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*Beate Pongratz-Leisten*

**RELIGION  
AND IDEOLOGY  
IN ASSYRIA**

STUDIES IN ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN RECORDS

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Beate Pongratz-Leisten  
**Religion and Ideology in Assyria**

# **Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records**

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## **Volume 6**

Beate Pongratz-Leisten

# **Religion and Ideology in Assyria**

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To my students



## Acknowledgments

This book is the product of several phases of development. It began as part of a larger project on Ancient Near Eastern religions during the academic year 2003–04, which I spent at Harvard University with a grant from the Center for the Study of World Religions. My colleagues at the time, Irene Winter, Peter Machinist, Piotr Steinkeller, and Paul-Alain Beaulieu together with their students graciously met with me several times to discuss various aspects of my research. In the years that followed, a draft manuscript emerged and received its most valuable comments from Zainab Bahrani, Benjamin Foster, Bruce Lincoln, and Peter Brown. During the academic year 2007–08, a grant from the National Endowment of the Humanities enabled me to spend a year at the Institute for Advanced Study, where I enjoyed the privilege of discussing my research in the seminars held by Caroline Bynum and Heinrich von Staden. At this time I narrowed my research focus to emphasize aspects of kingship and ideology in Mesopotamia. In 2009, with my appointment at the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World at New York University, I worked intensely with my colleagues to build the institution, formulate its vision, and design a graduate program and my research took another turn. I placed the historical development of ideology in Assyria – and its intercultural exchange with its neighbors – at center stage, working to delineate it from its beginnings through the Sargonid period in the first millennium BCE. Concomitant with the new research direction, I came to realize the need to clearly elucidate the fascinating interdependency between religion and ideology, which so often have been treated independently rather than as inextricably intertwined in the context of the ancient world.

Thanks are due to a number of scholars who kindly offered their comments and questions, and who invited me to present my work for discussion and analysis. Early drafts of several sections were read by Giorgio Buccellati, Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati, and Simo Parpola, and I am most grateful for their insightful comments. Productive and inspiring workshops include a 2007 meeting on royal ideology at the University of Pennsylvania, organized by Jane A. Hill, Philip Jones, and Antonio J. Morales; a 2010 meeting in Paris on Middle Assyrian developments in the Hābūr area in 2010 in Paris, organized by Nele Ziegler; a 2011 meeting on divination at the SBL conference in San Francisco, organized by Alan Lenzi and Jonathan Stoekl; a 2013 meeting on intertextuality, organized by Johannes Bach and his peer students at Topoi Berlin; and a 2014 meeting on *Transmission, Translation, and Reception*, organized by Yoram Cohen and Amir Gilan at Tel Aviv University. These workshops provided the opportunity to discuss aspects of ideology, the relationship between historiography and divination, a topic that I further had the opportunity to intensely dis-



cuss with Jean-Jacques Glassner, the intertextuality of what has been distinguished as literary texts and historiographic texts, and the transmission of cultural ideas and cultic practices. Most of my contributions to these workshops have been published in the respective volumes of their proceedings. I decided to rework them into a coherent narrative of this book. My work on historiography also benefited from in-depth discussions with the students in my seminar on Assyrian historiography in spring 2013, and with Peter Machinist, Piotr Michalowski, Jean-Jacques Glassner, and Nele Ziegler during the concluding workshop, *Ancient and Modern Perspectives on Historiography*, which I organized at ISAW in April 2013.

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I dedicate this book to my students at ISAW. Their curiosity and enthusiasm provided a continuous resource of energy and inspiration as I worked to complete this book.

Princeton, July 2014

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# Abbreviations

AfO	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
AHw	<i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i> , 3 volumes. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ARET 7	A. Archi, <i>Archivi reali di Ebla, Testi. Testi amministrativi: registrazioni di metallic e tessuti</i> . Roma: Missione archeologica italiana in Siria, 1988
ARI	A. K. Grayson, <i>Assyrian Royal Inscriptions</i> , 2 vols. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1976
ArOr	<i>Archiv Orientalní</i>
ASJ	<i>Acta Sumerologica (Middle Eastern Culture Center Japan)</i>
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BAK	H. Hunger, <i>Babylonisch-assyrische Kolophone</i> . AOAT 2; Kevelaer: Verlag Butzon und Bercker, 1968
BagM	<i>Baghdader Mitteilungen</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research</i>
BATSH	Berichte der Ausgrabung Tall Šēḥ Ḥamad / Dūr Katlimmu, Berlin
BATSH 4	E. Cancik-Kirschbaum, <i>Die mittelassyrischen Briefe aus Tall Šēḥ Ḥamad</i> . Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1996
BiOr	<i>Bibliotheca Orientalia</i>
CAD	The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. Chicago: The Oriental Institute; Glückstadt: J. J. Augustin
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CT	Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum
CTN	Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud. London
CUSAS	Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology
CUSAS 10	A. R. George, <i>Babylonian Literary Texts in the Schøyen Collection</i> . Bethesda: CDL Press, 2009
CUSAS 17	George, A. R. Ed. <i>Cuneiform Royal Inscriptions and Related Texts in the Schøyen Collection</i> . Bethesda: CDL Press, 2011
CUSAS 18	George, A. R., <i>Babylonian Divinatory Texts Chiefly in the Schøyen Collection</i> . Bethesda: CDL Press, 2013
Emar 6/3	D. Arnaud, <i>Recherches au Pays d'Aštata</i> . Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations
FAOS	<i>Freiburger Altorientalische Studien</i>
FAOS 5	H. Steible, <i>Die altsumerischen Bau- und Weihinschriften. Teil I</i> . Stuttgart: Franz Steiner
FAOS 7	I. J. Gelb (†) and B. Kienast, <i>Die Altkakkadischen Königsinschriften des Dritten Jahrtausend v. Chr.</i> Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag
GAG	W. von Soden and W. R. Mayer, <i>Grundriss der Akkadischen Grammatik. Analecta Orientalia 33</i> . Roma: Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1995
GBAO	<i>Göttinger Beiträge zum Alten Orient</i>
GKT	K. Hecker, <i>Grammatik der Kültepe Texte</i> . Roma: Institutum Biblicum, 1968
HdO	Handbuch der Orientalistik
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College, Annual</i>
IAS	R. D. Biggs, <i>Inscription from Tell Abū Ṣalābīkh</i> , OIP 99. Chicago and London 1974



JANER	<i>Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JEOL	<i>Jaarbericht Ex Oriente Lux</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
LAPO	<i>Littératures Anciennes du Proche-Orient</i> (Paris: Les Éditions du CERF)
LAS	Simo Parpola, <i>Letters from Assyrian Scholars, Parts I and II</i> . Kevelaer-Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1971)
MARI	<i>Mari, Annales de Recherches Interdisciplinaires</i> . Paris: Recherches sur les Civilisations
MARV	Mittelassyrische Rechts- und Verwaltungsurkunden
NABU	<i>Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires</i>
OAA5 1	C. Michel, <i>Old Assyrian Bibliography</i> . <i>Old Assyrian Archives, Studies</i> , volume 1. Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten 2003
OBO	<i>Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis</i>
PAPS	Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society
RGG	<i>Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft</i> . Ed. H. D. Betz et al. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck
RHR	<i>Revue de l'histoire des religions</i>
RIMA 1	A. K. Grayson, <i>Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennium BC (To 1115)</i> . Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1987
RIMA 2	A. K. Grayson, <i>Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC I (1114–859 BC)</i> . Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1990
RIME 1	D. R. Frayne, <i>Presargonic Period (2700–2350 BC)</i> . Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2008
RIME 2	D. R. Frayne, <i>Sargonic and Gutian Periods (2334–2113 BC)</i> . Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1993
RIME 3/1	D. O. Edzard, <i>Gudea and His Dynasty</i> . Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997
RIME 4	D. R. Frayne, <i>Old Babylonian Period (2003–1595 BC)</i> . Toronto: University of Toronto, 1990
RINAP 1	H. Tadmor and S. Yamada, <i>The Royal Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 BC) and Shalmaneser V (726–722 BC), Kings of Assyria</i> . Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011
RINAP 3/1	A. K. Grayson and J. Novotny, <i>The Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib, King of Assyria (704–681 BC), Part 1</i> . Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns 2012
RINAP 4	E. Leichty, <i>The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria (680–669 BC) (The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period, vol. 4)</i> . Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011
SAA	State Archive of Assyria
SAA 1	S. Parpola, <i>The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part I</i> . Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1987
SAA 2	S. Parpola and K. Watanabe, <i>Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths</i> . Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1988
SAA 3	A. Livingstone, <i>Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea</i> . Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1989
SAA 4	I. Starr, <i>Queries to the Sungod</i> . Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1990

SAA 6	T. Kwasman and S. Parpola, <i>Legal Transactions of the Royal Court of Niniveh, Part I</i> , Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1991
SAA 8	H. Hunger, <i>Astrological Reports to Assyrian Kings</i> . Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1992
SAA 9	S. Parpola, <i>Assyrian Prophecies</i> . Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1997
SAA 10	S. Parpola, <i>Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars</i> . Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1993
SAA 12	L. Kataja and R. Whiting, <i>Grants, Decrees and Gifts of the Neo-Assyrian Period</i> . Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1995
SAAB	<i>State Archives of Assyria Bulletin</i>
SAACT	State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts
SAAS	State Archive of Assyria Studies
SCCNH	Studies of the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians
SMEA	<i>Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici</i>
StBot	Studien zu den Bogazköy Texten
SVAT	E. Ebeling, <i>Stiftungen und Vorschriften für assyrische Tempel</i> . Berlin 1954
TCL 3	F. Thureau-Dangin, <i>Une relation de la huitième campagne de Sargon (714 av. J.-C.)</i> . Paris: P. Geuthner, 1912
UF	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
WO	<i>Welt des Orients</i>
WVDOG	Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft
WZKM	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes</i>
ZAR	<i>Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte</i>



# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Setting the Stage

In his commemorative inscriptions the Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I (1233–1197 BCE) relates that, subsequent to his victory over Babylon in 1215 BCE, he transferred his residence from the city of Aššur to his newly founded capital, Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta (figs. 1 and 2).<sup>1</sup> The construction of the new royal capital had been under way since the early years of his reign, and the ideological message promulgated by Tukulti-Ninurta sought to link Assyria’s victory over Babylon – the time-honored religious center – with the creation of a new political and religious center in Assyria.<sup>2</sup> Tukulti-Ninurta’s extraordinary move from Aššur to Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta included not only the building of a new royal palace, but also the attempt to transfer the cult of the god Aššur away from the city Aššur, an act unique in Assyrian history.<sup>3</sup> This audacious development took place when the Middle Assyrian state was at the peak of its territorial expansion, counting for a short time Babylonia among its domains. By exploring the ideological discourse employed by Tukulti-Ninurta I to justify his political decisions, I intend to set the stage for an investigation of the history of the cultural discourse surrounding Assyrian kingship from the late third millennium through to the Neo-Assyrian period. First, however, I will shed light on the rich tapestry of traditions implicated in the naming of Tukulti-Ninurta’s new palace, in order to provide the reader with an inkling of the immense potential of possible insights that the modern scholar can gain from taking such choices seriously.

The building inscriptions commemorating Tukulti-Ninurta I’s move to Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta record the ceremonial names given to the newly built Aššur temple and to the new royal palace. To my knowledge, this is the only known example in which temple and palace share the same name: “house, mountain of all the ME” (é.kur.me.šár.ra),<sup>4</sup> and “palace of all the ME” (é.gal.me.šár.ra)<sup>5</sup> respectively. The name of the palace was rendered in Akkadian as *bīt kiššati*,

---

1 RIMA I A.0.78.22–25.

2 Gilibert 2008, 179.

3 Instances such as the presence of Aššur’s dagger in Kanesh must be regarded as a strategy for extending Aššur’s agency in the juridical context (Donbaz 2001; see further CAD P, 279–280, s.v. *patru* and CAD Š/3, 196 f. s.v. *šugariāu*) and should be distinguished from Tukulti-Ninurta I’s move.

4 RIMA 1, A.0.78.23:114. For the name of the temple see George 1993, no. 687. The name is derived from that of Enlil’s temple in Nippur (Machinist 1978, 526).

5 RIMA 1, A.0.78.22:51.



**Fig. 1:** Socle of Tukulti-Ninurta I (Berlin Vorderasiatisches Museum, Assur 19869/VA 8146; Photo: Aruz, Benzel, and Evans 2008, 210; Drawing: Black and Green 1992, 29).



**Fig. 2:** Socle of Tukultī-Ninurta I with Base Frieze (Photo: Moortgat 1969, fig. 247; Drawing of Frieze: Pittman 1996, 351, fig. 24).

‘house of totality.’ This is not a literal translation of the Sumerian ceremonial name, but instead reflects the title “king of totality,” *šar kiššati*. As such, it recalls an ideology that had emerged under the kings of Akkad,<sup>6</sup> and was then reproduced in the ceremonial name for Tukultī-Ninurta I’s palace in Aššur itself, which was called “house of the king, sovereign of the lands” (é.lugal.umun.kur.kur.ra), evoking the Enlilship of Aššur-Enlil.<sup>7</sup> I would like to take this onomastic phenomenon as the point of departure for my discussion of Assyrian royal ideology and ask: what did the king and his scholars have in

<sup>6</sup> Röllig (1993) 112–113; Schachner 2007.

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of Aššur’s Enlilship see chapter 9.2.4.

mind when choosing this particular ceremonial name for Tukulti-Ninurta I's palace in his new residence? How does it relate to their claim of universal control?

The Sumerian ceremonial name “Palace of All the ME” is reminiscent of names given to temples of Inanna/Ištar, who is renowned in Sumerian mythology for stealing the ME from her father Enki in Eridu and bringing them to the city of Uruk.<sup>8</sup> Among the temple names evoking this myth are the “house which gathers all the ME” (é.me.kilib.ur<sub>4</sub>.ur<sub>4</sub>) of the goddess in Larsa,<sup>9</sup> the “house which lifts on high all the ME” (é.me.kilib.ba.sag.il) of Inanna/Ištar messenger Ninšubur at Girsu,<sup>10</sup> the “house of skillfully-contrived ME” (é.me.galam.ma), *akītu*-temple of Ištar at Akkade,<sup>11</sup> the “house of scattered(?) ME” (é.me.bir.ra),<sup>12</sup> a shrine in Aššur's temple Ešarra at Aššur, and the “house of the ME of Inanna” (é.me.<sup>d</sup>Inanna), the temple of the Assyrian Ištar at Aššur, which in the building inscriptions of Tukulti-Ninurta I appears in its abbreviated form é.me.<sup>13</sup> All of these Sumerian ceremonial temple names relate in a condensed form to the mythology surrounding the goddess Inanna/Ištar, and the space of the temple as *res extensa* of her divine body echoes her “biography.” The goddess, her agency, and her lived-in space within the urban landscape of the Mesopotamian cities had merged into one and become part of the cultural landscape of their inhabitants.

As seen by the mythologizing connotations of temple names incorporating the ME, Tukulti-Ninurta I's decision to include the ME in the name of his palace was not arbitrary. By referencing the ME, Tukulti-Ninurta I demonstrates a desire to connect Assyrian kingship with the divine figure of Ištar. According to the Sumerian myth *Inanna and Enki*, the ME include all the cultural norms, institutions, professions, and positive and negative aspects of human behavior.<sup>14</sup> The ME also encompass the institution of kingship and its associated insignia, thereby designating Inanna as the patron deity of kingship.<sup>15</sup> Although in the later second millennium BCE the meaning of Sumerian ME is restricted through its much narrower Akkadian translation as *paršu* – “cultic regula-

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**8** For the myth *Inanna and Enki*, see Farber-Flügge 1973; Hallo 1997, 522–26; Farber 1987–90; Glassner 1992.

**9** George 1992, 61:25; 79:7' and 25; 223, 321 f. 476; George 1993, no. 759.

**10** George 1993, no. 757.

**11** George 1993, no. 754.

**12** George 1992, 187, A List of Shrines in E-šarra l. 2'.

**13** George 1993, no. 756.

**14** Alster 2006, 13–36. On the Me see further Glassner 1992; Zgoll 1997, 66–75; Krebernik 2002, 41 f.

**15** For the quotation of the relevant passage see further Chapter 5.1.

tion”<sup>16</sup> – the choice of the name *é.gal.me.šár.ra* for Tukulti-Ninurta’s palace implies knowledge of its more inclusive ancient meaning and its association with Inanna/Ištar. The Akkadian rendering of this name as “house of totality” in turn projects control over the conquered world, as well as over those regions of the world with which Assyria interacted through peaceful means, primarily trade and diplomatic arbitration. This notion is explicit in the royal title “king of Kish,” which was iconic as early as the reign of king Mesalim of Kish (ca. 2600 BCE).<sup>17</sup> By the time of the kings of Akkade, the title had come to mean ‘king of totality,’ *šar kiššati*, “using the similarity of the name of the city of Kish and the Akkadian term for ‘the entire inhabited world,’ *kišshatum*.”<sup>18</sup> Tukulti-Ninurta I’s ceremonial name for his new palace, consequently, was intended to promulgate the king’s claim to universal control “by the love” of Inanna/Ištar; in other words, the king’s effective empowerment through the grace and goodwill of Inanna/Ištar,<sup>19</sup> perpetuating an idea that originated in a Sumerian context and was adapted in subsequent periods. This is clear, for instance, in the tradition regarding the legendary king Etana, in which Ištar seeks a suitable individual to occupy the position of king established by the gods.<sup>20</sup>

In its highly abbreviated form, the ceremonial name of Tukulti-Ninurta I’s palace thus epitomizes the theological metastructure of Assyrian kingship. The centrality of the goddess Ištar to Assyrian kingship is apparent in the fact that Tukulti-Ninurta I committed himself to building a double temple to Ištar-Aššur-ītu and Dinītu as soon as he ascended the throne, with Dinītu replacing Bēlat-Akkadī in one version of the building inscriptions.<sup>21</sup> To that end, Tukulti-Ninurta demolished the former Ištar temple, justifying this action through the claim that Ištar explicitly communicated her desire for a new building with a different outline.<sup>22</sup> Claiming that a specific deity expressed his or her will explicitly is a cultural strategy that we will encounter much later with Sennacherib’s reconfiguration of the Aššur temple in Aššur as well.

In Middle Assyrian times, Ištar had multiple cults dedicated to her various manifestations in Aššur alone, among them those of Anunītu, the Assyrian

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16 See Šamši-Adad I’s comment on Ištar’s temple in Mari, for instance: ‘E-me’urur, temple which gathers the ME,’ *é.me.[ur<sub>4</sub>.ur<sub>6</sub>]*, *é mu-ha-mi-im pa-ar-ší* in his dedication inscription of two lions for Ištar, Charpin 1984, 45–47.

17 Rubio 2007, 16.

18 Van de Mierop 2007, 64.

19 Westenholz 2000.

20 For a re-edition of the *Etana Myth* see Haul 2000, and more recently Wilson 2007.

21 RIMA 1, A.0.78.15.

22 RIMA 1, A.0.78.11: 82–86 and A.0.78.12.



Ištar (Ištar-Aššuritu),<sup>23</sup> Ištar-of-Heaven (Ištar-ša-šamê), Ištar-of-Nineveh (Ištar-ša-Ninua<sup>ki</sup>), Ištar-of-Arbela, and her hypostasis as Bēlet-ekalli and Šarrat-ni-pha.<sup>24</sup> All of these Ištar figures shared a bellicose aspect, which bore upon Ištar's active, though not exclusive, support for the king during military campaigns intended to actualize his control over 'totality.' Ištar's other central aspect is her role as protector of the king, on whose behalf she mediates with the chief god and the divine assembly. The tropes expressing her protection of the king extend from her role as name-giver in Eannatum's *Stele of the Vultures* and the Sacred Marriage attested in Sumerian royal hymns<sup>25</sup> to her role as nurse and wet nurse of the king in Late Assyrian prophecies. Ištar-Anunītu was introduced in Aššur during the Akkad period, when the kings of Akkad called themselves her 'favorite' and her 'consort,' and then reintroduced under Tukultī-Ninurta I. It is also during the Middle Assyrian period that we encounter the first evidence for prophetesses in Aššur. The possibility that the institution of prophetesses was similarly (re)-introduced under Tukultī-Ninurta should be kept in mind, as Ištar-Anunitu is well attested in Amorite tradition (Mari in particular) as being a prophesying deity for the king. In any event, all of these tropes share a common emphasis on Ištar's love for the king.<sup>26</sup>

In ancient juridical language love signified both the protection of an overlord for his vassal and the loyalty of the vassal to his overlord,<sup>27</sup> a view that made its way into Sumero-Babylonian and Assyrian ideological discourse and represents one of the many examples of the close association between religion and law in the ancient Near East. This conceptualization of love constituted one of the most powerful instruments for the legitimization of the king's occupation of the throne, with the love of Inanna/Ištar guaranteeing the protection and love of the chief god Enlil or Aššur. That this trope enjoyed a broad diffusion through Mesopotamia and Syria is evident also from the archaeological evidence, notably in the close association of the Ištar temple with the palace in Alalah<sup>28</sup> and the Old Babylonian representation of the king's enthronement under the loving supervision of Ištar in Zimrilim's palace in Mari.<sup>29</sup>

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**23** This goddess already existed side by side with Aššur in the Old Assyrian period, see Hirsch 1961, 22.

**24** Meinhold 2009.

**25** Jones 2003; Lapinkivi 2004; 2008; Rubio 2009, 61–62.

**26** Pongratz-Leisten 2003, 150 ff.; 2008.

**27** Moran 1963.

**28** Yener 2005, fig. 4.27 and Lauinger 2008.

**29** Note, however, that although during the Early Dynastic period the palace contained a large sanctuary, by the Old Babylonian period many of its rooms had been reused for secular purposes and only the cella of Anunitum remained; the temple of *Ištar ša ekallim* must have been moved outside of the palace, see Heinrich 1982, 133.

Ištar-Šauška, a Hurrian hypostasis of the goddess Ištar, played a role in the city of Nineveh equivalent to that of Ištar in her various hypostases in the city of Aššur. This is true at least as early as the time of Šamši-Adad I (1808–1776 BCE), as during the Hurrian occupation preceding Šamši-Adad I's conquest Ištar-Šauška was the consort of Teššub, heading the Hurrian pantheon together with him. Ištar-Šauška's supra-regional status is acknowledged by Hammurabi in the prologue to his *Law Code*<sup>30</sup> mentioning her and her city among the places he conquered in the Old Babylonian period. As a supra-regional deity Ištar-Šauška appears again in the international treaties concluded by the Hittites with the Mitanni kingdom and other vassals such as Nuhašše and the Arzawa Country.<sup>31</sup> Hammurabi's epithet in connection with Ištar of Nineveh is interesting: although he is a contemporary of Šamši-Adad I, Hammurabi refers to Ištar-Šauška's temple in Nineveh as é.mès.mès where he "proclaimed the ME of Ištar." After renovating the sanctuary originally built by the Old Akkadian king Maništušu,<sup>32</sup> Šamši-Adad I, by contrast, uses the ceremonial name é.me.nu.è "house of the ME, which do not leave."

The name chosen for Tukulti-Ninurta I's palace at Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta thus draws upon a rich tapestry of traditions, woven over hundreds and hundreds of years from Sumero-Babylonian, Amorite and Hurrian traditions alike. It dresses an originally cosmological message in a political garb, indicating that the Assyrian palace (= king) now shares Ištar's role in controlling the ME. With the name é.gal.me.šár.ra, the king is also promoting the palace as the cosmic stronghold, a function formerly reserved for the temple. Note the description of Enki's temple in *Enki's Journey to Nippur*:

Your lock has no rival. Your bolt is a fearsome lion. Your roof beams are the bull of heaven, an artfully made bright headgear. Your reed-mats are like lapis lazuli, decorating the roof-beams. Your vault is a bull (some mss. have instead: wild bull) raising its horns. Your door is a lion who (seizes a man) (1 ms. has instead: is awe-inspiring) Your staircase is a lion coming down on a man.<sup>33</sup>

With this type of ideological discourse, for the first time, king and palace explicitly emulate the roles and functions formerly ascribed exclusively to the divine world.

<sup>30</sup> Roth 1997, *CH* iv 59–63.

<sup>31</sup> For references see Beckman 1999, 216.

<sup>32</sup> Ziegler 2005, 26 emphasizes the ideological scope of Šamši-Adad I's reference to the Akkadian king who attributed his power and his origins to the dynasty of Akkad.

<sup>33</sup> ETCSL 1.1.4: 26–32; al Fouadi 1969; Ceccarelli 2012.

The preceding analysis of the ceremonial name of Tukulti-Ninurta I's new palace provides a glimpse of the rich texture of Assyrian ideology. It is clear that this ideology draws on various traditions, a fact frequently obscured by the tendency of modern scholarship to categorize these traditions in blunt geographical terms like Southern and Northern Mesopotamia. Also evident is the need to pay close attention to the details of Assyrian ideological discourse and to the complexity of particular features of this discourse, among them royal titulature.<sup>34</sup> For instance, as soon as Tukulti-Ninurta I loses control over Babylonia, he abandons the title “king of the four directions.”

Tukulti-Ninurta I's reign is a formative moment in the development of Assyrian royal ideology, heralding the explicit representation of the Assyrian king as an active participant in the establishment of cosmic order in concert with the divine world. To propagate this image of the king effectively, the scholars in his entourage turned to every medium at their disposal – text, image, architecture, and ritual. The motive for the ‘activism’ apparent in official discourse may be sought in the imperialist expansion driving Assyrian politics beginning in the fourteenth century BCE. This expansion resulted in dramatic changes to the ethno-linguistic makeup of Assyria's population. As more and more non-Assyrian people were integrated into the empire, Assyria became “less and less Assyrian culturally and linguistically.”<sup>35</sup> Subsequent large-scale migrations – particularly by Aramaeans – deeply affected the cultural landscape. Following the collapse of Hittite control in the northern part of the Fertile Crescent, small Aramaic kingdoms emerged; later, Aramaean populations spread throughout Mesopotamia.<sup>36</sup>

The Assyrian royal discourse that emerged under Tukulti-Ninurta I with its cosmological and mythic overtones should be considered the ideological response of the scholars working at the Assyrian court to these political developments. One can assume that the rulers of Mesopotamia always relied on the competence of scholars and experts for programmatic statements of their rulership. This is already apparent in the Old Babylonian Period in the elaborate ideological discourse created by king Šamši-Adad I in response to and as

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<sup>34</sup> Liverani 1981; Cifola 2004, 14.

<sup>35</sup> Beaulieu 2004, 192.

<sup>36</sup> The Aramaeans, known in the cuneiform sources as the *Aḫlamū*, appear already in the inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser I as a major force in the area of the Middle Euphrates, which the Assyrian military strove to control. Whether the Ahlamu attested in Sippar-Ammanum during the Old Babylonian period are to be equated with the later Aramaeans as suggested by Lipiński 2000, 37, remains open to debate. On the Assyrian-Aramaean interaction see Fales 1986, 1991, 2000, 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2011.

a consequence of his political activities and in the presence of diviners in the entourage of the kings of Mari and Ešnunna. Nevertheless, a royal scholar in the direct entourage of the king of Assyria emerges for the first time in the figure of Marduk-nādin-ahhē, a descendant of a Babylonian family of scholars, who moved from Babylonia to Aššur to enter into the service of King Aššur-uballiṭ I (1353–1318 BCE) as *tuṣṣar šarre* (scribe/astrologer<sup>2</sup> of the king).<sup>37</sup> This appointment bears witness not only to what later became the institution of the “royal scholar” (*ummān šarri*) as adviser to the king – an institution spelled out in the *Synchronistic King List*<sup>38</sup> and abundantly attested in Sargonid epistolary literature – but also to the presence of Babylonian scholars at the Assyrian court, known from the Middle Assyrian period at the latest. Naturally, this presence implied new impulses to the formation of Assyrian ideological discourse.

Exploring how this discourse both reflected and informed power relations, I will focus specifically on the history of Assyrian kingship and its conception in myth, historiography, ritual, and imagery. An attempt will be made to treat Assyrian kingship in context, demonstrating its receptivity to Sumero-Babylonian tradition on the one hand and to Hittite-Hurrian tradition on the other.<sup>39</sup> Further, the ideology of Assyrian kingship will be analyzed as a product of the dynamic interface between political action and the paradigms of rulership developed by erudite scholars in the entourage of the king. At this point I must emphasize that I am well aware of the pitfalls of identifying language groups with concepts of ethnicity and social identity.<sup>40</sup> The problem is particularly vexing with regard to the Hurrians, who were ubiquitous in Northern Syria during the third millennium and influenced Assyrian cultural discourse, but whose major cultural expressions – particularly ritual and mythic traditions – survived only in the libraries of the Hittite kingdom in the city of Hattuša.

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**37** Wiggermann 2008; Wiggermann provides a list of several such scholars during the Middle Assyrian period which included also a royal exorcist (*āšip šarre*) during the reign of Shalmaneser I (1263–1234 BCE).

**38** Found at the city of Aššur, this king list is a list of Assyrian and Babylonian kings arranged synchronically, which also names the chief scholars to the kings. Unfortunately there is a large gap in the text covering the kings preceding Tukulti-Ninurta I, so that we do not know exactly when the Assyrians themselves considered this tradition to have started, Weidner 1926; Grayson 1980–1983, 116–121 no. 12 and comments by Heeßel 2010, 165 with fn. 55.

**39** Peter Machinist has collected the evidence for the military interaction between the Assyrians and Hittites and remains a little doubtful with regard to their cultural interaction (Machinist 2005). I would like to adduce some evidence throughout this book in that regard. See further Harrak 1987, and my discussion in *Chapter 4.3*.

**40** See most recently Michalowski 2011, 84 in his discussion on the Amorites with reference to Kamp and Yoffee 1980; Emberling 1997, and Emberling and Yoffee 1999; on the problem of the Amorite question see most recently Durand 2012 with further bibliography.

However, as the goal of this book is to identify the formation of the Assyrian ideological discourse in its intercultural exchange with Northern and Southern traditions, this taxonomy will be kept with allude caution.

## 1.2 Why This Book?

The publication of Albert Ten Eyck Olmstead's work on Assyrian history in response to Ernst Curtius' *Griechische Geschichte* and Theodor Mommsen's *Römische Geschichte*<sup>41</sup> gave Assyria its own voice in ancient history, and Assyria has fascinated modern scholarship ever since. The Assyrians have left us a vast range of textual and archeological material, presenting the modern scholar with a rare opportunity to trace Assyrian history over the course of two millennia. Situated at the heart of the ancient Near East – between the Iranian mountains to the East, the Syrian steppe to the West, the Anatolian mountain ranges to the North and the alluvial plain of Mesopotamia to the South – Aššur's existence and survival was predicated on and defined by intense cultural interaction throughout its history. Due to its beneficial geographical location, the city state of Aššur originally operated primarily as a trade hub linking Iran, Southern Iraq, and Anatolia. Developing from its beginnings as a city state, Assyria eventually burst onto the scene of history as the world's first hegemonic empire, inspiring awe and terror in future generations and informing the work of biblical prophets and Greek historians alike. Archaeological excavation of the Assyrian heartland began as early as the mid-nineteenth century, in the period of colonial appropriation of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>42</sup> Initial excavations were centered on the once glorious capitals, which had largely been built during Assyria's rapid expansion in the first half of the first millennium BCE. Assyria's monumental palaces, with their expansive reliefs and developed iconography dedicated to the military campaigns of the Assyrian kings, deeply impacted how the modern viewer perceived of that first world empire (fig. 3) and served as an imperialist model for the nationalist ideologies developing in France and Britain at the time.<sup>43</sup>

Subsequently, approaches to Assyrian history have focused primarily on three goals: (1) writing a history of events;<sup>44</sup> (2) reconstructing the historical

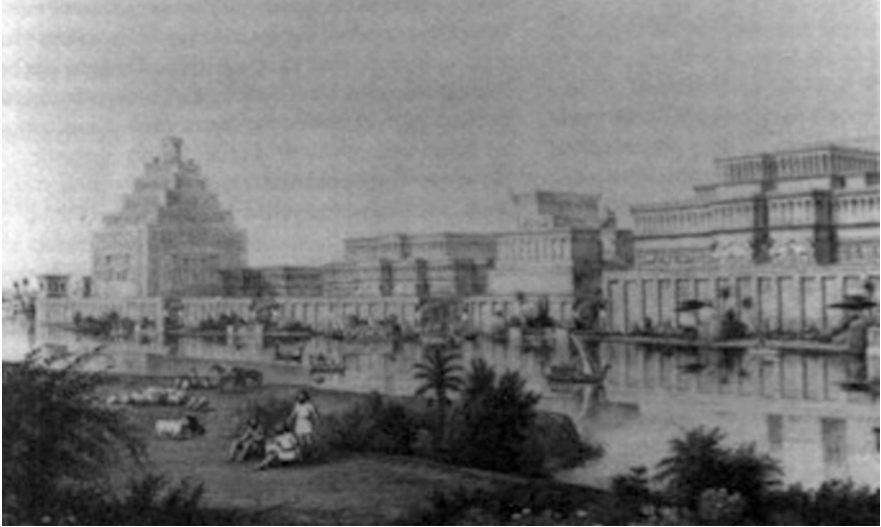
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**41** Olmstead 1923. For a survey on the early historiography of Assyria see Cancik-Kirschbaum 2011.

**42** Larsen 1996 and Liverani 2005, 223–225.

**43** Bohrer 1992, 1998, and 2001; Bahrani 2001; Larsen 1996.

**44** Among major monographs figure von Soden 1937; Mayer 1995; Lamprich 1995; Parker 2001; Yamada 2000 all of them focusing on aspects of the first millennium Assyrian history. For the research on Middle Assyrian history see *Chapter 4.3*.



**Fig. 3:** James Fergusson, *Nimrud* (Bahrani, 2001, 17; after A.H. Layard *Monuments of Nineveh*, London: John Murray 1849).

geography of the Assyrian empire;<sup>45</sup> and (3) exploring the strategies of Assyrian propaganda.<sup>46</sup> The sources available for such inquiry are fortunately quite plentiful. Numerous text editions of Assyrian royal inscriptions have been made available through the *Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia* project, formerly headed by A. K. Grayson at the University of Toronto and now under the custodianship of Grant Frame at the University of Pennsylvania, as well as through the published dissertations of Eckart Frahm,<sup>47</sup> Andreas Fuchs,<sup>48</sup> and the work of Hayim Tadmor.<sup>49</sup> A massive edition of the Kujunjik libraries is being published volume by volume through the *Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project* in Helsinki under the directorship of Simo Parpola. Parpola's edition of the letters

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**45** Of particular interest in this regard are the immense research project undertaken by the Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients in the 1970s under the directorship of Wolfgang Röllig, in which Assyria represented one geographical area, and the Helsinki Atlas published as part of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project headed by Simo Parpola at the University of Helsinki.

**46** Major contributions in this research area were made by Mario Fales, Steven W. Holloway, Mario Liverani, Peter Machinist, Johannes Renger, and Hayim Tadmor, and I will discuss their scholarship throughout this book.

**47** Frahm 1997.

**48** Fuchs 1994.

**49** Tadmor 1994.

written by ancient scholars to the kings Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal<sup>50</sup> has given these experts an audible voice and laid bare their extensive involvement in royal agency and decision-making.<sup>51</sup> Other volumes dedicated to Neo-Assyrian treaties, letters, administrative records, grants, and judicial texts have completely changed the modern perception of how the empire functioned. Together, these projects have added tremendous depth and nuance to the academic understanding of Assyrian history and culture. The existence and accessibility of this rich repertoire of sources available from first millennium Assyria distinguishes it from Babylonia and Egypt, both of which similarly developed into large imperial states. These sources enable an investigation into the deep history of Assyrian culture and tradition and permit a renewed exploration of the “mechanics” of the origin and development of an ideological discourse that would inform the operation of an empire.

Although sources for Assyrian history are not nearly as diverse or rich for the third and second millennia, the aim of this book is to go back in time and contextualize the development of Neo-Assyrian ideology from its origins in the earliest days of Aššur. Simultaneously, this book seeks to document the enormity of Assyria’s cultural interaction over space and time with “outside groups”. Instead of exclusively analyzing the imperial discourse of the first millennium BCE – an approach chosen by most scholars, including Mario Liverani,<sup>52</sup> Hayim Tadmor,<sup>53</sup> Steven Holloway,<sup>54</sup> Mario Fales,<sup>55</sup> and Stefan M. Maul<sup>56</sup> – the goal here is to trace Assyrian ideology in its formative stages and to expose the emergence of certain tropes during the early history of Aššur. In other words, my primary interest lies in the development of Assyrian ideological discourse against the backdrop of changing political-historical conditions.

Running an empire is a collaborative enterprise, and in Assyria “the emperor was obviously assisted by a large number of officials and courtiers, competent in (and entrusted with) various specific functions: scribes and administrators, astrologers and magicians, servants and body guards.”<sup>57</sup> In addition to the operative and executive aspects of monarchical power, control of a large

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50 Parpola 1970–1983 and 1993b.

51 The website *Knowledge and Power of the Assyrian Empire* founded by Karen Radner and Eleanor Robson has further facilitated access to the resources, <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/saao/knpp/>.

52 Liverani 1973, 1979, 1981, 1992.

53 Fales 2001 and 2012.

54 Holloway 2002.

55 1999–2000, 2001, 2012.

56 Maul 1991, 1995b, 1999, 2000a and 2000b.

57 Liverani 2005, 234.

territorial state required an ideological system that anchored the monarchy in established ideational frameworks and religious traditions. The formulation and promulgation of such an ideology was an act of agency. A further objective of this book, therefore, is to reveal the voice of the ancient scholars and to demonstrate their agency in the shaping of the image of the king in the surviving sources, even if the scholars as individuals remain lost to us.

In scholarship to date, royal ideological discourse has often been dismissed as straightforward propaganda more or less disconnected from the religious systems with which it was in dialogue. Since its introduction by Sir James Frazer in his monumental work *The Golden Bough* (1890–1900), discussion of the idea of divine kingship has been taken up by René Labat in *Le caractère religieux de la royauté Assyro-Babylonienne* (1939), Ivan Engnell in *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* (1943), and Cyril J. Gadd in *Ideas of Divine Rule in the Ancient Near East* (1948). *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man: An Essay of Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East* (1948), a collaborative work by Henri Frankfort, Thorkild Jacobsen, and John A. Wilson, was a key element of the postwar discourse on myth and ancient thought. This work, based on a discussion of ancient mythological and religious texts, sought to define the divide between ancient pre-scientific thought, lacking the capacity for abstraction, and modern philosophy and science. Henri Frankfort's monograph *Kingship and the Gods* (1948) grew directly out of this collaboration; although it rejected the universalistic approach of Sir James Frazer, it nevertheless adhered to the socio-cultural evolutionism and scientism of this period.

Motivated by a critical attitude toward the modern category of “divine” or “sacred” kingship, the present book embarks on an in-depth examination of the regional and temporal aspects of Assyrian cultural discourse and of the many cultural strategies used to *sacralize* kingship in Assyria. To some degree I am working with the same data that was available to René Labat, Ivan Engnell, and Henri Frankfort. Rather than operating with the notion of divine kingship introduced by Sir James Frazer, my approach does not begin from the question of whether the king should be considered a god but assumes instead the fluid notion of the divine<sup>58</sup> and examines strategies for sacralizing kingship, among them ritual, image, and narratives of power.

Following Frankfort's work the study of kingship ceased for several decades, to be revived only in recent years, as is demonstrated by the organiza-

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<sup>58</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the fluid notion of the divine and divine agency see Pongratz-Leisten 2011b, which to some extent represents a response to the approach of Barbara Nevling Porter 1997a and 2009.



tion of several conferences dedicated to the subject.<sup>59</sup> Even in more recent investigations relatively little attention has been directed at the dynamics of *regional traditions* and their impact on the conceptualization of monarchy.<sup>60</sup> Assyrian culture has for a long time been regarded as a “barbarian ‘parasite,’” feeding off of Babylonian traditions. This is despite the fact that already in the 1980s Peter Machinist emphasized the particularities of Assyrian culture and allowed Assyria to speak with its own voice.<sup>61</sup> Machinist’s analysis of the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic* focuses primarily on the interpenetration of Assyrian and Babylonian culture, observing astutely that Sumero-Babylonian traditions were woven into the epic.<sup>62</sup> One goal of this book is to delve further into the Sumero-Babylonian-Assyrian dialogue and, simultaneously, to broaden the element of cultural interaction by viewing the development of Assyrian royal ideology in light of Assyria’s interaction with Sumero-Babylonian tradition in the south and Hurrian-Hittite traditions in Syria and Anatolia in the west and north. I am, moreover, particularly interested in the origins of Assyrian ideology, as I am persuaded that we can only fully appreciate the ideological discourse of the Sargonid kings if we are aware of the rich tapestry of traditions their scholars drew upon. My aim, therefore, is to trace the development of Assyrian ideological discourse from the end of the third millennium through to the Neo-Assyrian period.

An investigation of the material and ideological conditions that determine cosmology, *weltanschauung*, and the shaping of kingship cannot neglect the underlying social apparatus. As mapped out above, Assyrian cultural discourse was largely the product of an increasingly professional body of scholarly experts.<sup>63</sup> The thread running through this book is the cooperation between the intellectual and political elites and the king, framing his political action and shaping his public *body politic*. This cooperation determined how kingship made use of tradition in its ideological discourse to establish itself as the

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<sup>59</sup> For recent research see the conference organized by Nicole Brisch at the Oriental Institute in Chicago, 2007, published by Brisch 2008, which lacks a treatment of Assyria, as stated by Cooper in his response in Brisch 2008, 267, the conference organized by G. B. Lanfranchi, the proceedings of which were published by Lanfranchi/Rollinger 2010, and the conference organized by Holly Pittman, Ph. Jones et al., *Cosmos and Politics in the Ideology of Kingship in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia*, which I had the fortune to attend.

<sup>60</sup> See the contributions by Jacob Klein, Harry A. Hoffner, Peter Machinist, Ziony Zevit, and G. A. Rendsburg in Beckman and Lewis 2006; Selz 1998 and 2001; Steinkeller 1999, and Jones 2005.

<sup>61</sup> Machinist 1984–85; see also Brinkman 1973.

<sup>62</sup> Machinist 1976.

<sup>63</sup> Gladigow 2004, 5.5.

guardian of cosmic order and how particular historical circumstances shaped ideological discourse. Accordingly, this book deals with the dynamic and asymmetrical relationships between king and religious elites as they were enacted by means of narratives of power, divination, and ritual performance.

Throughout this book I will discuss a broad array of literary sources and annalistic literature, which established what I call the *chaîne opératoire* of the ideal royal action (see especially *Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight*). This discussion is very much dominated by the notion of myth as an analytical tool rather than a state of mind, and so again my approach differs decisively from that of the Frankfort School. Issues of intertextuality and fictionality and how historiographic and literary texts inform each other with regard to their emplotment and message are equally discussed in these chapters and additionally in *Chapter Nine*. Ritual was a potent means of maintaining the balance of power between temple and palace and will be investigated in depth in *Chapter Ten*.

Narratives of power and ritual served to anchor kingship in the mythical past and were essential strategies for *sacralizing* kingship. Because ritual and narratives of power were informed by and made use of myth and *weltanschauung*, they adapted perpetually to changing political landscapes. Kingship in turn functioned both as the stimulus for the production of knowledge and cosmologies, as well as their crystallized expression. As such, considering myth, ritual, and kingship together is crucial to understanding the social efficacy of myth. This book does not regard tradition as a monolithic body of knowledge. Instead, it focuses on the mobilization of multiple strategies and the agency behind them in order to explore the dynamics of “re-invented tradition” in ever-changing historical circumstances.

Political agency, too, cannot be explained exclusively as the product of social function or individual motivations, but is to be understood as the outcome of a certain *weltanschauung*, which in antiquity was often expressed in mythic patterns of explanation, interpretation and orientation.<sup>64</sup> By taking into consideration the dynamic interaction between religious and ideological concepts and societal organization in their historical dimensions, this book attempts to bridge the modern division between religion and politics. For this study, religious systems are not understood as purely symbolic systems representing a “real” world outside of religion, and neither is myth categorized simply as the condensed iteration of religious systems. The assumption here is that cosmogonies and myths at large not only create their own versions of the world – versions that change depending on context or text genre – but that

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<sup>64</sup> Kippenberg 1995, 14 f.

they also have a strong impact on the political action of elites and on their ideological discourse. Conversely, while the *weltanschauung* expressed in myth can inform political action, ideological innovation tends to follow rather than precede expansionist ambitions and new conquests. In other words, religion is considered the “privileged transcendent system of culture that encompassed, structured, disciplined, and permeated all” other systems – politics, economy, arts, etc. – so that “none of them can be understood as secular in the modern sense.”<sup>65</sup> I will return to the relationship between religion, tradition, and ideology at the end of this chapter.

Tukulti-Ninurta I’s axiom that “peace cannot be made without conflict,”<sup>66</sup> a principle governing combat myths generally and informing the Assyrian royal inscriptions, determines the starting point for approaching the question of cosmology and politics in Assyria more broadly.<sup>67</sup> At stake were the dynamics between cosmic order (*kittu*) and *kratogenic* chaos, constantly threatening to destabilize and destroy civilization as embodied by the city.<sup>68</sup> Although in mythological narrative cosmic order was in the first instance established by means of combat and the triumph of the warrior god, in reality it had to be perpetually effectuated by the king through his administration of justice (*mīšaru*), i.e. securing civic order within the community, and through achieving concord (*mitgurtu*) and peace (*salīmu*) with the enemy,<sup>69</sup> i.e. mitigating the harmful

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**65** Lincoln 2008, 223.

**66** Machinist 1978a, *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*, A iii 15', *ul iššakan salīmu balu mithušu*; Foster 2005, 306.

**67** When considering the evidence of cosmogonic accounts and their context in Mesopotamia, it is revealing to note that, with very few exceptions, there are no such cosmogonies in their own right. The textual tradition of that region does not reflect a primary concern to learn about or depict the cosmos for the sake only of knowing or explaining its origins. Instead, cosmogonies function as analogies and etiologies for a particular plot, figure or the purpose of a specific text and ritual. As such, they have their place as prologues to larger poems and songs revolving around specific heroes or tools, as well as to dialogues, songs, and omen series. Furthermore, they play a major role in building rituals (Ambos 2004) and healing rituals meant to re-establish a primordial state of perfection. Moreover, cosmogonic concepts in abbreviated forms inform the ceremonial names of temples and palaces, royal titulary, historical narratives, state ritual, and iconography, and as such provide the key metaphor and conceptual framework for change and innovation (For the transformative effect of ritual see Turner 1967; Bell 1992, 184).

**68** Karen Sonik in press, alters the terminology used by Jan Assmann 2003, 189 to describe the distinction between cosmogonic chaos as primeval amorphous state from which sprang the order of creation and *cratogony*, i.e. the establishment of rule to *kratogenic* carrying the notion of consolidation and stability as housed within the city shifting the emphasis on the dynamics of civilization.

**69** Cancik-Kirschbaum 1997.

forces of disorder and confusion that existed within the organized universe but outside of the city and territory controlled by the king. Toward the end of the Sargonid period, the king Esarhaddon (680–669 BCE) explicitly evokes the indivisible relationship between royal agency and cosmic order by mapping his kingship into the regular paths of the celestial bodies in the heavens:

they (the gods) [named] me [for shepherd]ing the land and the people. In [order] to give the land and the people verdicts of truth and justice, the gods [Šîn and] Šamaš, the twin gods, took the road of truth and justice monthly.<sup>70</sup>

### 1.3 Fascination with the Assyrian Kings

Despite regional and temporal variations and differences, there always existed in Mesopotamia a system of beliefs and symbols aimed at cultural cohesion. In building their empire, the Assyrian kings drew on the diversity of cultural traditions by which they were surrounded and perfected an ideological system creating a sense of cultural cohesion, even though this sometimes developed differently at the local level. The Assyrian emphasis on cultural integration to construct a unified political community out of a rapidly expanding heterogeneous multilingual and multiethnic population – an integration enforced in part by their massive deportation politics – is what distinguished them from the Babylonians, who from the beginning comprised a conglomeration of city states. In the long history of the ancient Near East, the Assyrians stand out in their endeavor to create a coherent political and ideological system capable of transforming the intercultural heterogeneous landscape into a homogeneous intra-cultural empire dominated by a shared symbolic system. Well aware of the dynamics of conflict between the centralized court and other sectors of society, and the fragility of power relationships in the making and remaking of their political landscape, the Assyrians strove to create a communal sense based on key-metaphors which were evoked throughout the territory of their empire. These key-metaphors served the respective political elites in their “conversation” with the center.

In contrast to the various unified polities in Babylonia, which comprised several formerly independent city states, Assyria grew out of the single city state of Aššur. Given that the name of the city and its chief god are identical, this historical process “marks the native understanding of the land as the ex-

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<sup>70</sup> RINAP 4 no. 57 i 1’–8’.

tension of the city and the god.”<sup>71</sup> Essential to the Assyrian imperial ideology, consequently, is that the city of Aššur and her patron deity, i.e., the original political *and* cultic center, function as a cipher for the center of the empire regardless of the location of the royal residences, which changed over time. At various times, however, this core concept was challenged. This is particularly clear in the cases of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta and Khorsabad, the newly-constructed residences of Tukultī-Ninurta I and Sargon II (722–705 BCE) respectively, and in the reaction of the professional elites in Aššur, who were closely linked with the Aššur temple, to the building of these cities. Despite such occasional tensions, the scholars of Aššur were deeply involved in the organization of the state cult and in mapping the king’s image onto the mind of the people, and they managed to monopolize Aššur’s role as the cultural metropolis of Assyria. It is through their eyes that we have to read Assyrian ideological discourse.

In light of the idea that the dynamic growth of the Assyrian polity mirrored the spread of the god Aššur’s divine presence, the state of Assyria defined itself in relation to what lay beyond. The Assyrian kings considered it their primary duty to constantly push Assyria’s frontiers towards the unknown. The royal inscriptions in particular extol the king’s transformative ability to integrate the world of disorder, – i.e. the non-Assyrian world – into the world of order, and to make it a cohesive part of Assyria. As will be discussed in *Chapter Six*, royal inscriptions are to be read as variations on the plotline of the narratives revolving around the warrior god Ninurta. Royal titulature reflects the kings’ efforts to ensure correspondence between their controlled territory and cosmic dimensions, and thus to live up to the divine command to expand Aššur’s territory. This claim is expressed in titles such as ‘king of totality’ (*šar kiššati*), ‘king of the four banks (= corners of the world)’ (*šar kibrāt arba’i*) and ‘who exercises authority over the four banks from the rising to the setting sun,’ (*šarru ša ulu šītān adi šillān kibrāt arba’i ibēluma*).<sup>72</sup> These titles, as will be shown in *Chapter Four*, were not unique to Assyria, but reach far back to the beginnings of political attempts at unification in Mesopotamia and changed their meaning over time.

In addition to the mythic discourse behind political agency, the deliberate construction of the imperial space was instrumental in producing power, authority, and legitimacy.<sup>73</sup> The Assyrian kings developed multiple strategies for fostering an “enduring perception of geopolitical relationships”<sup>74</sup> as performed

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71 Machinist 1993, 81.

72 Fuchs 1994, 49 Silbertafel.

73 Smith 2003, 101.

74 Smith 2003, 135.

in spatial practice, and for creating places that drew together the communities of their empire into a single imagined civil community. These included the following material, cultic and ideological strategies, most of which are attested only during the Neo-Assyrian period:

1. The establishment of a network of communication and road systems designed to facilitate exchange of information throughout the empire.<sup>75</sup> This vast road system represented “the logistical strength and organizational power of the empire.”<sup>76</sup>
2. The implementation of massive hydraulic projects enabling the secure irrigation of vast regions in a dry-farming area. This demonstrated the effectiveness and technological transformative power of rulership and concomitantly displayed the king’s ability to maintain the divinely envisioned world order.
3. The construction of an urban fabric that fostered a close proximity between the palace and the temples, with residential quarters of high officials adjacent to the citadel, segregated by fortified walls from the rest of the walled city.
4. The implementation of an Assyrian style in the institutional architecture of the provincial capitals, thereby endowing political space with new meaning.
5. The erection of steles at the gates of conquered cities in the periphery in order to evoke the constant presence of the Assyrian king in the company of the Assyrian gods; the carving of rock reliefs served the same purpose of manifesting a constant Assyrian presence.<sup>77</sup>
6. The strengthening of the position of the Aššur temple as the religious center of the empire. This was achieved through the establishment of a system of regular deliveries to the Aššur temple providing for the daily offerings to the god Aššur. These deliveries were contributed “in a fixed rota”<sup>78</sup> by the various provinces of Assyria,<sup>79</sup> and the economic relationship they produced between Assyria’s cultic center and the provinces was vital to fostering the experience of political belonging and obedience to Aššur, the supreme god of the Assyrians.<sup>80</sup>
7. The creation of a provincial system during the Middle Assyrian period that was restructured under Tiglath-Pileser III, if not earlier.

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75 Kessler 1980, 27–78; Levine 1989; Liverani 1988; Postgate 1992.

76 DeMarrais, Castillo, and Earle 1996, 29.

77 Shafer 2007.

78 Postgate 2002, 2.

79 On the provinces see recently Radner 2006.

80 This aspect will be investigated by Joshua Jeffers in his dissertation on Tiglath-Pileser I.

8. The renaming of conquered provincial centers with Assyrian toponyms.<sup>81</sup>
9. The setting up of the weapon of Aššur for the performance of the loyalty oath.<sup>82</sup>
10. The development of a network of communication with the gods through divinatory experts who reported to the center from all ends of the empire.<sup>83</sup>
11. The elaboration of state rituals in the imperial center that not only required the presence of the king but turned him into an active agent through his assumption of the role of the chief priest (*šangū*) of the god Aššur.

These cultural strategies were effective displays of royal power, anchored in the *weltanschauung* and responding to the cultural imagination of the time at large. While the economic measures taken to bind the Assyrian provinces to the Aššur temple were imposed throughout the empire, other strategies differed in the extent to which they were applied in the territory of the empire, as demonstrated in some instances below. Continuous exposure to representations of Assyrian ideology and Assyrian administrative measures had a profound effect on the attitude of the people in the provinces and beyond, as is apparent in the emulation by local elites of the Assyrian style of living. Through exposure to the spatial practices mentioned above, they were supposed to adopt an identity that was predicated upon faith in the universality of Aššur.<sup>84</sup> Institutionalizing Aššur as the common point of reference for all of the empire's subjects was thus intended to generate a sense of absolute loyalty to the god and served as a vehicle for political loyalty to the king. This loyalty, however, did not include religious conversion<sup>85</sup> or the abandonment of the personal god.

The measures undertaken by Assyrian rulers in order to reinforce their centralized control were numerous and wide-ranging. Their mere existence reflects

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**81** Pongratz-Leisten 1997.

**82** Attestations for the establishment of Aššur's weapon are constrained chronologically to the period between 745 and 696 BCE and are limited to seven instances in the royal inscriptions. In six cases the installation of the weapon follows the transformation of a city into a provincial capital. In most cases the weapon of Aššur was raised at the extreme limits of the Assyrian provincial network, in Babylonia, Urartu, and Media and in bordering regions such as Cilicia and southern Philistine. Very often the setting up of divine symbol and royal image was accompanied by resettlements of foreign groups in the city or provincial regions, see Holloway 2002 163.

**83** Pongratz-Leisten 1999.

**84** Ando 2000, 41 describes similar strategies for sustaining the Roman empire.

**85** For diverging views in this debate see McKay 1973; Cogan 1974; Spieckermann 1982; Cogan 1993; Machinist 2003.

the fragility of monarchic power in Assyria and calls for a re-evaluation of the operation of the Assyrian empire which, from my point of view, was able to function only because of the cooperation and collusion between the ruler and political and scholarly elites. While recent research has been very successful in shedding light on the political and economic aspects of the operation of the Assyrian empire, this book aims at delineating the cultural and religious strategies that allowed it to function.

## 1.4 Tradition, Cultural Discourse, and Ideology: How They Intertwine

Let me begin by clarifying what I mean by the terms ‘tradition,’ ‘cultural discourse,’ and ‘ideology,’ as well as why and how I will use them throughout the book. Over time, scholarship has developed various labels for cultural knowledge, among them tradition,<sup>86</sup> cultural discourse<sup>87</sup> and, more narrowly, cultural repertoire.<sup>88</sup> I myself consider *tradition* the growing body of cultural memory, which is informed by social values and practices.<sup>89</sup> This cultural legacy materializes in *cultural discourse*, which is constantly reformulated and reconceptualized in all media including myth and historiography, as well as in architecture, iconography, and ritual. My understanding of cultural discourse includes all media of expression – image, text, and ritual. Moreover, the dynamics of the agency producing the media is just as important as the communication between authors and audience, both of whom participate in the production of culture and together constitute a discourse community.<sup>90</sup> In other words, *tradition* is the coherent body of the inherited cultural legacy “that transcended political fragmentation, and cut through various divisions, including linguistic diversity, to unify scribal intellectual worldviews in much of the Near East,”<sup>91</sup> while *cultural discourse* is the constant reformulation and re-conceptualization of tradition, as enacted by the ancient scholars in the entourage of the king and in the organization of local, regional, and supra-regional cults. Royal *ideology* then can be considered a *subcategory* of cultural discourse, namely the condensed form of the royal perspective, including all of

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**86** Eisenstadt 1973.

**87** Greenblatt 2005.

**88** Dorleijn/Vanstiphout 2003.

**89** Eisenstadt and Graubard 1973; Arnason 2005.

**90** Rafter 1988.

**91** Michalowski 2010, 8.



its conceptual innovations, which is constantly worked into the traditional framework.

Mesopotamian tradition has often been described as conservative and static in nature, striving to maintain the *status quo*. This characterization has been enhanced by the debate on pre-axial and axial civilizations, most recently promoted by S. N. Eisenstadt.<sup>92</sup> The dichotomy between traditional/premodern societies as “closed types” and modern societies as “culturally dynamic, oriented to change and innovation” very much informed the work of the founding fathers of sociology such as de Tocqueville, Marx, Durkheim, Weber, and others.<sup>93</sup> They tended to overlook the dynamics and tension between tradition and cultural discourse, which were constantly transformed in response to actual historical circumstances. In the case of Mesopotamia in particular, the notion of world-historical transformations and innovations restricted to the period between the eighth and third centuries BCE remains unconvincing. Even the most cursory investigation of the intertwining of religion and ideology in Mesopotamia reveals that the early civilizations of the alluvial plain, due to their geographical exposure to the northern and eastern mountains, the western steppes and desert, and, further to the west and the south, the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf, perpetually encountered new cultural and ethnic elements. The ensuing cultural interaction entailed the constant adaptation and transformation of new ideas and cultural practices, which in turn promoted the perpetual re-invention of tradition. It has been suggested that major breaks in the written tradition can be observed during the second millennium with the restructuring of the “received canon,” resulting in the discontinuation of entire categories of texts and a changed balance in favor of completely new cultural schemes.<sup>94</sup> The multi-ethnic and multi-lingual components of Mesopotamian culture cannot be stressed enough, as “what we so glibly call ‘Mesopotamian Civilization,’ is in reality, a convenient conceptual *bricolage* of many different cultural features, spread out over millennia in generally the same geographical space. This long, extremely complex occupational sequence is full of political and cultural breaks, discontinuities, local variation, and with its own visionary as well as revivalist movements.”<sup>95</sup> Geographic and ethnic terms, therefore, can only serve as auxiliary devices to the modern scholar. The expression of cultural texts in a particular language and the use of particular tropes at particular moments in time should be understood as a cultural choice

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<sup>92</sup> Eisenstadt 1986 and 1992.

<sup>93</sup> Eisenstadt 1973, 2. For a survey on the scholarly history of axial age see Arnason 2005.

<sup>94</sup> Michalowski 2005, 160.

<sup>95</sup> Michalowski 2005, 159.

determined by local or regional scribal practices and prevailing modes of scholarly production, all of which took place in an atmosphere of perpetual and vivid exchange. Notwithstanding these local and regional dynamics, royal ideology was surprisingly consistent with regard to the set of tropes and key metaphors it utilized to fashion a royal image that supported the claim of a particular king to be the equal of his peers on the international scene. While this set of tropes emerged very early in Mesopotamian history, local and regional choices expressing a preference for certain tropes over others were conditioned by specific historical circumstances. The kings of the Ur III period, for example, stressed their connection to Gilgameš, Lugalbanda and Ninsun, all at home in Uruk, which was not coincidentally the city from which the Ur III kings hailed.<sup>96</sup> This Ur III ideology, however, interestingly did not make its way into Assyrian discourse which chose to rely on traditions of the kings of Akkad instead.

Central to the correct understanding of ideology is the fact that, in antiquity, tradition and *weltanschauung* were entirely dominated and permeated by religion. Ancient Near Eastern scholarship has tended to view religion as “one cultural system among others (politics, economy, literature, art, philosophy, fashion etc.), all of which enjoy relative independence,”<sup>97</sup> rather than regarding religion as the meta-discourse encompassing, structuring, and permeating all others, ideology included. Archaeologists have also used the term *ideology* “as a substitute for ‘world view’, ‘religion’ or ‘political doctrine,’”<sup>98</sup> thus missing the opportunity to disentangle the various ways in which ritual, political discourse, and visual media were informed by ideology, which again had to respond to the religious *weltanschauung*. Last but not least, ideology has been considered primarily in Marxist terms and understood as a strategy deployed by political elites to influence social behavior,<sup>99</sup> to disguise social and economic stratification,<sup>100</sup> and to serve the integration of different social groups (classes, genders, professions, lineages, etc.) involved in power struggles.<sup>101</sup> There has thus been a “risk of reducing ideology to an unwieldy dichotomy between domination and resistance,<sup>102</sup> pigeonholing it in its worst two-dimensional

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<sup>96</sup> Wilcke 1989, 562f. Utuhegal, probably the older brother of Urnammu, was from Uruk, see Wilcke 1974, 192f.

<sup>97</sup> Lincoln 2008, 223.

<sup>98</sup> McGuire and Bernbeck 2011, 166.

<sup>99</sup> Ross 2005, 328.

<sup>100</sup> Liverani 1979; Pollock 1999, 173.

<sup>101</sup> McGuire and Bernbeck 2011, 174.

<sup>102</sup> Miller, Rowlands, and Tilley 1989.

form.”<sup>103</sup> As a result, adaptation, refocusing, and selective representation in the ideological discourse have frequently been classified as a misrepresentation of events and conditions,<sup>104</sup> marking ideological discourse as a whole as ‘untrue’ since it suppresses certain motives and interests to justify certain societal conditions. Myth, however, constitutes an integral part of the religious *weltanschauung* and informs ideology in ancient societies, where it has “the cultural status of truth in the society or groups to which they belong.”<sup>105</sup> As has been shown by Hans Blumenberg in his monumental *Work on Myth*,<sup>106</sup> this applies equally to modern societies despite the advance of secular, scientific rationality. Regarded by its audiences as truthful and meaningful, myth represents what Eliade called the *exemplar history* and is sufficiently authoritative to have paradigmatic value as “simultaneously a ‘model of’ and a ‘model for’ reality.”<sup>107</sup> Antonio Gramsci was among the first to suggest that ruling classes do not only rule “through force and the threat of force but because their ideas have come to be accepted by the ‘subordinate classes.’”<sup>108</sup> In his discussion of the Karatepe and Çineköy inscriptions, Giovanni Lanfranchi argued persuasively that even the elites of tributary states could be staunch supporters of the Assyrian empire, as they enjoyed material benefits stemming from their position in the Assyrian imperial circuit.<sup>109</sup> Consent to Assyrian overlordship could also be expressed from within, by local rulers themselves. Some of these rulers exalted overtly their alliance with Assyria, as did Bar-rakib of Sam’al, who proudly declares to have “run at the wheel” of the Assyrian king, thereby following in the footsteps of his father – also an erstwhile ally of the Assyrian king.<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, rulership has always been sanctified and presented in accordance with the religious *weltanschauung*. Only upon the disintegration of the medieval *weltanschauung* and its attendant institutions did ideology become an object of political debate and philosophical critique.<sup>111</sup>

Ideology was a central element of the cultural discourse, and it also functioned as an effective source of power (rather than solely as a source of authori-

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103 Burke 2006, 128.

104 Ross 2005, 328.

105 Flood 2002, 178.

106 Blumenberg 1985. For a detailed discussion of the relevance of myth to ideological discourse, see *Chapters Six and Seven*; for its relevance to ritual, see *Chapter Nine*.

107 Lincoln 1989, 24 and Flood 2002, 179.

108 Burke 2004, 25 and Gramsci 1989.

109 Lanfranchi 2007.

110 Zinjirli orthostat of Bar-rakib in Donner and Röllig 1962, no. 216:8–9 and 1964, 233; Zinjirli statue of Panamuwa II erected by his son Bar-rakib, *ibid.*, no. 215:6–7, 10–14 and 1964, 223–24; Lanfranchi 2007, 184.

111 Stentzler 1993, 212–217.

ty) along with economic, political, and military sources.<sup>112</sup> Nevertheless, because of the fact that religion permeated all of these sources of power in antiquity, ideology cannot be understood merely through its function in daily practice as a regulator and harmonizer of societal actions.<sup>113</sup> Instead, in an “ongoing arena for competition, control of meaning, and the negotiation of power relationships,”<sup>114</sup> ideology – as it materializes in state ceremonies, ritual, monuments, architecture, iconography, and all kinds of textual categories such as treaties, royal inscriptions, chronicles, and myths – strives equally to respond to and negotiate the religious *weltanschauung*, which prescribes a particular function and meaning for the institution of kingship in the cosmic order.

When defining his notion of the “stream of tradition,” Leo Oppenheim had the textual evidence of the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian libraries in mind. These libraries demonstrate a striking conservatism in the transmission of texts such as omen compendia and certain literary texts that originated in the Sumero-Babylonian tradition. Oppenheim assumed this apparent conservatism to be a consequence of “the desire to preserve a body of religious writings, or the wish to sustain one tradition against the opposition of, or in competition with, rival traditions.”<sup>115</sup> Oppenheim also stressed the point that in Mesopotamia it was “considered an essential part of the training of each scribe to copy faithfully the texts that made up the stream of tradition.”<sup>116</sup> As has been noted by Michalowski,<sup>117</sup> this purely operative aspect of scribal training implied that the scribal elites were educated in the stream of tradition, and so could serve the king in his endeavor to represent himself as the rightful occupant of the throne. The “relationship between texts, ideology, and political control”<sup>118</sup> is crucial to our understanding of the collaboration between scholars and the king: it reveals the authoritative voice of the former in the articulation of independent visions of social realities in literary compositions not commissioned by the court. Eventually, many of these compositions would be emulated in royal discourse. As such, they serve to illustrate the dynamic interaction between established tradition and cultural discourse on the one hand and the ideological interests of kings at particular historical moments on the other. In this context,

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112 Mann 1986.

113 Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu and Eagleton 1994.

114 DeMarrais, Castillo, and Early 1996, 16.

115 Oppenheim 1960b, 411.

116 *Ibid.*

117 Michalowski 1987.

118 Cooper 1993, 13 fn. 12.

it is again interesting to observe that the tradition revolving around the kings of Akkad seems to have had a much wider dissemination into the north and the west than the tradition revolving around Gilgamesh.

Oppenheim's notion of the stream of tradition has recently come under attack. Eleanor Robson has argued strongly against Oppenheim's homogeneous notion of tradition, referring to mathematical texts and discontinuity in the use of certain omina series.<sup>119</sup> Similar reservations have been advanced by Niek Veldhuis in his discussion of the transmission of lexical texts, where he has stated that Oppenheim's metaphor of a "stream of tradition" "views the tradition as something more or less independent and with a power of its own"<sup>120</sup> and conceals local variations. It seems to me, however, that Oppenheim had something different in mind, focusing much more on ideological preferences and the manner in which texts were created in the service of the court, be it in response to political events or as possible patterns of explanation and orientation, which might be appropriated only much later in time by some ideological discourse:

When Assyriologists will be able to follow the fate of individual text groups through the history of their tradition, they will obtain more insights into the workings of this 'stream' and, conceivably, light will be shed some day on the ideological preferences and other attitudes that neither the content nor the wording of these texts is likely to reflect directly.<sup>121</sup>

As noted by Jerrold Cooper, many Sumerian myths and epics – among them the narratives revolving around the legendary kings Enmerkar and Lugalbanda – did not survive the extensive recreation or re-invention of cultural discourse during the Old Babylonian period, while others such as *Angimdimma* and *Lugal-e* did. In addition to the discontinuation of certain texts, there was also the creation of new Sumerian works and the frequent addition of Akkadian translations,<sup>122</sup> although this process in its standardized form was only established during the Late Bronze Age as attested by the rich evidence of the libraries from Aššur, Emar, Nuzi, Boghazköy, Ugarit and Alalakh. There is clearly an intertextual relationship between Sumerian-Babylonian and Assyrian chronographic texts.<sup>123</sup> Moreover, the Assyrian lexical (i.e. educational) and divinatory corpus is indebted to the Babylonian tradition, and Assyrian literary

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119 Robson 2011.

120 Veldhuis 2012, 12.

121 Oppenheim 1960, 412; 1977, 16.

122 Cooper 1971–72.

123 Weissert 1992.

texts reveal signs of Sumero-Babylonian influence. Nevertheless, Assyrian textual production – particularly royal inscriptions and scholarly texts such as the earliest version of *Astrolabe B*<sup>124</sup> – remains quite distinct, demonstrating an increasing professionalism of local scribes and scholars beginning in the Middle Assyrian period if not earlier. This Assyrian acquisition of expertise in turn played into scribal training at cities such as Emar<sup>125</sup> and Ugarit,<sup>126</sup> attesting to an additional, indirect avenue of transmission of Babylonian knowledge and culture beyond a direct importation from Babylonia into Syria and Anatolia.

The various avenues of transmission of Sumero-Babylonian knowledge, as well as local continuities and discontinuities in the process of its adaptation, are, however, only one aspect. The other aspect, of particular importance in this book, is Jerrold Cooper's notion of textual communities defined by and through a corpus of shared texts.<sup>127</sup> This notion encapsulates perfectly the pervasive influence of scribal and scholarly agency in shaping cultural identity and maintaining cultural stability. It accounts for the perseverance of the tropes and imagery of combat myth narratives like *Lugal-e*, *Angimdimma*, and the *Anzû Myth*, the survival of the ideology of Sargonic Akkad in the cultural memory as expressed in omen compendia and later royal discourse in the Tigris region, and the inclination of scholars toward intertextuality in the creation of new texts.

To return to our definition of ideology, it is precisely the perpetual efforts of individual kings in the ancient Near East to demonstrate their fulfillment of the expectations of kingship that constituted the primary motivation for the formulation of the rhetoric of all materialized forms of ideology, be they textual, iconographic, monumental, or ritual. In this endeavor the ruler was guided by his scholars, who, as is becoming ever clearer from their libraries, represented the hidden voice<sup>128</sup> in the creation of the king's authority. Although I subscribe to the view that there was no geographically and diachronically unified way that power was structured and organized in Mesopotamia,<sup>129</sup> I still maintain that there was an overarching ideological conceptualization of rulership.

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124 See Horowitz 2011.

125 See Cohen 2004, 94 mentioning the Assyrian scribe Mar-Šeru'a (Emar 127) and for the figure of Kidin-Gula originating probably in the Mid-Euphrates region, which shows a mixture of Assyrian and Babylonian features in the scribal culture.

126 Van Soldt 1991, 522.

127 Cooper 1993, 13; a concept originally developed by the Medievalist Brian Stock.

128 Machinist 2003.

129 Cancik-Kirschbaum 2007, 168.

Similarly, while ideological expression in Northern Syria and Assyria differed to a large degree from that of Sumer and Babylonia, these dissimilarities can be traced to different choices regarding the use of key metaphors from the cultural repertoire that had developed since the fourth millennium BCE.

This process was already recognized by Hayim Tadmor in the 1970s<sup>130</sup> and dominated his subsequent analyses of royal inscriptions.<sup>131</sup> In this he was followed by Liverani, who in his seminal article on “The Ideology of the Assyrian Empire”<sup>132</sup> expanded the discussion to include space, time, diversity of men, and diversity of goods, aspects that he discussed in detail in his monograph *Prestige and Interest*. Despite the important contributions of both of these scholars, numerous Assyriologists continue to read the royal inscriptions principally as a source for the reconstruction of an *histoire événementielle*,<sup>133</sup> the illumination of the dynamics of imperial expansion,<sup>134</sup> and the exposition of the operational aspects of the exercise of imperial power.<sup>135</sup> The fact that the expansionist ambitions of the Assyrian empire and its artistic and architectural display have been at the center of scholarly interests<sup>136</sup> is largely based on modern scholarship’s understanding of ideology as a means for reinforcing social hierarchies and norms and legitimizing economic stratification.

This book aims to tell a different story. The focus here is on the king’s use of tradition in his effort to establish his authority and realize his desire to be recognized as legitimate by the elites, the gods, and posterity, as well as by his peers in the international arena. Accordingly, instead of focusing on the top-down effect of ideology, the goal of this book is to shed light on the intellectual efforts of the king’s scholars over centuries of Assyrian history to harmonize tradition and ideology while meeting the historical challenges faced by particular kings. In his discussion of first millennium Assyrian imperialist ideology, Mario Liverani emphasizes the fact that religion represents the code underpinning ideology. Liverani is correct to state that religion should not be considered an additional ideological element in its own right because the supreme god Aššur is the hypostasis of Assyrian kingship,<sup>137</sup> but this view applies only to the

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**130** Tadmor 1977; later Hayim Tadmor 1997 even argued for legitimately using the term “propaganda,” and while I follow him in the several steps of his argument, I still consider the term distortive and will avoid it throughout the book.

**131** Tadmor 1983; 1997.

**132** Liverani 1979.

**133** Mayer 1995.

**134** Lamprichs 1995; Parker 2001; Yamada 2000.

**135** Holloway 2002.

**136** Reade 1979a, 1979b. 1980; Russell 1987, 1991, 1999; Winter 1981; 1983; 1997.

**137** Liverani 1979, 301.

imperial claim of the Assyrian kings as visualized during ritual performances in which the king wore the god Aššur's tiara.<sup>138</sup> Liverani's position does not, however, apply to the ideology dominating the operational and executive aspects of royal agency, which, as I will discuss in this book, is informed above all by the Ninurta mythology.

Assyrian cultural discourse can also not be categorized simply as a Mesopotamian tradition, since Assyria emerges as a distinctive cultural zone in its interaction with Syrian and Anatolian cultures alike. Locating the various strands of tradition in Assyrian cultural discourse while simultaneously demonstrating Assyria's creative power and highly selective formulation of its royal ideology was one of the major challenges of writing this book. Documenting Assyria's construction of its own cultural heritage was further complicated by Assyria's frequent exposure to or provocation of migrations and its continuous cultural interaction with other regions through conquest, trade, and diplomacy. Assyria's geography plays a key role in Assyria's many cross-cultural interactions, as the city of Aššur began its existence as a hub between east and west, north and south, with an economic interest in monopolizing interregional exchanges.<sup>139</sup>

Last but not least, it is necessary to comment on the use of the terms "imperial" and "empire." Assyriologists and non-specialists generally work with a notion of the 'classical' empires of Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia that ties the idea of empire to a compactness of hegemonic control over a large part of the ancient Near East as occurred during the first millennium BCE. In response to the broadening of the term "empire" to include polities such as the empire of Akkad and the Hittite empire, which do not in fact meet the requirement of vast territorial control but were administratively decentralized or lacked an imperial ideology, Mario Liverani suggests that the term be limited to the Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, and Achaemenid polities, "reverting in fact to the 'classical' list as already defined by the ancient (biblical and Classical) authors."<sup>140</sup> Liverani covers many of the key characteristics of empire, such as the development of an expansive and substantial road system with its progressive establishment of a network of communication, centralized economic and administrative systems, extensive military capabilities, and the visual materialization of centralized power in the royal residences through architecture and state ceremonies. Beyond these conventional criteria, Liverani repeatedly stresses the importance of imperial ideology, since "the very same definition of an empire is not

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138 See *Chapter Nine*.

139 On the geography of the Old Assyrian Trade see recently Barjamovic 2008.

140 Liverani 2005, 229.



so much related to the size of the imperial state (which, as we have seen, can be quite small, if projected to a world scale), but to the ideological pretension of universal domain.”<sup>141</sup> As imperial claims, however, both the pretension to universal dominion and the notion of hegemonic control over the entire known *oikoumene* were already familiar to the kings of Akkad. “What follows in Mesopotamian history,” to quote Jean-Daniel Forest, is “nothing but a lengthy variation around the same theme until the advent of larger empires that went far beyond the Mesopotamian region.”<sup>142</sup> It is therefore impossible to distinguish the kings of Akkad from certain Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian kings on the basis of their imperial claims. The fascinating question to pursue is how and at what historical moment the Assyrians created their own imperial language: under which circumstances did Assyrian expansionist politics produce an imperial language with its own particular ideological variations, what were its specific characteristics, and how did Assyrian ideological discourse interact with Assyrian religious tradition on the one hand and with the ideologies of surrounding polities on the other? To answer this question, a distinction will be made between the political entity that constituted the Assyrian “empire” of the first millennium and the “imperial discourse” that informed the expansionist politics of Mesopotamian kings since the Akkad period.

## 1.5 The Mobility of the Scholars and their Role at the Royal Courts

The materialization of power in luxury goods and monumental architecture as signifiers of status and prestige and as vehicles for the communication of ideological claims addressed to peer polities is clear,<sup>143</sup> but this study is primarily text-based. As such, it complements the ground-breaking work of Irene Winter, Zainab Bahrani, and Julian Reade on the ideological elements informing the artistic self-representation of Assyrian and earlier kings.<sup>144</sup> Although it is focused on texts – in monumental form, on clay tablets, or as prescriptions for ritual performances – the central aim of this study is to demonstrate that texts were the product of the scholars working in the entourage of the king. Every statement made in a text or performed in ritual regarding the agency of an individual king or the institution of kingship as a whole represents the hid-

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<sup>141</sup> Liverani 2005, 232.

<sup>142</sup> Forest 2005, 196.

<sup>143</sup> Marcus 1996; Feldman 2006; Gunter 2009.

<sup>144</sup> Bahrani 2003 and 2008; Winter 1981, 1982, 1985, 1986, 1997; Reade 2005.

den voice of these scholars,<sup>145</sup> who crafted ideological responses to the circumstances that prevailed at particular historical moments.

Texts were circulated widely while scribes and scholars themselves moved over significant distances, resulting in a remarkable mobility of knowledge. This mobility was the foundation not only for intertextual creativity, text critique, commentary, and textual control, but also for the reinvention of the literary tradition centered on the figure of the king, as will be discussed at greater length in *Chapter Two*. The circulation of texts was further promoted through the acquisition by Assyrian kings of the private reference libraries of scholars in conquered cities, a practice attested as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century under Tukulti-Ninurta I, who explicitly refers to the seizure of texts from Babylon in the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*.<sup>146</sup> Activities of this kind, documented in the Middle Assyrian period for the kings Tukulti-Ninurta I and Tiglath-Pileser I, account for the presence of Babylonian scholars at the Assyrian court and of bilingual Sumero-Akkadian copies of Sumerian compositions in Aššur and Nineveh, among them *Angimdimma* and *Lugale*. Other Sumerian texts were also known in Assyria, “as is proven by the existence of a monolingual tablet containing a few lines of an Akkadian translation (without the Sumerian original) of the *Instructions of Shuruppak*, which was found at Aššur ... In fact, the so-called library of Tiglath-Pileser I<sup>147</sup> contains at least twenty Sumero-Akkadian bilinguals, including several *emesal* compositions, and Nineveh has yielded a handful of Sumerian compositions as well.”<sup>148</sup> Indeed, the second half of the second millennium BCE sees an internationalization of Akkadian literature, which spread to scribal centers throughout the ancient Near East. Notable examples of this phenomenon are Hattuša in Anatolia, Ugarit and Emar in Syria, and Susa in Elam.<sup>149</sup>

Scholarly mobility could be driven by a number of factors. Of these, the most important one was the collapse of polities, as this resulted in the disappearance of the palatial institutions that functioned as the larger framework in which scribal culture existed. Whatever the specific reason for the migration of scholars, their preeminent role in the process of state formation is truly striking. By way of illustration, Babylonian scribes worked at the court of Hattuša precisely during the period when Hittite scribal traditions were being shaped around 1600 BCE. At this point the *Narām-Sîn Epic*, one of the narratives regarding the Old Akkadian kings that emerged during the Old Babylonian peri-

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145 Machinist 2003b.

146 Foster 2005, 315.

147 For the discussion of Tiglath-Pileser’s library see Chapter 6.3.

148 Rubio 2009, 42 with reference to Alster 2005, 48, 207 and Cooper 1971–72, 1–2.

149 Rubio 2009, 42–43.

od in Mesopotamia, made its way into Anatolia in the form of *KBo* 19 99.<sup>150</sup> The colophon of this tablet is revealing because the text is the product of a scribe who bore an Anatolian name but was nevertheless of Babylonian origin; he chose to name both Babylonian and Hittite deities as the patron deities of his profession as a scholar:

ŠU <sup>m</sup>*Ha-ni-ku-i-li* DUB.SAR  
 DUMU <sup>d</sup>*A-nu*-LUGAL.DINGIR.MEŠ [D]UB.SAR <sup>r</sup>BAL.BI<sup>r</sup>  
 İR <sup>d</sup>*En-bi-lu-lu* <sup>r</sup>dÉ?.A?<sup>r</sup> <sup>d</sup>NIN?.[MAH]  
<sup>d</sup>NIN.É.GAL <sup>d</sup>*A-nim* <sup>d</sup>IM <sup>r</sup>d<sup>r</sup>[ ]  
<sup>d</sup>A.MAL <sup>d</sup>*Aš-šur* <sup>d</sup>Ha-[ ]  
<sup>d</sup>x [ x ].GAL <sup>ù</sup>*I-na-ar-x*[ ]  
*na-ra-a*[m] <sup>d</sup>*Hé<sup>2</sup>-bat<sup>2</sup>* d<sup>r</sup> [ ]

(By) the hand of Hanikuili, the scribe, son of Anu-šar-ilāni, the scribe, its translator, servant of Enbilulu, Ea<sup>2</sup>, Nin[mah?], Belet-ekalli, Anu, Adad, [...], A.MAL, Aššur, Ha[...], [...].gal, and Inar, beloved of Hebat<sup>2</sup>, [...].<sup>151</sup>

This copy of the *Narām-Sîn Epic* does not mark the beginning of an independent Hittite tradition of writing and scholarly education, but rather the beginning of an archival tradition in Hattuša. The cuneiform used by the Hittites during the reign of Hattušili I (1580–1550 BCE) is an Old Babylonian form of writing that is somewhat older than the one used in contemporary Northern Syria, suggesting that initially Hittite kings relied on foreign scribes. Only in the 15<sup>th</sup> century does a distinctively Hittite scholarly scribal tradition appear in Hattuša.<sup>152</sup>

The role of the scholars of the Mitanni state continues to be completely unrecoverable in light of the available evidence, and Mitannian administrative achievements are primarily recognizable in the integration of particular terms in the Assyrian language.<sup>153</sup> Nonetheless, as I will demonstrate in *Chapter 10*, Hurrian cultural discourse as transmitted in the Hittite-Hurrian texts excavated in the libraries of Boghazköy informed Assyrian state ritual, testifying yet again to the agency of scholars and scribes in the production and preservation of cultural memory. At the Assyrian court itself, the formative role of Babylonian scholars is first apparent in the time of Aššur-uballiṭ I (1353–1318 BCE), when we have textual evidence for a Babylonian quarter in Aššur that included a temple of Marduk, and, in ‘its shadow,’ a house owned by the scribe Marduk-

150 Westenholz 1997.

151 Beckman 1983, 103.

152 Klinger 1998.

153 See Chapter 2.2.

nādin-ahhe, son of Marduk-uballit, grandson of Uššur-ana-Marduk.<sup>154</sup> This scribal family belonged to a Babylonian scribal house whose members served as high state officials and as administrators of large provinces, exactly the kind of subjects that the ambitious Assyrian kingdom required.<sup>155</sup> In Assyria, Marduk-nādin-ahhe was appointed the ‘scribe of the king’ (*tuṣšar šarre*), a title attested only in the Assyrian capital and only once among the 59 scribes known from the reign of Aššur-uballit. Ninurta-uballissu, ‘scribe of the king’ under Ninurta-apil-ekur (1181–1169 BCE), trained younger scribes, as is made clear by the colophons of cultural texts such as lexical lists, incantations, and mythological texts which refer to his sons or pupils as young scribes (*tuṣšarru šeḫru*).<sup>156</sup> It thus appears that during the Middle Assyrian period the title ‘scribe of the king’ was the predecessor for the title ‘scholar’ (*ummānu*) of the king, which is attested for the first time under Ašarēd-apil-Ekur (1075–1074 BCE). Although it is a historiographic text, the *Tukulti Ninurta Epic*, celebrating the king’s victory over Babylon, mentions collections of tablets brought back from the libraries of Babylonia and thus supports the impression conveyed by the sparse evidence mentioned above for the active building of collections of cultural texts. The first archaeological evidence for such Middle Assyrian libraries stems from various find spots located in the Aššur temple and the Anu-Adad temple.<sup>157</sup> Their value as cultural texts is highlighted by the fact that those found in the Aššur temple were mixed with tablets from a Neo-Assyrian library, indicating a clear interest in preserving collections that might originally have been put together by various different experts.

The findspot in the Anu-Adad temple yielded a large number of Middle Assyrian lexical texts, regulations regarding palace and harem life, Middle Assyrian laws, royal rituals (among them the coronation ritual), hymns, mythical texts, incantations, medical prescriptions, and texts concerning the treatment of horses, the manufacture of perfumes, mathematics, astronomy, and astrology. “Several of the tablets were written by the brothers Marduk-balāssu-ēriš and Bēl-ahha-iddina from a family of scribes, during the decades before the reign of Tiglath-Pileser I, around the middle of the twelfth century BC.”<sup>158</sup> It is not clear whether these tablets originally belonged to various private libraries.

Another collection of Middle Assyrian tablets has been unearthed in the western corner of the Old Palace. These tablets are remnants of a library that

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154 Wiggermann 2008, 203.

155 Wiggermann 2008, 205 with text no. 3 and 207.

156 Jakob 2003, 256 ff.

157 Maul 2003.

158 Pedersén 1998, 83.

probably belonged to exorcists in the service of the king. They represent five tablets that are all listed in the *Exorcist's Manual*, the first millennium curriculum for aspiring exorcists. The famous sage and scholar Esagil-kin-apli, who served the Babylonian kings Nebuchadnezzar I and Adad-apla-iddina (12<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century BCE respectively), is named in the *Exorcist's Manual* as its compiler. Accordingly, the Middle Assyrian texts found in the Middle Assyrian palace speak in favor of dating the origin of the manual back to the end of the second millennium BCE,<sup>159</sup> and signal still further the exorcists' involvement in palatial affairs.

To fully understand the role of these intellectuals and experts, it is essential to distinguish between the highly trained scholars whose education encompassed the various disciplines of exorcism, astrology and astronomy,<sup>160</sup> the performance of the cult, and extispicy, and whose broad education is evident in their comprehensive private libraries, and the lower-level practitioners of the same disciplines. Leading scholars served as the chiefs (*rabi*) of different groups of experts employed at the royal court,<sup>161</sup> and their libraries indicate systematic research, the compilation of texts, textual production, and the education of apprentice scholars. Modern scholarship should therefore avoid the strict distinction between a “research” and an “educational” milieu.

The social role of leading scholars consisted of fashioning a *weltanschauung* that reinforced societal hierarchies and legitimized royal authority. Upon the perfection of the sciences of divination in the first millennium, “we are dealing with a sophisticated, well organized and comprehensive system of thought that had largely grown out of the necessity to advise and protect the king in his capacity as the god's earthly representative. It could not have developed as it did without this sort of background.”<sup>162</sup> This book will demonstrate

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**159** Maul 2003, 182; of the five tablets found in the Old Assyrian Palace, the first text seems to have been part of a series with the title “To purify the pen of cows, bulls, sheep and horses,” (Geller 2000, 248 l. 24); the second tablet formed part of the series of the *Mouth Washing ritual* normally performed on a statue or cultic object dedicated to the cult of a divinity (Geller 2000, 244 l. 11). The third tablet belongs to the “(mourning) of the month Dumuzi” also mentioned in the *Exorcist's Manual* (Geller 2000 244 l. 5); the fourth tablet belongs to the Series “To undo a curse” (NAM.ÉRIM.BÚR.RU.DA, Geller 2000, 244 l. 12); and the fifth tablet dealing with dry rot affecting a house belongs to the series of the Namburbi Rituals “warding off an evil” (Geller 2000, 248 l. 29).

**160** On the relationship between the two disciplines which in modern times are split into two categories with completely different connotations, one being considered a progressive science, the other as pure superstition, see Parpola 1993a, 47.

**161** Parpola 1993a, 52.

**162** Parpola 1993a, 56.

that such complexity can indeed be traced back much further in time. Further, it will establish that the great achievement of first millennium Assyrian ideological discourse lies in the sophisticated integration of all media to produce a coherent and persuasive royal image that could be reproduced in any context, where one element of this discourse could trigger the entire narrative of power in the mind of its audience.

Within the political, bureaucratic, and religious social strata of ancient Near Eastern society, leading scholars can be regarded as the “intellectuals” of their time; they shaped the *weltanschauung* and the perception of the king’s *body politic*, compiled the religious, historical, juridical and lexical knowledge, expounded ritual and religious texts, and determined the thought patterns for the ideological education of the bureaucratic elite. As such, scholars acted not only as the ideological custodians of the central institutions of temple and palace. Rather, by reaffirming, transmitting, and modifying inherited social, cultural, and political traditions, scholars also fulfilled authoritative and power-exercising functions on the higher levels of state administration. They acted as personal agents, counselors, and tutors to the crown prince and king and their advice was sought perpetually in all state affairs. Hence, beyond formulating the ideological basis for royal authority, scholars were also directly involved in the exercise of authority in ways that reached beyond their particular skills and expertise as astrologer, exorcist, and diviner.

The sensitive relationship between the king and his scholars is evident in Assyrian royal inscriptions and letters. These shed light on the efforts of kings to maintain absolute superiority in decision-making. Despite the fact that leading scholars acted as personal counselors to the king and were crucial to the ideological operation of empire, even “those lucky scholars ... were by no means freed of economic worries.”<sup>163</sup> They were not paid regularly but lived from occasional and regular(?) gifts and the leftovers (*rīhātu*) of the king’s table. Urad-Gula, for example, started his career as a “deputy of the ‘Chief Physician’ under Sennacherib (... , 681 B.C.), continued as a court exorcist under Esarhaddon (...) but lost his position at court after the accession of Ashurbanipal,”<sup>164</sup> as indicated by one of his letters:

<sup>13</sup> May the king (=Ashurbanipal),<sup>165</sup> my lord heed the case of his servant, let the king see the whole situation! Initially, in (the days of) the king’s father (=Esarhaddon), I was a poor man, son of a poor man, a dead dog, a vile and limited person. He lifted me up from

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<sup>163</sup> Parpola 1987.

<sup>164</sup> Parpola 1987, 269 with references.

<sup>165</sup> My added explanation for the reader.

the dung heap; I got to receive gifts from him, and my name was mentioned among men of good fortune. I used to enjoy generous ‘leftovers’; intermittently, he used to give me a mule [or] an ox, and yearly I earned a mina or two of silver.

<sup>19</sup> [In the days] of my lord’s crownprincehood I received ‘leftovers’ with your exorcists; I stood [at] the window openings, keeping watch; all the days that I spent in his service I guarded his privileges, I did not enter the house of a eunuch (<sup>10</sup>SAG) or a courtier (*ša ziqni* = private quarters of the palace) without his permission. I was looked upon as one who eats lion’s *morsels*, I appeased your god. Now, following his father, the king has added to the good name he had established, but I have not been treated in accordance with my deeds; I have suffered as never before, and given up the ghost.

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<sup>31</sup> If it is befitting that first-ranking scholars and (their) assistants receive mules, (surely) I should be granted one donkey; like[wise], (as) oxen are apportioned in Tebet (X), I too should [...] one ox!

<sup>34</sup> Two or three times within a month three to four [...] are give[n] to [...];

<sup>35</sup> [even ... an ap]prentice [of the] assistant [... ge]ts [... And] enjoys [a sh]leep [...]; but [me], [what (compensation) do I d]raw, or for what pur[pose do I w]ork?<sup>166</sup>

Scribal complaints are numerous. Thus the chief diviner complains to the king:

<sup>6</sup> The father of the king, my lord, gave me 10 homers of cultivated land in Hallahu. For 14 years I had the usufruct of the land, and nobody disputed it with me. (But) now the governor of Barhalzi has come and mistreated the farmer, plundered his house and appropriated my land.

<sup>17</sup> The king, my lord, knows that I am a poor man, that I keep the watch of the king, my lord, and am guilty of no negligence within the palace. Now I have been deprived of my field. I have turned to the king: may the king do me justice, may I not die of hunger!<sup>167</sup>

Towards the end of the eighth century BCE, the Assyrian palace was the only institution apart from the temples that was able to support scribes on a long-term basis. For this reason, Babylonian scribes are attested either at the Assyrian court or acting on behalf of the Assyrian king in their home towns.<sup>168</sup>

## 1.6 The Scholars’ Literary Production at the Assyrian Court

Let us return to the question of innovation and tradition and Assyria’s role in the production of a cultural discourse that was posed at the beginning of this chapter. A key factor for understanding the tension between the two is that scholarly knowledge and texts were understood, like the institution of kingship

<sup>166</sup> SAA 10 294.

<sup>167</sup> SAA 10 173.

<sup>168</sup> Fincke 2003/2004, 116.

itself, to have originated in the divine realm. Any innovation or alteration would thus be perceived as a threat to the cosmic plan originally laid out by the gods. The challenge in writing or reconstructing any cultural history is to delineate and illuminate precisely this tension between a culture's overt *weltanschauung*, its actual social-political realization, and the retrospective textualization of the latter.

A key point made by Eisenstadt<sup>169</sup> is that creativity and innovation within a cultural discourse can only thrive on the foundations of a long-lived tradition. Accordingly, our specific concern with the discourse of royal ideology requires an understanding of the perpetual reconceptualization or reinvention of tradition as “variations upon received themes” rather than as products of originality.<sup>170</sup> Tradition accounts for the longevity of certain themes over vast chronological and geographical expanses. In the particular case of Assyrian ideological discourse, tradition also accounts for the fluidity and intertextuality of texts, which resulted in the creation of new text genres revolving around the figure of the king, namely the royal hymns and royal epics of the Middle Assyrian period and the letters of gods and royal reports to Aššur of the Neo-Assyrian period. Idioms in the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic* reveal not only close intertextual links with the language of treaties and diplomacy, with penitential psalms and laments, with hymns and royal inscriptions, and with heroic tales,<sup>171</sup> but also anticipate the major themes of much later Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions. *Sargon II's Eighth Campaign to Urartu* “is remarkable for its long, complicated sentences, elaborate style, intricate figures of speech, and its grandiose conception.”<sup>172</sup> Both Sargon II's building account of a palace in his new residence at Khorsabad<sup>173</sup> and Sennacherib's report of the battle at Halule<sup>174</sup> draw on the language and imagery of *Enūma Eliš* and other myths, epics, heroic poems, and former royal inscriptions. The intertextual connections between the *Myth of the Creation of Man and God* and *Ashurbanipal's Coronation Hymn* are evident, while a section of Esarhaddon's *Apology* likewise reads as a reformulation of the same myth.<sup>175</sup> Although royal inscriptions were concerned primarily with demonstrating that the king had met the expectations of royal office – i.e., that as the steward of the god Aššur the king had secured the social and cosmic

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169 Eisenstadt 1986 and 1992.

170 Greenblatt 2005, 15.

171 Foster 2005, 298.

172 Foster 2007, 91.

173 Van de Mieroop 1999c and Chapter 4.6.

174 Weissert 1997.

175 RINAP 4 no. 1 ii 30–39 and for the myth see Chapter 5.3.



order and expanded the borders of Assyria – the royal reports to the gods and letter of the gods to the king served to sanctify royal deeds, which involved sacrileges such as fratricide, parricide, and the destruction of the main sanctuary of the enemy.<sup>176</sup> Despite their intertextual links with the royal inscriptions, then, royal reports to the gods and letter of the gods to the king must be seen in light of their particular function of sanctifying the king's deeds.

The Sumero-Babylonian impact on Assyrian culture was immense, as is clear from the fact that all official literature was basically written in Babylonian literary dialects and that the Assyrian pantheon was permeated by divinities of Sumero-Babylonian origin. Nevertheless, the Assyrians were self-conscious and creative in their adaptation of Sumero-Babylonian traditions and in their own cultural production. Assyrian particularism is evident in the continuity of certain elements within Assyrian ideological discourse, “despite its various twists and turns.”<sup>177</sup> This is especially true with regard to the Assyrian endeavor to exalt Aššur over the Babylonian god Marduk, first as the “Assyrian Enlil” under Tukultī-Ninurta I and then through Aššur's equation with the ancestor god AN.ŠÁR in the Assyrian version of *Enūma Eliš* under Sennacherib. Beyond this theological discourse revolving around the supreme divinity of Assyria, the mythology of the warrior god Ninurta and the king's fulfillment of the role of Ninurta served as the most relevant mythological framework for the royal inscriptions and royal ideology in general (see *Chapters Six and Seven*). All of these text categories ultimately emphasize divine legitimation and divine support. While the institution of kingship was never questioned, individual monarchs went to great lengths to justify their occupation of the throne.

## 1.7 Approaches and Method

Inspired by what Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht once called the “presence effects and meaning effects,”<sup>178</sup> – i.e. presencing as a practice of producing interpretation and meaning – this book intends to investigate the “materialities of communication”<sup>179</sup> in Assyria by considering Assyrian material culture and texts in terms of both their sign value and their practical value in a system of agency.<sup>180</sup> While for Gumbrecht the two dimensions of experience and interpretation re-

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176 See lastly Pongratz-Leisten 1999.

177 Machinist 1984–85, 361.

178 Gumbrecht 2004.

179 Gumbrecht 2004, 11 and 2012.

180 Warnier 2006, 187.

main incongruous, I follow the notion of “experiential realism,” or experientialism as developed in the field of cognitive linguistics.<sup>181</sup> In this view, bodily experience has a decisive impact on linguistic encoding and provides the basis for the construction of language.<sup>182</sup> From the perspective of cognitive linguistics it is the common experience and the cultural memory of a community that allows for the production of meaning. Accordingly, I explore how religion and *weltanschauung* translated into the ideological discourse of the Assyrian kings and were mediated in text, image, and ritual. While visual media will occasionally be discussed, the primary focus in this study is on the media of text and ritual and their impact on and negotiation of a complex of meanings that informed Assyrian royal ideology.<sup>183</sup> As such, I investigate the ideological strategies for the integration of religious and political elites and their interests and activities into the organizational system of the monarchical power structure.

This book does not adhere to or derive from any single “school of thought.” Some major trends have, however, had an impact on my work in recent years. One of these is the attempt of Stephen Greenblatt’s school of *New Historicism* to regard text in the larger sense of discourse and institutions, rather than distinguishing rigidly between what lies within the text and what lies outside:<sup>184</sup> any cultural product, then, is seen as “accumulation, transformation, representation, and communication of social energies and practices.”<sup>185</sup> Further, the works of Hayden White,<sup>186</sup> Wolfgang Iser,<sup>187</sup> Reinhart Koselleck,<sup>188</sup> and Jörn Rüsen<sup>189</sup> have been crucial for defining my approach to how to read ancient royal discourse in light of the modern truth claim. Their work has also helped clarify for me how ancient royal discourse should be situated within its respective historical context and in relation to the conceptual constructs determined by religion and *weltanschauung*.<sup>190</sup> The works of Hans Blumenberg,<sup>191</sup> Walter Burkert,<sup>192</sup> and Gerard Genette<sup>193</sup> have, in turn, been invaluable

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**181** Lakoff and Johnson 1980.

**182** Drewer 2003. For a constructive critique of Gumbrecht’s approach arguing to combine both these dimensions see Kreyer 2012.

**183** Gumbrecht 2004, 11.

**184** Greenblatt 1990.

**185** Greenblatt 1990, 15.

**186** White 1973 and 1999.

**187** Iser 1993.

**188** Koselleck 1979 transl. 2004.

**189** Rüsen 2005

**190** Hume 1999.

**191** Blumenberg 1985.

**192** Burkert 1982.

**193** Genette 1997.

in the formulation of my thoughts on the intertextual connections between royal inscriptions and mythic texts and heroic poems. Their work has also been useful in establishing that myth should be conceptualized as an analytical category and referential system rather than as a primitive way of thought.

Informed by Bruce Lincoln's definition of religion, this book investigates all four of religion's domains – discourse, practice, community, and institution<sup>194</sup> – and seeks to reveal the dynamics between religion and ideological discourse, between the persistence of tradition on the one hand and innovation or modification in ever-changing circumstances on the other.<sup>195</sup>

Approaches in cognitive religion<sup>196</sup> and in anthropological theory of art<sup>197</sup> have also proven fruitful in identifying the character of the agency of the secondary agents of the king.<sup>198</sup> These secondary agents, among them the royal insignia, the royal statue, the royal garments, and the divine tiara of Aššur, emerge as extremely powerful agents during ritual performances and in the imagery of royal steles and reliefs, serving to manifest the king's permanent presence throughout the territories he sought to control.

Finally, I must stress that this book, although diachronic in its approach, does not intend to be exhaustive in any way. Rather, the emphasis is on analyzing certain cultural strategies and key metaphors or literary tropes to convey a sense of the malleability, as well as the continuity and discontinuity, of tradition in Mesopotamia in general and Assyria in particular. To that end, this study will exploit every manner of source in order to assess the notion of rulership as it developed over the course of Mesopotamian history and to decode the ideological discourse produced in Assyria during the second and first millennia BCE. Additionally, it is hoped that this book will also sensitize the reader to the fact that our modern periodizations and our thinking in terms of ethnicities and political borders serves to hamper rather than to advance our understanding of the vital moments of change and re-invention of Mesopotamian tradition.

Assyria represents an ideal object of study in two respects: 1. for investigating the dynamics between religion, tradition, and ideological discourse, and 2. for exploring the dynamics of ancient Mesopotamian cultural discourse, since Assyria's constant exposure to surrounding civilizations and to the various cul-

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**194** Lincoln 2006, 5 ff.

**195** Burke 1997 and 2004.

**196** Boyer 1994, 2001; Tremlin 2006.

**197** Gell 1998; Osborne and Tanner 2007.

**198** On the notion of secondary agents as part of divine agency see Pongratz-Leisten 2011a, 140–152 and Chapter 9.7.

tural groups within its territory is evident in every medium of its cultural production. By treating the Sumero-Babylonian and the Syro-Anatolian spheres equally, I will go beyond the concept of a “Greater Mesopotamia” as it has been developed in scholarship to date; so far, modern scholarship has incorporated only the Hābūr triangle and Western Syria into its larger picture.<sup>199</sup> However, the royal vision of Assyria shows the impact of a much broader geographic range, entirely consistent with its aspirations to universal rule. It is to this range of cultures and traditions that I now turn.

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**199** Buccellati & Kelly-Buccellati 1980, 1-2; Charpin 2004, 30.

## 2 The Dynamics of Cultural Regions and Traditions in Mesopotamia and the Rise of Assyrian Cultural Discourse

### 2.1 Preliminary Remarks: Studying Aššur's Early Beginnings

Reconstituting the *weltanschauung* of ancient Assyrian monarchy is complicated both by the frustrating shortage of primary sources and by the skeptical attitude of some scholars, who assign great importance to gaps in transmission and to the scarcity of sources allowing direct historical reconstruction. There is certainly a dearth of written sources for the early history of Aššur. Nevertheless, the origins of Assyrian royal ideology can be discerned already in the third millennium on the basis of archaeological evidence from the Early Dynastic period and inscriptions from the ensuing Old Akkadian (ca. 2340–2120 BCE) and Ur III periods (ca. 2119–2000 BCE). Consequently, I would like to begin this study by establishing the contours of Assyrian royal discourse as it existed *before* the Old Babylonian period, i.e. before the reign of Šamši-Adad I, who is well known for his commemorative inscriptions and building activities in Aššur, and, although not of Assyrian origin, was a pivotal figure in the formulation of the key metaphors of Assyrian royal ideology.

Granting Aššur space for a cultural discourse of its own as early as the end of the third millennium BCE requires a substantial rethinking of our paradigms of what the term ‘local’ signifies and what exactly the ‘predominant’ culture of Sumer constitutes. We need to carefully consider the intercultural dynamics that operated between the Upper Tigris and Upper Euphrates regions and southern Mesopotamia,<sup>1</sup> including the northern Syrian, Hurrian, Akkadian, and Sumerian traditions. We must be aware that ethno-linguistic terms are of limited value when attempting to define an ideological discourse that was shaped by the presence and under the influence of a multitude of cultures.<sup>2</sup> Movement and interaction of peoples along trade routes had shaped the cultures of the ancient Near East for thousands of years before the appearance of written texts. As Gil Stein writes, “of the many trade networks that have so far been traced, the oldest is the so-called Piedmont route, which runs along the foothills of the Zagros and Taurus range and connects Elam with north Syria

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1 Recent excavations at Urkeš ([www.urkesh.org](http://www.urkesh.org)), Tell Brak, Tell Beydar and Tell Huēra have completely changed the picture; see further Frangipane 1993; Stein 1999, 112–116.

2 For this discussion with regard to Sumer and Akkad see Postgate 1994; Matthews 1997; Stein 2001.

and Southeast Turkey. The obsidian trade accounts for early cultural exchange between the Zagros and Taurus mountains ... Later, the Zagros played a central role in the westward distribution of raw materials such as lapis lazuli and a nickel-rich arsenic copper, which began during the late Ubaid period and peaked during the late Uruk period.”<sup>3</sup> It is probably along this trade route that Sumerians and later Hurrians originating in the regions of Armenia infiltrated the alluvial plain of Mesopotamia. Although this route did not directly incorporate the city of Aššur, it did pass through Nineveh.

Aššur's ideological discourse developed in the context of cultural interaction between north and south that dated back at least to the Uruk Period. Archaeological evidence demonstrating the development of organizational structures and ideological elements in the northern regions that were similar to those known from southern Mesopotamia,<sup>4</sup> however, underlines the necessity for a reconsideration of “the colonial phenomenon” of the Uruk expansion. This expansion appears to have been more limited than previously thought; it followed the course of the Tigris and the Euphrates and only partially involved the northern region as a whole. Local centers seem to have largely taken over the management of trade by expanding their control over the circulation of primary products towards the end of the Uruk period and in subsequent decades, as demonstrated by evidence from Arslantepe and Tell Brak.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, archaeologists have reacted against the Sumerian paradigm, i.e. the view that Sumerian culture was predominant, retaining instead a “neutral attitude vis-à-vis geographical predominance of one area over another.”<sup>6</sup> Be that as it may, visual and later textual media demonstrate that essential tropes linked with the office of kingship were developed in the highly stratified and socially diversified society of the ancient city of Uruk during the Uruk IV (3500–3200) and Djemdat Nasr periods (3200–2900 BCE). These tropes became the cornerstones of Mesopotamian royal tradition and were reiterated and reformulated in various regions and periods throughout the entire history of the ancient Near East.

Further, discoveries regarding the early urban culture of the Hurrians in Urkeš<sup>7</sup> – situated at the foothills of the Țur-‘Abdin – point to the existence of yet another cultural horizon, namely that of the Hurrians. Recent excavations

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3 Stein 2001, 159.

4 Frangipane 1993, 153.

5 Frangipane 1993, 159.

6 Buccellati/Kelly-Buccellati p. 11. I would like to thank both Marily-Kelly-Buccellati and Giorgio Buccellati for generously sharing their research with me before publication.

7 For the publications of the excavations see [www.urkesh.org](http://www.urkesh.org).

in Urkeš suggest that Hurrian culture co-existed with Sumerian culture while retaining its distinctiveness as a northern urban tradition.<sup>8</sup> These excavations also correct the idea that there was a period of ruralization in northern Syria during the second half of the third millennium,<sup>9</sup> as the monumental temple terrace in Urkeš can be safely dated to the Uruk period and has much in common with the temple terrace in Tell Huēra.<sup>10</sup> During the Akkad period at the latest, the “Khabur triangle was already dotted with Hurrian towns ... and the process of state formation was well under way, while further north, the mineral-rich region of eastern Turkey and southern Armenia (the “Upper Lands”), whence the Hurrians presumably came, was politically more advanced still.”<sup>11</sup> By the Ur III period the Hurrian presence extended from the Zagros Mountains through to Ṭur-‘Abdin, and from Subartu towards Ebla. This presence had a major impact on political and cultural life in the polities of Upper Mesopotamia.<sup>12</sup>

Eva von Dassow has discussed the phenomenon of “Hurrianization,” i.e. the spread of Hurrian language and Hurrian people in northern Mesopotamia and Syria during the late third and the second Millennium BCE,<sup>13</sup> positing that

most likely the land and language were called Ḫurri and ‘Hurrian’ after the self-designation of a population inhabiting that area and speaking that language, though the application of the designation ‘Hurrian’ to people is not attested until the mid-second millennium. In other words, it may be posited that the name Ḫurri (and its derivatives) originated from the designation of a particular group of people, putatively an ethnic group, and that this people’s designation was then applied to their land and language. It does not follow, even if Hurrian did originally denote an ethnic group, that the subsequent spread of the Hurrian language testifies to the multiplication and spread of ethnically Hurrian people. The increase in evidence for the use of Hurrian language, in onomastics, borrowed lexemes in other languages, the writing of texts in Hurrian, and so forth, during the time frame indicated above, may in part be just that, an increase in evidence, while in part it may be attributed to acculturation.<sup>14</sup>

Although I agree that onomastic choices and the use of a particular language do not necessarily indicate a particular ethnic identity and can instead be at-

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**8** G. Buccellati and M. Kelly-Buccellati, “... Nor North: The Urkesh Temple Terrace” manuscript p. 12

**9** Akkermans/Schwartz 2003, 210.

**10** Buccellati/Kelly-Buccellati 2009, 66. While earlier dating reached back into the ED III period, Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati told me in a conversation that the terrace can now be dated to the Uruk period, June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2011.

**11** Stein 2001, 153 f. with reference to Steinkeller 1998, 94–96.

**12** Dolce 1999; Archi 2013.

**13** von Dassow 2008, 68–90.

**14** von Dassow 71 f.

tributed to acculturation, there did exist bureaucratic traditions, myths, and ritual practices that – in addition to being written in Hurrian – are specifically designated as “Hurrian” by other ethnic groups. Hurrian divinities served as carriers of a Hurrian identity, but were also adopted and adapted by Hittite and Assyrian cults. In other words, while any cultural practice can in theory be the product of acculturation, the fact that it is associated with a particular ethnic identity presupposes the existence of such an identity at some point in history. In our particular case, there is a clearly discernible notion of a distinctly Hurrian tradition within the Mesopotamian *weltanschauung*. Throughout this study I will return to the importance of Hurrian cultural discourse for understanding some of the choices made by Assyrian kings with regard to their presentation of royal ideology through the media of text, image, and ritual.

Equally important to cultural developments in the north was the rapid political expansion of the city state of Kiš during the Early Dynastic period I. The notion of a strong ‘Kišite Tradition’ reflecting the political power and cultural importance of Kiš was first advanced by Ignace Gelb<sup>15</sup> and has gained further traction on account of an alabaster plaque discussed recently by Piotr Steinkeller.<sup>16</sup> This plaque – which clearly has ceremonial purpose – lists large numbers of people of cities that were taken by Kiš in the course of its territorial conquests. These included cities in northern Babylonia, the Diyala region, what later became Assyria, and the trans-Tigridian territories.<sup>17</sup> It is still unclear whether Kiš exercised control over all these areas. The numbers are unusually high, and rather than representing a list of prisoners as suggested by Piotr Steinkeller, it could also be one of the first census lists to exercise control over people who could potentially be levied for major irrigation work and building projects. It was during this time that the title ‘King of Kiš’ became so prestigious that it acquired the meaning ‘king of totality.’ During the Early Dynastic period Sumerian cuneiform was adopted by the scribal circles of Kiš, who “modified it quite significantly by introducing new signs and creating new phonetic values. The use of the Kišite cuneiform spread throughout northern Babylonia, eventually reaching Mari, the Hābūr triangle (Tell Beydar), northern Syria (Ebla), and probably many of the places affected by the expansion of Kiš as well.”<sup>18</sup> Moreover, in Kiš it is possible to see the development of an economy in which the palace and private households played a dominant role, in contrast to the south where communal temple households were the norm. As Piotr

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15 Gelb 1977.

16 Steinkeller 2013.

17 Steinkeller 2013, 142.

18 Steinkeller 2013, 147.



Steinkeller notes, the proto-Akkadian society of Kiš was markedly different from that of its southern counterparts, characterized “by a strong presence of tribal organization and the importance of lineages. In accordance with that, the northern kingship was based on descent, unlike that of southern Babylonia, which was (at least in theory) elective, with the ruler being an earthly representative (vicar) of the deity, who was the real owner and master of the city state.”<sup>19</sup>

The eastern Tigridian area around Ešnunna is another distinct cultural center important to the development of Assyrian royal ideology. During the Old Akkadian period and afterwards, this region developed its own ideological discourse – one that has much in common with Nineveh and Aššur on the one hand and Lagaš on the other. With regard to the textual evidence, much attention has been paid to the paleographic distinctions that characterize the cuneiform writing system of the eastern Tigridian area and to the use of lexical texts in its scribal curriculum,<sup>20</sup> but no such paradigm has yet been formulated for eastern Tigridian cultural discourse. While the city of Ešnunna is generally considered Old Babylonian by Mari specialists,<sup>21</sup> use of eastern Tigridian orthography in its texts links the city with the Old Akkadian and Old Assyrian horizons,<sup>22</sup> i.e. the northern Mesopotamian sphere. Accordingly, much attention will be paid to Ešnunna’s cultural discourse and to its interaction with Aššur in order to demonstrate the existence of a particular Tigridian discourse that incorporated a combination of Hurrian, Sumero-Babylonian, and northern Akkadian/Assyrian elements.

As a first step, I discuss the spread of cuneiform writing and scholarly knowledge from southern Mesopotamia in this chapter, and investigate what the dissemination of cuneiform culture implied for the development of typically northern forms of royal ideology. I will discuss the early development of Aššur’s own ideological discourse in *Chapter Three*. My ultimate goal is to demonstrate that the cultural discourse developed in the Tigridian and northern Syrian regions emerged in response to the expansionist empire of Akkad. Although this discourse absorbed some elements of imperial Akkadian ideology, it was also formulated and adapted to suit local needs and interests. The tensions outlined here, then, are not merely geographical, dividing between the South and the North, but also cultural, differentiating between use of the cune-

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<sup>19</sup> Steinkeller 2013, 147.

<sup>20</sup> See below.

<sup>21</sup> Charpin and Ziegler 2003.

<sup>22</sup> Whiting 1987.

iform writing system, the inferred transfer of Sumerian tradition, and indigenous cultural expression.

## 2.2 North-South Interaction and the Syro-Anatolian Impact on Assyrian Culture

Southern and northern Mesopotamia were closely linked historically through intense intercultural contact that included trade, warfare, diplomatic intermarriage, and mutual assistance in times of trouble. The two regions differed, however, not only in their languages and in the traditions that determined the particular choices they made with regard to their cultural and ideological discourse, but also in their ecological and economic conditions.<sup>23</sup> Northern Mesopotamia sits in the eastern part of the 'Fertile Crescent' that stretches from Palestine through northern Syria and northern Mesopotamia to south-east Iran, and is thus part of the dry-farming zone. In contrast, the flat alluvial plain of southern Mesopotamia depends on artificial irrigation, which helps account for why settlements first appeared later in the south than in the north. The rise of urban centers in the south emphasized social stratification, labor specialization, and technological innovation in tandem with the invention and development of writing.<sup>24</sup> While it is true that in later times certain Assyrian kings made a concerted effort to collect the body of cultural texts from Babylonia and build universal libraries housed in royal palaces,<sup>25</sup> Assyrian culture, on both its operational and ideological levels, exhibits a range of strategies that link it as much with the Syro-Anatolian and the eastern Tigridian cultural horizons as with the Sumero-Babylonian tradition of southern Mesopotamia.

Cultural interaction between Assyria and the Syro-Anatolian and eastern Tigridian cultural horizons has mainly been investigated with regard to the figurative language of visual images.<sup>26</sup> There are nevertheless numerous other instances of common cultural features and practices. The eponym dating system, for instance, was probably introduced to Mari by Šamši-Adad I following his conquest of Aššur. Like Inanna in southern Mesopotamia, the goddess

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<sup>23</sup> Galter 2007.

<sup>24</sup> Cooper 1989; Glassner 2003; Liverani 2006; see Green 1981 and Powell 1981.

<sup>25</sup> For its ideological expression see the two almost identical copies of a letter probably written by Ashurbanipal asking the governor of Borsippa to collect all kinds of literary and scholarly tablets in Babylonian collections for inclusion in the palace libraries with the help of Ashurbanipal's scholars, BM 25676 and BM 25678, CT 22 1, see Lieberman 1990.

<sup>26</sup> Opificius 1964; Mayer Opificius 1984; Winter 1982; Matthiae 1989.

Ištar-Šauška of Nineveh seems to have fulfilled a key function in the empowerment of the king through the divine world. Ištar-Šauška assumed such a role by the Akkadian period if not earlier, and rose to the top of the Hurrian pantheon at the side of Teššub during the second Millennium BCE, subsequently becoming an essential figure for both Hittite and Neo-Assyrian kingship.<sup>27</sup> With regard to royal titulary, the adoption of the title ‘sun’ for the king is particularly interesting. Hitherto considered an adoption from Babylonia, the title was already used by a king from Nagar/Tell Brak in northern Syria following Sargonic control over the region. This early use of the title was probably related to its use by the kings of the Ur III period.<sup>28</sup> Still another instance of common cultural practice is the inclusion of natural phenomena as divine witnesses to treaties, a characteristic of supra-regional and international law in the Syro-Anatolian realm that resurfaces in the Assyrian *tākultu*-ritual.<sup>29</sup> Cross-cultural fertilization resulting from interaction between Hurrians, Hittites, and Assyrians is also apparent in a Hittite prayer within a ritual text that is addressed to the goddess Ištar. This prayer invokes Ištar’s hypostases as they exist not only in all the cult centers of Hatti and in the cities of Syria, but also as they exist in Aššur and Nineveh, the latter appearing at the very top of the list:

§ 4 [...] He says as follows “... O Ištar [...] I will keep [...]ing and for you ... [If you are in Nineveh] then come from Nineveh. (But?) if you are [in] R[imuši, then come from Rimuši]. If you are in Dunta, then come from Du[nta].

§ 5 (O Ištar, [if you are] in [Mittanni], then come from Mitanni. [If you are in ..., then come from ... If you are in Dunippa then [come from] Duni[ppa, if you are in Ugarit] then com[e] from Ugarit, ...Alalhaz, ...Amurra, ...Ziduna, ...Nuḫašša, ...Kulzila, ...Zunzurḫa, ...Aššur, ...Kašga, ...Alašiya, ...Ālziya, ...Papanḫa, ...Ammaḫa, ...Karkiya, ...Arzauwa, ...Maša, ...Kuntara, ...Ura, ...Luḫma, ...Partaḫuina, ...Kašula, ...

§ 6 If (you are) in the rivers and streams [then come from there]. If for the cowherd and shepherds [you ...] and (you are) among them, then come away. If (you are) among [the ...], if you are with the Sun Goddess of the Earth and the Primor[dial Gods], then come from those.

§ 7 Come away from these countries. For the king, the queen (and) the princes bring life, health, streng[th], longevity, contentment?, obedience (and) vigor, (and) to the land of hattī growth of crops (lit., grain), vines, cattle, sheep (and) humans, *šalḫitti*-, *manitti*- and *annari*-.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Beckman 1998; Meinhold 2009, 168 ff.

<sup>28</sup> Inscription of the Hurrian king Talpuš-atili from Tell Brak, Eidem, Finkel & Bonechi 2001, 102 and discussion below.

<sup>29</sup> See *Chapter Ten*.

<sup>30</sup> KUB 15.35 +KBo 2.9 (CTH 716.1); Collins in Hallo, *Context of Scripture*, vol. 1, 1997, 164–165. This text is particularly interesting with regard to the transmission of tradition. Its curse formula is directed against the enemy and refers to Inanna/Ištar, reversing gender roles in exactly

Commonalities in Anatolian, Assyrian, and even Israelite ritual practice are further evident in divination with stones (cleromancy or psephomancy),<sup>31</sup> while the Hurrian underpinnings of Assyrian state rituals are discussed in *Chapter Ten*.<sup>32</sup> Anatolian-Assyrian interaction in the religious sphere is apparent already in the Old Assyrian period in Assyrian merchant documents from Kültepe/Kaneš that refer to the Anatolian goddess Anna, who is always linked with other goddesses associated with the sea or with rivers.<sup>33</sup> Commonalities between Assyrian and Hurrian religious practices are evident in the use of the *bīt hamri*, which was a sacred precinct. The *bīt hamri* is attested in the trading center of Kanesh near ‘the gate of the god,’ where oaths were sworn between the representatives of the local government and representatives of the merchants from Aššur by the dagger of the god Aššur.<sup>34</sup> A *bīt hamri* associated with the Hurrian storm god is attested in Old Babylonian Šaduppum, which by that time was part of the Tigridian kingdom of Ešnunna and appears to have had a strong Hurrian presence.<sup>35</sup> It reappears in Aššur in a Middle Assyrian ritual that includes a procession of the storm god Adad to various temples, city gates, and the *bīt hamri* itself.<sup>36</sup> Adad assumed a particular role as guardian of oaths, and it is in this context that the *bīt hamri* played an important role.<sup>37</sup> “The importance of Adad within the traditional pantheon of the city of Aššur is also highlighted by the fact that the ancient institution of choosing a year-eponym was performed before Aššur and Adad.<sup>38</sup> Another Middle Assyrian ritual, KAR 139, revolves around an object called the Mouth-Tongue (KA.EME) and a supplicant. As I will discuss in *Chapter Ten* such objects are attested in Hittite rituals. The site where the ritual of KAR 139 is performed also links it to Hurrian ritual practice, as it takes place in the *bīt ēqi* in Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta.

It is important to mention the so-called Assyro-Mitannian tablets in this context, as this group of magic-medical texts found at Hattuša point to close

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the same fashion as Iddin-Dagan A (Böck 2004) and the Ištar-Louvre text, see Groneberg 1997; on the ritual see further Haas and Wilhelm 1974, 57; Archi 1977, Miller 2004, 374–375.

31 Horowitz and Hurowitz 1992; Archi 1974; Finkel 1995.

32 See *Chapter 10.6*.

33 Hirsch 1961, 27; Archi 2002, 49, 27.

34 Veenhof 2003, 436.

35 For the *bīt hamri* attested in Akkadian, Hurrian and Hittite sources see Schwemer 2001, 247–256.

36 For the discussion of the ritual see *Chapter 10.2*.

37 Schwemer 2008, 139 and 2001, 323–327.

38 As Schwemer 2008, 140 fn. 45 points out, “evidence for this comes from the Neo-Assyrian period (Shalmaneser III), but there is little doubt that it reflects practices already well-established in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> mill.” With reference to Larsen 1976, 211–214.

interaction between Mitannian and Assyrian scribes during the fourteenth century BCE. These texts have been labeled Assyro-Mitannian because of their mixture of Mitannian and Assyrian sign forms.<sup>39</sup> Their language is Standard Babylonian, but they include a number of irregular forms and (Hurro)-Assyrianisms that reveal the scribe's partial familiarity with the Babylonian milieu.<sup>40</sup> The origin of these texts is unknown but it has been suggested that they hail from Assyria when it was still dominated by Mitanni. The content, language, and syllabary of the tablets clearly point to an ultimately Babylonian origin for these texts, which among others include an incantation against stillbirth, an eliminatory ritual of the marriage of the *eṭemmu*, and a ritual for the expulsion of the watchful demon (*hajjātu*) and the *rābiṣu*-demon.<sup>41</sup> For the purpose of this book the importance of these texts lies not so much in their presence in Bogazköy, to which they must have been brought as booty in the course of some military campaign probably by Suppiluliuma I. Rather, their significance lies in the fact that they point to close cultural interaction between Assyrians and Mitanni during the time of Mitannian dominance over Aššur and demonstrate that there was Assyrian scholarly activity before it appears in known texts from the city of Aššur. It is scholarly activity of this kind that explains the elaborate style of the *Adad-nirāri I Epic*, the first literary text of the Middle Assyrian period to have come down to us, which – despite its fragmentary state of preservation – bears the typical traits of Assyrian epic literature and attests to a fully developed genre thus evidencing the high education of its author.

Equally important is the fact that Mitanni appears to have made use of a system of territorial administration that divided land into provinces, as is the case for Assyria in the Middle Assyrian period. This system likely originated in the Old Babylonian period, as it is in texts from Mari and in Middle Assyrian texts that the term *halṣ/zu* designates a province.<sup>42</sup> *Termini technici* in the Assyrian language for military or administrative officials such as *šiluhlu*, *gelzuhlu* and *hassihlu* are in turn derived from the Hurrian language, as is demonstrated by the presence of the Hurrian suffix *-ohlu*.<sup>43</sup> These *termini technici* attest to

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39 Schwemer 1998, 50–51; Weeden 2012 even labeled these tablets Middle Assyrian because of their strong similarity with Assyrian script.

40 Schwemer 1998, 47.

41 For an edition of these texts see Schwemer 1998. Further tablets of this kind are also included in Abusch and Schwemer 2011, texts 1.3, 1.5 (*ana pišerti kišpi*), and 2.2 (a collection of anti-witchcraft therapies).

42 Lion 2001. Note that the Middle Assyrian province Qatnu can probably be identified with the Old Babylonian province of Qaṭṭunān, see Llop 2011, 595–596.

43 Postgate 2011, 9.

the persistence and survival of certain Hurrian administrative practices and traditions in the organization of the Middle Assyrian state.

A particularly revealing example of the complexity of cultural transmission within the larger ancient Near Eastern koine is the fact that a person with a Hurrian name held the office of court diviner and the office of the ZABAR-DAB<sub>5</sub> at the court of the Ur III kings, indicating the deep familiarity with and integration in Sumero-Babylonian culture of at least some individuals with Hurrian names – and therefore presumably of Hurrian origin. The court diviner Tahiš-atal appears frequently in the Puzriš-Dagan archive and also in documents from Umma ranging in date from Amar-Sîn to Šu-Sîn.<sup>44</sup> The ZABAR-DAB<sub>5</sub>, who was superior to the chief of the cupbearers and acted as the overseer of the diviners,<sup>45</sup> was responsible both for the administration of offerings for the temple and the royal cult<sup>46</sup> and probably served as adviser to the king. The occupation of such high office by Hurrians suggests that at the end of the third millennium Hurrians were not being marginalized and stereotyped as the ‘Other.’ Rather, they were either highly regarded on account of their religious expertise, which must have been rooted in an urban cultural tradition that was comparable in its complexity to that of southern Mesopotamia, or they were by that point so thoroughly integrated into southern Mesopotamian society that meaningful distinctions between Hurrians and autochthonous populations are not recoverable.

The title ZABAR-DAB<sub>5</sub> remained in use in the late Middle Babylonian period, where it applied to Esagil-kin-apli, scholar of King Adad-apla-iddina (1069–1048 BCE), and reflected a similar range of functions as it did under the Ur III kings.<sup>47</sup> During the Neo-Assyrian period, the first member of the family of exorcists attested at Aššur, Baba-šuma-ibni, is generally described in the genealogical formulas with the title *zabardubbû bît Aššur*, but is once called MAŠ.MAŠ *bît kiššûti*, exorcist of the “House of Might” (i.e. the Aššur temple).<sup>48</sup> Baba-šuma-ibni’s use of the title *zabardubbû* for the office of exorcist is a clear indi-

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<sup>44</sup> Sharlach 2002, 111–113.

<sup>45</sup> See the following dedicatory inscription by the *zabardab* of Shulgi: “Shulgi, the mighty one, king of Ur, king of the four corners of the world: Nanna-zišagal, ..., *zabardab*, chief cupbearer, overseer of the diviners, is your servant. Seal of Nanna-zišagal” (After Sallaberger in Sallaberger and Westenholz 1999, 187).

<sup>46</sup> Sallaberger 1999, 187–88.

<sup>47</sup> Esagil-kin-apli calls himself *zabardabbû* of Ezida thus referring to his organizing and administrative functions regarding the cult of that temple, Finkel 1988, 148–149: 22’; Heeßel 2010, 140; note that in Babylonian during the OB period the *zabardabbû* was an “official of the palace, in a senior military capacity,” see Podany 2002, 121 with reference to CAD Z, 6.

<sup>48</sup> Pedersén 1986, 45 (471).

cation that the exorcist, in addition to organizing the cult of the Aššur temple, also acted as educator of the crown prince and adviser to the king. These functions are independently attested in the correspondence between the king Esarhaddon, the crown prince Ashurbanipal and the exorcist Adad-šumu-ušur, for instance.<sup>49</sup> The cultic aspect of the Assyrian king's position as the chief *šangû* of the supreme god Aššur is a further example of an Assyrian cultural practice that bridges between the Syro-Anatolian and Assyrian cultural realms, as the performance of this office is likewise a prominent role of the Hittite king.<sup>50</sup> I will discuss this point further in *Chapter Five*.

Last but not last one might want to mention Assyrian emulation of Hittite architectural design in the building of their palaces in Nimrud, Khorsabad, and Nineveh. Royal Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III, Sargon, and Sennacherib reveal that these kings were familiar with palatial structures built in the Syro-Hittite, Luwian, and Levantine territories, which were still called after the Hittites. They all recorded the construction of buildings referring either to the *bīt hilāni*-style or that they conceived of their palaces as replica of a palace of the land of Hatti (*tamšil ekal māt Hatti*).<sup>51</sup>

The above survey merely touches upon a few of the most obvious common cultural features and practices linking the Hurrian-Hittite and Assyrian cultural horizons. I will pursue some of them in more depth over the course of this book. Before I do, it is necessary to outline the initial spread of the southern cuneiform tradition towards the north. It is also important in this context to observe the cultural interaction between north and south that resulted from this spread of cuneiform culture in order to sketch in broad strokes a number of tropes that were ultimately incorporated into the rich tapestry of Assyrian royal discourse, particularly during the Middle and Neo-Assyrian periods.

### 2.3 Early Beginnings in the South and the Spread of the Cuneiform Tradition

In the fourth millennium, the first city state was established at the urban center of Uruk in southern Mesopotamia. It was characterized by an integrated economy that bound the urbanized core to its hinterland and eventually impelled the invention of a notation system. Due to the increasingly hierarchical socio-political character of Uruk, the city was capable of mobilizing labor and resour-

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<sup>49</sup> SAA 10 nos. 185–232

<sup>50</sup> Taggar-Cohen 2006, 469 ff.

<sup>51</sup> Reade 2008.

ces and developed into a political and administrative center. In this capacity, Uruk faced new challenges in accounting and accountability. Clay tokens and cylinder seals had been in use for millennia. What was new in Uruk was the appearance of clay tablets with numerical signs and the inclusion of tokens in clay bullae, which could be sealed and marked on the outside with impressions of the tokens within. These innovations are attested not only in Uruk, but also in northern Mesopotamia, Syria, and to the east in Susiana,<sup>52</sup> bespeaking the phenomenon that has been termed the Uruk Expansion.<sup>53</sup>

A further notational device called a “numerico-ideographic” tablet is known only from Uruk and Susiana in this period. Numerico-ideographic tablets consist of simple numerical notations with the inclusion of one or at most two groups of ideograms representing discrete objects. These objects, with their combination of a numerical system and ideograms reflecting words, mark the beginning of proto-cuneiform. Further, “the idea that commodities, titles, names and transaction types could be represented graphically led almost immediately to the elaboration of an entire system of signs.”<sup>54</sup> The development of a complex repertoire of signs eventually resulted in the production of lexical texts, lists of words arranged by topic or category.<sup>55</sup> Subsequently, during the Early Dynastic period, there follow the first literary and commemorative texts, which present a complex characterization of the king as caretaker of the temple. This rapid development from numeric-ideographic notation to the articulation of a royal ideology strongly suggests the professionalization of the scribal guild in the service of rulership.

Sumerian cuneiform was adopted by many of the cultures of the ancient Near East as the script for writing their local languages. This was the case in Ebla with Eblaite, in Iran with Elamite, and in northern Mesopotamia with Hurrian during the third millennium, and later applied equally in Anatolia with Hittite and Urartian. The broad distribution of Sumerian cuneiform is further evidence of the cultural prestige that Sumerian “scholarship” had accrued during its formative period, as well as of the potential of the graphemic system to meet both administrative and cultural needs.

Around 2500 BCE, we encounter a “well-developed multi-lingual tradition that was shared by various independent southern cities and reached far beyond to Syria and perhaps elsewhere.”<sup>56</sup> The first god lists from Fara<sup>57</sup> and Abu

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52 Cooper 2004, 72 ff.

53 Algaze 2005; Butterlin 2000; Collins 2000; Postgate 2004; Stein 1999.

54 Cooper 2004, 77–78.

55 Englund/Nissen 1993.

56 Michalowski 2003, 109.

57 Krebernik 1986.



Šalābīḥ date to the Early Dynastic IIIa period (2600–2500 BCE),<sup>58</sup> as does the first cycle of temple hymns, likewise from Abu Šalābīḥ.<sup>59</sup> These texts point not only to the existence of experts versed in the necessities of the local cult but also imply a conscious endeavor to create a culturally coherent system of supra-regional dimensions.<sup>60</sup> The scholars who created these texts contributed to the shaping of an entire cultural discourse. This is most apparent in the intertwining of literary and lexical genres on one tablet<sup>61</sup> and sometimes even in the same text, so that some literary texts adopted the template of lexical lists.<sup>62</sup> Incantations also exhibit literary features, so that it is difficult to distinguish between literary and performative texts.<sup>63</sup> The earliest cosmogonies appear at Abu Šalābīḥ<sup>64</sup> and Nippur<sup>65</sup> alongside this multiplicity of text genres. One of them, known as the *Barton Cylinder*, tells the story of a food shortage at Nippur that is remedied by the warrior god Ninurta. This cosmogony anticipates a later Sumerian mythic tradition revolving around the warrior god, as recounted in compositions such as *Lugal-e*<sup>66</sup> and *Angimdimma* (= *Ninurta's Return to Nippur*),<sup>67</sup> and demonstrates that already in the Early Dynastic period there existed a cultural discourse extolling the figure of the heroic warrior who combats the forces threatening the existing cosmic order epitomized by the city.

Eannatum's *Stele of the Vultures* is the earliest known work of art that combines the myth of the divine warrior with an account of a historical king (fig. 4). Its pictorial program portrays a mythologized king performing the role of the warrior god Ningirsu/Ninurta through his martial deeds. On its obverse, the stele is divided into two registers. The upper register depicts the god Ningirsu holding a battle net crowned by the Anzû bird with his left hand, while inside the net are trapped the naked corpses of many soldiers; Ningirsu strikes the bald head of one of these soldiers with a mace held in his right hand. By means of its depiction of a crystallized action, namely the god's ultimate and inevitable triumph, this iconography comprises the "icon" of Ningirsu's victory rather

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58 Mander 1986.

59 Biggs 1974, 44–56.

60 Rubio 2011.

61 Krebernik 1998.

62 Civil 1987; Rubio 2003.

63 Michalowski 1981; Veldhuis in Abusch/van der Toorn, 1999, 35–48; Rubio 2009, 26.

64 Krebernik 1998, 321 with n. 805.

65 Alster/Westenholtz 1994.

66 Van Dijk 1983; Seminara 2001.

67 Cooper 1978.

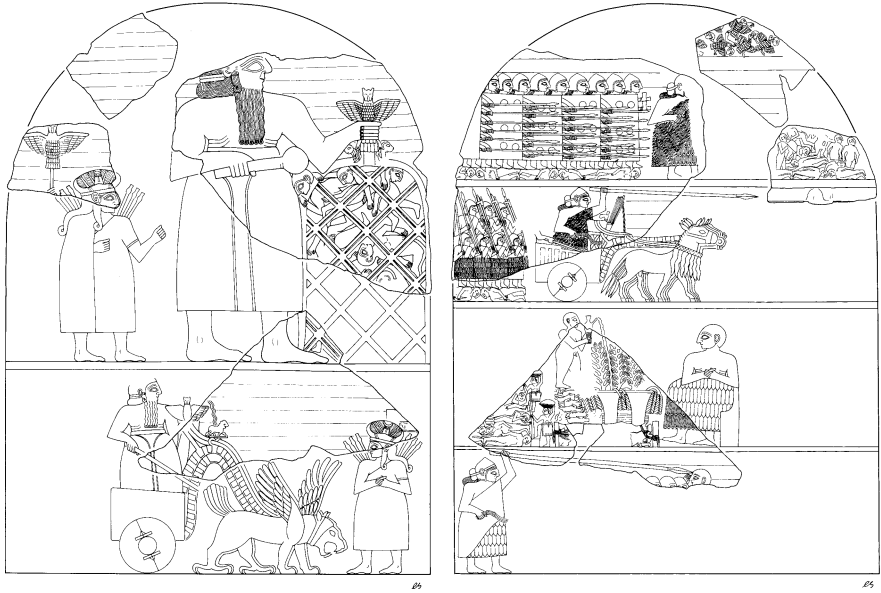


Fig. 4: Eannatum, Stele of the Vultures (Bahrani 2008, 148; Drawing: Elizabeth Simpson).

than a pictorial narrative.<sup>68</sup> Behind Ningirsu stands his mother Ninhursag, crowned with a feather crown and with three maces protruding from each of her shoulders. In the later *Anzû Myth* Ninhursag is known to have offered Ninurta strategic advice on how to defeat the Anzû bird, and the same dynamic might be operating here. The lower register depicts Ningirsu on his chariot, which is pulled into the presence of Ninhursag by two winged lions. There is no mention of the chariot of Ningirsu in the text on the stele, though the image is known from other texts that recount Ningirsu's victory over the lion-eagle Anzû and his subsequent triumphal procession into the city of Nippur. As such, to make sense of the imagery of Eannatum's *Stele of the Vultures* "prior knowledge on the part of the viewer would have been required, to which the representation stood in a referential status."<sup>69</sup>

The reverse of the stele is divided into four registers. In the upper right corner of the uppermost register there appear the vultures for which the stele is named, grasping in their beaks the severed heads of the enemy soldiers of Umma. Below them the king advances together with his soldiers, trampling

<sup>68</sup> Winter 1985, 16.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

underfoot the bodies of the fallen enemies and marching in the direction of a heap of human corpses and naked captives. The king's phalanx is depicted in an orderly formation, attacking with raised shields and with its spears directed against the enemy. In the next register, the king leads his phalanx forward from his chariot. Here, the soldiers within the phalanx carry raised spears and battle axes, prepared to do battle with the enemy. Due to the fragmentary nature of the stele, it is unfortunately not clear against whom the king and his soldiers are advancing. The third register shows a naked priest on top of a mound of animals, libating in front of a large seated figure that has been variously interpreted as the king Eannatum or as the god Ningirsu. Irene Winter convincingly argues in favor of viewing this figure as the king Eannatum and restores the imagery of the stele accordingly.<sup>70</sup> The fourth register is poorly preserved, but Winter describes the surviving fragment as follows: "one sees a hand at the far left grasping the butt of a long spear shaft, the tip touching the forehead of a bald enemy near the center of the band. The enemy faces the oncoming spear. His head emerges from a group of three additional bald heads before him all facing [the attacking figure]."<sup>71</sup>

The image of Ningirsu depicted on the obverse of the stele developed into one of the key metaphors of the kings of Lagaš, who described their election for kingship in these terms:

When Ningirsu, the warrior of Enlil, had granted the kingship of Lagaš to Uru'inimgina,  
....<sup>72</sup>

This close relationship between the patron deity of a city, who assumes the role of the divine warrior, and the ruler of the city is equally characteristic of the ideological discourse of Ešnunna and Aššur in later times.

At a certain point it becomes untenable to conceive of the spread of knowledge and the formulation of a royal ideological discourse as purely unidirectional processes. The earliest known example of a royal hymn comes from Ebla, suggesting that the royal hymn as a text category might have originated as a distinct northern tradition.<sup>73</sup> This royal hymn is from an educational context and begins with three lines of a literary text before proceeding with a list of personal names containing the element 'king' (*lugal*):

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<sup>70</sup> Winter 1985, 18.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Uru'inimgina (Urukagina) of Lagaš, see Steible and Behrens 1982, Ukg 4 vii 29–viii 9 = 5 vi 12–22; Frayne, RIME I, E1.9.9.1 vii 29–viii 4.

<sup>73</sup> Krebernik 1997, 190 with n. 14.

King, like Heaven, you do not falter/stagger,  
 Like Earth, you are not to be shaken,  
 Like the stone you do not know being crunched.<sup>74</sup>

Only a few Early Dynastic literary texts are known to have been transmitted directly into later literary tradition, but these texts nevertheless include important tropes and motifs that were integrated into later textual production. Among these tropes are the genealogy of gods, the concept of the ME along with their primary attribution to Inanna,<sup>75</sup> and the ascription of functional roles to certain gods, including the characterization of Ninurta as a warrior god and the portrayal of the sun god Utu as the chief judge.<sup>76</sup> All of these conceptualizations of the divine realm survived into subsequent historical periods as key tropes and are notable for their incorporation into the cultural discourse of both Assyria and Babylonia.

Royal commemorative inscriptions first appear in the north during the Early Dynastic period in a dynamic intercultural setting of competing city states. Though written by the kings of Kiš, these inscriptions have only been recovered in the Diyala region and at sites such as Nippur, Adab, and Girsu.<sup>77</sup> The inscriptions enable a basic reconstruction of the geo-political environment at the beginning of the Early Dynastic IIIb period (2500–2350 BCE), which was largely dominated by the competing city states of Ur and Uruk to the south and southwest, Umma (-Zabala) to the north, Lagaš (-Girsu-Nina) in the east, and Kiš and Akšak much further north again.<sup>78</sup> Theological rationales underpin military narratives within the royal inscriptions from the very beginning, as is plain in Eannatum's *Stele of the Vultures*, which relates that the gods witnessed the treaty between the rulers of the city states of Umma and Lagaš. The *Stele of the Vultures* also happens to be the earliest known artifact to associate Ningirsu/Ninurta with the figure of the king by combining the image of Ningirsu's emblematic cosmic victory with a historical account of a king's military campaign.<sup>79</sup> It is therefore fundamental to our understanding of Mesopotamian royal ideology.

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74 This is the text of exemplar A. For variants, I refer the reader to Krebernik 1997, 189:

A I a-b lugal an-ki nu-dúb<sup>l</sup> (GEŠTIN)

A I c-d ki-gin<sub>7</sub> nu-siki

A I d-g NA<sub>4</sub><sup>l</sup> (UD.NI)-gin<sub>7</sub> zu-ur<sub>5</sub>-ra nu-tuku<sub>x</sub>(HÚB)

75 Glassner 1992.

76 Krebernik 1998, 321 f.

77 Cooper 1983.

78 Cooper 1983, 9.

79 See *Chapter Six*.

In addition to literary texts and commemorative inscriptions, the *Archaic List of Professions* suggests an early tendency towards social hierarchies and a pyramidal social structure.<sup>80</sup> During the Early Dynastic IIIb period (2500–2340 BCE) Enmetena and Uru-'inimgina, rulers of the city state of Lagaš, establish freedom from debt slavery and corvée labor,<sup>81</sup> a political act that persists into the Old Babylonian period in the form of the *andurārum*<sup>82</sup> and the Old Babylonian *mišaru*-edicts. The purpose of such reforms was to restore an original and more equitable social order. As such, they developed into a trope of royal ideological discourse, which aimed to demonstrate that the king was capable of reestablishing and maintaining the cosmic order envisioned and ordained by the gods. Royal action along the lines of these reforms implies a high level of centralized control, and in the particular case of the reforms of Uru-'inimgina it is apparent that the palace controlled or at the very least had access to temple resources.<sup>83</sup> Remarkably, the tradition of royally decreed social reforms was discontinued after the Old Babylonian period, resulting in gross social inequalities that had the potential to produce dramatic demographic changes, as is discussed by Liverani with reference to the Late Bronze Age.<sup>84</sup>

It thus appears that highly stratified societies emerged in the south during the Uruk IV, Jemdet Nasr, and Early Dynastic periods, with a ruler at the pinnacle of the social hierarchy. By this time the essential roles and key metaphors that shaped royal ideology in the future history of the ancient Near East had been established within cultural discourse. In addition to the king as war leader, a role represented in the Uruk IV sealings with prisoner scenes (fig. 5) and later in Eannatum's *Stele of the Vultures*, (fig. 4), two further tropes developed, namely the king as hunter (*Lion Hunt Stele* from Uruk, fig. 6) and the king as temple caretaker and provider for the cult (*Uruk Vase*, fig. 7 and Early Dynastic votive plaques such as the one of Ur-Nanše, fig. 8).

The importance of the artifacts listed above is clear. They functioned as condensed ideograms expressing complex economic, socio-political, administrative, and ceremonial conceptualizations of social order. The production of these condensed expressions of complex ideas required not only a creative,

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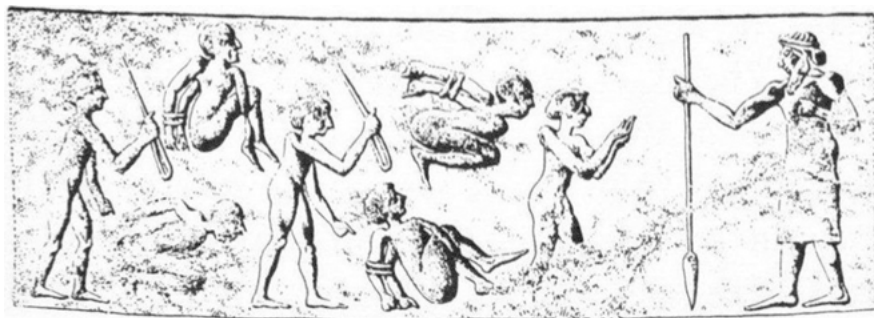
**80** nám-GIŠ.ŠITA to be read nám-éšda which according to the canonical series Lú = ša means 'kingship,' Englund & Nissen 1993; Wilcke 2007, 18–19, see the discussion in Chapter 5.1.

**81** FAOS 5/1 Ent. 79 iii 10–vi 6 and FAOS 5/1 Ukg. 4–5.

**82** Charpin 1987.

**83** Whether Uru-'inimgina's reforms actually implied the reestablishment of divine ownership over former royal estates is debated and to my view unlikely, Wilcke 2003, 141–143, see also Hruška 1973 and Edzard 1974.

**84** Liverani 2003 f, 26 f. and passim.

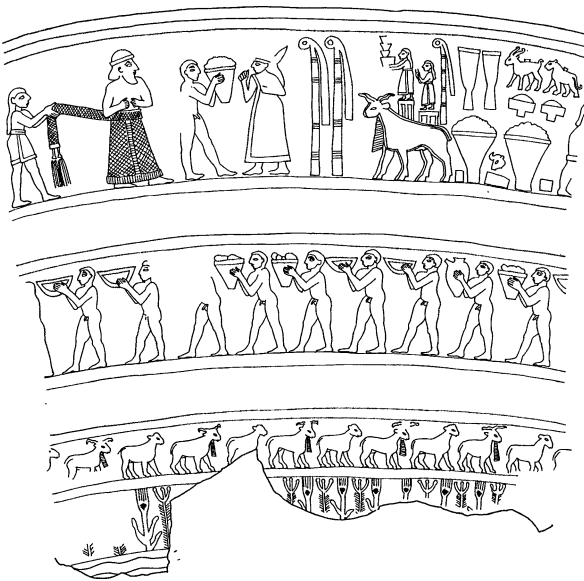


**Fig. 5:** Uruk IV Prisoner Sealing (Postgate 1992 25 fig. 2.3; after Brandes 1979 Plate 3).



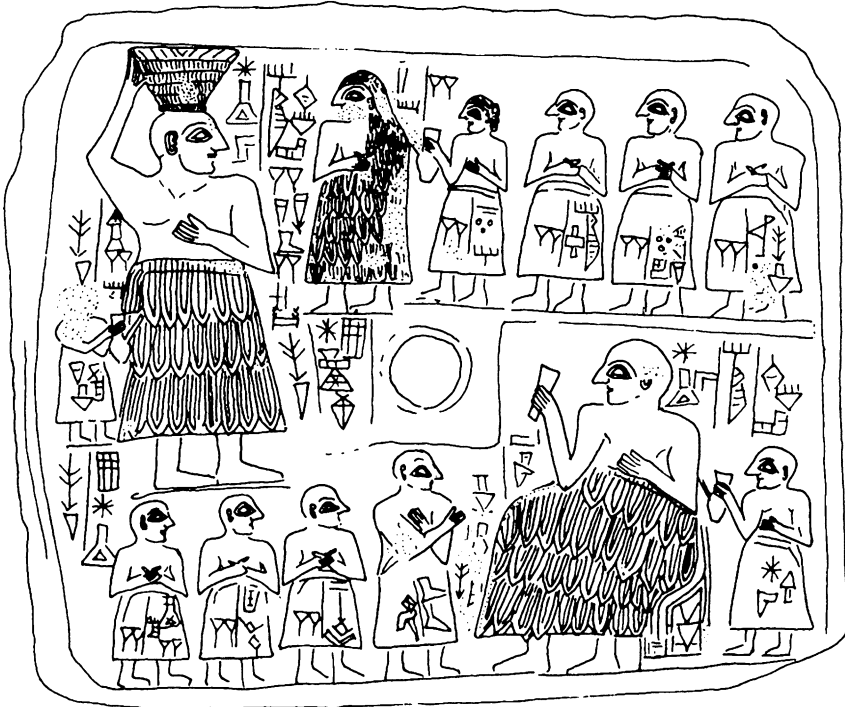
**Fig. 6:** Uruk Lion Hunt Stela (Photo: Strommenger and Hirmer 1964, pl. 18; Iraq Museum, IM 23.477).

organizing agent but also the existence of erudite elites who shaped the *weltanschauung* against which the institution of kingship and the duties of the ruler



**Fig. 7:** Uruk Vase (Drawing with the Reconstruction of the King: Bahrani 2002, 17; Photo: after Strommenger and Hirmer 1964, pl. 21; Iraq Museum, IM 19606).

within the cosmic scheme were defined. Although these tropes could exist independently of each other and within their own contexts, their existence be-speaks a *weltanschauung* that bound them to a system of thought in which the heroic deeds of the king were linked to his privileged access to the gods. With



**Fig. 8:** Ur-Nanshe Votive Plaque (Louvre AO 2344 ; Drawing: Boese 1971, pl. 29, fig. 1).

regard to the question of Assyrian ideological discourse and tradition, it is worthwhile exploring how these key metaphors or tropes were expressed in individual royal inscriptions and what individual Assyrian rulers chose to emphasize and elaborate.

## 2.4 The Spread of Mesopotamian Tradition to the North and its Interaction with the Hurrian Cultural Horizon

This book focuses on the religion and royal ideology of Assyria, yet one cannot understand Assyrian cultural discourse without reference to its broader context, i.e. the socio-political conditions prevailing in greater Mesopotamia. It is similarly ill-advised to assume a generalized cultural discourse for the entire ancient Near East. As such, it is worth stating that Urkeš and Aššur shared some features in their organization of power, at least during the Old Babylonian-



an period. The same can be said of Syria in the second millennium, as is clear from Mari texts and also from later Emar texts.<sup>85</sup>

In a recent article Giorgio Buccellati collects references made to Urkeš in the Mari letters.<sup>86</sup> The range and number of agents acting on behalf of the city of Urkeš is particularly striking, as is clear from Buccellati's list:

- ‘the city of Urkeš’ *a-lum Ur-ké-eš<sub>15</sub>*<sup>KI</sup> (44bis:21)
- ‘the sons of my city’ DUMU.MEŠ *a-li-ia* (44bis:8)
- ‘the men of Urkeš’ LÚ.MEŠ *Ur-ké-ša-yu*<sup>KI</sup> (69:9, a letter from Ašlakka; 105:7' from Ašnakkum)
- ‘the elders of Urkeš’ LÚ.ŠU.GI.ME *Ur-ké-eš<sub>15</sub>*<sup>KI</sup> (45:rev.12)
- ‘the *hābiru* are assembled in Urkeš’ (100:22 f, from Ašnakkum)
- ‘assembly’ *puhrum* and related verb (69:9 from Ašlakka; 99:rev.12' from Ašnakkum; 113:10 from Šuduhum)
- ‘Urkeš’ alone, referring to the population of the city as a whole is found in 48:59 (from Ašlakka); 98:17 (from Ašnakkum); possibly 140:17 (from Qa'a and Išqa, though here the name of Urkeš may simply refer to the place, not to the inhabitants).

Most of these agents – particularly the city as a collective, the elders, and the assembly – are also found in Old Assyrian Aššur, as I will show in the next chapter. The organization of power in Old Assyrian Aššur is therefore not an isolated case, but rather forms part of the northern Syrian cultural and political landscape. In both Urkeš and Aššur, however, the various collective urban political bodies were complemented by the presence of a single ruler, unlike in Emar, for instance, where so far the institution of kingship is not attested.<sup>87</sup>

Aššur's early beginnings – the subject of the next chapter – are difficult to reconstruct. Nevertheless, analyzing the northward spread of cuneiform writing demonstrates that Aššur was not an isolated case either in its political organization or in its cultural discourse. Although “the use of cuneiform writing in the Hābūr region presupposes the use of lexical and literary texts from Mesopotamia,”<sup>88</sup> several texts have been identified as indicating a local adaptation of southern cuneiform tradition. Important information can also be gleaned from sites such as Ebla, Urkeš, and the neighboring sites of Tell Brak and Tell Beydar.

<sup>85</sup> Fleming 2004.

<sup>86</sup> Buccellati 2013, 86.

<sup>87</sup> Emar shares the institution of the *tahtamum* (assembly) with the city of Tuttul, situated downstream from Emar at the junction of the Balih River and the Euphrates, see Fleming 2004, 211–217.

<sup>88</sup> Sallaberger 2004, 38.

The diffusion of southern Mesopotamian cultural traditions into northern Mesopotamia in the Early Dynastic period is indicated not only by the spread of the corpus of lexical texts, but also by the dispersion of other texts. These include the hymn to the god Ama'ušumgal, known from Abu Šālābīḥ in the south and Ebla and possibly also Mari in the north,<sup>89</sup> and a text about the Sumerian god Enki from Tell Beydar.<sup>90</sup> The *Enki Myth* found at Tell Beydar exhibits a peculiar combination of qualities that identify it as the product of scholarly circles operating in northern Mesopotamia. Its paleography links it to the second phase of Ebla in the time of the vizier Ibrium, but it is written in Sumerian despite its Semitic milieu. Further, the material qualities of the Tell Beydar *Enki Myth* – particularly its large size and pointed corners, a format it has in common with literary-lexical and administrative texts from Fara, Abu Šālābīḥ, and Ebla – suggest familiarity with southern Mesopotamian scholarly practice.

No parallel of the Tell Beydar *Enki Myth* has been recovered among the texts from Fara and Abu Šālābīḥ. The small scribal exercise tablets from Tell Beydar also do not contain excerpts from the standard lexical lists, adding to the perception that a local scribal tradition was at work. A further indication of the existence of a local scribal tradition in the north during the Early Dynastic IIIb period (2500–2350 BCE) is the discovery of a fragment of the standard profession list ED Lu A in Tell Brak,<sup>91</sup> which is contemporary with those found at Ebla and thus postdates ED Lu A texts from Fara and Abu Šālābīḥ.

Exercise tablets containing excerpts from the Early Dynastic profession list Lu E found at Urkeš/Tell Mozan<sup>92</sup> and in Gasur<sup>93</sup> point to the adoption of a distinct educational tradition in northern Mesopotamia that might have originated in Kiš rather than in Uruk.<sup>94</sup> The paleographic features of the ED list Lu E found at Urkeš again suggest a close connection with Ebla,<sup>95</sup> and the insertion of new entries into the list like scribe (dub.sar) and ruler (ensi<sub>2</sub>) reveal a deliberate modernization of southern tradition.<sup>96</sup> The find spot of the profession list in Urkeš, namely within the palace AP, is a tantalizing hint of close interaction between the king and the local scholars or scribes. Further, the very

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**89** Biggs, IAS no. 278; Bonechi/Durand 1992; Krebernik 2003; Fritz 2003, 169–172; for a full overview of literary production see Rubio 2009.

**90** Sallaberger 2004.

**91** Michalowski 2003.

**92** Buccellati 2003.

**93** HSS 10 222.

**94** Biggs 1981; Michalowski 2003, 2 n.1.

**95** Buccellati 2003, 48.

**96** Veldhuis 2010a, 391.

presence of the profession list Urkeš – only about sixty kilometers north of Tell Brak – implies interaction with a cultural horizon that is specifically identifiable as Hurrian.<sup>97</sup> During the Akkad period, Sargonic school tablets from Ešnunna<sup>98</sup> and Tell Leilan<sup>99</sup> vividly illustrate how Akkadian bureaucratic control was developed through the establishment of schools and the training of local scribes.<sup>100</sup> The Old Akkadian tablets from Aššur still await publication.

Communication between north and south was maintained through the trade route that passed by Akšak and Ešnunna before following along the Tigris river through Aššur and Nineveh and proceeding northwest towards Hamoukar and Tell Brak or Urkeš; this route then culminated in the Ergani mining area south of the source of the Tigris via the Mardin pass. Due to its location by the most important pass from Syro-Mesopotamia into Eastern Anatolia, Tell Mozan/Urkeš constituted the gateway into the Anatolian plateau. Once they had reached the plain at Mozan, merchants were able to proceed southward “either along the Khabur, reaching the Euphrates near Qraya and Terqa, or continue on the major east-west route, which followed the Khabur triangle either to the Balikh and Euphrates or in the direction of the Tigris.”<sup>101</sup> Early urbanization in the area of Urkeš was stimulated by its geographic control over the route into the Țur-‘Abdin highlands, a region rich in copper, timber, and stones that represented an essential component of the hinterland of Urkeš.<sup>102</sup>

Although Urkeš belonged to a different trading network,<sup>103</sup> the attestation of scholastic traditions linking it with Ebla bespeaks the mobility of experts trained in Sumerian lore, a mobility that was constrained neither by political borders nor by trade relationships. Such early interaction between Urkeš and Ebla might explain much later finds in Old Babylonian Alalakh, which evinces a strong Hurrian presence during that period as well as under the rule of Mitanni.

The early urbanization of Urkeš resulted in the production of texts that convey an official political message and thus allow a glimpse into an early Hurrian royal discourse that resonates with what we find later in Aššur and Nineveh. Traces of this process can be observed already in the period following the Akkadian empire, as inscriptions of Hurrian kings are attested in Nagar

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**97** Buccellati 2003, 46

**98** Westenholz 1972–74.

**99** De Lillis Forrest, Milano, and Mori 2007.

**100** Milano in de Lillis Forrest, Milano, and Mori 2007, 53

**101** Kelly-Buccellati 1990.

**102** Buccellati 1999, 241.

**103** Buccellati 1999, 238.

(modern Tell Brak) and Karahar, located between Ešnunna and Simurru. The inscriptions at both sites share a similar conceptualization of the king's titulary, and refer to the king as 'sun of the land,' a title that is absorbed into the titulary of the Ur III kings only in the reign of Amar-Suen.

<u>Talpuš-atili (Nagar)</u>		<u>Zardamu (Karahar)</u>	
<i>Tal-pu-za-ti-li</i>	Talpuš-atili,	<sup>d</sup> <i>za-ar-da-mu</i>	Zardamu,
<sup>d</sup> UTU <i>ma-ti</i>	the sun of the country	<sup>d</sup> UTU <i>ma-ti-šu</i>	sun of his land,
<i>na-gàr<sup>k</sup></i>	of Nagar,	<i>na-ra-am</i>	beloved
DUMU [x x]-[x]	son of ...	<sup>d</sup> KIŠ.NU.GAL	of Nergal,
		<i>i-lí-šu</i>	his personal deity,
		<i>an-nu-ni-tum</i>	Annunitum
		<i>um-ma-šu</i>	is his mother.

This solarization of the institution of kingship also occurs, albeit later, in the Old Syrian royal glyptic (ca. 1700 BCE) that depicts the winged disk hovering above the king.<sup>104</sup> It dominates the iconography of Hurrian glyptic from the fifteenth century onwards, as well as the Hittite aedicule seals at a slightly later date. Eventually, solarization makes its way into the Assyrian conceptualization of the divine kingship of Aššur, which is most prominently represented in the winged Aššur hovering about the sacred tree flanked by a spectral representation of the king.<sup>105</sup>

A foundation tablet from Urkeš, dating either to the Akkad or Ur III period, mentions an important figure named Tiš-atal.<sup>106</sup> This celebratory inscription is in Hurrian and refers to Tiš-atal as *en-da-an Ur-kèš<sup>ki</sup>*,<sup>107</sup> commemorating Tiš-atal's building of the temple of the god Nergal/Kumarbi<sup>108</sup> in Urkeš. As a commemorative inscription, it is of great value not only because it demonstrates the king's involvement in fostering the cult, but also because its curse formula sheds light on intercultural contact between Urkeš and Nagar. The curse formula mentions the goddess Bêlat-Nagar, suggesting that the goddess Bêlat-

**104** The cylinder seal has been published by P. Matthiae, *Syria* 46 (1969) 1–43 and pls. 1–2; see also the exhibition catalogue *Ebla. Alle origine della civiltà urbana* (Milano 1995), 395, 404 no. 242; see also M.-C. Trémouille, *dHebat*, 48, with n. 159.

**105** Pongratz-Leisten 2011a and 2013.

**106** Whiting 1976, Frayne 1997, 462. Two further texts mentioning a Tiš-atal have been found in Nineveh and Karahar. The first mentions a person named Tiš-atal is an administrative text from Ešnunna; it dates to the year Šu-Sîn 3 and refers to a certain *Ti-iš-a-tal lú Ni-nu-a<sup>ki</sup>*, Tell Asmar 1931–T615, and the second refers to a king of Karahar: <sup>d</sup>*Ti<sub>4</sub>(!)-sa-a-tal LUGAL Kâra-har<sup>ki</sup>* *RIME* 3/2, E3/2.5.1.2001.

**107** *RIME* 3/2, E3/2.7.3.1

**108** Thus Buccellati 2013, 89.

Nagar of Tell Brak either had a cult in Urkeš, or that she had acquired supra-regional status by this time:

- 1– 6 Tiš-atal, *endan* of Urkiš, built the temple of the god Nergal/Kumarbi?  
 7–10 May the god Lubdaga (Nupatik) protect this temple  
 11–14 As for the one who destroys it, may the god Lubadaga (Nupatik) destroy (him).  
 15–17 May the (weather-god(?) not hear his prayer.  
 18–25 May the lady of Nagar, the sun-god, (and) the storm-god(?) ... him who destroys it.<sup>109</sup>

In this inscription, the local rulers of Urkeš affirm their cultural distinctiveness by using the Hurrian title *endan*, composed either of the Sumerian word EN for ‘ruler’ or the Hurrian word for “god,” *en(i)*, and the morpheme *-dan* or *-tann/-tenn* indicating professional titles in Hurrian titlature.<sup>110</sup> This usage demonstrates a Hurrian identity that is set against the contemporaneous supremacy of either the Akkadian or the Ur III empire.<sup>111</sup>

The supra-regional standing of Bēlat-Nagar is confirmed by her status as a divine witness in an Old Assyrian treaty that will be discussed below, thus providing another link between northern Syrian and Assyrian culture. Bēlat-Nagar’s importance in the cult of Mari is suggested by the discovery in throne room 108 of a Hurrian incantation that refers three times to *na-wa-ri*.<sup>112</sup> One of the Mari letters in turn states that Bēlat-Nagar traveled through the region of Ida-Maraş in Northern Syria, possibly to mark the territory under the control of the king of Mari.<sup>113</sup> Bēlat-Nagar also appears in a Hurrian context in an offering list from Ugarit.<sup>114</sup> As observed by Dietrich and Mayer, the ritual texts from Ugarit exhibit a combination of Ugaritic and Hurrian language, the latter being used for offering lists and reflecting the frozen character that these texts had assumed by the Late Bronze Age.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>109</sup> RIME 3, E3/2.7.3.1.

<sup>110</sup> Wilhelm 1989, 11 and 1998, 121–23 “the one who is in charge of the enship”; Wegner 2007, 18.

<sup>111</sup> As an abstract *Induše*, *Indaššu*, *Enduše* and *Endaššu* occur in the Šemšara letters (Eidem/Lassøe 2001) in the sense of ‘his royalty’, a title that is also applied to a king of Šimaski during the Ur III period; as a loanword – *entašši* – it also occurs in Hittite related to the office of the *entu*-priestess, Wilcke 2010, 417 n. 33 with reference to an oral communication by J. Hazenbos.

<sup>112</sup> Guichard 1997, 337 with reference to Thureau-Dangin (1939) 5.

<sup>113</sup> Guichard 1994.

<sup>114</sup> Laroche, Ugaritica V, 504–505.

<sup>115</sup> Dietrich and Mayer 1999, 61 f.

Another Tiš-atal, described as the “man (LÚ) of Nineveh,”<sup>116</sup> is known from an administrative document from Ešnunna that dates to the Ur III period. This text records the distribution of flour by the ENSI<sub>2</sub> of Ešnunna to Tiš-atal and more than a hundred of his followers when they journeyed to that city on a diplomatic mission.<sup>117</sup> The Hurrian name of the Ninevite ruler Tiš-atal reflects the prominent Hurrian presence in Nineveh, which is also apparent in a loyalty oath from Nippur that was sworn by Tiš-atal and eighty other Ninevites in the third year of Šu-Sîn’s reign.<sup>118</sup> Šu-Sîn was married to a woman named Tiamat-bašti, who has been tentatively identified as the daughter of Tiš-atal and who had strong ties to Ištar-Šauška.<sup>119</sup> Finally, the foundation inscription of Tiš-atal of Urkeš affirms a distinct Hurrian identity at the same time that it demonstrates the adaptation of the cuneiform writing system to render the Hurrian language.<sup>120</sup>

A salient feature of the Hurrian bureaucratic scribal system is the widespread use of Sumerian and Akkadian logograms. Nevertheless, at least one of the administrative tablets from Urkeš, while written with Sumerograms and Akkadograms, was likely read in Hurrian,<sup>121</sup> thus pointing to the development of a distinctive Hurrian bureaucratic language. The foundation tablet of Tiš-atal and the Hurrian administrative texts represent the beginnings of a royal ideological discourse within a Hurrian tradition and expressed in the Hurrian language. This evidence is sparse, but the traditions it attests are found again many centuries later in the libraries of Hattuša and in the bureaucratic language of Mitanni.

Furthermore, the iconography of a seal impression depicting a divine figure astride a mountain range constitutes a cultural image that is altogether

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**116** Whiting 1976.

**117** Zettler 2006, 503.

**118** Zettler 2006, 504 f.: 6 NT 559 (A 31210)

obv. <sup>1</sup>mti-iš-a-tal ensi<sub>2</sub> <sup>2</sup>80 guruš <sup>3</sup>lú ni-nu-[a]<sup>ki</sup>-me <sup>4</sup>[...]-ka rev. <sup>5</sup>r nam-a<sup>1</sup>-erim<sub>2</sub> ib<sub>2</sub>-ku<sub>5</sub> <sup>6</sup>gîr ba-za-za dumu bu-ša-am-ka <sup>7</sup>tu<sup>tu</sup>gan-gan-è <sup>8</sup>u<sub>4</sub> 28 ba-zal <sup>9</sup>mu ši-ma-nu-um<sup>ki</sup> ba-hul Tišatal, city ruler, (and) 80 men, Ninevites ... (they) swore an oath. “Conveyer:” Bazaza, son of Bušam. 9<sup>th</sup> month, 28<sup>th</sup> day, Šu-Suen year 3.

**119** Wilcke 1988; Zettler 2006, 506.

**120** Salvini 1998 and Wilhelm 1998.

**121** Maiocchi 2011. On the basis of its paleography this administrative document has been dated to the Old Akkadian period, more precisely to the reign of Narām-Sîn. Although written in Sumerograms and Akkadograms, according to Maiocchi the presence of Hurrian morphemes such as the dative-morpheme *-va* strongly suggests that the tablet was read in Hurrian. It led Maiocchi to posit that the seals of the royal family bearing the local title *endan* should “also be viewed as Hurrian, despite the extensive use of sumerograms.” He suggests such an underlying reading in Hurrian even for tablets characterized by the absence of Hurrian morphemes.



**Fig. 9:** Kumarbi Striding Mountains (Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 1997, 93).

independent of the south (fig. 9). Whereas no comparable representations are known from the Mesopotamian glyptic tradition, the image is strikingly reminiscent of the later Hurrian mythic tradition describing the god Kumarbi as walking in the mountains.<sup>122</sup> This theme also evokes the relief of a mountain god from the well of the Aššur temple (fig. 10), which has been associated with Kassite iconography<sup>123</sup> and interpreted as a personification of Mount Ebih.<sup>124</sup> It may, however, simply be a depiction of the god Aššur that shares commonalities with the Hurrian tradition, especially because Kumarbi represents a combination of toponym and genitive suffix that is comparable to the use of the name Aššur to denote both the city and its patron deity.<sup>125</sup> In Mesopotamian tradition, the equivalence of a toponym with the name of a patron deity generally applies to female goddesses. In the *Song of Silver*, however, Kumarbi is said to be the Father of Urkeš and his sister Šauška is described as the queen of Nineveh.<sup>126</sup> On the one hand, this points to the pantheon of the Hurrian city

<sup>122</sup> Buccellati 1999, 247.

<sup>123</sup> Parrot 1961, pl. 9.

<sup>124</sup> Cancik-Kirschbaum 2003, 28. In a conversation on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2013 Hartmut Kühne also showed me the connections with Kassite iconography, which suggests a dating into the Middle Assyrian period at the earliest.

<sup>125</sup> Wilhelm 1982, 73.

<sup>126</sup> Hoffner 1988 and 1998, 48–50; Buccellati 1999, 249 f.; Archi 2009. Scholars differ as to whether the *Song of Silver* was part of the *Kumarbi Cycle* or not, as suggested by Hoffner 1988; Polvani 2008, 622 has warned against such an assumption. See also Archi 2009, 211 and James and van der Sluijs 2012, 238 f.



**Fig. 10:** Relief of a Mountain God from the Well of the Assur Temple (Photo: after Parrot 1961, pl. 9; Drawing: after Black and Green 1992, 80).

Azuhinni headed by Kumarbi and Ištar-Šauška,<sup>127</sup> while on the other hand it establishes a direct link between the Hurrian and Assyrian cultural horizons:

Oh Silver! The city you inquire about, I will describe to you. Your father is Kumarbi, the Father of the city Urkeš. He resides in Urkeš, where he rightfully resolves the lawsuits of all the lands. Your brother is Tešub: he is king in heaven and is king in the land. Your sister is Šauška, and she is queen in Nineveh. You must not fear any of them. Only one deity you must fear, Kumarbi, who stirs up the enemy land and the wild animals (adapted from Hoffner 1990:46–47).

The myth reflects the relationship between the mountain people who mine silver and the city, administered and protected by the god Kumarbi. This god is set into a genealogical relationship with the storm god Teššub and Ištar-Šauška of Nineveh, which at the time of Šamši-Adad I was heavily Hurrianized.

<sup>127</sup> Deller 1976, 40.



By contrast, texts such as the royal ritual KUB 27.38 reveal a fusion of Hurrian and Akkadian traditions. This is evident in the list of images of divine kings (<sup>D</sup>šarri=n(a)=āš=e) that includes Nawar and Atalšen, king of Urkeš, as well as a list of wise kings that begins with Narām-Sîn, whose name is written with the determinative sign for gods, and proceeds with Sargon of Akkad, king Audalumma of Elam, Iammahu of Lullu, Kiglipadalli of Tukriš, and Maništušu and Šarkališarri.<sup>128</sup> This text also introduces “Silver, king (*ewri*), as king (*šarra*) ...; Hedam(m)u, king (*ewri*), Kumarbi created you as king (*šarra*).”<sup>129</sup>

Evidence of Hurrian settlements is not limited to Urkeš. While there were probably only a few urban centers with a particularly Hurrian identity, these are all located in the piedmont zone of the Anatolian plateau and might include sites like Tell Huēra, Tell Leilan, and Nineveh.<sup>130</sup> The spottiness of the evidence is possibly due to the fact that the core territory of the Hurrians “seems to have been the rural highland of the ʿTur-ʿAbdin, from where they spilled over only to a very limited extent in the immediate piedmont region to the south, which became their sole urban base in the third, and possibly already in the fourth, millennium – Urkeš being so far the only demonstrable example.”<sup>131</sup>

I have dwelt at such length on the early evidence of a Hurrian presence in the piedmont region of the ʿTur-ʿAbdin because, although it is sparse, it nonetheless points to the existence of an early Hurrian scribal and scholarly tradition that mediated the tension between local tradition and the cuneiform writing system with its attendant culture. This mediation shaped the value system and cultural expression of Hurrian identity, which interacted with Assyrian culture.

Other intriguing features of Hurrian material culture from Urkeš include the temple, which was probably dedicated to the Hurrian chief god Kumarbi,<sup>132</sup> and the *apu*, an elaborate monumental pit lined with stone that, as later Hurrian ritual texts suggest, served as a nexus for evoking the spirits of the Netherworld.<sup>133</sup> While the pit structure endured into the second millennium, the temple remained in use for over two thousand years until the end of the Mitannian kingdom.<sup>134</sup> The archaeological evidence of the *apu* should probably be linked

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128 De Martino 1993 and Archi 2013.

129 Archi 2013, 6 f. with reference to Wilhelm 2003.

130 Buccellati 2013, 94.

131 Ibid.

132 Buccellati/Kelly-Buccellati 2005, 2009, 62f.

133 The *apum* (pit) plays an important role in Hurrian purification rituals, see Wilhelm 1982, 80.

134 Buccellati 2013, 87–89.

with the cult of Kumarbi and/or the ancestor cult at Urkeš, which ties in well with the Tigridian custom of referring to lineage in order to legitimize the claim to rulership. Similar cultural strategies are attested in Aššur and Ešnunna.<sup>135</sup> The *apu* reappears in a Neo-Assyrian ritual that is discussed in *Chapter Ten*.

It should be noted that the earliest areas settled by Hurrians were the north-eastern Jazira and what later became northern Assyria. According to a letter from Arad-mu, the chancellor of the Ur III state, Hurrian settlement extended into the Diyala region by the Ur III period.<sup>136</sup> The Ur III king Šulgi built a temple for the patron deity of Ešnunna, who was addressed as Ninazu in Sumerian and as Tišpak in Akkadian. Subsequently, use of Hurrian language spread towards south central Anatolia and northern and central Syria, as is clear from texts found in Kültepe, Mari, and Alalakh VII, as well as in late pre-Sargonic Ebla. Indeed, Hurrian may have reached as far as Tunip, south of Ebla.<sup>137</sup>

Hurrian identity west of the Euphrates and south of the Anti-Taurus seems to have been well established by the time of Kültepe Ib, as is demonstrated by a letter mentioning witnesses bearing Hurrian names, several of whom are said to be from Haššum.<sup>138</sup> While this evidence is primarily based on the attestation of Hurrian personal names, it is worth noting that the deities of Haššum carried away by Hattušili I only a century later included the Weather god of Armaruk/Arruza, the Weather god of Aleppo, Hebat, Allatum/Allani,<sup>139</sup> mount Adalur, and Lel(l)uri, who are divinities associated with a Hurrian identity. In the second half of the second millennium BCE, Lelluri is “particularly prominent in the (*h*)išuwa-festival of Kizzuwatna attested abundantly at Hattusha.”<sup>140</sup>

Still another important document indicating the presence of a Hurrian stream of tradition in the west is the Hurro-Hittite bilingual known as the *Ebla Epic* or *Epos der Freilassung/Song of Release*.<sup>141</sup> Although it was written in 1400 BCE, the historical background of the story seems to be the final phase of Ebla

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**135** Here I have to correct myself, as in earlier years I considered Assyrian interest in genealogies a product of Amorite impact, see Pongratz 1997, 89.

**136** Michalowski 1986, 142 and 2011, 249–272.

**137** Wilhelm 2008, 181, 186 f.

**138** Hecker 1996; Wilhelm 2008.

**139** Allatum/Allani, goddess of the netherworld, is attested as early as 2000 BCE in Northern Syria, see Wilhelm 1982, 78.

**140** Wilhelm 2008, 191; For the assumption that the (*h*)išuwa-festival was influenced by the cult of Haššu see Wilhelm 1992; on the festival see further Wegner and Salvini 1991 and Strauß 2006, 11–13.

**141** Neu 1996; Hoffner 1998; de Martino 2000; Wilhelm 2001 and 2011.

in the Middle Bronze II period, suggesting that the text is of Old Syrian origin<sup>142</sup> and that it only later became part of Hurrian and ultimately Hittite tradition. The *Song of Release* recounts the story of the enslavement and liberation of the inhabitants of the city of Igingalliš under their leader Purra, who assumes mythical dimensions. Igingalliš, which is also attested in the *res gestae* of Hattušili I,<sup>143</sup> was located somewhere to the south of the Antitaurus and west of the Euphrates.<sup>144</sup> According to Wilhelm, it is likely that the *Song of Release* “forms part of old traditions about earlier events in the lands south of the Anatolian plateau and the Taurus chain, including events of the Mari period which presumably were written in Hurrian and later were adopted by the Hittites.”<sup>145</sup> Wilhelm further stresses that the Hurrian tradition attested at Hattuša preserves the memory of the ancient kings of Akkad along with that of other third millennium kings. In his view, this implies the incorporation of third millennium historical events and experiences into a mythological tradition by an established Hurrian scholarly elite; this elite then transmitted this historical-mythological tradition into the second millennium, where it was subsequently adopted by the Hittites. The creation of a cultural body of knowledge of this kind entails a longstanding tradition of scribal and scholarly education in the Hurrian cultural milieu.

In this context one might also want to mention the Old Babylonian city state of Tigonānum, “known locally and to the Hittites as Tikunani or Tikunan.”<sup>146</sup> In his publication of the texts Andrew George suggested that it was probably located near modern Bismil on the way to Ergani.<sup>147</sup> More recently he tends to locate it south of the ʿAbdin, as he sees connections with Assyrian trade routes to the west including way stations such as the cities of Hahhum, Zalpar, Nihriya, Eluhut, Huršanum, Ašnakku, and Burundi.<sup>148</sup> The history of Tigonānum goes back to the time of Yahdun-Lim of Mari.<sup>149</sup> During the later Old Babylonian period, ca. 1630 BCE., this city state was ruled by Tunip-Teššub, contemporary of Hattušili I,<sup>150</sup> whose palace archives yielded several

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142 Dolce

143 De Martino 2003.

144 Wilhelm 2008, 193.

145 Wilhelm 2008, 193, with n. 68 and 69.

146 George 2013, 101.

147 With this localization he followed Charpin 2000 and Miller 2001.

148 Email from June 24<sup>th</sup>. I am most grateful to Andrew George for sharing a manuscript on letters sent by people from Aššur and Ninet to the ruler of Tigonānum with me, which will be published in one of the future *CUSAS* volumes. See also Miller 2001, 419–420.

149 Charpin 2004, 379 n. 1978

150 Salvini 1994.

tablets, among them a “Sumero-Hurrian recension of an Old Babylonian text ancestral to Urta XV–XVI”<sup>151</sup> and several omen tablets, of which some were written by a diviner named Kuzzi who was “the authority active in forming the local divinatory tradition.”<sup>152</sup> This diviner probably acted as advisor to the king, as many omen tablets bear a colophon that locate his tablets in the palace; they were written by one of his pupils, “hand of Šamaš-muštēšir, in the palace of King Tunip-Teššub.”<sup>153</sup> The omen tablets show indented lines after the first line, a feature typical of omen tablets written in north Mesopotamia and its periphery.<sup>154</sup> They further show Hurrian glosses and Hurrianizing language and orthographic features diagnostic of peripheral Akkadian thus attesting to a tradition that originated in north Mesopotamia and went alongside Babylonian tradition, equally attested in the archive.<sup>155</sup> These omen texts display distinctive Syro-Anatolian cultural features. As noted by Andrew George:

In many apodoses the storm god Adad is prominent as the divine arbiter of political and military power. The twin mountains Nanni and Hazzi, which in Syrian and Hittite traditions are sacred to the storm god (Teššub, Baal-Zaphon etc.) and support him, appear in two apodoses ... The deity Allatum, who appears in still another apodosis ... is the Hurrian earth goddess Allani ..., but with Akkadian feminine ending (the usual Babylonian form is Allatum). Several texts include apodotic clauses that refer to the Habiru as a military force .... These are religious and political circumstances alien to southern Mesopotamia but familiar to the north and north-west.<sup>156</sup>

Another striking feature of the texts from Tigonānum is that they are dated by *līmu* in Assyrian fashion, listing personnel of King Tunip-Teššub.<sup>157</sup> The Tigonānum texts further include three rituals of which one revolves around the king receiving a new silver ring every day which he passes on to the haruspex. Another very fragmentary ritual includes Ištar and the king and a third one seems to describe a procession of Ištar of Ninet/Nineveh to several cities.<sup>158</sup> The presence of a ritual for the patron deity of Nineveh speaks for a close relationship between the cities of Tigonānum and Nineveh which is further confirmed by letters from Tigonānum.<sup>159</sup> The prominence of Adad and Ištar in

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151 George 2013, 101.

152 George 2013, 104.

153 George 2013, 104.

154 George 2013, 105.

155 George 2013, 108–109.

156 George 2013, 109.

157 George 2013, 101.

158 I am most grateful to Andrew George for having shared Lambert’s notes on these rituals with me.

159 George manuscript on Syrian letters.

the religious texts from Tigonānum reflects a tradition known already from the Old Assyrian *Sargon Legend* from Kanesh,<sup>160</sup> the official pantheon of the Mitanni empire,<sup>161</sup> and then from Middle Assyrian curse formulas in the inscriptions of Adad-nīrārī I and Shalmaneser I at the time of the first major Assyrian expansion to the west,<sup>162</sup> as well as from Neo-Assyrian penalty clauses.<sup>163</sup>

As meager as the evidence might be, it nevertheless constitutes a clear indication that there existed a distinct Hurrian stream of tradition that influenced Assyrian ideological discourse. In this context it is legitimate to ask whether Hurrian scholarly circles were also responsible for the transmission of the Sargon of Akkad tradition attested in the Old Assyrian *Sargon Legend* found at Kültepe, which is discussed in *Chapter Four*. Early evidence for the spread of Hurrian tradition into northern Mesopotamia of the kind outlined above helps explain why in the early Middle Assyrian period King Adad-nīrārī I was able to draw so readily upon Mitannian administrative practices while pursuing his expansionist interests.<sup>164</sup> After all, Mitanni possessed a bureaucratic tradition that presumably appealed to the needs of Assyria's ambitious imperialistic program and was intelligible from the perspective of Assyrian cultural and political horizons.

## 2.5 Excursus: The Cultural Impact of Treaties

Since the international treaties of the northern Syrian region and the divinities they include as divine witnesses have already been mentioned, I discuss their cultural function in more detail here.<sup>165</sup> The spread of cuneiform culture<sup>166</sup> throughout the ancient Near East in the later Early Dynastic period (2500–2350 BCE) coincides with some of the earliest evidence of official treaties,<sup>167</sup> such as one drawn up between Ebla and the neighboring kingdom of Abarsal.<sup>168</sup> The

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**160** See *Chapter 4*, 2.

**161** Schwemer 2008, 157.

**162** Pongratz-Leisten 2011b, 114.

**163** Schwemer 2001, 598–600.

**164** von Soden 1952.

**165** See also Smith's (2008) discussion for the Late Bronze Age; Pongratz-Leisten 2012.

**166** Michalowski 1990; Cooper 1999.

**167** Cooper 2003.

**168** Edzard 1992; Tonietti 1997, 232–33; for all three treaties, which so far have come down to us from the third millennium – the treaty between Ebla and Abarsal, between Umma and Lagaš, and between Narām-Sîn and the king of Elam – see Cooper 2003, 245–249.

Ebla text has been characterized as a calligraphic master copy<sup>169</sup> and reflects a level of scribal culture that went far beyond the basic training of a scribe.<sup>170</sup> Administrative texts of Ebla attest to a lively diplomatic exchange with messengers from the numerous kingdoms around Ebla visiting frequently the temple of Kura in Ebla to swear an oath of alliance. It is interesting to note that the principal deity of the city served as the sole supervisor of the treaty.<sup>171</sup> Written evidence for diplomatic activities include further the exchange of gifts prior to the conclusion of a treaty between Ebla and Mari<sup>172</sup> and a reference to a treaty between Ebla and Nagar/Tell Brak sworn in the temple of Dagan in Tuttul. These texts demonstrate the spread of distinctive forms of knowledge during the Early Dynastic period, including the organization of local panthea and the ritual performance of loyalty oaths.<sup>173</sup> Because they refer to and accept a third, presumably neutral deity as arbiter and witness – like Dagan in the treaty between Ebla and Nagar – treaties also expose an implicit acknowledgement of a shared culture that was common to numerous northern Syrian city states. Treaties further demonstrate that the scholars of the time, while serving divergent political interests, operated within broader networks that were capable of transcending political and cultural borders.

Treaty making in particular involved ratification ceremonies that included oath taking and the cursing of any future violators. These ceremonies could only develop with the mediation of the broader scholarly networks mentioned above.<sup>174</sup> During ratification ceremonies, scholarly experts had to coordinate the translocal or “international” involvement of the gods of the respective parties and ensure their cross-regional and cross-cultural recognition and translatability.<sup>175</sup> Moreover, the treaty between Ebla and Nagar sworn in the temple of Dagan at Tuttul suggests that, at least in some early treaties, the ceremony was performed under the purview of a third divine party that was supra-regionally

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**169** Edzard, 1992, 188 with reference to a statement made by A. Archi in the discussion.

**170** Van Soldt 1995, 177 emphasizes that the skill and knowledge of the scribes in Ugarit as attested in lexical, religious and literary texts in several archives was less developed than that of their colleagues in neighboring peripheral sites.

**171** Biga 2008, 302 with n. 20. The kingdoms around Ebla included Abarsal, Duh, Armiium, Darab, Hazuwan, Kakmium, Ra’ak, and others, see Biga 2008, 294; for the oath ceremony see Catagnoti 1997.

**172** Archi 1998, 5; Catagnoti 1997, 113–15; Eidem, Finkel & Bonechi 2001, 100.

**173** Eidem, Finkel & Bonechi 2001, 100.

**174** Biga 2008, 302.

**175** Assmann 1997, 2003, 2008; Smith 2008; further Peter Schäfer’s critical comments on Assmann’s approach shifting perpetually between the reconstruction of the history of events and history as collective memory in Schäfer 2005.

acknowledged. The same is true for the pre-Sargonic kings of Lagaš, who mention Ištaran of Der as the divine intermediary in their conflict with Umma, while the role of earthly intermediary was performed by Mesalim, king of Kiš.<sup>176</sup>

The supra-regional aspects of treaties also characterize the treaty concluded between the city assembly of Aššur and king Till-Abnû of Apum, a polity close to Tell Leilan that had its own *kārum* in the Old Assyrian period. After 2200 BCE, Apum superseded Tell Leilan as local capital until the latter was chosen by Šamši-Adad I as his residence and turned into a hub of international relations.<sup>177</sup> Among other clauses, the treaties from Tell Leilan and Apum define the import taxes that are to be paid by Assyrian merchants to the local ruler, who granted residence rights and guaranteed the safe passage of caravans in return. Of particular interest for the reconstruction of the cultural-religious discourse of Old Assyrian Aššur is the list of deities by whom Till-Abnû, king of Apum, swore his oath not to the king but to the Assyrians, i.e. the representatives of the “city of (divine) Aššur, the son(s) of (divine) Aššur in transit, and the *kārum* in your city:”<sup>178</sup>

Treaty between the King of Apum and the City Assembly of Aššur

Col. I

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 1  | Swear by [An(?)]!<br>Swear by [(Enlil(?)]!<br>Swear by [(Šarr]-mātīn(?)]!<br>Swear by Dagan!  |
| 5  | Swear by Adad of Heaven!<br>Swear by Sîn of Heaven!<br>Swear by Šamaš of Heaven!<br>Swear by the Assyrian Šamaš/Bel(?). <sup>179</sup><br>Swear by Nergal |
| 10 | the king of Hubšalum!<br>Swear by the Assyrian Ištār!<br>Swear by Bēlat-Apim!<br>Swear by Bēlat-Ninuwā!<br>Swear by Ninkarrak!                            |

**176** Such-Gutiérrez 2003, 333 fn. 1445. Wang 2011, 79.

**177** Eidem 2008b, 34. Šamši-Adad I exchanged envoys with the king of Dilmun in the Persian Gulf, and the Dilmunite envoys travelled to Šubat-Enlil; see also Charpin/Ziegler 2003, 140 ff. with further literature. The other example of Tell Leilan’s international trade relations is from a fragment of a Middle Bronze Age alabaster vessel with remains of an inscription in Egyptian hieroglyphs (see Meijer 1986).

**178** Eidem 2008b, 34.

**179** Kryszat 2003, 101.

- 15 Swear by Išhara!  
Swear by the god(s) of the mountain, and lowland  
and rivers!  
Swear by the god(s) of the netherworld and the heaven!  
Swear by the god(s) of Saggar and Zara!
- 20 Swear by the god(s) of Martu  
and Subartu!  
Swear by all these gods  
that are present!  
Till-Abnû, son of Dari-Epuh,
- 25 king of Apum  
to the city assembly of divine Aššur.<sup>180</sup>

This section of the treaty lists the deities by whom the ruler of Apum is expected to swear the oath to the city assembly of Aššur. It begins by listing the most important deities of both parties, while consistently prioritizing Assyrian deities. The beginning of the god list is particularly striking due to its combination of a supra-regional and local perspective. The triad of the originally Sumero-Babylonian gods Anu, Enlil, and Ea is amended in a specifically northern fashion by replacing Ea with Šarru-mātīn, who should be equated with Aššur.<sup>181</sup> Dagan is listed next as still another supra-regional deity who had important cultic centers first in Tuttul (ED) and later in Terqa (OB). The astral aspects of Adad, Šīn, and Šamaš follow, and this programmatic astral dimension is reminiscent of the curse section of a treaty from Ebla (2400–2250 BCE) that invokes the sun goddess, the storm god Adda, and the deity ‘star’ (MUL = Ištar?).<sup>182</sup> Such an invocation of astral deities also occurs in the oaths listed at the beginning of treaties from Mari,<sup>183</sup> in Hittite treaties, and in the treaty between Ini-Teššub and the king of Ugarit.<sup>184</sup> The function of the moon god as protector of and witness to treaties is a particularly Hurrian tradition that distinguishes this deity from his Sumero-Babylonian counterparts.<sup>185</sup> These astral deities are subsequently attested among the recipients of offerings in the Mid-

**180** Eidem 1991.

**181** Durand 1995, 173.

**182** For translations see Sollberger 1980; Lambert 1987; Kienast 1988; Pettinato 1991; Edzard 1992.

**183** M.6435+M.8987 1–2 = Durand 1986, 111 ff. and Durand *LAPPO* 16 no. 290 <sup>d</sup>UTUša ša-me-e [t]a-ma <sup>d</sup>IŠKUR ša ša-me-e [t]a-m[a]; M.7750 2’–3’ [<sup>d</sup>Utu ša ša-m]e-e [t]a-ma] <sup>d</sup>IŠKUR ša ša-me-e ta-[ma] (Joannès 1991, 139 ff.).

**184** RS. 17.146 rev. 49 = PRU IV, 157 pl. 20.

**185** Laroche 1955; Wilhelm 1982, 75.



dle Assyrian coronation ritual<sup>186</sup> and in a lexical list from Tell Barri.<sup>187</sup> In the first millennium BCE they appear at the beginning of the Neo-Assyrian loyalty oaths. This history qualifies astral deities as playing a central role in northern Syrian and Assyrian tradition.

Following the astral deities, the treaty between the city assembly of Aššur and king Till-Abnû of Apum lists a number of local divinities who had gained supra-regional status by the time of the Old Babylonian period. These include Nergal-of-Hubšalum, who also surfaces in Mari texts<sup>188</sup> (Hubšalum is located near Andarig); the Assyrian Ištar;<sup>189</sup> Bēlat-Apum, a local hypostasis of Ištar in the land of Apum,<sup>190</sup> whose cult was probably transferred to Tell Leilan after Šamši-Adad I made it his residence;<sup>191</sup> the Hurrian Bēlat-Ninuwa, who was venerated at Aššur<sup>192</sup> and later in numerous Hittite and Hurrian cities; and Ninkarak<sup>193</sup> and Išhara,<sup>194</sup> both Syrian goddesses.<sup>195</sup> In its final section, the god list records the deified mountains, rivers, heaven, and earth, as well as deified topographical features like the mountain ranges of the Sinjar (Saggar and Zara).<sup>196</sup> At the very end of the list appear deified Amurru and Subartu. Rather than being mere designations of the West and the North, as suggested by the Hurrian entries of the later god list from Emar,<sup>197</sup> Amurru and Subartu here

**186** KAR 137+ rev. iii 4 f (= Müller, Krönungsritual, 16 f col. iii 32 f.)

**187** Schwemer 2001, 284 fn. 1963 with reference to M. Salvini in Pecorella 1998, 189 f, 193 f, K9.T1:10'–14'.

**188** von Weiher 1971, 37, n. 6.

**189** Meinhold 2009 51–116.

**190** Eidem 2008a, 326 f.

**191** Eidem 2008b, 33.

**192** Meinhold 2009, 168–181.

**193** Westenholz 2010.

**194** Prechel 1996, 4, 24; Neu 1996b, 190. See however Sharlach 2002, 92, who stresses the fact that she is already attested in the god lists of Abu Šalābikh, and therefore might be a Semitic rather than a Syrian goddess.

**195** Westenholz 2010, 397.

**196** For Saggar see Durand 1987; for Zara see Joannès 1988.

**197** 174 <sup>d</sup>MAR.TU <sup>d</sup>*a-mur-ru-[he]* “Divine West”

175 DINGIR <sup>d</sup>Martu <sup>d</sup>*e-ni a-mur-[ri-we]* “the god of Amurru”

Laroche 1989, 9; Richter 1998; Beaulieu 2005. In the first case the Hurrian equivalent has the suffix *-hē* indicating belonging to something (Zugehörigkeitssuffix). The reconstruction in the second line is based on the entry in a Hurrian offering list from Ugarit which has the entry *i[n] amrw* and thus defines the ending *-we* in *a-mu-ri-we* as marking the rectum in the genitive in a genitive construct (Richter 1998, 136 with reference to RS 24.274 = *Ugaritica* 5, 504 = KTU<sup>2</sup> 1.125). Yet evidence from Ebla, for instance, in which Martu is used as a gentilic rather than a geographic term suggests that Martu in the Old Assyrian treaty designates the personification of the Amorites rather than a mere direction.

probably designate the divine personification of the Amorites as an ethnic group, who originated in the region of Mount Bišri, and of the Hurrians, who originated in eastern Anatolia.

In lines 20–23, the treaty between Aššur and the land of Apum identifies the gods by which the oath is sworn as those of Amurru and Šubarum: “Swear by the god(s) of Martu and Šubārum, swear by all these gods that are present.” This passage suggests that the gods were all present in some form in the temple where the oath was taken.<sup>198</sup> Also interesting is the fact that at the time of this treaty – at some point after the reign of Šamši-Adad I – Aššur is conceived of as part of Subartu, while in earlier times it was distinguished from Akkad, Amurru, and Šubarum.<sup>199</sup> Finally, the treaty clearly does not express a royal point of view, at least insofar as Assyria is concerned. Rather, it exemplifies a scholarly involvement in political exchange that is not dependent on “royal ideology.”<sup>200</sup>

## 2.6 The Dynasty of Akkad and the Creation of Charismatic Kingship

At the beginning of this chapter I suggested that the attestations of royal ideological discourse represented by inscriptions from Aššur, the eastern Tigridian area, and Urkeš testify to an attempt by local kingdoms to define their own cultural discourse in the face of the expansionist ambitions of the kings of Akkad. It is therefore appropriate to examine the ideological discourse of the kings of Akkad as the other crucial component in the development of northern and southern royal ideology. Because the city of Akkad has not yet been discovered (it was probably close to modern Baghdad), we have only a few fragments of the cultural texts that were produced under the aegis of its kings.<sup>201</sup> So far incantations and hymns have been recovered,<sup>202</sup> while royal inscriptions, in contrast, are known primarily from Old Babylonian copies.

After King Sargon (2334–2279 BCE), the founder of the dynasty of Akkad (2350–2150 BCE), defeated the coalition of Sumerian city states led by King Lugalzagesi, he built the city of Akkad as the seat of Akkadian kingship. An unprecedented process of enforced unification and political centralization fol-

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**198** Westenholz 2010, 384.

**199** Kryszat 2003, 101 with reference to kt 79/k 101, see Michel, *OAAS* 1, 99 and Kryszat 2004.

**200** I thank Daniel Fleming for this observation.

**201** Westenholz 1999, 20.

**202** Westenholz 1999, 75 with n. 352.

lowed, binding the former city states to the center by means of a centralized tax system. From the strategic location of Akkad the Sargonic kings could control all of southern Mesopotamia and expand more easily toward the north. Distant forays into Elam in the East and into the Upper Tigris and Upper Euphrates regions were launched in order to secure and monopolize trade routes. The progressive imposition of central control that began with the founding of a new capital at Akkad and the subjugation of the area around the confluence of the Diyala and Tigris rivers is reflected in Sargon's adoption of the title "king of Akkad." Following the Kišite precedent, the Sargonic kings also assumed the title "king of Kish." The assumption of this title implied the adoption of the role of arbiter associated with the kings of Kiš, as is reflected for instance in the king of Kiš's arbitration in the dispute between the kings of Lagaš and Umma and in the historical inscriptions of the rulers of the Early Dynastic III period. After his conquest of the south, Sargon added the epithets "governor of Enlil" (*šakin Enlil*) and "anointed priest of Anu" (*pašiš Anu*) to his titulary. Interestingly, with the exception of the title "king of Akkad" royal titles reflecting the king's service to the gods precede titles reflecting his earthly rulership in recitations of the king's titulary. This is also true for later Assyrian titulary:

Sargon, king of Akkad, bailiff of Ištar, anointed priest of Anu, lord of the land, chief governor of Enlil, conquered the city Uruk and destroyed its walls. ...<sup>203</sup>

Akkadian royal discourse preserves the traditional association of kingship with Inanna, though this function is transferred from the Sumerian deity to Ištar of Akkad. A curse formula of Narām-Sîn reads as follows: "may he hold no scepter for Enlil, may he not seize kingship for 'Aštar.'"<sup>204</sup>

The elevation of Enlil, patron deity of Nippur, to the status of sovereign god of the pantheon with the responsibility for bestowing kingship – a responsibility evident in the royal title 'governor of Enlil' (*šakin Enlil*) – can also be dated to the kings of Akkad. This innovation meant that the goddess Ištar now assumed the role of intermediary and advocate of the king before the divine council headed by Anu and Enlil.<sup>205</sup> Ištar's association with kingship nevertheless endured into the Old Babylonian period and beyond, as is plain in the royal hymns of the Isin-Larsa and Old Babylonian periods, as well as in the *Etana Myth*. The bestowal of royal insignia remained Ištar's specific prerogative.

<sup>203</sup> Gelb(+)/Kienast 1990, 170 f. Sargon C 4:1–14, see also Foster 2005, 57 f.

<sup>204</sup> Foster 1990, 32 xii 22–28; Westenholz 2000, 79.

<sup>205</sup> Pongratz-Leisten 2008 and Westenholz 2000, 80 whose article escaped me at the time.

Similarly, the earliest attestation of bilingual royal commemorative inscriptions hails from Sargon's reign, which has been considered crucial in the development of Akkadian as a vehicle for formal written expression.<sup>206</sup> It is at this time that the combination of formulaic language recording victorious campaigns, complex narratives addressing the reader, portrayals of the enemy, and assertions of the cosmic and historical significance of historical events originated.<sup>207</sup> The military accounts of the kings of Akkad are highly detailed and "offer far more information on the king's enemies. Sargon's and Rimuš's monuments were decorated with reliefs depicting his defeated enemies, as identified by captions."<sup>208</sup> This is yet another feature linking the ideological discourse of northern Akkad with that of Aššur. In the vast corpus of Early Dynastic inscriptions, xenological discourse appears only in Eannatum's *Stele of the Vultures* and in Entemena's account of his feud with Umma, both from Lagaš. Even in these texts, however, the gods are much more active participants than in the inscriptions of the Akkadian kings, which replace the victorious god with the king as the central actor in a novel conception of world dominion.<sup>209</sup>

The image-makers of the rulers of Akkad were clearly familiar with the visual conventions employed in Lagaš, in some cases possibly drawing their inspiration directly from pictorial monuments erected by the Early Dynastic III kings of that city. Despite the fragmentary nature of the diorite stele of Sargon (Louvre Sb 2, fig. 11), it is evident that its iconic representation of victory was inspired by Eannatum's *Stele of the Vultures*. A notable innovation in the Sargonic imagery is that it is now the king (Sargon himself) rather than the god of the victorious city (i.e. Ningirsu on the Stele of Eannatum) who holds the net and smites the enemy within it. Lorenzo Nigro has argued persuasively that the enemy chief in the stele of Sargon, depicted with his head protruding from the net, is Lugalzagesi of Uruk, who was vanquished by Sargon during his early military endeavors in southern Mesopotamia.<sup>210</sup> The royal rank of the enemy being struck by Sargon is indicated by his beard and long, loose hair, "suggesting that he had just lost his royal hair buns while fighting in battle."<sup>211</sup> Opposite to the king is a seated figure with three undulating rays rising from the shoulder, one of them ending in a mace head. This detail has been convincingly interpreted as the attribute of Ištar in her warrior aspect, which would

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206 Foster 2009, 145.

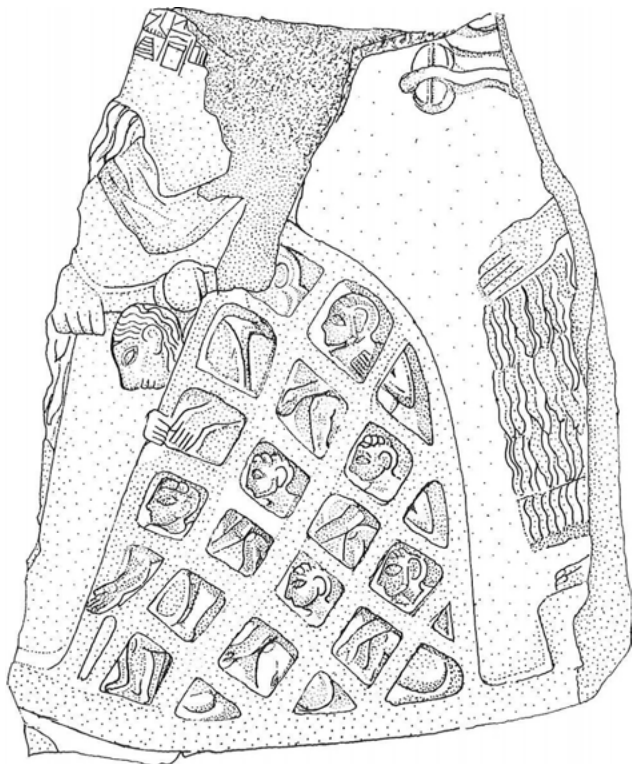
207 Foster 2009, 198.

208 Westenholz 1999, 75 with reference to Buccellati 1993.

209 Westenholz 2000.

210 Nigro 1998, 93.

211 Nigro 1998, 90.



**Fig. 11:** Diorite Figure of Sargon (Börker-Klähn 1982, fig. 19b; Louvre, SB 2).

identify the seated figure as Ištar.<sup>212</sup> The elevation of Akkad’s patron deity to the rank of the Akkadian dynastic goddess and the syncretistic identification of Inanna of Uruk and Semitic Ištar were integral to Sargon’s religious reforms. Further, “the placement of the king’s daughter Enheduanna in the office of en-priestess at Ur and the renewed central role assigned to Enlil,” were, as Nigro contends, all means of “obtaining a cultural and ideological supremacy over the South and of gaining the political consensus of the powerful Mesopotamian clergy.”<sup>213</sup> Ištar’s central role in kingship was also adopted by the rulers of Aššur during the Akkad period.<sup>214</sup>

Although the enemy figures trapped in the net are depicted naked in both Eannatum’s *Stele of the Vultures* and in the stele of Sargon, only in the latter

<sup>212</sup> Nigro 1998, 85 with further bibliography.

<sup>213</sup> Nigro 1998, 88.

<sup>214</sup> See *Chapter Three*.

do these enemies sit in an orderly formation and appear submissive. In the *Stele of the Vultures*, the god Ningirsu is shown achieving the ultimate cosmic victory over disruptive forces; in the stele of Sargon, this iconic representation is transformed and becomes an image of ongoing royal action under the guidance and protection of the dynastic goddess Ištar to ward off threats to civilization, thus affirming the victory of order over chaos.

Sargon's adoption of the central gesture of the warrior deity on his stele epitomizes the transition from the Early Dynastic programmatic statements combining myth and historical events to the ideological discourse of the Akkad period. The replacement of Ningirsu with the king in the pictogram with the net constitutes an appropriation of the mythic icon of victory by the king, thereby centering martial action primarily on himself. By the time of Sargon's grandson Narām-Sîn, the transition is complete: the image of kingship becomes that of the "eternal" warrior, and on his famous *Victory Stele* Narām-Sîn is so completely identified with the role of the warrior god Ningirsu that he is represented as superhuman in size and in command of both life and death. Accordingly, the *Victory Stele* of Narām-Sîn marks the historical juncture at which the era of independent city states transitioned to one of unified empire and centralized kingship. Several strategies can be observed in the *Victory Stele*. As mentioned, Narām-Sîn emulates the depiction of the warrior god Ningirsu in Eannatum's *Stele of the Vultures*<sup>215</sup> by representing himself as superhuman in size and capable of commanding life and death. The artistic choices made in Narām-Sîn's *Victory Stele* contrast strongly with those in Eannatum's stele, as the former "presents events not linearly or sequentially but hierarchically. Narām-Sîn, the mighty king of Akkad, is the telos of the temporal narrative. The king is therefore the culmination of the event."<sup>216</sup> Narām-Sîn's body is portrayed emerging as a silhouette against the sky, walking on the mountaintop and crossing into territory hitherto uncharted by the kings of Mesopotamia. The imagery depicting the king mastering unknown territory is a new element in royal iconography. Although it commemorates the historical event of Narām-Sîn's campaign against the Lullubu in the eastern mountains, the *Victory Stele* transforms Narām-Sîn visually into an icon of victory in the role of master of the universe. The gesture of the warrior god Ningirsu, whose power over the enemies in his net on Eannatum's *Stele of the Vultures* manifests the glorious outcome of the

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215 Steible and Behrens 1982, 120–145; Cooper 1983, 45–47; Winter 1985; Winter 1986; Heuzey 1884–1912, pls. xxxviii–xlii (copies and drawings showing the position of the text in relation to the relief); Alster 2003/2004. For a different interpretation see Selz 2008, 22 who also interprets the figure on the obverse as the ruler in the role of the divine victor.

216 Bahrani 2008, 109.

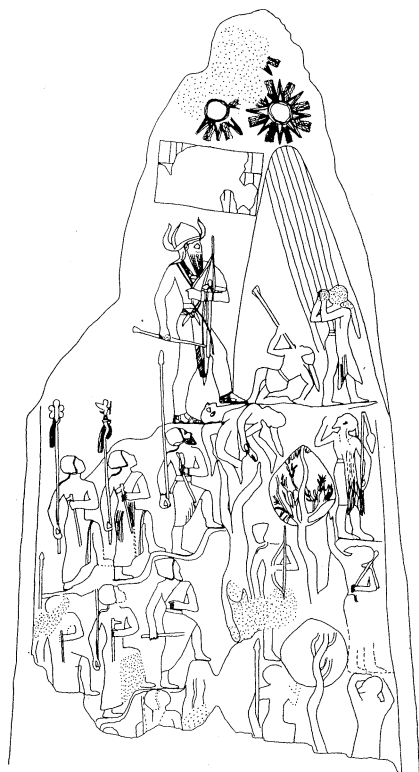


Fig. 12: Stele of Naram-Sin (Winter 2002, 305).

battle, is replaced in the *Victory Stele* by the king shown in the heroic action of trampling over the defeated enemy. A variation of this triumph motif<sup>217</sup> is known from the “war-side” of the Early Dynastic *Banquet Stele* from Ur, which shows the king driving over the bodies of the enemy with his chariot. Unlike Eannatum’s victory in the *Stele of the Vultures*, Narām-Sîn’s triumph is conceptualized as a human achievement accomplished by an ideal king. Narām-Sîn’s emulation of the warrior god Ningirsu/Ninurta – who by the end of the Early Dynastic period becomes established as the son of Enlil, chief god of the Sumerian pantheon and patron deity of Nippur<sup>218</sup> – is total.

<sup>217</sup> Becker 1985; Rubio 2007, 27–29; the motif of the king trampling the enemy continues through the Anubanini relief at Sarpol-I Zohāb to the Darius relief at Bisutun.

<sup>218</sup> The Barton Cylinder provides evidence for this, Alster and Westenholz 1994; see also the discussion by Wang 2011, 192.

The image of the ideal king combines a variety of elements that all contribute to the sacralization of kingship: the perfect body, the king's superhuman size, and the demonstration of victorious action not in the alluvial plain but in the wilderness of the mountains. In the *Victory Stele*, these tropes are supplemented with the horned crown, which signals the divine status of the king (fig. 12). This visual icon is further complemented by the writing of the king's name with the divine determinative in the inscription. The *Victory Stele* thus serves as a visual expression of the new conception of kingship,<sup>219</sup> standing at the historical juncture between an era of independent city states and an era of unified empire and centralized kingship. Before the Akkad period, kingship had been conceived of in "limited terms and within the local structure of the city-state," but it "now came to be defined as *sovereign* power."<sup>220</sup> The text of the *Victory Stele*, reporting on the historical defeat of the Lullubi mountain tribes, can also be read on a mythic level as narrating the royal victory over the disruptive forces of chaos.<sup>221</sup>

By means of such steles, as well as through sculptures and rock carvings that were always combined with historical narratives of their conquests, the kings of Akkad in a very material way appropriated and demarcated the space of their empire. This pictorial materiality served to proclaim their presence and their claim of control over a specific territory. Narām-Sîn's rock carving at Pir Hüsein at the Tigris tunnel (fig. 13) can be interpreted as precisely such a declaration of presence, rather than as a symbol of actual control over the region. The cultural technique of indexing royal presence in the 'four corners of the world,' developed by the kings of Akkad, became part of the repertoire of topoi incorporated into the foundational myths of kingship, in which it appears in the guise of the rebellion theme.<sup>222</sup> As a topos, the indexing of royal presence in the 'four corners of the world' also surfaces in the inscriptions of the kings of Akkad and in their legendary tradition, and later reappears as one of the most important strategies adopted in the royal inscriptions of Assyrian kings. The driving impetus behind this strategy, namely the alignment of the known

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**219** Why some scholars want to read the DINGIR category marker as a logogram for *ilum* 'god' and thus introduce a distinction in the act of divinizing between the deified king and other deified entities such as statues, steles, cultic paraphernalia etc. remains opaque to me, see the recent discussion by Král 2010.

**220** Bahrani 2008, 102.

**221** Westenholz 2000a, 102.

**222** See the expression "when the four quarters rebelled against him" (Frayne, RIME 2, E2.1.4.3 iii 15–18 = Wilcke ZA 87 24 J ix 13–17; Frayne, RIME 2, E2.1.4.3 iii 27 = Wilcke ZA 87 25 J ix 26–30; Frayne, RIME 2, E2.1.4.8 ii 1'–5'; p. 138, RIME 2, E2.11.4.28:9–13; p. 140, E2.11.4.29:5–7 collected by Westenholz 2000a, 107).





**Fig. 13:** Fragment of Naram-Sin's Rock Carving at Pir Hüseyin at the Tigris Tunnel (Börker-Klähn 1982, fig. 25).

boundaries of the universe with the boundaries of empire, will be discussed at greater length in *Chapter Four*.

Because the royal inscriptions of the kings of Akkad were studied and copied by Old Babylonian scribes, they became part of a supra-regional cultural heritage. In this context, King Sargon was integrated into the Babylonian textual tradition as the successful founder of a new dynasty, while his grandson Narām-Sîn was presented as the prototype of the *Unheilsherrscher* who, in his hubris, challenged the gods themselves, and ultimately provoked the demise of the empire.<sup>223</sup> This paradigm only changed with the production of texts like the *Weidner Chronicle*. As is discussed in *Chapter Eight*, the survival of so few cultural texts from the Old Akkadian period is mitigated by the fact that the kings of Akkad entered the Old Babylonian stream of tradition on account of their great political achievements.<sup>224</sup>

The kings of Akkad also marked the high point of the literarization of the figure of the king. Many legends relate to two kings of Akkad in particular, namely Sargon and Narām-Sîn. Episodes from the lives of these kings constitute an ideal setting for the politically motivated utilization of history and aid in the establishment of continuity with the past. Moreover, the king is conceived of as “an artisan of human experience,”<sup>225</sup> a paradigmatic figure at the crossroads between private history and cultural history. Legends of the kings of Akkad surviving in copies from the Old Akkadian, Old Babylonian, and later periods attest to the overall perception that these kings had created a “new type of charismatic kingship.”<sup>226</sup> This monarchic template shaped the ideologies of the Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, and even later empires in a process of *translatio imperii*,<sup>227</sup> reinforcing the place of combat as the primary strategy for empire-building. Once this paradigm took hold, all subsequent rebellions against the king could be and were regarded as infringements of the boundaries of the empire and, correspondingly, as disruptions of and rebellions against the cosmic order. The discovery of a composition about Sargon of Akkad among mercantile texts in a private house at the *kārum* of Kaneš represents a rare indication of the appropriation of Akkadian tradition by the city of Aššur,

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223 Westenholz 1997.

224 Westenholz 1997.

225 For similar developments of the king’s novel in Egypt see Loprieno 1996, 287.

226 Westenholz 2000a, 99.

227 This notion of *translatio imperii* was generally applied to the continuity of empires from Assyria to Babylonia and from Media to Persia, see Liverani 2003, before it was turned into a comprehensive model of world history, see Liverani 2005, 224. As I learned from Gonzalo Rubio, the most famous early use of this concept is from Otto Frisingensis (12<sup>th</sup> cent.), who applied it to the *Heilige Römische Reich*, see Whaley 2012, 17 ff.

whence it journeyed deep into Anatolia during the early second millennium BCE.

In the legends of the kings of Akkad the topos of salutary accounts of hardship is closely linked with the topos of the king's normative behavior. This normative behavior is reflected in the king's relationship with the gods, as is observed critically in the *Curse of Akkad* and in the *Cuthean Legend*. In the Mesopotamian *weltanschauung* any failure of the ruler to pay due attention to the gods could provoke their wrath and lead them to abandon their cities, which left these cities bereft of divine protection and vulnerable to enemy invasion. This theological explanation of political crisis dominates the literary compositions of the *Curse of Akkad*<sup>228</sup> and the Sumerian *City Lament*, both of which are related to the collapse of the Ur III empire.<sup>229</sup> It also demonstrates again the close link between the king's actions and the welfare of his country, the latter represented by its constituents, the city states. Moreover, this explanation of political crisis is integrated into the scholarly genres of chronicles<sup>230</sup> and omen literature, the latter of which includes references to some of the omens reportedly recorded under the kings of Akkad.<sup>231</sup>

By the Old Babylonian period Akkad had developed “into the paradigm or, better, the prototype, for future dynasties in 1) its scope and power, through the unification of Babylonia and control of the periphery; 2) its elaboration of an imperial bureaucracy; and 3) its new conception of royalty.”<sup>232</sup> Fascination with the kings of Akkad endured into the Neo-Assyrian period and beyond, as is apparent from the content of the library of Kišir-Aššur, chief exorcist of the Aššur temple during the reign of Ashurbanipal.<sup>233</sup> In addition to a host of scholarly texts, Kišir-Aššur's library contained the *Weidner Chronicle*, *Sargon's Report on his 8<sup>th</sup> Campaign*, and *Sargon's Geography*, which describes the creation of an imaginary empire of nearly cosmological dimensions under Sargon of Akkad, the namesake of the Neo-Assyrian king Sargon II.

Although there was a deliberate effort to introduce Akkadian as a language of prestige under Sargon of Akkad, many official inscriptions were written in Sumerian or as bilinguals. This suggests that the established scholarly circles of Sumer retained their position alongside the newly developing scholarly elite at the royal court of Akkad. It is only towards the end of the Old Akkadian

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228 Cooper 1983; Glassner 1986; see also the contributions in Liverani 1993.

229 Michalowski 1989; Tinney 1996; Green 1978 and 1984.

230 See Grayson 1975, Chronicles 3 and 4.

231 Güterbock 1938, 60 f. and Cooper 1980.

232 Cooper 1993, 11 f.

233 Baker 2000, 623 no. 26 f.

period that the Akkadian language becomes the primary vehicle of expression in texts. Following the disintegration of the empire of Akkad, Gutian rulers continued using Akkadian, while the kings of the Ur III period reverted to the use of the prestigious Sumerian language.

## 2.7 The Transformation of Tradition During the Ur III Period

The Old Babylonian historiographical tradition centered on the kings of Akkad is only one element in Assyrian historiography. Literarization of the kings of Akkad constitutes another important element, but it is not preserved as a distinct text genre. Instead, this literarization is manifest as a reservoir of tropes utilized in the construction of the image of kingship. The royal self-praise genre from the Ur III<sup>234</sup> and the early Old Babylonian periods, for instance, perpetuated and perfected a tradition that originated in the Early Dynastic period.<sup>235</sup>

Of central importance are those tropes that depict kings and divinities in league with one another, legitimizing kingship through the intimate association of the king with the divine world – a practice best attested for the pantheon of Uruk, to which the Ur III kings frequently referred because Uruk was the ancestral home of their dynasty.<sup>236</sup> The idea that a living king should pay close attention to the written legacy of his predecessors, a notion that figures prominently in the *Cuthean Legend*, is attested for the first time in Šulgi's self-praise:

Because of my extraordinary wisdom and my ancient fame as a master, he should choose my hymns as example, and himself beget heavenly writings (mul-an).<sup>237</sup>

Since only one known manuscript of Ur III royal hymns actually dates to the Ur III period,<sup>238</sup> it is difficult to tell whether this topos was original to the literarization of the king during the Ur III period or whether it was introduced as part of the Old Babylonian redaction of Ur III hymns. Evidence of Ur III literary

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**234** Machinist 1976.

**235** For a discussion on the origin of self-praise in the Ur III period, see Cooper 1993, 14 with n. 16.

**236** As with the goddesses Inanna and Ninsun, see for instance Šulgi A 7: dumu u<sub>3</sub>-tud-da nin-sun-kam-me-en “I am a child born of Ninsun,” or with legendary heroes such as Lugalbanda and Gilgamesh; as shown by Wilcke 1987–1990, the alliance between the goddess Ninsun and the hero Lugalbanda goes back to Early Dynastic times. For other alliances such as Gilgamesh as the brother of the king, and Ninsun as his mother see Wilcke 1989.

**237** Šulgi B ETCSL t.2.4.2.02: 305–307: geštug<sub>2</sub> geštug<sub>2</sub> dirig-ga-gu<sub>10</sub>-še<sub>3</sub> / um-mi-a-gin<sub>7</sub>, mu lib-ir-ra-gu<sub>10</sub>-še<sub>3</sub> / nig<sub>2</sub>-umun<sub>2</sub>-a en<sub>3</sub>-du-gu<sub>10</sub> he<sub>2</sub>-en-pad<sub>3</sub>-de<sub>3</sub> mul-an he<sub>2</sub>-u<sub>3</sub>-tud.

**238** Rubio 2000 [2005], 216.

compositions is scanty, but the existence of several Ur III literary catalogues listing incipits of compositions – including two royal hymns of Šulgi and Ur-Namma respectively<sup>239</sup> – suggests that there was a full-fledged body of cultural texts that re-invented the image of the king during the Ur III period. This re-invention and transformation of tradition is documented under King Šulgi of Ur, who had to overcome a crisis caused by the death in battle of Ur-Namma, the founder of the dynasty. As Piotr Michalowski writes:

The centralized, patrimonial state run from Ur required a well-regulated and well-trained bureaucracy that could be held accountable for all fiscal and organizational activities. Writing was the instrument by which the Crown exercised oversight and control, as documented by the hundred thousand or so published administrative documents from the period. The heads and minds of these literate servants had to be molded through schooling that not only taught them writing skills but also indoctrinated them into the ideological aspirations of the new state. Although contemporary evidence is still sparse, it appears that sometime under Šulgi the masters of the royal academies literally wiped clean the literary slate and discarded all but a few of the old compositions that went back to Early Dynastic times, that is more than half a millennium earlier. They kept most of the pedagogical tools such as word lists, but discarded virtually all the old narratives, replacing them with materials written in honor of the contemporary ruling house.<sup>240</sup>

Šulgi's foundation of 'academies' is mentioned in his self-praise *Šulgi B*, the introduction of which also states that he was educated in the Sumerian and Akkadian textual tradition in the E<sub>2</sub>-DUB-BA:

11–20 I am a king, offspring begotten by a king and borne by a queen. I, Šulgi the noble, have been blessed with a favorable destiny from the womb. When I was small, I was at the academy, where I learned the scribal art from the tablets of Sumer and Akkad. None of the nobles could write on clay as I could. There where people regularly went for tutelage in the scribal art, I qualified full in subtraction, addition, reckoning and accounting. The fair Nanibgal, Nisaba, provided me amply with knowledge and comprehension. I am an experienced scribe who does not neglect a thing.

In the same self-praise, Šulgi boasts not only of his military training and hunting prowess, but also of his knowledge of extispicy, of his skill in music, and of his mastery of five languages.<sup>241</sup> The passage of *Šulgi B* pertaining to the foundation of academies in Ur and Nippur is as follows:

308–319 In the south, in Ur, I cause a House of Wisdom of Nisaba to spring up in sacrosanct ground for the writing of my hymns; up country in Nippur I established another.

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<sup>239</sup> Rubio 2009, 37.

<sup>240</sup> Michalowski 2008, 38.

<sup>241</sup> Rubio 2006.

May the scribe be on duty there and transcribe with his hand the prayers which I instituted in the E-kur; and may the singer perform, reciting from the text. The academies are never to be altered; the place of learning shall never cease to exist. This and this only is now my accumulated knowledge! The collected words of all the hymns that are in my honor supersede all other formulations. By An, Enlil, Utu and Inanna, it is no lie – it is true!

The reference to the establishment of academies “for the writing of my hymns” once again points to the potential for interaction between scholars and the king.

Šulgi’s foundation of academies was centered on the cities of Nippur and Ur, the respective religious and political capitals of the Ur III period. The Ur III scholarly tradition was preserved into the Old Babylonian period in the institution of the academy (e<sub>2</sub>-dub-ba), where textual standardization is likely to have begun.<sup>242</sup> Old Babylonian academies appear to have been located in private houses, which are attested archaeologically in Nippur, Sippar-Amnanum, Tell ed-Der, Ur, and Meturan.<sup>243</sup> The significance of the city of Meturan to the transmission of the stream of tradition is discussed in more depth in *Chapter Three*.

This chapter has outlined the origins of a scholarly discourse centered on the figure of the king. Discourse of this kind is recoverable for the first time with the emergence of writing in the Uruk IV period toward the end of the fourth millennium BCE, and a continuous tradition is evident through to the emergence of the first empires during the Akkad and Ur III periods. The iconography of artifacts such as the *Uruk Vase* and the *Lion Hunt Stele* points to a body of experts concerned with shaping the royal image, which develops substantially during the Early Dynastic period (2900–2350 BCE). Artifacts such as Eannatum’s *Stele of the Vultures* from the Early Dynastic IIIb period (2500–2340 BCE) advanced the notion of the warrior as leader figure, in both the divine and the human realm. The spread of cuneiform writing during the Early Dynastic period involved the diffusion of lexical and literary texts from the south into the north, where a local scholarly tradition was emerging, as is apparent in political centers such as Kiš, Ebla, Tell Brak, and Urkeš. Simultaneously, this

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**242** I use the category of standardization as opposed to canonization, which circumscribes a closed body of texts. See also critically Foster 2007, chapt. 1. For the Old Babylonian textual standardization of Sumerian literature see Rubio 2009.

**243** Vanstiphout 1995; Veldhuis 1997; Tinney 1999; Robson 2001; Rubio 2009, 39–42; Robson 2011. While the body of knowledge written in the Sumerian language survived in the institution of the Old Babylonian edubba, the late Old Babylonian tablets from Dūr-Abiešuh provide evidence for the emergence of a specifically Akkadian written tradition that maintained “close connections to the intellectual traditions of Nippur but displays a marked proclivity for writing in Akkadian.” (George 2009, 149).

northern Syrian horizon was interacting with Hurrian tradition, which represents an important cultural element in the piedmont region of northern Mesopotamia. During the Old Akkadian, Ur III, and Old Assyrian periods, the Sumer-Babylonian and Syro-Hurrian traditions both contributed to the development of a cultural discourse in Aššur and in the larger Tigridian area, including Ešnunna and Tigonānum. This will be demonstrated in the next chapter. Focusing on the third millennium represents an attempt to demonstrate the cosmopolitan nature of scholarship from the very beginning. It also illuminates why in later periods Assyrian kings could so easily turn to a rich tapestry of traditions from which to weave their particular ideological discourse, as happened in the Middle Assyrian period, when Assyria first became a territorial state.

## 3 The Origins of Assyrian Cultural Tradition

### 3.1 Where to Begin?

Where and when can we first locate a specifically Assyrian ideological discourse? Who can we identify as its ‘founding father(s)’? The perspective of the modern historiographer of the ancient Near East has been greatly distorted by the evidence of the later territorial and imperial states, which were characterized by a cultural and political center. Traditional histories of Assyria typically begin in the second rather than in the third millennium BCE, thereby separating the city of Aššur’s history as a center of trade during the Old Assyrian period from Assyria’s history as a territorial state in later periods.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the emergence of a particularly Assyrian cultural discourse is said to begin only when the former city state Aššur developed into a territorial state during the Middle Assyrian period in the second half of the second millennium BCE.

This reconstruction of Assyrian history has persisted in part due to recent developments in the field of Assyriology. In recent decades, Assyriology has become increasingly fractured as research has focused on ever narrower fields of specialization. Research on Assyrian history has not been spared this phenomenon, becoming chronologically compartmentalized into studies on the Old, Middle and Neo-Assyrian periods. Resulting research has been informed by a correspondingly restricted interpretation of tradition. Further, research on Assyrian cultural discourse has been confined primarily to the literary texts. Because the city of Aššur produced almost no such texts,<sup>2</sup> scholarly study of Assyria has instead been preoccupied with Assyria’s perceived historiographic tradition. Scholarship has largely ignored the ancients’ blurring of the ‘literary’ and the ‘historiographic’ texts and has focused on the annals for which imperial Assyria is famous.<sup>3</sup> Regarding Mesopotamian literary tradition *per se*, scholars have been primarily concerned with trying to explain how this literary tradition – as expressed in tales of the kings of Akkad<sup>4</sup> – spread through Mesopotamia, into Mari in Syria, and further afield into Anatolia. The purpose of such investigation was to determine whether the spread of tales of the kings of Akkad beyond Mesopotamia was a consequence of the direct presence of the Ak-

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1 Veenhof/Eidem 2008.

2 See now the Old Assyrian Sargon legend found at Kültepe and published by van de Mieroop 2000, 145–159 on the basis of its primary edition by Günbatti 1997.

3 Liverani 1981, Michalowski 1983, Tadmor 1991, Renger 1986, and Weissert 1997 represent notable exceptions.

4 Güterbock 1938.



kadian kings in Anatolia or whether it was necessary to posit channels of transmission either through the Hurrians or the Old Assyrians.<sup>5</sup> In this approach, the Hurrians were considered creative in their adaptation of the Babylonian tradition because there is concrete textual evidence indicating such creativity.<sup>6</sup> Aššur, however, was omitted from such analyses, because there is very little direct evidence for its early cultural discourse, which can be reconstructed only through a careful analysis of other surviving media.

In this vein, because the earliest building inscriptions of the rulers of Aššur possess formal characteristics that show commonalities with royal inscriptions from the south, they have been categorized as typical Old Akkadian and Ur III inscriptions and, consequently, have been included in editions of the royal inscriptions of the kings of Akkad and the kings of the Ur III period.<sup>7</sup> Yet the *archaeological* evidence demonstrates the existence of a flourishing and independent economic and cultic life in Aššur already during the Early Dynastic period, as is clear from the older layers of the Ištār Temple.<sup>8</sup> This situation is also indicated by early inscriptions attesting to Aššur's intermittent independence during the reigns of the Old Akkadian and Ur III kings. Despite this important evidence, scholarship has tended to approach Aššur's history as if it began only in the first centuries of the second millennium BCE, "when it exhibited a set of distinctive features in the areas of political institutions, economic structures, law, religion, language, and art, which set it off from the preceding Ur III empire, contemporary Babylonia and the following Middle Assyrian period."<sup>9</sup>

The situation was, however, much more fluid during the third and first half of the second millennium BCE, when cities rose to prominence primarily on the basis of their economically strategic locations within the commercial networks that crisscrossed the ancient Near East in general, and northern Mesopotamia – notably Ešnunna, Mari, Aššur, Ekallatum, Emar, and Carchemish – in particular.<sup>10</sup> The recent finds of Tigonānum<sup>11</sup> seem to indicate that one has to add this city to the list of major centers in the Northern Syrian and Tigridian region. Aššur emerged as one 'center' alongside others, constituting a node in the dynamic network of cultural interaction that linked Amorites, Hurrians and Babylonians. Due to the archaizing Old Akkadian features of the

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5 Kammenhuber 1976a and 1976b.

6 de Martino 1993.

7 Gelb & Kienast 1990, 79 f. and 369; Steible 1991, 245; Galter 1997, 54; Frayne, RIME 2, E2.4.1.1.

8 Bär 2003.

9 Veenhof and Eidem 2008, 19.

10 Durand 1992; Charpin and Durand 1997, 376–377.

11 George 2013, 101–128

Old Assyrian language, Aššur has not generally been regarded as subject to the *Babylonization* of written culture in Upper Mesopotamia,<sup>12</sup> while the terms ‘Akkadian’ and ‘Akkad’ have been understood merely as synonyms for the cities of Ešnunna and Babylon.<sup>13</sup> In a recent study of Ešnunna’s role in the formation of scribal tradition in Mari, the Middle Euphrates, and Upper Mesopotamia, Dominique Charpin suggests that the term ‘Babylonization’ should be replaced with ‘Akkadization,’ since this process started in the period of Ešnunna’s emerging supremacy under its king Narām-Sîn.<sup>14</sup> This ambitious king clearly emulated Akkadian tradition as is demonstrated by his choice of the name Narām-Sîn, which, like that of his illustrious Akkadian namesake, was preceded by the determinative for ‘god’ (DINGIR). As is stressed by Charpin, the Akkadization of scribal practice did not, however, follow the southern Babylonian model represented by Babylon and Larsa,<sup>15</sup> but seems to have originated in Ešnunna itself. In Mari this modernizing of scribal practice included changes in tablet shape, in paleography, in the syllabary, in the use of ideograms, and in the notation of numbers and measures. According to Charpin, widespread literacy in Aššur suggests that the city firmly resisted such scribal reforms, but it could equally be said that the correspondence of merchants and scholarly production at the court represent two different aspects of the scribal world. Traces of Akkadization are apparent in the inscriptions of Šamši-Adad I<sup>16</sup> and in his diplomatic correspondence,<sup>17</sup> which points either to the presence of Ešnunnean scholars at his court or at least to the exposure of his scribes to Ešnunnean scribal tradition. Akkadization implied not only linguistic change but also the adoption of typical features of Old Akkadian royal ideology, as I will demonstrate in this chapter.

As is clear from the process of Akkadization, Ešnunna played a central role in the transmission of Sumero-Babylonian culture to the west, and, as I would like to suggest, to the north. It is worth noting in this regard that the Akkadian written at Old Babylonian Alalakh, which had a strong Hurrian presence, shares features with Old Akkadian.<sup>18</sup> Other linguistic features like the shift

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12 Charpin and Durand 1997, 374.

13 Durand 1992, 123.

14 Charpin 1985b, 55 and fn. 35, 62, and 2012, 135.

15 Charpin 2003, 40 fn. 99; 2008, 153.

16 See the contraction of *i+a > ê* (Charpin 2012, 134), hitherto considered a feature of Mari texts but which is equally present in Ešnunna and Aššur; see also Kouwenberg 2010, 14 stressing a ‘northern kind of Old Babylonian.’

17 See the use of the anonymous sender formula for the king: *umma bêlka-ma* used by Šamši-Adad I in letters found at Šemšara, Eidem and Læssøe 2001, nos. 6–25 and Charpin 2012, 128.

18 Whiting 1987, 6.

from  $n > l$  as attested in the Old Assyrian/Middle Assyrian month name *kanwar-ta/kalmarte* have been considered a shared linguistic feature of Old Assyrian, Hurrian, Proto-Hattic, and Hittite,<sup>19</sup> supporting the idea that there was a common linguistic horizon in the north that might – with all due caution – reflect a distinct cultural horizon.<sup>20</sup> This chapter will therefore attempt to reveal how the cities of northern Mesopotamia and northern Syria defined their own cultural identity in light of their indebtedness to the Akkad model, both during and in the period following the Akkadian empire.

The following investigation, rather than locating the beginnings of Assyrian ideological discourse at any one moment in history, seeks to lay bare the dynamics of a *longue durée* inextricably bound up in Aššur's various roles as a trading station, an outpost at the frontiers of the empires of the Old Akkadian and Ur III periods,<sup>21</sup> a city state of the Old Assyrian period, and, under Šamši-Adad I (1808–1776 BCE), an important cultic center in a large territorial state.

### 3.2 The Early History of the City of Aššur

Due to its strategic location as a gateway to the fertile alluvial plain of the south and as a node in the trade route linking the Taurus region through Ešnunna with Der,<sup>22</sup> the city of Aššur was one of the earliest prosperous settlements in the north. This is evident in Aššur's ceramic history, which begins in the sixth or fifth millennium BCE while stone vessels date to the Uruk period (fig. 14). By the later Early Dynastic period, Aššur's economic wealth was based on its commercial role and translated directly into a flourishing cult, as confirmed by the early Ištar temples.<sup>23</sup> Finds from the early strata of the Ištar temple include an Early Dynastic seal that in its material composition and iconography links Aššur with the regions of the Diyala and the Hamrin (fig. 15).<sup>24</sup> Similarly, numerous praying figures<sup>25</sup> and censers point to connections with the cultural horizons of the Diyala region and Mari. The Early Dynastic finds also included a relief plaque showing a female figure (fig. 16), perhaps Ištar,<sup>26</sup>

19 Hecker, *GKT* § 33a with additions by Hirsch 1972, 400; Deller 1985–86, 43.

20 I state this with caution, as I am well aware of the danger of equating language, ethnicity, and culture.

21 Neumann 1992.

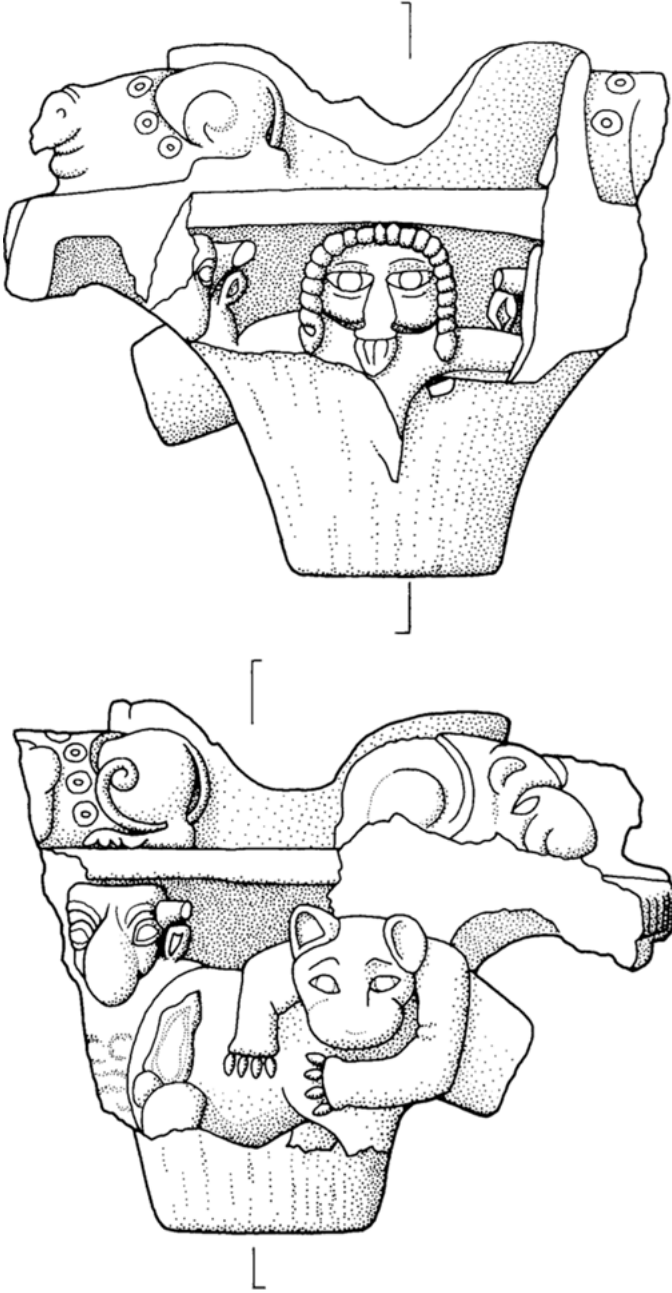
22 Veenhof 2003b, 26.

23 Orlin 1970; Larsen 2000; Bär 2003.

24 Bär 2003, S 21, see pp. 131, 140 and pl. 43.

25 Bär 2003, 84–96 (ED praying figures), 96–101 (Akkad – Early OB) and pls. 1–40.

26 Bär 2003, 164 and pl. 62.



**Fig. 14:** Steatite vessel with hero and lion grabbing ram from Ištar temple at Aššur (Bär 2003, pl. 52; Assur 22408/VA 7887).

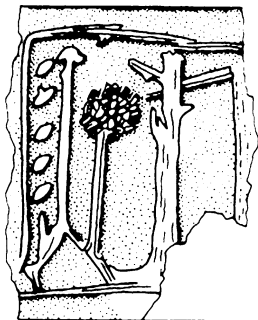


Fig. 15: ED Seal with Pole (Bär 2003, pl. 44: S 21; Assur S 22342).

and a cylinder seal that in its iconography links Aššur with Tell Brak (fig. 17).<sup>27</sup> A bead assemblage from the Archaic Ištar temple G with quadruple-spiral beads and etched carnelian indicates contacts with the trade routes connecting India to Anatolia “and closely resembles jewellery recovered from sites in southern Mesopotamia.”<sup>28</sup> The sealing of an *entu*-priestess is still another sign of the importance of the Ištar temple (fig. 18) during the late Ur III period.

Remains of archaeological strata under the stratum dating to the reign of Šamši-Adad I in the area of the Old Palace confirm the existence of an official building that might have functioned as a palace already by the late Early Dynastic period or early Old Akkadian period at the latest.<sup>29</sup> Old Akkadian tablets carrying the excavation number Ass. 19492 confirm this dating; accordingly, the earliest strata comprised several layers from the Akkad period and perhaps one that dates back into the Early Dynastic period.<sup>30</sup> Aššur is not mentioned in the royal inscriptions of the kings of Akkad, who only refer to Subartu, the later homeland of Assyria. This lack of written evidence is due to the fact that the Old Akkadian texts from Aššur, which include economic and school texts, have not yet been published.<sup>31</sup> It should be mentioned, however, that some of the school tablets represent word lists that contain not only Sumerograms but also Akkadian words. This led Aage Westenholz to assume that they repre-

<sup>27</sup> Bär 2003, S 25, 132 and pl. 44.

<sup>28</sup> Westenholz 2005, 9.

<sup>29</sup> Peddeand Lundström 2008, 27.

<sup>30</sup> Miglus 1989 and Neumann 1997, 136. Hans Neumann provides a preliminary discussion of all the Old Akkadian texts from Aššur in his article 1997.

<sup>31</sup> Neumann 1997 and Hasselbach 2005, 5 fn. 31.



**Fig. 16:** Ištar Relief Plaque from Ištar Temple at Aššur (Bär 2003, pl. 62; Assur S 23106/ BM 118996).

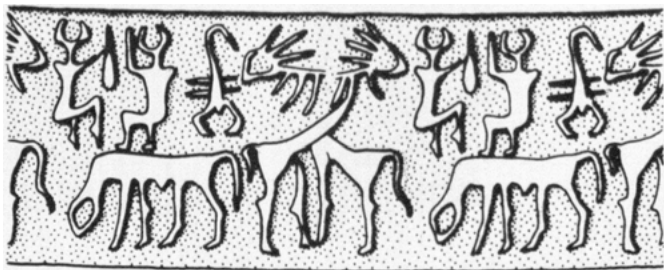


Fig. 17: ED Seal with Animals (Bär 2003, pl. 44, S 25; Assur 22543/VA 7963).

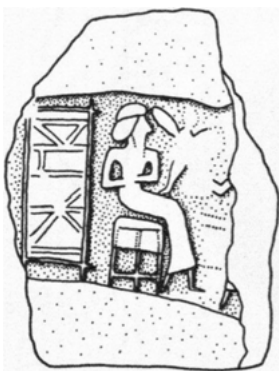


Fig. 18: Seal of NIN.DINGIR (Bär 2003, pl. 45, S 7; Assur 21977a/VA 8122).

sented the beginning of an Akkadian lexical tradition that was discontinued when the Akkadian empire collapsed.<sup>32</sup>

The level directly beneath Šamši-Adad I's Old Palace, known as the courtyard of the so-called *Schotterhofbau*, has been dated to the Old Assyrian period on the basis of fragments of clay tablets, envelopes, seal impressions, and a lentil-shaped exercise tablet. Bricks with the name of Erišum I have been recovered from the mud debris separating this level from Šamši-Adad I's Old Palace,<sup>33</sup> attesting to Erišum I's intention to make a representational statement regarding his function as ruler of the city. This casts a different light on the nature of kingship in Aššur than does the correspondence of the merchants of the Old Assyrian period. Inscriptions of Erišum have been also found in Kaneš

<sup>32</sup> Neumann 1997, 137 with reference to Westenholz 1974–1977, 106.

<sup>33</sup> Miglus 1989 and Pedersén 1989 and Dercksen 2004, 5–7.

and must probably be seen in the context of other school tablets found at the merchant center. Enough school tablets have been found to assume some kind of scribal training that must have occurred in some kind of cooperation with the one performed in the city of Aššur as attested by a duplicate.<sup>34</sup> The texts from Kaneš included literary texts, a love charm, a Lamaštu incantation and other incantations, letters and other texts related to commercial activities.<sup>35</sup>

All of this archaeological data implies that Aššur functioned as a trade hub very early on, connecting Elam, Babylonia, and Anatolia and facilitating the long-range exchange of precious metals and textiles. Aššur occupied this position even before the Old Assyrian period, when precisely such a role is securely documented in the archives of Kaneš/Kültepe. The antiquity of Aššur's role as a center of trade points to firmly established political and economic structures. In turn, Aššur's long history of trade explains the close relationship between the god Aššur and the City Hall (*biṭ ālim*), the function of the latter being primarily economic,<sup>36</sup> as is clear from the Old Assyrian letters.

During the Old Akkadian and Ur III periods Aššur's phases of independence were temporary and short-lived, and some elements of the early inscriptions reflect southern traditions. Nevertheless, the choices made by the local rulers or governors of Aššur regarding the introduction and fostering of particular cults and the choice of specific titles in their celebratory inscriptions suggest their active participation in and reception of an existing supra-regional cultural discourse. The same evidence also indicates a deliberate attempt by the rulers of Aššur to define their own identity on their own terms, rather than a passive copying of existing traditions from the south.

Judging by the scale of investment in building projects in Aššur during the Old Assyrian period and during the reign of Šamši-Adad I – notably in structures like the Old Palace, the city walls, and the temples in Aššur – the city appears to have played a major role as cultural metropolis and seat of kingship during the Old Babylonian period, though this view has been questioned recently on the grounds that Ekallatum might have been Šamši-Adad I's base of operation before he chose Šubat-Enlil – formerly Šekhna – as his residence.<sup>37</sup> It seems, however, that it was only toward the end of his reign that Šamši-Adad I divided his territorial state into three blocs administered from *three*

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34 Hecker 1996.

35 Hecker 1993.

36 Dercksen 2004, 12f.

37 Charpin/Durand 1997; Ziegler 2002. Note that Daduša in his stele calls him 'king of Ekallatum'; Ekallatum further occurs as reference point in the prophecy ARMT 26 196: "You will meet your appointed time just like Ekallatum."



strategic sites: Šubat-Enlil, his own newly founded capital in the Hābūr Basin, Ekallatum, located just north of Aššur, and Mari, an important trade station on the route from Babylonia to northwestern Syria. As discussed further below, Aššur's Old Palace and some of its most important temples were the beneficiaries of major renovation work under Šamši-Adad I, implying that in the beginning of his reign Aššur must have been more than merely a ceremonial center for this king.

Investigating Assyrian ideological discourse from a diachronic perspective reveals its complexity: the future Assyrian empire may have grown out of a city state, but this city also served as an important outpost of the Akkadian and Ur III empires.

During the early periods of Aššur's existence, the city of Nineveh – located further north on the east bank of the Tigris at the site of a key river crossing – seems to have had a strongly Hurrianized population and been largely independent of the south. In recent years the question of Akkadian control of Nineveh has been disputed, and even Maništušu's building activities in the Ištar temple of Nineveh have been cast into doubt.<sup>38</sup> The sparse textual evidence from the Ur III period, including the visit of the local king Tiš-atal of Nineveh to Ešnunna<sup>39</sup> during the reign of Šu-Sîn and expenditures recorded in Ur for messengers or ambassadors from the states of Šimanum and Nineveh,<sup>40</sup> argue in favor of Nineveh's geo-political status as a Hurrian principality. This perception is reinforced by the status of the Hurrian Ištar-Šauška as Nineveh's patron deity, which further marks its cultural identity as Hurrian. If Nineveh was identical with the city of Ninet, a sanctuary of a goddess Eštar that is mentioned in the archives of Mari, then this same goddess was also venerated in the palace of Mari at the end of the reign of Yasmah-Adad.<sup>41</sup> Nineveh's strategic location and importance as a former seat of Hurrian rulers made it a highly desirable target for the expansionist vision of Šamši-Adad I.

The formation of the Assyrian state and the development of its cultural discourse in general and its royal ideology in particular were based on local as well as 'supra-regional' political, economic, and social structures. Nowhere is this complex discourse more apparent than in the attempt to combine multiple different traditions in the *Assyrian King List (AKL)*, which begins with the '17 kings who lived in tents' – thus connecting the city with an Amorite past an-

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**38** Westenholz 2005.

**39** Whiting 1976, (TA 1931–T615).

**40** Watson 1986.

**41** For the discussion of and bibliography on the identification of the two cities see Ziegler 2005, 19 f.

chored in a more mobile lifestyle – and concomitantly appropriating Aššur as the historic seat of kingship.<sup>42</sup>

### 3.3 Socio-Political Organization: North versus South

When approaching the subject of Assyrian identity, it is necessary to be mindful of the fact that some of the differences in the social organization of northern and southern Mesopotamia reflect actual ecological differences between the two regions.<sup>43</sup> Although kings in northern Mesopotamia and in northwestern Syria controlled much wealth and a large expanse of land, their power was “balanced by the council of the city elders and family members, in a pattern also characteristic of a ‘tribal type of society.’”<sup>44</sup> Such patterns are evident in the various Early Dynastic archives of Ebla, Nagar/Tell Brak, and Nabada/Tell Beydar in the Hābūr Basin. Furthermore, it seems that the polities that formed part of the kingdom of Nagar remained to some extent economically autonomous and were responsible only for certain tasks, such as feeding the donkeys of the ruler when he travelled through the area. The retention of economic autonomy is additionally apparent in the fact that the leaders of these smaller polities could receive gifts directly from a foreign ruler; gift-giving was not always channeled through the king of Nagar for redistribution.<sup>45</sup> During the Early Dynastic period there were several major centers in the Jazira, among them ancient Šekhna/Tell Leilan and Urkeš/Tell Mozan, which controlled polities in competition with Nagar.

Although no texts from the Early Dynastic period survive from Aššur, the later Old Assyrian archives of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE attest to a social organization comparable to that of other northern Mesopotamian and northern Syrian polities, as there is a similar distribution of power between the city assembly (*ālum*), the eponym (*limmum*), and the city ruler (*rubā’um*), the latter a title also used by the rulers of Ešnunna. In this framework, the occasionally attested ‘Elders’ (*šībūtu*) were probably part of the city assembly or represented it in some capacity,<sup>46</sup> while the ruler was the *primus inter pares* and ‘overseer’ (PA/*waklum*) of the community of the city.<sup>47</sup> Judicial and presumably other ad-

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<sup>42</sup> For a discussion of this list see below *chapter* 3.5.3.1.

<sup>43</sup> See Liverani 1993, 3 who cautions us against crude environmental explanations including the ethnic one with regard to the empire of Akkad.

<sup>44</sup> Stein 2004, 74.

<sup>45</sup> Sallaberger 2004, 67.

<sup>46</sup> On the elders reflecting collective leadership in Syria see Fleming 2004, 190–200.

<sup>47</sup> Cifola 1995, 9.

ministrative affairs were overseen in close cooperation between the ruler and the city assembly. The city assembly was the highest judicial authority and functioned as a court of law, but could also make political decisions relating to trade and to the distribution of costs for the fortification of the city. It could issue commands (*awātum* ‘word’) and some of its decrees could turn into general rulings (*awātum*, pl.) which were then inscribed on a stela (*awât nar-u’ā’im*).<sup>48</sup>

Old Assyrian letters clearly indicate that political leadership in Old Assyrian Aššur was shared between various bodies, but this is not true for the royal inscriptions of that period, which represent the king in his exclusive position with regard to the god Aššur. The divergent evidence for Aššur’s political organization reflected in the letters of merchant families on the one hand and in the royal inscriptions on the other demonstrates that the ruler’s ideological claim of a monopoly over executive power cannot be accepted *prima facie*. Instead, as already pointed out in *Chapter One*, the king relied on a host of courtiers, officials, scribes, and diviners to ensure effective governance.<sup>49</sup>

The *Archaic List of Professions* from Uruk<sup>50</sup> reveals a complex social structure, yet the political organization known for Aššur is not observable in the Sumerian city states of the south. In southern Mesopotamia, palace and temple both represented wealthy, economically privileged households, as is demonstrated by their architecture and administrative documents. Even cooperative institutional bodies, as represented in the archaic city seals indicating regular deliveries to the temple of Inanna in Uruk during the Jemdet Nasr period, do not necessarily imply the independence of the temple from the ruler in the city of Uruk.<sup>51</sup> In the *Archaic List of Professions*, the NAMEŠDA sits atop the social ladder followed by a vizier, indicating an early tendency toward a strongly pyramidal social structure.<sup>52</sup> During the Early Dynastic III period, Enmetena and Uru-’inimgina, rulers of the city state of Lagaš, decree freedom from debt slavery and corvée labor.<sup>53</sup> These decrees point to centralized control, and the *Reforms of Uru-’inimgina* indeed make clear that the palace controlled, or at least had access to, the resources of the temple.<sup>54</sup> As such, southern Mesopota-

48 Veenhof 2003a, 74.

49 See Chapter 1.4.

50 Englund, Nissen, and Damerow 1993.

51 Matthews 1993; Steinkeller 2002.

52 nám-GIŠ.ŠITA to be read nám-éšda which according to the canonical series Lú = ša means ‘kingship,’ Englund & Nissen 1993; Wilcke 2007, 18–19.

53 FAOS 5/1 Ent. 79 iii 10–vi 6 and FAOS 5/1 Ukg. 4–5.

54 Whether Uru-’inimgina’s reforms actually implicated the reestablishment of divine ownership over former royal estates is debated and in my view unlikely, Wilcke 2003, 141–143, see also Hruška 1973 and Edzard 1974.

mian society appears to have been strongly hierarchical with power concentrated in the hands of a single ruler already in the Early Dynastic period. The essential roles and key metaphors that would govern royal ideology in the future history of the ancient Near East had at this point been established in southern Mesopotamia: the king as war leader, the king as hunter, and the king as caretaker of the temple.

Differences in social organization influenced the early monumental and ideological self-representation of kings, which had not yet emerged in third millennium northern Mesopotamia. Instead, above ground elite burials involving numerous people emphasize the importance of lineage in the north, typical of a society organized along tribal lines.<sup>55</sup> Because urbanism was a secondary development in northern Mesopotamia that arose in response to the growth of cities in the south, “northern kings borrowed the ideological trappings and administrative technologies of southern kingship and southern state societies – palaces, cylinder seals, writing, and royal iconography – although all these were translated into local forms and presumably into local systems of meaning as well.”<sup>56</sup>

### 3.4 Third Millennium Ideological Discourse in Aššur

No inscriptions from the Early Dynastic period have been recovered in Aššur and only a few inscriptions hint at the ideological discourse that developed during the Old Akkadian period (ca. 2350–2200 BCE). This group includes votive inscriptions, building inscriptions, and inscriptions on sealings, which, beyond the titulary, provide little historical information. Nevertheless, these few inscriptions reveal the roots of an Assyrian ideological discourse predicated on the establishment of alliances with divine figures, particularly with the god Aššur and the goddess Ištar in her various hypostases.

Among the early building inscriptions is a votive plaque originally written by Ititi that was secondarily placed in the Ištar temple built by Tukulti-Ninurta I. In this inscription, Ititi reports that he dedicated the votive plaque in question to the goddess Ištar as part of the war booty he acquired following his victory over Gasur. Accordingly, Ititi’s inscription happens to be early evidence of Aššur’s interaction – in this case by means of military confrontation – with a city that formed part of the Hurrian cultural horizon but might at that time

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<sup>55</sup> Porter 2002a and 2002b.

<sup>56</sup> Stein 2004, 72.

have been dominated by Akkadians, as administrative records refer to it as an Old Akkadian garrison.<sup>57</sup>

*Inscription of Ititi*<sup>58</sup>

1	<i>i-ti-ti</i>	Ititi,
2	PA	the ruler,
3	DUMU <i>i-nin-la-ba</i>	son of Ininlaba,
4	<i>in ša<sub>10</sub>-la-ti</i>	(8) dedicated (this object) from the booty
5	<i>ga-sur</i> <sub>3</sub> (SAG).KI	of Gasur
6	<i>a-na</i>	to
7	<sup>d</sup> INANNA	the goddess Ištar.
8	A.MU.RU	

This inscription points to the importance of the goddess Ištar to the ruler. Ititi's description of himself as 'son of Ininlaba,' however, also reveals an interest in genealogy and in identification with individual predecessors. Ininlaba's name – 'Innin/Ištar is a lion' – in turn demonstrates that the strong bond between the ruler and the goddess Ištar enjoyed a long pedigree. Indeed, the name Ininlaba is "also found in documents from contemporary Gasur, and paralleled in other Old Akkadian names such as Aštar-laba, Šî-laba, and Šî-lab'at, meaning 'Ištar is a lion', 'She is a lion', and 'She is a lioness.'"<sup>59</sup> Ititi's genealogical reference implies a claim to rule based on ancestral line and thus indicates a royal outlook that is very different from the one advanced in the *Sumerian King List* in the south – of which one fragment dates to the Ur III period<sup>60</sup> – in which particular stress is laid on the rotation of hegemonic rule among the city states rather than on the rise and fall of individual dynasties.<sup>61</sup>

Ititi's title in the votive plaque inscription is PA, which used to be read as an abbreviation of the Sumerian title PA.TE.SI = ensi<sub>2</sub> = Akkadian *išši'akkum*, a designation that referred to a provincial governor under the kings of Akkad. In Aššur, the title ENSI<sub>2</sub>, however, only occurs in the construct with the name of the god Aššur, and so, in Ititi's inscription the reading PA = *ugula/waklum* is to be preferred.<sup>62</sup> This title served as the self-designation of the rulers of Aššur

<sup>57</sup> Durand 1977 and Michalowski 1986, 139 assumed that during the Old Akkadian period the Hurrian presence might still have been confined to the eastern Tigridian region.

<sup>58</sup> RIMA 1, A.0.1001.1: *Ititi PA DUMU I-nin-la-ba in ša-la-ti Ga-sur<sub>14</sub> ki a-na dINANNA A.MU.RU*. The plaque originally belonged to the layers G or G/F of the early Ištar Temples, see most recently Meinhold 2009, 20 with previous discussion.

<sup>59</sup> Lambert 2005b, 36.

<sup>60</sup> Steinkeller 2003; see further Michalowski 1983; Wilcke 1989; Glassner 2005; for a recension from Tell Leilan see Vincente 1995.

<sup>61</sup> Wilcke 1989.

<sup>62</sup> Veenhof 2003b, 38.

as long as the city state of Aššur was independent.<sup>63</sup> The title *ugula/waklum* denoted the ruler's status relative to the community of Aššur, qualifying him as 'administrator of the City' and as 'overseer of the community', while the title *ensi<sub>2</sub>/iššiakkum*, which is attested in official seals and inscriptions, referred to the ruler's relationship with the god Aššur. The title *ugula/waklum* was still in use under Adad-nīrārī I (1295–1264 BCE) and Shalmaneser I (1263–1234 BCE), and inscriptions of the latter show that the title *šid/išši'akku* could be used interchangeably in the same context.<sup>64</sup> Although use of the title *ensi<sub>2</sub>* in the political arena indicated dependency on the Akkadian overlord during the Old Akkadian period, the title first appears as a designation for the city ruler in the inscriptions of the kings of pre-Sargonic Lagaš, a city-state in southern Mesopotamia that encompassed a number of distinct towns.<sup>65</sup> In Lagaš, the administrative character of the title *ENSI<sub>2</sub>* is apparent in the epithet *ensi<sub>2</sub>-gal<sup>d</sup>Ningirsu*, which refers to the king's relationship with the patron deity. The same is true for the epithet 'given power by Enlil' (*á-sum-ma<sup>d</sup>en-líl*), which is found in the inscriptions of Enannatum. Although Enannatum and Entemena refer to themselves exclusively with the title *ensi<sub>2</sub>*, they relate that they obtained kingship (*nam-lugal*) from a deity.<sup>66</sup> Toward the end of the third millennium the ruler Gudea continued to designate himself "steward" (*ensi<sub>2</sub>*) of Lagaš, stressing his stewardship vis-à-vis the patron deity of the city.<sup>67</sup> The ideological discourse of these kings of Lagaš is typical of the Tigridian area and suggests that Lagaš forms part of a greater region of cultural unity that stretches north from Lagaš to Ešnunna and Aššur. This view is supported both by the exclusion of the dynasty of Lagaš from the *Sumerian King List* and by the fact that the scholars of Lagaš were sufficiently self-confident to compose their own king list.<sup>68</sup>

After he brought the city states of the south under his control, Lugalzagesi referred to himself as *ensi<sub>2</sub>-gal<sup>d</sup>en-líl*.<sup>69</sup> This epithet was then adopted by king Sargon of Akkad, who defeated Lugalzagesi and built the empire of Akkad.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>63</sup> About 1750 BCE the title PA + GN used by the rulers of Hana, *UGULA Ha-na*, see Podany 2002, 33.

<sup>64</sup> RIMA 1, A.0.76.27 and 28 (Adn. I) and RIMA 1, A.0.77.26–27.

<sup>65</sup> For the territory of the city state of Lagaš as expressed in cultic dependencies see Selz 1995, 294 ff. On the titles *ensi<sub>2</sub>* and *lugal* see further my discussion in *Chapter 5.1*.

<sup>66</sup> Heimpel 1992, 7 f.

<sup>67</sup> Winter 1992, 18; Glassner 1993.

<sup>68</sup> Sollberger 1967.

<sup>69</sup> RIME 1, E1.14.20.1 i 15–16 *ensi<sub>2</sub>-gal<sup>d</sup>en-líl*. For a detailed discussion of the title see Wang 2011, 132–134.

<sup>70</sup> RIME 2, E2.1.1.1: 2 [*lugal*] [*ag-ge-dè.KI*] and 8–9

The epithet  $\text{ensi}_2$  <sup>d</sup>Enlil thus expressed the king's direct accountability to Enlil, the chief god of the Sumerian pantheon, and did not entail that the ruler who adopted it relinquish the title 'king' (lugal) in relation to a particular city or to the land in general (lugal kalam-ma).<sup>71</sup> This same notion can be observed for the cities of Ešnunna and Aššur, where the city ruler was designated as the 'vice-regent' or 'steward' ( $\text{ensi}_2/\text{išši}'akku$ ) of the patron deity of the city. In Aššur, the ruler was vice-regent of the god Aššur while Aššur himself, written (<sup>d</sup>)Aššur(<sup>ki</sup>), was called 'king' (lugal/šarrum).

In Ešnunna, on the other hand, the ruler is referred to as 'beloved of Tišpak, steward of Ešnunna' ( $nāram$  <sup>d</sup>Tišpak  $\text{išši}'ak$  Ašnunna<sup>ki</sup>). This theocratic approach to kingship is further apparent in the fact that political authority continued to be associated with the epithet 'House of Tišpak and the Prince',<sup>72</sup> used to refer to both the god and the king. The broad similarity between the royal discourse of the rulers of Ešnunna and the rulers of Aššur is especially clear in the wording of their respective sealings. Indeed, the sealings of Šu-iliya, a local ruler of Ešnunna at the time of the Ur III king Ibbi-Sîn, and of Kirikiri, ruler of Ešnunna during the early Isin period, attribute the epithets 'strong king' and 'king of the four banks' to the god Tišpak. This is interesting because these epithets are known from the titularies of the kings of Akkad, but are here applied to a deity with whom the king is depicted in a subordinate relationship:<sup>73</sup>

*Seal Inscription of Šu-iliya*<sup>74</sup>

1	[ <sup>d</sup> ]Tišpak	Tišpak,
2	[LUGA]L <i>da-núm</i>	strong [kin]g,
3	[LUGA]L <i>ma-at [Wa]-ri-im</i>	[kin]g of the land [Wa]rum,
4	LUGAL	king
5	[ <i>kí-ib</i> ]- <i>ra-tim</i>	of the [f]our [qua]rters,
6	[ <i>a</i> ]- <i>ba-im</i>	
7	<sup>d</sup> Šu- <i>i-lí-a</i>	Šu-iliya,
8	<sup>r</sup> DUMU <sup>(?)</sup> - <i>šú</i>	his [son?],
9	<i>na-ra-a[m]</i>	belov[ed] of the goddesses
10	<sup>d</sup> <i>Be-la-at-t[e]-ra-ba-an</i>	Bēlat-T[e]raban

71 RIME 1, E1.14.20: i 4–5 lugal-unu.KI-ga lugal <sup>r</sup>kalam-ma<sup>r</sup>.

72 For an alliance between the House of Tišpak and the king of Mari, see Charpin 1991, 156; Charpin/Ziegler 2003, 39 and 49 f. This custom induced Dominique Charpin to assume that the title  $\text{ĪR}$  Tišpak indeed designated high officials of the king, Charpin 1990, 76 f. fn. 115 with reference to Charpin 1985a, 63–64 quoting a letter from the diviner Asqudum.

73 Schwemer 2001, 351 reads the title of the king as ugulawhile Frayne 1997, 435 prefers the reading *dumu*?

74 RIME 3/2.3.1.1

11	<sup>d</sup> Be-la-at-š[uh]-n[ir]	and Bēlat-š[uh]nir,
12	<sup>d</sup> rIŠKUR <sup>r</sup>	[of Adad]
13	ù <sup>d</sup> rX X <sup>r</sup> -[x]	and [GN]
14	i-š[i(?)]-...	...
15	mu-uš-te-[em <sup>2</sup> -ki <sup>2</sup> KUR <sup>2</sup> ]	unif[ier of the land <sup>2</sup> ].

Note further the title *muštemki mātim*, which was later revived by Šamši-Adad I.

*Seal Inscription of Kirikiri*<sup>75</sup>

1	<sup>d</sup> Tišpak	O god Tišpak,
2	LUGAL <i>da-núm</i>	mighty king,
3	LUGAL <i>ma-at wa-ri-im</i>	king of the land Warúm
4	<i>ki-ri-ki-ri</i>	– Kirikiri,
5–6	ÉNSI <i>áš-nun-na.KI</i>	steward of Ešnunna,
7–8	<i>a-na bi-la-la-ma</i>	(10)presented (this seal) to Bilalama,
9	DUMU.NI-šu	his son.
10	<i>i-qi<sub>4</sub>-iš</i>	

Kirikiri's son Bilalama expresses the relationship between god and ruler differently in the standard inscription of his stamped bricks, in which he emphasizes Tišpak's divine support as the basis of his empowerment. This position is articulated by means of the trope of love, conveying a relationship of mutual obligation between the deity and the king:

*Stamped Brick Inscription of Bilalama of Ešnunna*<sup>76</sup>

1	<i>bi-la-lama</i>	Bilalama,
2	<i>na-ra-am</i>	beloved
3	<sup>d</sup> Tišpak	of the god Tišpak,
4	ÉNSI	steward
5	<i>áš-nun-na.KI</i>	of Ešnunna.

Ešnunna represents the southernmost point of Hurrian penetration, which might explain Tišpak's position as the patron deity of Ešnunna. The Hurrian deity Tišpak, associated with the weather god Tešub, had replaced the local deity Ninazu as early as the Old Akkadian Period.<sup>77</sup>

Several seal impressions of a certain Šilulu, perhaps to be equated with Sulilu of the *Assyrian King List*, were found at Kültepe and demonstrate a theo-

<sup>75</sup> RIME 4, E4.5.2.1. The same wording or similar wording is attested in the sealing of Ušurawassu (RIME 4, E4.5.5), Azuzum (RIME 4, E4.5.6.2), Ur-Ninmar (RIME 4, E4.5.7.2).

<sup>76</sup> RIME 4, E4.5.3.3.

<sup>77</sup> Black and Green 1992, 178.



cratic understanding of rulership in the Assyrian cultural horizon that is similar to that of Ešnunna. These seal impressions also emphasize the equation of the city as a community with the eponymous god through the writing *Aššur.KI* instead of <sup>d</sup>*Aššur* and the positioning of the king's filiation.

*Seal Inscription of Šilulu*<sup>78</sup>

1	<i>a-šūr.KI</i>	Aššur
2	LUGAL	is king,
3	<i>ši-lu-lu</i>	Šilulu
4	ÉNSI <i>a-šūr.KI</i>	is steward of the city of Aššur,
5	DUMU <i>da-ki-ki</i>	son of Dakiki,
6	NIMGIR URU <i>a-šūr.KI</i>	herald of the city of Aššur (erasure).

The imagery of Šilulu's seal is interesting insofar as it shows a hero-like figure trampling over a naked enemy, which is reminiscent of the imagery of Naram-Sîn's victory stele.<sup>79</sup> Whether the trampling figure represents a divinity – perhaps Aššur – or the ruler is hard to determine. Be that as it may, the imagery differs clearly from later Old Assyrian royal seals that adopted the 'presentation scene' typical of the Ur III period, albeit with a probable change in meaning, as the ruler was represented as the standing figure being led by a LAMMA-deity into the presence of the seated Aššur.<sup>80</sup>

In line with Old Assyrian tradition,<sup>81</sup> Šamši-Adad I also chose this kind of formula to express the direct bond between Aššur and the ruler in his own seal.<sup>82</sup> Šamši-Adad I's interest in publicizing his genealogy should also be noted in this respect:

*Seal of Šamši-Adad I*<sup>83</sup>

1	<sup>d</sup> UTU-ši- <sup>d</sup> IŠ[KUR]	Šamši-Ad[ad],
2	[n]a-ra-am <sup>d</sup> [a]-šu[r <sub>a</sub> ]	beloved of the god Aššur,
3	[P]A.TE.S[I]	steward of
4	<sup>d</sup> a-šūr <sub>a</sub>	(the city of?) Aššur,
5	[mār] i-la-kab-ka-bu-ú	[son of] Ila-kabkabû.

The inscriptions on Šamši-Adad I's seals are typically Tigridian in their style, but the iconography of the audience scene in the seals is not. On his seals,

**78** RIMA 1, A.0.27.1.

**79** Eppihimer 2013, 42 fig. 8.

**80** Eppihimer 2013. During the Ur III period the seated figure represented the king and the figure standing before him represented one of his officials, who was also the owner of the relevant seal.

**81** Charpin 1984, 51; Charpin/Durand 1997, 371.

**82** Sealings of which have been found on various envelopes in the palace of Mari.

**83** RIMA 1, A.0.39.10.



Fig. 19: Seal of Šamši-Adad I (Porada 1980, fig. III-1 a).

Šamši-Adad I is depicted in Babylonian style with the typical Babylonian brimmed cap and beard, dressed in a long robe that leaves his right shoulder bare;<sup>84</sup> this imagery is reminiscent of that employed by his younger contemporary Hammurabi. The combination of Tigridian inscription and Babylonian iconography on Šamši-Adad I's seals reflects his broad geographical and cultural horizons with his scholars being conversant in a variety of traditions (fig. 19).

In Aššur itself, the trope of the city ruler being the 'vice-regent' or 'steward' (*ENSI<sub>2</sub>/išši'akku*) of the god Aššur – expressing the king's accountability to the patron deity – was firmly established by the time of Šamši-Adad I and dominated Assyrian ideology in various forms until the very end of the Assyrian empire.<sup>85</sup> Actual kingship was reserved for the god Aššur.

The titularies and inscriptions of the Old Assyrian rulers attest to the contracting of alliances with the divine world and are a direct reflection of the introduction of the cult of particular deities. Whether this cultic transfer occurred at the initiative of the Akkadian king or at the behest of the local ruler of Aššur cannot, of course, be determined. The integration of a specifically bellicose Ištar-hypostasis into the cult of Aššur, however, likely had consequences for cultic hierarchies and had a corresponding impact on ideological discourse. Of particular interest is an inscription written on a fragment of an alabastron dedicated to the Akkadian Ištar-Annunītu, indicating that her cult

<sup>84</sup> Özgüç 1980, 65; Tunca 1989.

<sup>85</sup> Interestingly, during the period of the kings of Hana in the Middle Euphrates region the title *išši'akku* also appears in the seal of the kings Iggid-Lim and Isih-Dagan, here in combination with the god Dagan: RN [PA].TE.SI <sup>d</sup>*Da-[gan]* [L]UGAL KUR *Ha-[na]*, see Podany 2002, no. 11 and no. 12; adopted by Hammurabi when he conquered the region, see no. 14.

had been introduced to the city of Aššur.<sup>86</sup> The presence of Akkadians – and, consequently, Akkadian culture – is further supported by the discovery of a spearhead inscribed with the name of an individual who served under the Akkadian king Maništušu (2269–2255 BCE).<sup>87</sup> This spearhead was placed secondarily in the foundation of Ištar temple D of the Old Assyrian period.

Ištar in her various aspects remained central to Assyrian rulership. During the Ur III period at the latest, the cult of Bēlat-ekallim, a goddess until then broadly venerated in southern Mesopotamia and otherwise known by her Sumerian equivalent Nin-egal, was introduced in Aššur under Zarriqum,<sup>88</sup> the local governor of the Ur III king:

*Inscription of Zarriqum*<sup>89</sup>

1	É <sup>d</sup> NIN-É.GAL- <i>lim</i>	The temple of the goddess Bēlat-ekallim,
2	<i>be-la-ti-šu</i>	his lady,
3	<i>a-na ba-la-aṭ</i>	for the life
4	<sup>d</sup> AMAR. <sup>d</sup> ZUEN	of Amar-Sîn,
5	DA x	the <i>strong man</i> ,
6–7	LUGAL [ŠEŠ.UNUG].KI-MA	king of [Ur(?)]
8	ù LUGAL	and king
9–10	<i>ki-ib-ra-tim ar-ba-im</i>	of the four quarters,
11	<i>za-ri-qum</i>	has Zarriqum,
12	GĪR.ARAD	governor
13	<sup>d</sup> A-šūr <sup>ki</sup>	of Aššur
14	ARAD- <i>su</i>	his (Amar-Sîn's) servant,
15	<i>a-na ba-la-ṭi-šu</i>	built for his (own) life.
16	<i>i-pu-uš</i>	

Like other early inscriptions, this votive plaque was found in a secondary context in the Ištar-temple built by Tukultī-Ninurta I. Because the later sanctuaries dedicated to Ištar were dedicated to Ištar-Aššurītu, it has been assumed that Zarriqum's building represented a chapel within that temple rather than an independent temple in its own right.<sup>90</sup> Although the Zarriqum inscription is only a votive plaque and conveys nothing about Bēlat-ekallim's actual role, the presence of her cult in Aššur is central to understanding Assyrian ideology. Bēlat-ekallim's Sumerian hypostasis Nin-egal is known to have been equated with Inanna and played an important role in determining the destiny of the

<sup>86</sup> RIME 2, E2.0.0.1005 [...] *a-[na]* <sup>d</sup>INANNA *an-nu-ni-tum* A.MU.RU.

<sup>87</sup> RIME 2, E2.1.3.2002 = RIMA 1, A.0.1002.2001: *Ma-an-iš-tu-šu* LUGAL KIŠ *A-zu-zu* 'İR<sup>3</sup>-*su a-na*<sup>rd</sup> *Be-al-SI-SI* A.MU.RU.

<sup>88</sup> For a recent survey on Zarriqum's career see Michalowski 2009, 150 with bibliography.

<sup>89</sup> After RIMA 1, A.0.1003.2001.

<sup>90</sup> Meinhold 2009, 117.

king.<sup>91</sup> The Sumerian ceremonial name É.KI.NAM = É *ašar šimāti* attested in the Aššur Directory (*Götteradressbuch*)<sup>92</sup> is reminiscent of this particular function, which Ištar assumed for the Assyrian king. The fact that Zarrīqum designates himself as Amar-Sîn's servant indicates that during this period Aššur was dependent on the Ur III court.<sup>93</sup>

The articulation of a programmatic royal discourse focusing on the ruler's relationship with the gods – primarily Ištar and Aššur – is explicit in the inscriptions of the Puzur-Aššur dynasty of the Old Assyrian period. In his report on the construction of a temple for Ištar the ruler Ilu-šumma introduces himself with the following title:

*Inscription of Ilušumma*<sup>94</sup>

1	DINGIR-šu-ma	Ilu-šumma,
2	ÉNSI	steward
3	a-šu-ur.KI	of Aššur,
4	na-ra-am	beloved
5	<sup>d</sup> a-šūr	of Aššur
6	ù <sup>d</sup> INANNA	and Ištar,
7	[mēra ša]lim-a-ḫu-um	[son of Ša]lim-ahum,
8	ÉNSI	steward
9	a-šu-ur.KI	of Aššur,
10	a-na <sup>d</sup> INANNA	(13) has built a temple for
11	NIN.A.NI	Ištar, his lady,
12	a-na ba-la-ṭi-šu	for his life.
13	É i-pu-uš	

The adoption of the title 'beloved of Ištar' is clear evidence of the appropriation of Akkadian ideology in the titulary of the kings of Aššur. In Assyria, the concept of being the beloved of a certain god underwent a local transformation through its application to the local patron deity and its association with an alliance that bound the divine world with the king. Votive plaques from the preceding Ur III period dedicated to Ištar-Aššurītu<sup>95</sup> indicate that it was probably during that time that the deity identified with the temple was redefined and Assyrianized: the Akkadian Ištar-Anunitu became the Assyrian Ištar-Aššurītu.

<sup>91</sup> Behrens 1998.

<sup>92</sup> Menzel 1981, *GAB* 165.

<sup>93</sup> I follow here Sallaberger 2007, 434 and Barjamovic 2011, n. 15 rather than Michalowski 2009, who assumes that Aššur was a vassal state of the Ur III ruler.

<sup>94</sup> RIMA 1, A.0.32.1:1–13. For a detailed summary of the building history of the early Ištar temples in Aššur see Meinhold 2009.

<sup>95</sup> Meinhold 2009, 26.

As the Ur III state weakened progressively toward the end of the third millennium BCE, the opportunity arose for Aššur to revive its commercial role as a hub between Elam, Babylonia, and Anatolia, competing for primacy in this capacity with Ešnunna and Mari as well as Isin and Larsa. Aššur's wide-ranging contacts are especially apparent in the inscriptions of Ilu-šumma and his successor Erišum I. One of Ilu-šumma's two surviving inscriptions introduces three motifs central to royal ideology: the king as the overseer of the irrigation system essential for the subsistence of the city, the king's measurement of house-plots for the people of Aššur, and the king's function as guardian of Aššur's position in inter-regional trade. With the exception of the motif of the king as custodian of the irrigation system, which was reintroduced during the Middle Assyrian period, these motifs were typical only for the Old Assyrian period and subsequently abandoned.<sup>96</sup>

A façade (and) new wall I constructed and subdivided house-plots for my city. The god Aššur opened for me two springs in Mount Abih and I made bricks for the wall by these two springs. The water of one spring flowed down to the Aušum Gate (while) the water of the other spring flowed down to the Wertum Gate.

I established freedom of the Akkadians and their children.

I purified their copper. I established their freedom from the border of the marshes and Ur and Nippur, Awal, and Kismar, Dēr of the god Ištaran, as far as the city (Aššur). (Meaning: I freed the Akkadians and their children from forced labor and cleared them of their obligations to pay copper as tax).<sup>97</sup>

While Ilu-šumma is the first ruler of Aššur to refer to geographical areas beyond Aššur, these references do not indicate Assyrian territorial control. Rather, they bespeak Aššur's efforts to control the trade in tin, copper, and premium woolen textiles. Tin probably came from Iran and was supplied via Elam, copper originated in Oman and reached Aššur via Babylon, and premium woolen textiles were generally produced in southern Mesopotamia.

The inscriptions of Ilu-šumma's successor, King Erišum, attest to significant building activities in the area of both the Aššur temple and the Adad temple. Copies of two inscriptions, the originals of which were placed in the Aššur temple, survive in Kaneš on clay tablets.<sup>98</sup> They are vital to understanding the administration of justice in the city of Aššur, which was performed at the *mušlālum*-gate in the presence of the seven Divine Judges. Of particular

<sup>96</sup> Larsen 1976, 63–80; Dercksen 2004, 17–18.

<sup>97</sup> RIMA 1, A.0.32.2:30–65.

<sup>98</sup> RIMA 1, A.0.33.1.

interest is the textual insertion that links the two inscriptions. This insertion lists the Seven Judges, reflecting the emphasis in both of the inscriptions on the construction of the Step Gate and on its judicial function as a site for giving testimony and speaking the oath. Somehow, this tradition of the judges of the Aššur temple, established at the latest under Erišum, survived in the much later *Götteraddressbuch*<sup>99</sup> and fragmentarily in the *tākultu*/banquet ritual, thus attesting to the longevity of certain traditions:<sup>100</sup>

<u>Erišum</u>	<u>Götteraddressbuch (GAB)</u>
(1) Mēšarum ('Justice')	(34) Mišaru
(2) Išme-karāb ('He heard the prayer')	(39) Išme-karāba
(3) Šê-raggu ('Get Out, Criminal!')	(40) Hip-raggu ('Break the Criminal')
(4) Ulli-mēšaram ('He Extolled Justice')	(34) (Distorted? to:) Il-Mišarum
(5) Ašur-ḥablam ('Watch Over the Downtrodden!')	(36) Ašra-killā ('Watch Over the Detention')
(6) Pūšu-kēn ('His Speech is just')	(37) Pīšu-kēna
(7) Išmēlum ('God Has Heard')	(38) Išmēla
	(40) Il-padā ('God (of the) Sparing')
	(40) Ušur-pīšunu ('Guard Their Word')
	(41) Tišamme-pê-mukarribe ('Listen to the Word of the Suppliant')

The above survey of the royal inscriptions from third millennium Aššur demonstrates that the rulers of that city experimented with their self-representation. On the one hand, there was an emphasis on the central notion of accountability to the gods, which was primarily expressed through the king's status as steward of the god Aššur. On the other hand, attempts were made to focus on the ruler's direct interaction with the community of Aššur through such actions as ensuring an adequate water supply for the city, assigning living space to the people within Aššur's urban landscape, and supervising trade. Tropes centered on the ruler's relationship with his subjects reflect the position of Aššur's ruler as a *primus inter pares* within the city community, a notion that vanished with Šamši-Adad I and his ambitions for building a territorial state.

Ištar's central role in the cultic life of Aššur is evident by the Early Dynastic period, notably in the discovery in the Ištar temple of a relief plaque that depicts her naked in a frontal position, which is similar to her representation on the much later Hasanlu bowl.<sup>101</sup> Finds from the Sumerian period in the same

<sup>99</sup> Menzel 1981, T 148–49.

<sup>100</sup> K. 252 v 1–8 = III R 66 v 1–8, Frankena, *Tākultu*, 6; see also Krebernik 2007.

<sup>101</sup> Standing naked on a lion dragon and thus exposing her sexuality in order to mesmerize the monsters, this representation is reminiscent of the *Song of Ullikummi*, some form of which

temple prove that Ištar's cult preceded the cult of the god Aššur by at least a millennium. In the Akkad period, texts hint at Ištar's importance in the empowerment of the king, a trope that was later intensified through her adoption of the voice of Aššur and her transmission of divine commands in the form of oracles. Other tropes, including that of the king as protector of trade, simply disappear. Šamši-Adad I's vision of an Upper Mesopotamian kingdom resulted in a thorough reinvention of ideological discourse. Because Šamši-Adad I's ideological discourse incorporated all of the elements essential to an ideology of universal control, it became the blueprint for subsequent kings. Warfare replaced trade as a means for obtaining the surplus resources required to support extensive building programs in Aššur and the other Assyrian capitals, as well as for sustaining Assyria's growing bureaucratic apparatus.

### 3.5 Šamši-Adad I and Daduša

#### 3.5.1 Joining Forces to Conquer the Eastern Tigridian Region: The Impact of Politics on the Historiographic Discourse of Daduša and Šamši-Adad

Šamši-Adad I's (1808–1776 BCE) contribution to the development of Assyrian ideology and historiography was crucial. According to Dominique Charpin's

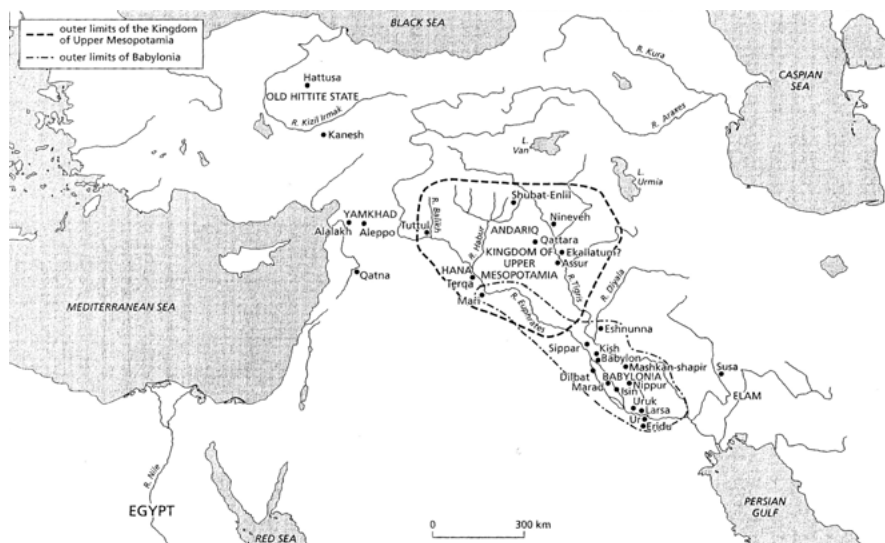
Assyria <sup>102</sup>		Eshnunna	
King	Date	King	Date
Erishum I	1974–1935		
Ikunum	1934–1920		
Sargon I	1919–1880		
Puzur-Assur II	1879–1872	Ibal-pi-El I	?–1863
Naram-Sin	1871–1829/19	Ipiq-Adad II	ca. 1862–ca. 1818
Erishum II	1828/18–1809	Naram-Sin	1818–?
Shamshi-Adad I	1808–1776	Dadusha	?–1780/1779
	(1807–1775) <sup>103</sup>	Ibal-pi-El II	1779/8–1765

**Tab. 1:** Chronological Table of the Dynasties of Aššur and Ešnunna (after Charpin 2004a; Pruzsinszky 2010, 157 and Veenhof 2007)

found its way into one of the Assyrian state rituals, see Stein 2001, 154–155 with fig. 4. For a discussion of this ritual see *Chapter* 9.5.

**102** Assyrian dates provided by the Kültepe Eponym List (Veenhof 2007; Pruzsinszky 2010: 157)

**103** 1807–1775 date range for Shamshi-Adad I is consistent with Middle Chronology / Eshnunna dates also follow the Middle Chronology (Charpin 2004, Pruzsinszky 2010: 35)



**Map 1:** Early 2<sup>nd</sup> Millennium Territorial States (after van de Mierop 2004, 110, Map 6.1).

recent reconstruction, Šamši-Adad I was of Amorite origin and his ancestors had settled in Akkad,<sup>104</sup> becoming rivals of the kingdom of Ešnunna. Under the expansionist politics of Ipiq-Adad II and Narām-Sîn, Šamši-Adad I was expelled from Akkad (Chronological Table); from his exile in Babylon he conquered Ekallatum, and then Aššur and the area of the Hābūr triangle, where he made Šekhna his royal residence and renamed it Šubat-Enlil.<sup>105</sup>

According to Charpin we should not think of an “Assyria” during the reign of Šamši-Adad I.<sup>106</sup> The city of Aššur formed part of Šamši-Adad I’s kingdom of Upper Mesopotamia, which at this time encompassed the upper and eastern Jazira and represented one of several Amorite kingdoms (Map 1). Nonetheless, Šamši-Adad I initiated major transformations in the political and cultural life of Aššur. It is with this king that we first encounter a titulary reflecting a full-fledged and sophisticated ideological program, which built not only on local (Aššur), Akkadian, and Ur III precedents, but also reflected his expansionist ambitions and thus integrated the central aspects of the imperialism known to us from later Assyrian kings.<sup>107</sup> Šamši-Adad I’s political skill is evident in his

**104** Durand 1997, 28 and Charpin 2004b.

**105** Charpin 2004b, 375 f.

**106** Charpin 2004b, 371 and 376 f.

**107** On his titulary see Garelli 1990.



strategic balancing of the local tradition of Aššur, which had its own established cultural discourse, with major ideological innovations of his own.

The complexity of Šamši-Adad I's ideological discourse is due at least in part to his interaction with the kings of Ešnunna, notably Narām-Sîn, the first king to turn Ešnunna into a major Tigridian power, and Daduša, the powerful king of that same city with whom he competed for supremacy in the Eastern Tigridian region. Ešnunna “was the most important military and administrative center in the lower Diyala. In essence, it controlled access to this frontier zone all the way into the Hamrin Basin, which was the nerve center for one part of the Ur III military corps and also the key to martial, diplomatic, and commercial access to Iran.”<sup>108</sup> Ešnunna's social, political, and economic importance is equally discernible in its involvement in the transmission of cultural knowledge from the south to the north. Its kings, Narām-Sîn and Daduša in particular, clearly took the Sargonic tradition as a model to emulate<sup>109</sup> and, consequently, played an important role in its transmission into the intellectual discourse of the city of Aššur during the time of Šamši-Adad I.<sup>110</sup>

Šamši-Adad I incorporated the originally small and self-governing city state of Aššur, which had established trade connections with Anatolia, northern Syria, and Iran, into his Kingdom of Upper Mesopotamia. Once he had conquered Ekallatum and Aššur,<sup>111</sup> Šamši-Adad I eventually proceeded to take control of the kingdom of Mari and most of Upper Mesopotamia, from eastern Syria and up to the Zagros mountains. Following his seizure of Aššur, Šamši-Adad I modelled his seal inscription after the traditional titulature of the Old Assyrian kings, calling himself “favorite of Aššur, vice-regent of Aššur” (*narām Aššur, ensi<sub>2</sub> Aššur*) and thereby acknowledging and adopting local tradition. Additionally, Šamši-Adad I included his filiation, “son of Ilakabkabû,” in the seal inscription. After his conquest of Mari in Syria, however, Šamši-Adad I assumed a new style of self-presentation that includes the well-known rhetoric of the kings of Akkad. In addition to “governor of Enlil” (*šakin Enlil*), epithets such as “mighty king” (*šarrum dannum*), “king of Akkad” (*šar Uri<sub>3</sub>*), and “king of totality” (*šar kiššatim*) became part of the titulary of Šamši-Adad I in his

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**108** Michalowski 2011, 181.

**109** Foster 2009, 146.

**110** Whether the Tell Leilan redaction of the Sumerian King List must also be attributed to this channel of transmission requires further research. Its discovery in Šamši-Adad I's residence in Tell Leilan speaks in favor of scholars having been in the environment of the king, as the list was compiled from two other copies and a third version of an unknown tradition, see Vincente 1995, 234.

**111** Charpin and Durand 1997.

inscriptions, signaling his effort to construct a territorial state. The title “governor of Enlil” disappears at the time of the revolt of Puzur-Sîn, who considered Šamši-Adad I to be a foreign usurper alien to the lineage of Aššur (“a foreign plague, not of the flesh of Aššur,” *šibiṭ ahītim lā širi*<sup>URU</sup>Aššur), and in its absence there appears to have been a return to the exclusive use of the title *iššiak Aššur* until the title *šakin Enlil* was re-introduced under Erība-Adad I (1380–1354 BCE) in the Middle Assyrian period. It is not clear whether the re-introduction of the title should be interpreted as a revival of Old Akkadian ideology or as the use of a trope familiar from Hammurabi’s prologue, in which (Anu and) Enlil are said to be responsible for assigning power to kings. The key feature of Šamši-Adad I’s inscriptions in Aššur is that as a steward (ENSI<sub>2</sub>) of the god Aššur, he is accountable to this deity.

During Šamši-Adad I’s reign there was a change in scribal practice in Aššur that can only be ascribed to the influence and physical presence of Babylonian scribes. Šamši-Adad I’s monumental inscriptions are written in Old Babylonian, and “his and his son’s letters discovered at Mari show no genuine ‘Assyrian’ features of orthography, phonology, or morphology.”<sup>112</sup> It should further be noted that in Šamši-Adad I’s residence at Tell Leilan a version of the *Sumerian King List* was found that was also written in Babylonian script,<sup>113</sup> which constitutes still more evidence of the adoption of Babylonian scribal culture at the court of Šamši-Adad I.

At this point it is necessary to comment on the title ‘mighty king,’ for which the kings of Urkeš must be revisited. The rulers of Urkeš seem to have adopted the custom of the Akkadian kings of writing the epithet ‘the strong one’ right after their name. This is attested in the names of the kings Tiš-atal and Ann-atal, both of whose names contain the Hurrian element *-adal*, ‘the strong one,’ an epithet shared with the god Nergal/Kumarbi at Urkeš.<sup>114</sup> In Akkadian royal inscriptions, the title *dannum* – ‘strong, powerful’ – in its nominalized meaning, immediately follows the name of the king in the titulary, as in *Narām-Sîn dannum* or *Šar-kali-šarrī dannum*, ‘Narām-Sîn, the strong one’ and ‘Šar-kali-šarrī, the strong one.’ Only in the titulary of the Ur III kings is the epithet ‘the strong one’ paired with LUGAL as an adjective, as in LUGAL KALAG.GA (strong/mighty king). This practice is then adopted by Šamši-Adad I, as attested in line 6 of a votive inscription from Mari:

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<sup>112</sup> Veenhof 1982, 363.

<sup>113</sup> Vincente 1995.

<sup>114</sup> Personal names with the element *-adal* then become common in the Old Babylonian period, see Salvini 1998, 112; Trémouille 1999, 289.

Votive Inscription of Šamši-Adad I<sup>115</sup>

1	<i>a-na</i> <sup>d</sup> inanna lugal	To Ištar-King
2	<i>ša-pí-ra-at ki-ša-at</i>	who controls the totality
3	<i>ša-me-e ù er-šé-tim</i>	of Heaven and Earth,
4	<i>ma-gi-ra-at ni-iš qa-ti-šu</i>	who responds favorably to his prayer,
5	<i>a-li-kat im-ni-šu</i>	who walks at his right side,
6	<sup>d</sup> utu-ši- <sup>d</sup> iškur lugal kal-ga	Šamši-Adad, the mighty king,
7	lugal <i>a-ga-dè<sup>ki</sup></i>	king of Akkad,
8	<i>ka-ši-id ki-ša-at</i>	conqueror of all
rev. 9	<i>a-ia-bi-šu</i>	his enemies,
10	<i>li-li-īs zabar</i>	(14) has dedicated a bronze drum
11	<i>ša ri-gi-im-šu ūa-bu</i>	of which its pleasant sound
12	<i>a-na sí-ma-at qar-ra-du-ti-šu</i>	is adequate to her heroism.
13	<i>šu-lu-ku</i>	
14	<i>ú-še-lu</i>	

Ideological discourse never emerges independently of interaction with groups that are considered outsiders or competitors by a particular cultural and political community. Instead, it develops in direct response to and in conversation with peer polities. While on the one hand the titles adopted by Šamši-Adad I belong to the ideological program inherited from the kings of Akkad, on the other hand they simultaneously address peer polities who claimed the same rank, first and foremost the kings of Ešnunna. In this light, the first ruler of Ešnunna who was independent of the Ur III kingdom adopted the title LUGAL – ‘king’ – which subsequently became the prerogative of the god Tišpak, with the ruler acting as his steward (ENSI<sub>2</sub>). Beginning with the reign of Ipiq-Adad, Ešnunnean kings started to use the title ‘mighty king’ (*šarrum dannum*). Ipiq-Adad II introduced the epithet of ‘the king who enlarged’ the borders of the kingdom (*šarrum murappiṣ Ešnunna<sup>ki</sup>*) and ‘king of totality’ (*šar kiššatim*), thereby explicitly challenging his peers in Ekallatum/Aššur and Mari and establishing a precedent for the expression of territorial claims. The expansionist ambitions reflected in the epithet *murappiṣ Ešnunna<sup>ki</sup>* anticipate what later becomes the central premise of Assyrian kingship, namely the expansion of the borders of Assyria commanded in the Assyrian coronation ritual.

Šamši-Adad I shares the title LUGAL KALAG.GA with the kings Narām-Sîn and Daduša, who seem to have been the most powerful of the kings of Ešnunna – possibly helping to explain why Narām-Sîn is mentioned in the *Assyrian King List* in the narrative section on Šamši-Adad I and reflecting the military pressure exerted by Ešnunna.<sup>116</sup> By that time the city state of Ešnunna had

<sup>115</sup> Charpin 1984.

<sup>116</sup> For the quotation of the text see below *Chapter* 3.5.3.1.

expanded its control over the Diyala valley as far as its confluence with the Tigris and incorporated previously independent cities such as Nerebtum (Ishchali), Šaduppum (Tell Harmal), and Meturan (Tell Haddad). Ešnunna experienced a decline in power in the decades preceding the reign of Šamši-Adad I, a period regarded as the classical phase of Aššur's trade with Anatolia when Sargon (1920–1881 BCE), Puzur-Aššur II (1880–1873 BCE), Narām-Sîn (1872–1829/19 BCE), and Erišum II (1828–1809 BCE) were rulers in the city. Because Ešnunna was located on the trade route that ran from Susa through Der and then upstream along the Tigris, Aššur must have benefited from Ešnunna's temporary weakness by controlling trade in tin during that period.<sup>117</sup> Veenhof, however, accepts the possibility that Aššur's trade might have started even earlier.<sup>118</sup>

After bringing Aššur, the Hābūr triangle, and the kingdom of Mari under his control, Šamši-Adad I appears to have envisioned an additional network of power based upon the cities of Aššur, Nineveh and Arbela. During the last years of his reign, he undertook to conquer the regions east of the Tigris, which became the core land of later Assyria.<sup>119</sup> In the winter of 1781 BCE, Šamši-Adad I joined forces with Daduša, the king of Ešnunna, to conquer the region between the Upper and Lower Zab rivers east of the Tigris, focusing particularly on the kingdom of Qabara/Arbail. This campaign is recorded in the first example of historiographic writing, which is inscribed on a commemorative stele of Šamši-Adad I now kept in the Louvre and narrates the events of the campaign against Qabara; the combination of military narrative and royal inscription anticipates the basic outline of later Assyrian royal inscriptions:

i 1-10 ... [By] command of [the god] Enlil and [...] my attack [in Arraphe [...] seventh day [...]] and I sacrificed

Lacuna

ii 1'-iv 12' I entered his fortress. I kissed the feet of the god Adad, my lord, and reorganized that land. I installed my governors everywhere and in Arraphe itself I made offerings at the *hunṭum* festival to the gods Šamaš and Adad. On the twentieth day of the month Adaru I crossed the river Zab and made a razzia in the land of Qabara. I destroyed (lit.: I struck down) the harvest of that land and in the month of Magrānum (lit. 'Threshing Floor') I captured all the fortified cities of the land of Arbela (Urbēl). I established my garrisons everywhere. Qabara ... [...] In ... the harv[est] ... that city in the month ... they did not carry ... that city in [...]

Lacuna<sup>120</sup>

117 Dercksen 2004, 27.

118 Veenhof in Veenhof/Eidem 2008, 32 assumes that this was during the reign of Ilu-šumma.

119 Charpin/Durand 1997, 382.

120 Translation follows for the most part Grayson RIMA 1, A.O.39.1001; see further Charpin and Durand 1985, 315, 98; Eidem 1992, 16–18; Whiting 1990, 169 with fn. 14.

Šamši-Adad I's inscription describing his campaign against Arraphe and Qabara differs greatly from his building inscriptions dedicated to the Aššur temple and the Ištar temple Emenue at Nineveh, in which the narrative emphasis is on the process of building the temple rather than on military campaigns, in line with the traditional Sumero-Babylonian model. Although much more fragmentary, Šamši-Adad I's inscription on his victory stele, like the stele of Daduša, reveals numerous elements well-known from later Middle Assyrian royal inscriptions – possibly due to the nature of the stele as carrier of the inscription. These elements are as follows: war waged in the name of a god, in this case Enlil and another god, probably Aššur; a narrative concerning the successful conquest of a region, in this case the Hurrian kingdom of Arraphe though the details do not survive; the annexation of a land (*KUR/mātu*) to Aššur through its administrative reorganization and the appointment of governors; the king's celebration of an important local festival – in this particular case the *humṭum*-festival – to ingratiate himself with local elites and to gain the support of their gods; and finally references to razzias like that in Qabara and the installation of garrisons.<sup>121</sup> The importance of Arraphe (*āl ilāni*) to the kingdom of Arraphe is clear from one of the Old Babylonian letters from Šemšara, which mentions a treaty ceremony relating to a treaty between Šamši-Adad I and Yašub-<sup>d</sup>IM performed in the temple of the storm god of Arraphe,<sup>122</sup> an important cultic center in the Eastern Tigridian area.<sup>123</sup> Although it is only mentioned in passing in his stele, Šamši-Adad I's installation of governors (*ša-knu*) appears to refer to the reorganization of the conquered areas as provinces under his control, an administrative system that the Mitanni state and then the Middle Assyrian kings would develop and perfect. It should also be noted that despite its poor state of preservation, Šamši-Adad I's stele resembles Daduša's stele in style and iconographic content, emphasizing the smiting of the enemy in various forms.

Having vanquished the Hurrian kingdom of Arraphe in 1781 BCE, Šamši-Adad I proceeded to invade the region of the Lower Zab while his son Išme-Dagan captured Nineveh and his son Yasmah-Adad concentrated on Qabara, gateway to the Lower Zab, which fell in the fall of 1780 BCE.<sup>124</sup> Both city states

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121 See already Tadmor 1977.

122 SH 809, quoted by Deller 1976, 38.

123 See the letter ARM I 136 (quoted in Schwemer 2001, 266), in which Šamši-Adad I's son Išme-Dagan reports that he provided the temple with a garden for which the seeds of *daprānum*-juniper had to be imported from Syria. For further evidence revealing the importance of the cultic center of the storm god see Schwemer 2001, 266–267.

124 Charpin/Ziegler 2003, 76.

had remained independent polities until then, functioning as buffer states between Ešnunna and Aššur. At some point after the conquest of Nurrugum-Nineveh, Šamši-Adad I began rebuilding Emenue, its temple of Ištar. The conquest of Nurrugum-Nineveh is mentioned only briefly to provide a sequence of events that links Šamši-Adad I to the dynasty of Akkad:<sup>125</sup>

The temple Emenue – which (is) in the district of Emašmaš, the old temple – which Manišutušu, son of Sargon, king of Akkad, had built, (that temple) had become dilapidated. The temple which none of the kings who preceded me from the fall of Akkade until my sovereignty, until the capture of Nurrugum – seven generations had past and ...<sup>126</sup>

Šamši-Adad I's building inscription for Emenue also demonstrates that the cult of Ištar was active in the city of Aššur at least from the reign of the Old Akkadian king Maništušu (2269–2255 BCE). Ištar-of-Nineveh was already known in the south – specifically in Nippur – by her Hurrian name <sup>d</sup>Ša-u<sub>18</sub>-ša-Ni-nu-a<sup>ki</sup> during the Ur III period.<sup>127</sup> She had probably been brought there by the sister of king Tiš-atal of Nineveh when she married Šu-Sîn of Ur.<sup>128</sup> Her cult in Nineveh attained such importance that Šamši-Adad I traveled there for oracular inquiries (*têrêtum*) before going on campaign.<sup>129</sup>

The revolt of the Turukkeans brought an end to Šamši-Adad I's campaign between the Zab rivers, as it obliged him to focus his attention elsewhere.<sup>130</sup> In Šamši-Adad I's victory stele commemorating the campaign, credit for all conquests is assigned to him (fig. 20).<sup>131</sup> Daduša's victory stele (fig. 21), by contrast, reads differently. Having emerged victorious from the military confrontations, Daduša's stele claims that he offered Qabara and its population as a diplomatic gift to Šamši-Adad I, implying that it was Daduša himself who conquered Qabara while simultaneously acknowledging the superior status of Šamši-Adad I.<sup>132</sup> These events occurred in the last years of Daduša's reign and are confirmed by eponym dates from Mari and Šemšara as well as year names

**125** Ziegler 2005.

**126** RIMA 1, A.O.39.2 i 7–25.

**127** Such-Gutiérrez 2003, vol. I, 366; vol. II 381, pl. 84.

**128** Whiting 1982; Zettler 2003, 27.

**129** *LAP0* II 672.

**130** See Charpin/Zieger 2003, 106 f. For further attempts of the Turukkeans to gain control of the Hābūr Triangle see Charpin 2003, 112 ff.

**131** RIMA 1, A.O.39.1001 and Charpin and Ziegler 2003, 92. Unfortunately not much of the stele is preserved, but it seems to have been similar in style and iconography to the one of Daduša both emulating the style of Old Akkadian iconography of steles after Sargon, see Börker-Klähn 1982, figs. 21–22.

**132** Khalil Ismail and Cavigneaux 2003.



Fig. 20: Stele of Šamši-Adad (after Moortgat 1969, fig 204, 205; Louvre AO2776).

on tablets from Šduppum and Nerebtum.<sup>133</sup> Interestingly, in Daduša's stele Šamši-Adad I is referred to as 'king of Ekallatum,' reflecting the fact that although Šamši-Adad I's kingdom was administered from Šubat-Enlil, Ekallatum, and Mari, his cultural politics were perceived as being centered on Ekallatum/Aššur.

Daduša's victory stele, which is much better preserved than the Louvre stele of Šamši-Adad I, represents an important document for the development of Tigridian historiography.<sup>134</sup> Like Šamši-Adad I's inscription, it anticipates the typical structure of later Assyrian royal inscriptions in its presentation of the name, filiation, and titulary of the king, which is here preceded by the invocation of the storm god Adad. It should be noted that Adad also figures as the prominent warrior deity in the Old Assyrian *Sargon Legend*,<sup>135</sup> thus linking

<sup>133</sup> Miglus 2003, 399 with references to Frayne, RIME 4, E4.5.19.1; Whiting 1990, 169 ff. and Wu Yuhong 1994, 169, 179.

<sup>134</sup> On the iconography of the stele see most recently Peter Miglus 2003, who notes similarities with Eannatum's Stele of the Vultures and the steles of Sargon.

<sup>135</sup> See *Chapter 4.2*.

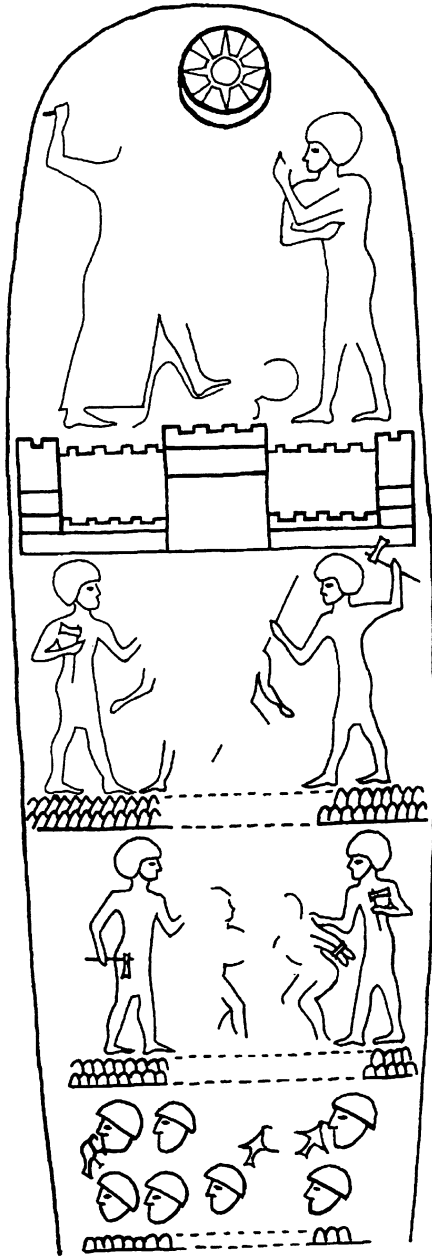


Fig. 21: Daduša Stele (Miglus 2003; Iraq Museum, IM 95200).



the conception of the storm god in Aššur to that of Ešnunna. Similarly, Adad is the figure depicted as treading on the enemy in the upper register of the Daduša stele, flanked by Daduša himself, who is represented as a supplicant in a manner comparable to Hammurabi on his stele. The Daduša stele records the sequence of events relating to a military campaign, including a description of the spoils brought to Daduša's royal residence following the campaign's successful conclusion; the campaign itself is justified by a perceived lack of respect for the king and ends in a swift victory that is accompanied by extensive destruction, the abduction of gods, and the bringing of extensive booty to Ešnunna:

When Anum and Enlil (v) with a magnificent order instructed me in a lordly way to exercise kingship over the universe (*šarrūt kiššatim*) forever and govern the totality of the people (*kullat niši*), (when) at the declaration of Warrior Tišpak and Adad, my god, the skill of battle, that of throwing down all evil (*naphar lemnūtum*) and of lifting up the head of Ešnunna, was majestically given to me – at that time Qabra, where none of the princes, my predecessors, who have ruled in Ešnunna, nor of the kings who exist in the whole world, where no king at all had ventured to besiege it, to this land that hated me and failed to bow down respectfully upon the evocation of my honorable name I sent ten thousand first rate troops. With the strong weapon of warrior Tišpak and Adad, my god, (vii) I passed through its territory like the wild *kašūšum* (divine destruction). His allied forces and all his warriors, none of them offered me any resistance, his widespread cities Tutarra, Hatkum, Hurarā, Kirhum and his extensive settlements I swiftly seized with my strong weapon. I truly had their gods, their booty and their precious wealth brought to Ešnunna, my royal capital. (viii) After I had laid waste to its surrounding territories and crushed his extensive land, I majestically approach Qabra, his main city. In ten days I seized this city by means of a surrounding siege wall, by heaping up earth, with the help of a breach, an attack and my great strength. I swiftly bound its king Bunu-Ištar by the blaze of my strong weapon and I truly had his head quickly brought to Ešnunna. (ix) The determination of the kings who supported him and his allies dissolved altogether and I truly set them in deadly silence. I brought in a lordly way his vast booty, the heavy treasure of this city, gold, silver, precious stones, fine luxuries and everything else that this land possessed, to Ešnunna, my royal capital, and (x) I truly exhibited it to all people, young and old, of the upper and lower land. All that remained in this land, this city, its vast territory and its settlements, I truly gave as a gift to Šamši-Adad, king of Ekallatum ...<sup>136</sup>

Some details of this narrative are unusual, namely the exhibition of the spoils of war to the inhabitants of Ešnunna, the reference to Daduša's presentation of Qabra to Šamši-Adad I as a gift, and the description of the imagery on the stele itself, which has been preserved. Daduša's representation in the upper register of his stele in a praying posture addressing the celestial bodies of Šin

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136 After van Koppen in Chavalas 2006, 98–102.

and Šamaš likely reflects the rising importance of astrology in the Old Babylonian period, which is also apparent with the emergence of the first astrological omen tablets at that time. Another unusual feature of the Daduša stele is the inclusion of a prayer addressed to the god Adad, who had enabled the king's victory by means of his strong weapon.

Reference to filiation and epithets like 'mighty king' (LUGAL KALAG.GA), 'beloved of Tišpak,' and 'for whom Adad has determined the conquest of his enemy with a strong weapon' – all of which appear in the Daduša stele – emerge as the typical tropes of Tigridian ideological discourse. The epithet 'seed of a long-lasting lineage', by contrast, appears to have been shared with the kings of Babylon who were of Amorite origin, entering into the Assyrian titulary only in the first millennium BCE. Also typically Babylonian and reminiscent of the prologue to Hammurabi's law code is the trope of the establishment of Daduša's kingship by the chief gods Anu and Enlil in a chain of command that passes through the city god Tišpak and Daduša's personal god Adad.<sup>137</sup> The inclusion of the personal god is characteristic of a particularly Ešnunnean royal discourse (iv 13–v 11) and does not occur in Hammurabi's stele. Šamši-Adad I, on the other hand, does refer to his personal god Šin in his inscription from the Aššur temple, demonstrating yet again that there was significant overlap between the royal ideology of Ešnunna and that of Aššur.<sup>138</sup>

Although the style of the Daduša stele inscription has been classified as awkward,<sup>139</sup> together with the Louvre stele of Šamši-Adad I it constitutes the earliest known attempt to draw up a military report within the framework of an address delivered to the gods, framed by the invocation of a god and royal titulary at the beginning and a curse formula at the end, which mimics at least in part the structure of Akkadian royal inscriptions. The particular structure of Daduša's military report reappears only under the Middle Assyrian kings in the second half of the second millennium BCE, and then develops into the form of annals under Tiglath-Pileser I (1114–1076 BCE). In its attempt to model the king's image after his achievements while reinventing established tropes, the Daduša stele represents a beautiful illustration of the creativity of ancient scholars. These scholars adapted received tradition in light of the relevant historical events of their time and in the process they fashioned new forms of royal self-representation.

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137 In Hammurabi's prologue Anu and Enlil bestow kingship upon the king through Marduk, city god of Babylon.

138 RIMA 1, A.O.39.1:132 <sup>d</sup>ZUEN DINGIR *rešīya*.

139 Khalil Ismail/Cavigneaux 2003, 154.

The only other roughly contemporaneous inscriptions that can be compared stylistically and in terms of their historical scope to the victory steles of Šamši-Adad I and Daduša are Yahdun-Līm's *Disc Inscription* and his brick inscriptions recording his building of the Šamaš temple in Mari. In contrast to Šamši-Adad I's and Daduša's inscriptions, Yahdun-Līm's *Disc Inscription* begins with the king's name and titulary before introducing the topos of divine election; in this case Dagan selects Yahdun-Līm for kingship. The *Disc Inscription* also describes more than a single military campaign, as it records both Yahdun-Līm's victory over the Khanean chiefs and his foundation of the new fortress Dūr-Yahdun-Līm:

Yahdun-Lim, son of Yaggid-Lim; king of Mari, Tutul and the country of the Khaneans;  
 The powerful king, who controls the banks of the Euphrates.  
 Dagan proclaimed my kingship and handed me a powerful weapon, "Destroyer of Kings  
 Hostile to me";  
 I defeated seven kings – Khanean chiefs – who successfully challenged me, annexing  
 their territory;  
 I removed the hostile forces from the banks of the Euphrates, giving peace to my land;  
 I opened canals, thus eliminating well-water drawing throughout my land.  
 I built Mari's ramparts and dug its moat;  
 I built Terqa's ramparts and dug its moat.  
 And in the burnt field – an arid spot – where not one king since days of yore founded a  
 town,  
 Indeed I, having wished it,  
 Founded a town, dug its moat and called it "Dur Yahdullim."  
 I then opened a canal for it and called it "Ishim-Yahdullim."  
 I, therefore, enlarged my country and strengthened the structure (lit. foundations) of Mari  
 and my land,  
 Establishing my reputation for eternity.  
 Whoever discards my commemorations (lit. foundation inscriptions), replacing them with  
 his own  
 Such a person – be he king or governor –  
 May Anum and Enlil curse him darkly;  
 ... *further curses follow* ...<sup>140</sup>

Several similarities are apparent between the inscriptions of Mari and Ešnunna on the one hand and later Assyrian inscriptions on the other. These include the statement of the king's genealogy following his name, the account of a military campaign,<sup>141</sup> the reference to a god entrusting the king with a powerful divine weapon, the king's role as enlarger of the territory under his control

<sup>140</sup> Translation after Sasson 1990.

<sup>141</sup> See already Renger 1980–83, 69 § 5.

(*māti urappiš*), the king's strengthening of the foundations of the land (*išdē kunnu*) in a formula typical of later Assyrian royal inscriptions, and the king's provision of water for the newly built city, a motif that resurfaces in Assyrian royal inscriptions from the Middle Assyrian period onward (see *Chapter Seven*). Yahdun-Lim's *Disc Inscription* also reveals a deep familiarity with Sumerian literary production, as the structure of its beginning is modeled entirely after Sumerian votive inscriptions.

Like the Daduša stele, Yahdun-Lim's building account of the Šamaš temple<sup>142</sup> commences with an invocation of a divinity, in this case the god Šamaš, instead of with the titulary of the king, which here follows the prayer to the sun god. This structure might have served as a model for the Daduša stele, as its inscription begins with a hymn addressed to the weather god. The subsequent military account in Yahdun-Lim's Šamaš temple inscription describes the king's expedition to the Mediterranean Sea, achieving mythic dimensions through its account of the arrival of Yahdun-Lim's soldiers at the seashore and their bathing in the Mediterranean, which in one case is referred to as A.AB.BA rather than *tiāmtum*.<sup>143</sup> Yahdun-Lim's description of the felling of trees in the Cedar Mountains, reminiscent of Gilgameš's achievements recorded in the episode of Gilgameš and Huwawa, becomes yet another trope of royal discourse and reemerges in later Assyrian inscriptions along with Yahdun-Lim's reference to 'finished craftsmanship' and technical perfection in construction.<sup>144</sup> Because Yahdun-Lim's inscriptions predate those of Daduša and Šamši-Adad I, it can be inferred that the kind of textual work on royal representation that they represent might have begun even earlier at Ešnunna, perhaps even under its king Ipiq-Adad II, who introduced the notion of expanding the borders of his kingdom into royal discourse. If this is the case, then only chance has prevented us from recovering concrete evidence of such cultural dynamics.

As a preliminary conclusion it can be observed that the commonalities linking the royal inscriptions of Ešnunna, Mari, and Aššur reinforce the impression gained from the linguistic perspective. Ešnunna's political power in the Old Babylonian period is also evident in its function as a cultural model for its peers. Such cultural modeling resulted not only in Yahdun-Lim's scribal reforms at Mari, but also helps account for the ease with which scholars during the reign of Šamši-Adad I were able to draw and build upon a rich northern Mesopotamian cultural repertoire.

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142 RIME 4, E4.6.8.2.

143 RIME 4, E4.6.8.2:60.

144 RIME 4, E4.6.8.2:99–107.

### 3.5.2 Daduša and his Scholars' Library as Predecessor to the Exorcist's Library in Aššur

Although its discovery is perhaps completely accidental, it should be noted that a seal of Daduša's diviner Iluni has been found in Meturan/Tell Haddad, suggesting that this scholar may well have been active on the king's behalf in cities outside of Ešnunna.<sup>145</sup> It is conceivable that Iluni was in Meturan on a political mission, as is attested for other diviners like Asqudum at the court of Zimrilim of Mari,<sup>146</sup> or that he journeyed there in order to cooperate with local exorcists at the king's behest. Since no scholar's library has been found in Aššur that dates to the time of Šamši-Adad I, a closer examination of the textual production of Daduša and his scholars can help shed light on the development of Assyrian tradition and ideological discourse.

It is possible to learn about the activities of the exorcists of Meturan from a tablet collection that has been discovered in a large house. This collection includes economic and administrative texts, school texts, letters, and literary, exorcistic, hemerological, mathematical, medical, and liturgical texts.<sup>147</sup> Because the Meturan tablets comprise both utilitarian and literary texts, they provide a unique insight into the rich intellectual world of an eighteenth century exorcist skilled in apotropaic and exorcistic rites for the sake of the individual and agricultural rites intended to protect the harvest against every manner of natural disaster. The inclusion among the Meturan tablets of a collection of royal hymns on a *Sammeltafel*<sup>148</sup> and Sumerian literary texts concerning Gilgameš not only indicates a deep familiarity with the Sumero-Babylonian tradition of the south but also concern with the institution of kingship; similarly, the presence of a Sumerian version of the myth of Adapa, regarded as the model sage, points to an interest in defining the professional identity of the exorcist. It is unfortunately impossible to tell whether the literary and exorcistic texts of the Meturan library belonged to the same person, as they were found in separate rooms.

Antoine Cavigneaux and Farouk al-Rawi, the editors of the Meturan library texts, have shown that some of these texts exist in several copies written by different hands, suggesting an educational context. This notion is reinforced

145 RIME 4, E4.5.19.2015: *i-lu-ni MÁŠ.ŠU.GÍD.GÍD DUMU <sup>d</sup>UTU-ra-bi ir<sub>11</sub> da-du-ša*.

146 Charpin 2011.

147 Cavigneaux 1999. For a convenient list with bibliographical references see Jean 2006, 159–161.

148 Two of the four hymns are dedicated to the kings Lipit-Eštar and Iddin-Dagan, see Cavigneaux/al-Rawi 1993, 95.

by the presence of school texts. Accordingly, there is a distinct possibility that there was more than one person working as an exorcist, which would point to a scholarly and educational environment comparable to what we find in the second half of the second millennium with the house of the diviner in Emar<sup>149</sup> and in first millennium Aššur with the *House of the Exorcist*.<sup>150</sup> The combination of utilitarian and literary texts in the library of Meturan is itself a clear indication of scholarly interest in both the *weltanschauung* represented by literary texts and in the application of this cultural matrix to social practice, as is evident, for example, in the ideological representation of kingship. Scholars can thus be seen to be integrating and regarding as unitary what we generally tend to divide into religion, culture, and politics.<sup>151</sup> Another Old Babylonian library worth mentioning in this context is the library of the Enki Temple in Larsa, which includes hymns pertaining to the royal cults of Hammurabi and Samsuiluna (TCL 16 43, 61), liturgical poetry, incantations like the purification ritual for king and army before battle (YOS 11 42),<sup>152</sup> incantations for the royal censer (YOS 11 49), and further the “liturgy of the celebration of a sacred marriage rite of the king Rīm-Sîn and the goddess Nanaya, divinatory series, penitential prayers, and mathematical texts.”<sup>153</sup> The content of both library collections testifies to close cooperation between scholars and/or temple personnel and the king.

Interaction between the king and his scholars during the reign of Daduša was effectively a continuation of a tradition hinted at in Ešnunna already in the Akkad period. A number of literary texts were found among several school exercises excavated in private houses in Ešnunna, one of which is related to the later traditions of the *Great Rebellion against Narām-Sîn*<sup>154</sup> while another is a hymn extolling the martial qualities of the storm god Tišpak, thus reflecting northern Mesopotamian and Hurrian conceptions of the storm god.<sup>155</sup> This evidence from the Akkad period is tantalizing, as it reveals the emergence of a literary tradition centered on the kings of Akkad in the region of Ešnunna during the time of the kings of Akkad. The existence of such a tradition helps explain the fact that later scholars from Ešnunna were conversant with the

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149 Fleming 2000; Cohen 2009; Rutz 2013.

150 Michalowski 2001, 112 seems to have thought along the same lines, classifying the library as a reference library.

151 For a similar observation see Cavigneaux 2002, 2.

152 Van Dijk 1973.

153 Westenholz and Westenholz 2006, 7–8.

154 Westenholz 1974–77, 96, *MAD* 1 172. For a recent edition and discussion of this school text suggesting a literary reception of historical events see Haul 2009, 33–57.

155 Westenholz 1974–77, 102 *MAD* I 192.

discourse centered on the kings of Akkad, as is apparent during the Old Babylonian period. Moreover, it constitutes evidence of a trajectory for the transmission of the Akkadian tradition into the Old Assyrian *Sargon Legend*.<sup>156</sup>

Since they do not precede Daduša but do predate Hammurabi's invasion in 1760, the texts from Meturan allow a glimpse into the scholarly world of an eighteenth century political center in the Tigridian region that interacted directly with Aššur. An interesting cultural link between Aššur and Ešnunna is the concern with economic measures demonstrated by kings from both cities. In Šamši-Adad I's inscription from the Aššur temple, he provides information about the silver value of basic commodities. The same economic concern is apparent in certain cases from Daduša's law collection, which is known as the *Laws of Ešnunna*.<sup>157</sup> Both texts, albeit different in genre, are reminiscent of the Old Babylonian royal edicts issued to cancel private debt obligations and serving to enhance the king's image as provider of justice for his people. Indeed, the same trope is attested in the inscriptions of Nūr-Adad of Larsa,<sup>158</sup> who reigned slightly earlier than Daduša in Ešnunna and Šamši-Adad I in Aššur. In its demonstration of the growing professionalism of scholarly experts, the library of Meturan points to the social dynamics behind Šamši-Adad I's effort for cultural integration. The cultural dominance of Ešnunna at that time is evident in the fact that Mari's scribal reform also adopted Ešnunnean scribal conventions with regard to the shape of tablets and signs.<sup>159</sup> Similarly, both the king of Ešnunna and Šamši-Adad I appear to have relied on the calendar of Akkad, as they share seven month names.<sup>160</sup>

One other feature worth mentioning in support of the notion of a larger cultural community encompassing northern Syrian and the eastern Tigridian region is the fact that the palaces of the Old Babylonian kingdoms of Mari, Tell Rimah (Qattara/Karana), Tell Bi'a (Tuttul) and Tell Asmar (Ešnunna) and the Eastern Lower Town palace in Tell Leilan (Šubat-Enlil) show similarities in their outline, all "built around an inner and outer courtyard, usually connected by a reception suite."<sup>161</sup>

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156 For the text see *Chapter 4.2*.

157 Roth 1997, 57–70.

158 RIME 4, E4.2.8.7; see also the inscriptions of his successors Sîn-iddinam RIME 4, E4.2.9.6 and Sîn-iqišam RIME 4, E4.2.11.1.

159 Durand 1985, 161–164; Charpin 1992, 6–7; Charpin and Ziegler 2003, 40.

160 The so-called calendar of Šamši-Adad I is attested at Chagar Bazar, Tell Rimah, Tell Taya, Tell Bi'a and Tell Leilan, see Charpin/Ziegler 2003, 156.

161 Ristvet and Weiss in Eidem 2011, XXXIII.

### 3.5.3 Šamši-Adad I's Kingdom of Upper Mesopotamia: Political Pragmatism and Cultural Discourse

#### 3.5.3.1 The Eponym System and the Mari Chronicles

Šamši-Adad I's (1808–1776 BCE) efforts to fashion a cohesive kingdom of Upper Mesopotamia were effectively an attempt “to unite the whole Hābūr region and adjacent areas under a single administration, a system seen in operation in the tablets from Chagar Bazar.”<sup>162</sup> Also important in this respect was the introduction of the Assyrian eponym system in the cities of Mari, Tuttul, Šubat-Enlil, and Terqa for the purpose of dating documents and streamlining administrative procedures.<sup>163</sup> Probably introduced for the first time under Erišum I,<sup>164</sup> the eponym system was the foundation of Assyrian chronological reckoning through to the very end of Assyrian history.

Several eponym lists from the Old Assyrian period have been recovered in Kültepe. In addition, Mari has yielded exemplars of the so-called *Mari Eponym Chronicle*, which does not, however, “follow Assyrian scribal conventions.”<sup>165</sup> It is interesting that one exemplar of the Assyrian eponym lists, designated by Veenhof as *KEL A*, exhibits features of an official scholarly text representing an ‘authorized’ full version of the list, including insertions referring to the Assyrian kings Erišum through Narām-Sîn. *KEL A* concludes with a colophon that is highly unusual in its lexicography and points to the Akkadization of scholarship:

[...] ÌR-sà iš-tur<sub>4</sub> Šu-H[a?-x-x i]š-ta-sí-šu-um  
Warassa wrote (it), Šu-H[a ...] read it out to him.

Veenhof observes that although typical of Babylonian scholarly practice, the verbs *šaṭārum* ‘to write’ and *šitassûm* ‘to read’ in the above colophon are not used in Old Assyrian, which uses *lapātum* for ‘to write’ and *šamā’um* ‘to hear’ instead.<sup>166</sup> The colophon of the *Mari Eponym Chronicle* reveals a similar phrasing:

ŠU Ha-ab-du-ma-lik mu-uš-ta-as-sú-u Li-mi-<sup>d</sup>Dagan  
By the hand (written by) H., the one who dictated it was L.<sup>167</sup>

<sup>162</sup> Veenhof and Eidem 2008, 141; Eidem 2011, 58.

<sup>163</sup> Van de Mierop 2007.

<sup>164</sup> Veenhof 2003, 20. Note that the *KEL* begins with year one of Erišum and opens with the statement that the eponym system was instituted during his reign: “After the accession of [Erišum], the overseer, our lord; after the *limum* had been instituted.”

<sup>165</sup> Veenhof 2003, 13.

<sup>166</sup> Veenhof 2003, .

<sup>167</sup> Veenhof 2003, 10.



Eponym list *KEL A* and the *Mari Eponym Chronicle* also share a similar division of the eponyms into groups according to the accession of kings to the throne, revealing that this scribal convention was shared by the scholarly circles of Aššur/Kaneš and Mari. For instance, in the beginning of *KEL A* appears the following line:

[ištu rēš k]ussīm ša Erišum [waklim bē]lini  
After the accession of Erišum, the overseer, our lord.

The *Mari Eponym Chronicle* is likewise a scholarly document, preserved in several copies and editions that were composed on the basis of an existing eponym list and “fleshed out by adding selected pieces of historical information, which he (the author) may have derived from existing royal inscriptions, chronicle-like texts and perhaps even chancery documents.”<sup>168</sup> As Veenhof notes, “his (the author’s) purpose apparently was to treat the period during which the dynasty culminating in king Šamši-Adad I arose and flourished (mentioning i.a. his father, brother, birth, accession to the throne, conquests etc.), up till the year when he died.”<sup>169</sup> One might add Birot’s observation that the rise of Šamši-Adad I is set against the background of the interaction and tension between Šamši-Adad I’s growing Upper Mesopotamian kingdom and Ešnunna, since several sections refer to their military encounters.<sup>170</sup> Below follows the most detailed such section:

*Section E*

- 1’ During (the eponymy of) Ennam-Aššur: Šamši-Adad [conquered?] the la[nd of ...]
- 2’ [During (the eponymy of) S]în-muballit: Šamši-Adad [conquered?] the lan[d of ...]
- 3’ [During (the eponymy) of Riš-Šamaš: Išme-dagan [caused] the defeat of [...]
- 4’ During (the eponymy) of I]bni-Adad: Šamši-Adad [conquered] the land of [...]
- 5’ During (the eponymy) of Aššur-imitti: Šamši-Adad [caused] the defeat of [...]
- 6’ he restored that ... the land of [...]
- 7’ (the city of) Meturan, the land of [...]
- 8’ ... Daduša ...
- 9’ During (the eponymy of) Ili-ellāti: ...
- 10’ During (the eponymy of) Rigmānum: Mu-...
- 11’ During (the eponymy of) Ikūn-pīya: Mu-na-[...]
- 12’ ... a defeat ...
- 13’ and Šamši-Adad
- 14’ the city of Meturan ...
- 15’ ... to Daduša ...

<sup>168</sup> Veenhof 2003, 17.

<sup>169</sup> Veenhof 2003, 17.

<sup>170</sup> Birot 1985, 224; Glassner 2004, 160–164.

- 16' During (the eponymy of) Asqudum: Šamši-Adad [...]  
 17' During (the eponymy of) Aššur-malik: Išme-Dagan [caused] a defeat ...  
 18' and Šamši-Adad [took?] Nur[rugum]  
 19' Kiprum, king [of ...]  
 20' Yašub-Adad, king [of ...]  
 21' Yašub-Lim, king [of ...]  
 22' he *bound*<sup>2</sup> these 9 kings  
 23' (and) [*rendered them*<sup>2</sup>] to Daduša.  
 24' During (the eponymy of) Awiliya: ... the Turuk[keans ...]

### 3.5.3.2 The Assyrian King List

Both the eponym lists and the *Mari Eponym Chronicles* must have formed the basis for the creation of the first large section of the *Assyrian King List* (henceforth *AKL*). It has been suggested that the list originated with Šamši-Adad I (1808–1776 BCE), as it is under his name that the author inserted a chronicle-like entry tracing his origins through to his conquest of the city of Aššur.<sup>171</sup> In this vein, the preceding sections, comprising the seventeen kings who lived in tents, the forefathers of Šamši-Adad I, and the Old Assyrian kings, have been interpreted as some kind of a prehistory to Šamši-Adad I that combines Šamši-Adad I's dynastic Amorite origins with the urban element of the city of Aššur. The narrative entry concerning Šamši-Adad I reads as follows:

In the time of Naram-Sîn (of Ešnunna) Šamši-Adad went to Babylonia (Karduniaš). During the eponymy of Ibni-Adad Šamši-Adad came up from Babylonia and seized Ekallatum, three years he resided in Ekallatum. During the eponymy of Atamar-Ištar, Šamši-Adad came up from Ekallatum and removed Erišum, the son of Narām-Sîn, from the throne (of Aššur), and seized the throne (of Aššur). He ruled as king for 33 years.<sup>172</sup>

Because Šamši-Adad I's departure from Babylonia occurred after the accession of Erišum II, the Narām-Sîn mentioned in the *AKL* must be Narām-Sîn of Ešnunna.<sup>173</sup> The transition from ahistorical chronological texts like the Assyrian eponym lists, which simply list the names of eponyms, to historiographic writing as represented by the *Mari Eponym Chronicles* and the *AKL* represents a

171 The five known exemplars are A) the “Nassouhi List,” from Aššur, (Nassouhi 1927); B) the “Khorsabad List,” (Gelb 1954); C) the SDAS List (Gelb 1954); D) KAV 15 and E) BM 128059 found at Nineveh (Millard 1970). The sigla are the ones used by Grayson 1980–83, 101–115. For interpretations of the list see Landsberger 1954, 33 ff., 109 ff.; Kraus 1965, 11–22; Finkelstein 1966, 113; Malamat 1968, 164; Röllig 1969, 273, Freydank 1975, 173–175; Larsen 1976, 36–40; Grayson 1980–83, 101 f.; Glassner 2004, 71–75; Wu 1990; Siddall 2007. For the chronological order of the various exemplars see Pruzsinsky 2009, 45–47.

172 After Veenhof 2003, 61.

173 Veenhof 2003, 61.

new way of conceiving of the past. That the *AKL* dates to the time of Šamši-Adad I is, however, doubtful. Šamši-Adad I's *Ahmentafel* has been understood as being interwoven into the three major sections preceding the reign of Šamši-Adad I, namely "the seventeen kings who lived in tents," the forefathers of Šamši-Adad I, and the Old Assyrian kings of the city of Aššur.<sup>174</sup> Only the second section can be said to represent a list of the "forefathers" of Šamši-Adad I, as both it and the *Mari Eponym Chronicle* mention Ila-kabkabû and Aminu as powerful predecessors of Šamši-Adad I.<sup>175</sup> Nothing in Šamši-Adad I's inscriptions suggests that he conceived of himself as an outsider to Aššur. It is only later under Puzur-Sîn – who seized the throne from one of Šamši-Adad I's successors – that he was stigmatized as such.<sup>176</sup> After Šamši-Adad I's entry in the *AKL* there are several further chronicle-like entries pointing to some kind of disarray or upheaval involving either the usurpation of the Assyrian throne or the assembling of forces in Babylonia in order to take the Assyrian throne.

Doubts about dating the *AKL* to Šamši-Adad I have been raised in part by the publication of a fragmentary Sumerian-Babylonian literary bilingual text of Middle Assyrian provenance. One section of this text relates to the *AKL*, and the text as a whole should probably be assigned to the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I (1233–1197 BCE), as he was the only Assyrian king "before 1000 B.C. known to have had a scribe capable of Sumerian literary composition."<sup>177</sup> Further, Lambert notes – and he was preceded by Cooper<sup>178</sup> – that the text is closely related stylistically and in its historical allusions to the bilingual prayers to the god Aššur from the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I, and thus fits perfectly into the context of literary creativity that characterized his rule.<sup>179</sup> Lambert writes about the author of this fragmentary bilingual tablet that he "obviously thought and wrote first in Akkadian, and then produced a totally artificial rendering"<sup>180</sup> in Sumerian. Since the Akkadian of the text is Babylonian and not Assyrian, the scribe in question was clearly a learned Babylonian scholar in the service of King Tukulti-Ninurta I.

The first section of the bilingual Middle Assyrian text relates to the *AKL* and summarizes the entries through to Tukulti-Ninurta I, while the second section refers to Tukulti-Ninurta I's deeds on behalf of the city of Aššur and the Aššur

174 Landsberger 1954, 33.

175 Yamada 1994, 15.

176 RIMA 1, A.O.40:12–13: [šī-bi-i] [ṭ a-hi-tim?] la šī-ir [d]URU A-šur "... a foreign plage, not of the flesh of [the city] Aššur."

177 Lambert 1976, 86.

178 Cooper 1971, 2.

179 Erroneously cited as *KAR* 118 and 119, as already noted by Yamada 1994, 12 with fn. 4.

180 Lambert 1976, 86.

temple in particular, for which Tukulti-Ninurta I claims to have maintained the regular offerings and increased their amounts. Special concern for the Aššur temple is also evident in the third section, which consists of a detailed account of Tukulti-Ninurta I's adornments for the Aššur temples in Aššur and Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta. This section thus has an intertextual relationship with a parallel section in the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*<sup>181</sup> that describes the booty from Babylonia that was dedicated to the Aššur temple and used in its refurbishment. The first section of the bilingual text can only have been written on the basis of the *AKL*, which must therefore have existed in some form by the time of Tukulti-Ninurta I despite the fact that all known exemplars are Neo-Assyrian in date.<sup>182</sup> While use of the *AKL* reveals the historical knowledge of the scholar who wrote the bilingual text, this knowledge was only used to establish a framework for the deeds of Tukulti-Ninurta I recounted in the following sections.

From Tukulti-Ninurta I's royal inscriptions it is clear that the provisioning of the Aššur temples only took place after his conquest of Babylon. Tukulti-Ninurta I's emphasis on his maintenance of the regular offerings might therefore be intended to divert his audience's attention from the fact that he actually deprived Aššur of resources in order to build his new capital Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta and to transfer the cult of Aššur to his new residence.

It is deplorable that the bilingual Middle Assyrian text is so badly preserved because, like the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*, it appears to have included certain tropes of Assyrian ideological discourse that were integrated into the commemorative inscriptions only during the much later Sargonid period. Among these tropes is the notion of truth and cosmic order as represented in the term *kittu* (obv. 9), which amounts to ensuring an atmosphere of civic order so that 'people did what was pleasing to the gods' (obv. 10). The account of the restoration and sumptuous adornment of the Aššur temple in the bilingual text occupies most of the preserved text and immediately follows the trope of the establishment of civic and cosmic order. This is reminiscent of Gudea's building hymn, which uses a utopian vision of peace and social justice as the framework for constructing the divine abode of the god Ningirsu.

The author of the bilingual text is familiar with the typical "chaîne opératoire"<sup>183</sup> of the ideological presentation of the image of the ideal king. Additionally, his use of the term *BALA* for the kings preceding Tukulti-Ninurta I in the first section of the text signals intimate knowledge of Babylonian tradition as reflected in the *Babylonian King Lists A and B*, which build on the *Sumerian*

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181 See Foster 2005, 315 f. col. vi.

182 See fn. 160.

183 See the discussion in *Chapter 7*.

*King List*. On the other hand, the use of the term UGULA for the rulers of Aššur reveals knowledge of a local tradition typical of the city of Aššur. When using the term *ina šangûtiya*, “in my administration, lit. ‘during my priesthood,’” to refer to the king’s reign, the scribe follows a practice introduced in the Assyrian royal inscriptions of the Middle Assyrian period.<sup>184</sup>

Below follows the text in full, as it is of great importance to later historiographic and literary textual production in Assyria and reflects the author’s broad command of both Sumero-Babylonian and Assyrian tradition:

BM 98496

Obverse

- 1 ... their dynasty (bala).[...]
- 2 To the dynasty (bala) of six kings ...
- 3 [With their 77 names ... [...]
- 4 In their total of 40 kings 24 filiations ...[...]
- 5 From the beginning to the “going out” of the dynasty (bala) of Sulili, up to the dynasty of [...]
- 6 In their administration (nam-sanga) the duties of the “overseers” in the presence of Aššur were pleasing to him, and he confirmed them for ever.
- 7 In my administration (nam-sanga.mu/*šangûtiya*) the regular offerings to the gods were established:
- 8 I added to them and did not diminish, I multiplied and did not reduce.
- 9 By the wisdom which Ea decreed for me, truth (*nig-zi/kittu*), the .... of the gods, was born with me;
- 10 People did what was pleasing to the gods.
- 11 At that time two lofty matching Lahmus, as bright as the day, were raised up on shining pedestals,
- 12 (Also) 21 ... tall of stature and high,
- 13 (And) five broad-chested lions.
- 14 By the [...] .... of Nunnamnir, the exalted,
- 15 .....] were placed right and left.

Reverse

- 1 .....] at its ... [...]
- 2 .....] they made well.
- 3 I brought forth at its side .....[...]
- 4 .....] ..... I brought forth with big body and fiery (?) limbs,
- 5 Clothed in terror, ..... with an aura, .... is put on them,
- 6 They are fiery (?), awe-inspiring in their prancing (?),
- 7 With fierce countenance, .... limbs, and glaring glances,
- 8 Who put to death the evil one, are joined to fell the disobedient [...]
- 9 ..... fierce .[...]
- 10 Equipped with divine terror and aura . [...]
- 11 The temple Ehursgurkurra [.....] .... [...]

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184 See *Chapter 5.2*.

Returning to the question of the origin of the *AKL*, it seems more plausible to date the text to the time when Assyria became part of the community of great powers in the Late Bronze Age. Although Shigeo Yamada is certainly correct in assuming that the entry in the *AKL* regarding Šamši-Adad I reflects knowledge of the eponym chronicles, both of the eponyms it lists are in fact wrong and cannot have come from the *Mari Eponym Chronicle*.<sup>185</sup> If this section of the *AKL* hails from Šamši-Adad I's reign, one would expect that such data would have been used correctly. The recent discovery of fragments of the *Sumerian King List* in Šamši-Adad I's royal seat Šubat-Enlil/Tell Leilan does suggest that there was historiographic interest among his scholars,<sup>186</sup> which could conceivably have been maintained into later periods. In this context it should be mentioned that Aššur-uballiṭ I's (1353–1318 BCE) scholar (*tupšar šarri*) was of Babylonian origin and educated in the Sumero-Babylonian tradition.<sup>187</sup> This individual could thus have been perfectly suited for writing a king list like the *AKL*, which has intertextual links with the *Sumerian King List* and the list of *The Rulers of Lagash*. All of these lists use the phrase “he exercised kingship for x years,” *mu x i<sub>3</sub>-ak / x MU.MEŠ šarrūta ipuš*, a phrase alien to the *Babylonian King Lists*. Use of this phrase in the *AKL* is thus evidence that its author was steeped in Sumero-Babylonian tradition and, in addition, had knowledge of the Assyrian eponym tradition. Further, knowledge might have been preserved regarding Šamši-Adad I's association with the Hābūr Plains<sup>188</sup> and his residence in Tell Leilan, so that the author of the *AKL* was motivated to begin the list with a pastoralist section similar to that of the *Genealogy of Hammurabi*, which also evokes tribal origins.

Yamada suggests that because Šamši-Adad I and Bēlu-bāni were outsiders who had usurped the throne of Aššur, they were in particular need of legitimization.<sup>189</sup> The *AKL* would therefore have served their ideological purpose of identification with the local royal line of Aššur. The *AKL*, however, is dispassionate about usurpers, and in some royal inscriptions both Sulilu and Bēlu-bāni are even referred to as founders of a dynasty.<sup>190</sup> Moreover, from the intertextual point of view it can be argued that the *AKL* was redacted only in the time of

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**185** I thank Nele Ziegler for this information, which she provided in a talk on Šamši-Adad I at ISAW on April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013 in my workshop on *Assyria in Ancient and Modern Historiography*.

**186** Vincente 1995.

**187** Wiggermann 2008.

**188** Eidem 2011, 2.

**189** Yamada 1994, 23–29.

**190** Piotr Michalowski, “The Mesopotamian King Lists: History in the Making,” talk given at the ISAW workshop *Ancient and Modern Perspectives on Historiography in Mesopotamia*, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

Shalmaneser I (1263–1234 BCE) or shortly before him, as Shalmaneser I is the first king who mentions Šamši-Adad I in his inscriptions in the context of *Distanzangaben* regarding the restoration of the Aššur temple.<sup>191</sup> It is also in Shalmaneser I's building inscription that Ušpia, the penultimate king of “the seventeen kings who lived in tents,” and Erišum I, known as builder of the Aššur temple, appear for the first time in Assyrian royal inscriptions. The author of Shalmaneser I's inscription was clearly interested either in identifying several stages of Assyrian history or in establishing an intertextual link with the *AKL*. Such telescoping references to the early history of Aššur do not resurface until the reign of Esarhaddon, where they occur in Esarhaddon's inscription describing the rebuilding of the Aššur temple.<sup>192</sup>

Another purpose of the *AKL*, at least during the Neo-Assyrian period, appears to have been the recitation of the names of the royal line of Aššur in the context of the ancestor cult or on the occasion of the ascension of a new king to the throne, as was probably the case with the *Genealogy of Hammurabi*. A cultic purpose of this kind is suggested by the reverse order of the kings in the second section of the *AKL*, which covers the “forefathers” of Šamši-Adad I, and by the “amulet tablet” shape of two exemplars of the Neo-Assyrian king list. As is clear from recent finds at Tell Taynat, this “amulet tablet” shape is the shape of tablets that were hung on the walls of the temple for display purposes. Yamada, however, assumes that such a purpose could only have been a secondary development on the grounds that the section in the *AKL* on Šamši-Adad I centers on chronographic information rather than on cultic prescription.

Although the evidence speaks against the attribution of the *Assyrian King List* to the reign of Šamši-Adad I, his inscriptions do highlight his charismatic and emblematic role in the conceptualization of Assyrian leadership. Essential parts of his titulature continue to form the core of royal self-representation during the Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian periods, and the attempt to stake a claim for the glory of Aššur's kingship is particularly characteristic of the literary inscriptions of Adad-nīrārī I (1295–1264) and Tukultī-Ninurta I, as is clear from their historical epics. It should also be noted that several kings decided to adopt Šamši-Adad I's name while others refer to his reign in their *Distanzangaben*, including him in the lineage of their rightful restoration of the temples.

<sup>191</sup> RIMA 1, A.0.77.1, Šamši-Adad I (l. 120) Ušpia (l. 113) and Erišum (l. 116). On *Distanzangaben* see Na'aman 1984. See also *Chapter* 4.3.

<sup>192</sup> RINAP 4 no. 57.

In contrast to the Assyrian royal inscriptions, the Neo-Assyrian chronicles provide an unbiased account of imperial history and record events that did not reflect well on the king, like the reference to the various rebellions that occurred during the reign of Shalmaneser III. The purpose of these chronicles is not yet known, although it has been suggested that they “were intended as sources for creating omen apodoses.”<sup>193</sup> However, as Alan Millard observes, they “frequently give less specific information than the ‘historical’ references found in omen texts.”<sup>194</sup> Nevertheless, an intertextual relationship between the Neo-Assyrian chronicles and the *AKL*, which only survives in Neo-Assyrian exemplars, is highly probable, as the latter presents a comprehensive overview of the history of Assyria that reaches into a tribal past and intends to be undiscriminating. The chronicle-like reference to Šamši-Adad I in the *AKL* can thus be read as a foundational statement that evokes Assyria’s expansionist dynamics under that charismatic king.

### 3.5.3.3 Šamši-Adad I’s Rebuilding of the Aššur Temple and Aššur’s Enlilship

Šamši-Adad I’s (1808–1776 BCE) conquest of Aššur resulted in two major alterations to the cultic topography of the city. One was the rebuilding of the former Adad temple as a double temple dedicated to the gods Anu and Adad,<sup>195</sup> and the other was the rebuilding of the Aššur temple as a double temple dedicated to the gods Enlil and Aššur alike, which is generally attributed to the influence of Sumero-Babylonian tradition and is thus to be connected to the reign of Šamši-Adad I. The notion of Enlilship as the expression of divine leadership was, however, apparently known in Aššur under Erišum I. When Erišum renovated the Aššur temple, the name of the temple was ‘Wild Bull.’<sup>196</sup> The epithet ‘wild bull’ is usually associated with Enlil, who might have been present in Aššur before the reign of Šamši-Adad I. This epithet occurs again in Šamši-Adad I’s stone tablets recording his restoration of the Aššur temple, in which he refers to the Aššur temple as the temple of Enlil.<sup>197</sup> He also reports that he gave that temple the Sumerian ceremonial name É.AM.KUR.KUR.RA ‘The Temple – Wild Bull of the Lands.’ It is on the basis of this inscription and the archaeological evidence of a double temple that Peter Miglus has suggested that the sanctuaries of Enlil and Aššur were combined into one double complex

193 Millard 1994, 6.

194 Millard 1994, 8.

195 Schwemer 2001, 242f.

196 RIMA 1, A.0.33.10: 11–13: [É]-tum [ri]-mu-um [šu]-um-šu.

197 RIMA 1, A.0.39.1: 52–54.



under Šamši-Adad I.<sup>198</sup> What then should one make of the name ‘Wild Bull’ for the Aššur temple under Erišum? Does it attest to the presence of the god Enlil in the Aššur temple already by this time, or does it amount to a theological statement about Aššur’s position as chief god of the city of Aššur through his assumption of Enlilship, i.e. his adoption of leadership in the local pantheon in the city of Aššur? Some of these aspects likely induced Šamši-Adad I to monumentalize the association of Aššur and Enlil in a double temple.

In addition to associating the cults of Enlil and Aššur, Šamši-Adad I pursued an interest in ensuring that the cult of the originally Sumero-Babylonian god Enlil enjoyed equal standing in Aššur. This effort appears to have been rooted in the cultural heritage of the Dynasty of Akkad, which Šamši-Adad I was eager to promote. The kings of Akkad associated themselves with the chief god of the Sumerian pantheon in order to foster their legitimacy in the former city states of southern Mesopotamia. A typical royal inscription of Narām-Sîn of Akkad starts with the statement: “Enlil is his god, Abā, the young man among the gods, is his family god.”<sup>199</sup> Šamši-Adad I’s eagerness to promote the cult of Enlil is further apparent in the fact that he named his new royal seat Šubat-Enlil (‘the seat of Enlil’). Still more, Šamši-Adad I’s institutionalization of the *kispum*-offering for Sargon and Narām-Sîn of Akkad in Mari bespeaks his reverence for the kings of Akkad, whom he seems to have regarded as his direct predecessors and from whom he appears to have felt that he derived his power.<sup>200</sup>

### 3.5.3.4 The Kings of Akkad as Models for Ambitious Rulers

The evidence discussed in this chapter indicates the scale of Šamši-Adad I’s political ambitions and attests to his development and use of cultural discourse to aid in the exercise of political control over a large territory.<sup>201</sup> Although the evidence is limited, the elaboration of Šamši-Adad I’s titulary in line with his expanding control over the territory of Upper Mesopotamia reflects the careful and sophisticated choices made by his scholars in order to shape his image as a successful and powerful king. Given Šamši-Adad I’s origins in Akkad, it is not surprising that his scholars looked to the kings of Akkad as prototypes

<sup>198</sup> Miglus 1990.

<sup>199</sup> FAOS 7, 226 Narāmsîn C 1.

<sup>200</sup> Birot 1980; Durand/Guichard 1998; Charpin 2004b; beyond the evidence of the building inscriptions, this claim is particularly apparent in the titulary chosen by Šamši-Adad I in his votive inscriptions found at Mari, which hark back to Akkadian tradition, see Charpin 1984.

<sup>201</sup> Kupper 1985.

and models for kingship, thereby perpetuating and developing the specifically *Assyrian* literarization of the kings of Akkad, which is known from the Old Assyrian *Sargon Legend* found at Kültepe in distant Anatolia and is discussed in the next chapter.<sup>202</sup> In such literary texts, the kings of Akkad act as stand-in personages representing the historical kings in whose times the legends about the kings of Akkad were written.<sup>203</sup> A similar phenomenon is apparent during the reign of Daduša in the region of Ešnunna, where the library of Šaduppum/Tell Harmal yields a literary composition known as *Sargon in Foreign Lands*. This text describes Sargon's battle against the Hurrians in the region of Mardaman, an area straddling the road through the ʿTur-ʿAbdin to Diyarbekir.<sup>204</sup> It should be noted in this regard that the copy of *Sargon in Foreign Lands* found in Šaduppum/Tell Harmal is the only tablet known so far of this poem, representing further testimony of both Ešnunna's interest in the northern regions and of scholarly interest in fashioning an ideological discourse based on the kings of Akkad. Šamši-Adad I's interaction with Ešnunna continued after the death of Daduša, as he attempted to renew his alliance with Ešnunna's new ruler Ibal-pi-El II and met with his messengers in the city of Aššur.<sup>205</sup>

The literarization of the kings of Akkad constitutes a widespread phenomenon that is attested in both the formerly Sumerian and in the Tigridian cultural centers. In the latter group, this literarization appears to have originated with the scholars working under Daduša in Ešnunna and under Narām-Sîn in Aššur at the latest.<sup>206</sup> Literarization of the kings of Akkad in Aššur might have begun even earlier, as two rulers of Aššur adopted the names of Akkadian kings, namely Sargon (1920–1881 BCE) and Narām-Sîn (1872–1829/19 BCE).<sup>207</sup> This evidence identifies Tigridian ideological discourse as the direct precursor of the epic tradition that is subsequently elaborated during the Middle Assyrian period, culminating in the epics of Adad-nīrārī I (1295–1264 BCE) and Tukulti-Ninurta I (1233–1197 BCE).

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**202** See *Chapter 4.2*.

**203** Liverani 1993.

**204** Westenholz 1997, 78–93; note further that an Early Old Babylonian toponym list has been found in Tell Harmal, which includes the name of Kaneš, testifying to an interest in the Anatolian horizon, see Dercksen 2005 with reference to Levy, *Sumer* 3, p. 79 v 161.

**205** Charpin and Ziegler 2003, 130 with reference to ARM I 37:19–28: “The man of Ešnunna has written to me with regard to establishing an alliance (*aššum napištim lapātim*). I have taken out one clause out of the tablet of the treaty (*tuppi niš ili*). I have sent (a new version) to Ešnunna. The people of Ešnunna are obstructive and I have not received any news.”

**206** The find at Kültepe predates Šamši-Adad I as the house in which the Sargon text was found was destroyed in about 1836 BCE.

**207** For the chronology see Veenhof and Eidem 2008, 29.

It has been my aim in this chapter to demonstrate that the diffusion of cuneiform writing entailed the spread of Sumero-Babylonian tradition into the north. This is evident not only in the Old Assyrian incantation tablets from Aššur, which are written in Hymnic Epic Dialect, and in the Old Assyrian Sargon Legend from Kültepe, but is also supported by the finds of fragments of the *Sumerian King List* in Šubat-Enlil/Tell Leilan, the residence of Šamši-Adad I. These fragments are written in Babylonian script on tablets in a standard treaty format, and therefore suggest that there were Babylonian scribes in the entourage of Šamši-Adad I. The royal inscriptions from northern Syria, Mari, Aššur, and the larger Tigridian area, however, indicate that deliberate choices were made in the formulation of local cultural discourse in these regions. These choices reveal the existence of a northern Mesopotamian tradition that formed the cultural framework for the development of a typical Assyrian royal ideology. The finds of scholarly texts at the palace library of Tigonānum including ritual and divinatory texts of the sixteenth century and the Assyro-Mitannian tablets found at Bogazköy dating to the fourteenth century BCE represent further important vestiges of Tigridian or Assyrian scholarship active in the service of the elites before the time of Adad-nirārī I and Tukulti-Ninurta I when such interaction is undisputed.

Two tropes that were characteristic of the Assyrian conceptualization of kingship emerged already during the second half of the third millennium: the king as steward of the god Aššur, which expressed his accountability to the divine world, and his intimate relationship with Ištar. These tropes persisted into the Old Assyrian period, i.e. the first two centuries of the second millennium BCE when Aššur played a major role as a hub in the trade of tin.

There was major ideological innovation in the eighteenth century, when Šamši-Adad I managed to build his kingdom in Upper Mesopotamia. Šamši-Adad I's expansion resulted in the importation and adoption of Old Akkadian tradition on the one hand and in intense cultural interaction between Aššur, Ešnunna, and Mari on the other. Consequently, Babylonian tradition spread northward and westward. The association of the god Aššur with Enlil, which was promoted by Šamši-Adad I through his building of the double temple in the city of Aššur, firmly established Aššur's Enlilship in the Assyrian pantheon. Ideologically, the way was thus clear for claiming universal rather than merely local dominion by extending Aššur's local role to the universal dimensions represented by Enlil. As stewards of the local god Aššur, Assyrian kings were entitled to rule the narrowly conceived land of Aššur; as stewards of Aššur/Enlil, Assyrian kings could claim to rule totality. This new conceptualization was of primary ideological importance to Assyria's expansion during the Middle Assyrian period.

## 4 Empire as Cosmos, Cosmos as Empire

KA<sub>5</sub>.A *lapān* <sup>d</sup>Šamši *ēkīam illak* “Where can the fox go to get away from the sun?”  
Esarhaddon, (Leichty, RINAP 1 v 25)

### 4.1 What is ‘Universal Control’?

In the preceding chapter we saw the dynamics between sociopolitical conditions and royal ideological discourse during the early history of Aššur, when it became a major player among its peers in northern Mesopotamia and Syria. In this chapter I will discuss the central trope of Assyrian religion, i.e. Aššur’s command to expand the borders of the empire and ultimately to align the territory controlled by Aššur with the cosmos. As we saw in the last chapter, this trope was common to both Aššur and Ešnunna in the Old Babylonian period. In the Mesopotamian *weltanschauung*, any force that disrupted the social order had to be pushed toward the periphery of the controlled territory and beyond it, either by means of war or through ritual action. Establishing and maintaining order and eliminating disruptive forces was, therefore, the primary task of the king, whose duty it was to harmonize the condition of the world with the ideal primeval order created by the gods. This task situated the king at the threshold between history and the mythological and emblematic, helping to explain the recurrent use of the tropes of the king as hunter, as warrior, as caretaker of the cult, and as shepherd of his people.

The opening lines of Ashurbanipal’s *Coronation Hymn*, which reflect the theological superstructure underpinning the institution of Assyrian kingship, illustrate the notion that it is the king’s mission to subdue the entire universe and place it under his rule. It reveals that “the border moved forward by the king is not simply a state border, it is the demarcation between order and chaos, peace and turbulence, justice and violence”<sup>1</sup>:

May Šamaš, king of heaven and earth, elevate you to shepherdship over the four [region]s  
(*kībrāt erbetti*)!

May Aššur, who ga[ve] you [the scepter], lengthen your days and years!  
Spread your land wide at your feet!<sup>2</sup>

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1 Liverani 1990, 57.

2 SAA 3 no. 11:1–3.



**Fig. 22:** Ashurnasirpal II, Nimrud, Throne Room (Photo: British Museum, ME 124531, Courtesy British Museum).

Articulating the mission of kingship by combining the notion of shepherdship (*rē'ūtu*) with the claim of imperial control (*kibrāt erbettim*) is a conscious and deliberate choice, and it frames the present investigation. In the Neo-Assyrian period, the imperial claim to universal rule was inextricably tied to the notion of divine universality, which is visually symbolized by the winged disk that represents the national god Aššur (fig. 22). This iconography is a signifier for universal control on the one hand,<sup>3</sup> and for the divine command to establish social order within the known and controlled world on the other. Furthermore, in Mesopotamian religion the conceptualization of the cosmic order was modelled on the social order, entailing interdependence between human action and the dynamics of the cosmic order decreed by the gods.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, in this *weltanschauung* the king's ordering of the world was the fulfillment of the original divine plan, implying that everything and everyone had their proper

<sup>3</sup> Pongratz-Leisten 2011a and 2013c.

<sup>4</sup> Pongratz-Leisten 2013b.

position within the larger cosmic and social system. This notion involves a perception of controlled space in which any difference between the center and the periphery must be eliminated. By extending the borders of empire into unfamiliar lands, the distinction between the known and the unknown is eliminated. In other words, the empire becomes coextensive with the earth through the subjection of previously uncontrolled territories. Indeed, this is the mission of Assyrian kingship as promulgated in the Assyrian coronation ritual. Moreover, this notion demands total alignment in the intentionality and action of the gods and the king, and it is this understanding of reality that generated the entire discourse of royal ideology.

The first step of this analysis consists of a diachronic investigation of the particular terminology used in the ancient inscriptions to express territorial control, which will serve to determine when it is possible to speak of an actual claim to imperial control. An investigation of this kind requires a thorough examination of the meaning of the terms *kiššatu*, 'totality,' and *kibrāt erbettim*. The latter literally means 'four banks' and originally designated the banks of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, but in modern translations it is generally rendered as 'the four regions of the world' or as 'the universe.' While it is certainly true that at some point *kibrāt erbettim* acquired the meaning assigned to it by most modern translators, use of this term in earlier periods to convey the king's control of inhabited space suggests a more discriminating reading.

The language of the Sumerian royal inscriptions distinguishes between territory that is controlled by Sumerian city states, which is expressed by the term *kalam*, and territories subject to foreign lands, which are identified as *kur.kur*.<sup>5</sup> These foreign lands were known through trade and/or from military conflicts. The distinction between the two categories is obvious in Lugalzagesi's *Vase Inscription*, which was dedicated to the chief god Enlil following a military victory. Lugalzagesi's *Vase Inscription* distinguishes between territory controlled by the gods and territory controlled by man, the former including the foreign lands while the latter corresponds to the city states of Sumer. Toward the end of the Early Dynastic period, Lugalzagesi, originally king of Ereš and Umma, as reflected in his title "lú-mah priest of Nisaba,"<sup>6</sup> conquered the city states of Ur and Uruk and then defeated the city state of Lagaš. As a result, Lugalzagesi was effectively in control over the larger part of the region south of Babylonia.<sup>7</sup> In Lugalzagesi's ideological discourse this major political

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5 Wilcke 1990, 470–71.

6 For the argument that Ereš was the home town of Lugalzagesi and his father Bubu, as its patron deity Nisaba was their family deity, see Steinkeller 2003, 621–24.

7 Van de Mierop 2007, 48.

achievement, which for the first time brought a large territory under the control of one polity, was linked to the claim of universal control expressed in a metaphor of the chief god Enlil, who was said to have placed all the foreign lands under his foot from sunrise to sunset:

When the god Enlil, king of all the (foreign) lands (kur-kur-ra), gave Lugalzagesi kingship of the land (nam-lugal-kalam-ma), directed the eyes of the land toward him, brought down the (foreign) lands (kur-kur) at his feet, and made them submit to him from sunrise to sunset, at that time, from the Lower Sea, along the Tigris and Euphrates, to the Upper Sea, he put their roads in good order for him. From sunrise to sunset Enlil did not allow him any rival.<sup>8</sup>

This passage demonstrates the close connections between Enlil, the institution of kingship, and cosmic leadership. Enlil's kingship among the gods was established by the Fara Period at the latest, as the za<sub>3</sub>-mi<sub>3</sub> hymns relate that Enlil is the one who separates heaven from earth. In the *Kesh Hymn*, likewise attested in the Early Dynastic Period in a version from Abu Salabiḥ, Enlil “emerges from his house/temple as the princely lord in his royalty” (nám-nun-e nám-nun-e é-ta nam-ta-ab-è <sup>d</sup>en-líl nám-nun-e é-ta nam-ta-ab-è nám-nun-e nam-lugal-la é-ta nam-ta-ab-è).<sup>9</sup> These early literary texts thus reveal a notion of divine kingship that aligns with the ambitions of the earthly rulers.

Lugalzagesi's explicit mention of control over the territory along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, i.e. along the river banks that ‘link’ the area between the Upper Sea and the Lower Sea, refers to control over all of the major cities located along these rivers and thus anticipates the title ‘king of the land (of Sumer),’ lugal-kalam-ma. This region is juxtaposed with the foreign lands (kur-kur), pointing to a clear notion of the cultural cohesion of the south in contrast to the surrounding areas of the Iranian plateau and the Arabian desert. Interestingly, in his titulary Lugalzagesi juxtaposes the conquest of territory with the city of Uruk, the cultic center of the goddess Inanna, patron deity of kingship. He is “Lugalzagesi, king of Uruk, king of the land,” Lugalzagesi lugal-unu.KI-ga lugal-kalam-ma, implicitly citing Inanna's favor as a foundation for his legitimate kingship.<sup>10</sup>

Accordingly, use of the metaphor of the ‘four banks’ in the “First Empire of Akkad” did not represent something altogether novel, but was rather the

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<sup>8</sup> My translation largely follows Frayne in RIME 1, E1.14.20.1.

<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately this particular line is broken away in the early version, see Biggs 1971; quoted after the OB version ETCSL 4.80.2: 1–3.

<sup>10</sup> RIME 1, E1.14.20.1:3–5.

product of ongoing conceptual development.<sup>11</sup> In the Bassetki statue inscription of King Narām-Sîn of Akkad, for instance, Narām-Sîn boasts of having defeated the city states of the south who had risen against him in a major revolt:

Narām-Sîn, the Mighty,  
king of Akkade:  
When the four banks (*kibrātum arba'um*)  
All together revolted against him,  
He won nine battles in only one year  
Through the love Ištar showed to him  
And he captured the kings  
Who had risen against him.<sup>12</sup>  
Because he (Narām-Sîn) preserved the foundations of his city (in  
Times) of danger, (the residents of) his city requested  
from Inanna/Ištar in Eanna<sup>13</sup> (in Uruk),  
from Enlil in Nippur, from Dagan in Tuttul,  
from Ninhursag in Keš,  
from Enki/Ea in Eridu,  
from Sîn in Ur,  
from Šamaš in Sippar,  
(and) from Nergal in Kutha,  
that he be (made) the god of their city Akkad,  
and that they built his temple  
within Akkad.

Like Lugalzagesi, Narām-Sîn references Inanna/Ištar first, before the inscription proceeds with a list of all the cultic centers of Sumer and beyond that Narām-Sîn brought under his control. The choice of Inanna/Ištar heading the list of gods was based in his special devotion for that deity; additionally, the fact that the ruler of Uruk, Amar-girid, had been one of the main leaders of the insurrection might have impacted the particular structure of the list of deities.<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, during the late Early Dynastic period the title 'king of Kiš' (lugal kiš<sup>ki</sup>) emerges, playing on the homophony of the city name Kiš and the Akkadian word for 'totality' (*kiššatu*); this homophonous relationship allows the royal

<sup>11</sup> Hasselbach 2005, 4 fn. 25 with reference to Steinkeller 1993, 113 who considers the Uruk-Expansion to be a possible precursor of this development, albeit as a commercial rather than a political phenomenon; Nissen 1993, 93 and Liverani 1993, 3 argue for larger territorial units.

<sup>12</sup> After Gelb (†)/Kienast 1990, 81, Narām-Sîn 1:1–19.

<sup>13</sup> Written 25) *iš-te*<sub>4</sub> 26) <sup>d</sup>INANNA 27) in É.AN.NA-*ki-im*; for the reading of É.AN.NA-*ki-im* as Ayakku and its interpretation as an alternative name for Uruk see Beaulieu 2002.

<sup>14</sup> See also Beaulieu, *Ibid.*



title ‘king of Kiš’ to signify universal control.<sup>15</sup> The ‘totality’ implied by the title includes only a number of city states such as Uruk and Ur, or, in other cases, Kiš and Akšak, and might therefore appear limited from our modern perspective. Nevertheless, these cities represented major political centers competing for control over water resources as well as centers of learning bound together by a common *weltanschauung*. As such, when King Lugalkiginnedudu of Uruk assumed the title ‘king of Kiš’ in a dedicatory inscription to Inanna of Nippur, he might have been in control of the other city states of the south through conquest or treaty arrangements.<sup>16</sup> Joan Westenholz emphasizes the fact that the few southern kings who claim the title ‘king of Kiš,’ among them Eannatum of Lagaš and Mesannepada of Ur, all credit Inanna with having granted them kingship.<sup>17</sup> Eannatum states this explicitly: “to Eannatum, the ruler of Lagaš, the goddess Inanna, because she loved him so, gave the kingship of Kiš to him in addition to the rulership of Lagaš.”<sup>18</sup> The origins of the concept of hegemonic control by the grace of Inanna can thus be traced back to the early history of the Sumerian city states, when they were still competing with each other for supremacy.<sup>19</sup> Following his conquest of southern Mesopotamia, Sargon, the first king and founder of the empire of Akkad, clearly understood this concept, since his titulary begins with the titles ‘bailiff of Inanna, king of totality,’ *maškim.gi<sub>4</sub>* *dinanna lugal kiš*, before proceeding with the established titles ‘anointed priest of An, lord of the land, chief governor of Enlil,’ *pa<sub>4</sub>.šeš an / lugal kalam.ma.ki ensi<sub>2</sub>.gal d<sub>4</sub>en.líl*.<sup>20</sup>

At least in the second half of the third millennium and in the first half of the second millennium, a distinction was made between the actual control of territory, implying political and cultural integration (*kalam*), and simple forays into peripheral regions beyond the heartland (*kur*). The textual evidence suggests that it was the combination of control over the city states and contact with more distant regions that was expressed by the title ‘king of totality (*kiššatu*).’ Distant regions were known through trade and military action, and might have been incorporated into networks of control as subjected vassals and/or

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15 Westenholz 2000, 77.

16 RIME 1, E1.14.14.2:3. See the interesting Lugalkiginnedudu’s interesting remark made in ll. 5–14: when the goddess Inanna combined lordship with kingship for Lugalkiginnedudu, he exercised lordship (*nam-en*) in Uruk and kingship (*nam-lugal*) in Ur’ reflecting the different customs of designating rulership in these cities.

17 RIME 1, E1.13.5.1:2.

18 RIME 1, E1.9.3.5 v 23–vi 5.

19 Westenholz 2000, 77.

20 RIME 2, E2.1.1.1.

by means of interdynastic marriages.<sup>21</sup> The ideological discourse, however, blurs the distinction between the actual control that was exercised over cities along the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, and what can at most have been temporary or very partial control over the foreign lands described by the tropes “from sunrise to sunset” and “from the lower sea to the upper sea.” These tropes conveyed the image of a cosmic totality (*kiššatu*) that was culturally and politically integrated. This programmatic *weltanschauung*, which was already conceptualized in the time of Lugalzagezi, was propagated systematically by the kings of Akkad, who not only transformed Mesopotamia politically by introducing a complex and unified administrative structure but also inscribed a new vision of the world into the most remote mountain sides in the form of steles and rock reliefs.<sup>22</sup> During the Ur III period, the term *ma-da* was introduced, which is a Semitic loan word designating the concept of ‘territory, countryside, march, frontier (area),’ but not yet ‘homeland,’ (= Akkadian notion) as is the case under the kings of the Isin Dynasty.<sup>23</sup> Although later bilingual lexical texts equate *kur* rather than *kalam* with the Akkadian *mātum*, it is the Sumerian *kalam* and Akkadian *mātum* that share the notion of a “land” as a political entity comprised of a particular people. Later Assyrian royal inscriptions illuminate this understanding by alternating between the terms “land” (*mātu*) and “prince” (*rubû*) to represent a political community when referring to enemies vanquished during military campaigns:

Aššur, the great god, has entrusted me a kingship without rival, and has made my weapons powerful above all those who dwell in palaces. From the upper sea of the setting sun to the lower sea of the rising sun he has made the four quarters submit to my feet.<sup>24</sup>

From the very moment that an attempt to exercise hegemonic control is apparent in the inscriptions of the Early Dynastic and Old Akkadian periods, it is clear that the term *kiššatu* is used metaphorically to align the known world with the cosmos. The term *kibrāt erbettim* had not yet acquired a comparable meaning in these early periods.<sup>25</sup> Instead, it remained restricted to the four river banks of the Euphrates and the Tigris.

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<sup>21</sup> Glassner 1984; Ataç 2013.

<sup>22</sup> Michalowski 2010a, 152 f.

<sup>23</sup> Michalowski 2011, 125 f. with n. 6.

<sup>24</sup> OIP II, 66 ll. 2–3.

<sup>25</sup> For a different interpretation see Glassner 1984 and Ataç 2013, 393.

## 4.2 Controlling the Land between the Rivers: The *Sargon Legend* and the First Macro-Regional State under Šamšī-Adad I

Until the Old Babylonian period, the Euphrates and Tigris rivers remained the dominant geographical reference points for kings, who mapped their regional control only *along* the river banks. The first explicit reference to control over the land *between* the Euphrates and Tigris rivers is from the reign of Šamšī-Adad I (1808–1776 BCE) and is found in a vase inscription dedicated to the god Dagan:

	[ <sup>d</sup> utu]-ši- <sup>d</sup> [iškur]	[Šam]šī-[Adad],
2	ˀlugal ˀ da-[núm]	mig[hty king],
	ša-ki-in <sup>d</sup> [en-líl]	governor of Enlil,
4	ensí <sub>2</sub> <sup>d</sup> a-š[ur]	steward of Aššur,
	na-ra-am <sup>d</sup> da-g[an]	beloved of Dag[an],
6	mu-uš-te-em-ki ma-]a-tim	<i>unifier/pacifier</i> <sup>26</sup> of the [la]nd
	bi-ri-it <sup>i7</sup> idigna	between the Tigris
8	ù <sup>i7</sup> buranun-na	and the Euphrates,
	ru-ba [ma-r]i <sup>ki</sup>	prince of [Mar]i,
10	lugal é-ká[l-la-ti]m <sup>ki</sup>	king of Ekal[latu]m,
	ša-ki-in š[u-ba-at- <sup>d</sup> e]n-lí] <sup>ki</sup>	governor of Šubat-Enlil,
12	tu-a-mi a-na [ <sup>d</sup> ]a-gán	twin vase for [D]agan
	ù ša-ku-la-at [...]	and the <i>tākultum</i> -banquets
14	[x] x <sup>d</sup> a-šur a-n[a ...]	... Aššur ...
	(...)	
rev.	na-ru-x x x [...] <sup>27</sup>	

As is discussed in *Chapter Three*, Šamšī-Adad I is known for his establishment of a macro-regional state. By forging a triangle of control with three centers of power, namely Šubat-Enlil, Ekallatum, and Mari, Šamšī-Adad I abandoned the idea of a territorial state as an outgrowth of a former city state in favor of the ingenious concept of the macro-regional state, which was based on a two-level monarchy in which he was the ‘great king’ and his two sons were his co-regents with control over their own distinct territories. Šamšī-Adad I’s ‘totality’ extended from the west to the east, as represented by expeditions to distant regions, like the Mediterranean shore in the west and Tukriš in the east, some-

<sup>26</sup> See AHW II, 643 s.v. *mekū*; Šamšī-Adad I uses the same epithet in his inscription on stone tablets from the Aššur temple, see RIMA 1, A.0.39.1:5–6.

<sup>27</sup> Charpin 1984, 50–51.

where in north-west Iran. In Šamši-Adad I's inscriptions the notion of a north to south axis is absent, and this exclusion implicitly reflects the political reality of Babylonian expansion under the Old Babylonian dynasty, which prevented Šamši-Adad I from advancing southward in a meaningful way:

At that time I received the tribute of the kings of Tukriš and of the king of the Upper Land, within my city, Aššur. I set up my great name and my monumental inscription in the land Lebanon on the shore of the Great Sea.<sup>28</sup>

By setting up a stele in Lebanon, Šamši-Adad I emulated the practice of the kings of Akkad and claimed an idealized control over the westernmost periphery – namely the Mediterranean Sea – by carving his monument into the landscape. Šamši-Adad I's pairing of the Mediterranean shore with the eastern region of Tukriš to substantiate his claim to the title 'king of totality' is a striking choice. Adopted from the Old Assyrian *Sargon Legend*, this literary trope reflected political reality only in part, as it was only in the first millennium BCE that the Assyrians could claim effective control over the regions to the west of the Euphrates. The intertextuality between Šamši-Adad I's inscription and the Old Assyrian *Sargon Legend* is one of the earliest manifestations of the relationship between literary texts and royal inscriptions, as in this case a literary text provides the model for a particular trope used in a royal inscription.

The Old Assyrian *Sargon Legend* was recovered from the private house of a merchant in Kaneš/Kültepe and predates the inscription of Šamši-Adad I.<sup>29</sup> Its find spot has led almost all of the earlier editors of the text to assume that it is a parody transmitted by Assyrian merchants to Anatolia. Dercksen, Alster, Oshima, and Westenholz have taken a different approach. Dercksen assumes an Assyrian origin of the text in the city of Aššur and considers it a token of the cultural contacts between Aššur and Akkad. This view explains why two early rulers of Aššur – Sargon and Narām-Sîn – borrowed their names from the rulers of Akkad and wrote their names with the divine determinative in their official seals.<sup>30</sup> Although some of the text's Sumero-Babylonian motifs suggest that it could have been written in Babylon rather than in Aššur, Dercksen is of the opinion that the geographical names it records reflect a northern horizon. He further emphasizes that the text is Old Assyrian in language and orthogra-

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**28** RIMA 1, A.O.39.1:73–87.

**29** Since it was first published by Cahit Günbatti 1997, this text has been the subject of several translations and studies: Van de Mieroop 2000, Hecker 2001, Cavigneaux 2005, Foster 2005, Alster and Oshima 2007; Westenholz 2007b; Liverani 2010.

**30** Dercksen 2005. In this assumption Dercksen follows Veenhof 2003, 44.

phy and, in contrast to Old Assyrian incantations,<sup>31</sup> shows no features of the Babylonian hymno-epic dialect. Because of the uniqueness of the Old Assyrian *Sargon Legend*, the ancient epic is quoted in full, mostly following Dercksen's translation and his division of the text according to literary tropes:

*Introduction*

King Sargon, king of Agade the metropolis (*rebitum*),<sup>32</sup> mighty king, who discusses with the gods. Adad gave him strength, and as a result I (!) took possession of the land from East to West and on one single day I did battle with seventy cities; I captured their rulers and I destroyed their cities.

*The first feat: Sargon the hunter and athlete*

I swear by Adad, the lord of strength, and by Ištar, the lady of battle! I saw a gazelle and I threw a brick into the river. But while I was running, my girdle broke; I attached a snake, ran on and caught the gazelle. (Then) I took the brick out of the water.

*The second feat: Sargon the provider*

I swear by Adad and Ištar! Every day I truly slaughter one thousand oxen and six thousand sheep. I did indeed slaughter daily. Seven thousand (are) my heroes who are daily eating brisket in my presence. Three thousand are my runners who are eating loins. A thousand are my cupbearers who are daily eating marrow from shanks until they are satisfied. ... invited (them) and my seven thousand heroes ate brisket. For the last man brisket was found lacking; he slaughtered his ox from Kušamman that belonged to his travel seat and he gave brisket to the last man. My cook let mediocre meat burn and as a punishment he slaughtered one hundred oxen two hundred, and I fed it to my servants.

*The third feat: Sargon resisting darkness*

I swear by Adad and Ištar! For seven years, one month and fifteen days I stayed in darkness, together with my army. When I came out, indeed I did take a measuring rod (decorated with) carnelian and lapis lazuli, and indeed I divided the land; I divided the Humanum<sup>33</sup> mountain in two parts and put up my statue between them as a (marking) stake.

*The fourth feat: Sargon the conquering hero*

The prince of Tukriš I dressed in an animal skin. As for (the men of) Hudura:<sup>34</sup> I applied a slave mark to their heads. As for (the men of) Alašiya: I covered their heads like that of a woman. Of the Amorites I destroyed their penis instead of cutting off their noses. I tied the heads of the Kilarites<sup>35</sup> with a leather strap. I released the *sutuhhu* of the .... I shaved

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31 Veenhof 1996 and Michel 2004.

32 As pointed out by Dercksen, the word *rebitum* occurs as an epithet for cities in Old Babylonian texts, and is also used as an epithet for Akkad in the Prologue of Hammurabi's *Law Code*; it is further attested in opposition to *kārum* 'colony' in Old Assyrian texts, and interestingly also occurs in Daduša's inscription as a designation for Qabara, see Dercksen 2005, 111–112.

33 Mount Humanum is not to be confused with the Amanus Mountains and is probably to be sought on the Euphrates route to the west, see Dercksen 2005, 114.

34 Hudura seems to be a place near Puruškanda in central Anatolia and Amurru could designate the region of Jebel Bishri, where the Amorites originated.

35 Kilarium is attested in Old Assyrian texts but its location is unknown.

the scalp of (the men of) Hattum.<sup>36</sup> I pinched the men of Luhme with a toggle-pin. As for the (women of) Gutium (and the men of) Lullu(bu)m<sup>37</sup> and Hahhum:<sup>38</sup> I slit open their clothes.

*Conclusion and praise*

I touched the three *posts* of heaven with my hands. Why should I increase words on (other) tablets? Does Anum not know me? Let them increase the regular offerings to me, because I have been king and conquered the Upper and Lower Country. How I am king, (and) how I took the lower and upper country. Adad is king.<sup>39</sup>

Situating the Old Assyrian *Sargon Legend* in a northern Mesopotamian horizon on geographical grounds is supported by the oath formula repeatedly used in this text, which is addressed to the divine pair of the weather god Adad, who played a prominent role in Syria and northern Mesopotamia, and Ištar. The combination of Adad, written <sup>d</sup>IŠKUR, and Ištar is reminiscent of the Hurrian divine pair Teššub, who could also be represented by the IŠKUR sign, and Ištar-Šauška. As already discussed in *Chapter Two*, the combination of Ištar and Adad occurs for the first time in the reign of the Hurrian king Tiš-atal in Urkeš in a curse formula; after Belat-Nagar, the local hypostasis of Ištar-Šauška in Nagar, and the sun god Šimige (<sup>d</sup>UTU-*ga-an*),<sup>40</sup> this curse formula mentions Teššub written with the Sumerogram <sup>d</sup>IŠKUR. Daniel Schwemer has emphasized that already during the Old Babylonian period Adad/Teššub was venerated together with Ištar/Šauška rather than with Hebat in northern Mesopotamia, which is also true in the Tiš-atal inscription. To be sure, it is not always clear whether Ištar/Šauška figured as Adad/Teššub's spouse or sister. Further, blessings in the Mitannian correspondence of the Amarna period reveal the coupling of Adad with Ištar/Šauška,<sup>41</sup> and the divine pair is also attested in the Hurro-Akkadian milieu of the eastern Tigridian region of Arrapha.<sup>42</sup> As such, the decision of the authors of the Old Assyrian *Sargon Legend* – who were

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**36** Hattum is reminiscent of Hatti and appears together with Lullu(bu)m as one of the enemies of Narām-Sîn.

**37** If Lullu(bu)m is to be equated with Lullubum, it should be located in the eastern Tigridian region, and thus would evoke the image of opposite ends.

**38** The location of Hahhum is assumed to be in northern Syria, somewhere northeast of Adiyaman at a crossing of the Euphrates; see van de Mieroop 2000, 151 ff. As can be gleaned from itineraries, Hahhum was one of the stations of the Assyrian trade route into Anatolia, see Veenhof 2008, 12.

**39** Dercksen 2005, 108–110.

**40** Wilhelm 1998; Schwemer 2001, 445.

**41** See the letters of King Tušratta sent to Amenhotep III and Amenhotep IV, referred to by Schwemer 2001, 460.

**42** Schwemer 2001, 460.

probably scholars working at the court of the ruler of Aššur – to direct that text’s oath formula to Adad and Ištar demonstrates that they operated in a northern Mesopotamian cultural milieu; in Assyrian ideological discourse, the pairing of Adad and Ištar persisted into the Middle Assyrian period.<sup>43</sup> Dercksen also notes that the martial role assigned to Adad in the text is unusual and alien to southern Mesopotamian tradition, although the Old Assyrian *Sargon Legend* does share this notion with Daduša’s royal inscription.<sup>44</sup> This corroborates my thesis that there existed a distinct Tigridian cultural discourse.

In the fourth feat described in the Old Assyrian *Sargon Legend*, the author maps Sargon’s ‘conquered’ territory far into Anatolia and on an east-west axis, specifically from Tukriš in the eastern Tigridian region and Gutium in the Zagros mountains to Alašiya (=Cyprus) in the Mediterranean Sea. In addition to shedding light on the geographical conception of the “totality” controlled by Sargon, this literary composition is of utmost importance to the cultural discourse and later literary production centered on the Assyrian king, as it anticipates the emphasis on the king as hunter and warrior and focuses primarily on his masculinity and power. Moreover, as already noted by Dercksen, Alster, and Oshima,<sup>45</sup> the text was written by a well-educated scribe and abounds in literary allusions. These allusions include Sargon’s experience of the sun’s darkening, which references *Sargon the Conquering Hero* and *Sargon in Foreign Lands*, a text found in Tell Harmal and in omen literature (l. 42 in the third feat);<sup>46</sup> the mention of the measuring rod, which references the Sumerian version of *Inanna’s Descent* (l. 45);<sup>47</sup> and the treatment of the people in Luhme, which is inspired by a passage in the *Cuthean Legend* (l. 62).<sup>48</sup> Moreover, ll. 41 ff. in the third feat are inspired by Gilgameš Tablet IX (ll. 83–87; 140–165; 173–75), which refers to Gilgameš’s journey through a tunnel of darkness until he sees the light. The text also shares this vision with the Old Babylonian legends *Sargon the Conquering Hero*<sup>49</sup> and *Sargon in Foreign Lands*,<sup>50</sup> as well as omen literature.<sup>51</sup>

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43 Pongratz-Leisten 2011b, 114.

44 Dercksen 2005, 117.

45 Alster and Oshima 2007, 4.

46 Line 42, see Westenholz 1997, 69 ad lines 57–64 and p.71 and 91, quoted by Dercksen 2005, 113.

47 Dercksen 2005, 113.

48 Dercksen 2005, 115 with reference to Westenholz 1997, 315.

49 Westenholz 1997, 59–77.

50 Westenholz 1997, 78–93.

51 Cavigneaux 2005, 599.

The Old Assyrian *Sargon Legend* is an outstanding example of the transmission and reception of cultural knowledge. The text is informed by what Westenholz calls the ‘Akkad Saga,’<sup>52</sup> i.e. the cultural tradition that evolved around the Akkadian kings Sargon and Narām-Sîn beginning in the Akkad period, and represents an improvisation on a variety of literary themes that must have circulated in oral form. Its compositional style draws on the royal inscriptions of the Akkad period and its subscript categorizes it as a praise of Sargon’s achievements that is to be performed in the context of the mortuary cult. The bulk of the text, on the other hand, is dedicated to episodes of Sargon’s life, all starting with the refrain “I swear by Adad and Ištar” and combining historical deeds with motifs from fairy tales.<sup>53</sup> These passages were easy to remember and reflect an improvisational mode of reception, which is typical of oral tradition. The extensive intertextuality of the Old Assyrian *Sargon Legend* with texts from the Sumero-Babylonian tradition, however, can only have been the product of an educational and scholarly milieu like the one linked with the court at Aššur, and classifies the text as a combination of orality and literacy, which coexisted in Mesopotamian textual production.<sup>54</sup>

### 4.3 Building an Empire: The Role of Hanigalbat in the Middle Assyrian Period

The end of the Old Assyrian period is poorly documented. Modern scholarship faces a gap of more than three hundred years between the disintegration of Šamši-Adad I’s macro-regional kingdom of Upper Mesopotamia and Aššur-uballiṭ I’s (1353–1318 BCE) renewed expansion of the city state of Aššur. As suggested by the work of Aline Tenu, it is possible that the Hittite-Hurrian bilingual text mentioning a prince of Aššur by the name of Šu-Ninua<sup>55</sup> constitutes evidence of an alliance or link between Aššur and Nineveh around 1600 BCE, which now may be confirmed by the texts from Tigonānum.<sup>56</sup> Be that as it may, by the end of the sixteenth century Assyria had lost its independence to Mitanni, becoming a vassal of this polity for the period between ca. 1550

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52 Westenholz 1997, 22.

53 Alster and Oshima 2007, 6–8 and Westenholz 2007b, 21–22.

54 See also Westenholz 2007b.

55 Tenu 2005, 27 with reference to Neu 1996.

56 See my discussion in *Chapter 2. 4*



and 1390 BCE.<sup>57</sup> Only following the assassination of Tušratta and the Hittite invasion of Mitanni from the west in the fourteenth century BCE did Assyria annex the lands comprising the eastern Tigridian area and the eastern Jazira – a decisive expansion of Assyrian territory that was largely directed by Aššur-uballiṭ I. As documented by the exchange of diplomatic letters with Babylon and Hatti, it is under this king that the first signs of a growing self-confidence as a territorial state become discernible. This king secured Assyrian control of Nineveh and Arbail, as is expressed in his building inscription from Ištar’s temple at Nineveh. In that inscription, Aššur-uballiṭ I calls himself “king of the *land* (emphasis mine) of Aššur,” *šar māt Aššur*, with the term *mātu* now denoting a unified political entity similar to KALAM in earlier Sumerian usage and in the inscriptions of Sargon, as well as in compositions from the Ur III and Old Babylonian periods.<sup>58</sup> This use of the term first occurs in an Assyrian context in the Old Assyrian *Sargon Legend*, now shifting from a literary to a political context. Additionally, Aššur-uballiṭ I refers in his inscription to Šamši-Adad I’s previous work on Ištar’s temple. He thereby associates himself with Šamši-Adad I’s attempt to control the Aššur-Nineveh-Arbail triangle that constituted the core territory of Assyria in later times.<sup>59</sup> Aššur-uballiṭ I also demonstrates a remarkable interest in promulgating the continuity of Assyrian kingship by recording his genealogy to the sixth generation, thus formulating an ideological vision that might have paved the way for the creation of the *Assyrian King List*.<sup>60</sup> The importance of this king to the expansion of Assyrian territory toward the south is acknowledged by the author of the *Synchronistic King List*, which records Aššur-uballiṭ I as the first king following the period of Mitannian control over Aššur.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, it is with Aššur-uballiṭ I that the *Synchronistic King List* begins its chronological account, in contrast to the previous section that lists the names of Assyrian and Babylonian kings and then their skirmishes.

Subsequent to their conquest of new territories, the Assyrians were able to secure the heartland of their country from the attacks of mountain people and, later, from Aramean raids. Although the power of Aššur declined temporarily after Aššur-uballiṭ I’s death, this trend was reversed in the following century

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57 Lion 2011; see also the treaty between the Hittite King Suppiluliuma (1355–1320 BCE) and Šattiwaza, king of Mitanni, according to which the predecessor of the latter seized a door made of silver and gold from Aššur and brought it to his capital.

58 Dercksen 2005, 113.

59 See, however, Postgate 2011, 8, who assumes that Nineveh together with Kilizi and Arbail remained under Mitannian control until after the reign of Aššur-uballiṭ, as his successor Enlil-nērārī had to confront his Babylonian counterpart in the region of Kilizi.

60 RIMA 1, A.0.73.1–2.

61 Grayson, *ABC*, chronicle no. 21.

under Adad-nīrārī I (1295–1264 BCE). This king expanded Assyrian control toward the region of Hanigalbat in the Hābūr triangle, which was the former core of Mitanni and a contact zone between the Hittite empire and Assyria of great strategic, political, and economic importance.<sup>62</sup> Adad-nīrārī I's political ambitions are reflected in the revival of the epithet “king of totality” (*kiššatu*).<sup>63</sup> Following his defeat of Wasašatta, the son of Šattuara, king of Mitanni, Adad-nīrārī I annexed several formerly important Hurrian centers, among them Ta'īdu, by then the royal residence of Mitanni,<sup>64</sup> Kahat, seat of the storm god Adad, and Waššukanni,<sup>65</sup> the former royal residence; additionally, Adad-nīrārī I launched several forays toward the region of Iridu, Sudu, Harran, and Carchemish.<sup>66</sup> His interaction with the Hurrian milieu is reflected in the end of his curse formula, which pairs Adad/Teššub with Ištar:

- 55 *ḏIškur i-na ri-hi-iš le-mu-ti li-ir-hi-is-su a-bu-bu*  
 56 *im-hu-ul-lu sah-maš-tu te-šu-ú a-šām-šu-tu su-qu*  
 57 *bu-bu-tu ar-ru-ur-tu hu-šá-hu i-na ma-ti-šu*  
 58 *lu ka-ia-an KUR-sú a-bu-bi-iš lu-uš-ba-i*  
 59 *a-na ti-li ù kar-me lu-te-er ḏišg-tár be-el-ti*  
 60 *a-bi-ik-ti KUR-šu li-iš-ku-un*

May the god Adad overwhelm him with a terrible flood. May deluge, hurricane, insurrection, confusion, storm, need, famine, hunger (and) want be established in his land. May (Adad) cause (these things) to pass through his land like a flood and turn (it) into ruin hills. May the goddess Ištar, my mistress, bring about the defeat of his land.<sup>67</sup>

In his commemoration of his restoration work on the temple of the Assyrian Ištar, Shalmaneser I (1263–1234 BCE) likewise features the pair of Adad and Ištar in his curse formula,<sup>68</sup> thus continuing a tradition which was attested in the Assyrian *Sargon Legend* for the first time. This pairing persists into the first millennium BCE with Šamaš-rēša-ušur, “governor of Sūhu and Mari,” who represents himself in the presence of the deities Adad and Ištar,<sup>69</sup> and it continues in a different genre, namely the Neo-Assyrian penalty clauses in contracts from Nimrud.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Giorgieri 2011, 172.

<sup>63</sup> RIMA 1, A.0.76.3:1.

<sup>64</sup> Novak 2013; Faist 2006 with reference to Radner/Schachner 2001; Radner 2004, 113–115 identifies Ta'īdu with Üçtepe on the Upper Tigris, north of Kahat.

<sup>65</sup> RIMA 1, A.0.76.1:8–11.

<sup>66</sup> RIMA 1, A.0.76.1:13.

<sup>67</sup> RIMA 1, A.0.76.22:55–60.

<sup>68</sup> RIMA 1, A.0.11.6:22–31.

<sup>69</sup> Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 231.

<sup>70</sup> For the texts see Schwemer 2001, 598–99.

Another interesting feature to be observed in the royal inscriptions of Adad-nīrārī I is that this king uses the motif of sowing salty plants over the ground of the vanquished city of Iridu to prevent any further growth,<sup>71</sup> a motif at that time only known from Hittite royal discourse.

I captured by conquest the city Taidu, his (Hurrian king Ušašatta, son of Šattuara) great royal city, cities Amasaku, Kahat, Nabula, Hurra, Šuduhu, and Waššukanu. I took and brought to my city, Aššur, the possessions of these cities, the accumulated (wealth) of his (Ušašatta's) fathers, (and) the treasure of his palace I conquered, burnt, (and) destroyed the city Iridu and sowed salty plants over it.<sup>72</sup>

Whether such action was actually performed or whether this is merely a literary motif is irrelevant. What is important is that the use of the motif reflects Adad-nīrārī I's awareness of the strategic importance of the city of Iridu, which was located in the zone of Hittite influence and had been a site of conflict between Hittites and Hurrians some fifty years earlier as described in the treaty between Suppiluliuma I and Šattiwaza of Mitanni.<sup>73</sup> It further demonstrates Adad-nīrārī I's knowledge of Hittite ideological discourse as this motif links his discourse with the annals describing the conquest of Hattusili I in Northern Syria. These have been transmitted in later copies probably dating from the time of Hattusili III, who was likely a contemporary of Adad-nīrārī I.<sup>74</sup> This ritual or motif, however, occurs for the first time in the *Anitta Text* describing the conquest of central Anatolia,<sup>75</sup> where it is used to describe the destruction of Hattusa, which is to become the capital of the Hittite empire. This text interestingly uses the Sumerogram za<sub>3</sub>.ah.li = Akkadian *sahlu* thus suggesting a Babylonian origin of the motif. Adad-nīrārī I's deliberate choice of this motif then reflects his claim that with the conquest of Iridu the Hittite and Assyrian states now shared a common border.<sup>76</sup> The motif occurs further in the inscriptions of Adad-nīrārī I's son and successor Shalmaneser I (1263–1234 BCE) in his account of the city Arinu,<sup>77</sup> to be revived only by Ashurbanipal (668–631/27 BCE) in his account dealing with the destruction of Elam.<sup>78</sup>

71 See already my discussion of this passage in Pongratz-Leisten 2011b, 113.

72 RIMA I, A.0.73.3: 26–36.

73 Beckman 1996, 42. 6A § 12.

74 Haas 2006.

75 Carruba 2003, 37 §XIIb 48.

76 Klengel 1999, 164–165.

77 RIMA 1, A.0.77.1:46–51.

78 Borger 1996, 168 Prisma T V 7–8. This ritual occurs further in the curse formula of the Aramaic treaty of Bar-Ga'yah of Ktk with King Mati'el of Arpad, see Fitzmyer 1967, 15 Curse Section IV.

Assyrian expansion to the west was primarily a survival strategy.<sup>79</sup> While Aššur's local agricultural production was sufficient to meet the needs of the city during the Old Assyrian period, Aššur's location near the dry-farming belt and its small agricultural hinterland proved to be insufficient to meet its needs once the city became the capital of an expansionist territorial polity. As a result, the area to the north and to the west of the Assyrian heartland, which was in the dry-farming zone and a rich source of metal ores, was of major interest to the Assyrians from the Middle Assyrian period onward. Expansionist ambitions and material needs thus help to account for the incorporation of the west into Assyria. A further impetus for this expansion was the trade in luxury goods, observable already prior to the Middle Assyrian period.<sup>80</sup>

In an ongoing effort to dismantle the power structure of Mitanni, which had built alliances with the Hittites and the Ahlamu nomads, Adad-nīrārī I's son and successor Shalmaneser I established administrative districts in the Hābūr triangle.<sup>81</sup> The surviving elites of the former Mitannian state do not appear to have submitted easily to Assyrian overlordship, organizing their resistance in the mountainous area of the Ṭur-ʿAbdin. As a result, Shalmaneser I's son and successor Tukulti-Ninurta I (1233–1197 BCE) felt compelled to secure the northern frontier and safeguard passage along the piedmont route from Aššur toward the Balih river prior to continuing Assyria's westward advance (Map 2).<sup>82</sup> After his establishment of administrative districts in the Hābūr triangle, Shalmaneser I pursued an expansionist policy in the Jazira and finally conquered Hanigalbat, which was placed under the control of his brother Ibašši-ilī, who bore the titles 'grand vizier' (*sukallu rabi'u*) and 'king of the land of Hanigalbat' (*šar māt Hanigalbat*); Ibašši-ilī's successors all descended from his line.<sup>83</sup> The *sukkallu rabi'u* resided in Tall Sheikh Ḥamad/ancient Dūr Katlimmu, which from that point onward served as the region's provincial capital.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Kühne 2000; for the expansion under Tukulti-Ninurta I see Yamada 2011.

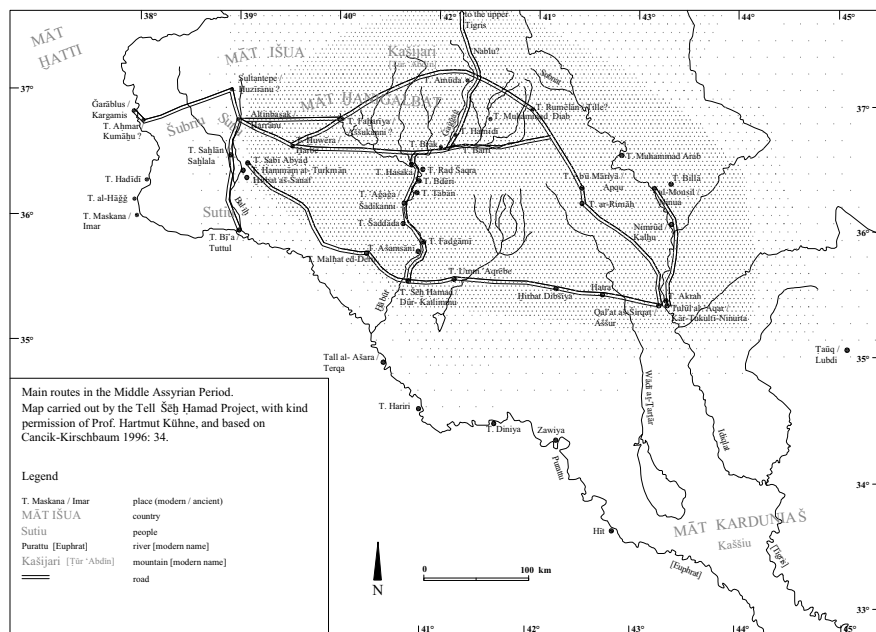
<sup>80</sup> Faist 2001, 128–138.

<sup>81</sup> The cities of Amasakku, Ta'idu, and Nahur were seats of district governors (*bēl pāhete*), see also Jakob 2003, 9. Archaeological and textual records reveal an Assyrian presence in Tall 'Amuda/Kulišhinaš and Tall Fekheriya in the north.

<sup>82</sup> Jakob 2003, 9 with reference to RIMA 1, A.0.77.1:56–72; see also the remarks by Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, 38; Fales 2012, 112.

<sup>83</sup> Fales 2012, 112–114.

<sup>84</sup> The surviving correspondence between the governor of Dūr Katlimmu and the king of Assyria proves that this region was under the tight control of Aššur at this time, governed by a firmly established administration, supported by a communication system consisting of a canal and a steppe route with regular road stations, Tall Umm 'Aqrēbe being one of the most important of these, see Kühne 1995, 72 and 2011, 103; Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996.



Map. 2: Assyrian expansion (after Faist 2006, 149).

Further, the *sukkallu rabi'u* assumed a status comparable to that of a viceroy, “overseeing rural areas and their output, supervising workers, supplying the Assyrian capital with tax-revenues, acting as legal authority, hosting officials during their travels, and even taking on specific policing and military duties.”<sup>85</sup> His authority stretched over four districts headed by the *bēl pāhete*, who were in turn assisted by minor local officials (*qēpu*). In addition to Tall Sheikh Ḥamad, these *bēl pāhete* resided in Tall Faḡgami (Qatni), Tall ‘Aḡaḡa (Šadikanni), and Tall Ṭabān (Ṭabētu),<sup>86</sup> all located along the Hābūr River. Newly founded road stations such as Tall Umm ‘Agrēbe<sup>87</sup> along the new route connecting Tall Sheikh Ḥamad with Aššur are an indicator of the Assyrian attempt to both control and colonize the steppe.

The degree of Assyrian political control prior to Shalmaneser I (1263–1234 BCE) over the various local polities along the Hābūr river might have varied slightly, but overall, with the growing pressure exercised by the Ahlamû no-

<sup>85</sup> Fales 2012, 113.

<sup>86</sup> Kühne in press. For the texts from Ṭabētu see Maul 1992.

<sup>87</sup> Pfälzner 1994.

mads marauding in the area,<sup>88</sup> these polities must have had an interest in maintaining a good relationships with their powerful Assyrian neighbor. Such a policy is discernible in the local kingdom of Ṭābētu / modern Tall Ṭābān which together with its satellite city Dūr Aššur-ketta-lēšir / modern Tell Bdēri located just to its north on the Hābūr river yielded rich archaeological and textual information. The history of Ṭābētu goes back to the Old Babylonian period, when it operated as a local center under the district governor of Qaṭṭun-an during the time of Zimrilim, an internal political organization, that was continued by the kings of Terqa.<sup>89</sup> Its status as a local center is reflected in the textual record, including letters, administrative, legal texts, and scribal exercises,<sup>90</sup> among them a land grant especially notable for its oath formula, which mentions Dagan (of Terqa) and Addu of Mahānum, a cultic center of the Bedouins in the western part of the Upper Jazira not far from Ṭābētu, representing the sedentary and pastoralist populations respectively.<sup>91</sup> The particular choice of the divinities as represented in the texts as well as the local calendar, which was practically identical with the one of Mari and also later with the one of Terqa,<sup>92</sup> anchors Old Babylonian Ṭābatum in the Syro-Babylonian tradition.

Ṭābatum subsequently must have come under Hurrian control as indicated by a brick inscription recently found in three exemplars written by a local ruler named Adad-bēl-gabbe who traces his lineage back to an individual bearing a Hurrian name: King Adad-bēl-gabbe, son of Zumiya, king of the Land of Mār[i], son of Akit-Teššub, [also] ki[ng of the Land of Māri].”<sup>93</sup> The rest of the Middle Assyrian inscriptions from Ṭābētu are divisible into two groups, the first group comprising 12<sup>th</sup> to early 11<sup>th</sup> century building inscriptions of the local rulers of Ṭābētu, who called themselves ‘king of Mari’ (*šar māt Māri*),<sup>94</sup> and the second belonging to the royal administrative archive and dating from the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE to the first part of the 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>95</sup> By the time of Ninurta-tukultī-Aššur around 1133 Ṭābētu must have reclaimed a semi-inde-

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**88** Kühne 2009, 46.

**89** Yamada 2008, pp. 164 and 2010.

**90** Yamada 2008.

**91** Yamada 2008, 160.

**92** Yamada 2008, 164.

**93** Shibata 2011.

**94** Maul 1992, 48 f. and 2005, 18 f.; Shibata and Yamada 2009; and now the fragment published by Shibata 2011.

**95** Yamada 2008, 153; for the publication of these tablets see Shibata 2007, who on the basis of the Eponyms dates the texts to the period between Shalmaneser I (1263–1234 BCE) and Ninurta-apil-Ekur (1181–1169 BCE).

pendent status as suggested by *nāmurtu* documents, recording gifts of the local ruler to the Assyrian king. Such evidence suggests that at that time the ruler had the status of a vassal rather than a governor in the direct service of the Assyrian king.<sup>96</sup> From this first Adad-bēl-gabbe onward all subsequent rulers had Assyrian names, displaying the effort exercised by this formerly Hurrian dynasty by adopting Assyrian names also to appropriate an Assyrian lifestyle.<sup>97</sup>

Ṭābētu's former Hurrian component explains Ṭābētu's strong familiarity with Babylonian tradition, as close interaction between these two cultures had occurred since the third millennium BCE in Mesopotamia as well as in Northern Syria. Due to the strong presence of the Hurrians in the Hābūr valley, the storm god Adad, local patron deity of Ṭābētu, must have appropriated traits of the Hurrian storm god Teššub. His temple was restored by Adad-bēl-gabbe III (end of the 12<sup>th</sup> cent. BCE).<sup>98</sup> Another temple was dedicated to the goddess Gula and had the same name as that known from Babylonian tradition, É.GAL.MAH.<sup>99</sup>

Further to the west, Middle Assyrian garrisons were established east of the Balih River. These fortifications represented "fortified agricultural production centers,"<sup>100</sup> which were granted by the Crown "as an autonomous farming estate in its well-defined boundaries and rights. The MA *dunnu* controlled vast tracts of farmland all around a fortified 'industrial' area; it was not open to secondary subdivisions or privatization (i.e., all the personnel was of dependent status vis-à-vis the owner), and – in the main – belonged to a single individual, at times even of high rank, residing elsewhere and specifically in a city (provincial capital or other)."<sup>101</sup> Such centers with their landholdings appear to have originated from the earlier structure of the *dimtu* attested in the Nuzi texts<sup>102</sup> and continued an administrative tradition that had been established under Mitannian control. This explains once again why the Assyrians were able to control the Western territories with such speed and effectiveness.

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**96** Shibata 2007, 63.

**97** Liverani 1988, 89. Formerly Maul 2005, 15 with reference to Freydank 1991 still ignorant of this recent find had suggested that Adad-bēl-gabbe (now Adad-bēl-gabbe II) might have been a member of the royal family in Assur similar to the vizier or governor, who in Middle Assyrian times, were members of the royal family, see Cancik-Kirschbaum 1999; see also Jacob 2003, 59–65.

**98** Maul 2005, no. 3.

**99** Maul 2005, no. 2.

**100** Wiggermann 2000, 172–174; Fales 2012, 101–103.

**101** Fales 2012, 101 f. with reference to Wiggermann 2000 172–174 and Radner 2004, 70

**102** Zaccagnini 1979. Note that in earlier times these were also single-real-estate owners.

The steppe garrisons Tell Šābi Abyad (Amīmu?),<sup>103</sup> Tell Hammam at-Turkman,<sup>104</sup> and Hirbat aš-Šanaf demonstrate a deliberate Assyrian attempt to control and colonize the regions *between* the rivers. In the later part of his reign, Tukultī-Ninurta I managed to bring this region of the Middle Euphrates between the Balih River and the Hābūr River fully under his control.<sup>105</sup> After Shalmaneser III's conquests in 856 BCE, the region became part of the province of the "commander in chief" (*turtānu*), which at that time extended to the Euphrates with Til Barsip as the provincial capital.<sup>106</sup>

The efforts of the kings Adad-nīrārī I, Shalmaneser I, and Tukultī-Ninurta I to establish a larger Assyrian kingdom can be considered the first phase of Assyrian expansion.<sup>107</sup> Tukultī-Ninurta I's sack and pillage of Babylon constituted a dramatic moment in Assyria's disturbance of the balance of power, which was divided between the kings of Hatti, Egypt, Babylonia, and formerly Mitanni. At least in terms of the ideological claims that were now expressed in Tukultī-Ninurta I's titulary, Assyria's defeat of Babylonia prompted a move toward the assertion of hegemonic control in the ancient Near East:

Tukultī-Ninurta, king of the universe (*šar kiššati*), king of Assyria, king of the four quarters (*šar kibrāt arbā'i*), sun of all people, strong king, king of Karduniaš, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the Upper (and) Lower Seas, king of the extensive mountains and plains, king of the land of Šubarū, Qutu, and king of all the lands Mairi, the king whom the gods have helped to obtain his desired victories and who shepherds the four quarters with his fierce might I, son of Shalmaneser (I), king of the universe, king of Assyria, son of Adad-nīrārī (I) (who was) also king of the universe (and) king of Assyria.<sup>108</sup>

The defeat of the Babylonian king Kaštiliaš IV is commemorated in a stone inscription recording Tukultī-Ninurta I's renovation of his palace in Aššur, the name of which was "Palace of the King, Lord of the Lands."<sup>109</sup> This title reflects the king's claim of universal control and his appropriation of the Sumero-Baby-

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**103** Jas 1990; Tenu 2009, 142. The texts will be published by F. A. M. Wiggermann. For the tentative identification with Amīmu see 1999–2001, 97. Tell Šābi Abiyad was not an administrative center, but the property of Ili-pada, *sukkallu rabi'u* "great vizier" probably granted to him by the Crown, see Faist 2006, 151 fn. 19.

**104** Van Loon 1988; de Meijer in press; van Soldt 1995.

**105** This is confirmed by the mention of a district governor of the city of Tuttul by the name of Aššur-šuma-ēriš in an administrative document from Tall Šābi Abyad, see Jakob 2003, 9 fn. 71 with reference to communication from Wiggermann.

**106** Radner 2006, 48, § 3.2.

**107** Cancik-Kirschbaum 2012, 21.

**108** RIMA 1, A.O.78.5–14.

**109** RIMA 1, A.O.78.5:79.



lonian theology of divine sovereignty (*Illilūtu*) and supremacy, which was associated with the supreme god Enlil and was now, following the Assyrian king's conquest of Babylonia, appropriated by Assyrian ideology. Tukulti-Ninurta I's victory is further celebrated in a literary poem that is known as the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*.<sup>110</sup> Assyria's spectacular expansion during the Middle Assyrian period came to an end with the murder of Tukulti-Ninurta I and was followed by a period of decline between 1200 and 900 BCE, barring a minor revival under Tiglath-Pileser I (1114–1076 BCE).

Along with these first attempts at building an Assyrian macro-regional state, it is possible to observe a dramatic increase in the power of the Assyrian king: "The City Assembly disappeared and was replaced by royal officials, whose position depended in the first place on their personal relation to the king."<sup>111</sup> This organization of power is apparent in the Assyrian *Coronation Ritual*, in which the officials have to symbolically resign their offices by placing their official insignia at the feet of the king, who confirms their position with the words: 'each one shall hold his office.'<sup>112</sup> The most important measure taken by the Assyrians to properly administer their vast and ever growing territory was the implementation of a provincial system with provincial capitals placed under the control of the high officials, which was the foundation for the later development of the empire. The custom of entrusting state affairs to members of the royal family is well documented in the Middle Assyrian letters found at the provincial capital of Tall Sheikh Ḥamad/Dūr-Katlimmu, which served as the residence of the grand vizier (*sukallu rabi'u*) under Shalmaneser I and Tukulti-Ninurta I.<sup>113</sup> In addition to kingship itself, the office of eponym and the post of grand vizier were both handed down within the ruling royal family.<sup>114</sup>

During the three hundred years between Tukulti-Ninurta I and Aššurnāṣir-pal II, the political geography of the Syro-Anatolian region changed markedly. The Hittite empire incorporated Kizzuwatna (Cilicia and the Taurus) into its territory and established secundo-genitures in Aleppo and Carchemish before collapsing; consequently, the geographical term Hatti migrated from the Anatolian plateau to northern Syria.<sup>115</sup> Only Carchemish maintained its political position to some degree and preserved the structures of Hittite political organization. During the 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE Assyria experienced a shrinking of its terri-

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110 Machinist 1978a; Foster 2005, 298–317.

111 Faist 2005, 17.

112 Müller 1937, 14 iii 1–14.

113 Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996. For further examples in other periods of Mesopotamian history see Edzard and Röllig 2006.

114 See Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, 22 pl. 5.

115 Hawkins 1974, 68.

tory and only regained its strength under Tiglath-Pileser I, who conducted military campaigns to Lebanon and the Mediterranean Coast. Tiglath-Pileser I's inscriptions reveal that by the 11<sup>th</sup> century BCE the Assyrians regarded Carchemish as Hatti's political center and applied the title "king of Hatti" only to kings of that city.<sup>116</sup> It is during the period between Shalmaneser I and Tiglath-Pileser I that due to direct political encounters it is possible to posit also major cultural interaction between Hittites and Assyrians.<sup>117</sup> Beyond other cultural practices such as the Hittite legal tradition of subordination and parity treaties,<sup>118</sup> this might have led to the adaptation of the annalistic style in the Assyrian royal inscriptions under Tiglath-Pileser I already attested under Hattusili I in the Hittite sphere.

Throughout this long period of expansion towards the west and towards the south with Tukulti-Ninurta I incorporating Babylon for a short time into Assyrian territory, the city of Aššur remained the political and cultural center of Assyria. While it seems that Nimrud gained in importance already under Shalmaneser I,<sup>119</sup> it is only under Tukulti-Ninurta I that we see the foundation of a new residence as a major agrarian center on the other side of the Tigris to exploit the Eastern region. The existence of the new capital Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta was, however, short-lived, and after Tukulti-Ninurta I's death, the center shifted back to Assur. Only during the first millennium BCE did the imperial center move to Nimrud, Dūr Šarru-kēn, and Nineveh. Such transfers of the administrative and political centers allowed the various kings to turn the respective residence into a reflection of their personal conception of Assyrian ideology and to immortalize their names by means of monumental building programs.<sup>120</sup> The city of Aššur, however, once it was established as the seat of the Assyrian dynasty (*šubat palēya*) and the seat of Assyrian kingship (*šubat šarrūtiya*) under Aššur-uballiṭ I, remained the cultic and cultural metropolis; here the kings were crowned in the temple of the god Aššur, and many of them were buried in the Old Palace.

#### 4.4 The Neo-Assyrian Empire: The King and His Cabinet

Following a protracted period of crisis between the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century and the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century there followed a period of revival between

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116 Hawkins 1974, 70.

117 Klengel 1999, 268–273; d'Alfonso 2006, 303–307; see further *Chapters* 6.4 and 10.5.

118 D'Alfonso 2006, 328.

119 Postgate and Reade 1976–1980, 320.

120 Cancik-Kirschbaum 2011–12, 72.

900 and 745 BCE, in which the Assyrian kings reestablished the borders of the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Even this period was not without turmoil. In 827 Shalmaneser III (858–824 BCE) and his crown prince Šamši-Adad V had to deal with a major revolt led by the Assyrian prince Aššur-daʾin-apla who had allied with 27 Assyrian cities.<sup>121</sup> It seems that Šamši-Adad V (823–810 BCE) ultimately defeated the rebels with the help of the Babylonian king Marduk-zākīr-šumi. Šamši-Adad V never refers again to these defeated cities again and describes campaigns that led beyond them.<sup>122</sup> Control over them was not complete though, as his successor Adad-nīrārī III (809–783 BCE) is still striving to consolidate the frontiers and central Assyria. It has been suggested that the reform of the provincial system occurred already under Shalmaneser III. In light of the evidence, Luis Robert Siddall, however, argues that it might have begun under Šamši-Adad V and continued into the reign of Adad-nīrārī III. The provincial system, as created by then, became the backbone of the Assyrian empire and the basis of its stability.<sup>123</sup> In this system the provinces delivered regular provisions to the Aššur temple<sup>124</sup> and to the palace; deliveries to the former were effectively an “extension of customs which went ultimately back to a system of commonly ruling family groups of the Old Assyrian phase.”<sup>125</sup>

The administrative organization of the Middle Assyrian period appears to have been directed primarily by two viziers, one responsible for the recently conquered regions in the west and the other responsible for the management of Assyria’s heartland, including Aššur, Nineveh, and Arbail.<sup>126</sup> In the Neo-Assyrian period, a number of other powerful dignitaries became prominent in the administration of the empire. As the biggest consumer of resources and a center for manufacturing, the palace was now administered by the steward (*mašennu*). Other dignitaries entrusted with administrative duties were the “commander in chief,” (*turtānu*),<sup>127</sup> who was the head of the Assyrian army and controlled the provincial governors, and the “cupbearer” (*rab šaqê*) and “palace herald” (*nāgir ekalli*), who could also act as military commanders. Two high dignitaries are only attested during the Neo-Assyrian period, namely the “chief eunuch” (*rab ša rēši*)<sup>128</sup> and the “chief judge” (*sartinu*), pointing to

121 RIMA 3, A.0.103.1: i 39–44.

122 Siddall 2013, 85.

123 Beaulieu 2005, 49; Postgate 1995, 3 ff. suggests Adad-nīrārī III as the transforming force behind the provincial system.

124 Postgate 2002, 2.

125 Fales in press.

126 For the magnates of the king during the Neo-Assyrian period see Mattila 2000.

127 Dalley 2000.

128 Deller 1999; Tadmor 2002; Siddall 2007.

increasing administrative specialization and growing differentiation in the organization of power. The hierarchical relationship between these dignitaries is not exactly clear,<sup>129</sup> but it must be stressed that these various titles rather conceal than reveal the multiplicity of functions that came with these offices. In any case, this group, which has been labeled “the Assyrian Cabinet,”<sup>130</sup> was followed by the provincial governors, who were headed by the governor of the province of Rašappa. From the Middle Assyrian period onward, the Crown appears to have exercised additional control in the provinces through commissioners of the Crown (*qēpu*) in the Middle Assyrian period and “military governors” (*rab muggi*) or “confidants of the king” (*ša qurbūti*) during the Neo-Assyrian period. This dual system of provincial officials and crown officials was probably intended to maintain control over the provincial magnates.<sup>131</sup>

The severe crisis toward the end of the ninth century BCE “is usually interpreted as a reaction of the old nobility against the expansion of the provincial system which put forward a new class of royal favorites. And indeed, after the suppression of the rebellion, the influence of this new nobility of high officials increased dramatically, especially the influence of the commander-in-chief of the army whose power often overshadowed the authority of the king. ... The extent of actual royal authority was at times quite limited, while some provincial governors acted as nearly independent monarchs.”<sup>132</sup> While Shalmaneser III’s two sons competed for the throne during the seven-year internal crisis that followed their father’s death, for instance, the chief eunuch (*rab ša reši*) became very powerful. As described above, the younger son Šamši-Adad V (823–810 BCE) finally prevailed, and in his inscription found at Nimrud he credits his chief eunuch with his second campaign against Nairi<sup>133</sup> and assigns epithets to him that are normally reserved for the king, such as “wise” (*eršu*), “experienced in battle” (*mudê tuqumta*) and “man of authority” (*awil tēmi*). Twenty years later in 798 BCE, Mutakkil-Marduk, chief eunuch under Adad-nīrārī III (809–783 BCE), was awarded the special honor of serving as eponym alongside other ministers of the king,<sup>134</sup> a position not occupied again by a chief eunuch until the very last period of Assyrian history. The power exercised by certain eunuchs is reflected in Adad-nīrārī III’s stele from Saba’a, which not only contains a dedicatory inscription (lines 1–22), but also introduces Nergal-

129 Matilla 2000, 161–168.

130 Parpola 1995.

131 Kühne in press.

132 Beaulieu 2005, 51.

133 RIMA 3, A.O.103.1: ii 16b–34a, see also Tadmor 2002, 607 f.

134 Millard 1994.

ēreš, governor of the provinces of Rašappa, Laqê, and Suhi, along with his titles (lines 23–25). Nergal-ēreš is then recorded in the first person (lines 26–33) in the curse formula.<sup>135</sup> The same pattern can be observed in the king’s stele from Tell Rimah, except for that in this inscription the section dealing with Nergal-ereš has been deliberately erased, indicating that he had fallen from favor. Under Adad-nirāri III, strong personalities like the commander-in-chief Šamši-ilu<sup>136</sup> and other officials wrote their own inscriptions to commemorate their deeds, “just like an Assyrian monarch.”<sup>137</sup> The military importance of the chief eunuch is evident in the reign of Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 BCE), and the steady rise in power of both this official and the commander-in-chief (*turtā-nu*) under Sargon II testifies to changes within the palace hierarchy.<sup>138</sup>

In their annals the Assyrian kings seldom give credit to these social groups, and King Adad-nirāri III may be considered an exception. Perhaps not coincidentally, it is also during the reign of this king that a queen mother, the famous Semiramis, who in the beginning of his reign due to his youth acted as some kind of regent, had her own stele.<sup>139</sup> Modern historiography generally interprets this multiplicity of inscriptions as a sign of the weakness of the political center.

Stephanie Dalley,<sup>140</sup> and in her vein, Luis Robert Siddall, by contrast, have argued that the position of these strong men can be compared to the authority and power exercised by the *sukkallu rabû* as *šar māt Hanigalbat* during the Middle Assyrian period. In his detailed study of these four strong men Siddall points to the consistent use of highest officials in the control of northern Syria to secure economic and commercial gains. He argues “that the magnates were a part of the imperial expansion, and their prominence in the royal inscriptions was a result of their increased responsibility because of the political climate in which they operated. The political climate was problematic for two reasons: first, the 827–821 revolt had greatly reduced Assyria’s territorial holdings; and the second was that Adad-nirāri III was a youth when he came to the throne ... In this way Sammuramāt and the magnates were key figures in the maintenance of the empire.”<sup>141</sup>

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135 RIMA 3, A.O.104.6.

136 Fuchs 2008.

137 For the list of the officials and their inscriptions see Grayson *RIMA* 3, 200 ff.

138 Tadmor 2002, 608.

139 RIMA 3, A.O.104.2001. Whether all of this must be considered an indication of the strength or the weakness of that king remains open to debate, see Siddall 2013.

140 Dalley 2000.

141 Siddall 2013, 129.

In contrast to the tenor of the royal inscriptions, in which political and military agency is monopolized by the king, land grants and tax exemptions are clear evidence of the king's acknowledgement and reward of faithful service. Such grants are already attested under Adad-nīrārī III.<sup>142</sup> They show that land and people were at the disposal of the king who used these resources “from estates throughout Assyria for state projects and temple maintenance.”<sup>143</sup> Land grants continue into the period of Ashurbanipal as demonstrated by the following example:

[I, Ashurbanipal, great king, mighty king, king of the world, king of Assyria], k[ing of the four quarters, true shepherd, who does good], k[ing of righteousness (*mišari*), lover of justice (*rā'im ketti*), who makes] his [people content, who always behaves kind]ly [to-wards the officials who serve] him [and rewards] the reverent [who obey] his [royal command] –

[NN], eu[nuc]h [of Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria, [one who has deserved kindness] and favor, [who, from the 'succession'] to the exercise of kingship [was] devoted [to the king] his lord, who served [before me] in faithfulness, [and walked] in sa[fety], who gr[ew wi]th a good repute [within my palace], and kept guard over [my] kingship,

[at the prompting] of my own heart, and according to [my own] counsel [I plan]ned to do [him good], and decreed a gi[ft] for him. The field, or[chards and pe]ople which] he had acquired [under] my [prote]ction [and made his] own estate, [I exemp]ted (from taxes), wr[ote down] and s[ea]led [with] my royal [sea]; I gave (them) to [NN, eunuch, who rever-ences] my kingship.

[The corn taxes of those fields and or]chards [shall] not [be collected, the straw taxes shall] not [be gathered .....]

(Break)

[When NN, eunuch], g[oes to his fate in my palace with a good repute, they shall bury him] where he dictates, and he shall lie where [it was his wish]

(Break)

[A future prince shall not cast asid]e [the wording of this tablet. Aššur, Adad, Ber, the Assyrian Enlil and the Assyria]n [Ištar will hear your prayer].

(Rest destroyed)<sup>144</sup>

While the historical introduction of Ashurbanipal's land grant might sound formulaic to the reader, Aššur-etel-ilāni's tax exemption for his chief eunuch is evidence that the king could and did reward actual loyalty. In Aššur-etel-ilāni's case, it is loyalty during the period of the king's “apprenticeship” as crown prince, active support for his ascension to the throne, and devoted service during his rulership that are being rewarded:

142 SAA 12, nos. 1–13.

143 Siddall 2013, 180.

144 SAA 12 no. 29.

[Af]ter my father and begetter had depa]rted, [no father brought me up or taught me to spr]ead my wing[s], no m]other cared for me or saw to my educa[tion],  
 Sîn-š[umu-lēšir], the chief eunuch, one who had deserved well of [my] father and beget-  
 ter, who had led me [constantly], like a father, installed [me] safely on the throne of my  
 father and begetter and made the people of Assyria, great and small [..... keep watch over  
 m]y kingship during my minority, and respected [..... my royalty],  
 Afterwards, Nabû-rēhtu-[ušur, a ..... who had made] rev[olt and rebellion .....] assem[bled  
 the people of] the city [and the land of Assyria ..... treaty oath .....] to Sî[n-šarru-ibni, my  
 eunuch, .....] whom I had instal[led ..... the prefect of the city of Kar-.....] with them [.....  
 they were] alone in their (hostile) talk [.....] battle and war [.....]  
 At the command of Bēl and Nabû, [great] god[s my] lords, [I .....]. Sîn-šumu-lēšir, my chief-  
 eunuch, and the [battle troops of his own estate ....] who had stood with him, people [.....]  
 I clothed them with col[ored clothing, and bound their wrists with] rings of [gold .....]  
 Break  
 ....<sup>145</sup>

Moreover, as Hartmut Kühne observes there are indications of an intense investment policy whose purpose it was to develop settlement systems in the Jazira, headed by already existing ‘centers.’ Because these towns had to accommodate a growing administration that included both provincial functionaries and crown officials – the *sukallu rabi’u* during the Middle Assyrian period and the ‘confidant of the king’ (*ša qurbūti*) and ‘commissioner’ (*qēpu*) during the Neo-Assyrian period – such measures prompted a level of urbanization that was unprecedented.<sup>146</sup>

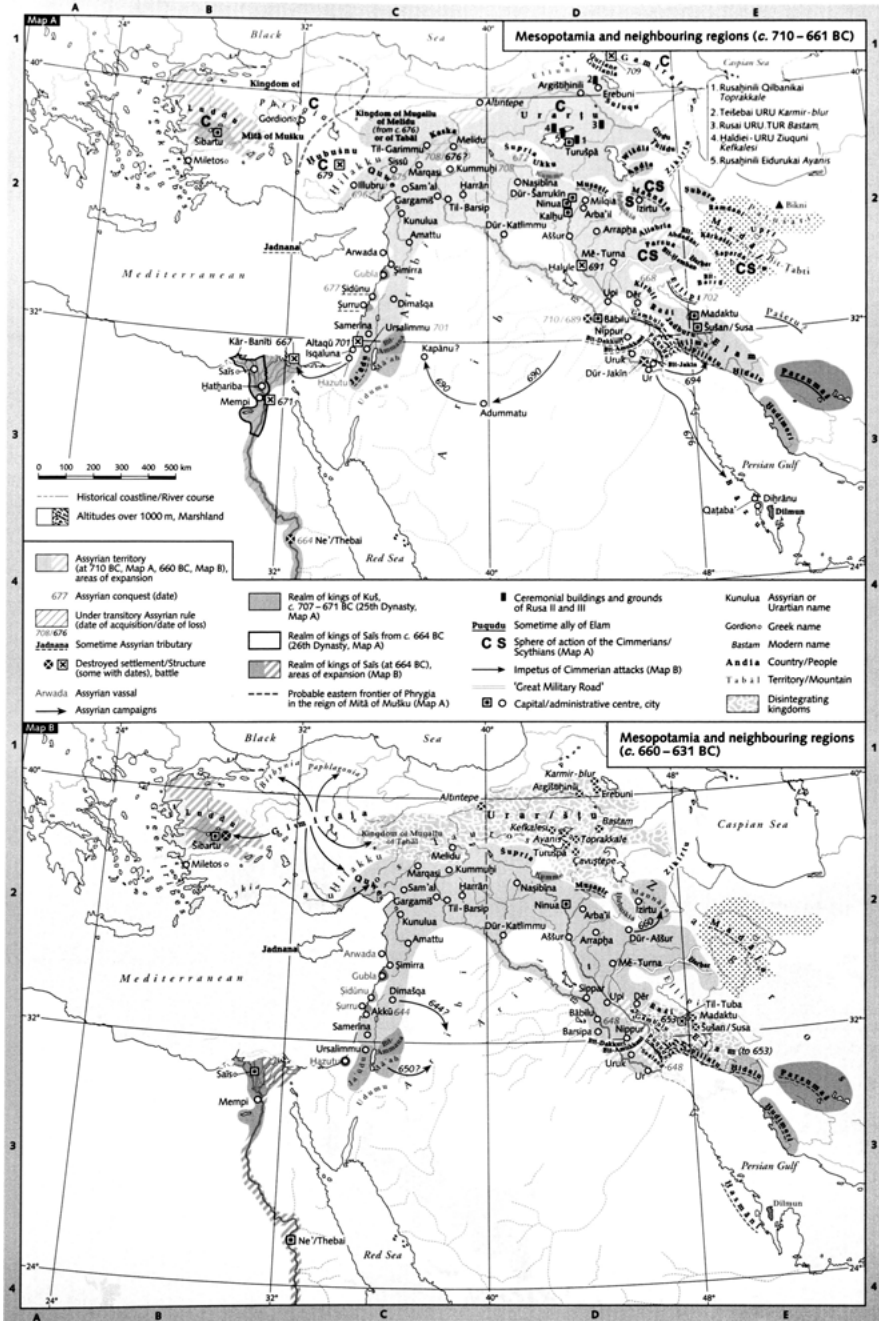
An important step in the remodeling of the Assyrian provincial system was “splitting the very large provinces, thereby preventing leading high officials from becoming too powerful, and second by expanding the system for the first time west of the Euphrates, where a large number of provinces were created in the wake of the campaign against the small kingdoms of Syria and the Levant.”<sup>147</sup> In addition, the land holdings entrusted to officials were now made up of “many different and separate plots, located in more than one area or even province”<sup>148</sup> in order to avoid the accretion of too much power in the hands of any single official. While it was possible to inherit an official position, such inheritance depended on the loyalty of the officeholder to the king. Officials were endowed with a “variety of functions and privileges so as to make them operative extensions of the patrimonial power of the king. Their power was exercised in the judiciary sphere, in military conduction, in the coordina-

145 SAA 12 no. 35.

146 See Kühne in press, section 5. 2.

147 Beaulieu 2005, 52; for the provinces see Radner 2006.

148 Fales in press.



Map 3: Late Assyrian Empire.



tion of the civilian sector and public works, and in the management of a province which went by their name. They participated in the divisions of spoils of war, had a fixed cyclical position in the choice of year eponyms immediately following the King, and enjoyed endowment of land and people. As a body, they sat in council with the King, of whom they represented the true executive ‘arm’ in war and peace.”<sup>149</sup>

Together with the magnates of the king who formed the royal cabinet, the governors were counted among the “great ones” (*rabûte*) of Assyria. They were, however, lower down the political hierarchy than the magnates.<sup>150</sup> The provinces were bound to the imperial administration based in the imperial capital – Nimrud, Nineveh, or Khorsabad, depending on the time – and organized in a communication grid that was based on a network of forts and supply centers. This system paved the way for increased royal interventionism. Under Tiglath-Pileser III Assyria embarked on its fourth and final period of expansion (Map 3), beginning with the conquest of most of Syria and Lebanon and concluding with the annexation of Egypt and Elam under Esarhaddon (680–669 BCE) and Ashurbanipal (668–631/27?).<sup>151</sup>

## 4.5 The Literarization of the Empire

Political developments deeply affected the metaphorical language used in the discourse of royal ideology. One important feature introduced by Aššur-uballiṣ I (1353–1318 BCE) was the use of the term *mātu* ‘land’ to designate a political entity that had been incorporated into the Assyrian provincial system, where previously the term had been used to describe external polities bound to Assyria by means of treaties and other agreements. Peter Machinist<sup>152</sup> has outlined the various administrative strategies employed by the Assyrians to integrate conquered regions into their empire. First, the conquered people were counted for/with (*manû ana/itti*) the people of Assyria, while the conquered state was turned into a province of Assyria (*turru ana*) or added to (*ruddu eli*) the border of Assyria. Second, the captured lands were reorganized by appointing Assyrian officials as their governors (*šaknu/bēl pihāti*), while taxes and service in the form of corvée labor were imposed on them. Reorganization could imply the deportation of people, destruction, rebuilding, and even giving provincial capi-

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149 Fales in press.

150 Mattila 2000.

151 Faist 2005, 15.

152 Machinist 1993.k

tals new Assyrian names.<sup>153</sup> If a conquered polity was subjected to Assyria but not integrated into its provincial system, it was obliged to enter into a vassal treaty and to send annual tribute to the Assyrian king. Membership in the empire was consequently based either on being an Assyrian or, in the case of a distinct conquered population, being a “son of Assyria.” As such, the terms “Assyria” and “Assyrian” in the royal inscriptions point less to an ethnic understanding than to a political meaning, “defining a region and people that manifest the required obedience.”<sup>154</sup> The cultural objective of these strategies was to eliminate differences through a process of administrative homogenization and the standardization of cultural modes of expressions like architecture and iconography.

With Adad-nīrārī I’s forays into northern Syria and the conquest of the Middle Euphrates region, i.e. the former state of Mitanni, we again encounter the title ‘king of totality’ (*šar kiššati*), reiterating the ancient notion of the subjection of formerly foreign polities to the king. Assyrian metaphorical language reflects a degree of continuity in its use of the term ‘land’ (*mātu*) to designate what the Assyrians considered their cultural homeland. Yet in their attempt to incorporate more and more regions into what they called *māt Aššur*, they developed a new understanding of the term *mātu* that was primarily political rather than cultural.

The word ‘king,’ *šarru*, only came to be written primarily with the sign MAN, which can also be read as ‘twenty’ or as representing the sun god, at the time of Adad-nīrārī I’s expansion to the west into the region of the Balih river and the Jazira. Interestingly, this writing parallels the use of the winged disk as a visual signifier for ‘king’ in Hittite culture, signifying universal royal presence. It also attests to the continuity of direct cultural interaction between the Syro-Anatolian and Assyrian scholarly horizons, as well as to the scholars’ search for new symbols with which to express the royal claim to universal control.<sup>155</sup> As discussed in the *Chapter Three*, the royal claim to universal control is also known from the Akkad dynasty through to the Old Babylonian period, though its transmission and development at that time is more difficult to trace.

Tukulti-Ninurta I, who brought Babylonia under his control, reintroduced the term *kibrāt arbā’i* in his inscriptions but used it with a new meaning. For the first time, it is possible to speak of *kibrāt arbā’i* as denoting the ‘universe’,

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153 See also Pongratz-Leisten 1997a.

154 Machinist 1993, 89.

155 Pongratz-Leisten 2011a and 2013b.

since the term is combined with the image of the universal presence of the sun:

MAN <i>dan-nu</i> <sup>r</sup> <i>le-ú</i> MURUB <sub>4</sub>	strong king, [capable] in battle,
<sup>r</sup> <i>ša</i> <i>kib-rat</i> 4 <sup>r</sup> <i>ar-ki</i> <sup>d</sup> <i>ša-maš</i>	the one who shepherds the four quarters [after] Šamaš,
<i>ir-te-ú ana-ku</i>	am I. <sup>156</sup>

By means of various cultural strategies, the king and his scholars strove to create a locative map of the world that communicated meaning through structures of congruity and conformity,<sup>157</sup> based on the homogeneous action of the gods and the king. In this map, all positive qualities were concentrated in the center, while all negative qualities were pushed toward the periphery.<sup>158</sup> Order and anti-order corresponded with center and periphery and with the inner and the outer world; spatiality as a whole was reduced to binary dichotomies such as cultivated land/civilization versus nature/steppe/wilderness. This construction was based on the psychological need for security<sup>159</sup> and constituted the foundation for the Assyrian revival of the well-known tropes of the king as hunter, warrior, and builder of temples.

The imbalance in status between center and periphery allowed for only one ‘correct’ political solution: universal empire as programmatically stated in the Assyrian coronation ritual. By divine command the king was obliged to enlarge the borders of his empire outward, toward the unknown. Such expansion mirrors the path taken by Gilgameš in his march to the lands beyond the cosmic ocean, as it is conveyed in the *Babylonian Map*. The fluid geographical notion of imperial boundaries – which responded to political realities – generated a concept of empire that extended across the entire universe and whose borders were thus equivalent to the borders of the cosmos.<sup>160</sup> This dynamic conception of political borders obliged the king to keep expanding his frontiers so as to align them with those of the cosmos.

In his discussion of the *Sargon Geography*, which he attributes to Esarhad-don, Liverani demonstrates that until the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I the Euphrates and the Zagros mountains represented the boundaries of Assyrian territory in the Assyrian mental map.<sup>161</sup> When in the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE Assyrian expeditions crossed the Euphrates and advanced toward the Mediterranean

156 RIMA 1, A.O.78.1:16–18.

157 J. Z. Smith 1993, 292.

158 Liverani, 2001, 17 f.

159 Liverani 2001, 17 f.

160 Liverani 2001, 29.

161 Liverani 1999–2001.

Sea, when Assyrian forces penetrated the mountainous regions to the north and east, notably the Nairi lands and Zamua, the established Assyrian mental map was no longer valid. The expansion of Assyrian territorial control beyond the Euphrates and toward the Mediterranean Sea meant that the oceans were now imagined as representing the ends of the world. Accordingly, the ideal concept of the elimination of difference between center and periphery dominated the inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian kings. King Shalmaneser III describes himself as the “conqueror from the upper and lower seas to the land Nairi and the great sea of the west as far as the Amanus range ... (from) the land Namri to the sea of Chaldea, which is called the Marratu (‘Bitter’) River.”<sup>162</sup> In other words, Shalmaneser III claims to have reached the banks of the four seas: the upper and lower seas of Nairi, probably Lake Van and Lake Urmia, as well as the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf.<sup>163</sup> By using the Akkadian term “Bitter River,” the scholar who produced this particular text intended to evoke an image of Shalmaneser III’s territory that reached the shore of the cosmic ocean surrounding the earth.

Territorial expansion does not necessarily correspond to territorial control. Nevertheless, a claim to universal control is also discernible in public monuments, such as the iconography of city gates and obelisks set up in public spaces and temples.<sup>164</sup> The programmatic emphasis in these monuments is on those geographical regions that are the most distant from the Assyrian heartland, suggesting the unlimited span of Assyrian political control. Iconography of this kind is characteristic of the obelisks of Aššurnāṣirpal II and Shalmaneser III, as well as of Shalmaneser III’s city gates at Balawat – ancient Imgur-Enlil – which was situated strategically at the intersection of major roads connecting east and west in the core of the Assyrian empire. The geographical regions depicted on the Balawat gates and mentioned in the accompanying epigraphs include Phoenician cities and Qarqar in the west, the Tigris tunnel and Urartu in the north, Lake Urmia and Gilzānu in the East, and Bīt Dakkūri in the South.<sup>165</sup> In these depictions, the emphasis is on the subjugation of distant regions and on the bringing of tribute to the Assyrian king, thereby contributing to the king’s prestige as provider for his country. Since the main roads of the city were oriented toward the city gates, the location for such a programmatic message was well chosen. Additionally, city gates represented the limin-

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**162** RIMA 3, A.O.102.8:24–40.

**163** Heimpel 1987; Villard 2000, 74.

**164** Schachner 2007, pls. 70 and 71.

**165** Schachner 2007, 262.

al zone between inside and outside, order and anti-order.<sup>166</sup> Therefore, Shalmaneser III's choice of imagery is perfectly suited to illustrating the king's role as warrior fighting external chaos. The material composition of the gates enhanced their potency as the image of the cosmos. They were made from cedar wood, which was associated with the Lebanon, and overlaid with copper bands, copper traditionally being associated with the east; as such, the very materiality of the gates symbolized the expansion of Assyrian power both toward the west and the east.<sup>167</sup> The imagery of the city gates evoked the cosmos known to the Assyrian people, communicating their message even to the illiterate majority that would not have been able to read the accompanying inscriptions. Landscape representations on the gates portray a macro-region in which mountains are associated with the north and northeast, rivers associated with the south, and the ocean with the west.

Once established, the cosmic dimensions of Assyrian expansion continued to dominate the inscriptions of the Assyrian kings. Tiglath-pileser III, for example, strives to outdo his predecessors by moving from the horizontal to the vertical axis and claiming that the borders of his empire reach “[from] the horizon to the zenith” (*ultu išid šamê adi elât šamê*), which in literary texts denotes the boundaries of the sun and the moon.<sup>168</sup> The ocean is no boundary for Sargon II (721–705 BC), whose conquest of the island of Cyprus in the Mediterranean Sea – a journey of seven days in the midst of the western sea (*7 ūmī ina qabal tâmtim*) – overcomes the established frontiers of the cosmos.<sup>169</sup> Sargon II also conquers the island of Dilmun, situated 30 miles inside the eastern sea (=the Persian Gulf), and thus subdues both ends of the known world.<sup>170</sup> These conquests allow Sargon II to portray himself as the sun god Šamaš, who is the only one capable of crossing the seas according to the *Gilgameš Epic*.

There never was, O Gilgameš, a way across, and since the days of old none who can cross the ocean. The one who crosses the ocean is the hero Šamaš: apart from Šamaš, who is there can cross the ocean?<sup>171</sup>

When Gilgameš emerges from the tunnel through the twin mountain Mount Māšu on his journey to Utnapištim, he is confronted by the scorpion man and scorpion woman who “guard the sun at sunrise and sunset” (*Gilgameš Epic*

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**166** Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 207–209; Frahm 1997, 273–275; RINAP 3/1, 17–19.

**167** Schachner 2006, 266.

**168** Tadmor 1994, 158 Summ. 7:4 with note 4.

**169** Fuchs 1993, 232 145–146.

**170** Fuchs 1993, 232, 144.

**171** George 2003, *Gilgameš Epic* X 79–82.

IX 45). This association is explained by the nature of the scorpion that, as a nocturnal creature, is a symbol of death and night. Further, due to the scorpion's regular ecdysis – the casting off of its exoskeleton – the scorpion is a symbol of birth and rejuvenation in Mesopotamia.<sup>172</sup> This further highlights the iconographic association of the solar winged disk with the scorpion man, which is present in Mesopotamian iconography throughout the millennia.<sup>173</sup> The expanded perception of space, incorporating the unknown lands beyond the mountains of sunrise and sunset, was crystallized in the *Gilgameš Epic* and subsequently emulated by the Assyrian kings in their ideological self-representation.

As discussed above, the concept of an ideal world empire is expressed paradigmatically in the *Sargon Geography* and is associated with Sargon of Akkad.<sup>174</sup> This ideal world empire encompasses the entire surface of the earth – “the lands from sunri[se] to sunset, the sum total of all the lands”<sup>175</sup> – and is represented in lists of place-names and geographical distances.<sup>176</sup> The visual expression of this ideal world empire is anticipated in the imagery of Sargon II's throne pedestal, which depicts the conquest of a city located in a plain on a shore and of another city situated in the mountains,<sup>177</sup> representing the borders of the empire (fig. 23).<sup>178</sup>

Conventions regarding the appropriate use of particular epithets are discernible in the inscriptions of King Sennacherib (704–681 BCE). The epithet “king of the four quarters” (*šar kibrāt erbettim*), reflecting the cosmic dimensions of the empire, only appears in his inscriptions after he had conducted military campaigns in the four cardinal directions. Following Sennacherib's sixth campaign against Elam, universalistic-territorial claims are made: “from the upper sea of the setting Sun until the lower sea of the rising Sun” (*ultu tâmti elēniti ša šulmi* <sup>d</sup>*Šamši adi tâmti šaplīti ša šīt* <sup>d</sup>*Šamši*).<sup>179</sup> Sennacherib's scholar used a highly literary style replete with mythic allusions to the creation epic *Enūma Eliš* in his account of the battle of Halule, such that this military engagement assumed cosmic dimensions.<sup>180</sup> As Weissert notes, the literary al-

172 Woods 2009.

173 See the examples collected by Woods, figs. 13–20.

174 For the discussion and bibliography see Galter 2006, 290.

175 *Sargon Geography* 43: *mātātu ultu* <sup>d</sup>*šīt ša[mši]* (<sup>d</sup>utu. 𒌷-𒌷 .[a]) *adi erēb* <sup>d</sup>*šamši* (<sup>d</sup>utu.šú.a), Horowitz 1998, 72.

176 Horowitz 1998, 67–95; Galter 2006.

177 Blocher 1994.

178 Galter 2006 with reference to Winter 1981, 19, 26.

179 OIP 2, 23 I 13.

180 See the excellent analysis of Weissert 1997.

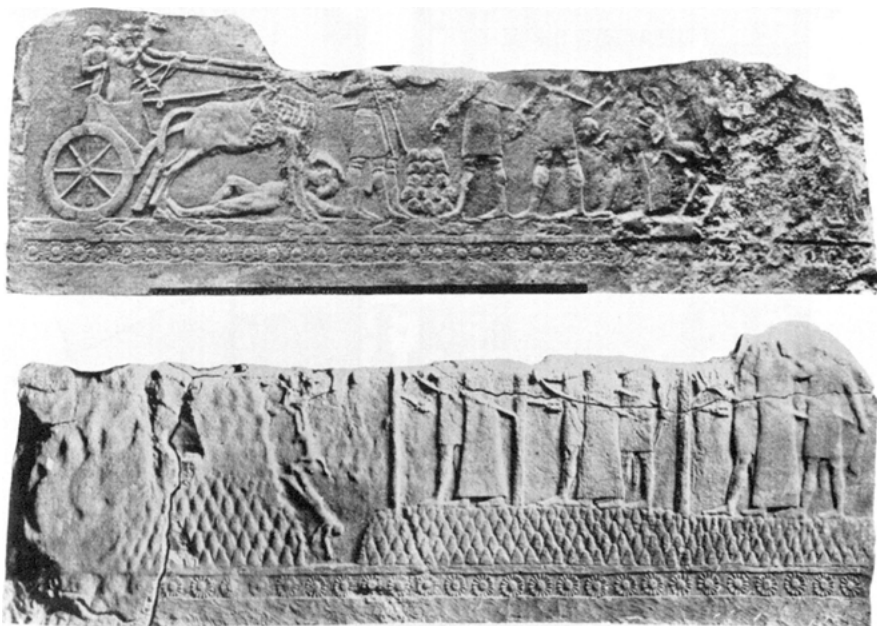


Fig. 23: Sargon II's Throne Base, Room VII, Khorsabad (after Winter 1981, 65; top NE side Iraq Museum; bottom SW side, Oriental Institute A 11257).

lusions to *Enūma Eliš* are particular to Sennacherib's account of the battle of Halule and thus serve as an ideologically motivated justification for the subsequent conquest and destruction of the city of Babylon: "The demonic portrait of the Babylonians, although sketched in the account of the campaign's first stage (Halule), actually expresses the intense and zealous atmosphere prevailing close to, and during, its last (the siege of Babylon); further, that the mythic presentation of the past events of Halule served in effect to create the right political climate in Assyria for the impending materialization of Sennacherib's horrendous plans; and that the passionate rhetoric became superfluous once Babylon had been sacked, and the frustration and hatred felt towards her stubborn inhabitants had found their outlet in the final victory."<sup>181</sup> The conquest and utter destruction of Babylon was deemed so important that it was also represented in a mythologizing garb in a pictorial scene on the gates of the *akitu*-house at the city of Aššur, where the god Aššur is represented in battle against Tiamat.

<sup>181</sup> Weissert 1997, 202.

As Liverani ingeniously observes in his analysis of Sennacherib's titulary, it was at this point that the rhythm in the epithets changed from binary to ternary, and the pattern from an antagonistic one into a centralized one. "The two external titles, being universalities in character, are both opposed to the middle title, nuclear in character." But, as he argues the combination of the first and third title "is not useless, nor is their order devoid of meaning. What we have is in fact the sequence: 1) general, compact totality (*kiššatu*); 2) inner core (*māt Aššur*); 3) patterned totality (four quarters). It is after the intervention of the Assyrian core, the necessary reference point, that the chaotic totality is changed into a cosmic totality."<sup>182</sup>

#### 4.6 The Assyrian Capital as the Epitome of the Empire

The approach to kingship and to royal control of the inhabited world described above presupposes an interconnectedness of city, territory, and cosmos, and a correspondence between the macro- and microcosm. This relatedness is reflected in the urban design of Assyrian cities and in the conception of the city as a nexus or mirror of the cosmos per se. Sargon's city of Akkad already appears as a synecdoche for the whole empire in ancient historiography, as is clear in the *Curse of Akkad*<sup>183</sup> and in other Sumerian city laments. These texts deplore the destruction of specific cities even though the events they describe relate to the collapse of the polities represented by these cities, namely the Akkad and Ur III empires. The notion of the city as a synecdoche for the state persists into the first millennium, as the city of Aššur epitomizes the local deity Aššur and the broader Assyrian polity throughout Assyrian history. Major social tensions were therefore presumably in play when Tukulti-Ninurta I attempted to move Aššur's cult to his newly built residence Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta<sup>184</sup> or when Sargon II founded his new capital Dūr-Šarru-kēn on pristine ground. The precise character of these tensions will unfortunately remain opaque to us.

Although it has been speculated that the cities of the Luwian/Aramaic kingdoms in northwestern Syria might have informed the urban design of the Assyrian capitals,<sup>185</sup> it is also possible that the city of Aššur, which was set on a natural terrace above the Tigris River and developed over millennia, provided

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**182** Liverani 1981, 235.

**183** Cooper 1983b, 1993.

**184** Dolce 1997.

**185** For an analysis of the topography of Aššur and the other Assyrian capitals see Novak 1999.



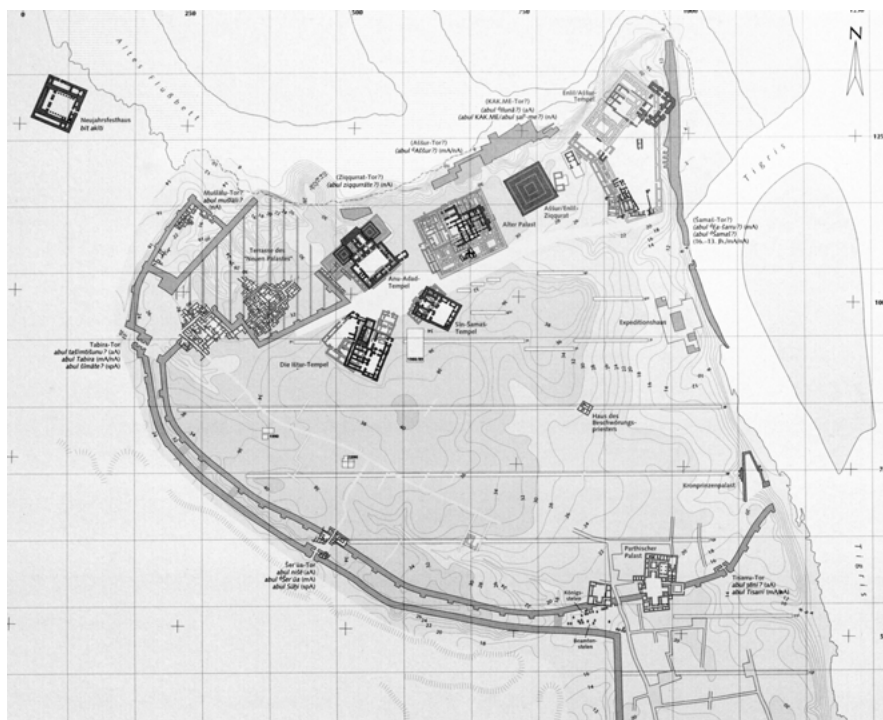


Fig. 24: Plan of Aššur (TAVO B IV 21 Finkbeiner, Pongratz-Leisten, Bengsch 1992).

the model for the later Assyrian capitals.<sup>186</sup> The fortress-like nature of Aššur's acropolis, which was segregated from the rest of the city by an additional wall (fig. 24), was reinforced by the city's location on a river bank and at the highest point in the landscape. Due to climatic conditions and in particular to the prevailing northwesterly winds, the acropolis in Aššur was located in the northwestern part of the city. The northern portion of the city included the palace, temples, and residential quarters occupied mainly by high officials and professionals. This spatial organization helped to foster the distinction in status between the elites and the rest of the people and monumentalized the social order. Aššur's urban layout thus reflected the relationship between the gods, the king, and the people.

In the city of Nineveh, which also developed over millennia, we find the additional distinction between a citadel on Kujunjik that encompasses palaces and temples and the arsenal located on a different mound, Nebi Yunus (fig. 25).

<sup>186</sup> Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 10 f.

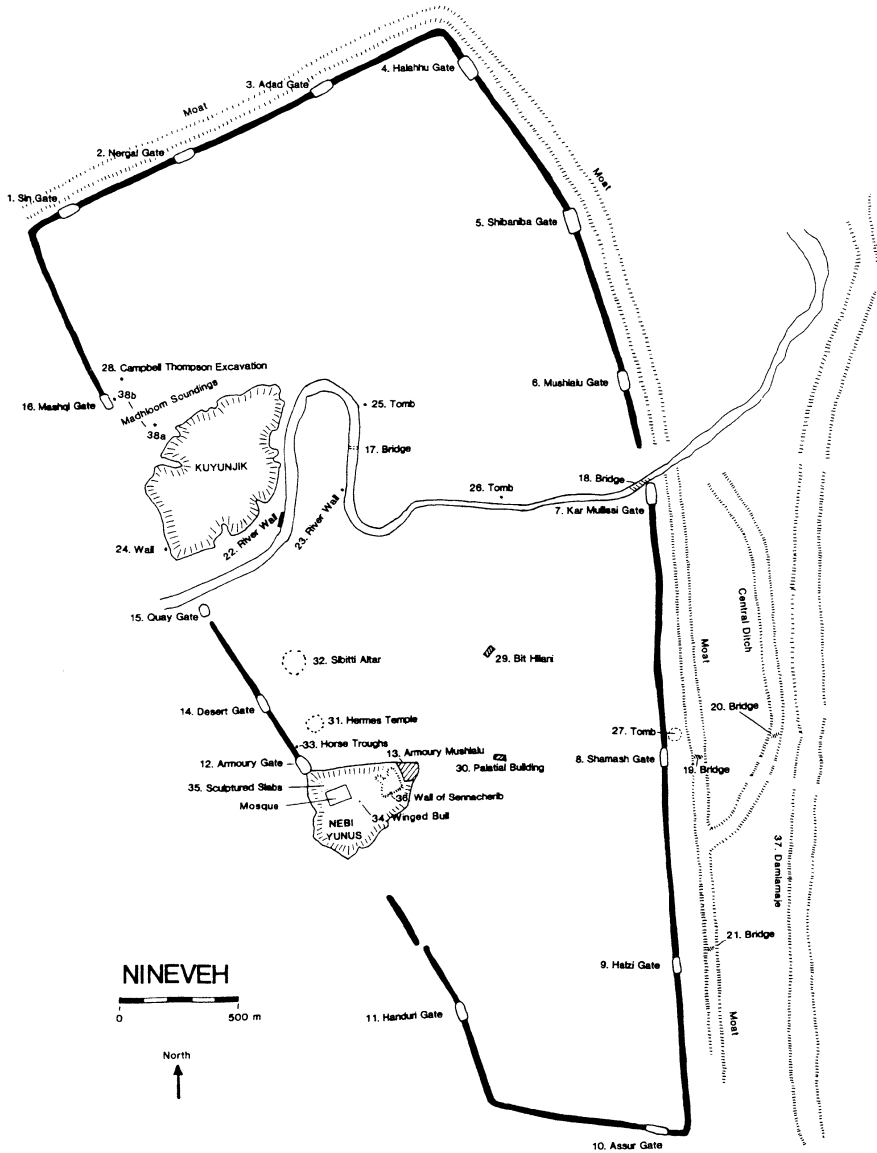


Fig. 25: Plan of Nineveh (Grayson and Novotny, RINAP 3/1, 19; after Scott and MacGinnis, Iraq 52 (1990) p. 73 fig. 4).

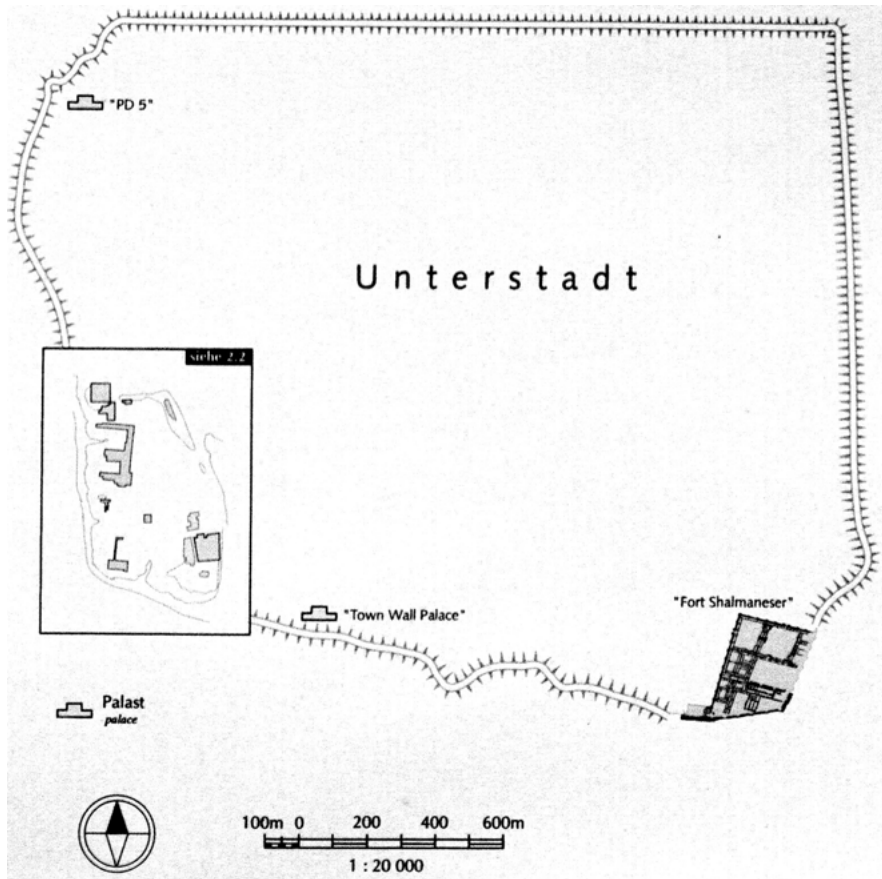


Fig. 26: Plan of Nimrud (TAVO B IV 20 2.2; Finkbeiner, Pongratz-Leisten, Bengsch 1992).

The city of Nimrud has a similar arrangement, as its citadel is separated from the arsenal at Fort Shalmaneser, which is located on another tell (figs. 26 and 27). Both the fortified character of Aššur's acropolis and the sharp spatial division between the citadel and the arsenal attested in Nineveh and Nimrud contributed to Sargon II's design for his newly founded capital Khorsabad/Dūr-Šarru-kēn (figs. 28a and 28b).

Despite the fact that palaces and temples are architecturally distinct, their close connection in Assyria was enhanced by the spatial link between the temple of Nabû, which in Aššur housed the divine seal of the god Aššur, and the palace.<sup>187</sup> Sargon II went so far as to build a bridge between the temple of

<sup>187</sup> George 1986, 140 ff.

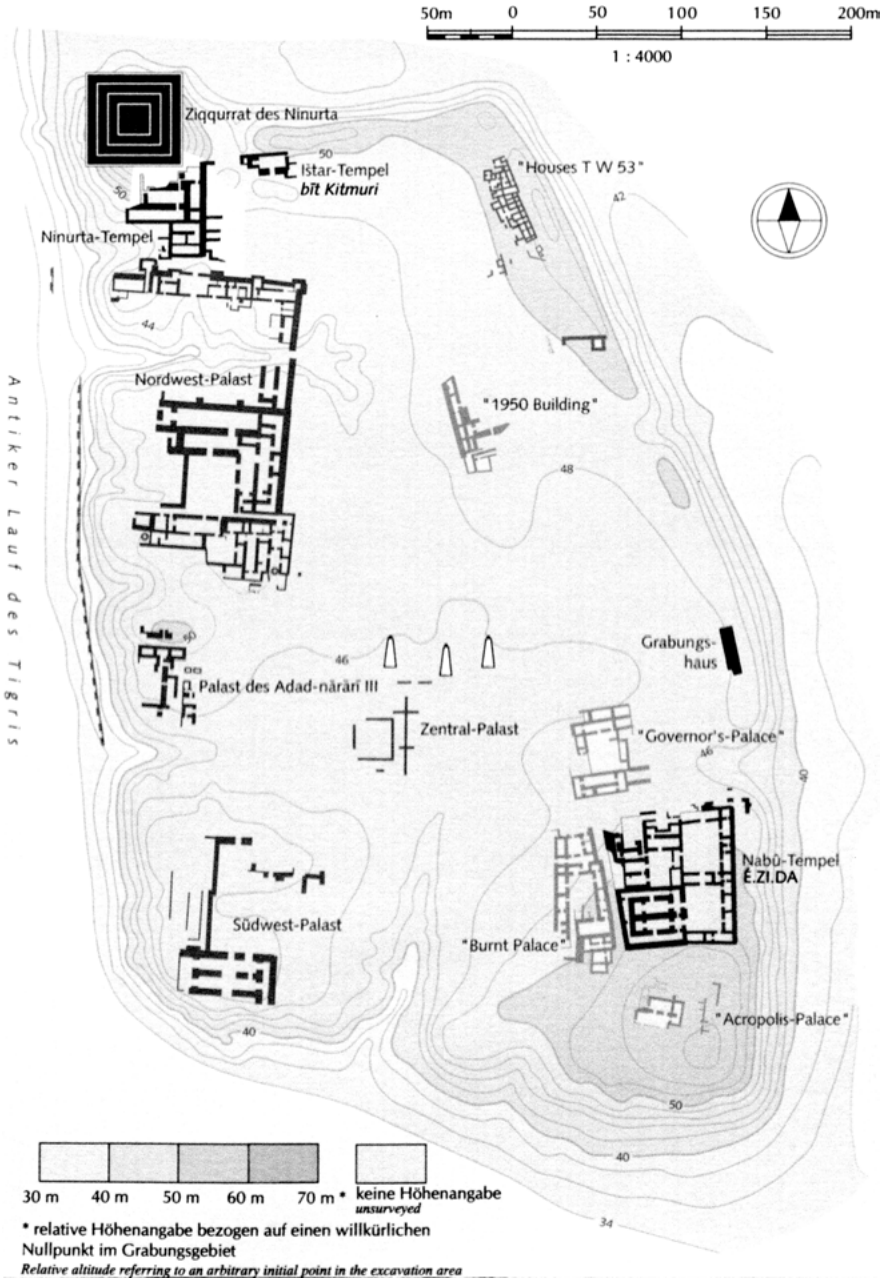


Fig. 27: Plan of Nimrud showing Fort Shalmanassar (TAVO B IV 20 2.1; Finkbeiner, Pongratz-Leisten, Bensch 1992).

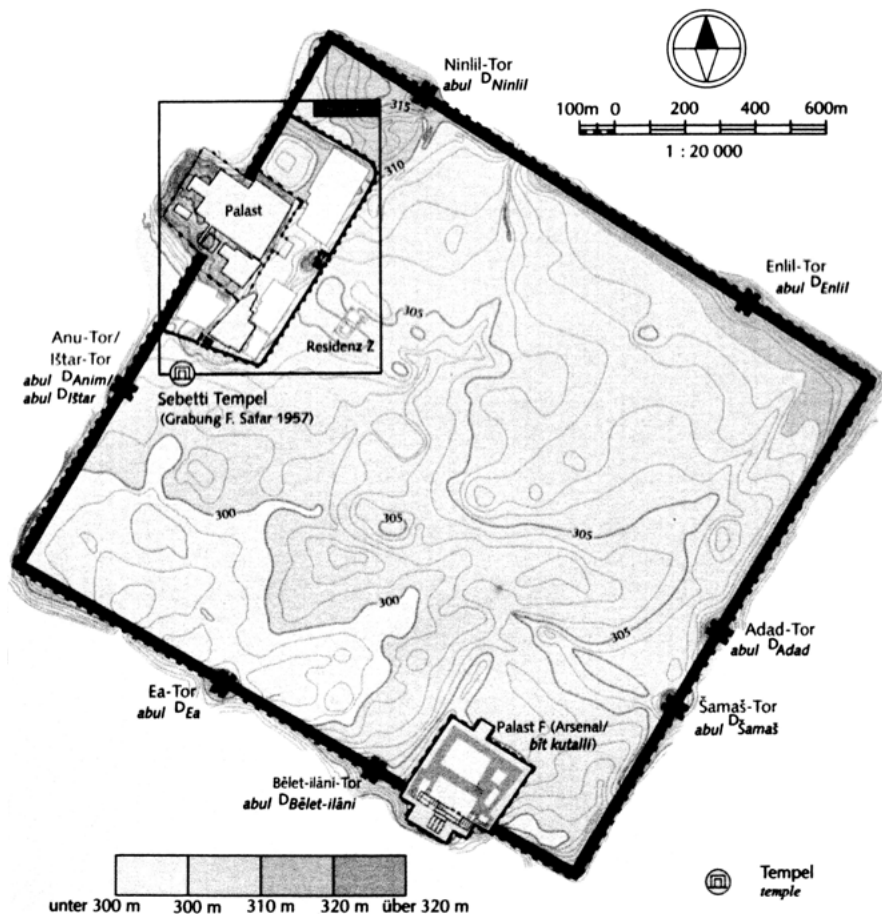
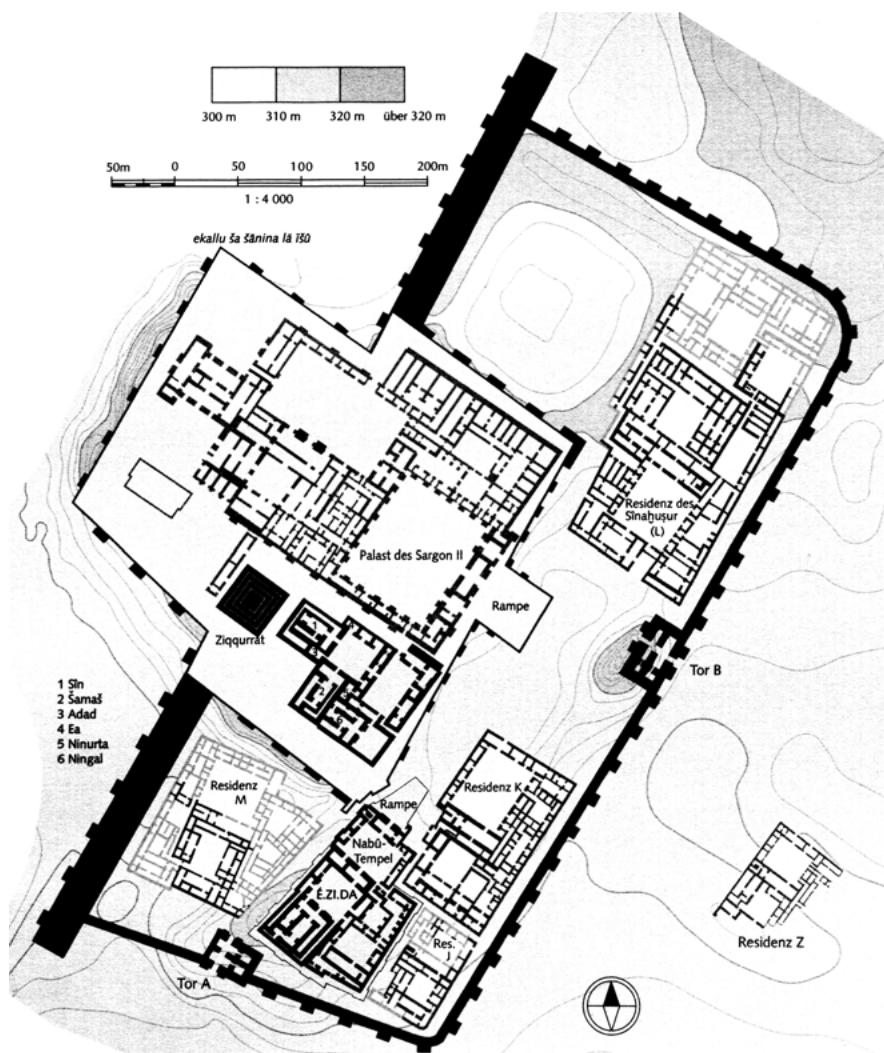


Fig. 28a: Plan of Dur-Sharruken (TAVO B IV 4.1).

Nabû and the palace<sup>188</sup> and included the temples of the major Assyrian deities in the palatial area, as is recorded in the inscriptions on the thresholds of the shrine chapels dedicated to the gods Ea, Sîn, Ningal, Šamaš, Nabû, and Ninurta.<sup>189</sup> This spatial relationship between what we would tend to categorize as secular and religious space links Assyria to the Syrian cultural horizon, as it is also attested in Mari and Alalakh. It is a relatedness that was reinforced by

<sup>188</sup> Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 96.

<sup>189</sup> Fuchs 1994, 280–283, and 369–371.



**Fig. 28b:** Dur-Sharruken Palace Details (TAVO B IV 20 4.2; Finkbeiner, Pongratz-Leisten, Bengsch 1992).

ritual performances that connected the two spaces.<sup>190</sup> When the construction of a new palace was completed, the king invited the gods, his high officials, and the representatives of vassal states and foreign countries to celebrate the

<sup>190</sup> See *Chapter Ten*.

inauguration of his new residence with a banquet,<sup>191</sup> as is related by Aššur-naširpal II in his *Banquet Stele*.<sup>192</sup> This stele also lists a range of exotic woods brought into Assyria from all corners of the world, bespeaking a new metaphor for the notion of cosmic control:

I founded therein a palace of boxwood, *meskannu*-wood, cedar, cypress, terebinth, tamarisk, *mehru*-wood, eight palace (area)s as my royal residence (and) for my lordly leisure (and) decorated (them) in a splendid fashion. I fastened with bronze bands doors of cedar, cypress, *daprānu*-juniper, boxwood (and) *meskannu*-wood (and) hung (them) in their doorways. I surrounded them with knobbed nails of bronze. I depicted in greenish glaze on their walls my heroic praises, in that I had gone right across highlands, lands (and) seas, (and) the conquests of all lands.<sup>193</sup>

Numerous Sumerian cosmologies focus on the city as the structure of order and civilization, distinguishing it from the uncivilized and unstructured realm. The city is further sacralized in mythology, which attributes its origin to the gods. In the first millennium version of the *Etana Myth*, the gods are credited with designing the city and with laying its foundations.<sup>194</sup>

[They] designed a city,  
[The great] gods laid its foundation.  
[They] designed the exalted city of Kiš,  
[The great] gods laid its foundation,  
The Igigi made its brickwork firm.  
(*Etana* i 1–5)

According to theological texts the idea of the city hailed from the very beginning of history, with the “city of primordial times” listed in divinized and personalized form among the ancestor gods of Anu in the great god list.

Although several kings built new cities or totally rebuilt existing ones to serve as their capitals, they never boasted of having founded an entirely new city.<sup>195</sup> Rather, they commemorated the construction of particular buildings or of the city walls. In other words, they represented their building activities as an extension of a pre-existing city. In his record of the construction of Dūr-Šarru-kēn/Khorsabad, his new residence, Sargon II for the first time in Mesopotamian history challenged this traditional *weltanschauung* by emphasizing how

191 See references in CAD Q, 242 s.v. *qerû*.

192 RIMA 2, A.0.101.30.

193 RIMA 2, A.0.101.30:25–30.

194 *Etana* I 1–5, see Novotny 2001.

195 Van de Mieroop 1999c.

he himself “selected the site, made the plans and supervised the work.”<sup>196</sup> By comparing himself to the wise sage Adapa, Sargon II presented the city as a project of his own mind, affirming that the “measure of the city walls represents a numerical cryptographic writing of his name”:<sup>197</sup>

16,280 cubits, the numeral of my name, I established as the measure of its wall and I set its foundation on a solid bedrock.<sup>198</sup>

As Marc van de Mieroop notes, he thus “embedded his identity into the very fabric of the city.”<sup>199</sup> Further, Sargon II introduces the idea of a city plan written in the stars through the rebus-writing of his name on the glazed bricks of the temple facades, which probably represented five signs of the zodiac (*lumaš-šū*).<sup>200</sup> This divine city plan is then claimed by Sargon II’s son, King Sennacherib, for his residence in Nineveh.<sup>201</sup> Still more, Sargon II stresses the primordial aspect of his work by harking back to the language of creation used to describe Marduk’s formation of the universe:

The opening of the city-gates of Dūr-Šarru-kēn is described in the same terms as the layout of the gates of the universe in the *Enuma elish*. Sargon II states: *ina rēše u arkate ina šēlē killalān miḫret 8 šārī 8 abullāti aptema*, “in front and back on both sides, I opened up eight city-gates into the eight wind-directions”, while the *Enuma elish* has this line: *iptema abullāti ina šēlē killalān*, “he opened up gates in both ribcages.” The term *šēlu* used here as the basic meaning of rib, which does actually reflect the side of the body. That the phraseology used by Sargon is clearly intended to refer to the *Creation Epic* is demonstrated by the fact that what he says does not accurately reflect his work. The city plan of Dūr-Šarru-kēn shows that there are two gates each in three of the city walls, while the fourth wall, where the citadel is located, has only one gate. The Akkadian *šēlē killalān* “both sides” thus cannot refer to the city, while it perfectly well represents the two sides of the vault of heaven, each with one gate to let the stars and planets pass through. This may explain the rather awkward statement by Sargon that he built eight gates in the eight wind directions.<sup>202</sup>

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**196** Van de Mieroop 1999c, 335 f.

**197** Van de Mieroop 1999c, 337

**198** Van de Mieroop 1999c, 336 quoting Fuchs 1993, 42 l. 65.

**199** Van de Mieroop 1999, 337.

**200** Finkel & Reade 1996; Roaf & Zgoll 2001.

**201** RINAP 3/1, no. 3: 34–36: “At that time, Nineveh, the exalted cult center, the city loved by the goddess Ištar in which all of the rituals for gods and goddesses are present; 35) the enduring foundation (and) eternal base whose plan had been designed by the stars (lit. “writing”) of the firmament (*šitir burummē*) and whose arrangement was made manifest since time immemorial; a sophisticated place (and) site of secret lore in which every kind of skilled craftsmanship, all of the rituals, (and) the secret(s) of the lalgar (cosmic subterranean water) are apprehended;” see also nos. 15 and 16.

**202** Van de Mieroop 1999, 337.



The configurational understanding of the Assyrian political landscape in which the empire was coextensive with the cosmos is expressed in the names that Sargon II gave to the city gates of his newly founded capital Dūr-Šarru-kēn. In these names, the built environment of the royal capital is mythologized by an explicit association of all the gates with the gods:

- 66 Toward the front and back, and on either side, toward the four winds, I opened eight gates.
- 67 “Šamaš Makes my Might Prevail,” “Adad Establishes its Abundance,” I called the gates of Šamaš and Adad which face the east.
- 68 “Bēl Establishes the Foundation of my City,” “Bēlit Increases Plenty,” I named the gates of Bēl and Bēlit which face north.
- 69 “Anu Prospers the Work of my Hands,” “Ištar Enriches his People,” I gave as names to the gates of Anu and Ištar which face the west.
- 70 “Ea Makes its Springs Flow Abundantly,” “Bēlit-ilāni Spreads Abroad her Offspring,” I called the names of the gates of Ea and Bēlit-ilāni which face the south.
- 71 “Aššur Makes the Years of the King, Its Builder, Grow Old and Guards its Troops” was the name of its wall, “Nimurta Establishes the Foundation Platform for his City for All Time to Come,” was the name of its outer wall.<sup>203</sup>

In their vertical association with the divine world, the names of the city gates of Dūr-Šarru-kēn read like abbreviated blessings or wishes in which the gods continuously ensure the prosperity and security of the city. The directional references are not topographical but point to the four cardinal directions, evoking a cosmic extension of the city, which reflects the king’s claim to universal rule. As such, the programmatic message of the ceremonial names of the city gates of Dūr-Šarru-kēn focuses exclusively on the political-theological dimension of the king’s alliance with the Assyrian pantheon.<sup>204</sup> Sargon II’s ceremonial names for his capital’s city gates contrast starkly with the known names of the city gates of Aššur and Nineveh. In these cities, the names of city gates carried a political-ideological or a theological message, or expressed a functional relationship between the city walls and the topography of the city, or related the city to its geopolitical surroundings.<sup>205</sup> Political and theological messages as well as the expression of functional relationships appear to have prevailed in

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**203** Fuchs 1993, 42 f. and 294 f.

**204** The same homogeneous picture is evident in the ceremonial names of the city gates of Babylon, which although not founded anew in the time of the redaction of *Tintir.ki* must at some point have been assigned a homogenous list of city gates, see George 1992, 199.

**205** Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 25–31.

the names of the city gates of Aššur. In Nineveh, by contrast, there appears to have been more of an emphasis on the political-theological and broader geographical aspects that linked the city with the world surrounding it, while ceremonial names referring to the inner life of the city were less frequently represented.

Founding a new city was considered a primordial act of creation by the gods; when performed by a king, it was regarded as an act of hubris. Sargon II's contemporaries criticized him by drawing an analogy with Sargon of Akkad in the so-called *Weidner Chronicle*. In this text, the building of Sargon's capital Akkad is presented as a sacrilege which led to punishment by the gods: "The simultaneity of the appearance of new stories about Sargon of Agade and the acts of the Assyrian king could obviously be coincidental, but it seems likely to me that we have here a condemnation of Sargon of Assyria's project by his own contemporaries through analogy with the ancient king."<sup>206</sup>

#### 4.7 Excursus: The Babylonian Map of the World

Although probably written in Borsippa during the eighth or seventh century BCE, the *Babylonian Map of the World* is another document that reflects Assyrian cosmography. It is a unique exemplar of cultural tradition that combines concrete geographical knowledge and mythic notions (figs. 29a and b) to form a cosmogram, in which the meaning of place names is not merely referential. The map represents a figurative conceptualization of space indicating constellations of political power.<sup>207</sup> The following considerations attempt to retrace the various cognitive and cultural skills as well as the body of tradition necessary for the creation of this map.

As part of their lexical tradition, the Sumerians from early on collected geographical knowledge in their compilations of lists of words by category, which also included lists of towns, mountains, and rivers. As with any other section in these "encyclopedias," these entries are categorized by means of semantic indicators (determinatives) "such as those for country, city, river and field."<sup>208</sup> In contrast to our modern communication paradigm, which is oriented toward geographical location, these geographic lists tell us nothing in that regard. Lists from Ebla and Abu Salabikh represent the earliest examples of

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<sup>206</sup> Van de Mieroop 1999, 338.

<sup>207</sup> Michalowski 1986.

<sup>208</sup> Hallo 1964, 61.



**Fig. 29a:** Babylonian Map of the World (British Museum 92687, Courtesy British Museum).

compilations of geographical knowledge,<sup>209</sup> and the tradition was subsequently canonized in the large compendium *ur<sub>5</sub>.ra=hubullu* and its commentaries. In addition to geographical lists of this kind there are topographical lists, including the famous lists of the cities of Babylon, Aššur, and Nippur.<sup>210</sup> These texts can list the names of the temples and the gods living in them, as well as the names of shrines, streets, canals, and city walls; temple lists should also be included among these sorts of compilations.<sup>211</sup> Within this larger framework, it is also possible to consider the cadastre lists including the late census list of Harran.<sup>212</sup>

Written sources concerning geographical perception and the conception of space are numerous, but graphic representations are far less common and only some plans of houses and temples<sup>213</sup> and several maps of cities and fields survive.<sup>214</sup> As William Hallo points out, all of these plans and maps served a prac-

**209** Pettinato 1978.

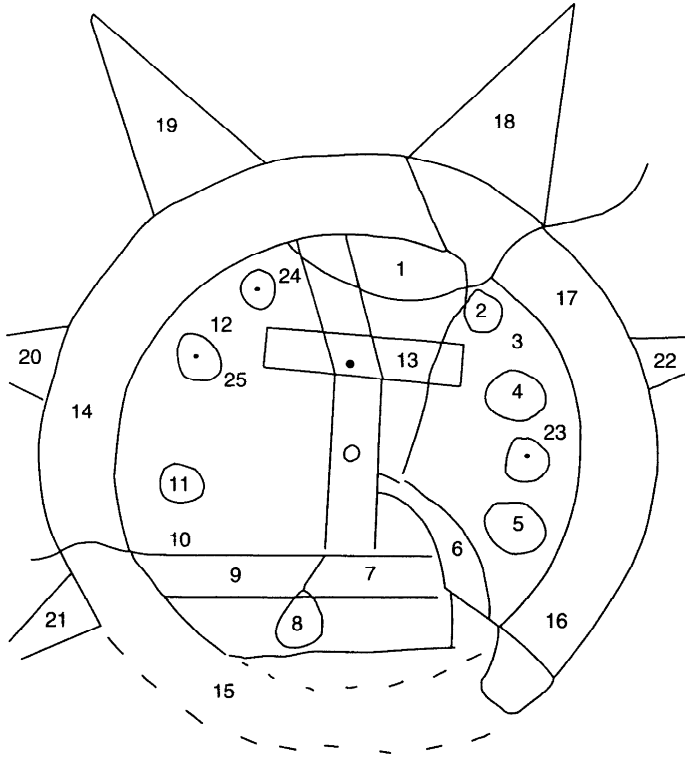
**210** George 1992.

**211** George 1993.

**212** Fales and Postgate 1995, XXXIII and no. 201–220; Pongratz-Leisten 1997b, 76 f.

**213** Heinrich and Seidl 1967.

**214** See Millard 1982 for some examples and Hallo 1964, 61 for further bibliography.



1. <i>ša-du-ú</i>	Mountain	18. BĀD.GULA	Great Wall
2. <i>uru</i>	city	6 <i>bēru</i>	6 leagues
3. <i>ú-ra-āš-tu[m]</i>	Urartu	<i>ina bi-rit</i>	in between
4. <sup>kur</sup> aš+šur <sup>ki</sup>	Assyria	<i>a-šar<sup>d</sup>šamaš</i>	where the Sun
5. <i>dér</i> (BAD.AN) <sup>ki</sup>	Der	<i>la innamaru</i>	is not seen
6. <i>x-ra[...]</i>		( <i>nu.igi.lā</i> )	
7. <i>ap-pa-r[u]</i>	swamp	19. <i>na-gu-ú</i>	Region
8. [š]uša[n] ([M]ÚŠ.EREN <sup>k[?]</sup> )	Susa	6 <i>bēru</i>	6 leagues
9. <i>bit-qu</i>	channel	<i>ina bi-rit</i>	in between
10. <i>bit-ia-</i> ( <i>aleph</i> )- <i>ki-nu</i>	Bit Yakin	20. [ <i>na-gu</i> ]- <i>ú</i> ( <i>half brackets</i> )	[Re]gion
11. <i>uru</i>	city	[...]	[...]
12. <i>ha-ab-ban</i>	Habban	21. [ <i>na-gu-ú</i>	[Re]gion
13. TIN.TIR <sup>ki</sup>	Babylon	[...]	[...]
14. <sup>id</sup> <i>mar-ra-tum</i>	ocean	22. <i>na-gu-ú</i>	Region
15. [( <sup>d</sup> ) <i>mar-ra-tum</i> ]	[ocean]	8 <i>bēru</i>	8 leagues
16. [( <i>id</i> ) <i>ar-ra-tum</i> ]	[o]cean	<i>ina bi-rit</i>	in between
17. <sup>id</sup> <i>mar-r[a-tum]</i>	oce[an]	23.–25. No Inscription	

Fig. 29b: Babylonian Map of the World with Sites Numbered (after Horowitz 1998, 21).

tical purpose, namely to establish ownership.<sup>215</sup> Richard Zettler's matching of the Kassite map of the city of Nippur with the modern excavation plan demonstrates that the ancients were quite capable of drawing a map that was true to scale.<sup>216</sup>

Another body of practical geographical texts is nearer our modern notion of functional geographical information. These are the itineraries, which originated in the contexts of military campaigns and trade. By indicating the "actual distances between major halting places in terms of days or double-hours,"<sup>217</sup> these itineraries testify to the "awareness of greater distances and spatial relationships."<sup>218</sup> They do not, however, have any function in their own right. As is insinuated by the insertion of itineraries into annals, they should be interpreted as part of the process of mastering or taking control over a particular territory.<sup>219</sup> Detailed knowledge of the controlled territory was critical to military operations, the movement of military units, and the transport of missives, letters, and messages throughout the empire. Due to the different nature of texts incorporating geographic knowledge, propagandistic in the case of annals and practical in the case of epistolary literature, they complement each other in reconstructing the geographical world as conceived by their authors.<sup>220</sup> The important conclusion drawn from these texts by Sabrina Favaro is that ancient travelers oriented themselves according to the relationship between localities rather than according to the cardinal directions. Favaro argues that the ancients did not have a holistic concept of the landscape; instead, they envisioned the world as a homogenous surface connected by a network of roads.<sup>221</sup> If the king penetrated beyond familiar territory and traversed the borders marked by the steles of his predecessors, his military expedition became a heroic cosmic journey that secured his prestige and immortal fame. Marching beyond the borders of known territory is a recurrent topos of the Assyrian royal inscriptions in particular.

Awareness of scale and spatial relationships, however, was not the primary determinant that shaped the *Babylonian Map of the World*,<sup>222</sup> which is the only map that comes close to reflecting a conception of the universe. The *Babyloni-*

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215 Hallo 1964, 61.

216 Zettler 1993, pl. 7.

217 Hallo 1964, 62.

218 Millard 1982, 113 f.

219 Favaro 2007, 100.

220 Parpola 1981, 123–124.

221 Favaro 2007, 100.

222 Horowitz 1998, 40 ff.

*an Map of the World* combines text and image, i.e. linguistic and visual imagery. It does not present a clear message according to a primarily functional communication paradigm.<sup>223</sup> Rather, the map depicts configurational knowledge gained through increasing experience of the environment,<sup>224</sup> and combines this knowledge with a mythical perspective on the universe. It brings together two different orientations: one that makes use of geographical features like the Euphrates as reference points, and one that establishes relationships between well-known cities and countries. A third purpose of this map was probably to locate and describe distant mythical regions by situating them in relation to familiar locales, such as Babylon, Assyria, and the Euphrates.<sup>225</sup> Further, the map appears to have been oriented northwest-southeast, an orientation that is known from both Assyrian and Sumerian temples, the latter probably providing the model for the Assyrian tradition.<sup>226</sup> The northwest-southeast orientation of Sumerian and Assyrian temples stands in contrast to the north-south orientation of Babylonian temples. Thus, it is interesting to observe that although the text of the *Babylonian Map of the World* is written in Babylonian, the orientation of the map is inspired by Assyrian tradition.

On the map, the northern mountains (1) represent the origin of the Euphrates River. The Euphrates in turn traverses the city of Babylon (13), which is drawn as an oblong near the center of the map, and then empties into the swamps (7) by the city of Susa (8), which is shown to the “east” of the swamps and is connected to the Persian Gulf by a canal (9). Simultaneously, the map suggests a rough division of Mesopotamia into territories located to the east of the Euphrates, such as Urartu (3), Assyria (4), and Der (5), and those located to its west, namely Bit Habban (12) and Bit Yakin (10). Der (5) is on the border of Elam, mirroring its historic position as the strategic starting point for campaigns against Elam. Susa (8), the capital of Elam, was also accessible from Bit Yakin (10), located to the east of the Euphrates and the swamps (7). Bit Habban regularly stirred up revolts against the Assyrians by conniving with the Babylonians and was therefore often the target of Assyrian military campaigns.<sup>227</sup> A Babylon-centric *weltanschauung* is apparent in the fact that these reference points are depicted in a symmetrical way on both sides of the Euphrates, while the map omits the Tigris River altogether, even though it was closer to them.

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223 MacEachren 1995.

224 MacEachren, 1995, 172.

225 Horowitz 1998, 40.

226 Martiny 1932.

227 Pongratz-Leisten 2001, 275.

Indeed, Babylon is located near the center of the map, while all the other locations reflect the status of satellites.

Beyond the continental portion of the inhabited world, i.e. beyond the mountains of the sunrise and sunset, the map outlines the saltwater river, called *marratu*, the “bitter one.” In the Babylonian conception of the universe heaven and earth do not have a meeting point,<sup>228</sup> and in order to reach heaven from earth one must pass either through the air, as is the case in the *Etana Myth*, or the sea, as is described in the *Adapa Myth*. In the *Babylonian Map of the World*, eight distant regions (*nagû*) originally radiated from the saltwater river, indicated by triangular protrusions. Of these protrusions, only five are preserved. In Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions, the term *nagû* functions either as a general designation for an area that is remote from the Assyrian core – and by extension, a foreign territory – or it has a political meaning that refers to administrative districts or provinces.<sup>229</sup> The latter meaning is not applicable to the *Babylonian Map of the World*, but the former is closely related to the meaning of the term in literary texts, where it is used to denote extremely distant regions, as is the case in the *Gilgameš Epic*.<sup>230</sup> In the *Babylonian Map of the World*, one of the distant regions to the northeast represented by a triangular protrusion is labeled, “Great Wall: 6 leagues in between where the Sun is not seen.”<sup>231</sup> Although this label is only written within this one region, its description can apply equally to the other *nagûs*, implying the transition from the cosmos to a sphere that resembles the primordial state that precedes creation.

In the text that accompanies the *Babylonian Map of the World*, numerous intertextual references are made to literary works. Notable among these are the references to *Enûma Eliš* through Marduk’s banishment of the vanquished monsters to the sea, to the *Gilgameš Epic* through the naming of Utnapištim,<sup>232</sup> the survivor of the Flood who resides across the ocean at the edge of the world, and to the historical epic of the *King of Battle* (*šar tamḥari*), through the citation of the names of Sargon, king of Akkad, and his opponent, Nūr-Dagan.<sup>233</sup> In this way, the obverse of the tablet relates distant places to the mythical and historical figures mentioned in the text. The reverse of the tablet describes

228 Izre’el 2001, 139.

229 Machinist 1993.

230 George 2003, *Gilgameš Epic* XI 141 *a-na* 14–TA.ÀM *i-te-la-a na-gu-ú* “In 14 places emerged a landmass.” For further literary examples see Horowitz 1998, 31 f.

231 Horowitz 1998, 22:18.

232 Whether the name of Ut-napištim was intended or whether it represents a confusion of the name of Sargon’s enemy in the Old Babylonian Sargon story remains unresolved, see van de Mieroop 1999a, 71.

233 Horowitz 1998, 38.

conditions in these far-away regions, which represent the transition into unknown space. Accordingly, text and image intersect in the *Babylonian Map of the World*, which not only organizes and interprets spatial information, but also symbolically represents the transition from historical real space to the mythic space of the distant regions (*nagû*). In text and imagery, an expanded cosmography controlled by the divine and earthly king provides the model for control obtained through battle and conquest. In this way, the ideal empire becomes coextensive with the cosmos.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Bruce Lincoln reads a similar rhetoric in the Bisutun inscription of Darius, see Lincoln 2007, 71.



# 5 Narratives of Power and the Assyrian Notion of Kingship

## 5.1 The Title ‘King’ and its Implications

In *Chapter Three*, the Sumerian terms used to express the notion of political leadership, namely en, ensi<sub>2</sub>, and lugal, were referred to as part of the discussion of the similarities between the titularies of the kings of Aššur and those of Ešnunna. The precise meaning of these Sumerian terms varies according to time and place. Nevertheless, when they are used to designate the role of the sovereign, modern scholarship generally assumes that they were local variants expressing the same essential concept: the term lugal was used in Ur, en in Uruk, and ensi<sub>2</sub> in Lagaš.<sup>1</sup> I do not intend to dispute this interpretation, but I would like to illuminate what ‘political leadership’ signified in the ancient Mesopotamian *weltanschauung*. Additionally, I would like to point out that the relationship between the divine world and the institution of kingship might have been conceived of slightly differently within ideological discourse depending on geographical regions and historical periods.

It is important to note that neither the title en nor the title lugal appear in the *Archaic List of Professions* as transmitted from Uruk,<sup>2</sup> which has been understood to reflect the social hierarchy of that city. Instead, a figure designated as namešda heads the list, a title that was equated in later lists with the Akkadian *šarru*, ‘king’. Because the sign for namešda is composed of the elements nam<sub>2</sub> + giš.šita (‘weapon,’ read éšda), it is tempting to link this written evidence with the iconographic evidence of the ‘prisoner scenes’ in both the Uruk IV glyptic and in the *Lion Hunt Stele*, which portray a ruler protecting the community in the contexts of war and hunting.<sup>3</sup>

In the *Archaic List of Professions*, the sign EN appears only in conjunction with other signs to designate particular professions. It is not until the Early Dynastic period that the title EN is used to designate a leader who assumes sacral and economic functions in administering the properties of the temples,<sup>4</sup> and who functions in Uruk as the “chief temple administrator chosen by the gods for his managerial competence.”<sup>5</sup> This later written evidence resonates with the visual message transmitted on the *Uruk Vase*, which depicts the ruler

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1 Michalowski 2008, 33.

2 Englund, Nissen, and Damerow 1993.

3 Selz 2001, 14.

4 Selz 1998, 292; Rubio 2007, 24.

5 van de Mieroop, 2004, 45.

successfully executing the duties of his office by promoting prosperity and abundance and thereby providing for the material needs of the temple. The Early Dynastic documents of Ur, Abu Salabikh, and Šuruppak represent the lugal engaged in military activities, taking care of the temples, performing justice, and supervising agricultural activities, including animal husbandry and the maintenance of irrigation systems.<sup>6</sup> In Lagaš, on the other hand, rulers used both the title lugal and ensi,<sup>7</sup> while in northern Syria en denoted the local ruler of the city of Ebla and lugal was used to designate the governor,<sup>8</sup> a tradition that is still apparent in Late Bronze Age Emar.<sup>9</sup> Only during the Sargonic period did en begin representing the title of a high-level cultic specialist,<sup>10</sup> at the same time that the kings of Akkad continued to use the Sumerian lugal (lit. “great man”), equated with Akkadian *šarru*, to describe themselves. The adoption of the title ‘king of Kiš’ around 2600 BCE in the Early Dynastic II period, which plays on the homophony of the city name Kiš and the Akkadian word for ‘totality’ (*kiššatu*), constitutes the oldest known attempt to express the superiority of one ruler among the rulers of the other city states. By the Sargonic period, the title lugal kiš<sup>(ki)</sup> had become iconic.<sup>11</sup>

In contrast to the historical reality of the early city states competing with each other for hegemony, the mythological tradition of the *Sumerian King List*, according to which kingship (nam-lugal) originated in heaven, could only allow one “legitimate locus of kingship at any one time,”<sup>12</sup> a position that circulated “among a restricted number of cities.”<sup>13</sup> The *Sumerian King List* excludes Lagaš from the group of privileged cities that are said to have exercised hegemony at some point, and it is possible that the political text *The Rulers of Lagaš* was produced in response to this exclusion. This text, which was likely commissioned under King Gudea of Lagaš, declares the primacy of the office of the ensi<sub>2</sub> over the office of the lugal by referring to the city states of the *Sumerian King List*:<sup>14</sup>

When Anu (and) Enlil  
called mankind by name  
and established rulership (nam-ensi<sub>2</sub>)  
kingship (nam lugal), the crown, the throne and ...  
they had not yet sent forth from above.

<sup>6</sup> Glassner 1993, 15.

<sup>7</sup> Sallaberger 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Selz 1998 cf. fn. 14 with further bibliography.

<sup>9</sup> Seminara 1996.

<sup>10</sup> Steinkeller 1999, 106.

<sup>11</sup> Wilcke 2007, 28; Rubio 2007, 16.

<sup>12</sup> Cooper 1993, 19.

<sup>13</sup> Van de Mieroop 2004, 41.

<sup>14</sup> Sollberger 1967; and recently Wilcke 2002, 67.

In the above passage, the textual evidence supports the modern view that the various Sumerian terms for leaders all denoted rulership *per se*. The passage also helps account for why the Akkadian term *šarru* was equated with numerous Sumerian titles by the Old Babylonian period. Modern scholarship has generally focused on these terms only in their denotation of *political* leadership, neglecting the broader dimensions of Mesopotamian kingship. Importantly, texts like *The Rulers of Lagaš* also indicate that despite their similarity, Sumerian terms for leaders had different connotations in different religious or geographic contexts.

In the Old Babylonian Sumerian composition *Inanna and Enki*, *nam-en* and *nam-lugal* appear in the list of ME stolen by Inanna from her father Enki. This demonstrates that *nam-en* “en-ship” and *nam-lugal/šarrūtu* “kingship” were regarded as part of the cosmic principles and cultic norms (ME) of the time.<sup>15</sup> In *Inanna and Enki*, the office of *nam-en* is listed at the top of the hierarchy of the important offices in Sumerian society, along with the office of the *lugal-priest* and the concept of divinity (*nam-dingir*).<sup>16</sup> It is possible that this remarkable arrangement reflects an Old Babylonian reception of earlier historical reality. Kingship is named only after these offices, and it is first deconstructed into some of its representative elements, among them the insignia of kingship – the lofty legitimate tiara (*aga zid mah*), the throne of kingship (<sup>gi</sup>*gu-za nam-lugal*), the scepter (*gidru mah*), staff, and crook (*ešgiri sibir*), and the royal dress (*[tug<sub>2</sub>] mah*) – and one of the important functions of kingship, namely shepherding. The actual office of kingship (*nam-lugal*) only appears at the end of this long list.

*Inanna and Enki*<sup>17</sup>

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | <sup>d</sup> <i>inana nam-en</i> [ba-e-de <sub>6</sub> ] | Inana, [you brought with you] the office of the en-priest,  |
| 2 | <i>nam-lugal</i> [ba-e-de <sub>6</sub> ]                 | [you have brought with you] the office of the lugal-priest, |
| 3 | <i>nam-dingir</i> [ba-e-de <sub>6</sub> ]                | [you have brought with you] divinity,                       |

<sup>15</sup> For a critical perspective on this interpretation of the ME’s see Glassner 1992; Glassner prefers to interpret the ME’s as characteristic traits of Inanna.

<sup>16</sup> This interpretation could be corroborated by Steinkeller’s hypothesis that the phenomenon of twin capitals in the early Sumerian city states – a religious center and a political center – is a secondary development, and that in an earlier state the religious center was simultaneously the seat of political power, which combined cultic and military duties in one leader figure, the EN. Over time this EN lost his power to the rising representative of the new political center, the ENS<sub>2</sub>, see Steinkeller 1999, 115.

<sup>17</sup> Farber-Flügge 1973, 54 f.; ETCSL 1.3.1.

4	aga zid mah [ba-e-de <sub>6</sub> ]	[you have brought with you] the legitimate and exalted crown, <sup>18</sup>
5	<sup>si</sup> gu-za nam-lugal-la ba-(e-de <sub>6</sub> )	[you have brought with you] the royal throne,
6	gidru mah ba-(e-de <sub>6</sub> )	you have brought with you] the exalted scepter,
7	ešgiri sibir ba-(e-de <sub>6</sub> )	you have [brought with you] the staff and crook,
8	[tug <sub>2</sub> ] mah ba-(e-de <sub>6</sub> )	you have [brought with you] the noble dress,
9	nam-sipad ba-(e-de <sub>6</sub> )	you have [brought with you] shepherdship,
10	nam-lugal ba-(e-de <sub>6</sub> )	you have [brought with you] kingship,
11	nam-egi <sub>2</sub> -zi ba-(e-de <sub>6</sub> )	you have [brought with you] the office of the egi-zi-priest,
12	nam-nin-dingir ba-(e-de <sub>6</sub> )	you have [brought with you] the office of the nin-dingir-priestess,
13	nam-išib ba-(e-de <sub>6</sub> )	you have [brought with you] the office of the išib-priest,
14	nam-lu <sub>2</sub> -mah ba-(e-de <sub>6</sub> )	you have [brought with you] the office of the lumah-priest
15	nam-gudu <sub>4</sub> ba-(e-de <sub>6</sub> )	you have [brought with you] the office of the gudu-priest.

The list continues with the offices of five other cultic specialists, including that of the nin-dingir-priestess, an office that kings are known to have bestowed on their daughters, and that of the IŠIB-priest, a title that kings used themselves to express their close relationship with the gods. The level of detail that accompanies the office of kingship – nam-lugal – communicates the constituent elements of kingship to the text’s audience and points to its author’s knowledge of tradition, as the list demonstrates an intertextual relationship with both the Sumerian *Šulgi Hymn X* and with the Akkadian *Etana Myth*. These insignia are not only conferred on the king by a variety of deities in other mythological texts, thus anchoring the institution of kingship in the divine world, but they are also subject to particular rites that secure succession to the office, as is discussed in *Chapter Ten*.

Three interrelated aspects of the list of the ME recorded in *Inanna and Enki* require further comment. First, the list identifies the institution of kingship as being part of the ME, i.e. the institutions, offices, and forms of human behavior that are inherent to and inform the social and cosmic order. Second, the list demonstrates that the office of kingship, although distinguished by its various attributes, cannot be separated from offices tied to the administration of the temple and the performance of the cult. Third, the list reiterates the close relationship between Inanna/Ištar and the institution of kingship through the in-

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<sup>18</sup> ETCSL 1.3.1 prefers to translate the “great and good crown.”

clusion of kingship among the ME that are stolen by Inanna. This link was perpetuated in the Old Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian versions of the *Etana Myth* and resurfaces in other media, notably prophecy, in which Ištar functions as the voice of the gods on behalf of the king in the Diyala region in the Old Babylonian period and later in Assyria.<sup>19</sup>

Crucially, all of the offices listed in *Inanna and Enki* are linked with the temple in either an administrative or cultic function, except for the term *nam-lugal* ('kingship'), which denotes political leadership. The variety of these offices implies a division of labor among various functionaries in the socio-political reality of southern and northern Mesopotamia. Simultaneously, the inclusion of some of these offices as titles in the titularies of certain kings should be understood as an expression of their intimacy with the divine world and their deep involvement in both the affairs of the temple and in the cult of the gods of territories over which they exercised control, rather than as an indication of the heightened religious sensibilities of a particular ruler. As such, epithets like "iṣib/išippu-priest of Anu" should be interpreted as elaborations on titles that signify the geographical expansion of territorial control. This becomes apparent, for example, in the inscriptions of the Middle Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I (1233–1197 BCE), who inserts this title immediately after the titles "king of Assyria, king of Sumer and Akkad," claiming in this particular case Uruk as the southernmost point of Assyrian control:

Tukulti-Ninurta, king of the universe, strong king, king of Assyria, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters, chosen of the gods Aššur and Šamaš, I, attentive prince, the king (who is) the choice of the god Enlil, the one who shepherded his land in green pastures with his beneficial staff, foremost purification priest (iṣippu), designate of the god Anu, ..."<sup>20</sup>

## 5.2 Political and Religious Functions Intertwined: The Title *šangû*

In addition to contextualizing the term *lugal/šarru* and the religious implications of the office, it is also necessary to situate the title *šangû* in Assyrian culture, as it is exclusive to Assyrian royal ideology. Unlike in the Babylonian

<sup>19</sup> Pongratz-Leisten 2003.

<sup>20</sup> RIMA 1, A.O.78.23:1–9: <sup>m</sup>Tukulti-Ninurta šar kiššati šarru dannu šar māt Aššur šar māt Šumeri u Akkadī šar kibrat erbī ništ <sup>d</sup>Aššur u <sup>d</sup>Šamaš anāku rubū na'ādu šar niš inī <sup>d</sup>Enlil ša ina šulum šiberšu irte''ū aburriš māssu iṣippu rēštū nibit <sup>d</sup>Anim.

context where the primary function of the *sanga/šangû* was to act as the chief administrator of a temple, in Assyria his duties lay primarily with the performance of the cult, even though the *šangû* remained the principal figure associated with a temple.<sup>21</sup> The Aššur temple was headed by a *šangû rabiû* (“high priest”), whose central role was appropriated by the king in the performance of state rituals; the *šangû rabiû* was assisted by a colleague, the *šangû šaniu* (“second priest”). Every temple other than the Aššur temple had only one *šangû*, who was responsible for all the divinities residing in that temple. There are a few attestations of a *šangû* named Elalî already in Old Assyrian texts, but the precise character of his position in that period remains opaque.<sup>22</sup> *Šangû* priests can be associated with a divinity (*ša DN*), a temple (*ša É*) or a city (*ša GN*), the latter indicating the *šangû*’s high status among the functionaries of the urban community. The title was written with the logogram SANGA,<sup>23</sup> the same sign as *šid/išši’akku* (“steward, governor”). When the title was applied to the king, it served to express his stewardship of the god Aššur.

It was, however, only under king Aššur-uballiṭ I (1353–1318 BCE) that the title *šangû* was introduced into the royal titulary.<sup>24</sup> This programmatic change in Assyrian royal ideology might have been a consequence of growing Hittite-Assyrian interaction during the fourteenth century BCE, as the Assyrian understanding of the functions and duties of the *šangû* are more reminiscent of Hittite than Babylonian practice.<sup>25</sup> There are several known instances in which the Hittite crown prince was installed as *šangû* of the storm god of either Kizzuwatna<sup>26</sup> or Nerik<sup>27</sup> and of Ištar of Samuha,<sup>28</sup> who are the principal deities of the Hittite pantheon. Aššur-uballiṭ I’s introduction of the title *šangû* in relation to Assyria’s supreme god Aššur was contemporaneous with the major expansion of the city of Aššur at the beginning of the Middle Assyrian period and appears to be inspired by the Hittite model in its delineation of the king’s special relationship with the supreme divinity of the local pantheon. Like the title *išši’akku*, the title *šangû* was used in construct form, generally coupled with

21 Van Driel 1969, 170–74; Menzel 1981, 130–133.

22 Menzel 1981, 130.

23 The other Sumerogram attested is KID.BAR with the variant É.BAR, see Menzel 1981, 132 with n. 1791.

24 Renger 1997, 170 fn. 3.

25 Taggar-Cohen 2006, 212 ff.

26 As is true for Prince Telipinu, who was installed by his father Suppiluliuma I, Taggar-Cohen 2006, 225.

27 Hattusili III installed his son Tudhaliya IV as *šangû* to the storm god of Nerik, Taggar-Cohen 225.

28 Taggar-Cohen 2006, 225.

the divine name Aššur, though it does occasionally occur with the gods Enlil and Ištar.

Peter Machinist has discussed with great sagaciousness the three titles that are commonly attested together for Assyrian kings beginning in the second millennium BCE and carrying through to the end of Assyrian history.<sup>29</sup> These titles are *išši'ak/iššâk* <sup>d</sup>Aššur, *šakin/šakni/šakan/šaknu* <sup>d</sup>Enlil, and *sanga*, which entered the titulary of Assyrian kings at different points in history. *išši'ak/iššâk* <sup>d</sup>Aššur is the oldest of the three titles, appearing already in the oldest royal inscriptions from Aššur, which date to the Akkad period. The title *šakin* <sup>d</sup>Enlil was introduced by Šamši-Adad I (1808–1776 BCE) and relied on the Old Akkadian model. Finally, as mentioned above *sanga/šangû* was introduced in the Middle Assyrian period. Machinist notes that despite the chronological range of these titles, “all three terms appear to express in one way or another the notion of ‘administrator, acting as a representative of higher authority,’ in this instance, the king as administrative representative of the god to whom the term is attached.”<sup>30</sup> The use of the dating formula *ina šurru šangûtiya* (“in the beginning of my *šangûtu/šangû*-ship”) to mark a king’s accession year, which is semantically parallel to the formula *ina rēš šarrûtiya* (“in the beginning of my kingship”), demonstrates that *šangûtu* was understood as a synonym for ‘kingship,’ *šarrûtu*. Although Assyrian ritual texts associated with the state rituals refer to the king as *šarru* and relate that he was assisted by the chief *šangû* of the Aššur temple, in royal ideology the king retains his position as the chief *šangû* of Aššur. This notion, as Machinist reminds us, is clearly expressed in the prayer performed by the chief *šangû* when crowning the king in the *Coronation Ritual*, which survives in a copy from the Middle Assyrian period:

May Aššur and [M]ullissu, the owners of your crown, co[v]er you with your crown for a hundred years! May your feet be good in the temple and your hands be good [a]t he breast of Aššur, your God! May your *šangûtu* and that of your sons be pleasing to Aššur, your God! Expand your country with your just scepter! May Aššur give you [c]ommand and attention, obedience, truth and peace!<sup>31</sup>

The juxtaposition of *šangûtu* with the command to expand the borders of Assyria confirms the understanding of the term as a synonym for ‘kingship.’ This interpretation is further supported by the formula “the gods Ninurta and Nergal who love my *šangûtu*” (<sup>d</sup>Ninurta u <sup>d</sup>Palil ša *šangûti irammû*) introduced by

<sup>29</sup> Machinist 2006.

<sup>30</sup> Machinist 2006, 154.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted after Parpola, *Assyrian Rituals*, in preparation.

Aššur-bēl-kala (1073–56 BCE)<sup>32</sup> and reiterated in the inscriptions of Aššur-dan II (934–912 BCE),<sup>33</sup> Adad-nīrārī II (911–891 BCE),<sup>34</sup> Tukulti-Ninurta II (890–884 BCE),<sup>35</sup> Ashurnāširpal II (883–859 BCE),<sup>36</sup> and Shalmaneser III (858–824 BCE).<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the decision to associate the warrior gods with *šangûtu* is a variation on the same message and conveys the economic and martial dimensions of providing for the temple. The following passage from Šamši-Adad V's (823–811 BCE) inscriptions illustrates the dual role of the *šangû* by combining the provisioning of the temple with the performance of the cult:

(Šamši-Adad (V)) ... whose name the gods designated from ancient times, pure *šangû* who provides unremittingly for Ešarra (and) who maintains the rites of Ekur, who is dedicated heart and mind to the work of Ehursagkurkurra (and) the temples of his land.<sup>38</sup>

It should also be noted that Ninurta's role as 'governor of Enlil' included both administrative and martial functions, which provided the model for the earthly king. As the Assyrian kings assumed the position of Ninurta in their relationship with Aššur, this double definition of Ninurta's role in relation to divine leadership exemplifies the complex notion of the king's *šangûtu* in Assyrian culture; this is further discussed in *Chapter Six*.

### 5.3 Anchoring the Institution of Kingship in the Mythical Past

This is not the place to reiterate in detail all the cosmologies from the early Sumerian debate literature or other text genres that contain cratogonies elaborating on the creation of kingship.<sup>39</sup> What is important to note, however, is that in these early tales the city is founded by the gods before the creation of humanity and the establishment of kingship. Humanity and kingship are regarded as secondary developments that follow rather than precede the idea of

32 RIMA 2, A.O.89.2:29'; A.O.89.7:iv 1 variation *šangûssu*.

33 RIMA 2, A.O.98.1:68.

34 RIMA 2, A.O.99.2:122.

35 RIMA 2, A.O.100.3': 5' (reconstructed), A.O.100.5:134.

36 RIMA 2, A.O.101.2:40; RIMA 2, A.O.101.30:84.

37 RIMA 3, A.O.102.6:iv 40; RIMA 2, A.O.102.16:341'.

38 RIMA 3, A.O.103.1:29–32: *a ultu ullâ ilānu ibbû zikiršu šangû ellu zānin Ešarra la muparkû mukil paṛši Ekur ša ana šipri Ehursagkurkurra ekurrâte mâtīšu*.

39 Among them are the cosmological introductions of the *Song of the Hoe*, *The Rulers of Lagash*, and the epic of *Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave*, to name some of the early examples of Mesopotamian literary history.



the city as a seat of the divinity. This ancient Sumerian notion of the sequence of creation persisted in the literary production of the first millennium BCE. It appears, for example, in the Standard Babylonian version of the *Etana Myth*, in which the gods plan and build the city of Kiš first and only afterwards decide to look for a king. Like in the list of the ME in *Inanna and Enki*, kingship is described by its representative insignia: a specific headdress, the tiara, the scepter, and the throne, exemplifying the conception of kingship in Mesopotamian thought in terms of its characteristic parts. The insignia were not conceived merely as symbols of rulership, but rather as the essential material instruments necessary for the performance of rulership (*simat šarrūti*).<sup>40</sup>

- 1 They planned the city [...].
- 2 [The gods? laid its foundations],
- 3 [They planned the city? Kiš?],
- 4 [The gods] laid its foundations.
- 5 The Igigi-gods founded its brickwork [...]
- 6 “Let [...] be their (the people’s) shepherd,
- 7 Let Etana be their architect, ...”
- 8 The great Anunna-gods, or[dainers of destinies],
- 9 [Sa]t taking their counsel [concerning the land],
- 10 The creators of the four world regions, [establishers of all physical form],
- 11 By(?) command of all of them the Igigi-gods
- 12 [ordained a festi]val f[or the people],
- 13 No [king] did they establish [over the teeming peoples].
- 14 At that time [no headdress had been assembled, nor crown],
- 15 Nor yet scepter [had been set] with lapis,
- 16 No throne daises(?) whatsoever [had been constructed].
- 17 The seven gods barred the [gates] against the multitude,
- 18 Against the inhabited world they barred [the gates ...],
- 19 The Igigi-gods surrounded the city [with ramparts?].
- 20 Ištar [came down from heaven? to seek] a shepherd,
- 21 And sought for a king [everywhere].
- 22 Innina [came down from heaven? to seek] a shepherd,
- 23 And sought for a king e[verywhere].
- 24 Enlil examined the dais of(?) Etana,
- 25 The man whom Ištar st[e]adfastly [...]
- 26 She has constantly sought ...
- 27 “[Let] king[ship] be established in the land, let the heart of Kiš [be joyful].”
- 28 Kingship, the radiant crown, throne, [...]
- 29 He(?) brought and [...],
- 30 The gods of the land[s ...]<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Cancik-Kirschbaum 1999, 239 with reference to Podella 1996, 255 ff., esp. 259 cf. fn. 493.

<sup>41</sup> Late version of the *Etana Myth*, translation: Foster 2005, 533 ff.

In addition to anchoring the creation of kingship within the larger framework of the creation of the city, the text provides an argument for the importance of the institution of kingship. It “argues” that the primary function of kingship was to maintain or restore the social order planned and intended by the gods. Accordingly, the text emphasizes the king’s function as shepherd, an image that entered the iconography of the cylinder seals.<sup>42</sup> Shepherdship in this case means the ability to control the teeming populace in the sense of maintaining civic order and ensuring that everyone contributes to the wellbeing of the gods.

A similar notion of how and why kingship came into being is apparent in the Akkadian debate poem *The Datepalm and the Tamarisk*, which was recovered from the library Šaduppum/Tell Harmal, i.e. in the cultural horizon of Ešnunna. Copies of this text also existed in Middle Assyrian/early Neo-Assyrian Aššur. Excavations at Emar have yielded a further exemplar, thus reflecting a Tigridian and northern Syrian adoption of a text that is ultimately rooted in Sumero-Babylonian tradition.<sup>43</sup> The younger version of the text explicitly elaborates on the motifs of legendary time, the divine origin of civilization, how the gods built cities and performed irrigation work, and on the gathering of the divine assembly and its decision to create the institution of kingship. This cosmological introduction is followed by the debate between the two trees, which compete in their importance to the palace and the cult:

*Šaduppum (OB)*

In those days,

in distant years,  
when the Igiu founded the land,  
the gods worked for the humans.

They assembled,

gave plenty to the humans,  
and a king,  
who would keep order  
and strengthen the people,  
and rule them from Kiš.  
He planted a palm tree in his court ...

*Emar/Aššur (MB/MA)*

On light days,  
dark nights,  
in ... years,  
when the gods had founded the land,  
built cities for the distant humans,  
heaped up mountains,  
dug the rivers, the life(force) of the lands  
the gods of the land assembled.  
An, Enlil and Ea consulted.  
Among them sat Šamaš and Bēlet-ili.  
The land had not yet received kingship,  
and lordship was bestowed on the gods.  
The gods, who had come to like the humans,  
gave them [a king],

who ruled from Kiš.  
He planted a palm tree in his palace.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Steinkeller 1992, 252.

<sup>43</sup> Wilcke 1989b with bibliography of the respective editions, and Foster 2005, 927–929.

<sup>44</sup> Juxtaposition after Heimpele 1993–1997, 556.

Reminiscent of the *Atramhasis* tradition, Bēlet-ilī's involvement in the creation of the king is explicitly mentioned in *The Datepalm and the Tamarisk* and provides a close link to the *Myth of the Creation of Man and King*, which dates to the first millennium and was originally found in Borsippa.<sup>45</sup> The first part of this later text is very similar to the *Atrahasis Myth*, describing the labor of the gods and their rebellion and then proceeding to the creation of humanity and the king. In the *Myth of the Creation of Man and King*, mankind is created to relieve the gods of the burden of their work, while the king's function is to rule humanity and organize labor.

The *Myth of the Creation of Man and King* is important for understanding ancient kingship, because it indicates that certain qualities were to be embodied in the person of the king, such as beauty, perfection, strength, ferocity, courage, and knowledge of the divine secret. These qualities enable the king to prevail over others and fulfill the responsibilities of his office.

- 1' ...  
 2' Their faces were turned away [...]  
 3' Bēlet-ilī, their lady, was frightened by their silence;  
 4' she spoke out to Ea, the exorcist:  
 5' "The toil of the gods has become wearisome to them!  
 6' ..., belt, ...  
 7' Their faces are turned away, and enmity has broken out!  
 8' Let us create a figure of clay and impose the toil on it  
 9' and relieve them from their exertions forever!"  
 10' Ea began to speak addressing Bēlet-ilī:  
 11' "You are Bēlet-ilī, the lady of the great gods.  
 12' ... later  
 13' ... his hands.  
 14' Bēlet-ilī pinched off clay for him.  
 15' Craftily she made clever things.  
 16' [...] she purified and mixed clay to create him.  
 17' [...] she decorated his body.  
 18' [...] his whole stature.  
 19' She put a [...]  
 20' She put a [...]  
 21' She put a [...]  
 22' [...] she placed on [his body.]  
 23' Enlil, hero of the great gods, [...]  
 24' [as soon as he saw him] his own features beamed.  
 25' [...] took a comprehensive view of [...] in the assembly of the gods.  
 26' His [...], he gave final perfection to the created being.  
 27' Enlil, the hero of the great gods [...],

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45 Van Dijk 1987, pl. XXXII Nr. 92; Mayer 1987; Müller 1989; Cancik-Kirschbaum 1995.

- 28' Let me determine his name as [*lullû-man*],  
 29' and gave the order to make him bear the toil.  
 30' Ea began to speak and said to Bēlet-ilī,  
 31' Bēlet-ilī, you are the Lady of the Great Gods,  
 32' It is you who have created the *lullû-man* (ordinary man)  
 33' now form the king, the *māliku-man*.  
 34' His whole figure (*gimir lānišu*) frame in excellence (*tābi ubbihi*),  
 35' conceive (*šubbi*) his traits (*zīmīšu*) in perfection, beautify (*bunni*) his body  
 (*zumuršu*)!  
 36' Bēlet-ilī formed the king, the *māliku-man*.  
 37' The [great] gods gave the battle to the king.  
 38' Anu gave him his crown, Enlil gave him his throne,  
 39' Nergal gave him his weapon, Ninurta ga[ve him his terrifying splendor],  
 40' Bēlet-ilī provided him with his beau[tiful appearance] (*bunnānišu*),  
 41' Nusku gave directions, consulted him and stood in service [before him].  
 42' He who spea[ks] with the king [disloyally or treasonably],  
 43' if he is [a notable, he will die a violent death].<sup>46</sup>

In the Assyro-Babylonian *weltanschauung* corporal beauty and perfection were not virtues in their own right, but were instead a prerequisite for human interaction with the gods, as is evident in the performance of Assyrian queries to the sun god by the diviner. In other words, the perfection of the royal body was primarily intended to render the king a legitimate recipient of divine knowledge. This physical perfection was complemented by the king's intellectual superiority, which he obtained by virtue of his being the "image of the god" (*tamšil ili*)<sup>47</sup> or the "flesh of the god" (*šir ili*), and which enabled him to make good decisions that further ingratiated him to the gods. In myth, the king's skill in decision-making is expressed by the participle form *māliku*, derived from the root *malāku*, "to give advice, to ponder, to come to a decision."<sup>48</sup> *Māliku* occurs in line 33' of the *Myth of the Creation of Man and King*, where it appears to function as a pun for *mal(i)ku* "king," derived from the West Semitic verb *malāku* "to reign."<sup>49</sup> Thus, although both the king and the *lullû-man* belong to the same species (*awīlu*), the king is distinguished from the *lullû-man* by virtue of his being a *māliku* who is appointed to the office of ruler (*šarru*).<sup>50</sup> In line 37', the author of the *Myth of the Creation of Man and King* expresses

<sup>46</sup> Text and translation: Mayer 1987; translation: Livingstone in Hallo/Younger, *Context of Scripture I*, 476–477.

<sup>47</sup> On the notion of *tamšilu* see Pongratz-Leisten 2011b, 142–143.

<sup>48</sup> Discussion by Mayer 1987, 64 f.

<sup>49</sup> See AHW, s.v. *maliku* III and CAD M/1 *maliku* B as well as the discussion by Renger 1988, esp. 166 and 168; Zaccagnini 1993, esp. 56 cf. n.10 and 66 cf. n. 44.

<sup>50</sup> Cancik-Kirschbaum 1995, 17.

the idea that battle was integral to the process of creation, and that it was conferred on the king by the great gods. The sacralization of the body of the king is further effected through the bestowal of the regalia of kingship by the gods, as Anu gives the king his crown and Enlil his throne. The king's invincibility is in turn guaranteed by the weapons of Nergal and by Ninurta's terrifying splendor (*šalummatu*). Bēlet-ilī provides the king with his perfect appearance, and Nusku stands ready to ensure the king's intellectual superiority and wise decision-making, which enable him to rule humankind.

Through its reference to the weapons of the warrior gods, the *Myth of the Creation of Man and King* represents kingship as having been created in order to pacify the world. Once he had proven his prowess in combat, the king was called upon by the gods to rule on the basis of his perfection in body and mind. As is discussed in more detail in *Chapter Six*, rulership implied assuming the role of Ninurta as the executive agent in the performance of power, both in its administrative aspect and with regard to establishing and protecting civic order. Accordingly, the myth articulates yet again the model of a successful ruler and the ideal image of his *body politic*, which was further negotiated in ritual and image.

#### 5.4 The Assyrian Notion of the King's Shepherdship (*rē'ûtu*) and Ashurbanipal's *Coronation Hymn*

The preceding discussion covered the implications of the titles *šarru* and *šangû*, as well as the mythic foundations of the office of kingship in Mesopotamian tradition in general and in Assyrian royal ideology in particular; this provides a platform for investigating the trope of royal shepherdship, as the Assyrians adopted a very specific approach to the king's role as shepherd. Modern scholarship tends to associate shepherdship primarily with the enactment of justice, probably under the impact of the imagery of the *Hammurabi Stele*. On closer inspection, however, it appears that this association only developed gradually. Legal authority can therefore be enacted on the divine level by the gods Ištaran, Šamaš, Adad, Ninurta, and Marduk, who assume the role of the divine judge without any explicit notion of shepherdship.<sup>51</sup> In the Early Dynastic period Ištaran of Der witnessed the agreement between the city states of Umma and Lagaš regarding the control of water,<sup>52</sup> a tradition that is still appar-

51 For a survey on divine judges see Krebernik 2007.

52 Cooper 1986.

ent in Gudea's building hymn, and by the Old Babylonian period the sun god Šamaš provides the model for the king's earthly dispensation of justice. In the Sumero-Babylonian *weltanschauung*, the institution of kingship was designed to uphold the social order through the enforcement of both justice and correct human social behavior (Sumerian *níg-si-sá*/Akkadian *mīšaru*), so that the cosmic order (Sumerian *níg-gi-na*/Akkadian *kittu*) remained undisturbed.<sup>53</sup> Kingship was thus the focal point at which the social and the cosmic order intersected. The ideal king was charged with meeting the needs of civil society and ensuring its proper functioning, as well as with providing for the cult of the gods and maintaining correct communication with them. In ideological discourse, the implicit purpose for the maintenance of social order was to guarantee the performance of human labor in the service of the gods.

Pre-Sargonic rulers sometimes stated that they were destined for shepherdship over the people,<sup>54</sup> a claim that is reflected in the onomasticon in names like 'Enannatum-is-the-true-shepherd' (En-na-na-túm-sipa-zi)<sup>55</sup> and 'the king is a shepherd' (lugal-sipa). In Akkadian tradition, the sense of 'in accordance with the divine order' and 'reliable in social relationships' of the adjective 'true' – Sumerian *zi*/Akkadian *kīnu* – was linked with "king" (*šarru*) rather than with "shepherd" (*rē'ū*).<sup>56</sup> Further, until Šulgi the Old Akkadian and Ur III kings made no use of the title "shepherd" in their inscriptions. In this case, as in many others, the local royal discourse of Lagaš represents an exception, as Gudea of Lagaš shared the title "shepherd" with Ningirsu and presented himself as the legitimate shepherd who is knowledgeable and capable of realizing things.<sup>57</sup> Explicit mention is made of shepherdship in King Šulgi's self-praise, where it appears in connection with the king's enforcement of justice:

They (the Anuna-gods) made Šulgi's shepherdship everlasting for me and made Šulgi, the righteous one of his god, rise over the land like Utu for me. They set up a throne of firm reign for him. The shepherd will decree just judgments and will make just decisions upon it (?). They granted (?) Šulgi a royal crown ..... great ..... (Šulgi P Fragm. C 58–65)

In Sumero-Babylonian royal ideology the king's role as judge was reinforced by the image of the king as protector of the weak and the oppressed, which is

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<sup>53</sup> The notion of *mīšaru*, derived from *ešēru* 'to straighten out, to set right,' comprises the performance of royal justice and correcting iniquitous situations, thereby guaranteeing the cosmic order (*kittu*), derived from the root *kānu* meaning 'to be stable,' see also Charpin 2010, 83; Démare-Lafont 2011, 335.

<sup>54</sup> Steible and Behrens 1982, Ukg. 51: 1–3, Luzag. 2:6.

<sup>55</sup> Westenholz 2007, 307.

<sup>56</sup> Westenholz 2007, 306.

<sup>57</sup> Selz 2001, 16 f. with reference to Gudea Cyl.A 7:9–12; 25:22; CylB 2:7 f. (see Edzard 1997, 73 passim)

already attested in the inscriptions of the rulers of Lagaš. It is clear from the documentation of the Old Babylonian period, from which several royal edicts survive, that this was by no means merely a literary trope. The purpose of these edicts – generally proclaimed shortly after the king’s accession to the throne – was threefold: canceling non-commercial debts, returning alienated goods to their former owners, and commanding the return of individuals to their original social status, which implied the remission of debt slavery.<sup>58</sup> As Charpin writes, the royal edict:

thus appears to be the exercise of a duty toward justice that the gods themselves expected from the new king; it took the form of a ceremony during which the king brandished a gold torch. The gold torch was obviously a solar symbol, the king being explicitly compared to the rising sun. This is particularly significant given that the sun god, Shamash, was at the same time the god of justice. A recently published letter connects that ceremony to the end of the mourning period observed after the death of the previous king: ‘The king promulgated the ‘restoration’ [*mīšarum*] of the country; he lifted the gold torch for the country and put an end to the country’s mourning.’<sup>59</sup>

Although it is attested for several deities following the Ur III period, the epithet ‘shepherd,’ *sipa/rē’û*, most often occurs as an epithet of the sun god Šamaš. Consequently, ‘shepherdship’ has been associated primarily with the enactment of legislation, in which the king’s verdict before his subjects is analogous to the sun god’s determination of man’s fate. Šulgi is, however, very ambiguous in this regard. He first couples the trope of royal justice with knowledge and military prowess and depicts himself as a king without rival, but then states that his heart has never committed violence against any king, thereby elaborating on the rhetoric first introduced by Gudea of Lagaš:

I have no equal among even the most distant rulers, and I can also state that my deeds are great deeds. Everything is achievable by me, the king. Since the time when Enlil gave me the direction of his numerous people in view of my wisdom(*geštug<sub>2</sub>*), my extraordinary power (*â dirig*) and my justice (*nam-si-sá*), in view of my resolute and unforgettable words, and in view of my expertise, comparable to that of Ištaran, in verdicts, my heart has never committed violence against even one other king, be he an Akkadian or a son of Sumer, or even a brute from Gutium.<sup>60</sup>

As is clear from the entry *rē’û* in the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*, the term can serve as a synonym for ‘ruler,’ as seems to be the case in one of Iddin-Dagan’s

<sup>58</sup> Charpin 2010, 86.

<sup>59</sup> Charpin 2010, 92.

<sup>60</sup> *Šulgi* B, ETCSL 2.4.2.0.2:259–269.

hymns: "Iddin-Dagan, you are a shepherd (chosen by) his (Enlil's) heart."<sup>61</sup> Similarly, in Hammurabi's *Law Code* the king states: "I am Hammurabi, the shepherd called (to rule) by Enlil."<sup>62</sup> This title is combined with adjectival attributes and appositions like "I am the strong shepherd, the shepherd of the widespread people, I am the hero, the protector, who made secure the foundation of his father's throne,"<sup>63</sup> and statements like that of King Narām-Sîn in the *Cuthean Legend*, "I am a king who does not keep his country safe, a shepherd who does not keep his people safe."<sup>64</sup> The title also appears in the epithet chosen by the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III, who is called "the shepherd of all foreign rulers."<sup>65</sup> The various contexts in which the term *rē'û* figures all indicate that the primary task of the king as shepherd was to protect his people from any external threat or inner turmoil, in much the same way that a shepherd would be expected to protect his flock from wild animals.

Hammurabi's epithet 'shepherd of the people' (*rē'î nišî*), which appears in the prologue to his *Law Code* (CH iv 45), reveals that shepherdship was intended for the people.<sup>66</sup> This trope is also attested separately in Hammurabi's *Law Code*, preceding the trope of the sun and the light as a metaphor for control over the four regions. Tukultī-Ninurta I's epithet, "the one who shepherds the four quarters after Šamaš" (*ša kibrat erbetti arki Šamaš irte'u*),<sup>67</sup> is a new creation with imperialistic implications, as it alludes both to the implementation of civic order within the king's own territory and to control over conquered peripheral regions. This claim to universal control is further apparent in Tukultī-Ninurta I's decision to replace the established epithet "chosen of Aššur" (*niš-īt Aššur*) with "chosen of Aššur and Šamaš" (*nišit Aššur u Šamaš*), as is attested in inscriptions from his newly built residence in Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta.<sup>68</sup> It is noteworthy in this regard that in his epic, Tukultī-Ninurta I still strives to strike a balance between controlling the land by force and being "attentive to the people's voice, the counsel of the land,"<sup>69</sup> a statement in which he distinguish-

<sup>61</sup> UET 6/1 84 ii 4 ff.: Iddin-Dagan sipa.šà.ga.na.me.en

<sup>62</sup> CH i 51: Hammurabi, *rē'ûm nibit Enlil anāku*.

<sup>63</sup> 5R 33 I 22 ff. (Agum-kakrime).

<sup>64</sup> OB *Cuthean Legend*, JCS 11, 85 iii 12.

<sup>65</sup> STT 43:1.

<sup>66</sup> Such an understanding is corroborated by the Old Babylonian *Cuthean Legend*, in which the king makes the following statement: 'I am a shepherd who has not cared for his subjects (*la mušallim nišišu*), JCS 11, 84 ii 12.

<sup>67</sup> Machinist 1976, 473 and Machinist 2006; on shepherdship as a topos of royal legitimation see Westenholz 2004 and 2007.

<sup>68</sup> RIMA 1, A.0.78.23:3–4.

<sup>69</sup> Foster 2005, 302, TKN i = A obv. 25.



es between his own people and those people that are yet to be incorporated into his kingdom.

The imperialistic claims and ambitions of Tukultī-Ninurta I's new epithets represent the direct antecedent to Ashurbanipal's *Coronation Hymn*, and the nuanced distinction between inner and outer control continues to be integral to its ideological message. Strikingly, the *Coronation Hymn* begins its invocation of the gods by referring to the sun god's selection of the king 'to shepherd the four regions,' and only then invokes Aššur. Both gods, however, represent in the first instance the king's imperialistic claims. Only after its introduction of Šamaš and Aššur does the hymn proceed to articulate the utopian vision of the just king who safeguards social order. As its name suggests, the *Coronation Hymn* is mainly hymnic in character, but the prescription for a cultic specialist on the third line of the tablet's reverse side points to a cultic setting for the text, as does the blessing spoken at the moment of the king's coronation. The ritual itself is performed before the sun god Šamaš, who is also the first god to be addressed in the introductory hymn:

*The Coronation Hymn of Ashurbanipal,*

- 1 May Šamaš, king of heaven and earth, elevate you to shepherdship over the four [region]s!
- 2 May Aššur, who ga[ve you [the scepter], lengthen your days and years!
- 3 Spread your land wide at your feet!
- 4 May Šerua extol [your name] to your god!
- 5 Just as grain and silver, oil, [the catt]le of Šakkan and the salt of Bariku are good, so may Aššurbanipal, king of Assyria, be agreeable to the gods [of his] land!
- 8 May command,<sup>70</sup> attention,<sup>71</sup> truth and justice be given to him as a gift!
- 9 May [the people] of Aššur buy 30 kor of grain for one shekel of silver! May [the peop]le of Aššur buy 3 seah of oil for one shekel of silver! May [the peop]le of Aššur buy 30 minas of wool for one shekel of silver!
- 12 May the lesser speak, and the [greater] listen! May the greater speak, and the [lesser] listen! May concord and peace be established [in Assyri]a!
- 15 Aššur is king – indeed Aššur is king! Aššurbanipal is the [representative] of Aššur, the creation of his hands.
- 16 May the great gods make firm his reign, may they protect the life [of Aššurba]nipal, king of Assyria
- 17 May they give him a straight scepter to extend the land and his peoples!
- 18 May his reign be renewed, and may they consolidate his royal throne for ever!
- 19 May they bless him (by) day, month, and year, and guard his reign!
- 20 In his years may there *cons[tantly]* be rain from the heavens and flood from the (underground) source!

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<sup>70</sup> Livingstone has 'eloquence'.

<sup>71</sup> Livingstone has 'understanding'.

- r. 1 Give our lord Aššurbanipal long [days], copious years, strong [wea]pons, a long reign, y[ear]s of abundance, a good name, [fame], happiness and joy, auspicious oracles and leadership over (all other) kings!
- 3 After he has pronounced the blessing, he turns and pronounces the (following) blessing at the opening of the censer (placed) before Šamaš:
- 
- 5 Anu gave his crown, Illil gave his throne; Ninurta gave his weapon; Nergal gave his luminous splendor. Nusku sent and placed advisers before him.
- 9 He who speaks with the king disloyally or treasonably – if he is a notable, he will die a violent death; if he is a rich man, he will become poor.
- 11 He who in his heart plots evil against the king – Erra will call him to account in a bout of plague.
- 13 He who in his heart utters improprieties against the king – his foundation is (but) wind, the hem of his garment is (but) litter.
- 15 Gather, all the gods of heaven and earth, bless king Aššurbanipal the circumspect man!
- 17 Place in his hand the weapon of war and battle, give him the black-headed people, that he may rule as their shepherd!<sup>72</sup>

Ashurbanipal's coronation hymn is an outstanding example of the consolidation of tropes known from much earlier periods. The wish that 'command, attention, truth, and justice' (*qabû šemû kettu u mēšaru*, l. 8) be given to the king is reminiscent of the Middle Assyrian *Coronation Ritual* (Chapter 9.7), which expresses the same blessing at the moment when the *šangû*-priest crowns the king. This crystallizes the *chaîne opératoire* of the king's interaction with his subjects, as the king gains both their attention (*šemû*) and the obedience (*magāru*) of his vassals by his command (*qabû*), thereby establishing the order and stability of the cosmos (*kittu*), as well as inner social order (*mīšaru*) and peace (*salīmu*).

The reference in *Ashurbanipal's Coronation Hymn* to affordable prices for basic commodities (ll. 9–11) mirrors similar statements that appear already in the prologues to the early law codes and in the royal inscriptions of Šamši-Adad I and Daduša from the Old Babylonian period.<sup>73</sup> Likewise, the utopian vision of the lesser speaking while the greater listen and the greater speaking while the lesser listen is a variation on a trope of social peace and equality that is already known from Gudea's building hymn and Hammurabi's *Law Code*.<sup>74</sup>

Lines 38'–43' of the *Myth of the Creation of Man and King*, which emphasize the divine origin of the royal insignia, are repeated literally in the last section

<sup>72</sup> SAA 3 no. 11.

<sup>73</sup> See above Chapter 3.5.3.3.

<sup>74</sup> Edzard, *Gudea* CylA+B.



Fig. 30: Coronation Scene on Assyrian Helmet (Born and Seidl 1997, fig. 22).

of Ashurbanipal's Neo-Assyrian coronation ritual.<sup>75</sup> Ashurbanipal's invocation of the sun god Šamaš is inextricably linked to his claim to universal control. As a concept of Assyrian kingship, this notion is materialized further in the statue 'Sun-of-the-Lands' (A[L]AM! <sup>d</sup>šam-šu KUR.MEŠ), which is mentioned among the gods of the Aššur temple in a version of the Assyrian banquet ritual *tākultu*<sup>76</sup> that also dates to the time of Ashurbanipal.

The *Coronation Hymn* establishes only a secondary association with the king's function as preserver of justice, which is derived from the Sumero-Babylonian role of the sun god.<sup>77</sup> An important point of divergence is the imagery of a Neo-Assyrian helmet that depicts the coronation scene, as it portrays the gods Aššur and Ištar/Mullissu as the ones who give the king the insignia of kingship (fig. 30). The concept of the king as judge is absent from Assyrian royal ideology after the Old Assyrian period, reappearing only under the Sargonids.<sup>78</sup> In the intervening periods, Assyrian kings did not interfere in legal processes but delegated the administration of justice to the governors, the *suk-kallu*, and the *sartennu*, who dispensed justice within the regular administrative framework.<sup>79</sup> Direct appeals to the authority of the king (*abat šarri* 'word of the king') regarding oppression at the hands of the administration were not within the remit of the legal system.<sup>80</sup> Thus, in a highly sophisticated and com-

75 For the discussion of the insignia see *Chapter* 9.8.

76 Menzel 1981, 114.

77 Pace Arneith 1999.

78 Tadmor 1987.

79 Postgate 1974.

80 Postgate 1974, 424; Faist 2010, 18, fn. 13.

plex way, the solarization of Assyrian rulership in *Ashurbanipal's Coronation Hymn* combined the Assyrian and Babylonian concepts of kingship.

## 5.5 Conclusion: The Political and Religious Dimensions of Assyrian Kingship

Closer inspection of various Mesopotamian myths demonstrates that the ancient *weltanschauung* does not recognize the modern division between the king's political and cultic duties, which are generally separated into the roles of political leader and priest in scholarly jargon. As shown above, the terms *išši'akkû* and *šangû* could both be used to designate the office of kingship, and both incorporated administrative and cultic duties. The role of priest and the role of political leader were mutually dependent: the king had to pacify and secure the inhabited world by eliminating dangerous animals that threatened the herds and through military action against the enemies of Assyria, and only when this had been achieved could the king take proper care of his subjects and the cult.

The structure of the Assyrian royal inscriptions, which divides the narrative into the description of the hunt, the military report, and only then the building account (see *Chapter Six*), provides implicit proof for this *weltanschauung* in its very organization. Although references to military conquests can be found in Sumerian and Babylonian inscriptions, the strict sequence of royal action stated above – hunt, warfare, and the building of temples – is typically Assyrian, as is its articulation in royal inscriptions. A close reading of Assyrian royal inscriptions reveals that the conquest of the 'chaotic' outer world was an essential prerequisite for the construction of the empire's cultic infrastructure. Accordingly, reports of military campaigns and of the hunting of wild animals – both signifying battle against disorder – always precede the building account in inscriptions dating from the reign of Tiglath-Pileser I (1114–1076 BCE) onwards. Similarly, the Middle Assyrian king Arik-dēn-ili (1307–1296 BCE) "argues" that it is only after building the temples for the gods – subsequent to his pacification of the land – that the king can expect divine reward in the form of prosperity, which is manifest in good harvests:

When I planned to rebuild that temple in order that the harvest of my land might prosper,  
...<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> RIMA 1, A.O.75.1:14–17.

The texts examined in this chapter illuminate the cultural reasoning that informs the actions taken by kings in anticipation of divine reward. It is essential to pay attention to the particular choices made in royal titularies and to the distinctive structure of texts, which establish the king's agency and make an argument in their own right. This approach makes the modern reading of Assyrian royal inscriptions at once more interesting and more enlightening, so that it becomes possible to determine under what socio-political conditions kings chose certain tropes for their self-presentation. These tropes will be explored in the following *Chapters Six and Seven*.

## 6 Administrator, Hunter, Warrior: The Mythical Foundations of the King's Role as Ninurta

“Your son and grandson shall rule as kings on the lap of Ninurta.”  
(Ištar Oracle SAA 9 1.10)

### 6.1 The Typification of Royal Roles: Homogeneity in Action between the Gods and the King

According to the colophon of the Old Babylonian *Gilgameš Epic*, which refers to the legendary hero as the “surpassing one,” prowess and virility were favored over all other qualities as the chief characteristics of the king. The flawless physique of the king is perhaps best exemplified in a passage from Tablet I of the Standard Babylonian *Gilgameš Epic*, which dwells at length on the qualities linked to the prestige of the occupant of the office of rulership; it might well be that this passage originally constituted the introduction to the Old Babylonian epic:<sup>1</sup>

*Gilgameš Epic* I 30 ff.

(30) Surpassing all kings, heroic, lordly in stature (*šanu'udu bēl gatti*),  
Heroic offspring (*qardu lillid*) of Uruk, a charging wild bull (*rīmu muttakpu*),  
He leads the way in the vanguard,

He marches at the rear, defender of his comrades,  
Mighty floodwall (*kibru dammu*), protector of his troops,

(35) Furious flood-wave (*agū ezzu*) smashing walls of stone,  
Wild calf of Lugalbanda, Gilgamesh is perfect in strength (*gitmālu emūqi*),  
Suckling of the divine wild cow, the woman Ninsun,  
Towering Gilgamesh is uncannily perfect (*gitmālu rašubbu*).

...

(47) Who could be like his for kingly virtue ([*ša itti*]š*u iššannanu ana šarrūti*)?  
And who, like Gilgamesh, can proclaim, “I am king!”

Gilgamesh was singled out from the day of his birth,

(50) Two-thirds of him was divine, one third of him was human!

The Lady of Birth drew his body's image (*šalam pagrīšu*),

The God of Wisdom brought his figure to perfection (*ultešbi gattašu*).

(236) He is radiant with virility (*eṭlūta bani*), manly vigor is his (*balta išī*),  
The whole of his body is seductively gorgeous (*zu'una kuzba kalu zumrīšu*).

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1 Tigay 1982, 51.

In Assyrian royal ideology, physical wholeness and perfection of the body were considered the basic requirement for rulership, as only the perfect body could represent a *body politic*. Accordingly, corporal perfection was essential if the king was to be entrusted with the shepherdship of the people, a view reflected in one of Adad-nirāri II's (911–891 BCE) inscriptions:

The great gods, who take firm decisions, who decree destinies, they properly created me, Adad-nirāri, attentive prince, [...], they altered my stature to lordly stature (*nabniti bēlūti*), they rightly made perfect my features (*šikin bunnanniya*) and filled my lordly body (*zumur bēlūtiya*) 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 (*melamme šarrūti*), they made my almighty name greater than (that of) all lords, the important name Adad-nirāri, king of Assyria, they called me. Strong king, king of Assyria, king of the four quarters, sun of all people, I:<sup>2</sup>

It should be noted that in Adad-nirāri II's royal inscription, the perfection of the king's body is enhanced by the divine grant of splendor (*melammu*). The notion of royal *melammu* was first introduced in Middle Assyrian epic literature, and the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic* in particular dwells at length on the scorching effect of the king's terrifying splendor; this motif likely developed as a consequence of the king's emulation of the divine Ninurta figure, as is further discussed below. Vitality, vigor, and awe-inspiring strength – bordering on outright aggression – were regarded as prerequisites for successful royal performance. Masculine vigor and power, qualities necessary for the prosecution of warfare against rebels and enemies, were conceived of as divine characteristics that were given to the king already at his birth. In the Mesopotamian *weltanschauung*, these masculine qualities were inextricably linked to male potency and sexuality. Authority and dominance presupposed perfection, which is expressed in the terms *banû* and *damqu*, along with life force, vitality (*baštu/baltu*), and sexual allure (*kuzbu*).<sup>3</sup> This set of qualities is combined in the description of Gilgamesh to define the king's body as the *body politic*, thereby establishing him as an “effective signifier of heroic virtue”<sup>4</sup> (fig. 31).

It was the king's perfect body that distinguished him from the rest of humankind and associated him with the divine world. The semi-divine hero Gil-

2 RIMA 2, A.O.99.2:5–10.

3 Winter 1996, 11 ff.

4 Winter 1996, 19.

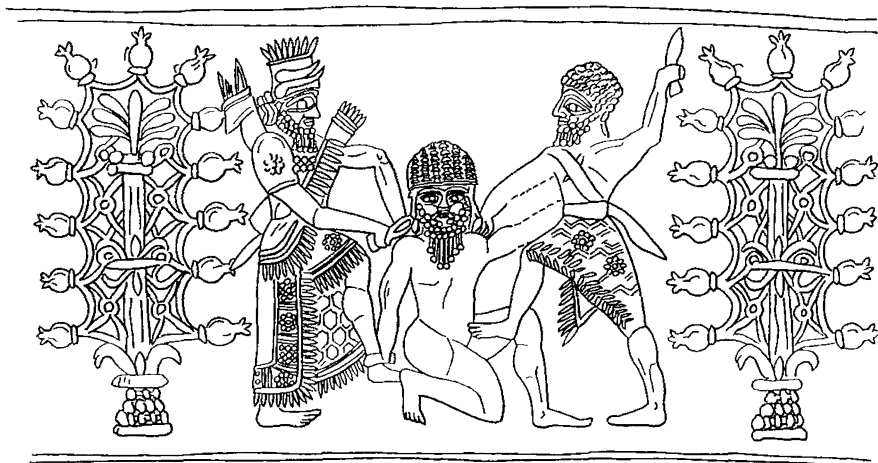


Fig. 31: Neo-Assyrian Seal Depicting Gilgamesh in the Garb of the Assyrian King (Lambert 2010, 358 pl. VIII, fig. 7).

gamesh is the primary exemplar of such rulers,<sup>5</sup> but this idea is equally conveyed by Tukulti-Ninurta I's (1233–1197 BCE) self-praise in the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*, which constitutes the first stage of a major appropriation of literary traditions from the Sumero-Babylonian south after the reign of Šamši-Adad I. Although the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic* is written in Standard Babylonian, uses the tripartite structure of building inscriptions, relies on tropes such as divine parentage, and associates the two Babylonian chief deities Enlil and Ea with the king, it is distinctly Assyrian in its literary expression and in its ideological message, which focus on the warrior-like qualities of the king and compare him to the ravaging gods Adad and Ninurta:<sup>6</sup>

(10') Glorious is his (the king's) vehemence (*šarrahat mamlüssu*); it scor[ches the dis]respectful in front and rear. 11' Glowing is his aggressiveness (*qā'edat irhüssu*); it burns the disobedient to the left and right. 12' His radiances are frightful (*melammūšu*); they overwhelm all the enemies. 13' He who (controls) the entire four directions (the whole universe), the awe-inspiring one – the assembly of all kings fear him continually. 14' When he thunders like Adad, the mountains (=foreign lands) tremble. 15' And when he raises his weapons like Ninurta, the regions (of the world) everywhere are thrown into constant panic. 16' By the fate (determined by) Nudimmud, his mass is reckoned with the flesh of the gods (*šir ilāni*). 17' By the decision of the lord of all the lands, he was successfully engendered through/cast into the channel of the womb of the gods. 18' He alone is the

<sup>5</sup> Winter 1996, 16.

<sup>6</sup> Machinist 1976, 466 f.



eternal image of Enlil (*šalam* <sup>d</sup>Enlil), attentive to the voice of the people, to the counsel of the land. 19' Because the lord of the world appointed him to lead the troops, he praised him with his very lips, 20' Enlil raised him like a natural father, after his firstborn son.<sup>7</sup>

The Assyrian exposition of and reflection upon the king's perfect body emerged directly from the notion of the social person of the ruler, which included the concept of the homogeneity in action between the gods and the king. Such homogeneity in action is frequently proclaimed in royal inscriptions and elaborated on beautifully in the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*, where it is based on the very material quality of the king's status as "the flesh of the gods" (*šir ilāni*) and as an "image of [the supreme god] Enlil" (*šalam* <sup>d</sup>Enlil), as well as in the king's association with Enlil's son, the warrior god Ninurta, the divine model to whom the king is compared in this passage of the epic. Interesting in this regard is the fact that in this passage the king's prowess and global reach are juxtaposed and interwoven with the praise of his unequalled status before the gods.<sup>8</sup>

As negotiated in myth and in omen compendia, beauty, physical integrity, and virility comprised the visual signifiers of the king's suitability for the royal office and portended his future success. The perfect body of the king was transformed into a semiotic landscape, read as a favorable sign guaranteeing stability and abundance in the land. It is not surprising, then, that the royal physicians and exorcists of Esarhaddon labored under terrible pressure to hide the physical weaknesses of the king, manifested in a skin rash and other chronic afflictions, from public view.<sup>9</sup> Beauty, physical integrity, and virility became the essential tropes of the visual and ritual display of the king's image, while his individual personality was subsumed within the various official settings of palatial wall reliefs and steles, triumph and state rituals, journeys to his various palaces and residences throughout Assyria, and other occasions of public presentation. All of these media and their various settings functioned to reciprocally augment each other's message in a variety of ways and through a variety of referencing devices. What remained constant was "the emphasis on the role and figure of the ruler throughout a host of narrative and iconic representations: engaged in ritual practice, facing an enemy citadel or in the lead chariot of a campaign attack."<sup>10</sup>

Tukulti-Ninurta I's characterization of the king as the image of Ninurta was introduced following his conquest of Babylonia and the concomitant appropri-

7 *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic* I A 10'-20', edition: Machinist 1978; see also Foster 2005, 298-317.

8 Machinist 2011, 411.

9 Radner 2003.

10 Winter 1997, 363.

ation of Babylonian cultural knowledge. The king as hero – traversing difficult terrain, crossing rivers and even the sea, climbing steep mountains, personally combating the enemy – represented *the* central innovation and *leitmotif* in Assyrian ideological discourse during the Middle Assyrian period and came to dominate text, ritual, and image until the collapse of the empire. Although the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic* was informed by the tradition of former Babylonian court poetry including royal hymns and epics, its author created a completely new discourse centered on the king's identification with Ninurta. The importance of the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic* to the development of Assyrian royal ideology cannot be stressed enough, as its author, steeped in both Assyrian and Babylonian traditions, established all of the important rhetorical devices and motifs that later featured in the royal inscriptions of Assyrian kings from Tiglath-Pileser I (1114–1076 BCE) onward. Indeed, some of these tropes and rhetorical devices are known exclusively from the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic* and royal inscriptions through to the Sargonid period, when they are revived and elaborated. Beyond the notion of the king embodying the warrior god Ninurta, these motifs include the representation of the enemy leader as violating a treaty previously established with the Assyrian king; this ultimately becomes *the* standard justification for the Assyrian kings' military campaigns in their commemorative inscriptions and annals. A further motif introduced in the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic* is that of soldiers dancing furiously before battle, brandishing their sharpened weapons and taking on strange forms like that of Anzû before proceeding to swirl like a whirlwind in combat (v = A rev. 45' ff.); this image is later applied to the king himself, who is compared to the sandstorm and flood. At the end of the epic, the king is praised in relation to Nabû – originally a Babylonian divinity associated with knowledge and wisdom – reflecting Tukulti-Ninurta I's own self-representation as a sagacious, perceptive, and competent ruler, which is discussed in *Chapter Seven*, and anticipating the central role of Nabû in Assyrian culture during the first millennium BCE.<sup>11</sup> There is a marked interdependence in the roles of protagonists, the plotlines, and the shared motifs of myth, epic literature, and royal inscriptions; this interdependence is the focus both of this chapter and of *Chapter Seven*.

The plasticity and malleability of the royal image enabled the hidden agents of royal representation, i.e. the scholars, to fashion the virtual image of the king in such a way as to construct a 'second reality' anchored in the coherent framework of Assyrian cosmology; this 'second reality' then completely replaced actual reality. The constructed royal image had three primary mani-

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<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of Nabû's role in Assyria see Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 96–102.

festations: the administrative/legal, the political, and the sacral image.<sup>12</sup> According to particular contexts or historical circumstances, ideological discourse emphasized specific royal roles and actions, thus maintaining the notion of the cosmic-political order and shaping not only the profile of the individual king, but also social reality.

This virtual image of royal perfection did not represent an accomplishment in its own right, but rather served to advance the notion of homogeneity in action between the gods and the king, enabling the king to meet the expectations linked with the various roles of the royal office. In order to fully understand the implications of human and divine kingship and their interdependence in defining rulership *per se*, we should remind ourselves that the king and the gods were primarily conceived of not as individuals but in terms of their roles and functions; this is similar to the conceptualization of the person in antiquity, who is defined not as an individual but as a *social type* embedded within a network of social relationships.<sup>13</sup> This does not, of course, imply that the identity of the individual was fully effaced by the primacy of group identity and by social typification. Nevertheless, in the societies of the ancient Near East the social role shaped the person more than the person reshaped the social role, and this typification determined the overall idea of the grand narratives of myth, epic, and, ultimately, royal ideological discourse. Because the conception of the gods fell into the same thought structure, the typification of roles also entailed that social actors were conceived of less as unique individuals and more as interchangeable entities, and thus as *types* that could be either divine or human.<sup>14</sup> The king's actions, consequently, could be shaped according to divine models, or inversely, divine models could be shaped according to the changing conceptions of human rulership. Heavenly kings and human kings shared a particular assemblage of characteristics, roles, and functions, as did the warrior god and the king as warrior, or the divine judge and the king as judge.

The role of divinities as models for human beings applies equally to those divinities that represent particular professions listed in the early god lists, which are later commented on in detail in the Old Babylonian Sumerian poem *Enki and the World Order* and in other myths, reflecting the diversification of

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12 E. H. Kantorowicz's model of dividing the king's person into the *body natural* and the *body politic* in his investigation of the political theology of the Middle Ages helps in understanding this concept, see Kantorowicz 1957, 87–97, 316–317; for the ancient Near East see the discussion by Winter 1997 on the basis of Belting 1994, 98–99; Marin 1988, and Bann 1984.

13 Pongratz-Leisten 2011b.

14 Berger/Luckmann 1966, 72–73.

labor in ancient societies. As the status of a divinity rose, so too did the complexity of the roles and functions assembled in a particular type of *personage*. If the high status of a divinity was complemented by the association of particular emotions and behavioral patterns, the *personage* could be as complex as the goddess Ištar. Critically, when such types and their assemblage of roles became common knowledge throughout Mesopotamia, they were negotiated in the cultural discourse of local communities in theological as well as in ideological contexts. Regarding the conceptualization of rulership, this line of thought applies especially to the typification of the god Ninurta, who emerged as *the* model of rulership, be it human or divine, on the basis of the complexity of his roles and his combination of both administrative and martial functions.<sup>15</sup>

## 6.2 The “Divinity” of the King

From an ideological perspective, statements asserting that kingship was divine or non-divine in Mesopotamia offer little insight into the institution as it was understood by the ancients.<sup>16</sup> In Mesopotamia the office of kingship was con-

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**15** Modern scholars often draw on the indigenous terms of specific cultures – such as apotheosis, *consecratio*, *heros*, incarnation, and the likeness to god (*imago dei*) – to describe particular cultural strategies of assimilating the king with the divine. While all of these categories stand in their own right within their respective cultures, we have to be careful when applying them to the institution of kingship in Mesopotamia or to the larger ancient Near East. Further, if we do use these terms, we have to define and justify this procedure. It was above all Sir James Frazer who shaped the idea of Sacred Kingship in the *Golden Bough*, which was based on the presumption that, in the “magic period” of mankind, kings possessed magic forces to guarantee the fertility of their people. This force was not supposed to vanish, and at the first sign of weakness the king was to be killed or replaced. Though the king as an individual dies, his powers survive in his successor. Kingship in Egypt and Mesopotamia offered the best proof for Frazer, who reconstructed an annual liturgy of the death and resurrection of the divine king. This liturgy then generated the idea of the magic king, who controls the seasonal cycles, as well as that of gods of death and gods of vegetation. Further universal aspects of kingship put forth by Frazer were sacred marriage and the scapegoating function of the king, all highly controversial topics in the history of religion.

**16** With respect to the Old Babylonian period and the first millennium BCE Philip Jones only recently stated: “Kingship was regularly treated as divine in the Old Babylonian corpus and as non-divine in the first millennium one.” This claim seems to rest solely on the writing of the king’s name with the DINGIR-sign and ignores the complexity of the strategies deployed to sacralize and immunize the institution of kingship throughout the history of Mesopotamia, see Jones 2005, 331. Michalowski 2007, even stated that far too much importance has been attached to the divinization of kings in Mesopotamia. Winter 2007 suggests that sacral and divine kingship should be distinguished from one another.

sidered to be of divine origin and the human king was regarded as its recipient.<sup>17</sup> The divinization of kings remained exceptional throughout Mesopotamian history. It is evident for the first time in Early Dynastic Ebla, where the ancestor kings were deified in the mortuary cult and elevated to a status that approached the divine.<sup>18</sup> Their invocation in the context of certain state rituals reveals that, owing to their quasi-divine status, royal ancestors were considered guarantors for the continuity of the dynastic line. In later times the names of the kings listed in such invocations were not written with the determinative for a divinity, but the understanding of the divine aspect of the ancestors must have applied to the enthronement ritual of the Old Babylonian king. No ritual prescription survives, but the text known as the *Genealogy of the Hammurabi Dynasty* was certainly an integral part of the enthronement process.<sup>19</sup> The invocation of the members of the dynastic line is probably also evident in the mortuary cult for the royal ancestors in Assyria, as two of the five exemplars of the *Assyrian King List* survive in the shape of exorcistic tablets, suggesting a performative aspect that likely involved the reading of names.<sup>20</sup> Both lists share an introductory section that includes the names of tribes who figured as ancestors within the royal lineage, attesting to the diffusion of the idea of an *heros eponymos*. This idea persisted in cultic texts from thirteenth century Ugarit, which even share the tribal name of Ditanu – the founding ancestor of the

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17 A similar observation has been made for the Egyptian Pharaoh, see Leprohon 1995, 275 and Gundlach 1988; a thorough comparison between the Egyptian and Mesopotamian concepts of kingship is still wanting, as observed by Charpin 2008, 159.

18 *ARET* 7 150 records ten names in its beginning and proceeds with cultic matters in its second section. That these ten names are royal names is confirmed by the entry EN-EN in obv. iii 6; in addition, each name is preceded by the Sumerian word dingir for “god.” By comparison with administrative documents, Alfonso Archi has proven that the list “follows a regressive chronological order” and that “the first eight kings must belong to a period that predates the archives, that is, before 2400 BCE” see Archi 1986 and 2001, 2. The regressive order in the ancestor list is due to the oral tradition of genealogical lists and also known from the Assyrian King List and the Ugaritic king list *KTU* 1.113. For the ancestor cult in Ebla see further Matthiae 1979 and Archi 1988.

An ancestor cult is also attested for members of the royal family and high officials at Early Dynastic Lagaš, where the memorial services for the ancestors were held during the festival of Baba (ezem-<sup>d</sup>Ba-ba<sub>6</sub>), the festival of Lugalurub (ezem-<sup>d</sup>Lugal-urub<sub>6</sub>) and the festival of Lugalurubar (ezem-<sup>d</sup>Lugal-uru-bar-ka), see Kobayashi 1985. This tradition continued through the period of Gudea at Lagaš, in which the name of the king was written with the DINGIR-sign in offering texts, see for example *ITT* 2, 957 (Tsukimoto 1985, 62f). For the Ur III kings bala documents attest to offerings for the ancestor kings at the ki-a-nag on the eve of new moon and full moon, see Sallaberger 1993, 63 ff.

19 For this text see Finkelstein 1966.

20 Yamada 1994, 37.

clan ruling the city at the time – with the Mesopotamian tradition. Interestingly, in contrast to their Mesopotamian counterparts the ancestor kings were divinized in Ugarit and their mortuary cult was mythologized.<sup>21</sup>

The deification of dead kings at Ebla and Ugarit must be distinguished from the deification of King Narām-Sîn of Akkad, who, perhaps due to northern influence,<sup>22</sup> decided to write his name with the determinative sign for divinity during his own lifetime following his suppression of the rebellions that marked the beginning of his reign.<sup>23</sup> Together with Narām-Sîn’s slightly later adoption of the horned crown in visual imagery, the writing of Narām-Sîn’s name with the qualifier for a divinity served as a new strategy for distinguishing the king from the rest of humankind. Although the Ur III kings conceived of themselves as the protective genii of their city or of the land (<sup>d</sup>lama Urim-ma and <sup>d</sup>lama kalam-ma) beginning with the reign of Šulgi,<sup>24</sup> this self-designation denoted their protective role toward their subjects rather than an attempt to declare themselves equal in rank with the gods. Deification, which aimed to illuminate a particular function or characteristic of the king or just to revive “central authority in a time of state crisis,”<sup>25</sup> was still common in the Old Babylonian period,<sup>26</sup> but did not survive beyond it. Instead, ideological efforts were directed toward the development of cultural strategies that sacralized the office of kingship by means of particular tropes that associated the ruler with the divine world.

Since the institution of kingship demanded uninterrupted continuity,<sup>27</sup> the king was required to perform a range of roles. As is clear from texts, rituals, and visual media, the king was the supreme administrator responsible to his patron deity or to the supreme god of the pantheon; he was the foremost high priest in the cult; he was a hunter and warrior defending not only his controlled territory but also ideally the cosmos against chaos; he was the judge and shepherd of his people; and he was the builder of the temples and the caretaker of the cult. Even though such roles could also be performed by divinities, who then served as models for their human counterparts, in Mesopotamia

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21 Del Olmo Lete 1999; Schmidt 1996, 47–122; Tropper 1989, 125.

22 Porter 2011.

23 Whether his deification can be linked to his victory over the rebellious city states is not entirely clear, see Cooper 2008, 262.

24 Wilcke 1974, 179 n. 36; Selz 1997, 182; Sallaberger and Westenholz 1999, 153; Klein 2006, 120.

25 Michalowski 2008, 35.

26 Charpin 2008, 160 f.

27 Kantorowicz 1957, 87–97, 316–317.

the king continued to be regarded as a human being throughout his lifetime.<sup>28</sup> Assyrian royal discourse integrated these roles into a logical, interdependent system in which the successful accomplishment of one role reinforced achievements in the other roles and vice versa.

## 6.3 The Interdependency of Myth and Royal Ideology

### 6.3.1 Ninurta as Enlil's Administrator: A Model for Assyrian Kingship

As demonstrated in the preceding chapters, intense cultural interaction facilitated the spread of Babylonian tradition into Aššur and northern Mesopotamia already in the third millennium, continuing through to the Old Babylonian period. This cultural interaction promoted the movement of Babylonian scholars – and with them tropes concerning the image of the king – to the north even prior to Tukultī-Ninurta I's (1233–1197 BCE) conquest of Babylonia. Though it is poorly preserved, “the length and complexity of the *Adad-nīrārī I Epic* suggests that it belonged to a fully developed Assyrian royal epic tradition,”<sup>29</sup> which had incorporated and appropriated Babylonian literary models from the legends about the kings of Akkad by the beginning of the thirteenth century BCE. In contrast to the *Tukultī-Ninurta Epic*, the *Adad-nīrārī I Epic* begins by praising only the Assyrian king, anticipating his exploits and extolling his role as administrator of Enlil; the position of temple administrator is described by the typically Babylonian term *šatammu* (“chief temple administrator”), rather than by the expected Assyrian term *šaknu* “governor,” which is attested in the royal inscriptions from Aššur beginning with the reign of Šamši-Adad I. Like the *Tukultī-Ninurta Epic*, however, the *Adad-nīrārī I Epic* cites the transgression of a diplomatic agreement that had been concluded between the fathers of the Assyrian king and the Babylonian king as the justification for military action.

The passage of the *Tukultī-Ninurta Epic* that equates the king with Ninurta suggests that during Tukultī-Ninurta I's reign scholars explicitly formulated a royal ideological discourse that was shaped by the theological concepts that framed the roles embodied by the god Ningirsu/Ninurta. This discourse is extremely complex and rich in Sumero-Babylonian concepts. Accordingly, exploring the various roles and functions of the god Ningirsu/Ninurta is particu-

<sup>28</sup> For a similar approach to the ‘deification’ of the Egyptian Pharaoh see Gundlach 1988.

<sup>29</sup> Foster 2005, 293 and Machinist 1976, 182 ff., 312 ff. and 518 ff. and 1978.

larly illuminating for our understanding of Assyrian royal ideology and the choice of specific royal titles that reference the roles of kingship. Aššur's assumption of the divine leadership previously ascribed to Enlil, apparent in the notion of the *Ellilūtu*, was accompanied by his assumption of Enlil's fatherhood of the warrior god Ninurta, whose functions and roles came to constitute the model for Assyrian kingship. It is, therefore, absolutely essential to understand Ninurta's relationship with Enlil in the Sumerian-Babylonian tradition in order to grasp the implications of the Assyrian king's relationship with Aššur-Enlil.

Based on his divine genealogy as the son of Enlil and Ninlil, Ningirsu/Ninurta was assigned the titles "governor of Nippur" (*ensi<sub>2</sub> Nibru<sup>ki</sup>*) and "great governor of Enlil" (*ensi<sub>2</sub>-gal<sup>d</sup> En-lil-lá*) by the Pre-Sargonic period.<sup>30</sup> Ninurta also functioned as the seal-bearer of Enlil, a role that survived into the second millennium in northern Syria, where Ninurta acts as the sealing authority in land transactions in the city of Emar.<sup>31</sup> This function symbolizes Ninurta's legitimate ownership of the land<sup>32</sup> and is an outstanding example of the seal representing Ninurta's role in this particular socio-economic context.<sup>33</sup> In the particular case of Emar, Ninurta represented the ownership and authority of the city community and the city-elders rather than that of the king.<sup>34</sup>

Ninurta's administrative function persisted into the first millennium, as in Neo-Assyrian cultural practice the gods Aššur and Ninurta were regarded as the owners of the seal that the kings used to authorize their decrees. This concept is expressed at the end of numerous tablets: "ex[cerpted according to the wording of a valid document (*dannatu*) with the seal of Aššur and Ni]nurta that is [kept] in the Inner City in the *temple of* [...]." <sup>35</sup> As noted by Irene Winter, a text from the reign of Ashurbanipal further illustrates the "extension of the full weight of the royal office and its administrative bureaucracy" by reference to the king's seal on a tablet recording a royal tax exemption for an official: "do not act negligently against the seal ..." In this line, the seal once again references the authority of the occupant of a particular office, in this case that of the king.<sup>36</sup> The function and significance of the seals as representations of

<sup>30</sup> Annus 2002, 11 with reference to Westenholz 1975, nos. 82 and 145. For IM 43749 see also Steinkeller 1977, 51 n. 37.

<sup>31</sup> Annus 2002, 85 and 147.

<sup>32</sup> Annus 2002, 147.

<sup>33</sup> Winter 2001, 2 with reference to Cassin 1960/287, 270–274 who stresses the "homologous relationship between the person and the seal."

<sup>34</sup> Yamada 1994, 62 and Annus 2002, 85.

<sup>35</sup> SAA 12 no. 71 rev. 7; the seals of gods are found (referred to) on decrees and seem to serve more of a solemnizing than a legalistic function (Kataja/Whiting, SAA 12, xvi).

<sup>36</sup> Winter 2001, 3 with reference to SAA 12 25 rev. 16–18.



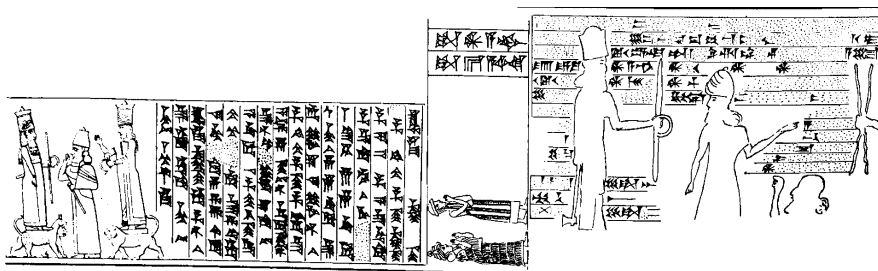


Fig. 32: Sealings on Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty (Parpola and Watanabe 1988, 28).

the authority of their owners was exploited fully in the Sargonid period in Esarhaddon's succession treaty for Ashurbanipal, which is sealed with three versions of Aššur's seal: the Old Assyrian seal said to be the seal of the City Hall, the Middle Assyrian seal whose inscription is unfortunately too damaged to make any conclusive statement about its content,<sup>37</sup> and the Neo-Assyrian seal (fig. 32). This third seal bears an inscription that identifies it as the seal of destinies:

The Seal of Destinies with [which] Aššur, king of the gods, seals the destinies of the Igigi and Anunnaki of heaven and underworld, and of mankind. Whatever he seals he will not alter. Whoever would alter it may Aššur, king of the gods and Mullissu, together with their children, slay him with their terrible weapons! I am Sennacherib, king of [Assyria], the prince who reveres you --- whoever erases my inscribed name or discards this, your Seal of Destinies, erase from the land his name and seed!<sup>38</sup>

As stated by Andrew George, “the seal’s inscription explicitly reveals the function of the Seal of Destinies to have been the sealing by Aššur of both human and divine destinies, as irrevocably decreed by him in his position as king of the gods.”<sup>39</sup> The king’s – or his scholars’ – deliberate decision to apply seals of Aššur from all periods of Assyrian history anchors Aššur’s authority in deep history, advancing the view that the origin of Aššur’s dominion over the world is to be located in primordial times. According to Sumero-Babylonian and Assyrian tradition, however, this dominion could only be enforced through warfare, i.e. the agency of Ningirsu/Ninurta, whose role as warrior god had come to dominate the notion of political and divine leadership. The divine seals im-

37 SAA 2 no. 6.

38 George 1986, 140 f.

39 George 1986, 141.

printed on Esarhaddon's succession treaty thus point to the transfer of functions and roles from Ninurta to Aššur.

Along with the early definitions of Ningirsu/Ninurta's role as the city administrator of Enlil, there arose a similar rhetoric revolving around the city ruler. Both Lugalzagesi of Uruk and Sargon of Akkad designated themselves as "governor of Enlil" (PA.TE<sup>si</sup>-gal-<sup>d</sup>En-líl). In subsequent centuries, the title "governor" (ensi<sub>2</sub>(PA-TE-SI)/išši'akku) also came to be used by the city rulers of Lagaš, Old Assyrian Aššur, and Ešnunna, as is discussed in *Chapter Three*. Among these city rulers, the old Assyrian Erišum I explicitly connects his administrative role as EN<sub>2</sub> to his relationship with the god Aššur, who was assigned the title "king",<sup>40</sup> and this connection was never abandoned in Assyrian royal ideology.

It was primarily during the second millennium, however, that ancient scholarship began developing coherent narratives regarding the implications of the offices of divine and human kingship. The articulation of such narratives shaped the profile of divinities such as Ninurta – and later Marduk and Aššur – as well as that of the king, as is illustrated by the mythic narratives of *Angim-dimma*, *Lugal-e*, the *Anzû Myth*, and *Enūma Eliš*. It is interesting to note that the martial role of Ninurta as heroic warrior prevails in the mythic narratives and that this role subsequently informs official ideological language in Assyria. Such reciprocal rhetoric explains why the image of human and divine leadership was constantly revised in cult and theology – as it was in royal ideology – thus allowing them to retain a dynamic quality. The interdependent dynamic that shaped the notion of either royal or divine leadership during the end of the second millennium and during the first millennium BCE is key to unraveling the associations of the office of kingship in Assyria. This dynamic is likewise essential to a proper understanding of the rise of Ninurta and the subsequent assumption of his roles and functions by Marduk, which ultimately contributed to the shaping of the image of Aššur. Finally, it is also key to comprehending the "emplotment"<sup>41</sup> of Assyrian royal inscriptions, i.e. the way a series of events was endowed with the structural coherence of a plot that conformed to the mythic model. This chapter focuses on mythic narrative and its implications for understanding ideology as it is conveyed in the royal inscriptions, while *Chapter Nine* will discuss the implications of the Aššur-Ninurta-King relationship for Assyrian state rituals.

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<sup>40</sup> RIMA 1, A.O.33.1:35–36.

<sup>41</sup> White 1999, 8.

### 6.3.2 Ninurta as Warrior: The Pervasive Rhetoric of the Combat Myth in Image and Text

Ninurta's role as *the* divine warrior fighting the lion-eagle Anzû developed alongside his executive roles as 'sealbearer,' 'throne-bearer of Enlil,'<sup>42</sup> and 'governor of Enlil,' and was referenced in theophoric personal names even before the oldest known written mythic narratives. The cosmogony of the Early Dynastic *Barton Cylinder* indicates that the cult of the god Ninurta was already established in Nippur by *circa* 2300 BCE, as was the relationship between Enlil, the chief god of the Sumerian pantheon, and the warrior god. In the cosmogony of the *Barton Cylinder*, Ninurta is tasked with restoring the gods' access to food and water. The fragmentary blessing of the winds as Ninurta's helpers might point to conflict within the larger narrative, particularly because conflict forms a prominent part of the narrative of the later Sumerian tales about Ninurta like *Angimdimma* and *Lugal-e*, which are attested in copies from the first half of the second millennium BCE. No text copies narrating the heroic deeds told of Ninurta in *Angim* and *Lugal-e* are known from the Early Dynastic Period. There is, however, an early Semitic literary text from Ebla that does associate Anzû with Mount Šár-Šár, which is Anzû's birth place according to the later *Anzû Myth*.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, Pre-Sargonic theophoric names from the Early Dynastic period exhibit elements that may well refer to a myth concerning the defeat of Anzû by Ningirsu/Ninurta: "Ningirsu has spread his arms for Uru'inimgina like the Anzû bird (his wings)."<sup>44</sup> The cosmogonic significance of the warrior deity is further evident in the Early Dynastic sculpture of a lion-eagle that is thought to have guarded the entrance gate of a temple in Ubaid<sup>45</sup> (fig. 33), anticipating in its figural form Anzû's role as temple guardian. Similarly, the depiction on the *Stele of the Vultures* of Ningirsu holding a net full of enemies and crowned by the lion-eagle indicates the early importance of an Anzû-like figure and his association with Ningirsu/Ninurta.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, even the image of a lion-eagle on the club of the Early Dynastic king Mesalim of Kiš (fig. 34) cannot be imagined

<sup>42</sup> This title implies judicial power, see Krebernik 2007, 356b § 6.

<sup>43</sup> ARET 5, 6//IAS 326+346, Krebernik 1992, 75: C6.2-6//A4.6-4.7: ... DUGUD AN.ZU HUR.SAG sa-sa-ru<sub>12</sub> i-ra-ad ".... Venerable(?) Anzû, Mount Šaršar is quaking."

<sup>44</sup> Selz 1995, 24.

<sup>45</sup> Orthmann, 1975, fig. 97.

<sup>46</sup> Orthmann 1975, fig. 90; Steible and Behrens 1982, 120-145; Cooper 1983a,; Winter 1985 and 1986; L. Heuzey, *Decouvertes en Chaldée par Ernest de Sarzec*, Second volume (Paris: E. Leroux, 1884-1912) pls. xxxviii-xlii (copies and drawings showing the position of the text in relation to the relief); Alster 2003-2004. For a different interpretation see Selz 2008, 22 who also interprets the obverse as the ruler in the role of the triumphing divine.



**Fig. 33:** Early Dynastic Sculpture of Lion-Eagle from Temple of Ubaid Gate (Orthmann 1975, fig. 97).



**Fig. 34:** Macehead of Mesalim (Moortgat 1969, pls. 35 and 36).

in its apotropaic function without a prior narrative recording the victory of Ningirsu/Ninurta over Anzû. Its figural form also anticipates Anzû's role as a guardian of the temple as described in the beginning of the *Anzû Myth* and depicted on the walls of the Ninurta Temple in Nimrud (fig. 35).

There are a number of combat myths that center on the warrior deity Ningirsu/Ninurta, who by his victory over chaos secures his position as administra-



Fig. 35: Ninurta Temple at Nimrud (Black and Green 1992, fig. 117).

tor of Enlil.<sup>47</sup> These myths include the already mentioned Sumerian compositions *Angimdimma*, in which Ningirsu battles Anzû, and *Lugal-e*, in which Ninurta campaigns against Asakku and the stones. The Old Babylonian and Standard Babylonian version of the *Anzû Myth* must also be included among these myths. In Babylonia, elements of the warrior mythology were integrated into the theology that shaped the image of the Babylonian chief god Marduk during the second half of the second millennium. In the Tigridian region, mythological elements of this kind formed part of the narrative regarding the battle of the storm god Tišpak of Ešnunna against the snake dragon at the request of the older god Sîn,<sup>48</sup> a mythic tale that is possibly referenced in the iconography of cylinder seals from the Akkadian period (fig. 36).<sup>49</sup> It is interesting to note that the adversary of Tišpak was conceived of as a sea dragon; in

<sup>47</sup> Annus 2002, 11 f.

<sup>48</sup> Lambert 1984; Wiggermann 1989; Lewis 1996; Sommerfeld 2002.

<sup>49</sup> Frankfort, *Stratified Cylinder Seals from the Diyala Region*, 1955, pl. 61, no. 649 (= Boehmer 1965, no. 567); Porada 1980, fig. b; Lewis 1996, figs. 3 and 4.



**Fig. 36:** Tišpak Riding on the mušhuššu-Dragon, Old Akkadian, Eshnunna (Boehmer 1965, fig. 567).

an Old Akkadian school tablet, Tišpak is called “steward of the Sea” (*abarak Ti’āmtim*).<sup>50</sup> In fact, the storm god and the sea dragon are already attested as counterparts in the combat myth in literary texts, incantations in particular, from Ebla.<sup>51</sup> By the Mari period this mythology was transferred to the storm god Adad of Aleppo, as is clear from a letter to the king of Mari,<sup>52</sup> and it also

<sup>50</sup> Westenholz 1974–77, 102:

MAD I 192

*a-ba-ra-ak*

Steward

*ti-ām-tim*

of Tiamat,

*ku-ra-tum a-zum tibi*

fierce warrior, arise!

<sup>d</sup>Tišpak *a-ba-ra-ak ti-ā(m)-t[im]*

Tišpak, steward of Tiamat

*é-zum te-bi i-lum šar [...]*

fierce one, arise! God, king of ...

Durand 1993, 43, by contrast, suggests the reading *A(b) parrāk ti’āmtim* “O Father! You whose role is to block the Sea.”

<sup>51</sup> Fronzaroli 1997.

<sup>52</sup> Durand 1993.



Fig. 37: Terqa Stela of Tukulti-Ninurta II (after Gerlach 2000, 239).

surfaces in connection to Baal at Ugarit.<sup>53</sup> Jean-Marie Durand stresses<sup>54</sup> that the Syrian tradition regarding the smiting of the sea-dragon by the weather god must have informed the narrative of the Babylonian *Enūma Eliš*, as these particular agents (weather god and sea) were alien to the narrative of Sumerian combat myths. Hurrian domination in northern Syria during the second half of the second millennium BCE facilitated the spread of the imagery of the weather god smiting the snake dragon. This imagery appears in the iconography of a stela of purely southern Anatolian style that was found in the city of Terqa on the middle Euphrates. The stela itself was appropriated by an Assyrian king,<sup>55</sup> thus reflecting the recognition of a cultural trope that had the potential to be incorporated into Assyrian ideological discourse (fig. 37). The battle between a weather god and a snake dragon subsequently reappears in the medium of text in a seventh century tablet from Nineveh, which recounts Tišpak's smiting of the Labbu,<sup>56</sup> and then surfaces for the last time in a seal from late Neo-Assyrian Tušhan/modern Ziyaret Tepe (fig. 38).

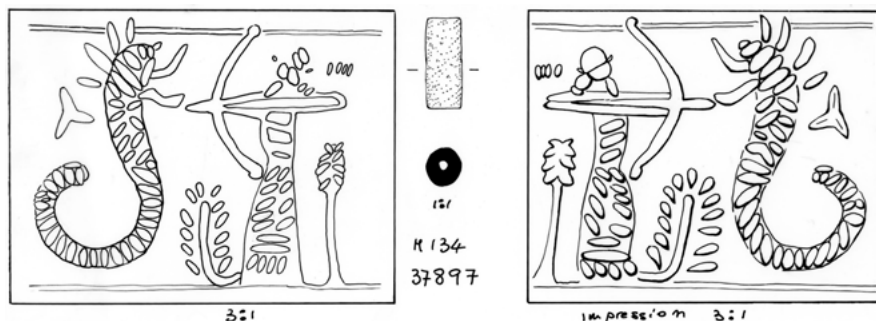
Regardless of regional and temporal variations and differences, the general plot of the combat myth is straightforward: a warrior deity battles the disrupt-

<sup>53</sup> Bourdreuil and Pardee 1993; Smith 1994; Parker 1997, 87–105; Coogan and Smith 2012, 97 ff. with a concise survey on the differences and commonalities between the Ugaritic narrative and *Enūma Eliš*.

<sup>54</sup> Durand 1993, 42.

<sup>55</sup> Gerlach 2000.

<sup>56</sup> Foster 2005, 581–882.



**Fig. 38:** Snake Seal, Ziyaret Tepe ZT 37897  
(Courtesy of the Ziyaret Tepe Archaeological Expedition).

ive and hostile forces that have unsettled the cosmic balance. In search of a solution, the gods convene and discuss what action should be taken against the disruptive forces. In some cases, they first choose representatives of the older generation of gods to confront the disruptive element. This approach generally fails, and so either a mother goddess is consulted on whom to choose next (*Serpent Myth*), or an elder god persuades a younger god, sometimes his son, to go into battle (*Anzû Myth*, *Enûma Eliš*). The battle is difficult and uncertain, and the younger god sometimes requires assistance in overcoming the challenge of the adversary. To attain victory, the god must not only apply brutal force, but also cultural knowledge, either in the form of an incantation (*Enûma Eliš*), through the use of the cylinder seal (*Labbu Myth*), or through the knowledge guarded by the god Enki/Ea and the seven sages. By virtue of his ultimate victory, the young warrior is elevated in the pantheon to a position alongside the existing chief deity. Toward the end of the second millennium and in the first millennium BCE, when Assyria and Babylonia developed into large territorial states and empires, the mythological victory of the younger god established and secured his position as chief god of the pantheon. Consequently, he assumed the mythological role and function of the creator god that had hitherto been occupied by a representative of the older generation.

I suggest that all of these stories should be understood as variations on the narrative of the warrior, articulated by various scholarly elites in response to the increasing martial responsibilities of the rulers of the various Mesopotamian urban centers that developed from the fourth through to the third millennium BCE. The rise of regional and supra-regional states prompted the continuous elaboration of these stories, beginning with the battle account itself until it culminates, through combination with other narratives, in a creation myth like *Enûma Eliš*, which merges in a most sophisticated way the combat and



creation accounts. The narrative of the combat myth was referenced in all media: texts, i.e. the stories mentioned above, and – as discussed previously – in monumental art and in the iconography of seals, as well as in ritual (investigated in *Chapter Ten*). As media, however, image and ritual never represent a particular story in full. They are both characterized by their allusive and referential character, only evoking key moments of the narrative and thus presupposing an informed audience already familiar with the relevant cultural knowledge.<sup>57</sup> By condensing the central message of mythic narratives, the iconic character of image and ritual was comprehensible even to those who were not part of the Sumerian, Babylonian, or Assyrian “textual communities.” The invocation of broader narratives is apparent, for instance, in the *Club of Mesalim*, which bears the image of the ferocious Anzû. If the viewer was educated in the stream of tradition, such iconic representations had the potential to trigger the rich repertoire of cultural knowledge that contributed to the determination of the viewer's own identity.

My analysis of the combat myth and its bearing upon the structure and the content of Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions and, as I will discuss at greater length in *Chapter Ten*, on the performance of major Neo-Assyrian state rituals differs from the structuralist approach originally formulated by Vladimir Propp and others: in addition to emplotment and the particular sequence of action,<sup>58</sup> I equally emphasize the types of agents involved. While Propp identifies actions as *functions* that can be performed by any character, I suggest that a particular set of functions is tied to a particular *type* of agent, even as the individual embodiments of any one type (Tešub, Ningirsu, Marduk, Aššur, and the king) are interchangeable. The combination of a particular set of functions with a type of agent allows particular actions to become established as tropes<sup>59</sup> or icons, which can in turn be mediated equally in myth, royal inscription, and epic, as well as in image and ritual.<sup>60</sup> This is not to say that each combat myth developed a particular unique image of the adversaries, for instance, so that in the end these remain recognizable for the audience as distinct characters. Their contours with regard to the plotline, however, were laid out in a way that the king could step into the role of the divine warrior vanquishing an enemy who possessed the monstrous features of a mythic adversary.

The third millennium BCE building hymn of Gudea, the king of the powerful city state of Lagaš, constitutes an excellent example of the blending of the

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57 See the excellent analysis by Sonik in press (b).

58 Propp 1928 [1958].

59 For the notion of tropological discourse see White 1973 and 1999.

60 See my further discussions in *Chapters Seven* and *Nine*.

king's role with that of Ningirsu/Ninurta – at least in textual records. Contemporary theology endowed the god Ningirsu/Ninurta with legal authority; in Gudea's dream, Ningirsu presents himself in the following terms: "In the Ebabbar, the place where I issue orders, where I am shining like the sun god, I justly decide, like Ištaran, the lawsuits of my city."<sup>61</sup> The role of Ištaran of Der in overseeing boundary disputes is previously attested in the Early Dynastic royal inscriptions that deal with the border conflict between Umma and Lagaš. The ascription of this function to Ningirsu suggests that Gudea's theologians/scholars integrated this role into his image as an almighty patron deity of the city state of Lagaš. Accordingly, Gudea's building hymn illustrates how scholars within a local cult could shape the image of the patron deity, which in turn influenced the image-shaping of the king. Thus, in the praise of the king that appears toward the end of the building hymn the king adopts the role of Ningirsu:

He paid attention to the justice (ordained) by [Nanše] and Ni[ngirsu]; he did not expose the orphan [to the wealthy person] nor did he expose the widow to the [influential] one. ... Day of justice had risen for him, and he set (his) foot on the neck of evil and complaint. Had he not himself risen for his city from the horizon like the sun god?<sup>62</sup>

It is precisely in this section of the hymn that the ideological discourse merges the king's establishment of civic order inside the controlled territory ordained by the patron deity Ningirsu with the martial activities performed at the frontiers, which serves to secure the king's supreme legal authority in both realms.

At the time, this explicit blending of the inner and outer order established by royal control represented a new step in the of development royal ideological discourse. Before the advent of royal inscriptions, these roles were depicted separately in iconography. This is apparent in the visual media, notably in the *Uruk Vase*, which depicts the king as the provider for the temple, the *Warka Lion-Hunt Stele*, which portrays the king as a hunter protecting his city from the threatening wilderness beyond it, and in the *Prisoner Scenes* on various sealings that show the king in his role as victorious warrior alongside the naked and utterly defeated enemy. By contrast, no image of the ruler performing justice is known from the Uruk period. It was only during the Lagaš II dynasty, under Urnanše and Gudea in particular, that the king's roles as ultimate legal

<sup>61</sup> Edzard 1997, Gudea E3/1.7.Cyl.A x 24–26: é-bar<sub>6</sub>-bar<sub>6</sub> ki-á-ág-ge<sub>26</sub>-gá ki <sup>d</sup>utu-gim dall-agá ki-ba <sup>d</sup>ištaran-gim di-iri-gá si ba-ni-ib-sá-e.

<sup>62</sup> Edzard 1997, Gudea E3/1.1.7.Cyl B xviii 4–13.

authority and as the warrior who sustains the civic order and the cosmic balance were combined.

References to warfare are attested in royal inscriptions already in the Early Dynastic period and persist through to the reign of Urnanše of Lagaš. In their building inscriptions dedicated to the temple of Ningirsu, however, Urnanše and his successor Gudea emphasize their roles in fostering long-distance trade and omit any reference to their military undertakings, thereby establishing a new ideological model for inscriptions and expanding the existing tropes.<sup>63</sup> The peaceful image of the ruler promoted by the textual sources<sup>64</sup> is mirrored by the image of the ruler in visual media, which never represent Gudea as a victorious warrior.<sup>65</sup> This absence of martial imagery has strongly shaped modern perceptions of the Sumero-Babylonian kings. It also stands in stark contrast to the martial tone of the royal inscriptions of the Old Akkadian kings that preceded the Lagaš II Dynasty, as well as to the tone of the Ur III hymns, which overlapped with the reign of Gudea at least for the period of Ur-Namma.<sup>66</sup> Later Assyrian tradition also differs in this respect from the model of Urnanše and Gudea, as the pacification of the world through warfare remained an essential trope of Assyrian royal ideology.

As such, it is significant to note that when King Gudea maps out the image of the ideal world order just before the gods are supposed to enter the newly built temple, he uses a metaphor for controlling the undomesticated sphere. This mode of royal self-representation can be read as a variant of the king as hunter theme, which links the trope of the pacification of the world with the gods' consequent occupation of their future residence. In this imagery, wild animals kneel down and lions and other dangerous beasts are made to sleep peacefully side by side:

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**63** Bauer, 1998, 450. All the raw materials necessary for the building such as woods, bitumen, gypsum, copper, gold, silver, and carnelian, which are obtainable only through distant trade missions (Edzard, Gudea, E3/1.1.CylA xv 6–xvi 32) and military campaigns, are not explicitly mentioned. For a discussion of whether the necessary raw materials were obtained by trade (Edzard, Gudea, 26) or as booty (Cooper), see the review by Cooper 1999b, 699. The earlier military activities of King Eannatum against Elam already testify to hostile relations with the East (Bauer 1998, 457), and this conflict continued in later periods. See further the letter written to the chief administrator of the temple of Ningirsu at Lagaš in the reign of Uru'inimgina, Michalowski 1993, 11 no. 1; K. Volk apud Selz 1991, and Gudea Statue B. For the mirroring of military activities in the mythical narratives dealing with the conflicts between Sumer and Elam, see Komoróczy 1982.

**64** Selz 1991, 36.

**65** Suter 2000, 18.

**66** See most recently Wilcke in George 2011, 34 f.

18 ... maš-anše níg-zi-gál-eden-na  
 19 téš-bi-šè gurum//gam-ma-àm<sup>67</sup>  
 20 ur-mah pirig ušumgal-eden-na-ka  
 21 ù-du<sub>10</sub> gar-ra-àm

The goats and asses, the creatures of the steppe,  
 are kneeling together.<sup>68</sup>

On the lion, panther, and the “dragon of the steppe”

he (Gudea) set sweet sleep.<sup>69</sup>

(Gudea CylB iv 18–21)

Gudea’s choice of this particular metaphor points to the cosmological underpinnings of royal ideology, which imagined that royal power partakes in the cosmic order by establishing control beyond the city, penetrating the realm of disorder and chaos. These cosmological underpinnings – cast in metaphor by Gudea – continued to dominate ideological discourse for centuries to come.<sup>70</sup> At its very end, Gudea’s building hymn harks back to another image of utopia, located exclusively in the human realm:

eme-níg-hul-da inim ba-da-kúr  
 níg-érim é-ba im-ma-an-g[i<sub>4</sub>]

He changed the words of evil-speaking tongue,

He had everything hostile turned away from the temple.<sup>71</sup>

Gudea’s enemies, and by extension the enemies of the cosmic order, are characterized by their “evil-speaking tongue,” an expression reminiscent of the rhe-

**67** D. O. Edzard translates both verbs gurum/gam-ma-àm and gar-ra-àm as 3rd pl., interpreting the animals as the subject for the participle form ending in -àm. This is not the only example for the 3rd pers. sing. used for plural subject; on the function of /-am/ in metaphorical language, see Black 1998, 16.

**68** In contrast to Dietz O. Edzard, I prefer to render the exact meaning of gam = *kanāšu*, “to prostrate, to kneel down,” because the same verb may be used with the meaning “to subdue” the enemy. Although the verbal chains are clearly formed according to the pattern of the 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. Singular, this differentiation does not apply in the case of the Stative. In contrast to Edzard, who prefers to translate the verbal forms with a fientic aspect, I prefer to emphasize the static aspect as suggested by the grammatical form with the ending /-am/.

**69** Edzard, *Gudea*, CylB iv 18–21

**70** By referring to the three categories of animals – lion, panther, and “dragon of the steppe” – the author conveys the graded distance of the realm of antiorder outside the domestic sphere. He introduces the categories “normal,” “exotic” and “demonic” through the lion of the steppe, the panther which is more likely at home in the mountains, and the “dragon of the steppe” representing the demonic sphere, Pongratz-Leisten 2006, 47 ff.

**71** Edzard, *Gudea*, CylB xviii 2–3.

torical device later used by Neo-Assyrian kings to describe the treacherous and rebellious actions of disloyal subjects. In the royal inscriptions of Neo-Assyrian kings, expressions such as “untruthful speech” (*dabāb lā kitti*), “evil-speaking tongue” (*lišān lemuttim*), and “to plan evil things” (*lemuttu kapādu*) are synonymous with “lie” (*sarru*) or “untruthful speech” (*dabāb sarrāti*), which were clearly linked to the violation of a treaty or loyalty oath.<sup>72</sup> Although they are still situated in distinct sections of the narrative, the two passages from Gudea’s building hymn cited above anticipate the equation of hunting and warfare that dominates Assyrian royal rhetoric and iconography beginning with the reign of Tiglath-Pileser I (1115–1077 BCE) at the end of the Middle Assyrian period.

Peter Machinist and Hayim Tadmor have stressed the heroic tenor of Assyrian royal inscriptions and warn the modern reader about their questionable historicity and their use of literary topoi.<sup>73</sup> Hayim Tadmor in particular has highlighted the literary and historiographical convention within Assyrian commemorative inscriptions to describe a victory that was achieved *at the very outset* of the king’s reign. This convention served to convey the image of the successful warrior “in conformity with the norms of behavior befitting an Assyrian monarch.”<sup>74</sup> As is discussed in *Chapter Nine*, I believe that the earliest attestation of this convention within Tigridian ideological discourse is to be found in Daduša’s liver model.<sup>75</sup> Regarding the Assyrian royal inscriptions themselves, the first example of a literary presentation of history of this kind can be attributed to Shalmaneser I (1267–1234 BCE). Subsequent to his titulary, Shalmaneser I begins his military account with a temporal clause introduced by *enūma* (“when”), referring to a rebellion in Urartu that was suppressed in just three days:

When (*enūma*) Aššur, the lord, faithfully chose me to worship him, gave me scepter, weapon, and staff to (rule) properly the blackheaded people, and granted me the true crown of lordship: at that time (*ina ūmēšuma*), at the beginning of my priesthood (*ina šurru šangūtiya*), the land Uruaṭri rebelled against me. I prayed to the god Aššur and the great gods, my lord. I mustered my troops (and) marched up to the mass of their mighty mountains. I conquered .... I destroyed, burnt, (and) carried off their people and property. I subdued all the land Uruaṭri in three days at the feet of Aššur, my lord.<sup>76</sup>

72 Pongratz-Leisten 2002.

73 Machinist 1976, 1978, 2011; Tadmor 1981.

74 Tadmor 1981, 14.

75 See *Chapter 9.5.3*.

76 RIMA 1, A.O.77.1:22–41.

As observed by Tadmor, Shalmaneser I's son Tukulti-Ninurta I makes use of the same technique. Tukulti-Ninurta I links his campaign against Babylonia to his conquest of the western regions, combining the two through the vague term "then" (*ina ūmēšuma*). This connection is made in order "to convey the message that all the military feats of the king, culminating in the conquest of Babylon, the apex of his achievements, actually took place within the first *palû*, or during a period of time very close to the first *palû*. Obviously, this is not a chronological arrangement of events."<sup>77</sup> This kind of literary patterning is, of course, diametrically opposed to chronistic narration, and for several generations Assyrian kings vacillated between the two. Chronistic narrative and heroic epic narrative were successfully combined for the first time only in the form of Tiglath-pileser I's annals.<sup>78</sup> As Tadmor notes, Tiglath-pileser I's prism-inscription from Aššur, covering his first five regnal years (*palû*), "kept to the literary convention of introducing the feats of the first regnal year by the short formula *ina šurru šangūtiya*. The account of each subsequent year was separated from the preceding account by a short paean of praise set between two horizontal lines. Though these accounts were not marked as *palû*'s, in the concluding section of the historical narration a specific reference was made that all these victories were achieved from 'the beginning of my reign, from my accession year to my fifth *palû*.'"<sup>79</sup> The king's scholars, who wrote the accounts of great victories that were sometimes said to have been achieved in one day, were clearly inspired by the epic traditions regarding the legendary kings of Akkad, which make use of similar motifs. Though written in prose, the text of Tiglath-pileser I's prism-inscription from Aššur "is heavily loaded with poetic similes, hyperbolae, typological numbers, and repetitions characteristic of epic style. A unique feature of this text is that each campaign is set off by a poetic device, a rhythmic stanza of praise, and not, as in later annalistic texts by a date expressed in terms of the respective eponym, or the regnal year."<sup>80</sup>

In the course of the subsequent development of Assyrian historiographic writing, the chronistic approach became firmly entrenched and annalistic writing established itself, undergoing only modest modification. The chronistic template was not interrupted until the Sargonid period, when room was made for the inclusion of ideological statements, prayers, dream reports, and visions, leading to the progressive blurring of the distinction between heroic poems and historiographic literature. The following discussion neither focuses on the

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77 Tadmor 1981, 15 f.

78 Tadmor 1997, 327.

79 Tadmor 1981, 18.

80 Tadmor 1997, 327 f.

close relationship between these two genres nor reiterates the excellent analyses of Tadmor, Liverani, and Cifola regarding royal titularies, which reveal the ideological structure that underlies the royal inscriptions.<sup>81</sup> Instead, I investigate the mythological underpinnings of royal inscriptions in order to reveal their emplotment.

## 6.4 The King as Hunter: The Middle Assyrian Contribution to Ideological Discourse

During the period of the *Club of the Great Powers*, the trope of the hunt as a metaphor for the king's obligation to defeat and control the disruptive elements encroaching upon the civilized order of the state emerged as a central motif in royal ideological discourse. The image of the hero smiting the lion and other wild animals dominates the iconography of the royal seal of Sauštatar towards the end of the fifteenth century BCE. Under the Hittite kings Hattušili III and Tudhaliya IV (c. 1227–1209 BCE), the hunt became part of a ritual event performed in honor of the stag god, tutelary god of the king.<sup>82</sup> The combination of hunt and cultic was also integrated into Hittite monumental art, appearing in “the upper register of the Sphinx Gate's western tower at Alaça Höyük.”<sup>83</sup> Such scenes remain an essential theme in later Syro-Anatolian monumental iconography, as is demonstrated by the Neo-Hittite evidence at Carchemish, and were also incorporated into Assyrian palatial imagery.

Nearly concomitantly with the Hittite ideological discourse during the later imperial period the trope of the hunt emerges equally in Assyria. The stag god, of course, does not feature in Assyrian culture. Nevertheless, the stag itself does figure in Middle Assyrian glyptic imagery. While the stag is attested also in the early imagery of Southern Mesopotamia,<sup>84</sup> its concurrency in Hittite and Middle Assyrian imagery is striking and attests to the interactive dynamics between the two powers. Middle Assyrian glyptic iconography abounds in leaping stags and scenes portraying the hero attacking lion-griffins, ibexes, the wild bull, or the moufflon. One Middle Assyrian seal is particularly telling in its combination of combat, represented by a lion-griffin attacking a wild bull, with reverence for the gods, represented through the depiction of a kneeling

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**81** Tadmor 1981; Liverani 1981; Cifola 1995 and 2004.

**82** Hawkins 2006.

**83** Gilbert 2011, 118; Taracha 2011.

**84** For references to the early attestations see Heimpel



**Fig. 39:** MA seal depicting lion-griffin attacking a wild bull, with the depiction of a kneeling worshipper under an altar crowned by the winged sun disk (Morgan Library and Museum # 598 (Courtesy Morgan Library and Museum).

worshipper under an altar crowned by the solar winged disk (Fig. 39).<sup>85</sup> This combination explicitly signals the cosmic implications of the hunt as part of the king's obligations towards the gods, which are referenced in the depiction of the cultic scene. As such, the seal evokes the iconography of Sauštatar's royal seal and bespeaks the intense interaction between Mitanni, Hatti, and Assyria in the creation of their respective discourses on royal ideology and to match each other's claims.

A letter from the Hittite king Hattušili III to his Babylonian counterpart Kadašman-Enlil II suggests that the hunt was considered an essential signifier for maturing into manhood within Hittite royal ideology: "I have heard that my brother has turned into a man and goes hunting" (KBo 1, 10 rev. 49).<sup>86</sup> Already during the Ur III period Šulgi extols his own protection of his subjects and their herds from the threat of the lion – the apex predator – and the wild bull, animals that endangered the life and livelihood of pastoralists. By hunting wild animals with his bow and stabbing lions with his spear, Šulgi exposed *himself* to risk and danger in order to ensure the wellbeing of his subjects. Despite the importance of the hunt in Šulgi's self-praise, it appears that the hunt was only ritualized in the Syro-Anatolian milieu and that its cosmic di-

<sup>85</sup> Pierpont Morgan no. 598.

<sup>86</sup> Quoted after Heimpel 1976–1980, 234.





**Fig. 40:** Kings Gate Carchemish Heraldic Stag Relief (after Gilibert 2011, 176, fig. 54).

mensions and implications for kingship were then fully articulated in Assyria, prompting the rise of this trope in Assyrian royal ideological discourse toward the end of the Middle Assyrian period. In the royal inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser I, the trope of the hunt as an icon of civilization was regarded as a direct parallel to warfare: the hunt constituted a perpetual struggle against chaos. Later Neo-Hittite iconography in the reliefs of the King's Gate at Carchemish (figs. 40 and 41) equates the hunt with warfare,<sup>87</sup> representing a further product of the intercultural dynamics between Assyria and the Syro-Anatolian horizon. When the notion of the hunt itself entered Assyrian ideological discourse, it was reformulated and reconceptualized within the framework of the king's mythologization as Ninurta.

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<sup>87</sup> Gilibert 2011.

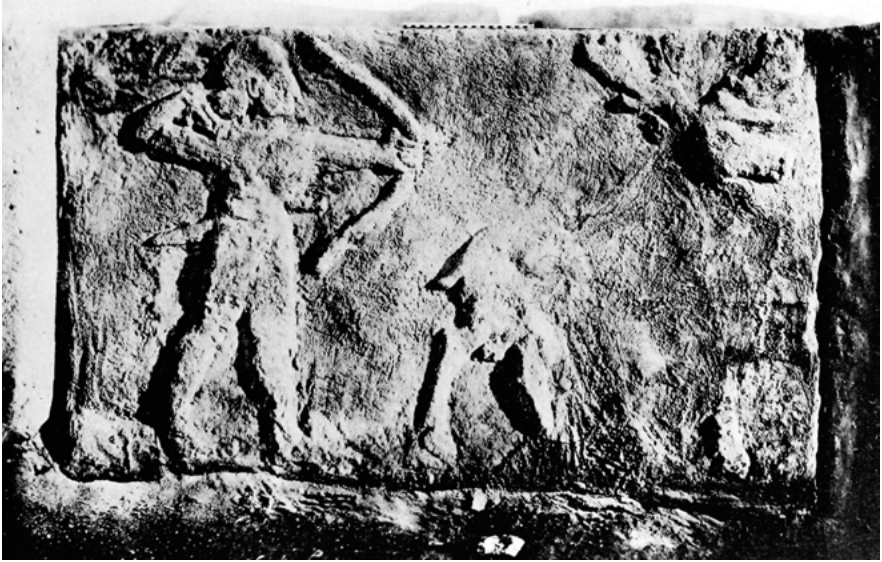


Fig. 41: Kings Gate Carchemish Hunter Relief (after Gilibert 201, 177, fig. 55).

In the Middle Assyrian period it is possible to discern the reemergence of Assyrian textual production after the centuries of disintegration and Mitannian overlordship that followed the reign of Šamšī-Adad I (1808–1776 BCE). Renascent Assyrian textual production is manifest during the reign of Adad-nīrārī I (1295–1264 BCE) in the form of the first Assyrian heroic poem, the *Adad-nīrārī I Epic*.<sup>88</sup> Middle Assyrian textual production experienced a climax under Tukulti-Ninurta I, who oversaw the composition of the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic* following his sack of Babylon, as well as the composition of several other bilingual literary works, including his historical prayers to Aššur.<sup>89</sup> Under Tiglath-Pileser I, lively scribal activity continued and “traditional literary works were copied and original compositions were produced, both being collected in a royal library.”<sup>90</sup> The colophons of these texts reveal the involvement of a body of professionals

<sup>88</sup> The text is preserved in several fragments: KAR 260 and KAH 2, 143. Another fragment (Rm 293), a duplicate, is published in *Afo* 17, 1954–56, p. 369. Two further duplicates have been published by Weidner, *Afo* 20, 19 63, 113–115.

<sup>89</sup> See Chapter 3.5.3.1.

<sup>90</sup> Hurowitz and Westenholz 1990, 1. Whether the scholars produced these texts for the royal library of Tiglath-Pileser I, as originally suggested by Weidner 1952–53, or for their own reference libraries, as discussed by Lambert 1976, 85 n. 2, remains unclear and is not relevant to the present discussion.

with the titles 'diviner' (*bārū*), 'chief diviner' (*rab bārē*), 'diviner of the king' (*bārī šarri*), 'scribe' (*tuṣšarru*), and 'exorcist' (*mašmaššu*),<sup>91</sup> which is essentially the same group of experts that is attested in the first millennium correspondence of the late Sargonid kings. Several texts are said to be copies of originals from Nippur, Babylon, Akkad, and Aššur, demonstrating again the embeddedness of these scholars in a broader cultural network of textual productivity.

The Middle Assyrian catalogue of songs (Lieder katalog KAR 158) contains twelve Akkadian royal hymns (*zamar šarri*), five heroic songs (*qurdu*), and two *gangiṭtu*-songs with the titles "trampler of the corners (of the world), who throws all the cities into confusion,"<sup>92</sup> and "let me sing of the strong god, the royal one, the heroic god"<sup>93</sup> (KAR 158 rev. iii 13–14).<sup>94</sup> These songs were part of the intense literary production of the Middle Assyrian period and attest to the recurrent ceremonial celebration of the king.<sup>95</sup> The indebtedness of Middle Assyrian textual production to Babylonian tradition is indicated by the presence of Middle Babylonian texts that were either brought to Aššur or written in Aššur among those found in Assyria. Assyrian indebtedness to Babylonia is further evident in the fact that the Assyrian chronicles, epic literature, and royal inscriptions of the Middle Assyrian period are all written in the Standard Babylonian literary dialect and make use of its narrative language, motifs, and topoi regarding the experience of the king and his accomplishments. Indeed, Tukulti-Ninurta I's reference to his pillaging of Babylonian libraries and the presence of Babylonian scholars at Aššur both demonstrate explicitly the process of Assyrian borrowing from Babylonia. Although Assyrian textual production drew on Babylonian tradition, Middle Assyrian texts nevertheless display a typically Assyrian view of the institution of kingship, which is particularly evident in the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*.

Text corpora like the *Middle Assyrian Laws* and the *Harem Edicts* incorporate material from the reign of Aššur-uballiṭ I (1353–1318 BCE), making clear that Middle Assyrian scribal activity can be traced to the very beginning of Assyria's development into a territorial state and to the very moment of its arrival on the international scene. In this light, Middle Assyrian cultural production can be seen as a reflection of the aspirations of Assyria's kings to join the *Club of the Great Powers* and to be accepted as equals by their royal peers – not just as politically and militarily, but also culturally. The extent of Assyria's

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91 Pedersén 1985, 33.

92 *dā'iš tubqāti ašu kalu ālāni*.

93 *gašra ila šarra luzzamur ila dapna*.

94 Black 1983, 25.

95 Pongratz-Leisten 2001.

cultural ambition is apparent in the fact that Middle Assyrian Aššur has so far yielded the most comprehensive corpus of lexical texts, including thematic lists, acrographic lists, and lists like *Nabnītu*, *Erimhuš*, the *Emesal Vocabulary*, and *Grammatical Lists*.<sup>96</sup> Middle Assyrian royal inscriptions were frequently written with archaizing Babylonian sign forms, and scribes often stressed the Babylonian origin of their texts. Niek Veldhuis observes that lexical texts like the explanatory list Ea use archaizing Babylonian sign forms to designate entries in the list but Assyrian sign forms for the accompanying explanatory text. This writing style is thus part of the effort to emulate Babylonian cultural practice in order to bolster the Assyrian claim to cultural prestige.<sup>97</sup>

Most of these various text genres center on the figure of the king and are dominated by a heroic world view. As the preferred object of the literarizing process, the king was represented as the pivot between political, situation-bound reality, and literary, mythic, and situation-abstract fiction. The Middle Assyrian heroic poems revive the tradition of the Ur III royal hymns<sup>98</sup> and are literarily interdependent with the royal inscriptions. This literary interdependence is evident not only in the fact that both the Middle Assyrian heroic poems and the royal inscriptions are written in the Standard Babylonian dialect, but also in their use of rare and unusual words, which is first attested in the heroic poems and subsequently appears in the royal inscriptions.<sup>99</sup> Moreover, the royal narratives concerning the military accomplishments of particular kings were refashioned in the Middle Assyrian period into an annalistic form that presented campaigns individually and in chronological order, where previously such commemorative inscriptions had been organized geographically.<sup>100</sup> It is also from this period that there is evidence for the rewriting of annals at certain intervals. The earliest edition of Tiglath-Pileser I's annals, composed after the fifth year of his reign, marks a watershed in the development of historiographic writing because the text is pervaded by literary features known from the legends of the Kings of Akkad.<sup>101</sup> In Tiglath-Pileser I's annals, for example, victories are said to have been achieved within a short time span (see the *Great Revolt Against Narām-Sîn* for comparison), while the king himself is depicted

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**96** Veldhuis 2012, 13 f.

**97** Veldhuis 2012, 16.

**98** Machinist 1976, 466.

**99** Hurowitz and Westenholz 1990, 14.

**100** Grayson 1980, 152–155: the typical arrangement of Assyrian commemorative inscriptions is: royal name, titulary, and genealogy, followed by the military report and the building account, and concluded by blessing and curse formulas.

**101** Westenholz 1997.

in nearly divine terms like in the *Tukulti-Ninurta I Epic* and the text is dominated by a heroic-epic tenor.<sup>102</sup>

Myth functions as the referential system determining the narrative structure of Tiglath-Pileser I's (1115–1077 BCE) royal inscriptions. In these royal inscriptions, the hunt – framed in mythic icons evoking the life-threatening moment of direct encounter with the monstrous – appears in narrative form, which is paralleled by the military account. As a re-actualization of the master narrative of the combat myth, the hunt is historicized, concretizing the category of beast that the king encounters, as well as the moment in time and the geographic space in which he does so. Although it triggers the cultural memory of the primordial battle against disruptive forces, the hunt simultaneously continues to figure as an icon that identifies the cosmic implications of the king's battle against his enemies, which is described in the parallel account of the king's military campaigns. The intimate relationship between the hunt and the military account in the royal inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser I underlines the fluid nature of the boundaries between myth and “historical” narrative.

Further, Tiglath-Pileser I's annals make the juxtaposition of war and the hunt explicit by combining the extensive report of the king's military campaigns over the course of several years with a narrative about the king's qualities as a hunter. Although the king's hunting expeditions were probably staged at various occasions during his campaigns, Tiglath-Pileser I's annals present them in one coherent section. The annals organize military events according to the regnal year in which they took place, but the narrative of the various hunting expeditions is arranged according to geographical location. This arrangement anticipates the system by which Ashurbanipal structures the military accounts in his royal inscriptions several centuries later. The animals killed by the king represent the various regions of the realm of chaos, which are brought under the control of the god Aššur through the efforts of the king. Chief among these animals are the wild bull of the steppe and the lions of the mountains:

vi 55–57) Tiglath-Pileser, valiant man, armed with the unrivalled bow, expert in the hunt.

vi 58–69) The gods Ninurta and Nergal gave me their fierce weapons and their exalted bow for my lordly arms. By the command of the god Ninurta, who loves me, with my strong bow, iron arrow-heads, and sharp arrows, I slew four extraordinary strong wild virile bulls in the desert, in the land Mittani, and at the city Araziqu which is before the land Hatti. I brought their hides and horns to my city Aššur.

<sup>102</sup> Hurowitz and Westenholz 1990, 1.

vi 70–75) I killed the strong bull elephants in the land Harran and the region of the River Hābūr (and) four live elephants I captured. I brought the hides and tusks (of the dead elephants) with the live elephants to my city Aššur.

Vi 76–84) By the command of the god Ninurta, who loves me, I killed on foot 120 lions with my wildly outstanding assault. In addition, 800 lions I felled from my light chariot. I have brought down every kind of wild beast and winged bird of the heavens whenever I have shot an arrow.<sup>103</sup>

The expansion of his control into Lebanon and toward the Mediterranean coastline prompted Tiglath-Pileser I to include the bull elephant of the region of Harran and the Hābūr River among the animals he hunted. When Tiglath-Pileser I reached the sea, he made a point of hunting the ‘horse of the sea’ (*nāhiru*):

16–25 I marched to Mount Lebanon. I cut down (and) carried off cedar beams for the temple of the gods Anu and Adad, the great gods, my lords. I continued to the land Amurru (and) conquered the entire land Amurru. I received tribute from the lands Byblos, Sidon, (and) Arvad. I rode in boats of the people of Arvad (and) travelled successfully a distance of three double hours from the city of Arvad, an island, to the city Šamuru which is in the land Amurru. I killed at sea a *nāhiru*, which is called a sea-horse.<sup>104</sup>

Securing access to the Mediterranean Sea represented a major military triumph for Tiglath-Pileser I, adding a novel dimension to the territories under Assyrian control. Tiglath-Pileser I’s inscription celebrates this achievement through its inclusion of the ceremonial hunt of the sea-horse, which reflects the cosmic overtones of world dominion. The cosmic implications of Tiglath-Pileser I’s conquest of the sea and the mountains are also conveyed visually by the manufacture of replicas of the sea-horses and their stationing at the gates of the royal palace as ‘symbols of the subjugated wilderness.’<sup>105</sup> Following the military reports and the hunting accounts, Tiglath-Pileser I adds a lengthy self-praise that portrays him as the benefactor of his land and his people, another innovation that combines war and the hunt as prerequisites for the exercise of royal power. The overall effect of Tiglath-Pileser I’s inscription is to argue powerfully that the king met all the expectations and obligations incumbent on the occupant of the royal office.

War and the hunt are also bound together by the common terminology used to describe them: “(Tiglath-Pileser), whose weapons the god Aššur has

<sup>103</sup> RIMA 2, A.0.87.1: vi 55–84.

<sup>104</sup> RIMA 2, A.0.78.3: 16–25.

<sup>105</sup> RIMA 2, A.0.78.4: 67–71; Annus 2001, 115; Lundström 2012.

sharpened,”<sup>106</sup> “I strike the wicked like the fierce dagger,”<sup>107</sup> and “I overpower like the net, I enclose like the trap.”<sup>108</sup> The parallel treatment of war and the hunt in the annals of Tiglath-Pileser I and in those of later Neo-Assyrian kings regarding form, structure, and language reveals their common meaning and function, so that the killing of the lion and other wild animals signified nothing less than the defeat of Assyria's enemies and the attendant expansion of Aš-šur's control over the world.<sup>109</sup> These tropes are interspersed with historical and geographical details, but their literary composition and the omission of any mention of royal defeat indicate that the annals were part of an ideal-biographical royal discourse.

*The Hunter*, a “short, epic-style poem about a campaign of an Assyrian king against mountain peoples, cast in a metaphor of a hunter stalking wild game,”<sup>110</sup> belongs to the context of the reshaping of royal inscriptions and the creation of historicizing poetry. The text was found in the Aššur temple as part of an excerpt tablet or school exercise that also contained the beginning of *Ištar's Descent*. It was originally assigned to Tiglath-Pileser I by its editor Erich Ebeling,<sup>111</sup> who identified a direct intertextual relationship between *The Hunter* and Tiglath-Pileser I's military report of his conquest of Murattaš. This attribution has not been widely accepted, and scholars like Borger have, by contrast, classified *The Hunter* as a Neo-Assyrian text written in archaizing style.<sup>112</sup> Only Victor Hurowitz and Joan Goodnick Westenholz,<sup>113</sup> followed by Benjamin Foster,<sup>114</sup> have argued that *The Hunter* should be dated to Tiglath-Pileser I as Ebeling suggested. Indeed, until recently Dietz Otto Edzard, based on Stefan Maul's observations regarding the paleography of the text, classified *The Hunter* as a Neo-Assyrian parody of a military report.<sup>115</sup> With all due respect to these scholars, the dating proposed by Ebeling seems to me best suited to the paleography and orthography of the text, a view reinforced by *The Hunter's* parallels with the poem LKA 63.<sup>116</sup> It also makes more sense to me to classify the text as a fable than as a parody.

106 RIMA 2, A.O.87.1 col. i 36–37: *ša<sup>d</sup>a-šur GIŠ.TUKUL.MEŠ-šu ú-šá-hi-lu.*

107 Adad-nirari II, RIMA 2, A.O.99.2:19 GIM GÍR *šal-ba-be ú-ra-ša-pa.*

108 Adad-nirari II, RIMA 2, A.O.99.2:21 [*ki-m*]a *šu-uš-kal-li a-sa-hap GIM hu-ha-ri a-kât-tam.*

109 Maul 1995, 399 and 2000; Machinist 1993, 83.

110 Foster 2005, 336–37.

111 Ebeling 1949.

112 Borger 1964, 112; *AHw* 3, 1124; referencing Borger, Grayson 1976, 3 n. 15 seems to accept Borger's dating, as he does not include this text under Tiglath-Pileser I.

113 Hurowitz and Westenholz 1990.

114 Foster 2005, 336.

115 Edzard 2004.

116 See my edition in the Appendix.

In light of *The Hunter's* glorifying character and its praise of the god Aššur, the text should be located in the larger framework of Assyrian historicizing poetry and heroic poems (*qurdu*). *The Hunter* is nevertheless unique because of its allegorical or parabolic character, which has no clear parallel in Mesopotamian literature. The hero of the narrative remains anonymous throughout, and is only referred to with the *epitheton ornans* as the 'hunter' (*bajjāru*). As in the royal inscriptions, the introductory section of *The Hunter* praises the king as a victorious warrior whose military endeavors enjoy the support of the gods. In the text, the king plans a military campaign, but his adversaries are depicted as mountain donkeys rather than human beings. As noted by Ebeling, this curious feature turns the poem into an allegorical fable.<sup>117</sup> Persuaded that they are protected by the inaccessible wilderness of the mountains, a motif reminiscent of the Sargon tale *King of Battle*,<sup>118</sup> the mountain donkeys feel strong enough to defend themselves. In line with other legendary literature, the hunter consults the gods by means of extispicy regarding the right moment for his attack and subsequently sets out on campaign with his soldiers and chariots. Following a one day march covering a distance that would normally take three days to traverse, the hunter reaches the enemy land and puts it to the torch before sunrise. The inhabitants of the mountain region – now human in nature – are all killed, and not even pregnant women and children are spared. The poem concludes with praise for the god Aššur:

LKA 62

- 1 [Who curbs] foes, trampler of his enemies,
- 2 [Who hunts] mountain donkeys, who startles the creatures of the steppe,
- 3 [The Hunter]: Aššur is his ally, Adad is his help,
- 4 Ninurta, vanguard of the gods, [go]es before him.
- 5 The Hunter plans battle against the donkeys,
- 6 He sharpens(?) his dagger to cut short their lives.
- 7 The donkeys hear that (but continue) to gambol around,
- 8 The Hunter's terror had not yet come down upon them.
- 9 They counter the (potential) confusion (of battle with the question): "Whoever came near us?
- 10 Who is it, not having seen who we are, who tries to frighten our assembly?
- 11 We are to be neglected (=protected by) the closed circle of the high mountains,
- 12 Because our dwelling place lies within the enclosure of the mountains.
- 13 May the wind blow the Hunter's snare away,
- 14 May the shootings of his bow not come to reach us who are assembled (in the mountains)."

<sup>117</sup> Ebeling 1949, 33.

<sup>118</sup> Westenholz 1997, 102–139.



- 15 The Hunter heard the chatter of the mountain beasts, (and thought)  
 16 “They are deprived of their reasoning, their words are troubled,  
 17 Their tendon is like *chaff*, the men are like a newborn.”  
 18 To the warriors who will open (new paths) on the mountain peaks, he says:  
 19 “let us go and bring massacre upon the mountain beasts,  
 20 With our sharpened weapon let us shed their blood.”  
 21 He performed an extispicy for his appointed time,  
 22 He raged like Adad (and like) Šamaš he was hitching up his chariotry.
- 23 A journey of three days he marched [in one].  
 24 Even without sunshine a fiery heat was among them,  
 25 He slashed the wombs of the pregnant, blinded the babies,  
 26 He cut the throats of the strong ones among them,  
 27 The smoke of their land barred their land.  
 28 Whatever land is disloyal to Aššur will turn into wasteland.  
 29 Let me sing of the mighty victory of Aššur, who goes out into combat,  
 30 and repeatedly achieves victory over the troops of the entire world.  
 31 Let the first one hear and te[l]l it] to the later ones!<sup>119</sup>

Like Tiglath-Pileser I's annals and consistent with northern Mesopotamian tradition, *The Hunter* limits the concept of the homogeneity and congruence of human-divine action to the god Aššur and the Storm God Adad; Ninurta is included only as the model for the king. In the annals, however, divine agency in the hunting reports centers on Aššur and Ninurta. Two examples from the annals suffice to illustrate this point:

In addition I got control of (and) formed herds of (vii 5) *naiālu* deer, *aiālu*-deer, gazelles, (and) ibex which the gods Aššur and Ninurta, the gods who love me, had given me in the course of the hunt in high mountain ranges. I (vii 11) numbered them like flocks of sheep, I sacrificed yearly to the god Aššur, my lord, the young born to them as voluntary offerings together with my pure sacrifices.<sup>120</sup>

Tiglath-Pileser, exalted prince, the one whom the gods Aššur and Ninurta have continually guided wherever he wished (to go) and who pursued each and every one of the enemies of the god Aššur and laid low all the rebellious.<sup>121</sup>

Beginning with Tiglath-Pileser I, Assyrian royal inscriptions acquire their typical structure, in which the king's titulary and genealogy is followed by military accounts (and often a hunting account), a building account, and a blessing and curse section focusing on the protection of the king's name and of the inscription itself.

<sup>119</sup> See Appendix 1 for the Assyrian text and commentary.

<sup>120</sup> RIMA 2, A.0.87.1: col. vii 4–16.

<sup>121</sup> RIMA 2, A.0.87.1: col. vii 36–41.

The *White Obelisk* (fig. 42), found in 1853 by Hormuzd Rassam “between the outer court of Sennacherib’s palace at Nineveh and the Ishtar Temple,”<sup>122</sup> is a key piece of evidence linking the royal inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser I and their imagery of war and hunt to the historical narrative of the Neo-Assyrian period as represented in the ninth century reliefs of Aššurnāširpal II. There has been some scholarly controversy regarding the dating of the obelisk,<sup>123</sup> but recently Holly Pittman, building on the work of Julian Reade, has advanced convincing arguments for attributing the obelisk to the reign of Aššurnāširpal I (1049–1031 BCE).<sup>124</sup> Except for two hymns dedicated to the goddess Ištar, very little is known of Aššurnāširpal I; it is therefore all the more crucial to include the *White Obelisk* in any discussion of the development of Assyrian ideological discourse during the transition from the Middle Assyrian to the Neo-Assyrian period. The obelisk is decorated with eight registers on all four sides, representing scenes of warfare, hunting, tribute processions, and ceremonial and ritual performances. Of interest to our discussion of the parallelism of warfare and hunt is the fact that the scenes dedicated to these subjects appear in the uppermost and lowermost registers of the obelisk, effectively framing the tribute scenes and the ritual scenes. This arrangement suggests the same understanding of the function of war and hunt in establishing cosmic order that is evident in texts from the reign of Tiglath-Pileser I. Additionally, the fragmentary hymn celebrating Aššurnāširpal I as a hunter supports the dating of the *White Obelisk* to his reign.<sup>125</sup> Another intriguing aspect of this monument is that its epigraph mentions the *bīt nathi*, which, if related to the Hittite *nathi* – originally a Hurrian loanword denoting a ceremonial bed<sup>126</sup> – perfectly fits the content of the Assyrian ritual for Ištar as known from its Sargonid period versions.<sup>127</sup>

The *White Obelisk* can be considered the precursor of the ceremonial representations of war and hunt that appear in the celebrated reliefs of Aššurnāširpal II’s throne room in his North-West Palace at Nimrud, in the bronze bands of the *Balawat Gates* of Shalmaneser III, and in the reliefs of Ashurbanipal’s North and South-West Palaces at Nineveh. Natalie May interprets these images as depictions of the Assyrian *War Ritual* known from the ritual text published by Karlheinz Deller,<sup>128</sup> implying an analogy between text and image. I prefer

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122 Reade 1975, 143.

123 For an overview of the debate see Sollberger 1974, 231–232 and Reade 1975, 129–133.

124 Pittman 1996.

125 Frahm 2009b, no. 77.

126 Explanation by David Hawkins, see Sollberger 1974, 237 f.

127 See *Chapter* 10.6.

128 Deller 1992. May 2012.

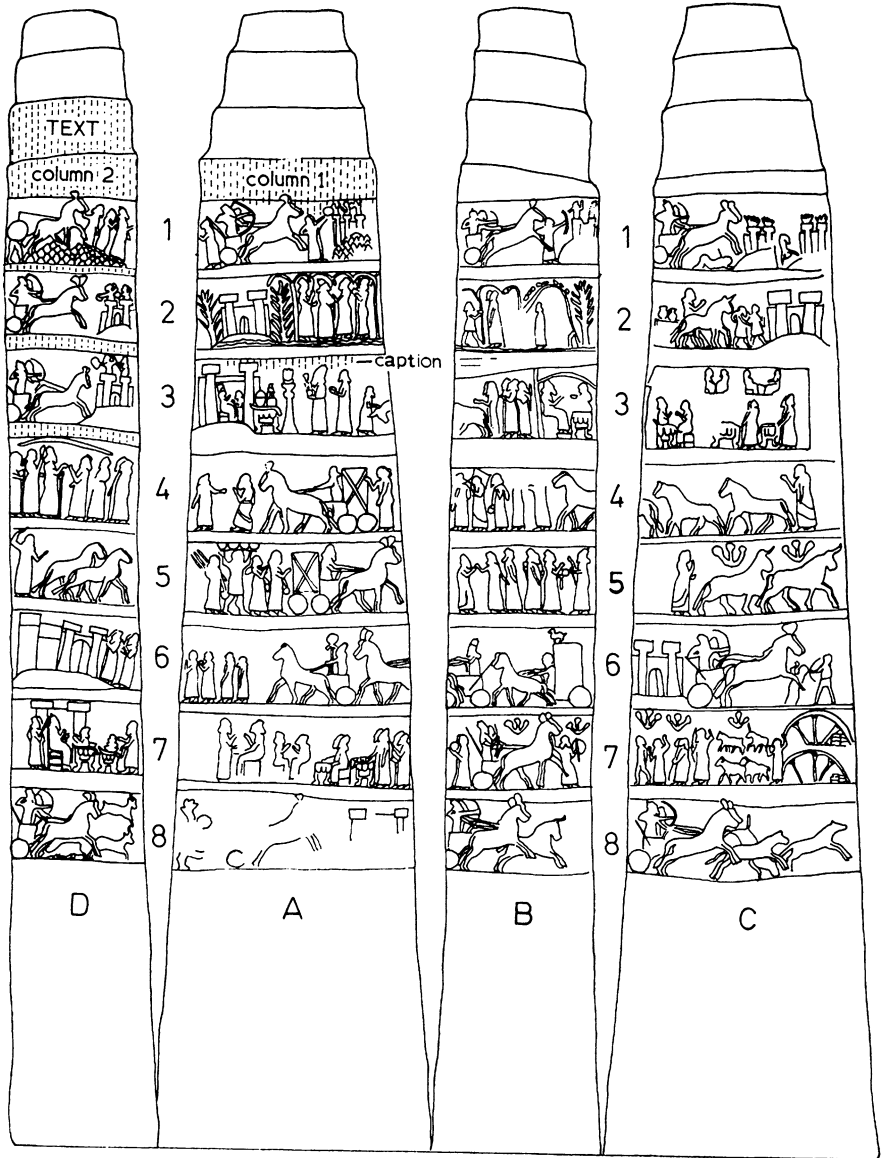


Fig. 42: White Obelisk (after Reade 1975, fig. 1).

to read these images as complex expressions of the intermediality between image, ritual, and text, encompassing myth *and* royal inscriptions. This reading would allow for both the suspension of time and space *and* for the repre-



Fig. 43: Neo-Assyrian Stamp Seal (after Kühne 1997, 211, fig. 31).



Fig. 44: Ashurbanipal Stabbing the Lion (Photo Pongratz-Leisten, Courtesy British Museum).

sentation of historical events (see my discussion in Chapters 9.6 and Chapter 10.4). Beginning with the reign of Shalmaneser III (858–824 BCE), the image of the king stabbing the lion became the iconic representation of Assyrian kingship as represented on the royal stamp seal (fig. 43),<sup>129</sup> and this image was replicated in Ashurbanipal's hunting scenes (fig. 44).

## 6.5 The Interface between Myth and Royal Inscriptions

The cosmic dimensions of the king's military campaigns and their persistence in Assyrian ideological discourse have been discussed at great length in Assyriological literature.<sup>130</sup> My intention here is to reveal the mythologizing tendency of the royal inscriptions, which is not only crucial for understanding ancient historicizing literature but also provides a deeper insight into the Assyrian state rituals that reactualized Ninurta's role annually, as is discussed later in this book.

Several Old Babylonian period sites have yielded versions of the Sumerian poems *Lugal-e*, which describes Ningirsu's victory over the Asakku-monster and his army of stone allies, and *Angimdimma*, the story of Ninurta's return to Ekur (the temple of his father) after his victorious battle against the lion-eagle Anzû. An Old Babylonian version of the *Anzû Myth* was also in circulation, the first millennium version of which encompasses three tablets and narrates Ninurta's heroic killing of the lion-eagle Anzû. The Old Babylonian version of the *Anzû Myth* anthropomorphizes one of Ninurta's weapons, depicting it as a messenger moving between Ninurta in the battlefield and the god Ea, who helps Ninurta succeed with the help of his magic.

The mythology of the god Ningirsu/Ninurta and its adaptation in historiography reflects a conception of warfare that regards this activity as a perpetual act of creation.<sup>131</sup> Indeed, the motif of the *Chaoskampf* is the authoritative “genotext”<sup>132</sup> that generates the various mythic “hypotexts” that inform Assyrian royal inscriptions; where they describe military activities, Assyrian royal inscriptions are to be regarded as “hypertexts”<sup>133</sup> ultimately derived from the *Chaoskampf* motif itself. In this capacity, the *Chaoskampf* motif functions as

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129 Maul 1995b, 395.

130 Lambert 1986; Maul 1991, 1995b, 1999, 2000; Annus 2002.

131 Otto 1999.

132 Burkert 1979, 2f.

133 For the relationship between hypotext (A) and hypertext (B) see Genette 1997.

“the ultimate sanction of all royal activity.”<sup>134</sup> In contrast to the royal inscriptions, from the second millennium BCE onward Ninurta mythology focuses on Ninurta’s martial role to the detriment of his administrative and agricultural functions. In the *Anzû Myth*, Ea encourages Ninurta at the moment of crisis. Ea’s speech stresses the status and rank of the leader figure, in this case the divine Enlil, as well as the importance of the proper operation of the cult centers spread throughout the four regions of the world. Hierarchical leadership and cult centers are represented as icons of control over the universe, highlighting the central role that the conquest of chaos played in the cosmic scheme:

‘Kill him, conquer Anzû!  
 ‘Let the winds bear off his wing feathers as glad tidings  
 ‘To the temple Ekur, to your father Enlil.  
 ‘Flood and bring mayhem to the mountain meadows,  
 ‘Kill wicked Anzû!  
 ‘Let authority return [to the father] who begot you.  
 ‘Let there be daises to be built,  
 ‘Establish your holy places in the four world regions,  
 ‘[Let] your holy places come into Ekur.  
 ‘Show yourself mighty be[fore the gods],  
 For your name shall be ‘Mighty One.’<sup>135</sup>

With its motifs of conquest, the (re-)establishment of the cosmic order by re-anchoring authority with the god Enlil, the building of temples, and the invocation of the name of the mighty warrior god, this passage anticipates the emplotment of the mythic narrative itself – qualifying it as a “hypotext” or “phenotext” of the original “genotext” of the combat myth<sup>136</sup> – and this emplotment is evident in Assyrian royal inscriptions from Tiglath-pileser I onward. Moreover, the passage expresses concisely the axiom of Tukulti-Ninurta I, as stated in the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*: “Peace cannot be made without conflict.”<sup>137</sup> This principle governs all combat myths and informs first Assyrian heroic epic literature and then Assyrian royal inscriptions.

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134 Wyatt 1998, 844 f.

135 After Foster 2005, 572, *Anzu* iii 114–124.

136 Note the distinction made by Hans Poser 1979 between “myth” as a master narrative or referential system (my terms) and “myths” as phenotexts. Malinowski’s concept of the “charter myth” also belongs here Malinowski 1926, as does Genette’s distinction between “hypotext” and “hypertexts”, Genette 1997.

137 Machinist 1978a, *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*, A iii 15’, *ul iššakan salīmu balu mithušu*; Foster 2005, 306.

It is not surprising that Middle and Neo-Assyrian copies of the *Anzû Myth* have been recovered from multiple sites in the Assyrian empire. Bilingual (Sumerian-Akkadian) copies of the Sumerian literary compositions *Angim* and *Lugal-e* appear in Assyria during the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I; these texts were again recopied much later in Nineveh during the Sargonid period.<sup>138</sup> This evidence highlights the interdependence between myth and royal inscriptions, which accounts for the king's assumption of a cosmogonic role in his emulation of Ninurta. The claim to universal control in the *Anzû Myth* passage quoted above perfectly encapsulates Neo-Assyrian royal ideology: any royal battle was understood as a re-actualization of Ninurta's battle against Asakku or Anzû or of Marduk's battle against Tiamat.<sup>139</sup> The enemies of the Assyrian king assumed the role of the threatening forces confronted by Ninurta in his divine battle.<sup>140</sup> As such, the historicity of the enemy was ultimately of little relevance to the ancient historian.

The king's appropriation of Ninurta's weapons was an important part of the re-actualization of Ninurta's role. Among these weapons are the flood (Sumerian: a.ma.uru<sub>5</sub>; Akkadian *abūbu*), the net (Sumerian: šuškal; Akkadian: *šuškalu*), and the sandstorm (*ašamšatu*), all of which are attested as weapons of Tukulti-Ninurta I. From Tukulti-Ninurta I onward, "deluge of the battle" (*abūb tamhari*) and "like the flood" (*abūbiš*) became standard epithets of the Assyrian king. Ninurta's warrior aspect was also important to the shaping of notions of divine kingship more broadly, as is indicated by the fact that Ninurta's weapons šār-ur<sub>4</sub> and šār-gaz, his personified helpers in Sumerian tradition,<sup>141</sup> were adopted by Marduk in the first millennium creation epic *Enūma Eliš*.<sup>142</sup> The association of such rhetoric with the supreme god Marduk in turn influenced the mythologizing language of Esarhaddon's report on his military campaign against Egypt, where he claims that both of these weapons preceded him into the enemy land.<sup>143</sup> As a notion, then, ideal rulership was continuously negotiated between myth and royal inscriptions.

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**138** Cooper 1971, 7. Note that the bilinguals from Ashurbanipal's library at Nineveh are closer to the Old Babylonian tradition in terms of spelling and variants than to the Middle Assyrian texts, a phenomenon that Rubio tentatively links with Ashurbanipal's conquest of Nippur, where the Middle Babylonian tradition preserved Old Babylonian writing practice, see Rubio 2009, 44 f.

**139** Maul 1999, 210.

**140** Maul 1999, 211.

**141** Annus 2001; Edzard, *Gudea StatB* v 37–44, and vi 21–44; see also Suter 2000, 189 and 284 ff.

**142** Maul 1999, 210–211. For further examples see Annus, 2002, 99.

**143** Borger 1967, 65, *Nin. E. col. ii* 6–13.

Ninurta and the king performed similar functions in their defense of the political and cosmic order,<sup>144</sup> as is further apparent in the divine epithets originally associated with the warrior god and ultimately applied to the king. Aššur-naširpal II's inscription for the Ninurta temple in Nimrud, which begins with a hymn to Ninurta and subsequently praises the king himself, is a prime example of this development. The hymn to Ninurta reveals that none of the tropes previously developed in Mesopotamian tradition escaped the cultural memory of the king's scholars, who combined all of these motifs into a persuasive divine image that provided the model for the perfect king:

I 1–9a) To the god Ninurta, the strong, the almighty, the exalted, foremost among the gods, the splendid (and) perfect warrior whose attack in battle is unequalled, the eldest son who commands battle (skills), offspring of the god Nudimmud, warrior of the Igigu gods, the capable, prince of the gods, offspring of Ekur, the one who holds the bond of heaven and underworld, the one who opens springs, the one who walks the wide underworld, the god without whom no decisions are taken in heaven and underworld, the swift, the ferocious, the one whose command is unalterable, foremost in the (four) quarters, the one who gives scepter and (power of) decision to all cities, the stern canal-inspector (I 5) whose utterance cannot be altered, extensively capable, sage of the gods (ABGAL DINGIR<sup>meš</sup>), the noble, the god Utulu, lord of lords, into whose hands is entrusted the circumference of heaven and underworld, king of battle, the hero who rejoices in battles, the triumphant, the perfect, lord of springs and seas, the angry (and) merciless whose attack is a deluge, the one who overwhelms enemy lands (and) fells the wicked, the splendid god who never once changes, light of heaven (and) underworld who illuminates the interior of the *apsû*, annihilator of the evil, subduer of the insubmissive, destroyer of enemies, the one whose command none of the gods in the divine assembly can alter, bestower of life, the compassionate god to whom it is good to pray, the one who dwells in Calah, great lord, my lord.<sup>145</sup>

I reproduce the table conceived by Amar Annus to illustrate the overlap in human and divine epithets, which is a product of the king's mythologization as Ninurta (see next page).<sup>146</sup>

Other epithets include “avenger of Assyria” (*muter gimil māt Aššur*), first attested under Aššur-rēša-iši I,<sup>147</sup> the “strong one” (*gašru*), first attested with Tiglath-Pileser I,<sup>148</sup> and “to tread (*kabāsu*) upon the neck of the enemy” (*En. el. ii 146, 148*), and “to trample (*dāšu*) the enemies” (*Anzû ii 47*).<sup>149</sup>

144 Maul 1991; Pongratz-Leisten 2001, 224 ff.

145 RIMA 2, A.0.101.1 I 1–9a.

146 Annus 2002, 97–98.

147 RIMA 1, A.0.86.1:8.

148 RIMA 2, A.0.87.4:3.

149 Annus 2002, 96 f.



Epithet	Translation	Ninurta	Aššurnaširpal
<i>dandannu</i>	“strong”	I, 1	I, 9 ( <i>dannu</i> )
MAH	“almighty”	I, 1	I, 32
SAG.KAL	“foremost”	I, 1	I, 32
UR.SAG	“hero”	I, 1	I, 20, 32 ( <i>uršānu</i> )
NUN-ú ( <i>rubū</i> )	“prince”	I, 2 ( <i>ilāni</i> )	I, 11 ( <i>maliku</i> ), 18 (NUN)
<i>ekdu</i>	“ferocious”	I, 4	I, 19 ( <i>ušumgallu</i> )
<i>lā padū</i>	“merciless”	I, 7	I, 34 (TUKUL)
<i>mušamqitu</i>	“who lays low”	I, 7	I, 34
EN ( <i>bēlu</i> )	“lord”	I, 9	I, 21, 32

The astralization of the gods Ninurta and Marduk also generated an astral mode of representation for their weapons. As Francesca Rochberg notes, the “mythological arrow of Ninurta (*šukūdu*) and that of Marduk (*mulmullu*) were given astral forms as Sirius and the Pleiades, respectively. The Astrolabe’s identification of the month of Ningirsu with the Pleiades echoes the personification of these stars as gods of war carrying bow and arrow.”<sup>150</sup> Thus personification is attested in an inscription of Esarhaddon and in the *Erra Epic*.

## 6.6 War, Abundance, and the Astralization of the Warrior God

Two questions still in need of investigation are when and under what circumstances the awe-inspiring splendor, originally a feature of the divine, was extended to royal imagery in the way that it applies to Tukulti-Ninurta I in the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*. I propose that the extension of this imagery to the king originates in the development of the warrior god Ninurta’s astral aspects. As we have seen, Ninurta was the model for the king in his role as defender against chaos. The rising significance of astrology beginning as early as the Old Babylonian period resulted in an increase in the astral modes of representation of the gods, including Ninurta. Following a period of several centuries, there emerged with Tukulti-Ninurta I a royal discourse that included the *melammu*-splendor as an essential feature of the image of the victorious warrior. It should be noted that the earliest compilation of the astrological omen series *Enūma Anu Enlil* dates to the Old Babylonian period,<sup>151</sup> which implies that in-

<sup>150</sup> Rochberg 2007.

<sup>151</sup> Rochberg 2006.

terest in and knowledge of the movement of the heavenly bodies must have reached even further back in time.

Three astral deities, Šulpa'e, who is in later omen texts associated with Jupiter,<sup>152</sup> Pabilsag, equated with Sagittarius already in the Old Babylonian period, and Numušda, a star in the path of Ea,<sup>153</sup> appeared in association with Ningirsu/Ninurta in the time between the Ur III period (2112–2004 BCE) and the Larsa period (2025–1763 BCE). At the time of Gudea, Šulpa'e had his own shrine in the local cult of the city of Lagaš and was associated with the palace (<sup>d</sup>šul-pa-è-é-gala<sub>g</sub>).<sup>154</sup> Of interest is the fact that even the temple of Ninurta is said to have been adorned with the brightness of heaven (*še-er-zi-an-na-ka*),<sup>155</sup> which might reflect the beginnings of an astral discourse centered on Ninurta. Šulpa'e was also integrated into the pantheon of Nippur during the Ur III period, probably on account of his wife, the goddess Ninhursaga, who was already revered there.<sup>156</sup> A Sumerian hymn dedicated to Šulpa'e that possibly originated in this context already refers to the luminous quality of his appearance:

Hero, who shines forth like moonlight over the upper city!  
 Hero Šulpa'e, who shines forth like moonlight over the upper city!  
 Eminent and famous Šulpa'e, who shines forth like moonlight over the upper city.  
 Lord of great divine powers (me), god who comes forth in glory (pa-e<sub>3</sub>).  
 Šulpa'e, of great divine powers, god who appears in glory, lordly in battle, who makes  
 vegetation grow tall in the Land!  
 Lord who raises his great arms, battle-club that smashes all enemies!  
 Pre-eminent brother-in-law of Father Enlil. Good youth of Enlil. He has named your au-  
 gust name.<sup>157</sup>

Of further interest to our understanding of the figure of Ninurta is the fact that this hymn associates Šulpa'e's astral mode with his capacity to make vegetation grow and with his martial qualities. The concrete reference to an astral mode of divine representation – evident in the reference to Šulpa'e's luminous shine and splendor – has been overlooked in modern scholarship, perhaps because there are no astrological omen texts from the Ur III period. Ninurta, however, is associated with Pabilsag, who is later identified with Sagittarius in

152 Rochberg 2007.

153 Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998.

154 Falkenstein 1963, 11 ff., 25.

155 Edzard, Gudea, E3/1.1.7.CylA xxvii 10.

156 Falkenstein 1963, 14 ff.

157 ETCSL 4.31.1:1–9 translates l. 9 in a slightly different way, neglecting the genitive construction: *šul zid* <sup>den</sup>-lil<sub>2</sub>-la<sub>2</sub> mu mah-zu mu-un-pad<sub>3</sub> ..., good youth! Enlil has named your august name.

a song dedicated to the warrior deity. This song contains an interesting passage regarding the goddess Nanše, which indicates a station (ki-gub) for Ninurta and suggests that an astral aspect was formulated for the deity toward the end of the third millennium or at the beginning of the second millennium BCE at the latest:

Speak to holy Mother Nanše, so she will cast her protecting arms over you like Utu! May she indicate your station (ki-gub) for you. ...<sup>158</sup>

The hero is most precious; his word is august. He is the sun of the Land; the discloser of great counsel in É-ama-lamma. Ninurta is most precious. Pabilsag is most precious. Ningirsu is most precious; his word is august. He is the sun of the Land; the discloser of great counsel in É-ama-lamma.<sup>159</sup>

The theological discourse that developed around Šulpa'e might have involved the rhetoric of light in its praise of Ninurta, as is exemplified by the following passage:

With the awesomeness that radiates from my forehead, which I make the foreign lands wear like a nose-rope, and the fear-inspiring luster, my personal weapon, which I impose on the Land like a neck-stock, I am able to root out and undo crime. I have the ability to reconcile great matters with one word.<sup>160</sup>

Both Šulpa'e and Ninurta share the epithet “thronebearer of Enlil (gu-za-lá-<sup>d</sup>En-líl-lá), which expresses the judicial agency of the god in the service of the chief deity of the pantheon. Both share the quality of the youthful hero whose principal activity is going to battle. Like Ningirsu/Ninurta, Šulpa'e is the hero (ur-sag), the “battle-club that smashes the enemy” (giš-gaz gu<sub>2</sub>-erim<sub>2</sub> ra) and “the rising flood” (a-gi<sub>6</sub> zig<sub>3</sub>-ga). This evidence demonstrates that in the theological discourse that developed either during the Ur III period or in the Old Babylonian period, an association was made between the warrior-aspect of deities and their astralization.

In the second millennium BCE, Šulpa'e-Jupiter became the astral representation of the Babylonian chief god Marduk. In the first millennium text of the *Erra Epic*, when the god Erra threatens the cosmic order by depriving Marduk of his power the event is described in astral terms that refer to the divine splendor of Marduk's planet:

158 ETCSL 4.27.07 ll. 66–69.

159 ETCSL 4.27.07 ll. 76–97.

160 Šulgi B, ETCSL 2.4.2.02.

I will shake the netherworld and make heaven tremble,  
I will make Šulpa'e (Jupiter) shed his splendor and remove the stars in the sky.<sup>161</sup>

The third deity with whom Ninurta was associated is Numušda, who is already attested in the Early Dynastic god lists from Fara and Abu Šalabiḥ. Numušda was considered to be the son of the moon god Nanna/Sîn, which possibly explains his astral aspect. Numušda shares martial characteristics with Ningirsu/Ninurta, among them the epithets “snarling lion,” “battle net,” “great dragon,” and “fearsome flood.” Further, the beginning of King Sîn-iqišam of Larsa's (1840–1836 BCE) hymn to Numušda<sup>162</sup> describes him as “Numušda, son of the prince, whose appearance is full of awe-inspiring radiance (me-lem<sub>4</sub>),” and refers to Numušda with epithets that are known from royal titularies. Among these are the image of a favorable destiny being determined for him while he was still in the womb,<sup>163</sup> and the choosing of justice (nig-zid) and annihilation of wickedness (nig-erim<sub>2</sub>).<sup>164</sup>

The theological discourse centered on Ninurta/Ningirsu at the end of the third millennium thus reveals a growing accumulation of functions and roles, which was achieved by means of association with other gods. This accumulation of functions and roles also demonstrates a concern with Ninurta/Ningirsu's astral aspect, which, as I suggest, laid the foundations for the ideological adoption of the *melammu*-splendor by the king.

Terrifying divine splendor is at first attested sporadically as a quality assigned to the Ur III kings and later to some Old Babylonian kings. Under Tukulti-Ninurta I, terrifying divine splendor developed into an important trope that served to convey the overwhelming martial power that the king directed against his enemies:

(10') Glorious is his (the king's) vehemence (*šarrahāt mamlüssu*); it scor[ches the dis]respectful in front and rear. 11' Glowing is his aggressiveness (*qā'edat irhüssu*); it burns the disobedient to the left and right. 12' His radiances are frightful (*melammūšu*); they overwhelm all the enemies.<sup>165</sup>

Although the trope of terrifying divine splendor remained restricted to the textual medium in Assyria, in later periods under the Sassanian kings the halo became an important visual icon that distinguished the king from the rest of

161 Cagni, *Erra Epic* IV 123–124.

162 ETCSL 2.6.71.

163 ETCSL 2.6.71:1–2.

164 ETCSL 2.6.71:38.

165 TKN I 10'–12'

the people, identifying him as a rightful and powerful agent of the god – a role already apparent in the Neo-Assyrian state rituals.<sup>166</sup>

During the second half of the second millennium BCE, scholars revived the ancient association of Ningirsu with agriculture, as is expressed in his role as “master of the flood” in an Old Babylonian period Sumerian BALBALE-song to Ninurta.<sup>167</sup> This revival served to frame the trope of abundance guaranteed by the agency of the god, which is expressed in astral terms. In this context, Ninurta is also associated with the Sebetti, i.e. their astral representation the Pleiades, because their heliacal rising in early summer and their disappearance in November marks the agricultural periods of harvest and sowing. Accordingly, control over the Sebetti/Pleiades was of prime importance and represented a major theme in the mythological discourse centered on the warrior deities Ningirsu/Ninurta and later Marduk. The relationship between Ningirsu and the Pleiades is apparent in *Astrolabe B*, the earliest known example of which dates to the Middle Assyrian period and was written by Marduk-balāssu-ēreš, the son of the royal scholar (*tupšar šarri*) Ninurta-uballissu, who worked in the service of the Assyrian king in the city of Aššur.<sup>168</sup> In contrast to the astronomical instruments that measure the altitude of the stars, the function of the Mesopotamian astrolabes was to identify the stars that rose each month in the Paths of Anu, Enlil, and Ea. In the menology of *Astrolabe B*, the rising of stars in the Path of Ea was connected with agricultural work. Ajjaru, the month of the Pleiades, is said to be the month of the ‘opening of the soil’<sup>169</sup> and is additionally associated with Ningirsu:

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**166** See above.

**167** *Balbale Song to Ninurta* (Ninurta F), ETCSL 4.27.06: “Through the king, flax is born, through the king, barley is born. Through him, carp floods are made plentiful in the river. Through him, fine grains are made to grow in the fields. Through him carp are made plentiful in the lagoons. Through him, mature and fresh reeds are made to grow in the reed thickets. Through him, fallow deer and wild sheep are made plentiful in the forests. Through him *mash-gurum* trees are made to grow in the high desert. Through him, syrup and wine are made plentiful in the watered gardens. Through him, life which is long is made to grow in the palace.” Ninurta’s role of controlling the “turbulent waters of the Tigris that return to Girsu during the flood season from the great mountain ranges” (George 2011, 9 i 2) in the East has another metaphorical meaning as illustrated by the following quote from Gudea Cyl. A viii 15–16: lugal-mu <sup>d</sup>Nin-gir-su en a huš gi4-a en-zi a kur-gal ri-a “My master Ningirsu, lord who is fierce waters that returned (or: were sent back) (during the flood season), true lord who is water/ semen ejaculated by the Great Mountain (i.e., Enlil).” In the words of George 2011, 9 “this wonderful poetic image harks back to the beginning of Cylinder A (i 5–9), where the outpouring of Enlil’s fatherly love for Ningirsu is likened to the overflowing Tigris – in turn equated with Enlil’s heart, which brings forth sweet water, i.e. Ningirsu.”

**168** Horowitz 1998, 159 n. 17 and 2011, 104.

**169** Horowitz 1998, 164.

(To) the month Ajaru (belong) the Pleiades, the Seven, the great gods.  
 Opening of the ground.  
 The oxen are prepared.  
 The flooding canal(?) is opened.  
 The plows are washed.  
 It is the month of the hero Ningirsu,  
 The great administrator of Enlil.<sup>170</sup>

Control of the Pleiades was significant insofar as their conjunction with the moon was considered to be of devastating consequence, as is described in the astrological omen series *Enūma Anu Enlil*: ‘When the Pleiades stand in the moon, there will be death and the Sebetti will devour the land.’<sup>171</sup> The association of Ninurta’s astral aspect with the growth of vegetation is further evident in a Šu-ila prayer addressed to Kaksisa-Ninurta:

You, Kaksisa-Ninurta, foremost of the great gods,  
 Runner along the pure heavens,  
 Utaulu, whose battle has no equal,  
 Powerful firstborn, beloved of Nunnamnir,  
 Legitimate farmer, who heaps up the crop in mounds  
 Who piles up the grain, who saves the life of all the people.<sup>172</sup>

Because of the prominence of astrology and the rise of astronomy during the first millennium, the astral associations of Ninurta became more and more evident. This is apparent in the so-called Neo-Assyrian *Syncretic Hymn to Ninurta*:

Your eyelids, O lord are the twins Sîn [and Šamaš],  
 Your eyebrows are the corona of the sun that [ ],  
 Your mouth’s shape, O lord, is the evening star,  
 Anu and Antu are your lips, your speech [is Nusku?],  
 Your discoursing tongue(?) is Pabilsag (Sagittarius), who [ ] on high,  
 The roof of your mouth O lord, is the circumference of heaven and earth, abode of [ ],  
 Your teeth are the Seven (Pleiades), who slay evildoers.<sup>173</sup>

The scholarly shaping of Marduk as the heroic warrior involved the adoption and elaboration of Ninurta’s astral aspects in *Enūma Eliš*, in the *Erra Epic*, in cultic commentaries, and in a myth that formed part of the incantation series *utukkū lemnūtu*. The Pleiades represent the seven sons of the warrior deity En-

170 Weidner 1915, 85 and Gössmann 1950, 109.

171 Gössmann 1950, 162 § 13h), Virolleaud, ACh II Suppl. IX a.

172 Mayer 1990, 470.

173 Foster 2005, 713.

mešarra in a Neo-Assyrian cultic commentary, which comments as follows on day 19 of the month Šabatu:

The 19<sup>th</sup> day, which they call the Silence, is when he vanquished Anu and the Pleiades, the sons of Enmešarra.<sup>174</sup>

Astronomical texts generally lack an explanation for lunar eclipses. A bilingual *historiola* that forms part of the *utukkū lemnūtu* exorcistic series, however, provides a mythological explanation for lunar eclipses that involves the agency of Marduk.<sup>175</sup> The seven evil demons (*utukkū lemnūtu*) are merged with the Pleiades and associated with Anu like in the *Erra Epic*. The *historiola* relies on the astral observation of the conjunction of the moon and the Pleiades to explain the astral phenomenon of the lunar eclipse, which appears to reflect some tension between Enlil and Anu:

When Enlil heard that report (of the Seven causing darkness),  
 He took the matter to heart.  
 With Ea, the lofty leader of  
 the gods, he took counsel and (as a result)  
 Sîn (the moon god), Šamaš (the sun god), and Ištar (Venus) he installed to keep the horizon in order.  
 With Anu he (Enlil) had them (Sun, Moon and Venus) share the rulership of all the heavens.  
 Unto these three, the gods, his children  
 He commanded them their night and day – unceasing – standing.  
 When those Seven, the evil gods  
 Break loose in the horizon,  
 Confronting Nannar-Sîn, ferociously they encircle (him) completely.<sup>176</sup>

As a counteraction, Ea calls upon his son Marduk to rescue the moon:

Ea called his son Marduk, and informed him of the matter.  
 “Go, Marduk, my son!  
 The son of the prince, Nannar-Sîn, who is evilly dark in the sky –  
 His eclipse in the heavens is clearly visible.  
 The Seven, they, evil gods, the fearless deathcausers, they,  
 The Seven, they, evil gods who like the Great Flood  
 Rise up and sweep over the country,  
 Upon the land like the storm they rise up.

174 SAA 3 no. 40:5.

175 Azarpay and Kilmer 1978, 374.

176 CT 16 19 52–73, quoted after Azarpay and Kilmer 1978, 372–373.



Fig. 45: Seleucid Period Lunar Eclipse Tablet (Berlin, VAT 7847; after Beaulieu 1999, 92, fig. 1).

Confronting Nannar-Sîn, ferociously they encircle (him) completely.<sup>177</sup>

This 7<sup>th</sup> century *historiola* can be related to an image on an astrological tablet from the Seleucid period that deals with lunar eclipses (fig. 45). The image depicts the Pleiades, the lunar disc with a man and a dragon who is coiled around the moon's perimeter, and Taurus. Although Ann Kilmer interprets the man as Marduk (alias Jupiter?), it is more precisely Marduk having absorbed the functions of Ninurta who rescues the moon with his magic club in his right hand and a rhombus-shaped dagger in his left hand, with which he stabs the dragon.

These few examples suffice to reveal the cosmic implications of the king's role as the warrior god Ninurta, which in the ancient *weltanschauung* went far beyond the battle between 'good and evil'. Any time the Assyrian king went on a military campaign to fight the enemy it was the cosmic balance itself that was at stake in mythological and theological terms. Among his other accomplishments, it was the king's military success that was thought to guarantee prosperity and abundance. The close relationship in royal discourse between war and abundance can, however, only be fully grasped with an understanding of the astral aspects of divine prototypes like the warrior god. I am by no means reviving the older notion of Mesopotamian religion as an astral religion, but I would like to emphasize that we cannot understand either certain juxtapositions and constellations of gods in theological lists and other contexts or the grouping of certain themes such as war and abundance *without* considering the astral aspects associated with the divine prototypes. The seeming unrelat-

177 CT 16 19:131-149.



edness of the roles of the king as Ninurta – divine administrator, warrior, and guarantor of abundance and prosperity – becomes intelligible if we understand these roles in light of the king's belligerent and masculine staging, since royal masculinity was a necessary prerequisite for the successful performance of the functions that guaranteed the social and cosmic order.

## 7 The King's Share in Divine Knowledge

### 7.1 Experience, Expertise and Knowledge: The King's Place in the Cosmic Scheme

Read from a diachronic perspective, the plotline of the Assyrian royal inscriptions does not remain restricted to that of the combat myth as conceived in the Middle Assyrian period. Another important trope, which emerges under the Middle Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I (1233–1197 BCE), is that of the capable, intelligent, and wise ruler who shares in divine knowledge. This trope is subsequently elaborated in the first millennium, initially in the Standard Babylonian *Gilgameš Epic* and then in the Sargonid royal inscriptions. Tukulti-Ninurta I includes the trope of the wise ruler in his titulary in one of the later building inscriptions from his newly built residence in Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta, which was constructed following his conquest of Babylonia:

Tukulti-Ninurta, strong king, king of all people, prince, vice-regent of Aššur, the foremost purification priest, ruler of rulers, the able favorite of Enlil (*tele'û migir* <sup>d</sup>Enlil), rightful shepherd, king (whose) decree cannot be rivaled, designate of Anu, the one who understands (*pīt hasīsi*), the wise one (*eršu*), who reaches the utmost boundaries of wisdom (*gāmer pāt nemeqi*), the beloved of Niššiku (*namad* <sup>d</sup>Niššiki),<sup>1</sup> the pure one, worthy representative of the scepter and the tiara (= kingship: *simat haṭṭi u agê*) ...<sup>2</sup>

It is tempting to view Tukulti-Ninurta I's choice of the trope of the wise ruler as a consequence of his conquest of Babylon, which – according to the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic* – occasioned the transfer of multiple scholarly and literary tablets to libraries in Aššur. It is likely that this transfer of knowledge also included the migration and perhaps even the deportation of Babylonian scholars to the Assyrian court, who then participated in the shaping of royal discourse. Both the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic* and the royal inscription quoted above strongly suggest the involvement of Babylonian scholars in their composition, as does the production of Sumero-Babylonian bilinguals during the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Tukulti-Ninurta I's self-praise mirrors the praise of the god Nabû at the end of his epic, thus representing another example of the king adopting a particular set of characteristics associated with a specific divinity. The appearance of the trope of the knowledgeable king in Assyrian royal discourse constitutes an example of the revival of a particular trope which in earlier times

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<sup>1</sup> The use of the term *nammadu* is quite unusual, see CAD N/1, 207, s.v. *namaddu* B.

<sup>2</sup> Deller, Fadhil, and Ahmad 1994, 464–465.

<sup>3</sup> See also *Chapter* 3.5.3.1.

had figured in poetic texts like the royal self-praises of the kings of Ur, for instance, rather than in what we traditionally consider to be historical inscriptions.

As a model for kingship, the trope of the wise and knowledgeable ruler is first negotiated in mythic literature. The presence of texts like the originally Old Babylonian period *Cuthean Legend* and the *Gilgameš Epic* in the Assyrian royal libraries indicates the significance that the Sargonid rulers attributed to the trope of sharing in and controlling divine knowledge – Sumerian *nam-kū-zu*, “pure, sacred knowledge,” Akkadian *nēmequ* – which “reinforced the sense of loyalty to the established order.”<sup>4</sup> As Bendt Alster notes,<sup>5</sup> this knowledge included the cultural knowledge of the king in his role as judge establishing civic order; knowledge of correct ritual performance and magic, the origins of which were traced back to the god Ea; scribal knowledge; and experience gained from life and handed down from legendary figures such as Atrahasis, Gilgameš, Adapa, Šuruppak, and Ahiqar. The notion that semi-divine figures transmitted their knowledge of the skills of civilization to humankind survives in Berossos’ *Babylōniaká*, in which the fish-man Oannes (Mesopotamian: Adapa) features as cultural hero.<sup>6</sup>

Although the primary meaning of the term *hasisu* and its derivatives is “aperture of the ear” and “(faculty) of hearing,” the term also represents skilled knowledge of the kind required for the building of temples, for fashioning statues, for casting bronze, and for a broad range of comparable activities. All of this knowledge was subsumed under the umbrella term *nēmequ*. The term *hasisu* designates the acquisition of such knowledge from exclusive professional circles or from within the family;<sup>7</sup> once in possession of such knowledge, both professional circles and skilled families guarded it through generations. Ultimately, however, practical knowledge was conceived as being derived from the gods. This is indicated by the Old Babylonian Sumerian poem *Inanna and Enki*, which lists professional skills in the list of the ME,<sup>8</sup> as well as by the divinities that epitomize specific professions. First millennium texts like the *Catalogue of Texts and Authors* and the *Enmeduranki Legend* similarly trace various compendia pertaining to professional knowledge back to the gods.<sup>9</sup> In this conception,

<sup>4</sup> Beaulieu 2007b, 3; for an extensive discussion of all the terms related to knowledge see Galter 1983.

<sup>5</sup> Alster 2005, 21.

<sup>6</sup> Schnabel 1923; Burstein 1978; Kuhrt 1987; Verbrugge and Wickersham 2001.

<sup>7</sup> Bremmer 1995; Graf 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Farber-Flügge 1973, 56–59 II v 65–vi 2.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, *ina hissat libbija*, as used by Aššurnaširpal II: “When I created that image of Ninurta (*šalam* <sup>d</sup>*Ninurta šuātu*), which in former times did not exist, (using) my knowledge

skill, expertise, and what the modern mind perceives as human ingenuity are all derived from the gods rather than from one's own cognitive faculties. The gods could and sometimes did share their knowledge with the king; in the *Enmeduranki Legend*, for instance, the gods share their knowledge with King Enmeduranki, who then shares it with his scholars. Practical knowledge is included in divine knowledge, imbuing it with symbolic meaning. This is central to understanding later Assyrian royal inscriptions, in which any technical or cultural achievement serves as a powerful idiom for highlighting the king's participation in the cosmic scheme. Interestingly, the trope of the knowledgeable king falls away after Tukultī-Ninurta I, to be revived only under the Sargonid kings, who describe themselves as wise or knowledgeable (*eršu*),<sup>10</sup> capable (*lē'û*), experienced (*itpēšu*), intelligent (*hassu*), learned (*mūdû*),<sup>11</sup> informed (*muntalku*),<sup>12</sup> circumspect and trustworthy (*pitqudu*),<sup>13</sup> and broad of understanding (*šadal karše*),<sup>14</sup> thereby cultivating an image of professionalism and "technical and informational competency."<sup>15</sup> In one of the few inscriptions that give his other name, Esarhaddon (680–669 BCE) makes a special case for having acquired expertise in all scholarly knowledge:

[Aššur-eṭel-ilāni]-mukīn-apli, the crown prince who (resides in) in palace of Succession, [... is complete], surpassing in intelligence, [...] whose mind has been educated ... of all scholarship, ...<sup>16</sup>

Royal ideological discourse regarding knowledge developed over time. Ancient Near Eastern knowledge is primarily practical rather than moral or philosophi-

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(of tradition), the *lamassu* of his great divinity, out of the best stone of the mountain and red gold, I considered it as part of (the innovations) of my great divinity in the city of Kalah, (RIMA 2, A.O.101.31:13–15 *e-nu-ma* ALAM <sup>4</sup>MAŠ šu-a-tú šá ina pa-an la-a GĀL-ú 14) *ina hi-sa-at lib-bi-ia* <sup>4</sup>LAMMA DINGIR-ti-šú GAL-ti ina du-muq NA<sub>4</sub> KUR-e ù KÛ.GI hu-še-e lu-ú ab-ni 15) *ana DINGIR-ti-ia* GAL-te ina URU Kal-hi lu-ú am-nu-šú) The translations of the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary "with my intuitive understanding," and of Ronald Sweet "with my clever mind" (Sweet 1990, 52) do not convey this connotation. Irene Winter's rendering "cunning/lit. intelligence, inspiration of the heart" (Winter 2008, 336 fn. 31) comes close to the original meaning, though it would be better to omit the notion of inspiration as well as the 'heart' in the modern sense, since the Akkadian *libbu* is understood as the seat of the rational mind.

10 Seux 1967, 22.

11 For this sequence of adjectives see Esarhaddon's *Nineveh A Inscription*, RINAP 4 no. 1 col. ii 18–19.

12 Esarhaddon, *Aššur-Babylon A Inscription* (AsBbA), RINAP 4 no. 48:24.

13 See entries under CAD P, 441 f., s.v. *pitqudu*.

14 Sargon II, TCL 3 23.

15 Holloway 2002, 83.

16 *Nineveh J* = RINAP 4 no. 13 1–3.

cal,<sup>17</sup> but cultural knowledge was nevertheless defined differently in different historical contexts. Although knowledge was ultimately derived from the gods, the Sumero-Babylonian tradition conceived of knowledge as residing with the mythical kings in the time before the flood, and with Ziusudra in particular, as is reflected in the Sumerian text *The Instructions of Šuruppak*.<sup>18</sup> Šuruppak's instructions to his son Ziusudra comprise teachings fundamental to civilized life<sup>19</sup> and include entirely practical concerns linked to agriculture, irrigation, and animal husbandry. The Old Babylonian version of the text introduces Šuruppak as the wise man, who tells his son to obey his instructions. Another Sumerian text, *The Instructions of Ur-Ninurta*,<sup>20</sup> demonstrates that the practical human undertakings included in the realm of cultural knowledge were considered essential to the cult of the gods. Accordingly, civilized life implied a relationship between kingship and knowledge of how to ensure the continuity of civilization as established by the mythic culture heroes from before the flood. To ensure proper provisioning of the gods, the king had to guarantee social order and justice so that civilized life would be maintained. The king did so by drawing on primeval knowledge from the time before the flood and transmitted over generations down to the time in which the king lived; in other words, the king ostensibly maintained order by upholding established traditions and conventions.<sup>21</sup>

Some curses at the end of commemorative royal inscriptions instruct the king's successors to read the stele or foundation tablet on which the inscriptions are written and to treat these objects in a ritually correct way before returning them to their proper place. It is these inscriptions that best encapsulate the cultural discourse emphasizing respect for and adherence to the past. An explicit admonition is expressed in the *Cuthean Legend*, which appears to have informed the beginning of the Standard Babylonian *Gilgameš Epic*:

*Cuthean Legend (Standard Babylonian Version) 149–180*

149            You, whoever you are, be it governor or prince or anyone else,  
150            whom the gods will call to perform kingship,  
151            I made a tablet-box for you and inscribed a stele for you.

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**17** See Alster 2005, 21 who argues for abandoning the notion of 'wisdom literature'. For earlier discussions on the notion of knowledge and wisdom see Galter 1983; Sweet 1990; Wilcke 1991; Denning-Bolle 1992; Pongratz-Leisten 1999, 286 ff.; Winter 2008.

**18** Alster 2005, 31–220.

**19** Beaulieu 2007b, 6.

**20** Alster 2005, 221–264.

**21** Note that *níg-gi-na* = *kittu* 'stability, cosmic order' directly follows the office of kingship and its insignia, as well as priesthood, Farber-Flügge 1973, 54–55 II v 16.

152 In Kutha, in the Emeslam,  
 153 in the cella of Nergal, I left (it) for you.  
 154 Read this stele!  
 155 Hearken unto the words of this stele!  
 156 Be not bewildered! Be not confused!  
 157 Be not afraid! Do not tremble!  
 158 Let your foundations be firm!  
 159 You, within the embrace of your wife, do your work!  
 160 Strengthen your walls!  
 161 Fill your moats with water!  
 162 Your chests, your grain, your money, your goods, your possessions  
 163 bring into your stronghold!  
 164 Tie up your weapons and (put) them into the corners!  
 165 Guard your courage! Take heed of your own person!  
 166 Let him (the enemy) roam through your land! Go not out to him!  
 168 Let him consume the flesh of your offspring!  
 169 Let him murder, (and) let him return (unharméd)!  
 170 (But) you be self-controlled, disciplined.  
 171 Answer them: "Here I am, sir!"  
 172 Requite their wickedness with kindness!  
 173 And (their) kindness with gifts and supplementary presents (?!)  
 174 Always precede them (i.e., do more than they ask!)  
 175 Wise scribes,  
 176 let them declaim your inscription.  
 177 You who have read my inscription  
 178 and thus have gotten yourself out (of trouble)  
 179 you who have blessed me, may a future (ruler)  
 180 bless you!<sup>22</sup>

*Gilgameš Epic (Standard Babylonian Version) 1–28*

1 [He who saw the Deep, the] foundation of the country,  
 2 [who knew ...,] was wise in everything!  
 3 [Gilgamesh, who] saw the Deep, the foundation of the country,  
 4 [who] knew [...,] was wise in everything!  
 5 [...] ... equally [...,]  
 6 he [*learn*t] the totality of wisdom (*naphar nēmeqī*) about everything,  
 7 He saw the secret (*niširta*) and uncovered the hidden (*katimta*),  
 8 He brought back a message from the antediluvian age (*tēma ša lām abūbi*).  
 9 He came a distant road and weary but granted rest,  
 10 [he] set down on a stele (*ina narē*) all (his) labors.  
 11–23 *Description of Uruk*  
 24 [*Find*] the tablet box of cedar (*tupšenna ša erēni*),  
 25 [*release*] its clasps of bronze!  
 26 [*Open*] the lid of its secret (*niširtišu*),

<sup>22</sup> Westenholz 1997, 327–331.

- 27 [lift] up the tablet of lapis lazuli (*tuppi uqni*) and read out  
 28 all the misfortunes, all that Gilgamesh went through.<sup>23</sup>

According to both the *Cuthean Legend* and the *Gilgameš Epic*, two elements were essential to correct royal behavior in mediating the interdependence of the divine and human world: ensuring the continuation of civilization and passing on relevant knowledge to future occupants of the office of kingship. Any failure with respect to either of these responsibilities led irrevocably to abandonment by the gods and, implicitly, to the ultimate collapse of the cosmic order. As such, the king served as mediator between the primordial past and the historical present. The expectations linked to the institution of kingship explain the overall idea of the Assyrian royal inscriptions, which in addition to referencing warfare, the hunt, and care of the cult, include utopian visions ranging from the rhetoric of abundance<sup>24</sup> to the rhetoric of social equality<sup>25</sup> and the mastering of technical expertise. All of these references and visions attempt in some way to demonstrate and affirm the king's fulfillment of the expectations connected to his office.

The idea that it was important for kings to record their experiences in written form, implying the importance of the transmission of knowledge of rulership to future generations, was not restricted to the *Cuthean Legend* and the *Gilgameš Epic*. This idea also appears in the *Synchronistic History*, a Neo-Assyrian text that survives in three copies from Ashurbanipal's Library; the text is written in Standard Babylonian and contains a number of Assyrianisms. Like the *Entemena Cylinder* from Pre-Sargonic Lagaš, which regulates the boundary between Umma and Lagaš, and like the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*, which focuses on diplomatic agreements between Assyria and Babylonia, the *Synchronistic History* places the treaty between Assyria and Babylonia concerning their mutual boundaries at the center of its narrative. Indeed, the continued violation of this treaty by the Babylonians constitutes the text's basic content, these violations being followed time and again by the victories of various Assyrian kings who manage to re-establish the borders specified by the treaty. In the text's conclusion, its author speaks of the fact that the *Synchronistic History* was inscribed

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23 George 2003, 539 f. This combination of the trope of the hero as expressed in the passage "the surpassing one of (all) kings" (*šūtur eli šarri*) and in that of the knowledgeable king is already attested in the version from Ugarit (Arnaud 2007), although it is anchored differently in the narrative structure (see George 2007). For the various prologues of the epic see most recently Sasson 2013.

24 Winter 2003.

25 Pongratz-Leisten 2005.

on a stele in order to exhort future rulers to take the necessary measures to ensure that they would not fall short of their predecessors:

*Synchronistic History* iv 23–26

Let a later prince who wishes to achieve fame in Akkad, write about the prowess of [his] victories. [Let him] continually [turn] to this [very] stele (and) [look at it] that it may not be forgotten.

Finally, a similar concern can be observed in the so-called *Weidner Chronicle*.<sup>26</sup> The *Weidner Chronicle* is in the form of a letter and is said to be written by a king of Isin to the king of Babylon. The text only survives in copies from the first millennium, one of which was found in the *House of the Exorcist* in Aššur. In this text, the advice (*amāt šitultī*, “word of deliberation/consultation”, 1.3) given by one ruler to the other concerns the proper administration of the cult of Marduk in Babylon; the recipient of the letter is, however, reproached for failing to heed such instruction (*urtu*), and the king of Isin therefore relates his experience (*alaktu*), cast in a dream-vision in which he receives advice from the goddess Gula. The text represents a unique creation that alternates between good and bad kings and descriptions of their administration of Marduk's cult. It is steeped in the tradition of the *Sumerian King List* and in the omen traditions centered on the kings of Akkad, and its structure is reminiscent of the literary predictive texts, i.e. the *Akkadian Prophecies*.<sup>27</sup> While the *Weidner Chronicle* is explicitly concerned with the cult of Marduk, the *Advice to a Prince*, which is known from Ashurbanipal's Library, focuses on the king's treatment of the citizens of Babylon, Sippar, and Nippur. As observed by Lambert, the aim of the text is to protect the citizens of these cities “from taxation, forced labor, and misappropriation of their property.”<sup>28</sup> The *Advice to a Prince* is written in the style of the omen compendia and is a serious political statement regarding the privileges of the citizens of the central Babylonian cultic centers, a concern that is especially apparent in the inscriptions of Sargon II.<sup>29</sup> It is addressed to kings in general and to the foreign (=Assyrian) king in particular, and thus represents another indication of the belief that the king's actions were supposed to conform to established traditions defining the office of kingship – in this case the granting of privileges to certain cities.

The texts discussed above represent variations on the subject of correct royal conduct, and their intertextual relationships reveal the erudition and creativity of the scholars at the Assyrian court.

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<sup>26</sup> For the latest edition see al-Rawi 1990.

<sup>27</sup> Grayson and Lambert 1964; Biggs 1985 and 1987; de Jong Ellis 1989.

<sup>28</sup> Lambert 1960, 111.

<sup>29</sup> Chamaza 1992.



## 7.2 The Trope of Abundance and Technical Expertise

The trope of mastering technical expertise, i.e. of human ingenuity with respect to improving living conditions and providing better care for the gods, was clearly of great importance to the author of the late version of the *Gilgameš Epic*. In Assyrian cultural discourse the emphasis on technical knowledge and practical information emerges in the Middle Assyrian period, in which Assyrian kings began elaborating on the trope of abundance in very concrete terms. As Irene Winter notes, the trope of abundance is always linked to water.<sup>30</sup> Although they stress their service to the gods, the Assyrian kings also point to their building of canals to provide for the cultivation of the crops that secure the subsistence of the city. This discourse was originally based in the topographical conditions of the city of Aššur. In contrast to the other Assyrian royal residences, which are all located in rich agricultural zones, Aššur is situated on a natural spur at the edge of the dry-farming belt, a highly unfavorable location necessitating the transport of water to the city's temples, palaces, and residential quarters.

The Old Assyrian ruler Ilu-šumma is the first to mention construction that was intended to secure Aššur's water supply:

The god Aššur opened for me two springs in Mount Abih and I made bricks for the wall by these two springs. The water of one spring flowed down to the Aušum Gate (while) the water of the other spring flowed down to the Wertum Gate.<sup>31</sup>

By the Middle Assyrian period, kings sought to meet Aššur's growing water needs by building major canal systems. In one of his inscriptions, Tukulti-Ninurta I (1233–1197 BCE) relates that he redirected the 'Canal of Justice', which had formerly provided water for Aššur, in order to water the fields surrounding his newly built residence Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta.<sup>32</sup> This was not a minor project,<sup>33</sup> but Tukulti-Ninurta I's successor Aššur-nādin-apli (1196–1193 BCE) reversed it – probably because Tukulti-Ninurta I's actions jeopardized Aššur's water supply.<sup>34</sup> Aššur-bēl-kala (1073–1056 BCE) boasts that he re-excavated the source of a canal that had been dug by Aššurdan I (1168–1133 BCE) in order to provide Aššur with water.<sup>35</sup> A similar discourse is apparent in Aššurnāṣirpal II's

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<sup>30</sup> Winter 2003.

<sup>31</sup> RIMA 1, A.0.32.2:30–48.

<sup>32</sup> RIMA 1, A.0.78.22.

<sup>33</sup> Bagg 200b and Kühne 2012.

<sup>34</sup> RIMA 1, A.0.79.1.

<sup>35</sup> RIMA 2, A.0.89.7: v 20–31.

(883–859 BCE) relocation of his residence to the city of Calah, which he provided with water by means of a canal drawing from the Upper Zab.<sup>36</sup>

The emergence of this cultural discourse in the textual sources is accompanied by the appearance of the stylized tree in the palace decoration of Tukulti-Ninurta I, the precise representation of which varies until the reign of Shalmaneser III. Earlier scholarship associated the stylized tree, which is often flanked by protective genii, with the pollination of the date palm,<sup>37</sup> but later interpretations have considered it either as an “emblem of the provisioning of the land and the role of the king in relation to it,”<sup>38</sup> or as a symbol of fertility and cosmic order.<sup>39</sup> Because the date palm is not central to Assyrian agricultural production,<sup>40</sup> its choice as a visual metaphor for abundance requires an explanation. Barbara Porter’s association of the date palm with Ištar, a connection that extends to the beginnings of Mesopotamian history,<sup>41</sup> seems the most plausible link, and it has the additional merit of being supported by representations of Ištar and the palm tree on ivories and alabaster vessels.<sup>42</sup> Assyrian ideological discourse does not link the image of the date palm exclusively to fertility; rather, it associates the date palm also with the king’s capacity for proper action, which is guaranteed by his communication with the divine world through Ištar, who mediates between the gods and the king to that end.<sup>43</sup>

Under Tiglath-Pileser I (1114–1076 BCE), utilitarian descriptions of the construction of canals and the undertaking of other measures to improve the supply of water to Aššur are supplemented by the much less practical building of landscape gardens<sup>44</sup> for the king’s “lordly leisure” (*kirî rišâte*).<sup>45</sup> These descriptions represent an ideological exploitation of technical knowledge, as Tiglath-Pileser I’s introduction of the landscape garden – replete with large numbers of exotic plants and animals – served as a further means of displaying the image of the king as having domesticated the forces of chaos and having brought them fully under his control.<sup>46</sup> Tiglath-Pileser I thus set the stage for

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36 Lackenbacher 1982, 124 ff.

37 Gadd 1945, 91–92 and Porada 1948 vol. 1, 76–93, and more recently Porter 2003.

38 Frankfort 1948; Oppenheim 1964; Winter 1981, 10.

39 Reade 1983, 27–28.

40 Porter 2003b, 17.

41 Landsberger 1967.

42 Porter 2003b, 17 with reference to Moortgat 19982, vol. 2, 72–74 and figs. 31–33.

43 See below.

44 RIMA 2, A.0.87.1 vii 17–27.

45 RIMA 2, A.0.87.10 71 ff.

46 Stronach 1990.



**Fig. 46:** Ashurbanipal North Palace, relief depicting Sennacherib's gardens and canals (British Museum 124939, b, Courtesy British Museum).

the imagery of huge parks (fig. 46) and hunting grounds depicted in the Neo-Assyrian reliefs, which in turn functioned as the model for the Persian *paridaida* 'walled enclosure, pleasure park, garden'.<sup>47</sup> During the next major expansion of the Assyrian empire in the ninth century, Aššurnaširpal II (883–859 BCE) went "out of his way to record the often exotic tress, cuttings, and seed which were retrieved on his campaigns, and which were then planted within the bounds of his new garden at Nimrud."<sup>48</sup> Far beyond signaling the king's pleasure, the royal gardens came to underline the cosmic role of the king "in assuring the fertility and fruitfulness of the land as a whole."<sup>49</sup> When he built his new capital Khorsabad, Sargon II (722–705 BCE) also established a royal garden, which he compares to Mount Amanus and in which he says he

<sup>47</sup> There is a vast literature on the Mesopotamian royal gardens, and my list is not exhaustive: Oppenheim 1965; Wiseman 1983 and 1984; Wiseman 1984; Stronach 1989 and 1990; Novak 1999, 332–351; see Mynihan 1979 on Persian and later gardens.

<sup>48</sup> Stronach 1990, 171.

<sup>49</sup> Stronach 1990, 172.

planted every tree of Hatti and the plants of every mountain; in this way, Sargon II exploits the ideological potential of his garden to mirror and manifest his control of the world.

Royal discourse centered on skill and knowledge developed further under Sennacherib (704–681 BCE), whose *Bavian Inscription* emphasizes the technical details of his construction of a complex infrastructure for the provision of water to Nineveh. In contrast to earlier royal inscriptions, which follow the sequential rhetoric of the *chaîne opératoire* of the king's actions – titulary, military account, building account – the invocation of the gods in Sennacherib's *Bavian Inscription* is followed by an account of the irrigation system he built around Nineveh and only then proceeds to the narrative of his military success, in this case the destruction of Babylon (figs. 47–49). In his account of the construction of the hydraulic system that was to supply Nineveh and its surroundings with water, Sennacherib dwells at great length on technical details:

At that time I greatly enlarged the abode of Nineveh. Its wall and the outer wall thereof, which had not existed before, I built anew and raised mountain-high. Its fields, which through lack of water had turned into wasteland, and came to look like holes<sup>2</sup> so that its people did not know water for irrigation but (instead) used to wait for rain to fall from the sky, (these fields) I watered, and from the villages of ... 17 GN ..., the waters, which were above the town of Hadabiti, (through) eighteen canals, which I dug, I directed their course towards the Khosr River. From the border of he town Kisiri to the midst of Nineveh I had a canal dug and brought those waters down therein. Sennacherib-Canal, I called its name. And the surplus of those waters I led out through the midst of Mount Tas, a difficult mountain, on the border of Akkad. ...<sup>50</sup>

The *Bavian Inscription* further details the building measures that ensured the provision of water for the orchards and vineyards of Nineveh and the fields around it. This first section of the inscription concludes with the dedication of the canal from Tarbisu to Nineveh and a description of Sennacherib's generous payment to the workmen.

The *Bavian Inscription*'s building account emphasizes Sennacherib's mastery of hydraulic techniques<sup>51</sup> and functions like an extended year name, as the preamble to the second part of the inscription, which narrates the military account, begins as follows: “in the same year with the opening of that canal, which I dug, ...” A description of Sennacherib's military campaign against Elam and Babylon follows, resulting in the destruction of Babylon by means of flooding. Only after the narrative regarding Babylon's destruction does the king resume his description of the construction of the canal system, which concludes

<sup>50</sup> Luckenbill, OIP 2, 79 f. ll. 5–13.

<sup>51</sup> Bagg 2000a.

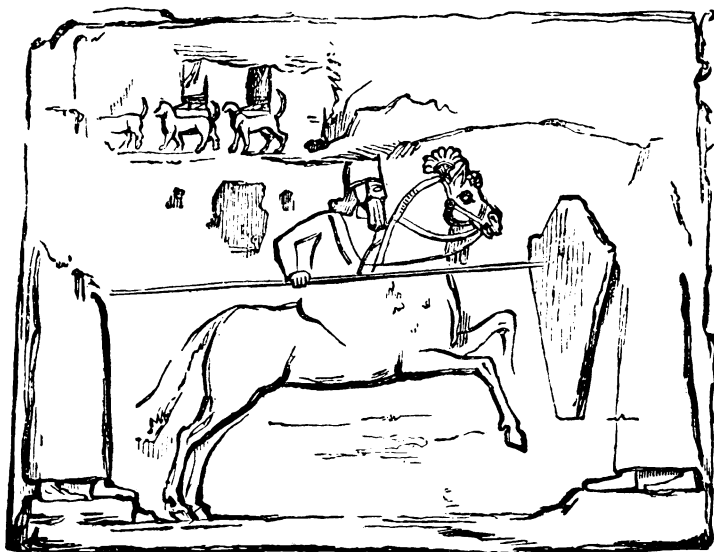


Fig. 47: Bavian Relief of Sennacherib riding horse (after Börker-Klähn 1982: No. 186b).

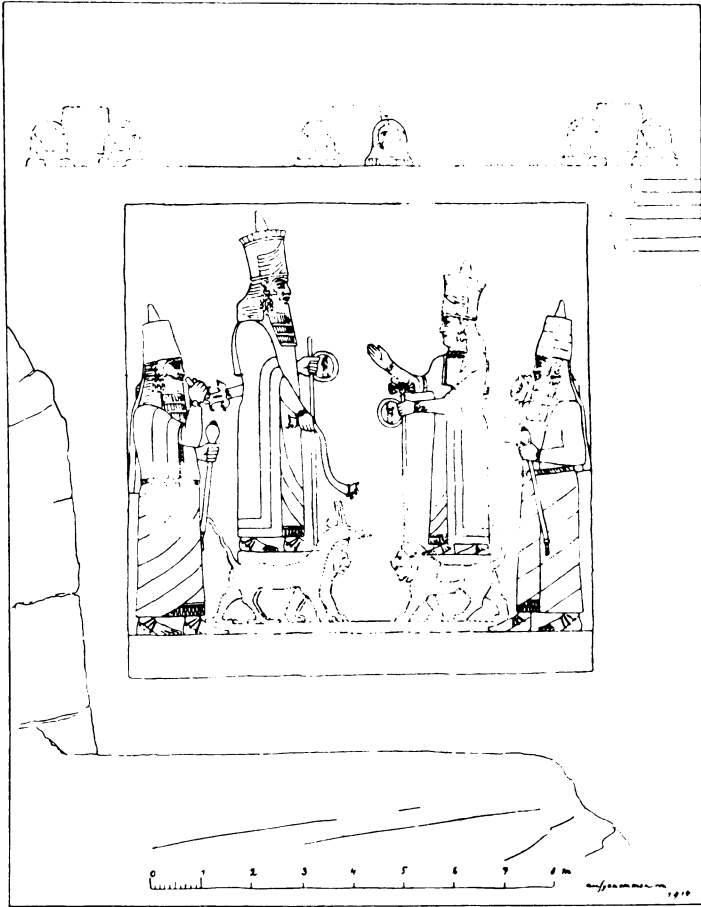
with a reference to six steles that were set up at the source of the canal in mount Tas and which are said to bear an image of Sennacherib himself in reverential pose, praying to the gods (*lābin appi*) depicted above him.

Sennacherib's *Bavian Inscription* thus combines the two key metaphors of the king: first, the monarch assumes the beneficial role of Ninurta as patron of agriculture controlling the waters of the mountains and guiding them into the Mesopotamian plain (*Lugal-e* 355 ff.).<sup>52</sup> Second, the devastating effect of Ninurta's onrushing flood – one of Ninurta's weapons as known from Assyrian royal inscriptions and the much earlier myths of *Lugal-e* and *Angimdimma*<sup>53</sup> – is manifest in the king's destruction of Babylon. In the Sumerian poem *Fields of Ninurta*, Ninurta is credited with the invention of agriculture and its tools,<sup>54</sup> a

<sup>52</sup> Civil 1994, 98; Annus 2002, 152–156.

<sup>53</sup> See Annus 2002, 123–133 with numerous references and a bibliography.

<sup>54</sup> The incipit of this text reads  $u_4-r_1-[a] u_4 sud-r[i_2-a]$  “in those days, in those distant days” and thus resembles the Barton Cylinder (Alster and Westenholz 1994). In the text *The Fields of Ninurta*, Ninurta is equally introduced as the son of Enlil, and depicted in charge of all the fields of Nippur. The text survives in several Ur III fragments and at least eight Old Babylonian witnesses from Nippur. About 160 lines of the text are preserved which originally may have had as many as 280 lines (see Rubio 2003, 205). In this text “a lexical template has been expanded and interdigitated with predicates, which fashioned it into a literary work.” (Rubio 2003, 207).

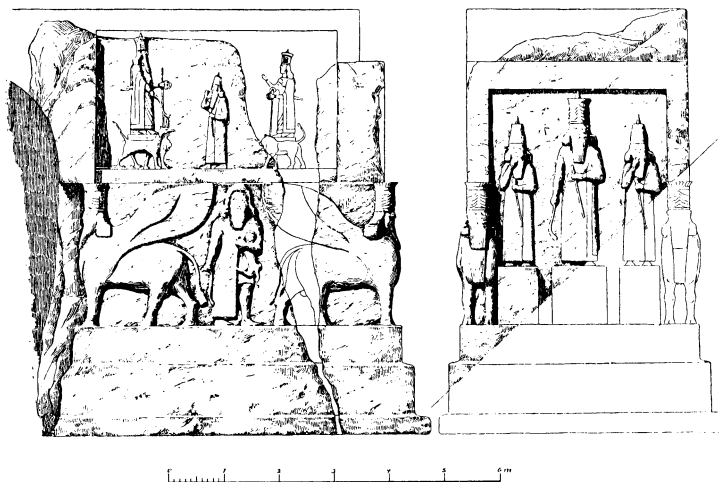


**Fig. 48:** Bavian Relief of Sennacherib Adoration (after Börker-Klähn 1982: No. 187a).

trope revived under Sennacherib's son and successor Esarhaddon, who wrote his name in astroglyphs and included the plough as a symbol of Ninurta.<sup>55</sup>

Sennacherib's significant investment in what was probably a summer residence and gardens at the site of Bavian – decorated with several reliefs showing him either riding his horse into battle (fig. 47) or in adoration of the gods Aššur and Ištar-Mullissu (figs. 48 and 49) – demonstrate the great importance the Assyrian king assigned to his hydraulic achievements.

<sup>55</sup> On the interpretation of the writing of Esarhaddon's name in hieroglyphs see Finkel and Reade (1996) and Roaf and Zgoll 2001.



**Fig. 49:** Bavian Relief of Sennacherib Adoration Entire Scene (after Börker-Klähn 1982: No. 188).

Similarly, it is Sennacherib with his interest in technical knowledge who introduced the trope comparing the king to Adapa, one of the seven sages in the entourage of Ea, the god of practical knowledge. A Seleucid text lists Adapa as the first among the seven sages,<sup>56</sup> juxtaposing legendary and historical kings with their chief scholars. Indeed, during the first millennium BCE “U’anna/Adapa, known under the form Oannes in Berossos, became the archetype of antediluvian knowledge and wisdom.”<sup>57</sup> Although the *Verse Account*, a propaganda text directed against the late Babylonian king Nabonidus (555–539 BCE), reflects the rising claim of the learned elites to intellectual and religious leadership and thus challenges the monarchical monopoly on knowledge,<sup>58</sup> the association of kings with scholars in Sargonid Assyria appears to have a solely positive connotation, as it enhances the king’s operational capacities in ruling his empire.<sup>59</sup> In a bull inscription detailing the building of his new *Palace-Without-Rival* in Nineveh, Sennacherib extols himself in the following terms:

<sup>56</sup> See most recently Lenzi 2008a and 2008b with discussion of earlier bibliography.

<sup>57</sup> Beaulieu 2007c, 161.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Pongratz-Leisten 1999, 310 f.

Ninšiku (Ea) provided me with broad knowledge (*karšu ritpašu*) equal to the sage Adapa (*šinnat apkalli Adapa*), he is the one who gave me sharp intelligence.<sup>60</sup>

In the same way, Sennacherib emphasizes his knowledge of bronze-casting in his inscription related to the construction of the gates of the *akītu* house:

I constructed a red bronze gate, which as to its metal b[ands] was the work of the smith god Ninagal, and of my own ingenuity ... I assembled silver, gold and bronze in the form of rings. I myself, as one who understands the matters involved, am capable of breaking up utensils of silver, gold, and red bronze – from one thousand talents to one shekel, to crush together and undertake their smelting.<sup>61</sup>

The royal effort to publicize the king's personal technical knowledge and achievements conflicts with the cultural norm that regarded cities and their institutions as having originated in mythic times. In the above-cited statements of Sennacherib, cultural reluctance to overtly accept and explicitly refer to any kind of innovation or progress probably informs the respective coupling of the king with the sage Adapa and the smith-god Ninagal. By connecting the king's achievements to these figures, the king is associated with the legitimate sources of the relevant skilled knowledge within ideological discourse and the king's personal claims are thus linked with the mythic past. Nonetheless, royal discourse does reveal a growing tendency toward a form of self-reflection that aims at historicizing the ideal paradigm of kingship and identifies that ideal with incumbent kings.

This emphasis on technical expertise and enthusiasm for the detailed narration of technical accomplishments compares with the military accounts, which convey relevant geographical information regarding past campaigns with utmost precision and present long lists of the names of conquered cities, sometimes accompanied by descriptions of their landscapes, flora and fauna, and ethnic particularities. Since these geographical descriptions can include additional information concerning the nature of the booty and tribute collected for the Assyrian temples, they can be read as variations on the theme of the king providing for the cult.

Interest in technical details was abandoned under Ashurbanipal, making way for the trope of the king as learned scholar versed in divination. The theme of abundance is disconnected from the successful application of hydraulic expertise and is instead entirely mythologized, with the gods taking center stage.

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<sup>60</sup> Luckenbill, OIP 2, 117:4.

<sup>61</sup> K 1356, Pallis 1926 pls. 3 and 4; Luckenbill, OIP 2, 139 ff.; Livingstone *NABU* 1990/87; Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 207 f.; Frahm 1997, T 183.



This is apparent in the introduction to one of Ashurbanipal's most important building inscriptions, Prism A:

Since Aššur, Sîn, Šamaš, Adad, Marduk, Nabû, Ištar of Nineveh, Šarrat-Kidmuri, Ištar of Arbela, Ninurta, Nergal, and Nusku let me take a seat on the throne of my father, my begetter, Adad, released the rains, Ea opened his springs, the grain grew in its furrows five ells long, the ear grew  $5/6$  ells long, the crop prospered, abundance of Nisaba, the grasslands grew steadily and abundantly, the orchards abounded in fruit, the cattle gave birth easily. During my reign, abundance (hé-nun=*nihšu*) and plenty (*tuhdu*), during my years bountiful produce (*hegallu*) was heaped up.<sup>62</sup>

This reading of Assyrian royal inscriptions represents a slightly different take on what Fales defined as the “positive position,” which regards their narrative as a “particular mix of outright informative data, ideological biases, and literary alterations” that should be understood “in the light of a long-standing stream of tradition and for preservation in future memory.”<sup>63</sup> Assuming that the narrative structure of these inscriptions follows a particular *chaîne opératoire* that suits the ancient cosmology, I strongly suggest that they should be read through the lens of myth and contextualized within their broader religious framework, which anticipates the king's assumption of the role of the victorious warrior god Ninurta. All additional tropes or historical details should be considered secondary insofar as these did not alter the primary message contained in the plotline of the combat myth.

### 7.3 The *chaîne opératoire* of Royal Performance and the Assyrian Enthusiasm for Detail

Tiglath-Pileser I (1114–1076 BCE) was the first king to develop the formal structure of Assyrian royal inscriptions in a way that weaved together the tropes of warfare, hunt, the building of the temple, and the resulting prosperity granted by the gods into a sequence that formed a coherent and meaningful narrative. This new compositional ‘architecture’<sup>64</sup> or *chaîne opératoire* – to borrow a term used by Marcel Mauss and his pupil André Leroi-Gourhan to conceptualize technical processes and their social effects<sup>65</sup> – was meant to demonstrate that

<sup>62</sup> Borger 1996, Prism A i 41–51.

<sup>63</sup> Fales 1999–2001, 138.

<sup>64</sup> Fales 1999–2001, 139.

<sup>65</sup> Mauss 1935. I would like to thank Kim Benzel for drawing my attention to Mauss' approach to technology; see also Dobres 1999.

the occupant of the office of kingship had fulfilled his mission on all levels. In this *chaîne opératoire*, the final trope of building the temple served as the key metaphor that signaled the king's successful reign over a community; this community was willingly subject to the civic order that the king established through key actions such as the hunt, warfare, and righteous judgment. Royal actions of this kind must thus be seen in the context of their ideological potential to shape and engender social and political communities, rather than being reduced to the level of purely technical procedures.

Correct social organization, ideally brought about through royal agency, enabled humankind to carry out the tasks of building the temple, excavating the canals, and working the fields, the ultimate purpose of which was to contribute to the proper cult of the gods. In other words, these royal actions must be read from the perspective of their cultural value in the ancient *weltanschauung*, i.e. as a royal response to the expectations attached to the office of kingship. This reading helps explain why in the visual arts, and especially on the steles distributed throughout the empire, the Assyrian king is represented as a priest rather than as a warrior or hunter. Similarly, at the end of scenes of hunting and warfare the king is depicted libating over the slaughtered animal or the subjugated foe. The pacification of the world was thought to be an ongoing process, but royal representation emphasized both the process and the ideal outcome.

By reiterating the *chaîne opératoire* conceived by Tiglath-Pileser I in their various commemorative and dedicatory inscriptions, the Assyrian kings demonstrated that they had lived up to their duties and indicated to the gods that their respective tenures merited divine support. Moreover, in a performative manner the monarchs re-enacted the ongoing process of pacifying the world and establishing the social order envisioned by normative cultural tradition. By adhering to the customary plotline in their narratives, Assyrian kings also transmitted the notion of the ideal "correct sequence of action" to their successors in written form. Indeed, it is precisely the "correct" sequential execution of royal tasks that defined the Assyrian view of the practical knowledge associated with rulership. The king's performance of the royal tasks rooted in cultural memory and formulated in the *Anzû Myth* aligned him with his predecessors and ultimately linked him back to the primeval period in which kingship passed from heaven to earth. Hence, every king in one way or another promulgated this message in his inscriptions carefully, inscribing it on statues, steles, or the walls of palaces and temples. The intention was to persuade the audience, which included the king's successors and the gods themselves, that the king had followed the proper course of action and carried out his duties.

Over time the royal inscriptions became more and more elaborate with regard to information about geographical, historical, and technical *savoir-faire*,

leading modern scholars to compare them to modern historiography. These inscriptions cannot, however, meet modern historiographic standards as their original intention has been misunderstood from the very outset. Because modern readers are oblivious to the fact that the geographical, historical, and technical details of the Assyrian royal inscriptions are embedded in the original ideological *chaîne opératoire* that links them to the fulfillment of human and divine expectations, Assyrian ideology has been regarded as merely manipulative and propagandistic.<sup>66</sup>

I propose that these geographical, historical, and technical details should be read as the tools with which kings identified themselves as individuals acting at a particular moment in history. Although Assyrian kings as a type were bound to a particular set of roles, individual kings used the particular data of their reign to define and express their individuality and personhood. As demonstrated by Mario Liverani in his seminal article on the variants in Sennacherib's epithets,<sup>67</sup> this historicizing aspect was further apparent in the titulary of the kings, which underwent constant changes according to historical political situations. Variation, as Liverani stresses, was the result not only of historical change, but – depending on context – could be functional; as such, modern editions separating the historical section of inscriptions from their dedicatory section actually distort the broader picture.<sup>68</sup>

As already stated in *Chapter Six*, however, the plotline of royal inscriptions should be read primarily in light of their mythic underpinnings<sup>69</sup> and as testimony to the fact that the relevant king had understood the mission of his office and dutifully fulfilled the obligations prescribed by it. Accordingly, royal inscriptions are ceremonial and celebratory in nature.<sup>70</sup> Modern research should thus be concerned with investigating the variations within the plotline of a particular royal inscription or, when striving to reconstruct the historicity of certain events, with examining the historical details by comparison with information drawn from text genres connected to daily practice.

In his examination of the Old Babylonian traditions regarding the *Great Rebellion against Narām-Sîn*, Steve Tinney likewise rejects the “separation of literary and historical texts on the basis of apparent veracity,” and concludes, like Liverani, that texts can only be read within their own context.<sup>71</sup> This con-

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<sup>66</sup> Tadmor 1997.

<sup>67</sup> Liverani 1981.

<sup>68</sup> Liverani 1981, 230.

<sup>69</sup> See *Chapter 6.3*.

<sup>70</sup> Oppenheim 1979.

<sup>71</sup> Tinney 1995, 2.

clusion restates an observation made by Piotr Michalowski in the 1980s: “the major corollary is the simple fact that the question of realism cannot be invoked in order to single out certain texts as historical, and therefore, somehow ‘real’ in opposition to those which one could, conceivably, label as ‘fictions.’ Texts are stories, or narratives, or whatever one may wish to call them, but there is no way in which any verbal artifact can be said to be ultimately more true than any other.”<sup>72</sup>

Michalowski’s assessment relies on the research of the historian Hayden White, whose examination of the relevance of literary theory to historical studies led him to contend that “it is sometimes said that the aim of the historian is to explain the past by ‘finding,’ ‘identifying’ or ‘uncovering’ the ‘stories’ that lie buried in chronicles; and that the difference between ‘history’ and ‘fiction’ resides in the fact that the historian ‘finds’ his stories, whereas the fiction writer ‘invents’ his. This conception of the historian’s task, however, obscures the extent to which ‘invention’ also plays a part in the historian’s operations. The same event can serve as a different kind of element of many different historical stories, depending on the role it is assigned in a specific motific characterization of the set to which it belongs.”<sup>73</sup>

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72 Michalowski 1983, 237.

73 White 1973, 6–7.

## 8 Between the Fictive and the Imaginary

### 8.1 The Tropological Discourse of Royal Inscriptions

A correct understanding of Assyrian ideological expression requires recognition of its highly metaphorical language and the epistemic function of myth as laid out in Blumenberg's monumental study *Work on Myth*.<sup>1</sup> The combat myth as a model of and for reality<sup>2</sup> underpins all regicentric literature, including the royal inscriptions; it was mediated through condensed icons such as that of the Assyrian royal seal and the Assyrian battle scenes in palatial reliefs; and it was staged in the performance of state rituals. Images of hunting and battle scenes, royal texts – be they epics, hymns, heroic poems, or royal inscriptions – and royal rituals all function as a kind of “phenotext”<sup>3</sup> or “hypertext”<sup>4</sup> of the original combat myth, which acts as a “charter myth,”<sup>5</sup> “hypotext,”<sup>6</sup> or “conceptual metaphor.”<sup>7</sup> In the words of Walter Burkert: “a myth, qua tale, is not identical with any given text.”<sup>8</sup>

Myth should not be dismissed as an archaic mentality, but rather re-introduced as a pragmatic analytical category<sup>9</sup> governing all media within Assyrian ideological discourse. Any literary royal text, image, or ritual must therefore be analyzed not only as a narrative in itself but also in its intertextual relationship with other cultural forms of expression and with “myth” as the “hypotext.” As formulated by Lakoff and Johnson, “the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.”<sup>10</sup> According to the narratologist Tzvetan Todorov,<sup>11</sup> the story-discourse distinction – the distinction between content and how the story is told – directs our attention to the level of presentation and to the arrangement and treatment of events, deep-

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1 Blumenberg 1985. See also Markus May's study on myth as a referential system in Aristotle's work, May 2004.

2 Lincoln 1989.

3 Burkert 1979.

4 Genette 1997.

5 Malinowski 1926.

6 Genette 1997.

7 Here I expand the notion of metaphor as developed by cognitive linguists Lakoff and Johnson 1980 into the realm of myth as a *Denkform*; see further Blumenberg 1985.

8 Burkert 1982, 3.

9 Kiening 2004.

10 Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 14. In this context see also Rolf Kreyer's discussion of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's notion of “presence,” Kreyer 2012.

11 Todorov 1966.

ening our understanding of the particular plotline chosen in a given royal inscription. These plotlines involve the pacification of the world (= military account + hunting account) in order to demonstrate the king's legitimacy and his merit, which permit him to restore or build the temples and to take care of the cult (= building account). Having acted successfully in both respects, the king is entitled to record his deeds in writing as a message to posterity and the gods (blessing and curse formulas).

Mesopotamian royal inscriptions represent various truths and intentionalities, necessitating a multilayered reading. One level is represented by topographic, geographic, and onomastic references, as well as information about the itinerary of a given campaign and lists of booty, which can be credited with truthfulness in terms of event history. Assyrian royal inscriptions in particular are frequently characterized by detailed information regarding the geography, fauna, flora, and people of conquered regions. Together with the stylistic format of the report this interest in comprehensive description can be considered an example of what Wolfgang Iser calls the "concealment of fictionality,"<sup>12</sup> i.e. the claim of the text to be an expression of reality. Such masking of reality is, as Iser suggests, itself a literary device. The relevant event history is, however, integrated into a narrative through emplotment according to the terms of the combat myth and through other literary and thought patterns. The emplotment of the narrative within the framework of the combat myth as represented by the Ninurta mythology constitutes the second level at which royal inscriptions should be read and carries an intentional truth, i.e. the ideological message of the king securing the civic and cosmic order.<sup>13</sup> Tropological discourse in the royal inscriptions is not limited to the trope of the king as successful warrior and provider for the temple, but structures their narrative as a whole.

Consequently, Assyrian historiography is more than a mere narrative of historical phenomena encompassing events, persons, processes, and institutions. Since the Ninurta mythology dominates the plot structure of royal inscriptions, Assyrian historiography should be read as a discourse in tropological terms with the combat myth as the central metaphor framing royal action. It is by means of their converging presentation in myth and historical inscription that events were endowed with meaning and truth.<sup>14</sup> As stated by Hayden White, the notion of tropological discourse "strikes at the very conception of factuality, and especially at historians' claims regarding the factual truthfulness not only of their statements about particular events but of their discourse

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<sup>12</sup> Iser 1993, 12.

<sup>13</sup> For a similar analysis of the reading process see Liverani 1973, 181.

<sup>14</sup> See White 1999, 10 ff. on tropological discourse.

as a whole. If a factual statement is not only a singular existential proposition cast in literal language but such a proposition plus the implied conventions for determining what shall count as literal and what as figurative in that proposition, then such statements can no longer be taken at their face value.”<sup>15</sup> Dichotomies such as literal/figurative, fictional/factual, and referential/intentional are consequently counterproductive in the reading of royal inscriptions, the logic of which falls between these two extremes.

Such a reading further undermines the view that the Assyrian royal inscriptions were basically devoid of historiographical scope or that they served merely propagandistic purposes as royal self-celebrations.<sup>16</sup> In ideological terms, the king’s access and loyalty to tradition identified him as the guarantor of the cosmic order and as the legitimate occupant of the office of kingship.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the king gained authority in the present by actively participating in the cosmic order and reiterating cultural meaning by undertaking actions that befitted the royal office.<sup>18</sup> His authority was primarily based on his adherence to mythological paradigms and to his fictitious role as Ninurta. The Ninurta mythology served as the most relevant backdrop for the construction of the king’s individual image and for the plotline of the narrative of his deeds. Simultaneously, by combining reality in the form of historical, technical, and geographical details with the overall mythic plot, i.e. through the operation of mythic “*emplotment*,”<sup>19</sup> the king not only reactualized and reshaped the past in light of the present, but also defined his individual legacy by presenting an interpretation of his achievements that conformed to the mythic ideal of the warrior king.

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<sup>15</sup> White 1999, 15.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> See a similar discussion by Anderson 2009 on how the ancient Greeks related to their past.

<sup>18</sup> In a similar vein Renger 2003 already emphasizes the literary quality of the Assyrian royal inscriptions of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE and their interconnectedness with the epic, mythical, and scholarly traditions, as is evident in their use of Standard Babylonian language, the coincidence of the written line and syntactic units, and the common use of rare vocabulary. Such a close connection to literary production is already apparent in the inscriptions of Hammurabi and Samsuiluna, for instance, which also feature elements of the Hymnic-Epic Dialect (HED), see Renger 1980–83, 68 § 4). As discussed by Marcia Anne Dobres, this unfolding of the continuous process of becoming in technical production and in the establishment of cultural meaning was the concern of Mauss in his approach to technology, see Dobres 1999, 127, which can be applied with some modification to the chain of argument followed in Assyrian inscriptions.

<sup>19</sup> White 1999.

The descriptive, historicizing aspect of Assyrian royal inscriptions described above appears in relation to military campaigns<sup>20</sup> and eventually makes its way into the iconography of Assyrian steles. Through to the Sargonid period, Assyrian kings fulfilled certain conventions by *presencing* their achievements in the textual record: by demonstrating their successful performance of the actions associated with the combat myth, kings asserted that they had met the expectations that came with the royal office. The same approach is apparent in the visual medium of the royal stele. To name but a few examples, the pictorial representations of Aššurnāširpal II (883–859 BCE), Shalmaneser III's Kurkh Monolith (858–824 BCE), Adad-nīrārī III's (809–782 BCE) stele from Tell Rimah, and Tiglath-Pileser III's (744–727 BCE) Iran Stele all follow the same paradigm. These steles depict the king in the gesture of prayer, communicating with the gods who are represented above him in the form of their symbols (fig. 50). With the exception of the king's robe and his (optional) necklace,<sup>21</sup> these steles are largely standardized and do not depict any features that suggest an individualized representation of history.<sup>22</sup>

In Esarhaddon's Zinçirli and Til Barsip steles,<sup>23</sup> by contrast, the king is depicted together with the crown prince Ashurbanipal and the governor of Babylon Šamaš-šum-ukīn in an uncharacteristic triumvirate that is specific to the particular historical circumstances of Esarhaddon's reign (fig. 51). These steles also revive the image of Ištar holding the enemy by the nose-rope, which is known from the Anu-banini rock relief, but now it is Esarhaddon himself who assumes the role of the goddess in the iconography. Of further interest in these steles is the historically particular depiction of Esarhaddon's enemies in their relationship with the Assyrian king: Zinçirli was an Assyrian vassal and Til Barsip was an important provincial center along the route toward the Mediterranean. While Til Barsip was at one point a center of Aramean resistance to Assyrian expansion, it was subsequently Assyrianized culturally. The depictions of Abdi-Milkutti, the Phoenician rebel whose revolt Esarhaddon suppressed in 677 BCE, and of the Egyptian king, who is recognizable by his Nubi-

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20 Zaccagnini 1982.

21 Reade 2005, 11.

22 This is not to say that the depiction of the king in communication cannot take on other forms; an outstanding example of this is Aššurnāširpal II's (883–859 BCE) relief in his Northwest Palace in Nimrud. Located behind the pedestal in his throne room, this relief depicts the king at the side of the sacred tree, communicating with Aššur in the winged disk. In contrast to the iconography of the steles, here the king is represented in his role as the steward of Aššur and the position of kingship is reserved for the god himself, see Winter 1983, 26 ff. and Pongratz-Leisten 2011b.

23 Porter 2003c.





Fig. 50: Stele of Adad-nīrārī III from Tell Rimah (Orthmann 1975, fig. 212).

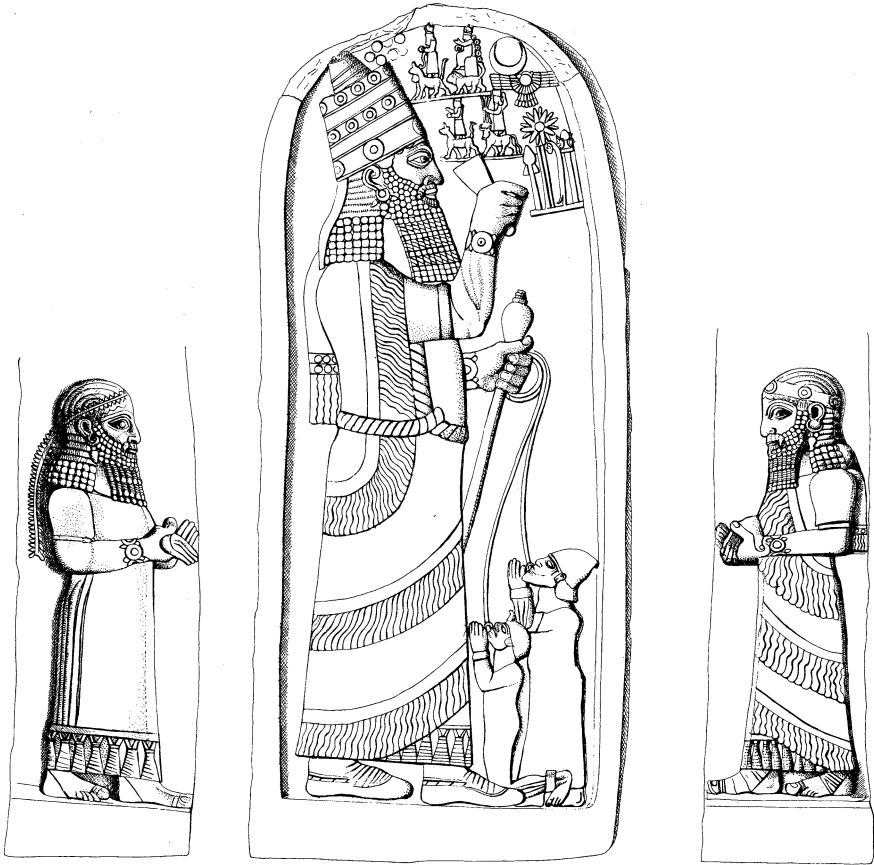


Fig. 51: Zinçirli Stele (Photo and Drawing after Porter 2003b, pls. 28 and 29).

an features, signal the “elimination of Egypt as Assyria’s last significant challenger for control of the west,”<sup>24</sup> and were meant to remind the two cities of Zinçirli and Til Barsip that their western colleague had been defeated. Whereas in the Til Barsip stele the two enemy kings are represented almost as Assyrians and with a certain dignity, in the Zinçirli stele in Sam’al they are depicted in the style of Sam’alian princes, approximating the local ethnic identity of the vassal in that region. Additionally, the enemy kings are much smaller than their Assyrian counterpart, and their “heads are thrown back so that they appear to look beseechingly at the face of the impervious Assyrian king. In an ironic twist, the scribe who laid out the text left large spaces in this line so that

<sup>24</sup> Porter 2003c, 71.

the word ‘Aššur’ is incised neatly on the upturned pointed beard of the Phoenician captive, as if labeling him as Assyrian property.”<sup>25</sup>

## 8.2 The Dual-Focus Pattern of the Assyrian Epic

Although it is informed by the Ninurta mythology, and although it shares with the royal inscriptions the historical framework of a campaign that actually happened including the historical figures of the Assyrian and Babylonian kings, the Assyrian royal epic – in contrast to the royal inscriptions – is never dominated solely by the emplotment of the combat myth. As is apparent in the Middle Assyrian royal epics of Adad-nīrārī I and Tukulti-Ninurta I, the topos of the king’s normative behavior in his dealings with the gods served other important plotlines as well. One of these is the Assyrian king’s adherence to the stipulations of treaties concluded under the surveillance of the gods, which the enemy king is said to transgress. The implications of the treaty motif were negotiated in myth before this motif made its way into Assyrian epic literature. In one section, the *Etana Myth* attests to the central role of Šamaš as witness to the swearing of oaths. This passage is preserved in full only in the Neo-Assyrian version of the *Etana Myth*, but fragments of the Old Babylonian and Middle Assyrian versions attest to the fact that it formed part of much earlier cultural discourse. The late version reads as follows:

[The serpent] made ready to speak, [saying to the eagle],  
 “[If indeed?] ... of friendship and [ ]  
 “[Then? Let us swear a] mighty [oath of Šamaš],  
 “A villainy of the gods, [an abomination you have committed],  
 “Come then, let us set forth [ ],<sup>26</sup>  
 “Let us swear [an oath] by the netherworld.”  
 Before Šamaš the warrior they swo[re] the oath,  
 “Whoever transgresses] the limits of Šamaš [ ],  
 “May Šamaš [deliver him] as an offender into the hands of the executioner,  
 “Whoever [transgresses] the limits of Šamaš,  
 “May the [mountains] remove [their pas]ses far away from him,  
 “May the oncoming weapon [make straight for him],  
 “May the trap and curse of Šamaš overthrow him [and hunt him down]!”<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Porter 2003c, 75 f.

<sup>26</sup> Foster 2005, 545 reconstructs “Come then, let us set forth [and go up a high mountain];” I think, however, that the focus remains on the taking of the oath. Wilson 1985, l. 14 translates: “Come, let us indemnify ourselves [ ],” a meaning that is otherwise not attested for *zaqāpu*. *AHw* III, 1513, s.v.*zaqāpu* N translates “(lass uns) zum Aufbruch (aufrichten).”

<sup>27</sup> Foster 2005, 545 and Novotny 2001, 17.

The treaty motif as negotiated in myth is *the* major theme of the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*. It dominates not only Tukulti-Ninurta's account of his dealings with the Babylonian king, but also determines the different relationships between the Assyrian and Babylonian kings and their respective gods. Tukulti-Ninurta is depicted as the beneficiary of divine support on account of his conscientious conformance to the terms of the treaty sworn before Šamaš and the gods, whereas the Babylonian king's betrayal of the emblem of Šamaš arouses the anger of his gods, who subsequently abandon him. With its dual-focus pattern,<sup>28</sup> the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic* is one of the few texts that elaborates on the behavior of both the king *and* his opponent, providing us with an idea of what the enemy's treacherous behavior implied in the Assyrian *weltanschauung*. The contrastive description of the Assyrian and Babylonian kings also plays out in their divergent approaches to armed confrontation. Tukulti-Ninurta I does not go to war with Kaštiliaš IV until he sends him a formal declaration of intent based on the stipulations of the treaty. This stands in stark contrast with Kaštiliaš IV's unannounced provocations against Assyria, and Machinist notes that "in the declaration, the Assyrian documents his charge that Kaštiliaš has violated their treaty, and then proclaims that he is reading out the tablet of the original agreement to the divine overseer of such matters, Šamaš. The god's verdict he concludes, will emerge from an ordeal of battle between the treaty partners, in which the winner will be the one who remained faithful to the treaty."<sup>29</sup>

The turning point in the narrative, as Machinist recognizes, is the Assyrian king's declaration and accusation, which later comes to represent the summary statement legitimizing the king's military actions in the royal inscriptions. With its emphasis on the contractual relationship between the two kings on the basis of a treaty witnessed by the gods, the Middle Assyrian epic articulates for the first time the rhetoric that determines the king's justification for going to war in much later royal inscriptions. The behavior of the opponent is characterized by notions of "crime, sin" (*gillatu*), "trickiness, evil" (*pašuqtu*), and "offense, act of malice, sin" (*šertu*).<sup>30</sup>

In the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*, the literary themes or *topoi* concerning the justification of battle and the behavioral patterns of the good (Assyrian) and bad (Babylonian) king – including the treaty-motif – are developed at length and in highly literary language. This literary language is replete with rare words and indicates that the text is the product of a learned scholar steeped in both

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<sup>28</sup> Altman 2008, 316.

<sup>29</sup> Machinist 1976, 458.

<sup>30</sup> Machinist, *TKN Epic* "vi" 24.

Babylonian and Assyrian tradition. Although these metaphors and literary *topoi* also inform royal inscriptions, they feature only as abbreviations in a condensed and perfunctory fashion. Indeed, when describing the Assyrian king's motivation for embarking on military campaigns the enemy king's treacherous behavior is sometimes condensed in the simplified motif of the lie (*sarru, sarā-ru*),<sup>31</sup> which omits any description of the specifics regarding a given enemy's violation of a treaty. Moreover, in contrast to the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic* royal inscriptions are single-focused, centering on the action of the Assyrian king without accounting for the thought processes of enemies and assigning them a passive and often even anonymous role. In this presentation, the enemy king's transgression was ultimately considered a sin against the gods.

The dual-focus pattern elaborated in such detail in the Middle Assyrian *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic* reappears to some degree in the royal inscriptions of the Sargonid period – particularly in Sargon II's highly literary account of his *Eighth Campaign*. In this account, the Assyrian king credits his adversary, king Rusa of Urartu, with observing the unwritten but still effective rules regulating the behavior of adversary kings of equal status in times of war. Sargon II mentions that Rusa had sent him a formal message asking him to engage in battle, but then proceeds to meditate at length about his own pious and correct observance of diplomatic agreements, raising our suspicions as to the veracity of his account:<sup>32</sup>

*Sargon II's Eighth Campaign 110–125*<sup>33</sup>

- 110 he felt himself eager to contest with me on the battlefield, and, preparing remorselessly a strategy for the destruction of the army of Enlil and Aššur,  
 111 he drew up a battle line at all the mountain regions and sent me a messenger (with a challenge) to attack and to mingle in battle.  
 112 I, Sargon, king of the four corners, shepherd of the land of Aššur, who observes the solemn oath of Enlil and Marduk, who heeds the judgment of Šamaš  
 113 seed of Aššur, of the city of knowledge and broad understanding, who attends reverently the commands of the great gods and does not approach/transgress their designs,  
 114 that legitimate king who speaks only propitious words, to whom treachery is a taboo, whose mouth utters nothing wicked or destructive,  
 115 the wisest ruler in the universe, who had been created with intellectual capacity and intelligence in decision-making, who holds in his hands the reverence of the gods and goddesses,

31 Pongratz-Leisten 2002.

32 Note that Oppenheim 1960, 137–139 prefers to interpret the enemy king's behavior as a cultural trait alien to Assyrian war practice.

33 My translation attempts to be more literal in some parts than that of Foster 2005, 797 f.

- 116 to Aššur, king of all the great gods, lord of the lands, begetter of the “Mighty One,”<sup>34</sup> king of all the great gods, who keeps in check the four corners of the world,
- 117 almighty lord of Aššur, who in the prodigious fury of his wrath grinds up the sovereigns of the entire world and crushes their bodies,
- 118 that sublime warrior from whom whose battle snare the evil-doer has no escape, who demolishes anyone who has not revered an oath to him,
- 119 (120) who charges furiously in the clash of battle, (119) against anyone who has not revered his name, or anyone who has trusted in his strength alone, or anyone who has forgotten the greatness of his divinity, or anyone who boasts vaingloriously,
- 120 shattering his weapons and evaporating his formations into the winds,
- 121 (however), the one who observes the verdict (*šipti*) of the gods and trusts in the favorable judgment (*ana damqi dēn* <sup>d</sup>UTU) of Šamaš and reveres the divinity of Aššur, Enlil of the gods,
- 122 he (Aššur) makes his fierce axes go at his side and establishes him in victory over his enemies and foes;
- 123 because, indeed, I had never transgressed the boundaries of Rusa the Urtian (that delimit) the frontiers of his extensive territory, nor had I shed the blood of his warriors,
- 124 I raised my hands (in prayer) that in the midst of battle, he (Aššur) bring about his downfall, that the aggressiveness of his mouth may turn against him and make him bear his punishment.
- 125 Aššur, my lord, heard my just discourse (*atmāya ša mišari*), it pleased him. He turned favorably to my petition for cosmic order (*kittu*) and granted my prayer.

After laying out in detail his correct behavior, at the end of this passage Sargon II links himself to the notion of cosmic order (*kittu*) in order to present himself as a model of the ideal king.<sup>35</sup> The dual-focus pattern of Sargon II’s *Eight Campaign* is also characteristic of *Esarhaddon’s Apology*, which is discussed in *Chapter Nine*, though in that text the contenders for the throne are not explicitly named and the nature of their misdeeds (*epšētišunu lemnēti*) remains undefined. Despite swearing an oath of loyalty to Esarhaddon, the contenders for the throne are said to have schemed evil (*ikappudū lemuttu* I 25; *ikpudū lemuttu* I 42).

These examples from the Middle Assyrian and Sargonid periods substantiate the view that irrespective of their dual- or single-focus pattern, the intentionality of both royal epics and royal inscriptions was to promote the image of the Assyrian king as acting in accordance with the rules and norms of international diplomacy and warfare.

<sup>34</sup> Here I follow the reading of Foster, who reads <sup>l</sup>*gaš-ru* in line with the *Anzū Myth* rather than <sup>l</sup>*gim-ru*, Mayer 1983, 78 l. 116.

<sup>35</sup> For a discussion of *Sargon II’s Eight Campaign* see further Chapter 9.2.

### 8.3 The Fictive and the Imaginary: Myth versus Legend and Royal Inscriptions

Despite the presence of Assyrianisms, like myth, legends, and historical-literary texts, royal inscriptions were written in the literary Standard Babylonian dialect, a choice that is essential to their categorization. From the point of view of the text producers, therefore, these various text categories – however distinct their plotlines – were considered to belong to one large group that we might call literary texts. Additionally, these text categories are characterized by fictionalizing acts of selection, combination, and self-disclosure intimating the “as-if” world, and are all based on intentionality.<sup>36</sup> In all genres the denotative function is, to various extents, “made subservient to the figurative one,” and “the dual nature of the presented world moves into focus: it is concrete enough to be perceived as a world and, simultaneously, figures as an analogue exemplifying, through a concrete specimen, what is to be conceived.”<sup>37</sup> In all genres the relation between fact and fiction is redefined and factuality becomes a matter of “descriptive protocols.”<sup>38</sup>

Accordingly, the notion of authenticity introduced by A. K. Grayson as a method for distinguishing between royal inscriptions and historical-literary texts on the basis that the former were composed at the king’s command while the latter were written at the initiative of the scribes<sup>39</sup> is not useful – particularly because the texts can reveal the same fundamental employment, which might be enriched by other plotlines in line with their genre, and because all these genres are linked intertextually and were the products of the same scribal circles. Nonetheless, while fictionality in terms of Hayden White’s literary theory applies to any of the texts under scrutiny, the genres of myth, royal epic, and royal inscriptions still differ in their conception of factuality. Although royal inscriptions, royal imagery, and state ritual are governed by the combat myth as “charter myth,” and might use similar narrative techniques, they retain their distinctiveness vis-à-vis mythological, legendary, and poetic literature, which equally revolve around the figure of the warrior king.

In this context, Iser’s notion of the imaginary as the third element in a triad with the real and the fictive constitutes a productive conceptual framework, as

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<sup>36</sup> For fictionalizing acts in constructing a represented world see Iser 1993, 1–21.

<sup>37</sup> Iser 1993, 15.

<sup>38</sup> White 1999, 18

<sup>39</sup> Grayson 1975a, 2b and 1975b, 7 n. 9. Haul’s recent distinction between authentic, feigned (“fingiert”), and fictive texts does not persuade, Haul 2009, 133–135, as it presupposes the notion of faking, a notion that seems inappropriate in defining the intentionality of the ancient texts.

it allows the maintenance of the notion of fictionality for all text genres.<sup>40</sup> Although Iser's discussion is not concerned with historiography and focuses exclusively on literature, his notion of the imaginary can inform our distinction between the two in a modified way. The fictive transformation of reality through an "as-if" construction applies to all our genres, but it is the transgression of the borders of what is familiar – the experience of the imaginary as described in myth dealing with imaginary events and imaginary actors – that distinguishes legendary and mythic texts from royal inscriptions and historical epic. Textual elements that index the 'impossible' or the 'unreal' stimulate affective reactions in the reader and thus distinguish the legendary and mythic texts from royal inscriptions and historical epics, in which the primary referents are tied to reality. In the *Cuthean Legend*, the enemy has a partridge body and raven face and is suckled by the primordial goddess Tīāmat.<sup>41</sup> Such elements exceed the boundaries of experience and trigger an imaginative reaction that creates an imaginary world in the reader's mind, constituting an analogue to the representation of the enemy both in reality and in the fictive royal inscriptions. The transgression of the borders of what is familiar in literary texts discloses their "as-if" character even when the referents in a given myth or legend are "historical" kings or events. As such, despite the fact that Narām-Sin was a real figure, the *Cuthean Legend's* self-disclosure as fictive lets its readers know how it should be read. Applying the insights of literary theory as developed by Hayden White and Wolfgang Iser to our texts thus provides us with a framework that allows us to categorize the fictitious as bound to emplotment and the imaginary which draws on myth as bound to the experience of the counter-intuitive.

Literary texts other than royal inscriptions are, moreover, much richer in their choice of various *topoi* and themes. The *Cuthean Legend* refers explicitly to the written text as a medium for transmitting the king's personal experience and knowledge to posterity, a *topos* that also appears in the *Gilgameš Epic*. The "Open the Tablet-Box" theme, i.e. leaving behind a written text as a *monument* to future rulers, frames the narrative of the *Cuthean Legend* in its beginning and end; at the text's conclusion, scholars are identified as the agents in the process of transmission. This framework is embellished by the introduction of a second account concerning a legendary predecessor, the king Enmerkar, who is criticized for failing to record his experiences for posterity and thus functions to demonstrate the importance of leaving behind written testimony to Narām-

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<sup>40</sup> Pace Haul 2009, who seems to have misunderstood my distinction between truth claim and reality in discussing the fictionality of legends and royal inscriptions.

<sup>41</sup> Westenholz 1997, 308–309, ll. 31–34.



Šîn. The account of Narām-Šîn's own experiences then forms the third and central layer of the narrative.

Moreover, the *Cuthean Legend* and the *Curse of Akkad*, for instance, introduce the notion of royal failure due to disrespect of the gods, a theme conspicuously absent from the royal inscriptions. Another plotline related to the king's relationship with the gods concerns his observance or disregard of omens. In the *Cuthean Legend*, the king's obedience to the will of the gods as expressed through omens determines his success and the welfare of both his reign and his country. Interestingly, the performance of extispicy before a military campaign also occurs in the Middle Assyrian poem *The Hunter* (discussed in *Chapter Six*), and only appears in the rhetoric of the royal inscriptions in the much later Sargonid period. It should further be noted that in the *Tukultī-Ninurta Epic*, it is the enemy king Kaštiliaš IV to whom his own gods refuse to give favorable omens. Further, legends, historical-literary texts, and poems can deal with maltreatment of temples, a behavior that elicits divine wrath. This theme is negotiated in the Sumerian poem of the *Curse of Akkad*<sup>42</sup> and in the much later Babylonian *Nabû-šuma-iškun Epic*.<sup>43</sup> At particular moments in history, myth and royal hymns introduce new tropes of the king as culture hero, as is the case in the Sumerian composition *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, which attributes the invention of writing to King Enmerkar of Uruk.<sup>44</sup> Royal hymns from the Ur III period through to the Isin-Larsa period sometimes praise the king for being conversant in various languages, for possessing all kinds of skills, and for being expert in the traditional body of scholarly knowledge, a trope that appears in the literary text *Sin of Sargon*, which was composed under

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42 Cooper 1983b.

43 Cole 1994.

44 "His speech was substantial, and its contents extensive. The messenger, whose mouth was heavy, was not able to repeat it. Because the messenger, whose mouth was tired, was not able to repeat it, the lord of Kulaba patted some clay and wrote the message as if on a tablet. Formerly, the writing of messages on clay was not established. Now, under that sun and on that day, it was indeed so. The lord of Kulaba inscribed the message like a tablet. It was just like that. The messenger was like a bird, flapping its wings; he raged forth like a wolf following a kid. He traversed five mountains, six mountains, seven mountains. He lifted his eyes as he approached Aratta. He stepped joyfully into the courtyard of Aratta, he made known the authority of his king. Openly he spoke out the words in his heart. The messenger transmitted the message to the lord of Aratta." Quoted after ETCSL t.1.8.2.3; see also Vanstiphout 2003. Note that in contrast to the legendary kings Lugalbanda and Gilgamesh, Enmerkar was neither deified nor venerated. Old Babylonian tradition classified him under ill-famed kings because he had allegedly not written down his experiences on a stele to be read by a future ruler, see Westenholz 1997, 264 and Selz 2008. My thanks to Gebhard Selz who allowed me to read his unpublished manuscript.

Esarhaddon, and then surfaces in the royal inscriptions of Ashurbanipal (668–631/27? BCE) and much later in those of Nabonidus (555–539 BCE). The introduction in Sargonid royal inscriptions of the motif comparing the king to the antediluvian sage Adapa can be considered a revival of the trope of the king as culture hero, and is reflective of the process whereby epic or mythic literature articulated particular motifs before they found their way into the commemorative inscriptions.

In some instances, myth explores the psychological experience of a hero, “progressively and deliberately achieving a portrait that is unique and non-transferable.”<sup>45</sup> Myth can also reverse the sequential chain of gestures, as is the case in the first millennium version of the *Gilgameš Epic*. Whereas the Old Babylonian *Gilgameš Epic* praises Gilgameš as warrior, the first millennium version extols him on account of his extraordinary experiences. Further, the first millennium *Gilgameš Epic* invokes the trope that it is the king’s duty to inform future generations of his experiences in written form and then, without referencing Gilgameš’s military achievements, praises him as the builder of Uruk’s city wall:

He built the wall of Uruk-the-Sheepfold,  
Of holy Eanna, the pure storehouse.  
See its wall which is like a *strand of wool*,  
view its parapet which nobody can replicate!  
Take the stairway that has been there since ancient times,  
And draw near to Eanna, the seat of Ištar,  
that no later king can replicate, nor any man.  
Go up on to the wall of Uruk and walk around,  
survey the foundation platform, inspect the brickwork!  
(See) if its brickwork is not kiln-fired brick,  
and if the Seven Sages did not lay its foundations!  
[One *šār* is] city, [one *šār*] date-grove, one *šār* is clay-pit, half a *šār* the temple of Ištar:  
[three *šār*] and a half (is) Uruk, (its) measurement.<sup>46</sup>

As discussed in *Chapter Four*, the Sumero-Babylonian-Assyrian *weltanschauung* assigned agency for the foundation of cities to the gods in mythic times. Curiously, in the *Gilgameš Epic* the city plan of Uruk is in principle attributed to Gilgameš, even though mythical ancestry in the guise of the Seven Sages is claimed for the sacred precinct of Inanna’s temple and its staircase. Gilgameš is clearly envisioned as the legendary model king, and he is grouped with the *Seven Sages* and distinguished from later kings. The *Gilgameš Epic* thus follows

<sup>45</sup> Sasson 2005, 230.

<sup>46</sup> George 2003, 538–539 i 11–23.

the cultural tradition expressed in the *Sumerian King List*, which credits Gilgamesh with a 125 year reign and counts him among the legendary kings.<sup>47</sup> Associating the king with the *Seven Sages* is a literary device that reappears during the reigns of Sennacherib and his successors, who compare themselves to the sage Adapa.<sup>48</sup>

In contrast to the narrative logic of the royal inscriptions, however, the plotline of myth can proceed with acts that might be unmotivated or unreasonable in themselves, provided that they are “effective in setting up the explanation of the ensuing acts. The characters accomplish (or undergo) without any surprise the most improbable and strange things, which are impossible to predict or justify. But there is a coherent line that runs throughout the narrative and culminates at its conclusion.”<sup>49</sup>

While some of the various motifs described above appear in royal inscriptions along with their plotlines, they never determine the character and structure of the overall narrative in the way that the employment of the combat myth does. Further, Assyrian epic literature sometimes includes other literary forms such as the royal praise or the penitential psalm, as is the case in the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*. These literary forms only appear again in late Sargonid royal inscriptions like those of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal,<sup>50</sup> when the distinction between royal inscriptions and mythic narratives became ever more blurred.

Accordingly, the distinction between royal inscriptions, epics, and legends can be described in terms of the different use of or weight assigned to particular tropes and plotlines, i.e. the different relationships between historical interpretation and literary representation. Or, to apply the categories developed by the historian Jörn Rüsen, “retrospectivity, perspectivity, selectivity, and particularity,”<sup>51</sup> can be weighted differently in different narratives. Rüsen’s categories embrace the following concepts: the approach to empirical facts determined by projections into the future (retrospectivity), the relationship between past and present determined by the author’s standing in a particular social

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47 ETCSL 2.2.1 112–115.

48 This grouping of the kings with Adapa is typical of the Sargonid period and could constitute further evidence in favor of the redaction of the 12 tablet version of the *Gilgamesh Epic* in the Sargonid period, as originally suggested by Frahm 1999 for other reasons.

49 Liverani 2004, 6.

50 In his discussion of epic as genre Richard Martin 2005 suggests a communicative approach to epic instead of a formal definition based on content or style, as epic can “interact with and incorporate all these forms” – myth, folktale, wisdom proverbs, and praise poetry, see also Gilan 2010, 51.

51 Rüsen 2005, 66. Note that Rüsen still argues in favor of the historian’s objectivity despite the fact that all of these aspects speak against the notion of objectivity.

context at a particular historical moment (perspectivity), the norms and values determining the selection of facts (selectivity), and the way historical knowledge is related to identity building through historical memory (particularity). Annals and epics were both produced to justify real-life events and to magnify their historical importance.<sup>52</sup> Both utilized structures of meaning-production that were ultimately aimed at preserving and disseminating the fame of the king, making use of the past in order to anchor the king in a continuum of space and time.

#### 8.4 The Dynamics of Literary Textual Production and Assyrian Royal Discourse

The preceding discussion of the commonalities and discrepancies between royal inscriptions and other literary texts relevant to the emergence of Assyrian cultural discourse reveals the following development: in Pre-Sargonic Lagaš and during the following Akkad period, the narrative of the royal inscriptions focused primarily on the martial role of the king. During the process of literary re-invention that took place in the Old Babylonian period, the Akkadian kings Sargon and Narām-Sîn emerged as the charismatic protagonists of legends that described their forays into and conquests of far distant regions; additionally, these two kings developed into paradigms for a discourse in which the figure of the king functioned as a model of human experience. It is this context that produced great legends and myths like the *Cuthean Legend*, *King of Battle*, the *Gilgameš Epic*, the *Etana Myth*, and the Akkadian *Anzû Myth*. *Enūma eliš* and the *Erra Epic* can be considered the climax of those literary works that negotiate the notion of leadership and the justification of warfare.

From the Middle Assyrian period onward, then, the Old Babylonian legends along with the *Anzû Myth*, the *Etana Myth* and the *Gilgameš Epic* provided the effective background and model for the behavior of individual kings in royal literature, which includes royal hymns, royal epics, and royal inscriptions. In an expression of a creative and imaginative Assyrian adaptation of the longstanding Sumero-Babylonian repertoire of tropes centered on the institution of kingship, Assyrian royal inscriptions integrate these tropes into their coherent narrative, whose plotline complements the combat myth and hunter poems with the trope of the king as legitimate builder, restorer, and provider

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<sup>52</sup> Bachvarova 2010, 70 applies this only to epic literature in the Hittite tradition; I suggest that we can include so-called annalistic literature in this kind of interpretation, at least in the Assyrian tradition.

of the temple. The ideological emphasis in royal inscriptions is clearly on the king's heroic and conscientious performance of his duties on behalf of the god Aššur. Written on tablets buried in foundation deposits and on the reliefs displayed on temple walls, royal inscriptions function as performative devices – along with imagery – that aim to persuade posterity and the divine audience of the king's successful tenure of his office.

## 8.5 Making an Argument: The Intertextuality of Sennacherib's Account of the Battle of Halule

I close my discussion with some final remarks on myth as an analytical category and its intertextuality with royal inscriptions. Myth as a referential system functioned in two ways in the cultural discourse of Mesopotamia. First, myth could act as the hidden text or matrix<sup>53</sup> that informed royal inscriptions and royal rituals without necessarily representing a definitive and canonized pretext. Although myth informed the general narrative of royal ideological discourse, myth as tropological discourse was condensed, reworked, and re-actualized in the historical image, text, and ritual – thus fulfilling a structural and descriptive model function.<sup>54</sup> These aspects have been discussed throughout this book. Second, myth – or rather the act of mythologizing – can be regarded as an erudite literary practice in the production of historical inscriptions. In this case, the intertextuality between myth and historical inscriptions works through direct literary allusions or quotations.<sup>55</sup> As the preserve of high culture, such literary allusions reveal not only the pervasiveness of myth in the cultural discourse, situating it in an intertextual space, but also reflect the voice of the scholar as the invisible agent who fashions the royal narrative centering on the king's *body politic*. In literary theory any text is regarded as being situated in a web of other signifying systems<sup>56</sup> and is therefore the *product* of cultural discourse.<sup>57</sup> Thus for Roland Barthes each text is a “chambre

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53 Riffaterre 1985.

54 May 2004, 140.

55 See Genette 1997, 1–7 for five types of “transtextuality” including intertextuality (allusion, quotation), paratextuality (title, subtitle, prefaces, etc.), metatextuality (commentary), archi-textuality (types of discourse, modes of enunciation, literary genres), and hypertextuality uniting a hypertext B with a hypotext A through a process of transformation see Genette 1997, 1–7.

56 Kristeva 1980.

57 Greenblatt 1990; Genette 1997; Vanstiphout 2000.

d'échos"<sup>58</sup> that extends the notion of intertextuality into intermediality: "l'intertexte n'est pas forcément en champs d'influences; c'est plutôt une musique de figures, de métaphores, de pensées-mots; c'est le signifiant comme sirène."<sup>59</sup> For Riffaterre, the "very idea of textuality" is "inseparable from and founded upon intertextuality."<sup>60</sup>

In Assyria, however, not every royal inscription exhibits the same level of enmeshedness with other texts. According to Manfred Pfister<sup>61</sup> and Harold Bloom,<sup>62</sup> intertextuality only becomes a meaningful approach in the interpretation of texts if the global concept of the intertext is limited to intertextuality as a specific characteristic of literariness and poeticity. What, then, was intertextuality intended to accomplish and what can be inferred about the native understanding of intertextuality? To my understanding, a high degree of literary intertextuality is to be considered not only a particular manifestation of erudition, but also a manifestation of meaning-production and intentionality, and as such a resource for decoding the message of the text. Accordingly, intertextuality deserves a more detailed analysis.

The account of the battle of Halule recorded in Sennacherib's *Chicago Prism*,<sup>63</sup> for instance, is exceptional in the richness of its literary allusions. This account is written in a highly poetic language and arguably "constitutes one of the finest pieces of Assyrian royal literature."<sup>64</sup> The text's first editor, Daniel D. Luckenbill,<sup>65</sup> noted its stylistic affinities with the Babylonian creation epic *Enūma Eliš* as early as 1924. More recently, Elnathan Weissert has suggested that through the literary allusions integrated into the account of the battle of Halule, "Sennacherib's scribe consciously referred to [*Enūma Eliš*] in order to enhance his anti-Babylonian propaganda."<sup>66</sup> Weissert also argues that when the account of the battle of Halule was written, namely in 691 BCE, "Sennacherib's plan to besiege and destroy Babylon, loot Esagila and take Marduk into captivity must have already been conceived."<sup>67</sup> Hayim Tadmor follows Weissert's understanding of the text.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Barthes 1975, 78.

<sup>59</sup> Barthes 1975, 148.

<sup>60</sup> Riffaterre 1981, 101.

<sup>61</sup> Pfister 1985, 13.

<sup>62</sup> Bloom 1976, 2–3.

<sup>63</sup> Grayson and Novotny, RINAP 3/1, no. 22 and its duplicate known as the Jerusalem prism no. 23.

<sup>64</sup> Weissert 1997, 191.

<sup>65</sup> Luckenbill 1924.

<sup>66</sup> Weissert 1997, 192.

<sup>67</sup> Weissert 1997, 202.

<sup>68</sup> Tadmor 1997, 326.

Although it is tempting to imagine such a scenario, the *Babylonian Chronicle* records an altogether different account of the battle of Halule in which the Assyrian army is forced to retreat.<sup>69</sup> It is difficult to reconcile this evidence with the notion that Sennacherib's account of the battle of Halule served to justify a future sack of Babylon. Moreover, Sennacherib's account of the battle is replete with literary allusions to and intertextual links with texts other than *Enūma Eliš*, including the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*, the Middle Assyrian poems LKA 62 and 63, the *Erra Epic*, and the highly literary account of Sargon II's *Eighth Campaign*. Erudite literary intertextuality of this kind is extremely rare in Assyrian royal inscriptions and points to the author's extensive command of literary tradition and to his singular capacity for combining elements drawn from myth, historical epic, and royal inscription in order to present a particular interpretation of historical events in conformity with cultural expectations and tradition: in other words, to produce an argument. Broad interrelatedness between these texts is not merely a display of erudition, but a means of invoking an extensive cultural tradition in order to frame and substantiate the concept of good (Assyrian) and bad (enemy) kingship. This framework in turn acts to sanction Sennacherib's particularly brutal treatment of his Babylonian and Elamite adversaries. With the exception of Sargon II's *Eighth Campaign* and Sennacherib's account of the battle of Halule, the dual-focus pattern that typecasts the Assyrian and enemy kings as good and bad antagonists respectively is typical only of Assyrian epic literature and is especially prominent in the *Tukulti-Ninurta-Epic*.<sup>70</sup> Royal inscriptions, by contrast, generally present a passive and anonymous image of the enemy.

Sennacherib's account of the battle of Halule describes his interaction with the rebellious Babylonians following the abduction and murder of his son Aš-šur-nādin-šumi, who had been the governor of Babylon. The account articulates several aspects related to the ancient notion of the bad king and defines actions that were considered taboo or divinely prohibited. It is the particular combination and literary presentation of these aspects and actions that constitutes a clear *casus belli* and justifies the Assyrian king's military campaign. The following points are addressed by the author of Sennacherib's account of the battle of Halule:

1. The illegitimate kingship of the Chaldean Mušēzib-Marduk, who rebelled against Sennacherib, fled into the marshes, sought the support of the Elamites, and was at some point restored to the Babylonian throne. Antagonism between the Babylonian and Assyrian kings is not, however, limited

<sup>69</sup> Grayson 1975, *Babylonian Chronicle* 1 iii 16–18.

<sup>70</sup> See *Chapter 7.5*.

to their personal disagreements. To account for the extensive resistance with which Sennacherib was confronted in Babylon, the narrative shifts from the person of the Babylonian king to the people of Babylon themselves. The citizens of Babylon are said to collectively lock the city gates against the Assyrian king and are compared to the host of horrible creatures (*gallê lemnūti*, *Chic. Pr.* v 18) created by Tīāmat in her battle against Marduk. This allusion, evoking the notion of disorder and confusion described at length in *Enūma Eliš*, functions as a synecdoche for the entire pretext and determines the meaning of the new text.<sup>71</sup> Further, the illegitimacy of the Chaldean king is expressed in a way that alludes directly to Tīāmat's appointment of the unworthy Qingu as leader of her terrifying army of monsters, thus creating an alternative line of kingship to that which produced Marduk (*En. el.* iv 82). This intense dramatization of the antagonism between the Assyrian king and the Babylonians not only serves to demonize the latter, but also provides the explanatory pattern for the Assyrian king's subsequent actions, establishing a clear *chaîne opératoire* that is illustrated by the following passage from *Enūma Eliš*:

*En. el.* IV 115–18

As for the eleven creatures, the ones adorned with an aura of terror,  
 And the horde of the *gallû*-demons, which all went at her side supporting her,  
 He put on lead ropes, he bound their arms.  
 He trampled them under, together with their belligerence.

2. The poor moral character of the Babylonians as a community is reflected by their misappropriation of the treasure of Marduk's temple Esagila and their use of divine property to bribe the king of Elam to assist them (*Chic. Pr.* v 31–37a). Since in the Mesopotamian *weltanschauung* morality is communal rather than individual and because the king was responsible for the maintenance of civic order in his capacity as mediator between the divine and human realms,<sup>72</sup> these acts highlight both the immorality of the Babylonian community and the failure – and consequent illegitimacy – of the Babylonian king.
3. The account of the battle of Halule includes a description of both the initial planning stage and of the actual military encounter itself. It is in this passage that most of the intertextual relationships with other mythical and historical-epic texts can be observed. The furious attack of the Babylonian and Elamite enemy hordes is described in naturalistic metaphors as an attack of locusts (see the reference to Sargon II's *Eight Campaign* below)

<sup>71</sup> Pfister 1985, 28–29.

<sup>72</sup> Pongratz-Leisten 2013a.



and the cloud of a terrible storm. The author builds tension by relating that the enemy forces cut Sennacherib off from all water sources and sharpened their weapons in anticipation of slaughter. The introduction of the latter motif – already used in Middle Assyrian heroic poems and royal inscriptions (see below) – prompts Sennacherib to plan his counter-attack. Rather than describing his attack as his own initiative, however, Sennacherib is said to turn to the gods in prayer, who then come to his aid. The icon of the attacking king follows, rampaging like a wild lion, clothed in armor and wearing a helmet, holding the weapon of Aššur in his hand, and driving his war chariot through the blood and gore of his fallen enemies. The numerous intertextual references that characterize this passage are laid out below.

Intertextuality in Sennacherib's account of the battle of Halule transcends the combat myth, as the tropological discourse that generates the gist of the narrative is also apparent in Middle Assyrian heroic poems and royal inscriptions. Although myth does operate as the text's referential system of thought and pattern of explanation, its intertextual ties to multiple other texts is evident on various levels in an even more concrete way and can be identified on the basis of the four criteria below:

1. while some of these texts include Assyrianisms, they are all written in the Standard Babylonian literary dialect;
2. an intertextual link can consist of direct quotation, allusion, and the choice of the same rare word in combination with the use of vocabulary exclusive to literary texts;
3. the use of the same metaphor or literary figure of speech to describe a particular situation;
4. the use of the same phraseology.

On the basis of these four points, intertextuality excludes stock phrases and idiomatic expressions common in the Akkadian language. Any other intertextual reference, however, creates concise word-pictures that not only condense and crystallize the meaning of certain passages but also place a "constraint upon reading," i.e. they compel a particular reading of the text.<sup>73</sup> Finally, intertextuality can function to *authorize* texts, as is the case in the newly reformulated text of Sennacherib.<sup>74</sup> Intertextuality as an *interpretation* of historical events thus represents a coherent strategy that links the new text with previous texts

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<sup>73</sup> Riffaterre 1980, 628.

<sup>74</sup> On quotation and allusion see Mary Orr 2003, 130–167.

that have already defined certain cultural norms and expectations. In the case of Sennacherib's account of the battle of Halule, these norms and expectations concern the office of kingship and the role of the warrior king. *Enūma Eliš* is the key text informing Sennacherib's account of the battle of Halule, as Sennacherib's effort to reestablish terrestrial order is portrayed as analogous to Marduk's re-establishment of cosmic order in *Enūma Eliš* – while Sennacherib's enemies are likened to those of Marduk, namely Tīamat and her horde of monsters led by Qingu. As stated above, intertextual references to other epics and myths are numerous in Sennacherib's account of the battle of Halule (especially with regard to the *Tukultī-Ninurta Epic*, LKA 62, LKA 63, and the *Erra Epic*). These references are compiled below, but I cannot claim to have covered them all given that the full scope of such learned intertextuality certainly eludes the modern reader.

1. The description of the rebellious inhabitants of Babylon as “wicked demons” (*gallê lemnūti*), which identifies them with the host aiding Tīamat in *Enūma Eliš*
  - a. *Chic. Pr.* v 18–19: *māri Bābili gallê lemnūti abullī āli uddilū* “... and the citizens of Babylon, wicked *gallū*-demons, had locked the city gates.”
  - b. *En. el.* IV 116–117: *milla gallê ālikū kalū imniša ittadi šerrēti idīšunu ukassi* “He put nose-ropes on the host of *gallū*-demons, all of which will walk to her right; he tied their arms.”
  - c. *Gallū* demons appear three times in the *Erra Epic*, namely when the Sebetti call Erra to arms: *gallū lišmūma ina ramā[nišunu lili]kū* “the *gallū*-demons may hear it and turn away (Erra I 67);” when Marduk describes the disintegration of heaven and earth that will ensue if he vacates the throne (*Erra* I 175); and when Erra promises Marduk that he will ensure the *gallū* demons remain in the netherworld (*Erra* I 185).
2. When Sennacherib's enemies engage in battle, they are characterized as ones whose bodies are seized by *alū*-demons. As a consequence the sheikhs of Chaldea trample (*uda''išū*) the bodies of their own soldiers instead of those of the enemy as they flee for their lives. To intensify the image of utter disarray they are said to lose control over their bodily functions.
  - a. *Chic. Pr.* vi 24–35: *šū<sup>md</sup> Umman-menanu šar Elamti adi šar Bābili<sup>lū</sup> nas-ikkāni ša Kaldi ālikūt idīšu hurbāšu tāhāziya kīma alē zumuršun ishup zarātešun umaššerūma ana šuzūb napšātišunu pagrī ummānātišunu uda''išū ētiqū kī ša atmi summati kuššudi itarrakū libbūšun šinātešun ušarrapū qereb narkabātišunu umaššerūni zūšun ana radādišunu narkabāt sisīya uma''er arkīšun munnaribšunu ana napšāte ušū ašar ikaššādū urasabū ina kakkī.* “(As for) him, Umman-menanu (Humban-mena-

nu), the king of the land Elam, along with the king of Babylon (and) the sheikhs of Chaldea who marched at his side, terror of doing battle with me overwhelmed them like *alû*-demons. They abandoned their tents and, in order to save their lives, they trampled the corpses of their troops as they pushed on. Their hearts throbbed like the pursued young of pigeons, they passed their urine hotly, (and) released their excrement inside their chariots. I ordered my chariots (and) horses to pursue them. Wherever they caught (them), they killed with the sword the runaways amongst them, who had fled for (their) lives.”

- b. In a fragmentary passage of the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic* the utterance of the Assyrian king paralyzes Kaštiliaš’s body like the presence of an *alû*-demon: *TKN* “iii” [= A obv.] 24: [...] *šarri danni kima alê zumuršu iksi*.
3. In Sennacherib’s account of the battle of Halule in the *Chicago Prism* the adverbial phrase *ana lā simātišu* is employed for the first time in Assyrian royal inscriptions and thus serves as an excellent reference-marker.<sup>75</sup> The phrase appears in the context of illegitimate or unworthy enthronement and follows the description of the Babylonian king as an unworthy weakling, as the Babylonians are said “to have seated him on the throne, inappropriate for him (*Chic. Pr.* v 28–30).” This alludes to Marduk’s accusation that Tiāmat inappropriately appointed Qingu as ruler over the gods and aligns the Babylonian king Mušēzib-Marduk/Šūzubu with Qingu as a leader of the forces of chaos.
  - a. *Chic. Pr.* v 28–30: *Bābilāya ana lā simātišu ina kussī ušēšibūšu bēlūt māt Šumeri u māt Akkadī ušadgilū pānišu* “The Babylonians placed him on the throne, inappropriate for him, and entrusted him with the rulership over Sumer and Babylon.”
  - b. *En. el.* IV 82: *ana lā simātišu taškuniš ana paraš enūti* “Inappropriate for him, you have installed him in the office of lordship.”
4. Sennacherib’s account of the battle of Halule describes how several armies banded their forces together and advanced against the Assyrian king. This passage not only has literary allusions to *Enūma Eliš* (*puhuršunu innendū* “they were advancing towards me as a group”), but also to Sargon II’s *Eighth Campaign* against Urartu, in which the enemy is said to advance like a swarm of locusts.
  - a. *Chic. Pr.* v 55–57: *ana ahameš iqrubūma puhuršunu innendū kīma tibūt aribi ša pān šatti mithāriš ana epēš tuqmāte tebūni šērūa* “Like a spring

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<sup>75</sup> Weissert 1997, 193.

- invasion of a swarm of locusts they were advancing towards me as a group to do battle.”
- b. *En. el.* I 21: *innendūma athū ilāni* “the divine brethren banded together, (confusing Tiāmat as they moved about in their stir).”
  - c. TCL 3 187: *kīma tibūt aribī* “like a swarm of locusts”
5. The use of the verb *šēlu* “to sharpen” in the sense of sharpening weapons in preparation for battle is attested in the Middle Assyrian period in LKA 62:6 (here the verb *sahānu* is used), LKA 63, and in the inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser I.
- a. Tigl. I RIMA 2, A.O.87.1 i 36–37: *šatammu šīru ša* <sup>d</sup>*Aššur kakkīšu uša’īlu* “exalted temple administrator, whose weapons the god Aššur has sharpened.”
  - b. LKA 63:6’–7’: *i[kpuḏū] ina libbišun tuqunta mārū // t[āhāza] ik[š]urū išē-lū kakkīšun* “The sons of the [mountains(?)] devised warfare in their hearts. They prepared for battle, they sharpened their weapons.”<sup>76</sup>
  - c. *Chic. Pr.* v 62: *uša’alū kakkēšun* “(and keeping me from the water source), they sharpened their weapons.”
  - d. *En. el.* IV 92: *u ilānu ša tahāzi uša’alu šunu kakkēšun* “while the gods of battle were sharpening their weapons.”
6. The rare adverbial expression *urruhiš*, “quickly” is not attested in royal inscriptions before the reign of Sennacherib and provides a further intertextual link with *Enūma Eliš*. It is, however, also attested in the Middle Assyrian *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*:
- a. *TKN Epic* iii 47: *umma urruhiš luddi [...]* “Quickly now, let me know ....”
  - b. *Chic. Pr.* v 66–67: *suppē’a urruhiš išmū illikū rešūtī* “they immediately heeded my prayers (and) came to my aid.”
  - c. *En. el.* II 113: *kišād Tiāmat urruhiš takabbas attā*, “You will soon trample on Tiāmat’s neck.” As Elnathan Weissert observes, “the common adverb links the alarmed state of Sennacherib and his divine supporters with the impatience of Anšar to send Marduk into battle.”<sup>77</sup>
7. A typical image used to describe the overwhelming force of the attacking king is that of the rampaging lion. Thus in the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic* the warriors of Aššur face the Kassite king, and though they are not clad in armor they nevertheless spring forth like lions:
- a. *TKN* “iii” 39 = iv [=A rev.] 39: *sar[i]jamāti ul ittahlipū labbiš ilabbubū*
  - b. Sennacherib describes himself as a raging lion before he puts on his armor:

<sup>76</sup> Hurowitz and Westenholz 1990, 3.

<sup>77</sup> Weissert 1997, 194.



**Fig. 52:** Standard of Ur with Soldiers Flattening the Enemy  
(Photo: British Museum ME 121301; Courtesy British Museum).

*Chic. Pr. v 67b–69a: labbiš annadirma attalbiša // siriām huliām simat šēlti āpira rāšūa* “I raged up like a lion, then put on armor (and) placed a helmet suitable for combat on my head.”<sup>78</sup>

- c. The same leonine imagery occurs in the *Erra Epic* in Erra’s speech addressing the third among the Sebetti:

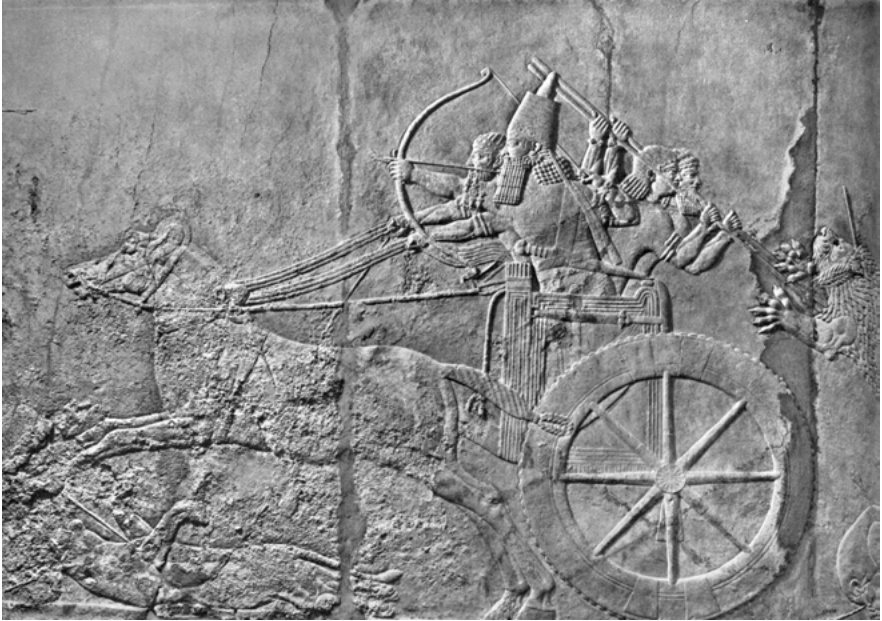
*Erra I 34: it[ami] ana šalši zīm labbi lū šaknāta āmirka lih’harmit* “He co[mmand- ed] the third: Make yourself the appearance of a lion, let him who sees you be paralyzed with fear.”

8. The image of the king driving his chariot over the dead bodies of the enemy and flattening (*sapānu*) their corpses is yet another key motif demonstrating invincible royal vigor and prowess. This image is already attested in the iconography of the Standard of Ur (fig. 52) and is supplemented in Sennacherib’s account of the battle of Halule by the image of the king grasping the bow of Aššur and the arrow ready to cut short the lives of the rebellious (see fig. 53). After Marduk creates the destructive winds and the Deluge as his weapons in *Enūma Eliš*, he mounts his terrible chariot with its four-steed team – the steeds are called the “Slaughterer,” the “Merciless,” the “Overwhelmer,” and the “Soaring” – and the chariot itself inspires tremendous terror and fear:

- a. *En. El. IV 50–54*

He mounted the irresistible and terrible storm-chariot,  
He hitched to it the four-steed team, he tied them at his side:  
“Slaughterer,” “Merciless,” “Overwhelmer,” “Soaring.”

<sup>78</sup> Note the Hurrian origin of the terms for armor and helmet.



**Fig. 53:** Assurbanipal on Chariot during Great Lion Hunt (Strommenger and Hirmer 1964: Fig. 248).

Their lips are curled back, their teeth bear venom,  
 They know not fatigue, they are trained to trample down (*lamdū sapāna*).

- b. The central function attributed to the warrior god's chariot is further evident in the fragment of a bilingual hymn probably addressed to the chariot of Marduk and possibly dating originally to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I. This fragment describes the parts of the chariot in line with the sequence provided in *Angimdimma* rather than with the sequence of  $Ur_5.ra = hubullu$  (*MSL VI 5 ff.*):<sup>79</sup>

*Angimdimma* 52–77

52–54 On his shining chariot, which inspires terrible awe, he hung his captured wild bulls on the axle and hung his captured cows on the cross-piece of the yoke.  
 55–64 He hung the Six-headed wild ram on the dust-guard. He hung the Warrior dragon on the seat. He hung the Magilum boat on the ... He hung the Bison on the beam. He hung the Mermaid on the foot-board. He hung the Gypsum on the forward part of the yoke. He hung the Strong copper on the inside pole pin (?). He hung the Anzū bird on the front guard. He hung the Seven-headed serpent on the shining cross-beam. Lord Ninurta stepped into his Battle-worthy Chariot. ....

<sup>79</sup> Lambert 1973.

76–77 When, at Enlil’s command he was making his way toward Ekur, the warrior of the gods was leveling the land (*sapānu* in bilingual edition).

- c. *Chic. Pr. v 69b–73: ina narkabti tahaziya širti sāpinat za’iri ina uggat libbiya artakab hantiš qaštu dannatu ša Aššur ušatlima ina qātiya ašbat šiltāhu pāri’ napšāti atmuh rittū’a* “In my anger, I rode quickly in my exalted battle chariot, which lays enemies low. I took in my hand the mighty bow that the god Aššur had granted to me (and) I grasped in my hand an arrow that cuts off life.”
- d. In *Enūma Eliš* the image of Marduk grasping a special weapon appears separately from the image of him riding his chariot. The former image precedes the latter and is linked to the gods’ command that Marduk kill Tiāmat:

*En. el. IV 30–31: iddinūšu kak lā mahra dā’ipu zayyāri / alikma ša Tiāmat napšatuš puru’ma* “They gave him an unrivalled weapon which overwhelms the enemy, (saying): ‘Go and pierce Tiāmat’s throat.’”

The rare expression *napišta parā’u* is common to both Sennacherib’s account of the battle of Halule and *Enūma Eliš*, and both texts emphasize the divine endowment of the weapon.<sup>80</sup> The image of piercing the throat recurs in *Chic. Pr. vi 3*.

9. The lengthy description of Marduk preparing his chariot for battle in *Enūma Eliš* (*En. El. IV 50 ff.*) is followed by Marduk’s creation of the four horrible winds, which can be compared with the image of the king blowing like the onset of a severe storm that occurs in Sennacherib’s account of the battle of Halule:

- a. *Chic. Pr. v 77: kīma tīb mēhê šamri ana nakri aziq* “I blew like the onset of a severe storm against the enemy.”

- b. *The Tukulti-Ninurta Epic* uses similar imagery:

*TKN iv (= A rev.) 40–43*

The irresistible Weapon of Aššur meets (in battle)  
those attacking [his] for[ce].

And Tukulti-Ninurta, the raging, pitiless storm (*ūmu ekdu la pādū*),  
made [their blood] flow.

The warriors of Aššur (struck) the army of the king of the Kassites like a serpent,  
A furious attack, an indomitable onslaught (*ašgugu dannu tīb la mahār*) [came]  
upon them.

- c. *Erra I 36: ana hanši iqtabi kīma šāri zīqma kippātu hiṭa* “To the fifth (weapon) he said: ‘Sweep on like the wind and penetrate into the ends of the world.’”

<sup>80</sup> Weissert 1997, 194 f. Weissert further refers to the fact that this image already occurs once in the inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III (Annals 17:11’) as restored by H. Tadmor, and equally mentions the ceremonial temple name *Marduk pāri’ napišti ayyābi* “Marduk-Is-the Piercer-of-Enemies” with reference to George 1993, 57.

*Erra* I 115: *ki šāri azāqu ki* <sup>d</sup>*Adad ur[t]aşan* “Like the wind I blow, like Adad I thunder.”

*Erra* i 173–174: Cagni: [*šāru*] *lemnu izîqamm[a] ša niši šiknat napišti niṭill[šin uttâ]* “An evil wind will blow hither and [blur] the eyesight of humankind.”

10. The verbal form *lištahhiṭamma* appears in comparable contexts in *Enūma Eliš* and Sennacherib's account of the battle of Halule:
- Chic. Pr.* v 78–79: *ina kakkē Aššur bēliya u tīb tahāziya // zumuršunu lištahhiṭamma lā inē'û i[rassun]* “With the weapons of the god Aššur, my lord, and my fierce battle array, I turned them back and made them retreat.”
  - En. El.* I 140: *zumuršunu lištahhiṭamma lā inē'û i[rassun]* “let their (the monsters') bodies keep attacking and not turn away.”
11. In Sennacherib's account of the battle of Halule the *uṣṣu*-arrow is used to pierce the corpses of the enemy; the same arrow is used to attack the walls of Babylon in the *Erra Epic*, where the walls stand in as a synecdoche for Babylon's citizens and their piercing by the arrow leads them to cry out in pain:
- Chic. Pr.* v 80–81: *ummānāt nakiri ina uṣṣi mulmulli ušaqqirma* “I shot the troops of the enemy with *uṣṣu*-arrows (and) *mulmullu*-arrows, and (pierced all their corpses like ...)”
  - Erra* IV 16: *ša Imgur-Enlil uṣṣa elišu tummidma u'a libbi iqtabi* “As to the (city wall) Imgur-Enlil, you have struck it with (your) arrow so that it says ‘Woe my heart.’”  
See also *Erra* i 90: *ša uṣṣini zaqti kepâta liša[n]šu* “the tip (lit. tongue) of our sharp arrow is blunted.”
- c. The *mulmullu*-arrow used by Sennacherib also features as one of Marduk's weapons in *Enūma Eliš*:
- En. El.* IV 34–41:
- On the path to success and authority did they (the gods) set him marching,  
He made the bow, appointed his weapon,  
He mounted the arrow (*mulmullu*), set it on the string.  
He took up the mace, held it in his right hand,  
Bow and quiver he slung on his arm.  
Thunderbolts he set before his face  
With raging fire he covered his body.  
Then he made a net to enclose Tīāmat within.
- The use of Marduk's *mulmullu*-arrow against Tīāmat parallels its “piercing” used by Sennacherib:  
*En. El.* IV 100: *issuk mulmulla ihtepi karassa* “He shot off the *mulmullu*-arrow and split her belly.”
  - See further *Chic. Pr.* v 81–82: *gimri pagrišunu upalliša tamziš* “all their bodies I pierced like ...” and *En. El.* v 58 where the verb *palāšu* is used to describe Marduk's drilling of waterholes in Tīāmat's corpse to carry



off the catchwater: *nambaṛi uptalliša ana babālim kuppū* “He drilled through her waterholes to carry off the catchwater.”

12. Comparing the enemy to sacrificial animals slaughtered in ritual contexts endows the actions of the Assyrian king with a religious overtone and can be identified in various texts:

a. *Chic. Pr.* v 82b-vi 1: “I quickly slaughtered and defeated Humban-undaša, the herald of the king of the land Elam, a trusted man who leads his troops, his main support, together with his magnates, who wear gold (decorated) belt-daggers and have reddish gold sling straps fastened to their forearms, like fattened bulls (*kīma šūri marūti*) restrained with fetters. I slit their throats like sheep (*kišādātišunu unakkis asliš*) (and thus) cut off their precious life like thread.”

b. In the *Tukultī-Ninurta Epic* the allies of the Babylonian king are said to be slaughtered like cattle:

*TKN* iv (= A rev. 32–45) “the warriors of Aššur [fell] upon the king of the Kassites like a serpent ... his allies were slaughtered like cattle.”

c. Similarly, *Enūma Eliš* compares the enemy to a bull:

*En. El.* IV 123–129

Having captured and vanquished his enemies

Having subjugated the mighty enemy like a wild bull (*šūrišam*),<sup>81</sup>

Having fully achieved Anšar’s victory over his enemies,

Valiant Marduk having attained what Nudimmud desired,

He made firm his hold over the captured gods,

Then turned back to Tiāmat whom he had captured.<sup>82</sup>

13. In the *Tukultī-Ninurta-Epic* the Babylonian king threatens to soak the pastures with the blood of the Assyrians, which will flood over their camp – a threat made good by the Assyrians against the Babylonians. The metaphor of torrents of blood is also used by Sennacherib and appears in the *Erra Epic*:

a. *TKN* iv (= A rev.) 32’ f.: *m[ā] annū ūmu šá dām nišē(UN<sup>meš</sup>)-ka umakkaru namê qerbēti // [u] elu (UGU) karāšika kī<sup>l</sup>ma<sup>d</sup> Adde ušettaqu abūb n[aš]panti* “This is the day, your people’s blood will soak the pastures and meadows, // And like the leveling of the flood pass over your camp.”

b. *Chic. Pr.* vi 3–5: *kīma mīli gapši ša šamātu simāni ummunīšunu ušarda šēr eršetī* “I made their blood flow over the broad earth like a huge flood caused by a seasonal rainstorm.”

<sup>81</sup> The terminative ending –iš is followed by the accusative case –am, used adverbially, see Huehnergard, *A Grammar of Akkadian*, § 28.2 and § 28.4). See also the translation of Talon 2005, 94.

<sup>82</sup> Foster 2005, 461.

- c. *Erra* IV 34–35: *damēšunu kīma mē rāṭi tušašbita ribit āli // umunnāšunu taptēma tušabbil nāra* “You made their blood flow along the square of the city like water in a channel // you leased their blood and let the river carry it off.”

Like Sennacherib's account of the battle of Halule, the *Erra Epic* uses the highly poetic term *umunnū* for “blood.”

Intertextual references to the *Erra Epic* can be questioned on the ground that unlike Sennacherib or Marduk, Erra rages indiscriminately, killing both good and bad. Only when all enemies are killed is Erra placated, decreeing the rebuilding of Akkad so that the land can flourish anew. This notion of complete destruction followed by renewal, however, follows the *chaîne opératoire* laid out in *Enūma Eliš*, in which Marduk kills Tīāmat in order to create the cosmos out of her corpse. It is thus not the *Erra Epic* but Sennacherib who deviates from established mythological patterns of total destruction and rebuilding. After Sennacherib destroyed Babylon by means of ritual flooding, he did not intend for the city to be rebuilt.<sup>83</sup> Although Sennacherib's attack on Babylon mirrors that of Erra during Marduk's absence (*Erra* I 180–191) and this parallel is used to make sense of Sennacherib's brutal devastation and destruction of the city, Sennacherib deviates from traditional cultural norms by failing to envision the rebuilding of Babylon. As the foundation inscription of Sennacherib's newly built *akītu*-house at Aššur relates,<sup>84</sup> Sennacherib transported some of Babylon's dust to Aššur in order to bury it at the foundation of that temple. This symbolic act served to demonstrate that renewal and creation were the exclusive prerogative of Aššur, while Babylon was consigned to complete annihilation.

Already in the 1980s Johannes Renger advocated a literary approach to royal inscriptions. At the time he was scrutinizing the royal inscriptions of Sargon II, stating that their highly literary style – expressed in the use of rare words otherwise attested in synonym lists (primarily *Malku* = *Šarru*),<sup>85</sup> in the archaizing adoption of titles like (*w*)*aklu*, *šakkanakku*, and *šāpiru* for the king,<sup>86</sup> in vowel and consonant alliteration, and in the intense use of comparison and metaphor along with syntactical features like paratactic structure and chiasm – was otherwise typical of lyric and epic literature. Renger further not-

<sup>83</sup> On the notion of flooding a city as a symbol for complete destruction see Machinist 1997, who discusses it in relation to the fall of Assyria.

<sup>84</sup> OIP 2, 135–139 foundation stela I 2.

<sup>85</sup> Renger 1986, 121.

<sup>86</sup> Renger 1986, 122.

ed the strong intertextual relations between royal inscriptions and texts like *Enūma Eliš*, the *Erra Epic*, and the *Etana Epic*.<sup>87</sup> According to Renger, the highly erudite character and literary style of Sargon II's inscriptions represents an innovation in the corpus of Assyrian royal inscriptions and enabled the development of new models for the articulation of military accounts.<sup>88</sup> This literarizing process indeed pervades the royal inscriptions of the Sargonid period and is indicative of the patterns of thought prevailing in the scholarly circles concerned with royal ideological discourse. Scholars in these circles appear to have resorted to literarization and intertextuality as a deliberate cultural strategy that redefined the institution of kingship in mythic terms at a time when the Assyrian empire was approaching the height of its power and was simultaneously extraordinarily powerful and extremely fragile. The mythic redefinition of royal deeds aimed to make sense of reality and represented a cultural strategy for sanctioning the king's actions and guiding the reception of the texts by their audience.

As shown above, the author of Sennacherib's account of the battle of Halule clearly intended to do more than compose a simple military account. Assyrian royal inscriptions from the Middle Assyrian period onward make use of the tropological discourse of the combat myth, which operates as the master narrative and determines the emplotment of the events described in these inscriptions. The author of Sennacherib's account of the battle of Halule does not draw on various myths and epic texts as hypotexts (A) merely in order to reveal a commonality in the cultural experience of warfare: he draws upon specific texts because they were already part of a literary tradition offering a repertoire of familiar images and metaphors that can explain the king's actions. Accordingly, the author is able to frame his text as the only possible interpretation of reality and is capable of engraving his own hypertext (B) in the cultural memory.<sup>89</sup> In the educated mind, literary allusions drawn from underlying hypotexts evoke these narratives as a whole along with the "phenotext" of the combat myth. These allusions thus invoke particular chains of argumentation whose specific compositional structure as constituents of a line of thought on warfare and royal action serves to frame events in line with the author's purposes. Myth, then, is not a vague aura of the archaic: it functions

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**87** Renger 1986, 122.

**88** Renger 1986, 122.

**89** For the relationship between a text A (hypotext) underlying a newly created hypertext (B) see Gérard Genette's theory of transtextuality, Genette 1997, 5. I apply Genette's concept of hypertextuality in a broader sense using the terms hypotext and hypertext beyond parody, travesty, pastiche, caricature, and forgery, and transposition as intertexts with a pretext.

as an analytical category operating on the basis of images rather than discursive reasoning.<sup>90</sup> From the perspective of cognitive linguistics myth supplied the shared experience and cultural memory of the Assyrian community, which contributed to the process of cultural construction and the production of meaning.<sup>91</sup> Beyond prescribing the only possible *chaîne opératoire* of royal action, intertextuality between myth and Sennacherib's account of the battle of Halule can be considered as a cultural strategy deliberately chosen by the scholar in order to present the only acceptable authoritative statement and to justify Sennacherib's singularly brutal treatment of the Babylonians and Elamites.<sup>92</sup>

The intertextuality that characterizes Sennacherib's account of the battle of Halule and Sargon's *Eighth Campaign* is also evident in *Esarhaddon's Apology* and in the royal inscriptions of Ashurbanipal. Several formulas in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions can be traced back to the heroic poems of the Middle Assyrian period. Such intertextuality reveals that form and narrative techniques should not be regarded as neutral until they are filled with content. Rather, "narrative modes were highly semanticized and engaged in the process of cultural construction"<sup>93</sup> and in the production of meaning.

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90 Kiening 2004, 35.

91 Lakoff and Johnson 1980.

92 On the embeddedness of a newly created text in a universe of already existing texts that provide authoritative meaning see Stierle 1984.

93 Nünning 2009, 62.

## 9 The Individual Ruler as a Model for Kingship: Rethinking Ancient Historiography

### 9.1 Introduction

So far, this study has focused on the divine warrior Ningirsu/Ninurta as a model for kingship and on the Ninurta mythology as a paradigm for the narrative of the king's deeds in both literary and historiographic texts. There are, however, two moments in Mesopotamian history when it is possible to observe a cultural strategy that promotes *individual* rulers as paradigmatic models for kingship, though the actual processes by which this strategy was pursued differ greatly in each case. The first such moment is in the Old Babylonian period, when scribes self-consciously conceived of the kings Sargon and Narām-Sîn of Akkad as the prototypes for future monarchs and articulated this vision in omen literature and in the development of a rich literary corpus centered on these kings. The second such moment – initiated by the relevant monarchs themselves rather than by later scribes – dates to the Sargonid period, when the Assyrian kings Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal decided to write their royal deeds into the historical record by incorporating them into the well-known and distinct text categories of oracles and divination compendia, a cultural strategy fully in keeping with that of the Old Babylonian scribes. Although the Sargonic and the Sargonid kings are separated by sixteen centuries, the cultural innovations that led to their establishment as paradigmatic figures were not entirely independent of each other. Indeed, the two Neo-Assyrian rulers appear to have refashioned the Old Babylonian precedent for their own purposes. In Ashurbanipal's case, we know that he was familiar with the omen tradition that referred to the kings of Akkad and Ur III as prototypes for royal action, as it is in his library that a tablet recording only historical omens was found.<sup>1</sup> Both Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal drew on prophecy and extispicy as techniques for communication with the gods, but the distinct nature of these techniques – one inductive, the other deductive – resulted in significant differences in how these kings were inscribed in the historical record as paradigms for rulership.

The historiographic innovations of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal cannot be isolated from the prolific textual production that characterizes the entirety of the Sargonid period. In a time when deviation from the law of primogeniture, the violation of international agreements, and internal disharmony threatened to undermine the credibility and legitimacy of individual Sargonid

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1 Starr 1986.

kings, the importance of divine sanction and the pretension of complying with the dictates of time-honored tradition became ever more pronounced. It is precisely during this period that textual production centered on the figure of the king diversified and become more sophisticated in its argumentation – Hayim Tadmor goes so far as to speak of regicentric literature.<sup>2</sup> Striking in this development is the apparent preference for dialogue – real or fictive – as the literary framework through which to illustrate and emphasize repeatedly the homogeneity and congruence in action between the king and the gods. The move toward a dialogical literary setting is evident in the *Royal Report of the King to the God Aššur* and the *Letter of Aššur to the King*,<sup>3</sup> in the secondary textualization of prophecy in the collective oracle tablets, and in the *Fictive Dialogue between Ashurbanipal and Nabû*.<sup>4</sup> Typical of these new compositions is their retrospective perspective, in which divine sanction for the deeds of the king is continually sought.

Since it is this retrospective perspective that shaped the overall character of the *Royal Report to the God Aššur* and the *Letter of the God Aššur*, these text categories will be discussed before I turn to the case studies of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal. These case studies will in turn examine how history was rewritten through the use of established text categories like prophecy and omen compendia.

## 9.2 The Legitimizing Command of Aššur: *Royal Reports* and *Divine Letters*

The *Royal Report to the god Aššur* and the *Letter of the God Aššur* represent two text categories that were written at the end of a royal campaign in order to conclude the communicative process between the king and the gods that served to secure the king's victory in battle. Channels of communication included astrological omens, dream oracles, prophecy, and extispicy, which were consulted both prior to and during wartime, first to confirm a propitious moment in which to embark on campaign and subsequently to overcome any crises while on campaign.<sup>5</sup> Although extispicy was the standard means for verifying homogeneity in human and divine intentionality, other techniques are in-

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<sup>2</sup> Tadmor 1986, 205.

<sup>3</sup> Pongratz-Leisten 1999;

<sup>4</sup> SAA 3 no. 3.

<sup>5</sup> See the discussion by Pongratz-Leisten 1999, 277–285.

voked as a group at seemingly insurmountable moments of military challenge, for instance by Ashurbanipal immediately prior the battle of Tell Tuba:

Upon the command of Aššur and Marduk, the Great Gods, my lords, who encouraged me with good omens, dreams, oracular utterances, and prophetic messages (*ina ittāti damqāti šutti egerrê šipir mahhê*), I defeated him in Tell Tuba.<sup>6</sup>

These techniques can also be invoked at the moment of victory itself, as is the case when Esarhaddon refers to divine favor at the time of his ascension to the throne:

(i 87–ii 11) In Addaru (XII), a favorable month, on the eighth day, the *eššeššu*-festival of the god Nabû, I joyfully entered Nineveh, my capital city, and I sat happily on the throne of my father. The south wind, the breeze of the god Ea, the wind whose blowing is favorable for exercising kingship, blew upon me. (ii. 5) Favorable signs came in good time to me in heaven and earth. They (the gods) continually and regularly encouraged me with oracles through ecstasies, the message(s) of the gods and goddess(es). I sought out every one of the guilty soldiers, who wrongly incited my brothers to exercise kingship over Assyria, and imposed a grievous punishment on them: I exterminated their offspring.<sup>7</sup>

The composition of royal reports and divine letters, by contrast, does not appear to have been standard practice for military campaigns. Such texts were only written when there was a severe violation of a tacit or an explicit international agreement or when the king was involved in fratricide. In other words, royal reports and divine letters were only composed when the king's actions required divine legitimization in the form of a divine command that sanctioned the royal deed. A. Leo Oppenheim observes that in Sargon II's letter to the god Aššur concerning his pillaging of the temple of the Urartean national god Haldi, which was located in Muşaşir and served as the cultic center for the coronation ceremonies of the Urartean kings, the Assyrian king "offers here an argument in his defense, an argument that anticipates a human reaction which the reference to a divine pronouncement is meant to counter."<sup>8</sup> Although the pillaging of temples regularly featured as one of the destructive measures inflicted upon enemies by the Assyrian kings, Sargon II's seemingly unprovoked pillaging of Muşaşir was a contentious and potentially sacrilegious act that required divine sanction in the eyes of some of his contemporaries.

A brief overview of the form of royal reports and divine letters will contribute to a better understanding of their function. Although royal reports to the

<sup>6</sup> BIWA, 225 Prism B § 35, v 93–96; for prophetic messages in royal inscriptions see Nissinen 1998.

<sup>7</sup> RINAP 4, no. 1 ii 1–11.

<sup>8</sup> Oppenheim 1960, 137.

god are accounts of military campaigns, they differ from ordinary royal inscriptions in that they can include an introductory section addressing the god directly – and in some cases other parties – and a postscript reporting on casualties.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, royal reports can use poetic language, as is the case in Sargon II's report on his eighth campaign to Urartu, and they can include unusual reflections on the theme of royal responsibility, as is the case in Esarhadon's report on his campaign to Šubria.<sup>10</sup>

Divine letters, by contrast, incorporate verbatim quotes from royal reports and can even refer to them with the formula *ša tašpuranni* “according to what you wrote to me.”<sup>11</sup> Because of this formula, I suggest restricting the category “divine letter” to those texts of the first millennium that identify the god as the sender of the letter.<sup>12</sup> Divine letters and royal reports have five typical features:

1. Both text categories reflect a written communication in line with the sender–recipient model.
2. In divine letters the god is sends the letter, whereas in royal reports it is the king who is the sender.
3. Formally, both text categories resemble the letter style, while the kings may address the god Aššur in a longer eulogy.<sup>13</sup> Divine letters omit the address to the king but the discursive mode of the dialogue is maintained in the direct speech addressed to the king. Several divine letters use the formula *ša tašpuranni* “according to what you wrote to me.”
4. Both text categories resemble royal inscriptions in terms of content. Royal reports are written in the first person and make use of the past tense, as do royal inscriptions.
5. Divine letters refer to the deeds of the king in the second person, while divine interference is described in the first person; divine letters also make use of the past tense.

Unlike the oracles of Ištar, which aim to maintain the illusion of direct verbal communication between goddess and king even in their written form, the discursive form of Aššur's divine letters aligns with that of commemorative narratives. The commemorative style of divine letters and their similarity in content

<sup>9</sup> See the royal reports of Shalmaneser IV (RIMA 3, A.0.105.3) and that of Sargon II (TCL 3).

<sup>10</sup> Bauer 1931; Leichty 1991; Lanfranchi 2003.

<sup>11</sup> See the texts nos. 41–43 in Livingstone, SAA 3 and Pongratz-Leisten 1999, 220.

<sup>12</sup> Unlike Borger 1957–1971, I exclude the Sumerian and Akkadian language Old Babylonian letter prayers.

<sup>13</sup> This is the case in Ashurbanipal's letter to Aššur reporting on his campaigns against the Arabs, see Pongratz-Leisten 1999, 241–245.



with commemorative inscriptions and royal reports qualifies them as historiographic documents that relate to the deeds of the king in a retrospective perspective. Divine letters quote verbatim from royal reports and modify their phraseology only by adding prepositional elements that refer to the king in the second person, thereby creating a fictive dialogue. Beyond phraseological modifications of this kind, the god in divine letters appropriates actions originally performed by the king. The following excerpt from Aššur's letter to Ashurbanipal illustrates this principle:

*SAA 3 no. 44: 3–10*

3–4 Because of the evil deeds [which Šamaš-šum-ukin] committed against you, I pulled out the foundations of his royal throne, over[threw] his reign and [comma]nded the dispersal<sup>14</sup> of the entire land of Akkad.

5–6 To perfect the shrines of the great gods, to renew [...] the offerings, to venerate my divinity (and) a good reign of [...] I decreed as your fate.

7–10 As for Šamaš-šum-ukin, who did not keep my treaty, but sinned against the charity of Ashurbanipal, my beloved king, I confined him in harsh imprisonment and bound [...]. I placed lead ropes on his magnates and [lead] them to [your] presence.

In the above passage, the underlying royal report retains its basic phraseological structure but is subjected to two forms of editorial revision in order to effectuate its transformation into a divine letter. First, the author intersperses the erstwhile royal report with legitimizing formulae that present the deeds of the king as consequent to the command of the god. Second, by framing the whole text as a divine response to the king's report, the author evokes a situation of dialogue between god and king.

The fictive dialogue between king and god does not aim at the exchange of information. Instead, the goal of this interaction is to consolidate the relationship between king and god and consequently to re-establish the harmonious balance between the divine and earthly realms, albeit with both a contemporary and a future audience in mind.<sup>15</sup> In my view, Aššur's sanctioning of the king's deeds was a necessary prerequisite without which the king was not allowed to access the Aššur temple or permitted to perform his triumphal procession. The letter of Sargon II (722–705 BCE) to the god Aššur, in which he reports on his eighth campaign to Urartu, will serve to make my case. Its introductory section and its postscript in particular shed light on the king's accountability

<sup>14</sup> Unlike Livingstone, *SAA 3 no. 44:3–4* I prefer to render *sapāhu* as dispersal rather than as destruction.

<sup>15</sup> Pongratz-Leisten 1999, 284.

to the elites,<sup>16</sup> as well as on the involvement of elites in the king's communication with the gods. The form and content of both sections is already familiar from Shalmaneser IV's (783–773 BCE) report to Aššur, but with one important exception: Shalmaneser IV lists only the god Aššur and the gods dwelling in the Aššur temple as recipients of his letter, while Sargon II (722–705 BCE) uniquely includes the city of Aššur and its citizens in his greeting formula:

1. To Aššur, father of the gods, great lord who dwells in Ehursaggalkurkurra, his great abode, hail, all hail!
2. To the gods of destinies and the goddesses who dwell in Ehursaggalkurkurra, their great abode, hail, all hail!
3. To the gods of destinies and the goddesses who dwell in the city of Aššur, their great abode, hail, all hail!
4. To the city and its people, hail, all hail, to the palace located in it hail, all hail!
5. For Sargon, the pure priest, the servant who reveres your great divinity and his army, all is well.<sup>17</sup>

The fact that Sargon II's address includes the elites of Aššur – this is probably what is meant by “its people” (*nišēšu*) – reflects the change that must have resulted from Tiglath-pileser III's (744–727 BCE) reduction of Assyrian vassal states to the status of provinces, a process that significantly extended the borders of the Assyrian empire. One of the consequences of this expansion was the attendant growth of the upper echelons of Assyria's bureaucracy, thus making the entire system more vulnerable to internal instability. This political change in turn informed Assyrian cultural discourse, as is illustrated by the development of new text categories. In their function as shapers of the Assyrian *weltanschauung* and as managers of communication between the gods and the king, scholars had to create a cultural discourse that reflected Assyrian political achievements and harmonized them with the cosmic order so as to foster the illusion of absolute royal control. It was precisely this demand for concerted communication between the gods and the king and its public display, however, that made the scholars indispensable to the king and promoted their monopolies in divinatory techniques, in shaping state rituals, and in elaborating textual and iconographic programs that insulated the monarch against any human judgment.

The introductory formula of royal reports is modeled after the phraseology of Neo-Assyrian letters, a fact that impelled A. Leo Oppenheim to assume that

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<sup>16</sup> Tadmor 1986 and Lanfranchi 2003.

<sup>17</sup> TCL 3 ll. 1–5; for a new edition see Mayer 1983; a new translation has been supplied by Foster 2005, 790–813; for a discussion of the letter, see Oppenheim 1960; Zaccagnini 1981; Levine 2003.

they “were written, not to be deposited in silence in the sanctuary, but to be actually read to a public that was to react directly to their contents.”<sup>18</sup> The public that Oppenheim had in mind consisted of the priesthood, the city as a corporate unit represented by the elders, and the city’s inhabitants in general. The priesthood itself, however, consisted of cultic functionaries with circumscribed cultic and administrative duties; excepting the *šangû* of Aššur and the *šangûs* of other gods, it is doubtful whether the priesthood constituted a strong and discrete social group in Aššur.<sup>19</sup> The role of the scholars was certainly more incisive, as they functioned as guardians of tradition and controlled both the king’s public display and his interaction with the divine realm. As has been pointed out by Tadmor,<sup>20</sup> it is not clear if the elders, who were presumably equivalent to the heads of the wealthy merchant families in the Old Assyrian period, still played a role in Middle Assyrian times; it is all the more questionable if such elders played an appreciable role in the Neo-Assyrian period. While Oppenheim’s interpretation of Sargon II’s letter to the god is very suggestive, it is unsupported by the evidence. In fact, there is no need for a public setting for the reading of this letter, and indeed the Aramaic speaking environment of the time likely meant that the letter, with its unusual lexicography, would not even have been understood by the general public. In the stele bearing his laws, Hammurabi – like Sargon II in his letter to the god – claims to address his people. Hammurabi’s stele was set up in the courtyard of the temple, and constitutes a useful point of comparison for the setting of Sargon II’s address to his people. The temple courtyard was accessible only to the functionaries and cultic specialists linked with it, which effectively limits the audience of objects and texts deposited within it to the gods and posterity.

It is the colophon of Sargon II’s letter to the god that helps identify its prospective audience and the agents behind the scene. Following its opening epistolary formula, the body of Sargon II’s detailed report on his campaign against Urartu has the narrative form typical of royal inscriptions, though it is unusual in its “poetic language, plays on words, and elaborate figures of speech.”<sup>21</sup> At the very end of the report, Sargon II describes his decision to send the army home while he himself – accompanied only by his elite troops – deviates from the normal route to go via Mušašir, home of the temple of the chief god of the Urartian pantheon, Haldi, and the place where Urartian kings

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18 Oppenheim 1960, 143.

19 For this professional group see Menzel 1981, 130–208 with a list of *šangûs* known by name.

20 Tadmor 1986, 205.

21 Foster 2005, 790. See further Fales 1991b for a detailed analysis of the complex poetic structure of the text.

were crowned. Sargon II destroys the temple of the god Haldi, abducts its gods, and plunders all of its belongings. This account concludes with a 5-line colophon, which is unusual for the epistolary text category but typical of those texts that were collected in the libraries of the scholars and kings and thus comprised the stream of tradition. The colophon does not, however, identify the tablet as the king's property, but as the property of the chief scribe of the king, who is explicitly described as a scholar of Sargon II. After its composition, the tablet somehow found its way into the library of the chief exorcist of the Aššur temple, who likely had a particular interest in the figure of Sargon II. The *Sargon Geography*, a text that portrays Sargon II as the follower of the paradigmatic great king Sargon of Akkad, was also part of this library. Interestingly, both the *Sargon Geography* and Sargon II's report on his eight campaign involve the notion of an imaginary empire of nearly cosmological dimensions.<sup>22</sup> The colophon of Sargon II's report reads as follows:

- 426 One charioteer, two horsemen, and three scouts (of those who) were killed.  
 427 I made Ṭāb-šār-Aššur, the chief-steward, send the men (who bring) first rate messages (<sup>lú</sup>EME.SAG<sup>meš</sup>) to Aššur, my lord.  
 428 Tablet of Nabû-šallim-šunu, chief scribe of the king, chief tablet scribe,<sup>23</sup> scholar of Sargon, king of Assyria,  
 429 First born son of Harmakki, royal scribe, a native of Aššur.  
 430 (The report) was delivered in the eponym year of Issar-dūri, governor of Arrapha.

I will refrain here from discussing the various renderings of line 427,<sup>24</sup> which are complicated by the fact that in some royal reports to the god Aššur the term *lisānu rēštu* (<sup>lú</sup>eme.SAG<sup>meš</sup>) is used without the determinative *lú* and can be translated as “first rate message,” a translation that I think is most appropriate to Sargon II's text. Furthermore, scholarly opinion hinges upon the question as to whether the verb *ultēbila* should be translated in the first or in the third person singular: “I made send” or “he (Ṭāb-šār-Aššur) made send.” The 1<sup>st</sup> person possessive pronoun “my lord” leads me to assume Sargon II as the subject of this sentence.

What is of particular interest is that this colophon indicates the involvement of several parties in Sargon II's report to the god. One figure is Nabû-šallim-šunu, the king's scholar and the apparent composer of the tablet, and the other is the chief steward and treasurer Ṭāb-šār-Aššur who, according to

<sup>22</sup> Pedersén 1985, part II, 44.

<sup>23</sup> For *giburu* Foster 2005, 813 refers to Reiner 1967, 200.

<sup>24</sup> Line 427 reads, <sup>lú</sup>EME.SAG<sup>meš</sup> mDÜG.GA.IM.<sup>d</sup>A-šur <sup>lú</sup>AGRIG GAL-ú ina UGU <sup>d</sup>A-šur *be-lí-ia ul-te-bi-la*; for the various translations see Levine 2003, 118 fn. 18.

information gleaned from the epistolary record, was responsible for inspections of all kinds and for work assignments to palaces and temples in various cities, in addition to being involved in political affairs more broadly.<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, very little is known of Sargon II's scholar Nabû-šallim-šunu. He is mentioned in a text that reports on his partaking in offerings and purification ceremonies performed in the Aššur temple prior to Sargon II's triumphal procession.<sup>26</sup> These activities in the Aššur temple took place on the 21<sup>st</sup> of the month Kislimu or Ṭebetu. If we assume that the date for the king's triumphal procession to the Aššur temple was set in the eleventh month Šabaṭu as mentioned in the later ritual text for Ashurbanipal A 125,<sup>27</sup> then the textual evidence suggests that the chief scribe had to perform some preparatory rites in order to allow the king to enter the city after his military campaign. Whether or not it was Nabû-šallim-šunu who brought the report of the king before Aššur on this particular occasion is a matter of speculation. In any event, the royal report likely reached the Aššur temple at some point before Sargon II's triumphal entry into the city; divine letters written in response to royal reports survive from the reigns of Šamši-Adad V (823–811 BCE)<sup>28</sup> and Ashurbanipal (668–631/27? BCE).<sup>29</sup> In conjunction with the postscripts of the divine letters, the available evidence suggests the following reconstruction of the various steps that were required for the king to be allowed to enter the city of Aššur following a military campaign:<sup>30</sup>

1. The king's scribe wrote a report on the king's campaign;
2. the king sent somebody to Aššur with the report;
3. at some point purification rites were performed at the Aššur temple in order to allow for the triumphal entry of the king into Aššur; in Sargon II's case, these rites were performed by his chief scribe Nabû-šallim-šunu;
4. Aššur sanctified the report in the form of an oracle, as may be deduced from the subscript *miḫrat dibbī [Aššur]* "copy of the words of [Aššur]" in Aššur's letter to Ashurbanipal SAA 3 44;

<sup>25</sup> See his correspondence with the king published by Parpola, SAA 1 nos. 41–74.

<sup>26</sup> ND 1120, Wiseman 1952; transcription and translation in van Driel 1969, 200–204; collated by Postgate in CTN 2 no. 229.

<sup>27</sup> The text is dated to the time of Ashurbanipal and arrangements may have been altogether different under his reign, see Menzel 1981, vol. 2, no. 24 i 5. For the interrelationship of these events see already Lanfranchi 1990, 230 f. and fn. 99

<sup>28</sup> SAA 3 no. 41.

<sup>29</sup> SAA 3 nos. 44 and 45; see also the fragments SAA 3 nos. 42 and 43 to unidentified kings.

<sup>30</sup> The idea of a fictive dialogue between king and god enacted first in the royal report that followed a military campaign and then in the letter of the god to the king contradicts the idea of A. L. Oppenheim, who claimed that the royal report was read on the occasion of the king's entry into the city of Aššur, Oppenheim 1960, 143.

5. on the basis of the royal report, this oracle was rewritten as a divine letter in response to the king;
6. the divine letter was then sent to the king,
7. who was then allowed to perform his triumphal procession and to enter the Aššur temple.

The above reconstruction reveals that the king and the god, i.e. the institutions of the palace and the temple, were the main agents in the communication process. The small number of royal reports and divine letters suggests that this particular form of communication was not standard, but performed only when royal actions necessitated divine legitimization. Actions requiring legitimization of this kind could include the abduction of the gods of the enemy and the destruction of their sanctuaries as described in Sargon II's report on his campaign to Urartu, or the case of fratricide embedded in Esarhaddon's report on his campaign to Šubria.<sup>31</sup> Divine legitimization is cited in Aššur's letter to Ashurbanipal regarding the rebellion of Ashurbanipal's brother Šamaš-šum-ukīn, who was governor of Babylonia and was killed by Ashurbanipal during the civil war.

The fact that Sargon II's treasurer and scholar are only mentioned briefly in the colophon of Sargon II's report should not mislead us about the extent to which the religious and political elites were involved in this exchange between the king and the god. Similarly, the fact that the text was found in the library of the chief exorcist and carries a colophon attributing it to a scholar rather than to the king should not lead us to assume that we are dealing with a text of private nature, written by a scribe to celebrate the king's success, as has been suggested by Louis D. Levine.<sup>32</sup> The chief exorcist's library includes tablets from the Middle Assyrian period and from the late eighth century BCE; it also reflects the idiosyncratic choices and preferences of Kišir-Aššur, the chief exorcist under Ashurbanipal. This context points to the secondary or even tertiary storage of Sargon II's report to Aššur.<sup>33</sup> The texts assembled in the library, itself an educational center for young scribes, demonstrate that the interests of the chief exorcist extended far beyond the performance of purification rites at the Aššur temple. The chief exorcist was the central figure in the organization of the cult of the Aššur temple and in the collection, compilation, and production of the body of cultural knowledge of the time. Simo Parpola<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> See fn. 10.

<sup>32</sup> Levine 2003.

<sup>33</sup> Pedersén 1986, 44 f. and Maul 1994, 159.

<sup>34</sup> Parpola, LAS II, 3 ff.

and Hayim Tadmor<sup>35</sup> have long cautioned against understanding the title “chief scribe” as referring to a scribe merely in the technical sense of the word. On the contrary, the colophon of Sargon II’s report testifies to the degree to which the scholar responsible for cultic affairs at the Aššur temple and the treasurer were involved in ensuring that the necessary steps were taken to allow Sargon II to enter the city.

It is difficult to determine the precise character of the relationship between Sargon II and his scholars, or that of his relationship with the religious elites in Aššur. It seems that in addition to Sargon II’s treasurer, his governor Ṭāb-šil-Ešarra<sup>36</sup> performed most of the tasks that required Sargon II’s presence in Aššur. Regarding the king’s cooperation with the religious elites, Sargon II tends to emphasize two acts in his commemorative inscriptions: 1) his explicit ceremonial performance of the New Year festival as recorded in his annals, which follows the model of Babylonian kingship,<sup>37</sup> and 2) his establishment of tax exempt status not only for the traditional Babylonian cultic centers, but also for the cities of Aššur and Harran, as is proclaimed in a text known in Assyriological literature as the *Aššur Charter*.<sup>38</sup> While this text could be an expression of Sargon II’s personal interest in the city of Aššur, it seems more likely to assume that by the end of the eighth century BCE the political and religious elites in Aššur had achieved a status of sufficient political and religious importance to enable them to claim (and receive) such privileges. Irrespective of what Sargon II did or did not do to arouse the indignation of the citizenry of Aššur, he seems to have avoided visiting the city even for state rituals as so far we have no evidence for his presence in Aššur. Certain prominent figures in Aššur appear to have possessed the power to regulate his entry to the city on the occasion of his triumphal procession, which normally included the offering of at least part of the booty seized on campaign to the Aššur temple. Esarhaddon’s effort to ingratiate himself with the elites of Aššur in his inscriptions by emphasizing that he too composed or perhaps simply confirmed the *Aššur Charter* ([*kā*]šir *kidinnūt* BAL.TIL<sup>ki</sup>)<sup>39</sup> is still another indication of the king’s accountability to the elites of Assyria’s cultic center.

The question, then, is whether or not the reconstructed sequence of events that preceded Sargon II’s entry into Aššur represents standard procedure. If it does, then can this sequence of events, which clearly demonstrates the authori-

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35 Tadmor 1981, 31.

36 See his correspondence with Sargon II in Parpola 1987, nos. 75–109.

37 Fuchs 1994, 156 ll. 320–321.

38 Chamaza 1992.

39 RINAP 4, no. 48: 41.

ty of Aššur's political and religious elites, be assumed to have operated as early as the time of Šamši-Adad V (823–811 BCE) and Shalmaneser IV (783–773 BCE)? It is also possible to argue that the fact that Sargon II's royal report was found in the exorcist's library suggests that it was intended to serve as a model for future kings and to remind them that their victory belonged to the god Aššur. In either case, even if religious authority was not able to constrain arbitrary royal behavior and hubris, it nevertheless retained its influence over the formulation of a positive image for rulership and the enhancement of its prestige, thereby contributing to the stability of political power. By means of the ritual actions performed during the king's triumphal procession to the Aššur temple, Aššur's religious elite reinforced the message of Aššur's kingship and the king's stewardship as proclaimed in the Assyrian coronation ritual. At some point, denying the king's right to perform his duty as the chief *šangû* of the god Aššur must have been detrimental to the king's individual rulership. A denial of this kind would presumably have prompted the king to engage and placate the various stakeholders in the network of power rather than to keep acting altogether unilaterally. The influence of ritual on the exercise of political power thus entails more than protecting the king from any culpability resulting from political mistakes in the performance of his office.<sup>40</sup> Ritual assumes a corrective function, as it reminds the king of his personal responsibility.

In the process of textualizing the king's deeds, by contrast, the scholars took on a crucial role in shaping the cultural memory of the individual king. Unfortunately, we do not have a divine letter of the god Aššur legitimizing Sargon II's pillage of the sacred center of the Urartian kings. It is therefore not possible to determine whether Aššur's religious elite attempted to manipulate the system of communication in order to support the harmonious balance between earthly and heavenly powers, which would have translated into a positive relationship between the city of Aššur and the king. Scholarly views on the importance of acting in accordance with the will of the gods is expressed in the text of the *Sin of Sargon*, which, as has been emphasized by Tadmor and Lanfranchi, is a product of the scholarly milieu and implies that both Sargon II and his son and successor Sennacherib paid for their actions with their own untimely deaths.<sup>41</sup>

The situation of Sennacherib's successors Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal was different, as both kings challenged tradition by deviating from the law of

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<sup>40</sup> Such is the argument suggested by Lanfranchi 2003, 104.

<sup>41</sup> See Lanfranchi 2003, 107 for the distinction between the *institutional* and *personal* figure of the king, and his emphasis that it is the private person of the king that pays for royal misdeeds. For the text see Tadmor, Landsberger, and Parpola 1989.



primogeniture. In addition to making use of the text categories discussed above, both Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal promoted themselves as models of governance conducive to the cosmic order. To this end, they relied on prophecy and the divine omen compendia, which they either transformed or reused for their self-promotion or for political purposes.

### 9.3 The Goddess Ištar and the King

Under King Esarhaddon, royal ideological discourse regarding the control of knowledge shifted from a focus on technology in the proper sense to expertise in divinatory techniques. The ideal image of the king now centered primarily on knowledge of how to communicate with the gods in order to comply publicly with the cosmic design and of how to act in accordance with the divine will. Central to this communication was knowledge of the proper performance of extispicy, of how gods could be appeased in case of portentous omnia, and of how to protect oneself by means of exorcistic rituals and prayers. These themes surface repeatedly in the correspondence between the scholars and the king and are even mentioned in commemorative inscriptions.

In addition to deductive techniques like extispicy, i.e. the reading of the exta of a sacrificial animal, and lecanomancy, i.e. the inspection of water in a basin, the religious traditions of ancient Syria and Anatolia in particular cultivated the practice of prophecy and dream oracles.<sup>42</sup> Although the storm god was the central figure in prophecy in northern Syria, the other powerful figure voicing divine intentionality was Ištar – formerly Ištar-Šauška – who during the late Sargonid period assumed the role of the midwife and wet nurse to the crown prince while simultaneously providing him with her oracles.<sup>43</sup> Accordingly, in addition to being the legitimate heir in genealogical terms and being the designated crown prince through confirmation by means of the swearing of loyalty oaths, the crown prince was supported by his institutional relationship with the goddess, which served as a central cultural strategy for establishing the king and sacralizing his rulership.<sup>44</sup> It was Esarhaddon in particular

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<sup>42</sup> Nissinen 2003.

<sup>43</sup> Pongratz-Leisten 2003.

<sup>44</sup> Beckman 2000, 18. The most important information with regard to the medical duties and the work of the midwife stem from literary texts such as hymns and myths describing diverse goddesses performing the role of the midwife, among them the goddess Ninisina of Isin. In his book on childbirth, Martin Stol summarizes the midwife's tasks as follows: "She makes the woman sit on the bricks of the birth, she may have punctured the amniotic sac, she delivers the child, cuts the umbilical cord, disposes of the afterbirth. She applies ointments to the

who exploited this institution for his succession politics and who disregarded the custom of installing the eldest son as crown prince.

In the cultural history of Mesopotamia, the role of Inanna/Ištar as mediator between the leader of the pantheon and the king and her empowering of the king in his office was originally clad in the relational framework of the *hieros gamos*, which can be traced back as far as the Early Dynastic period and which persisted through the Ur III and Isin/Larsa periods.<sup>45</sup> This sexual metaphor allowed Inanna to confer the divine blessing on the king in her capacity as the divine assembly's representative, thereby establishing the king's intimate relationship with the divine world and granting him his share of divine knowledge.<sup>46</sup> Inanna's blessing was an expression of Enlil's and An's approval of the king's correct performance of his royal duties, which entailed the proper care for the cult of the gods.<sup>47</sup>

It is interestingly in the ideological discourse of pre-Sargonic Lagaš that Inanna is attested for the first time in the role of the midwife. In Eannatum's *Stele of the Vultures* (ca. 2450 B.C.) we read the following:

[Lor]d<sup>2</sup> [Ni]ngirsu, [war]rior of [En]lil (3 cases frag.) [Ni]n[gi]rsu [imp]lanted the [semen] for E[a]natum in the [wom]b (2 cases broken) and [...] rejoiced over [Eanatum]. Inana accompanied him, named him Eana-Inana-Ibgalakakatum,<sup>48</sup> and set him on the special lap of Ninhursag. Ninhursag [offered him] her special breast. Ningirsu rejoiced over Eanatum, semen implanted in the womb by Ningirsu. Ningirsu laid his span upon him, for (a

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mother and rubs the newborn." Stol 2000, 171. See also the Sumerian hymn to the goddess Ninisina of Isin, which describes with great precision her role as a midwife:

SRT 6 rev. iii 1–8//SRT 7 ll. 11–19

“For the thousands of young maidens to establish fertility,  
to regulate the womb, to cut the umbilical cord, to determine the fates,  
to support the door of the Nigin-gar, to let the fetus come to a successful completion,  
the human child, after it has been received in the lap – to make it cry loudly,  
to put the belly downwards, to turn it upside down,  
to perform? the nugig-ship, to act quickly, to sing proper praise,  
when she has made manifest the great ME,  
and my Lady, has spoken the hymn of praise,  
Ninisina fittingly praise yourself!”

The exaltation of Ninisina in the period of the Isin Dynasty results in her merger with Inanna of Uruk and her adoption of Inanna's epithets and function as “great lady of the gods” and as a warrior-like goddess. For the edition of that text see, Römer 1969.

<sup>45</sup> Cooper 1993; Steinkeller 1999; Lapinkivi 2004.

<sup>46</sup> Pongratz-Leisten 2008.

<sup>47</sup> Pongratz-Leisten 2008, 55.

<sup>48</sup> “Worthy in the Eana of Inana of the Ibgal.”

length of) five forearms he set his forearm upon him: (he measured) five forearms (cubits), one span! Ningirsu, with great joy, [gave him] the kin[gship of Lagaš].<sup>49</sup>

Placing the newborn crown prince on the knees of his parent is performed by Inanna, who places the child on the lap of the mother goddess Ninhursag in the rhetoric of royal ideology.<sup>50</sup> In Eannatum's case, Inanna also assumes the role of the father by calling the crown prince by his throne-name. As such, Eannatum's *Stele of the Vultures* is the very earliest attestation of the cultural metaphor relating to Inanna's central role in legally accepting and naming newborn children, and in establishing the social relationship between the king and the divine world.

By the Isin-Larsa period at the latest, the legal act of naming was absorbed by the chief god of the pantheon. This is attested in the royal self-praise of Išme-Dagan:

He (Enlil) named me with a favorable name even when my seed was inserted into the womb. Nintud stood at my birth, and she established the office of en for me ..., even when my umbilical cord was cut. Enlil, my principal deity, bestowed on me the shepherdship of Sumer, and assigned to me a tireless protective goddess ... He selected me from my people, and announced me to the land ...<sup>51</sup>

Drawing exclusively on Early Dynastic evidence from Lagaš (though it does form part of what I would call the Tigridian cultural zone) to explain Neo-Assyrian cultural choices in the development of royal ideology might seem far-fetched to some readers. It is also possible to refer to later Syro-Anatolian tradition, which has much to offer regarding the conceptualization of Ištar as a prophesying deity and as midwife and wet nurse to the crown prince.

Ištar's role as midwife and wet nurse to the crown prince is already attested at the royal court of Tupkiš at Urkeš around 2250 BCE. Here, even the name of the midwife is known from her own seal.<sup>52</sup> Of particular interest for our discussion is the seal of King Tupkiš himself, which shows him seated on a throne with a lion reclined at his feet. The crown prince is standing on the lion's head, visually conveying a dynastic message by touching his father's lap. A divinity –

<sup>49</sup> *Stele of the Vultures*, Ean. 1 iv 9–12, Cooper, SARI I, 34.

<sup>50</sup> Heimpel 2000. For attestations see Sjöberg and Bergmann 1969, 142 f. This role of Ninhursag, assumed on the human level by the father, supports Peter Steinkeller's view that the "earliest Sumerian pantheon was dominated by female deities," Steinkeller 1999, 113, a position that has, however, been questioned recently by Michalowski, 2002.

<sup>51</sup> Išme-Dagan A 43 ff., see Reisman 1970; Jacobsen 1987, 112–124; Römer 1989, 659–673; Jacobsen 1997, 547–550.

<sup>52</sup> Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 1997, 83.

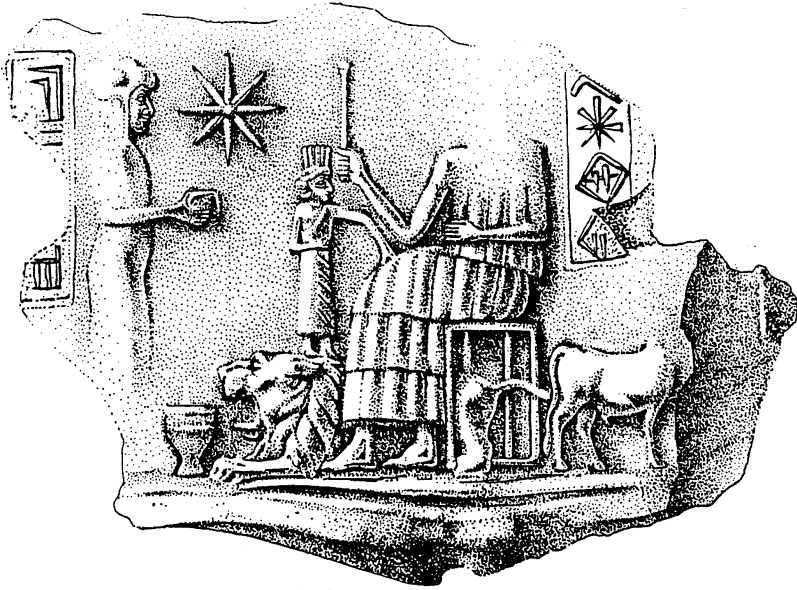


Fig. 54: Seal of Tupkish (after Buccellati and Buccellati 1997, 78).

quite possibly Ištar – feeds the lion, while a star hovers in front of her (fig. 54). Nurses are further known from the royal court of Mari during the Old Babylonian period.<sup>53</sup> These women entered into contractual relations and were paid in grain, silver, or gold,<sup>54</sup> as is shown by a later inventory of gifts from king Tuš-ratta of Mitanni.<sup>55</sup> A text from Nuzi seems to indicate that the wet nurse “retained a certain degree of importance long after her duties were finished.”<sup>56</sup> Hittite mythology explicitly refers to the performance of the midwife in the Hurrian-derived *Song of Ullikummi*, in which “the midwives aided the delivery of the monster Ullikummi and the Nurses, the Fate and Mother goddesses, lifted him and placed him on the knees of his father. The father expressed his joy and named the child. The same child-lifting occurred in the *Appu story*, also of Hurrian derivation, but only the Nurse, written logographically *UMMEDA*,

53 Dossin 1971, 65 vii 32; see also ARMT 10 92, ARMT 10 43.

54 San Nicolò 1932.

55 Moran 1992, EA 25 iii 62.

56 Morrison 1979, fn. 75. In the Hittite context magic knowledge probably expanded from the office of midwifery, a proposal advanced by G. Beckman on the basis of the term “old woman,” which is frequently used in magical texts, see Beckman 1983, 232–235.

is mentioned.”<sup>57</sup> Hittite mythology thus conveys the two important legal acts of taking the infant and naming the infant, the latter being done by the father, who thereby recognizes and accepts the newborn child. The legal act of taking the child was considered so important that it became a motif in Hittite birth rituals.<sup>58</sup>

Assyrian ideological discourse combined the role of Inanna/Ištar as mid-wife and wet nurse with her role as a prophesying deity who intervened on behalf of the crown prince and future king. Prophetic intervention by Ištar is also attested in Ešnunna, once more in the Tigridian region, and in the only Old Babylonian oracle of southern Babylonia that is spoken by the goddess Nanaya of Uruk rather than Inanna/Ištar of Uruk.<sup>59</sup> Ešnunna was as much part of the Tigridian cultural horizon as it was of the Sumero-Babylonian alluvial plain, and the two oracles of Ešnunna spoken by Ištar-Kititum<sup>60</sup> may therefore be considered the earliest examples of a cultural strategy inspired by northern Mesopotamian and Syro-Anatolian practice rather than Sumero-Babylonian tradition.<sup>61</sup> It is probably Ištar-Šauška of Ninet/Nineveh – referred to in the Mari letters<sup>62</sup> – who provided the model for conceptualizing Ištar-Kititum as a prophesying deity in the kingdom of Ešnunna where, in a retrospective prophecy, she acknowledges King Ibal-pi-El II’s succession to the throne.<sup>63</sup> As pointed out in *Chapter Three*, the cult of Ištar-Šauška at Nineveh had become so important by the Old Babylonian period that Šamši-Adad I (1808–1776 BCE) read the oracles (*têrêtum*) before going on campaign. He wrote to his son:

The oracle readings that I have done here (i.e. at Nineveh) have been very favorable. They yielded a presage of glory. This is what they say about this enemy: “You will not meet with failure.” [The oracle readings] carried your sign. You will [def]eat them. You [will ach]ieve [triumph]. Get your troops [into formation]; you do [not] risk falling into an ambush.”<sup>64</sup>

Although Jean-Marie Durand has drawn attention to the fact that *têrtum* can also have the meaning of oracle, it is not entirely clear whether the above letter refers to extispicy or prophecy.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Pringle 1993, esp. 133.

<sup>58</sup> Beckman 1977, Text C § 6.

<sup>59</sup> Thus Westenholz 2007, 317–324, who provided a new edition of the text.

<sup>60</sup> de Jong Ellis 1987; Moran 1993.

<sup>61</sup> I would consider the late Neo-Assyrian reference to Ištar-Urkittu, i.e. Ištar of Uruk, as a prophesying deity to be a late scholarly development rather than a reflection of the prophesying Ištar originating in Uruk, *pace* Dalley 2010.

<sup>62</sup> ARMT 26/1 no. 192:16.

<sup>63</sup> Pongratz-Leisten 2003, 157 ff.

<sup>64</sup> ARM I 60 (LAPO II 672), translation after Ziegler 2005, 25.

<sup>65</sup> Durand, ARMT 26/1, 379 f.

Prophecy is, however, certainly the oracular mode of Ištar-Kititum's communication with Daduša's successor King Ibal-pi-El II (1179–1765 BCE), in which Kititum posthumously predicts a successful reign for him:

*Kititum Oracle FLP 1674:*

O King Ibal-pi-El! Thus speaks the goddess Kititum: "The secrets of the gods lie before me, (and) because the invocation of my name is ever in your mouth, I shall reveal to you one by one the secrets (*nišrētu*) of the gods. At the advice of the gods, and by the command of Anu, the country is given you to rule. You will loosen the sandals of (+ legally take in possession?) the Upper and Lower Country, you will have at your disposal the treasures of the Upper and Lower Country. Your economy will not diminish. Wherever in the land your hand has laid hold, there will be permanent 'food of peace.' (And) I, Kititum, will strengthen the foundations of your throne. I have provided you with a protective spirit. May your [e]ar be attentive to me!"<sup>66</sup>

The divine design that Kititum shares with the king, here referred to as the 'secrets of the gods,' reveals that Ibal-pi-El II's kingdom will expand to include the Upper and Lower lands, that the economy will prosper, and that his rule will be stable.<sup>67</sup> Following Jack Sasson, in an earlier article I stressed the formal judicial language that Kititum uses to authorize the king's rulership at the end of the oracle: "And I, Kititum, will strengthen the foundations of your throne." Legal language of this kind was used by powerful kings to declare their support of a newcomer to the throne, as is demonstrated by the following example taken from a statement made by king Zimrilim of Mari quoting the king of Ešnunna: "As for Zimrilim, I myself have set him on the throne. I want to do what strengthens him and what secures the foundations of his throne."<sup>68</sup> The effect of such language in the context of prophecy is not to be underestimated, as it ties prophecy to divinatory practices and provides it with a legal overtone.

Clear evidence for Ištar-Šauška's role in prophecy during the second half of the second millennium comes from Hittite Anatolia, in particular from the reign of Hattušili III (1267–ca. 1240 BCE) and from his *Apology*.<sup>69</sup> At least eight different versions of Hattušili III's *Apology* have been found in the storeroom

<sup>66</sup> de Jong Ellis 1987.

<sup>67</sup> Contrary to what I stated in my former article, Pongratz-Leisten 2003, 159, I now interpret *nišrētu* as the positive aspects referring to the king's reign, as laid out by Kititum, i.e. the divine design for the king.

<sup>68</sup> Durand 1987b; Sasson 1998, 463. For a similar wording see Zimri-Lim's letter A.1153 referring to Yarim-Lim of Halab: "It is my father who brought me to my throne, who will strengthen me and will secure the foundation of my throne," (Sasson, *ibid.*, 464).

<sup>69</sup> Hoffner 1975.

of the Great Temple of the Lower City in Hattuša, which suggests the great importance that the Hittites assigned to the text. It was written at least ten years after Hattušili III deposed and exiled his nephew Urhi-Tešub. As noted by Hayim Tadmor, this apologetic account of the king's usurpation of the throne is extremely illuminating as a parallel for Esarhaddon.<sup>70</sup> Like Hattušili III's *Apology*, which in fact represents a *Stiftungsurkunde* for Ištar of Samuha, Esarhaddon's *Apology* was not conceived as a reflection on the past but "rather to serve certain imminent political aims in the present or some particular design for the future."<sup>71</sup> In Hattušili III's *Apology* there is a reference to Ištar-Šauška sending a dream oracle through Muwatalli, the eldest son of Muršili II, as an expression of divine support for Hattušili III's claim to rulership:

§ 1 (Col. i:1–4) Thus Tabarna Hattušili (III), Great King, King of Hatti, son of Muršili (II), Great King, King of Hatti, grandson of Šuppiluliuma, Great King, King of Hatti, descendant of Hattušili (I), King of Kuššar.

*Prooemium*

§ 2 (i:5–8) Ištar's divine providence I will proclaim. Let Man hear it! And may in future His Majesty's son, his grandson (and further) offspring of His Majesty be respectful among the gods towards Ištar!

Hattušili (III)'s early youth; Ištar's first intervention:

§ 3 (i:9–21) My father Muršili begot us four children: Halpašulupi, Muwatalli, Hattušili (III) and Maššanauzzi, a daughter. Of all these I was the youngest child. As long as I was still a boy, I was 'one-of-the-reins' (chariot-driver). (Now), Ištar, my Lady, sent Muwatalli, my brother to Muršili, my father, through a dream (saying): "For Hattušili (III) the years (are) short, he is not to live (long). Hand him over to me, and let him be my priest, so he (will) live." My father took me up, (while still) a boy, and handed me (over) to the service of the goddess, and as a priest I brought offerings to the goddess. At the hand of Ištar, My Lady, I experienced prosperity, and Ištar, My Lady, took me by the hand and provided for me.<sup>72</sup>

Hattušili III had been the youngest of four children and of fragile health,<sup>73</sup> which helps explain why he was initially assigned as a priest to the goddess Ištar. Later, when he had become king, he would constantly turn to her for guidance:

(i:51–60) In times of fear the goddess, My Lady, never abandoned me, neither to my enemy nor to my opponent or rival did she ever leave me. Whether it was some word from an enemy, from an opponent in court, or from the palace circle, Ištar, My lady shielded

<sup>70</sup> Tadmor 1983.

<sup>71</sup> Tadmor 1983, 37.

<sup>72</sup> Translation after van den Hout 1997, 199.

<sup>73</sup> Van den Hout 1995.

me in every way, favored me, and delivered enemies and rivals into my hands, for me to finish them off.

As is clear from several oracles,<sup>74</sup> toward the end of his reign King Hattušili III decided to install his son Tudhaliya IV as co-regent in order to secure his line of succession and to prevent Kurunta, his nephew and the King of Tarhuntaša, from seizing the throne of Hattuša.<sup>75</sup> The close relationship between Ištar and the king and the reliance on oracular inquiry to legitimize royal action in the context of succession reemerge in the late Sargonid period, as both Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal are younger sons of the king who are appointed as successors to the throne.

## 9.4 Esarhaddon's Reliance on Ištar's Voice and his Reformulation of the Assyrian Rules of Succession

### 9.4.1 Esarhaddon's Rise to Power

Although the Hittite evidence precedes Esarhaddon by five hundred years, Esarhaddon's decision to favor his younger son Ashurbanipal in the succession to the throne while making his elder son Šamaš-šum-ukīn governor of Babylonia closely parallels the Hittite precedent. It is possible that Hattušili III's *Apology* survived into the Sargonid period – not so much as a text but as a cultural discourse or practice that persisted within international cultural memory and served as a model for Esarhaddon, who then framed his own accession to the throne in a similar discourse. In contrast to Hattušili III, however, Esarhaddon does not rely on dream oracles but on prophecy. Oracles, mostly spoken by Ištar, were collected together on tablets in order to articulate a narrative that justified Esarhaddon's plans for the irregular appointment of his younger son Ashurbanipal as crown prince designate. The fact that it is Ištar who represents the divine protagonist in this divine-human communication among both Hittites and Assyrians constitutes further evidence of the intense cultural interaction between Hittite and Assyrian scholarly circles in the Middle Assyrian period.

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<sup>74</sup> Though not necessarily prophecies, as the oracles are referred to as KIN-oracles (see van den Hout 1991), which are to be linked with extispicy.

<sup>75</sup> Van den Hout 1991. The prayers of Hattušili III and Paduhepa to the sun goddess of Arinna confirm the narrative of the apology, see Sørenhagen 1981.



In his pioneering study of Esarhaddon's *Apology*, which constitutes the introductory section to the longest historical prism inscription from Nineveh (Nineveh A now RINAP 4 no. 1), Hayim Tadmor defined the text as an "unusual literary form" expressing an "equally unusual political situation,"<sup>76</sup> namely the deliberate failure to abide by the norm of primogeniture.

Esarhaddon came to power during the civil war that broke out after the murder of his father Sennacherib (704–681 BCE).<sup>77</sup> Esarhaddon's succession has been the subject of extensive recent research,<sup>78</sup> so I will only reflect on those points that contribute to an understanding of the arrangement of the oracle collections. As Barbara Porter<sup>79</sup> has demonstrated, it is very difficult to reconstruct the events surrounding Esarhaddon's rise to power because very few of his father Sennacherib's inscriptions survive from the late years of his reign. Those that do survive focus primarily on the destruction of Babylon, his raid against the Arabs, and the building of the festival house in Aššur. Nevertheless, the barrel cylinder commemorating the construction of Esarhaddon's succession palace in Aššur and the *Gift of Sennacherib for Esarhaddon*<sup>80</sup> – which mentions Esarhaddon's throne name Aššur-eṭellu-mukîn-apli – clearly testify to Sennacherib's intention to install Esarhaddon as his successor to the throne.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, a fragment of a loyalty oath may very well have recorded arrangements for Esarhaddon's appointment as crown prince, though his name is not preserved.<sup>82</sup> Such arrangements were necessary because, although it is not stated officially in any surviving text, the eldest son normally inherited the throne.<sup>83</sup> When royal succession did not comply with the norm of primogeniture, as is the case with Esarhaddon and his successor Ashurbanipal, this was cause for extensive justification in the royal inscriptions of these kings. The principle of primogeniture is also clearly expressed in the following statement of one of Esarhaddon's advisers, recorded in a letter:

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76 Tadmor 1983, 38; see further the contribution by Ishida 1991. On the passage Nineveh A i 23 see Frahm 2009. See Frahm 2010 for a possible connection of the letter YBC 11382 denouncing Esarhaddon's magnates, who were involved in a revolt against the king and his crown prince.

77 Parpola 1980.

78 See the bibliography in Leichty, RINAP 4, 10–11 given for Prism A.

79 Porter 1993, 14.

80 SAA 12 no. 88.

81 Porter 1993, 14 with fn. 19.

82 SAA 2 no. 3.

83 See the discussion by Garelli 1979 and by Barbara Porter 1993, 15 fn. 22; see further Pongratz-Leisten 1997b.

What has not been done in heaven, the king, my lord, has done upon earth and shown us: you have girded a son of yours with headband and entrusted him kingship of Assyria; your eldest son you have put (up) to the kingship in Babylon.<sup>84</sup>

Overruling the principle of primogeniture had to be legitimized through specific cultural practices in order for the new king to secure the loyalty of his contemporaries and the acceptance of future generations, which can explain the unusual text of Esarhaddon's *Apology* and the compilation of oracle collections.

It is not entirely clear if Sennacherib originally expected his eldest son Aššur-nādin-šumi to succeed him to the throne; it is also unclear if Aššur-nādin-šumi's installation as governor of Babylonia was intended to prepare him for future kingship in Assyria,<sup>85</sup> or whether this arrangement was intended to be permanent. The latter is assumed by Kwasman and Parpola on the basis of certain documents that mention Sennacherib's other son Urda-Mullissi both by name and by the title *mār šarri*, indicating the king's intention to install him as his heir to the throne.<sup>86</sup> Aššur-nādin-šumi was killed in a conspiracy of the Babylonians and Elamites, which eventually led to Sennacherib's devastating destruction of Babylon. Around 698 BCE Sennacherib appears to have designated his second son Urda-Mullissi as his successor to the throne, and it seems that Urda-Mullissi held this position for over a dozen years until his sudden and enforced resignation in 684 BCE. The reasons for Urda-Mullissi's dismissal are unknown. It is likely that Sennacherib's powerful wife Naqia had something to do with it,<sup>87</sup> convincing him to install his younger son Esarhaddon (her son, too) as crown prince and heir apparent in the year 683 BCE. Esarhaddon would not ordinarily have been next in line for the succession, as he states in his *Apology*: "I am my older brother's youngest brother."<sup>88</sup> Even before Sen-

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**84** SAA 10 no. 185; *pace* Radner 2003, 166 who concludes on this basis that the king could choose his successor from among all males of the royal line and that there was no established custom of primogeniture. See further the example of Tiglath-Pileser III, who, although a member of the royal family, was not the designated heir and usurped the throne. It is probably for this reason that he avoids including his filiation in his inscriptions, see most recently Tadmor and Yamada in the introduction to RINAP 1, 12. In Mesopotamia norms of succession appear to have varied according to time and place, Heimpel 1992.

**85** A different view is presented by Frahm 1997, 19 who contends that Sennacherib installed his first-born son Aššur-nādin-šumi as governor in Babylon and his second son Urda-mullissi as crown prince and heir apparent; the latter was demoted in 683 BCE in favor of Esarhaddon. Frahm does express doubt about this, however, as a relief from Lachish shows the king in the company of a crown prince already in 701.

**86** Kwasman and Parpola SAA 6, XXXII-XXXIV.

**87** Melville 1999 downplays the role of Naqia.

**88** Porter 1993, 16 and RINAP 4 no. 1 i 8.

nacherib's murder – probably at the hands of the unhappy Urda-Mullissi<sup>89</sup> – Esarhaddon had to confront the conflicting factions struggling for power in Assyria. Sennacherib sent Esarhaddon to the Western frontier, perhaps in order to keep him safe from such infighting; it should be noted that Esarhaddon's claim to have been the beneficiary of this kind of protection from his father is unique in Assyrian-Babylonian history and raises some doubts about the actual relationship between Sennacherib and Esarhaddon. It is, however, from the Western frontier that Esarhaddon would eventually make his way through Hanigalbat toward Nineveh to take the throne. Erle Leichty has recently argued persuasively that Esarhaddon might have reconsolidated his forces in Harran, which could be the Sargonid dynasty's original home.<sup>90</sup>

In the introduction to Esarhaddon's *Apology* – written long after Esarhaddon's succession to the throne in 673 BCE in order to justify his decision to appoint Ashurbanipal as his successor<sup>91</sup> – Esarhaddon refers to the two important stages of his own rise to power, namely his appointment as crown prince in the month Nisannu of the year 683 BCE<sup>92</sup> and his ascension to the throne on the 18<sup>th</sup> of Addaru (XII) 680 BCE. These two dates frame the civil war period described at length in his *Apology*. Esarhaddon's *Apology* is strikingly similar to the oracle collections from his reign, and both are deeply concerned with the period of civil war that followed Esarhaddon's appointment as crown prince. Furthermore, the *Apology* argues that the gods favored the kingship of Esarhaddon over that of his brothers: favorable omens and oracles confirm Sennacherib's preference for Esarhaddon and his elevation to the status of crown prince designate is presented as the implementation of divine will.<sup>93</sup> The political message of Esarhaddon's *Apology* is further strengthened by his unusual self-introduction, which, unlike the royal genealogies typical of the titulary at the beginning of royal inscriptions, stresses the question of divine election (i 5–7). Moreover, intertextual connections with mythic texts like *Lugal-e*, the *Erra Epic*, and

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**89** Parpola 1980.

**90** Leichty 2007. This argument is supported not only by the fact that three kings have theophoric names with the divine element *Sîn* and that *Sîn* figures prominently in their royal inscriptions (so Leichty), but also by the fact that the queen mother Naqia is represented holding a mirror in her hand, a motif typical of Syro-Anatolian representation (Parrot and Nougayrol 1956).

**91** Tadmor 1983, 37; Parpola, SAA 9, LXIX–LXX; Nissinen 1998, 15.

**92** For the date of Esarhaddon's appointment as crown prince see Kwasman and Parpola SAA 6, XXXIII–XXXIV and Nissinen 1998, 18.

**93** See the quotation of the relevant passage in *Chapter* 8.1.

the royal inscriptions of his predecessors Sargon II and Sennacherib<sup>94</sup> serve to bolster Esarhaddon's arguments and to justify his political actions.

#### 9.4.2 Esarhaddon's Oracle Collections

The prophecies recorded in Esarhaddon's reign represent an important addition to the discussion of the literarization of particular royal agendas. Sargonid scholarly tradition maintained two basic formats for the transmission of prophetic reports: the horizontal format of the *u'iltu* and the vertical format of the *tuppu*. Tablets with a horizontal format dealt with notes, omen reports, receipts, etc., and were disposable, while the *tuppu* format, on the contrary, was used for treaties, census lists, balance accounts, treasury inventories, royal decrees and ordinances,<sup>95</sup> lexical lists, and literary texts, and was designed for archival storage. Neo-Assyrian prophecies have been found in both formats, with single reports in the libraries of Nineveh being recorded in the *u'iltu* format and oracle collections in the multi-column *tuppu* format. Karel van der Toorn stresses the enduring significance of the Neo-Assyrian oracle collections,<sup>96</sup> which are the subject of the following discussion.

Much information can be gleaned from the format and formulation of these tablets. First, Simo Parpola has made the critical observation that, judging from sign forms and other scribal idiosyncracies, all the single oracle reports were written by different scribal hands, while the four oracle collections were all compiled by the same scribe.<sup>97</sup> Second, the single oracle reports usually begin with a brief note introducing the oracle, sometimes specifying its origin, context, or date, such as “the word of Ištar of Arbela [to the king's mother ...];”<sup>98</sup> “the prophetess Mullissu-kabtat (has said);”<sup>99</sup> or “words [concerning the Elam]ites.”<sup>100</sup> In the oracle collections of the multi-column tablets these “notes follow the oracle and are rigorously standardized,”<sup>101</sup> while “the individual oracles on the tablet and the authorship indications following them

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<sup>94</sup> See Johannes Bach's work on intertextuality in *Esarhaddon's Apology*, presented at my workshop on May 9, 2014.

<sup>95</sup> Parpola 1997, liii.

<sup>96</sup> Van der Toorn 2000.

<sup>97</sup> Parpola, SAA 9, LV.

<sup>98</sup> SAA 9 no. 5:1.

<sup>99</sup> SAA 9 no. 7:1.

<sup>100</sup> SAA 9 no. 8:1.

<sup>101</sup> Parpola, SAA 9, LXII.

are separated from each other by a horizontal ruling.”<sup>102</sup> Third, each oracle collection was originally preceded by an introductory section. In the second column of the first collection this section consists of ten lines now completely lost, which are separated from a postscript by a double ruling that is in turn separated by a single ruling from the corpus of the oracles that follow. In the third oracle collection, the introductory section probably included a statement about Esarhaddon’s success in stabilizing his rule over Assyria, as expressed in the formulas of a declarative speech act: “Heaven and earth are [well]; Ešarra is [well]; Esarhaddon, king of Assyria is [well].”<sup>103</sup> Subsequently, the text seems to refer to a ritual performance in the Aššur temple, which is signaled by statements like “before Aššur” and “they come” and “burn (aromatics).”

Why should one distinguish between the tablets carrying single reports and the multi-column oracle collections? For the most part, prophecy, “from the view of the communication process, does not presuppose any literary activity at all.”<sup>104</sup> Because the king was not present when oracles were taken, however, the divine message needed to be written down to ensure effective transmission; this is the purpose of the *u’iltu* format.<sup>105</sup> Simply committing an oracle to writing involved the use of a refined literary form that was not only “adjusted to necessary scribal conventions and stylized according to the prevailing customs”<sup>106</sup> but also aimed at intelligibility, so that the oracular message could be readily understood by its recipient, in most cases the Neo-Assyrian king.<sup>107</sup> In this context, standardized introductory formulas and subscripts facilitated the identification of the origin of the oracle as well its mediator. The formulaic framework used to transmit the message in writing is, consequently, comparable to that of astrological reports or omen reports.<sup>108</sup> While the *u’iltu* format has the character of a disposable document not necessarily intended for long-term preservation, “the *tuppu* format, in contrast, is intentionally designed for archival storage.”<sup>109</sup> This suggests that oracle collections were designed to be preserved for posterity.

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**102** Parpola, SAA 9, LVI.

**103** SAA 9 no. 3:9–11.

**104** Nissinen 2000, 241.

**105** Radner 1997, 52–68.

**106** Nissinen 2000, 244.

**107** Pongratz-Leisten 1999, 267; van der Toorn 2007, 111.

**108** On the basis of three oracles from Mari spoken by the same prophetess and dealing with the same event but sent to the king by three different persons, Karel van der Toorn has recently demonstrated how much the account of an oracle can differ according to the person who reports on the event: “The texts give only the gist of the oracle of the prophetess, each using its own words while pretending to quote hers.” (Van der Toorn 2007, 113).

**109** Nissinen 2000, 248.

As compilations on multi-column tablets, the oracle collections represent a new literary format. This format can be counted among the other new text categories that emerged under Esarhaddon, like his *Apology*,<sup>110</sup> or among text categories that became more prominent during the Sargonid period, like *Royal Reports* justifying exceptional royal actions. Fratricide, for instance, forms the background for Esarhaddon's report on his campaign to Šubria,<sup>111</sup> which, although not overtly stated, was intended to justify the murder of his brother Urda-Mullisi and his followers, whose claim to the Assyrian throne threatened Esarhaddon's succession. *Divine Letters* were also part of this intense literary production and are represented by texts like Ashurbanipal's *Fictive Dialogue between Ashurbanipa and Nabûl*,<sup>112</sup> and *Aššur's Letter to Ashurbanipal*,<sup>113</sup> which sanctions the king's killing of his brother Šamaš-šum-ukin, the governor of Babylon.

Although the oracle collections share in the historical argument advanced by these various texts, they should be approached in the broader context of literary creations linked to Esarhaddon's decision to appoint his younger son Ashurbanipal as his successor to the throne. The oracle collections read like an abbreviated version of his *Apology*, which describes his rise to power and was written long after his ascension to the throne. Simo Parpola has proposed this interpretation for the first oracle collection, which deals with the decisive battle before Esarhaddon's arrival at Nineveh in the eleventh month of 681 BCE and his ultimate triumph one month later (681–XII–8). Parpola dates the first oracle collection to late 673 BCE, i.e. the same time the *Apology* was composed, while suggesting the earlier date of 679 BCE for the second collection, which relates to Esarhaddon's difficulties in consolidating his power in the early years of his reign. Parpola suggests a date in the last days of 681 or early 680 BCE for the third collection because it contains oracles concerned with Esarhaddon's covenant with Aššur. I disagree with Parpola's dating of the third oracle collection since oracle SAA 9 no. 3.2 lists the various enemies that Esarhaddon confronted during his reign, like the Cimmerians and the king of Melid, and because of the retrospective voice of the Aššur oracle SAA 9 no. 3.3. I suggest instead that the compilation of the third oracle collection and its deposition alongside the first and second oracle collections was a consequence of a concerted effort to articulate a coherent narrative about these events toward the

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110 RINAP 4 no. 1.

111 Leichty 1991 and Pongratz-Leisten 1999, 238–240.

112 SAA 3 no. 13.

113 SAA 3 no. 44.

end of Esarhaddon's reign.<sup>114</sup> It is also possible to assume that a *Vorlage* informed the particular wording of the respective oracle collections, explaining their slight differences and preventing the author from composing a unified “literary” version of the three collections.

### 9.4.3 Rewriting History through the Voices of Ištar and Aššur

The first two of Esarhaddon's oracle collections, assembled either on three-column or two-column tablets, refer to historical events linked with Esarhaddon's installation as crown prince, the ensuing civil war, his enthronement, and several episodes from the beginning of his reign. The third oracle collection, by contrast, summarizes the events tied directly to Esarhaddon's rise to power and stands out for its inclusion of a retrospective oracle spoken by Aššur rather than Ištar.

The assemblage of the oracles on the multi-column tablets is not random, but roughly follows the course of the events they describe. As a result, the content of the oracles can be read as a “narrative” of Esarhaddon's ascension to the throne authorized by the divine voice. This narrative is also communicated in Esarhaddon's royal inscriptions, particularly in his *Apology* from Nineveh. The “narrative” framework relating to Esarhaddon's rise to power is, however, interspersed with oracles pertaining to political and military events from later in his reign (see especially SAA 9 no. 2.4 and 3.2). It is precisely this chronologically unsound fusion that complicates our understanding of the function of the oracle collections and – to my mind – precludes dating them to the beginning of Esarhaddon's reign.<sup>115</sup> In other words, the single oracles were originally spoken early in Esarhaddon's reign, when he was struggling to consolidate his power in Assyria. These oracles were not, however, assembled in the three collective tablets stored together in the libraries of Nineveh until later; their assembly was likely intended to legitimize Esarhaddon's reign and probably dates to the time when Esarhaddon planned to install his younger son Ashurbanipal as heir to the throne.

A survey of the chain of events presented in the “narrative” of these tablets can help illuminate their purpose. The first oracle collection, identified by Simo Parpola as the “Oracles of Encouragement to Esarhaddon,” pertains to the peri-

<sup>114</sup> I thank Simo Parpola for the conversation we had on the subject on August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

<sup>115</sup> Pace Weippert 1981, 95–96. Parpola, *SAA* 9, LXVIII points out that the references to Elam, Mannea, Urartu and Mugallu of Melid could, in principle, belong to any phase of Esarhaddon's twelve-year reign.

od of Esarhaddon's absence from Assyria, when his father Sennacherib had sent him away to protect him from assassination, as is expressed by the following oracle:

King of Assyria, have no fear! I will deliver up the enemy of the king of Assyria for slaughter. [I will] keep you safe and [make] you [great in] your Palace of Succession.<sup>116</sup>

Further support is provided by the oracle delivered to the Queen Mother:

I am the Lady of Arbela.

To the king's mother:

Because you implored me, saying: You have placed the ones at the (king's) right and left side in your lap, but made my own offspring roam in the steppe" —  
Now fear not, my king! The kingdom is yours, yours is the power!<sup>117</sup>

The tablet seems to end with Esarhaddon's safe arrival at the succession palace, as is mentioned in his *Apology*.<sup>118</sup> In the last oracle of the collection, Ištar tells Esarhaddon that just as he relied on her previous oracles, so too can he rely on her present and future oracles:

[I am the Lady of Arb]ela.

[O Esarhaddon, who]se bosom [Ištar] of Arbela has filled with favor! Could you not rely on the previous utterance which I spoke to you? Now you can rely on this later one too.<sup>119</sup>

Esarhaddon's inscriptions do not refer explicitly to Ištar's oracles in favor of his installation as crown prince, but her support for the future king is mentioned in his *Apology*, which refers to her intervention with the expression "through her sublime command":

Fear of the great gods, my lords, overwhelmed them, (and when) they saw my mighty battle array, they became like crazed women. The goddess Ištar, the lady of war and battle, who loves my priesthood, stood at my side, broke their bows, (and) she split open their tight battle ranks. In their assembly, they said thus: "This is our king!" Through her sublime command they began coming over to my side (and) marching behind me. They were gamboling like lambs (and) begging my sovereignty.<sup>120</sup>

The second oracle collection deals with Esarhaddon's efforts to consolidate his power. Unfortunately, the introduction is missing and the surviving text begins

116 SAA 9 no. 1:2:30'–35'.

117 SAA 9 no. 1:8:12–21.

118 Borger, *Ash.*, 41 § 27 Nin. A–F, Ep. 2 i 21–22 = RINAP 4 no. 1 i 21–22.

119 SAA 9 no. 1:10: vi 1–12.

120 RINAP 4 no. 1 i 72–79.



with the oracles themselves. In the first oracle, Ištar's promise to guide Esarhaddon's reign according to the ideal model of the past frames the collection as a whole:

[Have no fe]ar, Esarhaddon!  
[Like a] skilled pilot [I will st]eer [the ship] into a good port. [The fu]ture [shall] be like the past; [I will go around you and protect you].<sup>121</sup>

The oracles, cast in beautiful metaphors, repeatedly evoke Esarhaddon's difficulties in consolidating his kingship. They refer to rival claimants to the throne and to foreign enemies hoping to exploit Assyria's political instability in order to destroy Assyria:

I will [reconcile] Assyria with you. I will protect [you] by day and by dawn and [consolidate] your crown.  
Like a winged bird ov[er its *young*] I will twitter over you and go in circles around you. Like a beautiful (*lion*) cub I will run about in your palace and sniff out your enemies.  
I will keep you safe in your palace; I will make you overcome anxiety and trembling. Your son and grandson shall rule as kings before Ninurta.  
I will abolish the frontiers of all the lands and give them to you.  
Mankind is deceitful; I am one who says and does. I will sniff out, catch and give you the 'noisy daughter'.<sup>122</sup>

Another oracle relates to the military challenges that Esarhaddon faced in his later years:

I will choose the emissaries of the Elamites and the Mannean. I will seal the writings of the Urartian. I will cut off the ... of Mugallu (of Melitene).  
Who (then) is the lone man? Who is the wronged man? Have no fear! Well sheltered is Esarhaddon, king of Assyria.<sup>123</sup>

The major task faced by Esarhaddon during his reign was to allay the hostilities between Assyria and Babylonia, which culminated in several Babylonian revolts and in Sennacherib's final punitive destruction of Babylon and deportation of its citizens. It therefore comes as no surprise that the support of the Babylonian gods for Esarhaddon's rule was also confirmed in the oracles:

The gods of Esangil languish in the 'steppe' of mixed evil. Quickly let two burnt offerings be sent out to their presence, and let them go and announce your well-being!<sup>124</sup>

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121 SAA 9 no. 2.2:15'–19'.

122 SAA 9 no. 2.3: ii 1–19'.

123 SAA 9 no. 2.4:12'–17'.

124 SAA 9 no. 2.3:24'–27'.

The last oracle of the second collection, again unfortunately fragmentary, refers to Babylon and to Urkittu, Ištar's hypostasis in Uruk in Southern Babylonia.<sup>125</sup> Letters sent to Esarhaddon toward the end of his reign relate to the restoration of temples and statues in Uruk, which explains Urkittu's presence in the oracles.<sup>126</sup> Further historical allusions include the references to the Elamites and Manneans, to the sealing of the writing of the Urartian, and to Mugallu of Melitene, who remained an enemy throughout Esarhaddon's entire reign and who is mentioned in the queries to the Sun God.<sup>127</sup> A campaign against Mugallu is attested as late as Esarhaddon's sixth year in Elulu 675 BCE<sup>128</sup> and probably took place after Esarhaddon's campaign against the Manneans earlier in the same year.<sup>129</sup>

As such, the timeframe covered in the second oracle collection stretches from the beginning of Esarhaddon's reign to just after its midpoint, and includes activities in a geographical expanse stretching between some of the southernmost and some of the northernmost extremities of Esarhaddon's empire at that time. Both the first and the second oracle collections contain oracles spoken by Ištar or other gods<sup>130</sup> in promissory and commissive speech acts that express divine commitment to the king in highly particular situations.

The third oracle collection stands apart from the other two in three respects: its overall composition, the fact that the first two oracles are delivered by Aššur instead of Ištar, and the fact that Aššur's oracles are spoken in the past tense. This change in divine authority and in the use of tenses shapes the overall content of the message and should serve as a caution against reading the oracle collections as a simple secondary recording of formerly single oracles. On the contrary, the complexity of their composition demonstrates that much more was involved than mere recording and copying.

The third collection begins with a general introductory statement regarding Esarhaddon's final victory over his brothers and the consequent promotion of prosperity in the land, which is expressed in the well-being of Heaven and Earth, the Aššur temple, and the king. This presentation of Esarhaddon's rise to power is concluded by a blessing and followed by a ritual description of a

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**125** Ištar-Urkittu assumes a mediating role on behalf of the king before Nabû in the *Fictive Dialogue between Ashurbanipal and Nabû*, see Livingstone, SAA 3 no. 13 and most recently Foster 2005, 829–30; for the relationship between this fictive dialogue and prophecy, see Pongratz-Leisten 1999, 273 n. 37.

**126** SAA 10 nos. 349 and 355.

**127** Starr, SAA 4, LVIIIf.

**128** SAA 4, LVIII.

**129** SAA 4, LIXf.

**130** For the prophesying deities see Weippert 2002, 13.

ceremony in the Aššur temple involving the burning (of aromatics) and a reference to the king's mother. Simo Parpola tentatively reconstructed one verbal form as [... *i-n*]a-*āš-ši* “he lifts up”, which in the royal rituals generally refers to lifting up the crown of Aššur and the weapons of Mullissu.<sup>131</sup> Mention of the king's mother, however, suggests that the context of the coronation ceremony is unlikely in this case.

After a ruling, two oracles spoken by Aššur follow.<sup>132</sup> These oracles state that the king's victory was achieved with the support of Aššur, but their form is distinct from that of other oracles: they lack any address to the king or self-representation of the deity, features typical of the oracles spoken by Ištar. The first oracle refers to Esarhaddon's victorious reign, which secured his control over the entire universe from East to West. Instead of delivering a situational prediction, it summarizes the achievements of Esarhaddon. By contrast, the middle section of the oracle consists of a “victory oracle”<sup>133</sup> “predicting” Esarhaddon's future conquest of Melid (Melitene), the Cimmerians, and the Ellipi:

[List]en, O Assyrians!

[The king] has vanquished his enemy. [You]r [king] has put his enemy [under] his foot, [from] sun[se]t [to] sun[ris]e, [from] sun[ris]e to sun[se]t!

I will destroy [Meli]d,

[I will de]stroy [...],

[I will ...],

I will deliver the Cimmerians into his hands and set the land of Ellipi on fire.

Aššur has given the totality of the four regions to him. From sunrise to sunset there is no king equal to him; he shines as brilliantly as the sun.

This is the (oracle of) well-being placed before Bel-Tarbaši and the gods.<sup>134</sup>

The joint reference to the Cimmerians and Ellipi locates the text in the year 670 BCE, when a number of queries to the sun god speak of an Assyrian campaign against Ellipi.<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, a letter of Marduk-šakin-šumi to Esarhaddon mentions the triumphal procession of Esarhaddon into the city of Arbail following his victory over the Cimmerians, which can again be dated firmly to the year 670 BCE.<sup>136</sup>

**131** See his commentary for SAA 9, 22.

**132** I follow the suggestion made by Martti Nissinen 2000b, 252 fn. 62 and understand Aššur to be the sender of the first oracle too.

**133** Van der Toorn 1987.

**134** SAA 9 no. 3:2:i 28– ii 8.

**135** SAA 4 nos. 76–79. See especially SAA 4 no. 79 which mentions the involvement of the crown prince Ashurbanipal in the campaign.

**136** SAA 10 no. 254 and see the reconstruction by Lanfranchi 1990, chapters 5.2 and 5.3.

Aššur's second oracle of salvation (*šulmu*) constitutes the climax of divine speech in favor of the Assyrian king. It summarizes the political challenges Esarhaddon faced during the civil war in the past tense and emphatically affirms the Assyrian supreme god's support for Esarhaddon:

Now then, these traitors provoked you, had you banished, and surrounded you; but you opened your mouth (and cried): "Hear me, O Aššur!"

I heard your cry. I issued forth as a fiery glow from the gate of heaven, to hurl down fire and have it devour them.

You were standing in their midst, so I removed them from your presence. I drove them up the mountain and rained (hail)stones and fire of heaven upon them.

I slaughtered your enemies and filled the river with their blood. Let them see (it) and praise me, (knowing) that I am Aššur, lord of the gods.

This is the well-being (placed) before the Image.

This covenant tablet of Aššur enters the king's presence on a *cushion*.

Fragrant oil is sprinkled, sacrifices are made, incense is burnt, and they read it out in the king's presence.<sup>137</sup>

The first "oracle" of Aššur presents a mixture of two different speech acts: the *modus declarativus* stating Esarhaddon's past achievements is combined with a promissory statement "predicting" future victories that had actually already been achieved. The second oracle, by contrast, establishes a fictive dialogue between Aššur and the king that recalls Aššur's support for Esarhaddon in his moment of crisis. The form and performative situation of this oracle can be regarded as a precursor of the *Fictive Dialogue between King Ashurbanipal and Nabû*,<sup>138</sup> a text category that in my view emerged out of the secondary textualization of prophecy as represented in the oracle collections.

Both oracles have postscripts that record where they were placed: before Bēl-Tarbaši at the entrance gate of Ešarra in the first case, and in the main cella in front of the image, probably of Aššur, in the second case.<sup>139</sup> According to the *Divine Directory from Aššur* (the so-called *Götteradressbuch*), the god Bēl-Tarbaši is one of the guardians of the gates of the Aššur-Temple Ešarra.<sup>140</sup> Consequently, the tablet placed before Bēl-Tarbaši – if visible – would have guaranteed the dissemination of the divine word at least among those allowed to enter the temple district; this is much less true for the second oracle, which

137 SAA 9 no. 3.3:ii 10–27.

138 SAA 3 no. 13.

139 These postscripts are nominal sentences *annû šulmu ša ina pān šalme* "This is the well-being (oracle) (placed) before the Image," which prompted Weippert to assume that the oracle was "spoken" in front of the image. I prefer the approach suggested by Simo Parpola.

140 Menzel 1981 vol. 2, T 149:45.

was placed in the relatively inaccessible cella. The placement of the tablets in front of the divine statue, a custom well-known for treaty tablets in Hittite and Assyrian contexts,<sup>141</sup> points to the importance ascribed to Aššur's oracles and invests them with enduring legal meaning.

In the second oracle, the postscript records ritual instructions similar to those associated with ritual readings of the loyalty oath before the king. This passage has been understood as a reference to the first Aššur oracle,<sup>142</sup> and induced Simo Parpola to name the third oracle collection as a whole "The Covenant of Aššur." Scholarship dealing with the study of the Neo-Assyrian oracles has followed this interpretation and the first two oracles have thus been read in the context of Esarhaddon's ascension to the throne.<sup>143</sup> In what kind of ritual context, however, would Aššur's oracle have been set, and must it be related to Esarhaddon's ascension? As stated above, Esarhaddon's ascension to the throne was framed by two steps: (1) the ceremonial swearing of loyalty oaths while Sennacherib was still alive, and (2) Esarhaddon's actual enthronement following his expulsion of rival claimants to the throne, probably to Urartu or Šubria.<sup>144</sup>

The only two Assyrian ritual texts dealing with the enthronement of the king, namely the Middle Assyrian coronation ritual<sup>145</sup> and the *Coronation Hymn to Ashurbanipal*,<sup>146</sup> indicate that the coronation of kings took place in the Aššur temple. Neither text mentions the performance of a loyalty oath. Also problematic is the fact that the texts of loyalty oaths performed by the officials and vassals of the Assyrian empire do not record any ritual prescriptions that shed light on the procedure of oath-swearing. The oracle collection SAA 9.3 is, indeed, the only Assyrian text that mentions the ritual reading of an oath (*tuppi adē*) before the king in the Aššur temple.

SAA 9.3 is also the only Assyrian text to mention a covenant meal, which follows the ritual reading of the oath and is separated from the preceding Aššur oracles by a double ruling. This scribal demarcation indicates both that the oracles that follow it were spoken by Ištar and that the covenant meal itself was not considered part of the oath-reading ceremony. Further, the oath-reading

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**141** See now the evidence of Tell Taynat, which also includes an exorcistic tablet. In the Old Babylonian period letter prayers might have been subject to deposition of this kind.

**142** Weippert 2002, 17 considers the entirety of the first part to represent three oracles spoken by Aššur, which are then separated from Ištar's oracle by a double ruling.

**143** Otto 1998, 80–84 and 1999; Nissinen 2000. 251 ff.

**144** Leichty 1991.

**145** Müller 1957.

**146** SAA 3 no. 11.

ceremony before the king in the Aššur temple should be distinguished from the oath-swearing that accompanied the installation of a new crown prince. This oath was probably sworn in the Nabû temple<sup>147</sup> in the presence of Marduk and Nabû, as mentioned in a letter sent to king Esarhaddon regarding Ashurbanipal's appointment as crown prince:

The scribes of the cities of Nin[evēh], Kilizi and Arbela (could) ent[er] the treaty; they have (already) come. (However), those of Aššur [have] not (yet) come. The king, my lord, [knows] that they are cler[gymen]<sup>148</sup>. If it pleases the king my lord, let the former, who have (already) come, enter the treaty; the citizens of Nineveh and Calaḥ would be free soon (and) could enter (the treaty/loyalty oath) under (the statues of) the gods Bēl and Nabû on the 8th day.<sup>149</sup>

Although the above passage refers to Ashurbanipal's installation as crown prince, it is probably safe to assume that similar procedures were in place when Sennacherib appointed Esarhaddon as his crown prince. Ashurbanipal's appointment as crown prince coincided with the Babylonian *akītu* festival,<sup>150</sup> which could also account for the oath-swearing in the presence of the gods Marduk and Nabû.

If we assume that the *tuppi adê* of SAA 9.3 refers to the swearing of loyalty oaths rather than to oracles spoken by Aššur, then to my knowledge this constitutes the only evidence for the swearing of loyalty oaths on the occasion of the king's coronation in the Aššur temple. On the other hand, numerous sources attest to oath-swearing on the occasion of the appointment of the crown prince. There is another possible interpretation: similar to earlier practices among the Hittites, previously sworn loyalty oaths could have been read again at certain intervals in the presence not only of the magnates and vassals but also of the Assyrian king himself. If so, the loyalty oath could have been sworn both upon Esarhaddon's ascension to the throne and at a later point in his reign.

The subsequent oracle spoken by Ištar elevates the swearing of the loyalty oath to the divine level, as the treaty parties are represented by the gods. Accordingly, the oracle presents a literary reading of political events during the swearing of the loyalty oath:

147 Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 99.

148 Literally "temple-enterers" (*[ērib-bitī]*).

149 SAA 10 no. 6:6 ff.

150 For the dating of this letter to 7 Nisannu 672 BCE, see the comments by Simo Parpola to LAS 1.

Come, gods, my fathers and brothers, [enter] the cove[nant ....]

[She placed] a slice ... on the [ter]race and gave them water from a cooler to drink. She filled a flagon of one seah with water from the cooler and gave it to them with the words: “in your hearts you say, ‘Ištar is slight,’ and you will go to your cities and districts, eat (your) bread and forget this covenant.

“(But when) you drink from this water, you will remember me and keep this covenant which I have made on behalf of Esarhaddon.”<sup>151</sup>

Although Aššur’s oracles may originally have had a ritual setting that included a reading to the king, their secondary textualization in the collective tablets did not.

The other important question is how to reconcile the references to political and military undertakings from much later in Esarhaddon’s reign with the oracles spoken on the occasion of his appointment to the office of crown prince. This is the heart of the problem, as not one of the “historical oracles” in the third oracle collection can be read as a *situational* oracle simply because all of these historical allusions appear as listings of various historical episodes rather than as detailed accounts of oracular deliveries. If we take the formal presentation of the historical references seriously, the second oracle collection would only have been written in the second half of Esarhaddon’s reign, at some point after 675 BCE, while the third would have been written toward the end of Esarhaddon’s reign, around 670 BCE – a date that is closer in time to Ashurbanipal’s coronation than to his installation as crown prince, which had already taken place in 672 BCE. Of interest in this respect is the fact that the year 670 BCE is notorious for Esarhaddon’s slaughter of numerous magnates and officials, who had engaged in a conspiracy against the king. This event is recorded in the *Babylonian Chronicle*<sup>152</sup> and anticipated in a letter of one of Esarhaddon’s spies,<sup>153</sup> as well as in queries to the Sun God inquiring about the loyalty of official and magnates<sup>154</sup> and ‘appointment queries’<sup>155</sup> reflecting a situation of political tension and denunciation.

Could it be that Esarhaddon intended to create a visionary framework for Ashurbanipal’s coronation by using the retrodictive oracles spoken by Aššur in the third oracle collection? The fact that these oracles evoke the state procedure of the loyalty oath and the covenant meal to protect Ashurbanipal from

151 SAA 9 3:4: ii 35–iii 12.

152 Grayson 1975, 86, *Chronicle* I, col. iv 29; Parpola, LAS II, 238 suggests the month of Nisanu 670 BCE; see also Frahm 2010, 110 fn. 53.

153 Frahm 2010, YBC 11382.

154 SAA 4 nos. 139–148.

155 SAA 4 nos. 149–182.

harm by means of some kind of 'performative magic'<sup>156</sup> certainly seems to aim at influencing the course of events while simultaneously emphasizing contemporaneous political ethical conventions.

Read from this perspective, the oracle collections as a text category share features with the so-called literary predictive texts,<sup>157</sup> such as the *Marduk Prophecy*, *Šulgi Prophecy*, *Dynastic Chronicle*, and *Uruk Prophecy*.<sup>158</sup> These literary predictive texts consist of a number of "'predictions' of past events," so-called *vaticinia ex eventu* that were "carefully selected for their illustrative value and assembled into a dramatic progression of cycles of 'good' and 'bad' heralding the establishment of a final era of bliss."<sup>159</sup> The purpose of these predictions is to vindicate this final era and to legitimize the present, a situation that well describes the historical context and general message of the Neo-Assyrian oracle collections. These literary predictive texts have no prophetic or cultic setting<sup>160</sup> but emerged from the context of historiographic writing. The Neo-Assyrian oracle collections differ from the literary predictive texts insofar as they are explicit about historical events and do not cover the vast temporal and spatial scope typical of the literary predictive texts. Nonetheless, because of their literary affinities to divine letters, literary predictive texts, and the fictive dialogue, the secondary textualization of the Neo-Assyrian oracles belongs to the broader historiographic productivity of the Sargonid period. Instead of viewing the oracles as a simple "collection," their compositional outline suggests a reading that transcends the historical circumstances that elicited their first formulation.<sup>161</sup> The exemplary character of the oracles also anticipates the future appointment of Esarhaddon's younger son Ashurbanipal. Rather than legitimizing Esarhaddon's reign, the oracle collections trace his ascension to the throne and thus produce a model of irregular succession that can be repeated again in the future. Ashurbanipal's royal authority and his claim to power are thus anchored in the divine sanction of Esarhaddon's rise to power, and a divinely approved precedent is established for deviation from the tradition of primogeniture.

Simo Parpola suggests relating the first oracle collection to the historiographic context of Esarhaddon's *Apology* in his Nineveh inscription from 673 BCE and assumes that the second collection concerned with the stabilization

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156 Austin 1975; Searle 1975; Tambiah 1968; and Michalowski 1981 and Veldhuis 1999.

157 de Jong Ellis 1989.

158 Grayson 1980, 183–184.

159 Beaulieu 1993, 41.

160 Ellis 1989, 147.

161 Van der Toorn 2000, 77.



of Esarhaddon's rule was written in the year 679 BCE, i.e. the same date as the Aššur A inscription; Parpola regards the third collection as the earliest one, dating it to the last days of 681 or 680 BCE.<sup>162</sup> While Parpola's reconstruction may well be accurate, the question remains as to whether a gap of six years should be postulated between the writing of the first and the writing of the third collection, as the tablets were written by the same hand.

Like divine letters, these oracle collections were designed to extend divine approval to certain historical events. Divine letters repeat a narrative about the decisive stages of one of the king's military campaigns and intersperse the erstwhile royal report with legitimizing formulae, wherein the deeds of the king are presented as taking place at the command of the god and buttressed with sanctifying formulae.<sup>163</sup> In the oracle collections, divine speech repeats a narrative concerning certain key moments in Esarhaddon's rise to power and imposes a particular interpretation of them that then determines how these events will be understood by posterity. This retrospective perspective is further supported by the fact that the oracles always refer to Esarhaddon as "king" (*šarru*) and never as "crown prince," a fact that has not hitherto been taken into consideration. The *tuppu* format of the tablets was supposed to emphasize the judicial force of the content, as this same format was used for treaties and other legal documents and conveyed binding authority.<sup>164</sup> As is the case in Esarhaddon's *Apology*, the argument of the oracle collections is that Esarhaddon's accession was well grounded in legal state procedure.<sup>165</sup> As such, the oracle collections could serve as an exemplary precedent for Ashurbanipal and help suppress another potential crisis. Through the oracle collections, the particular moment in Assyrian history when Esarhaddon was installed as crown prince (*mār šarri ša bīt rēdūti*) despite being a younger son was presented as conforming to tradition. This effect was brought about by reliance on the key strategy of Mesopotamian culture, namely divine speech, which offered a range of culturally established associations that condensed and established meaning.<sup>166</sup> With their binding and authoritative force,<sup>167</sup> the oracle collections in their written form were meant to transform the perception of the events

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162 Parpola, SAA 9, LXVIII f.

163 Pongratz-Leisten 1999, 266–275, esp. 272.

164 In this context we can refer to the formula "According to the command of Anu and Antu, may [this endeavor] be successful!" This wish expresses the hope of the scribe that his work will be pleasing to the gods and is used in Seleucid Uruk and Babylon in legal contexts and for scientific texts, see Pearce 2004, 628.

165 Tadmor 1983, 39.

166 Pongratz-Leisten 2012.

167 On the power of the divine word see Noegel 2004.

surrounding Esarhaddon's rise to power and thus functioned as a model case for the future selection of Ashurbanipal as crown prince.

By means of the divine voice, the oracle collections concerned with legitimizing irregular succession gain the same divinely determined character as the *Tablet of Destinies*: they impose the concept of cosmic order articulated by the gods while transcending a particular historical event and using it to establish a new paradigm of succession. The oracle collections can be seen as a first step in the literary development towards prophetic historiography.<sup>168</sup> As text categories, both the oracle collection and the aforementioned fictive dialogue that grew out of the textualization of prophecy were not part of the common literary repertoire. Although the oracle collection and the fictive dialogue were linked intertextually to other existing text categories, they emerged in historical situations of crisis<sup>169</sup> and were exceptional in their form, content, and function. The fictive dialogue and the oracle collection both drew on the familiar structures and content of oracles in order to transpose and actualize the textual repertoire in a new literary framework, creating a message that does not address the king in a specific historical situation but is directed instead at posterity. By means of this new compositional framework, such texts compel the audience to engage in a dynamic and new reception of customary strategies of discourse.

What remains to be determined is whether the oracle collections are addressed to a particular audience and if so, who that audience might have been. Although the oracle collections reflect a discourse that existed prior to Esarhaddon's decision to appoint Ashurbanipal as his successor to the throne, it remains doubtful whether, in the political monarchical structure of the Assyrian empire, one should envisage a scenario of public reading designed to persuade the elites to support the future crown prince. Esarhaddon's report on his campaign in Šubria to eliminate rival claimants to the throne describes the monarch's use of overt physical force in cases of non-compliance with his wishes. Furthermore, the institutional setting of the loyalty oath was designed to guarantee obedience to the crown. In the case of the oracle collections, therefore, the gods and future rulers appear to be a much likelier audience than any contemporaries, as only they are in a position to evaluate Esarhaddon's conformity with tradition; the divine voice recorded in the oracles certainly intends to provide cogent evidence that Esarhaddon did conform to the cosmic plan. Esarhaddon's oracle collections evoke Jorge Borges' notion of the writing of the god as instantaneous absolute plenitude that leaves diachronic

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<sup>168</sup> Petersen 2000.

<sup>169</sup> Pongratz-Leisten 1999, 284.

writing behind in merging the past, present, and the future into the cosmic plan.<sup>170</sup> The listing of prospective campaigns in Aššur's oracles thus loses any historical value in its own right. Instead, these historical references serve the general purpose of expressing Aššur's promise to defend the king against any enemy who might threaten Assyria in the future. The Aššur oracles, while employing the retrospective perspective, establish Esarhaddon's individual fate as a historic model and thus turn his reign – itself based on irregular succession – into a synecdoche for Assyrian rulership *per se* that is in compliance with the divine design.

## 9.5 Ashurbanipal and the Omen Tradition

### 9.5.1 Ashurbanipal's Personal Take on the Extispicy Omen Series *iškar bārûti*

The other instance of royal appropriation of an established scholarly text category, in this case the extispicy series *iškar bārûti*, dates to the reign of Ashurbanipal, who used this omen series to establish his own deeds as a paradigm within a symbolic system that was ultimately subject to divine authority.<sup>171</sup> As indicated by a tablet from his library that lists only historical omens,<sup>172</sup> Ashurbanipal was well informed about the existence of historical omens concerning the kings of Akkad and Ur III, and he revived the historical omen tradition in order to include himself among the 'model kings.'

*Excerpt Tablet:*

- 1 If the gall-bladder completely surrounds the liver, it is the omen of Sargon who by this omen
- 2 marched on the land of Elam, defeated the Elamites,
- 3 imposed on them ... (and) cut off their food supplies<sup>?</sup>
- 4 If the gall-bladder completely surrounds the liver and [its<sup>2</sup> to]p<sup>2</sup> falls upon it; the gall bladder hangs down
- 5 It is the omen of Sargon, who marched on the land of Amurru,
- 6 defeated the land of Amurru, and conquered the entire world
- 7 If the right side of the liver is four times as thick as its left side<sup>2</sup>, and the caudate lobe lies on top of it,
- 8 it is the omen of Sargon who by this omen ... dominion over Babylon.
- 9 He removed soil from the ... gate and ... named it Babylon.

<sup>170</sup> Borges 1999, 250–254 “The Writing of the God.”

<sup>171</sup> Part of Chapter 9.5 has been published in Pongratz-Leisten 2014c.

<sup>172</sup> Starr 1986.

- 10 [In front of?] Akkad he built (another) city, and named it [Babylon].  
 11 [...] he settled [therein?].<sup>173</sup>

Esarhaddon made use of prophecy to rewrite history in the collective oracle tablets; Ashurbanipal preferred to make use of the textual vehicle of scholarly extispicy, the omen series. The distinction between practice and textual production in the domains of prophecy and divination is crucial to my argument. In divination, individual omen reports reflect practice based on observation, but the omen compendia are purely textual scholastic products (which can include omnia based on observation).<sup>174</sup> The rulers of the ancient Near East made extensive use of divination for ad-hoc decision-making in daily affairs. By contrast, appropriation of the omen series as a system of thought that communicates the image of the model king and preserves the reign of individual kings as a historical paradigm is very rare in Mesopotamian history.<sup>175</sup> It is this latter aspect that I investigate here in more depth.<sup>176</sup>

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173 Starr 1986, 635.

174 This argument has long been made for the astrological omen compendia, see Rochberg 2004 and 2010; recently Richardson 2010 and Winitzer 2011 made the case for extispicy omen compendia.

175 Note that no omen reports or omen compendia survive in Sumerian or Akkadian language before the beginning of the second millennium BCE (Michalowski 2006 and Richardson 2010), and that the distribution of omen texts and the exclusively Akkadian technical terminology of the craft contrast with the elaborate passage from Šulgi's Hymn B (ll. 131–149) in which the king boasts of surpassing his diviners in the relevant knowledge. Not only does Šulgi claim to have excelled in decoding the signs written in the liver by listing a host of situations for which royal performance required the taking of oracles, he even claims authorship of lists of omens, thus throwing the significance of omen compendia into high relief.

Šulgi B: 131–149

“I am a ritually pure diviner, (máš-šu-gí-gíd dadag-ga-me-en)  
 I am Nintu of the written lists of omens! (giri-gen-na inim uzu-ga-ka <sup>d</sup>nin-tud-bi gá-me-en)  
 For the proper performance of the lustrations of the office of the high priest,  
 For singing the praises of the high priestess and (their) selection for (residence in) the gipar,  
 For the choosing of the Lumah and Nindingir priests by pure extispicy  
 For (decision to) attack the south or strike the north,  
 For opening the storage of (battle) standards,  
 For the washing of the lances in the “water of battle,”  
 And for making wise decisions about rebel lands,  
 The (ominous) words of the gods are most precious, indeed!  
 After taking a propitious omen from a white lamb – an ominous animal –  
 At the place of questioning water and flour are libated;  
 I make ready the sheep with ritual words  
 And my diviner watches in amazement like a barbarian.

In northern Mesopotamia, examination of the entrails of sacrificial animals for royal purposes dates back to the Early Dynastic period, as is revealed by profession lists. Royal inscriptions of king Ur-Nanshe of Lagash mention the use of extispicy, as indicated by the wording “to choose by means of extispicy”, Sumerian *maš pà*, for the installment of a certain official as spouse of the goddess Inanna.<sup>177</sup> Another royal inscription by the same king contains an incantation to the reed for ritual purposes. In this incantation the god Enki pronounces a favorable verdict (*éš.bar*) to ensure its efficacy in a dedication ritual. This favorable divine verdict probably occurred on the basis of extispicy as well, as illuminated by later texts in which *éš.bar* equals Akkadian *purussû* “divine verdict” and is spoken generally by the sun god as decoded from the signs in the liver.<sup>178</sup> Contemporary with the southern evidence, Pre-Sargonic adminis-

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The ready sheep is placed in my hand, and I never confuse a favorable sign with an unfavorable one.

...

In the inside of a single sheep I, the king,  
Can find the (divine) message for the whole universe.”

In this text passage Šulgi addresses the two domains of divination from the outset: practice and scholarship. He first refers to himself as a ‘ritually pure diviner’, i.e. as somebody involved in the omen practice and then as Nintu, creating and compiling the omen compendia. Šulgi then outlines the contexts that require divination. Šulgi’s list of situations related to the performance of divination does not only reveal the king to be the primary agent of divination, but further demonstrates that he has fully understood the importance of conveying the notion that he acted in compliance with the cosmic order as designed by the gods. Šulgi’s insinuation that he had drawn up a systematic treatise of omens further demonstrates that he was aware of the model function of such omen compendia. By choosing a biological metaphor and comparing himself to the birth goddess Nintu in the process of composition, Šulgi does not emphasize his personal initiative but depicts royal action and performance as if they are inherent to the cosmic design.

It is with Šulgi that we see for the first time the king usurping the *weltanschauung* originally advanced by the scholars. While the latter strove to position kingship within the larger cosmological framework, Šulgi, by appropriating the authorship of the omen compendia, steps outside of the system that inscribes royal performance in the authoritative past. Instead of fulfilling the role of the king who strives to match the ideal king and to meet the expectations linked with the office of kingship, Šulgi transforms himself into the epitome of the ideal king. Such royal appropriation of the entire system of thought was unprecedented and represents an interesting facet in the dynamics of royal-scholarly interaction, as it must eventually have been considered a threat to the status and role of the scholarly elites.

**176** In contrast to Pongratz-Leisten 1999, which was more concerned with the operational side of decision-making on the one hand and with ideological self-representation in controlling this knowledge on the other; see also recently Radner 2011.

**177** Frayne, Pre-Sargonic Period, RIME 1, Ur-Nanshe E1.9.1.17 iii 3–6.

**178** RIME 1, Ur-Nanshe E1.9.1.32 iii 1–3.

trative documents from Ebla<sup>179</sup> in Northern Syria listing numbers of sheep whose innards were used for the purpose of extispicy not only show that this method of divination was practiced on a large scale on behalf of the court, but also point to the king's sponsorship and patronage of the craft.<sup>180</sup> Certain year names from the Ur III and Old Babylonian period attest to the practice of choosing high officials and priests and priestesses by means of extispicy.<sup>181</sup> The close relationship between the king and the diviners as royal advisors in cultic, political, diplomatic, and administrative affairs is illustrated by letters from the Old Babylonian period onward. This relationship is also apparent in the seals of the diviners, who position themselves in direct relation to the king, as illustrated by the seals of diviners to Šulgi,<sup>182</sup> Daduša and Ibal-pi-El II of Ešnunna,<sup>183</sup> and of Asqudum, the diviner to King Zimrilim of Mari: "Zimrilim, appointed by the god Dagan; Asqudum, the diviner."<sup>184</sup> The fact that Šulgi's cup-bearer and chief-steward calls himself 'overseer of the extispicy priests' (ugula maš-šu-gí-gíd-dê-ne)<sup>185</sup> highlights the close connection between the court and a professional set of expert diviners. Several hundred years passed before the divinatory practice itself was transmitted in writing. In my view, the very emergence of textual production in the context of divination constitutes a conundrum for the modern scholar.

By the early second millennium BCE three major divination genres emerged in quick succession. First, divinatory liver models from the so-called *šakkanakku period* appear in early second millennium BCE Mari; these models overlap partially with the end of the Ur III period and survived its collapse by several decades.<sup>186</sup> The inscriptions on these liver models come in various formulations, suggesting that the diviners were still experimenting with the written framework for their technique. Three formulas occur: (a) 'omen (*amūt*) + royal name,' with the omen referring to the constellation of signs as depicted in the liver model; (b) 'when (*inūmi*) + event'; and (c) 'if (*šumma*) + event'. Over time, the second formula disappeared, the third became the standard form for recording omens, and the first remained in use for the historical omens inter-

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179 Archi 2009.

180 For divination at Ebla see also Biga 1999 and Coser 2000.

181 See the lists of year names in *RIME* 3/2 and *RIME* 4; pace Michalowski 2011, 208 who assumes that "extispicy became a dominant form of divination only during the Old Babylonian period."

182 *RIME* 3/2, E3/2.1.2.2052.

183 *RIME* 4, E4.5.19.2015 and *RIME* 4, E4.5.20.2010.

184 Charpin 2011.

185 *RIME* 3/2, E3/2.1.2.2052: v 9'.

186 On liver models see the monograph of Meyer 1987; and more recently Maul 2003, 71–79.

persed in omen series.<sup>187</sup> In formulas (a) and (b) the verbal tense is the preterite, while the present tense is reserved for formula (c). Two examples of historical omens may suffice by way of illustration:

Rutten, RA 33, no. 3	
<i>a-mu-ut Na-ra-am-<sup>d</sup>Sîn</i>	Omen of Narām-Sîn
<i>sá A-pí-sá-al</i>	who conquered Apišal.
<i>il-qá-é</i>	
Rutten, RA 33, no. 6	
<i>a-mu-ut</i>	Omen
<i>šú-hu-ra-im</i>	of diminishment
<i>šī<sup>188</sup> I-bí-<sup>d</sup>Sîn</i>	of Ibbi-Sîn
<i>ba-taq(?) ma-ti-šu i-ba-al-ki-li-šu</i>	against whom a fraction of his country made a revolt.

The important feature of these liver models for the reader is that they presuppose a combination of image and text, i.e. the omen is represented by the physical form of the liver, which is different in all 32 liver models kept at the Louvre. The written text, by contrast, contains the apodosis. Regarding the use of different verbal tenses, namely preterite and present, it is intuitive to assume that texts using preterite verbal forms had a distinct purpose, which has generally been identified as didactic. Their function can, however, equally be read as paradigmatic, like that of the entries in the omen compendia. Support for this suggestion comes from Hazor, where several liver models have also been found.<sup>189</sup> Liver model Hazor 17<sup>190</sup> betrays some similarity to the omen collection of the *bārûtu* series. The editors of this liver model state:

What is striking about this model with its accompanying text is its similarity not only to the liver model tradition but, more importantly, to the Old Babylonian omen collections from Mesopotamia proper. This is made clear by a review of some of the points already discussed, including: 1) the standard interpretation of the double *manzāzum/naplastum*; 2) the explanation of the cleft as a forecast of rebellion on the basis of the set of associations KAK-shape/KAK-sign/*kakku* (weapon) à *bartum* (rebellion); 3) the relation of predic-

**187** Glassner 2000.

**188** = *šī* genitive relative pronoun.

**189** Landsberger and Tadmor 1964 and Horowitz, Oshima, and Winitzer 2010.

**190** The text on the liver model runs as follows:

- a) ...
- b) In the afternoon, it will become dark, the enemy I will kill.
- c) In the evening, it will become dark, the enemy I will kill.
- d) Like the start (opening) of a rebellion.
- e) A man will reach the realm of wisdom.
- f) A god received the prayer of a man.

tions of darkness/obscurity (*eṭū* ‘dark’) with the *padānum*; and 4) an example of the ‘temporal interpretive theme’. Moreover, in its wording and subject matter, the text follows standard conventions for the Mesopotamian divination tradition (*bârûtu*). Thus, Hazor 17 belongs to the mainstream of the extispicy divination tradition of Mesopotamia.<sup>191</sup>

The other two genres originated somewhat later in the Old Babylonian period, i.e. in the first half of the second millennium BCE. These genres are the omen reports containing either fortunate or unfortunate omens for a particular inquiry, and the omen compendia, most important of which is the extispicy series (*iškar bārûti*). Other series were added either during the Old Babylonian period or later, among them the astrological series *Enūma Anu Enlil*, the series *Šumma izbu* (concerned with malformed births),<sup>192</sup> *Šumma ālu* (If a city (is set on high)),<sup>193</sup> and the physiognomic series (*Alamdimmû*), to mention only the most prominent ones.

In the first millennium BCE, Mesopotamian scholarship produced commentaries of all kinds, such as excerpt series, factual commentaries (*mukallimtu*), linguistic commentaries (*šātu*), and explanatory series.<sup>194</sup> Another extispicy series also emerged, known as the *tamītu* oracles and addressed to the sun god Šamaš and the weather god Adad. Although they deal primarily with the affairs of private persons, these *tamītu* oracles also include a number of historical omens referring to the Old Babylonian kings Hammurabi and Samsuditana; these omens have no practical setting and are like the omen series of a purely textual nature. They are attested only in copies from first millennium BCE Nimrud and Nineveh and have recently been edited by W. G. Lambert.<sup>195</sup>

As soon as divination was committed to writing, it formed a major part of scholarly libraries, royal libraries, and temple libraries. The divination tablets in Ashurbanipal’s library amount to more than a quarter of the surviving texts, bespeaking the importance of such divination texts in the ancient *weltanschauung*.<sup>196</sup> Before discussing Ashurbanipal’s use of the historical omen tradition, I will comment on the historical omens and their intertextual relationship with other chronographic literature.

191 Horowitz, Oshima, and Winitzer 2010, 143.

192 Leichty 1970.

193 Freedman 1998.

194 Such as *Šumma Sîn ina tāmartišu*, see N. Veldhuis, 2010b, 81 ff.

195 Lambert 2007.

196 Koch 2011, 447.



### 9.5.2 The Liver Models in the Broader Context of the Historical Omens

Historical omens alluding to historical persons are as old as the first recorded omen reports on liver models from Mari dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>197</sup> The value of such omens for historical reconstruction was intensely debated in Assyriological scholarship<sup>198</sup> until Jerrold Cooper demonstrated their unsuitability as historical sources for reconstructing third millennium history in 1980.<sup>199</sup> Liver models have been deemed of didactic purpose in the context of the professional training of the diviners. The fact that they include historical omens referring to the kings of Akkade and to the kings of the Ur III dynasty, to Gušur, first king of Kīš, and Kubaba, founder of the Third Dynasty of Kīš,<sup>200</sup> as well as to the legendary kings Gilgameš and Etana, however, links them with the textual production of omen compendia rather than to that of omen reports and lends them a paradigmatic character. Rather than referring to actual historical events, they establish these kings and their deeds as models for kingship.

The number of historical omens in the first millennium omen compendia is minimal when compared to the thousands of omens that are collected in the various omen series. Furthermore, until the first millennium historical omens are always interspersed among other apodoses and never form a coherent group of their own. The sparse evidence of the historical omens led Piotr Michalowski to consider them as “vignettes of the past,” as “anecdotes lost in a vast ominous landscape.”<sup>201</sup> He writes:

Of the thousands of such omens known to us today, slightly over 60 are “historical,” and these acquire a special status only when they are decontextualized and seriated into modern collections of historiographic data. Omens were an extremely important part of culture, but they were hardly privileged repositories of historical knowledge.<sup>202</sup>

Nonetheless Michalowski admits to the importance of Finkelstein’s essay in that

It was the first major attempt to analyze historiography “from the native point of view,” rather than as a reflex of modern intuitive concepts. Finkelstein was searching for a sense

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**197** Rutten 1936.

**198** Finkelstein 1963, 463 and Grayson 1960 argue that these entries have historical value. Disagreement has been expressed by Güterbock 1934, 47 ff. and Reiner 1974.

**199** Cooper 1980, 100.

**200** Jean-Jacques Glassner discussed these omens in his paper “The Diviner as Historian” delivered at our workshop Ancient and Modern Perspectives on Historiography in the Ancient Near East, held at ISAW, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

**201** Michalowski 1999, 76.

**202** *Ibid.*

of the past; he was not interested in whether something actually happened, in the colloquial sense, but rather in the way in which earlier events, real or imaginary, were portrayed. In this way he almost succeeded in separating himself from earlier studies on history writing, which always seemed to return to the point of origin. Searching for the original kernel of truth that simply “must” lie hidden behind the textual distortions of history.<sup>203</sup>

Although in the end Finkelstein was also searching for a genre that had a privileged connection with historical reality, his qualification of the omen texts – and here we should include all the omens referring to royal action – as lying at the root of Mesopotamian historiography has been so far unique and is invaluable for our modern understanding of how the ancients view their past.

More than fifty percent of the omen entries, however, contain apodoses that are primarily concerned with political and military matters. These include the king’s involvement with court intrigues, treason, usurpation, border garrisons, the success of the army in the field, the loyalty of the people of the land, of officials, of vassal kings, and of members of the royal family.<sup>204</sup> Omen entries referring to royal action constitute a rich repertoire of the possible constellations of power and interactions in which a king might find himself involved, and can therefore be read as paradigmatic for royal action.<sup>205</sup>

The paradigmatic function is further supported by the fact that among the historical omens there are several omens formulated in the past tense rather than the durative, which points to the future:

If there is a ‘well-being’ groove [on the sheep’s liver] that is like the squatting of a young bull, it is the omen of Gilgameš, who had no rival.

If the gall bladder is shaped like a lizard, it is the mark of Sargon.

If the heart is like a testicle, it is the omen of Rīmuš, whom his servants killed with their cylinder seals.

If the fetus is like a lion, it is an omen of Narām-Sīn, who subdued the world.

If the fetus is compact, it is an omen of Ibbi-Sīn: disaster.<sup>206</sup>

Numerous apodoses of this kind do not use third person verbal forms to refer to the king, but are expressed in the first or second person, thereby invoking the formulation of the omen reports and the notion of divinatory practice:

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**203** Michalowski 1999 76–77.

**204** Richardson 2010.

**205** Similarly Larsen 1987, 212–213 who described them as prescribing legitimate behavior in present and future circumstances.

**206** Quoted after Michalowski 1999, 76.

YOS 10 33 iii 37–45

ll. 37–39: You will pen[etra]te the [distri]cts of the cities of your enemy and bring forth booty (from them).

ll. 40–42: You will (pe)netrate from the epicenter of [yo]ur enemy('s land) and bring forth booty.

ll. 43–45: [You w]ill p[ene]trate in(to) the rear of enemy's land and [bri]ng forth boot[y].<sup>207</sup>

Even though these omen entries may have been copied from earlier oracle reports, references to kingship in the liver models and the omen compendia serve a purpose entirely different from that of observational practice, namely to inscribe royal performance in the “reciprocal relation that unites the cosmos, nature, and culture.”<sup>208</sup> As Jean-Jacques Glassner states regarding the construction of the omen compendia, “the seer seeks more and more to define, by means of a meticulous description of occurrences, the modalities according to which are established the reciprocal relations that unite the two worlds of society and nature, longing for a plan in which the very subject matter of history is diluted.”<sup>209</sup>

The fact that the ancient scholars derived their material for historical apoduses not only from historical kings, but also from literary sources, such as the *Gilgameš Epic* or the *Etana Myth*, reiterates the paradigmatic nature of these historical omens, as the mythology revolving around these legendary kings provided the model for royal behavior.<sup>210</sup> Such an understanding of the ancient sources is reinforced by the intertextual relationship between these omens and two chronicles. In the *Chronicle of Early Kings*, which covers kings from Sargon of Akkad (c. 2334–2279 BCE) through to Agum III (c. 1450 BCE), the events recorded regarding the kings Sargon and Narām-Sîn of Akkad are the same as those recorded in the omen series.<sup>211</sup> This is also true for the *Weidner Chronicle*, which starts with kings from the Early Dynastic period and continues through to the reign of Šulgi (2094–2047 BCE), and which is primarily concerned with royal treatment of Marduk's temple in Babylon and consequent divine reward and divine punishment.<sup>212</sup> Both chronicles were composed during the first millennium BCE and both chronicles can be considered pseudo-chronicles, as they do not provide any valuable information regarding the history of events. In-

<sup>207</sup> Quoted after Winitzer 2011, 81.

<sup>208</sup> Glassner 2000, 203.

<sup>209</sup> Glassner 2003, 203.

<sup>210</sup> Starr 1986, 631.

<sup>211</sup> Grayson 1975, 182 ff.

<sup>212</sup> Grayson 1975, 47.

stead, their concern lies with the heroic deeds of kings and with correct royal treatment of the cult; both chronicles occasionally record rather bizarre events, which is also true for various historical omens.<sup>213</sup>

The paradigmatic value of the early kings of Akkad in the omen compendia and the chronicles extends to the historical legends, and all three text categories coalesce around the paradigmatic royal figures who had constructed the ‘first empire’<sup>214</sup> in history. An important point of difference, however, is that in the omen series Sargon and Narām-Sîn mostly appear as fortunate rulers, while legendary tradition divided between the two, turning Sargon into the paradigmatic fortunate ruler and using Narām-Sîn as both a positive and a negative model.<sup>215</sup> Overall, intertextual links between omen compendia, pseudo-chronicles, and literature support the idea of an entirely text- rather than observation-based composition process for the omen compendia. This mingling of the legendary and historic past demonstrates that scholars were not concerned with the distinction between myth and history.

Omen compendia – with their numerous references to anonymous kings and princes and the occasional historical omen – as well as pseudo-chronicles and historical legends amount to a corpus of culturally authoritative texts that anchor the royal office and royal action in the divinely ordained cosmic order, complemented by a critical voice regarding royal failures related to the cult. Given that the ancient *weltanschauung* was based on the reciprocal relationship between cosmos, nature, and culture and that liver models and omen compendia were paradigmatic in character, it is not surprising that under particular historical circumstances certain kings expressed an interest in appropriating the learned textual production of divination for their ideological self-representation.

### 9.5.3 Military Victory and the Right to Kingship: The Liver Model of Daduša

Although Daduša was king of Ešnunna rather than of Assyria, Ešnunna is a key site in the development of the Tigridian cultural discourse of which Assyria was part. Accordingly, Daduša’s liver model is included in this discussion as a relevant example of how the royal use of certain scholarly text categories was intended to influence the reception of history and to secure the representation of a particular king. The purpose of King Daduša’s liver model – namely to

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213 Reiner 1974.

214 Liverani 1993.

215 Westenholz 1997.



Fig. 55: Liver Model of Daduša Liver (after Al-Rawi 1994, 39, fig. 7).

align the individual king's reign with the overall cosmic schema – is similar to that of the prophecy for his predecessor on the throne of Ešnunna, Ibal-pi-El II. Nothing is known about Daduša before the interaction between Ešnunna and Šamši-Adad I that is attested in the Mari letters,<sup>216</sup> and the circumstances of his ascension to the throne remain obscure. Daduša's liver model, however, reveals that his scholars were well versed in the divinatory tradition known from Mari and that they considered it an appropriate medium for the writing of history.

Daduša's liver model is comparable to the liver models from Mari in its combination of image, i.e. its representation of a particular formation of the liver, and text (fig. 55). While the image of the liver models from Mari appears to represent the protasis of the recorded omen, in Daduša's liver model image and text are disconnected in that the first part of the text referring to observation does not actually describe the features represented in the clay model, but refers instead to a broader range of entrails including the belly, the heart, and the gut.

Daduša's liver model describes the king's ascension to the throne in retrospect starting with a description of various pathological observations in the entrails. In contrast to the Mari liver models, however, no preterite verbal form is preserved in Daduša's liver model, which uses the stative form instead. The stative verbal form was favored by scholars to describe “scientifically observed and recognized pieces of information, in the field of divination (we are mainly thinking of hepatoscopy and astrology) just as in that of medicine, astronomy,

<sup>216</sup> Charpin and Ziegler 2003.

and mathematics.”<sup>217</sup> As stated above, the “observed” features described in the text of Daduša’s liver model do not relate to the signs incised on the model itself but describe aspects of the belly, heart, and the gut, and ultimately quote an omen related to the soft part of the breastbone of the sheep (*kaskasu*). Observations relating to numerous parts of the body of a sacrificial animal are also known from the Old Babylonian period, linking the omen report recorded in Daduša’s liver model to these Old Babylonian omens.<sup>218</sup> The apodosis of Daduša’s liver model omen implies the victory of the king, the particulars of which are then described and connected to the reading of omens on the occasion of Daduša’s accession to the throne.

The pathological configurations drawn on Daduša’s liver model include features that are read at the beginning of an observation in the standard order of reading the liver. Among these features are the sign denoting the “presence” (*manzāzu*) or the “view” (*naplastu*),<sup>219</sup> here represented doubled by the two parallel lines on the right side of the liver (= the *lobus sinister* in modern anatomical terms), followed by the “path” (*padānu*).<sup>220</sup> The occurrence of a doubled *manzāzu/naplastu* is known from clay models and omen collections and generally implies a doubly positive sign indicating that “the gods are present and willing to communicate.”<sup>221</sup> The crescent like marks known as the “horn” (*qarnu*) appear to provide information regarding the time of the king’s victory.

In the following lines, the victory of Daduša is presented as having taken place either prior to his accession to the throne or during the first year of his reign. Daduša’s liver model thus introduces a literary prototype – namely the king’s accomplishment of a great victory in his first regnal year – that resurfaces many centuries later in the Middle Assyrian royal inscriptions of Shalmaneser I (1263–1234 BCE), who uses this motif as a heroic-epic convention.<sup>222</sup> Daduša’s liver model can thus be considered a literary creation derived from the practice of omen observation that identifies the very image of the liver with the “tablet of the gods” (*ṭuppi ilāni*), thereby advancing the notion that divine favor accompanies the king’s reign.

Based on the above, it is possible to assume that scholars were able to produce texts related to but not reflective of observational practice by the reign

217 Glassner 2000, 207.

218 Nougayrol 1967.

219 During the Old Babylonian period *manzāzu* came to replace *naplastu*, see CAD N/1, 306, s.v. *naplastu*.

220 Horowitz, Oshima, and Winitzer 2010, 138.

221 Horowitz, Oshima, and Winitzer 2010, 139.

222 Tadmor 1981, 14 still thought of the motif as a “product of an indigenous Assyrian literary tradition.”

of Daduša in the eighteenth century BCE. This competence involved writing texts that transcended the simple image (protasis) and text (apodosis) relationship represented in the liver models from Mari. Despite the uniqueness of the Daduša liver model, the fact that the scribal communities of Mari and Ešnunna both made use of clay liver models establishes that they formed part of a common cultural horizon.

*Liver Model from the reign of Daduša, Tell Haddad, IM 85441*

- 1 *ka-ar-šu-um šu-me-lam*
- 2 *ta-ri-ik li-bu-um šu-me-lam ta-ri-ik*
- 3 *ti-ra-nu 14* (Quotation of an Omen:) *ka-ās-ka-su*
- 4 *i-mi-tam ha-mi-iš i-na šu-me-el ha-x*
- 5 *li-tum ia-tum i-[n]a qa-ti ab<sup>2</sup> X il<sup>2</sup>-tim<sup>2</sup>*

Name of the diviner

- 6 *bārûm(máš.šu.gíd!.gíd!) dumu/tur x x ša [x] il<sup>2</sup>*

Occasion of the Omen

- 7 *Da-du-ša i-na ni-x[x x<sup>d?</sup>b]a-ti-ri-ſ[im? (...)]*
  - 8 *ù né-pi-iš-tim ši-ru-u[m x x] um? X[...]*
  - 9 *warah(iti) Da-du-ša a-na kussîm(gu.za) x[...]*
  - 10 *ù ši-mu-ru-um Ba-ti-[ir<sup>ki</sup> ...]*
  - 11 *[x (x)] x te-re-tum [ša-al-ma (or: i-ša-ra)]*
  - 12 perhaps nothing missing
- 1.e. *i-na šâr-ru-ut Da-du-ša / ši-ru-um an-nu-um*

- 1 The belly was dark on the left.
  - 2 The heart was dark on the left.
  - 3 There were fourteen loops of the gut. “(If) the soft part of the breastbone
  - 4 is bent over on the right, from the left ...
  - 5 the victory is mine.” By the hands of ...
  - 6 the divination priest, son of ...
  - 7 Daduša in [... The goddess?] Batiritum [...]
  - 8 and the extispicy. The sign ...
  - 9 The month that Daduša [ascended] to the throne ...
  - 10 and Šimurru, Batir, ...
  - 11 ... the omens were favorable.
- 1.e. At the (assumption of) kingship by Daduša, this was the state of the signs.<sup>223</sup>

Daduša and Ibal-pi-El II are the only kings of Ešnunna who are known to have made use of the practice of extispicy or prophecy respectively in order to create new literary forms that anchor their reigns in the divinely ordained cosmic scheme. Both kings were the most powerful contemporaries of Šamšī-Adad I, and it was under their rule that Ešnunna’s expansion reached its greatest ex-

tent; indeed, Šamši-Adad I served as their vassal for some time.<sup>224</sup> It might well be that the great power of these two kings of Ešnunna was accompanied by a heightened need for divine legitimization.

#### 9.5.4 Ashurbanipal's Appropriation of the Omen Compendia

This is also true – albeit on an altogether different scale – for the reigns of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal in the first millennium age of empires. Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal were both the beneficiaries of irregular succession to the throne, and they struggled with the expansion of their empire and the accompanying stress placed on the existing bureaucratic structure. Ever more frequent invocations of divine favor and sanction for their deeds – including fratricide for Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal and numerous executions of high officials for Esarhaddon – represents a hallmark of their commemorative inscriptions.<sup>225</sup> In addition, Ashurbanipal, as noted throughout this book, was a passionate and major collector of cultural texts.<sup>226</sup> He was well versed in the discipline of divination and communicated personally with his scholars regarding which series they were to collect for his libraries and which excerpts from particular series they were to copy; Ashurbanipal even wrote letters himself. Ashurbanipal's erudition and his familiarity with scholarship and cultural discourse must have acquainted him with the historical omen tradition, as demonstrated by the excerpt tablet concerned with historical omens revolving around the kings Sargon and Narām-Sîn of Akkad, which in turn motivated him to establish himself as a paradigmatic king in ancient historiography.

Ashurbanipal is famous for his self-presentation in colophons as an intellectual conversant in divination.<sup>227</sup> In addition to the excerpt tablet with the historical omen collection quoted above,<sup>228</sup> there is a letter that lists historical omens concerned with Ashurbanipal and Šamaš-šum-ukīn (Rm 2, 455), which is discussed below, and another omen text (Rm 2, 134) written in Neo-Babyloni-

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224 Charpin and Ziegler 2003.

225 Pongratz-Leisten 1999.

226 Maurice Rheims' characterization of the art collector applies to Ashurbanipal's collection of divinatory, scientific, and literary texts to some degree: "l'objet d'art devient le symbole du gout, de l'intelligence, de la puissance sociale, de la richesse du collectionneur, et donne apparemment plus de prestige à ce dernier qu'au créateur" (Rheims 2002, 51).

227 BAK 100 and 101.

228 Chapter 9.5.1.



an script that refers to the kings Ashurbanipal, Hammurabi, and Itti-Marduk-balāṭu, and also dates to the reign of Ashurbanipal.<sup>229</sup>

The letter testifies to Ashurbanipal's personal endeavor to be included in historical omens. It was written to him in the aftermath of his war against Tammariṭu II of Elam by a diviner who asks the king in which form he should enter the apodosis referring to Ashurbanipal's victory over the Elamite king. It represents a unique testimony to the king's aspiration of not only being accepted in the ranks of scholarship but to obtain his place as paradigmatic king in ancient historiography as well. Unfortunately, the obverse is very badly preserved, and so my rendering is confined to the preserved section on the reverse:

*Rm 2, 455 (CT 35 pls. 37–38)*

Rev.

- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| 1     | [Omen for Ashurbani]pal, mighty king, reverent prince, of whom (it is said) Ištar (walks) at the side of his a[rmy]  |
| 2     | They cut off [the head of Teumman, king of Ela]m in the midst of battle and the son of Bēl-iqīša   |
| 3     | ... -tuk of the Elamite they hung around his neck, and Ashurbanipal  |
| 4     | [went to Ninive]h, his royal residence. They were exulting joyfully and performed music,   |
| 5     | the messenger? of Ummanigaš, king of Elam, he killed in front of Ashurbanipal, king of the universe,   |
| 6     | and he sat on his throne. Ashurbanipal, king of the universe, at the command of  |
| 7     | [...] Tammariṭu, king of Elam, together with his magnates  |
| 8     | rolled before him [in?] Nineveh, his royal residence.  |
| <hr/> |  |
| 9     | [whom Aššur and] Ištar love and lead with their full content, and Tammariṭu  |
| 10    | who had plotted for help of Šamaš-šum-ukin, he himself, the diviner and his magnates   |
| 11    | went and kissed his feet, Tammariṭu and the diviner accuse each other in front of him.   |
| <hr/> |  |
| 12    | [If ...] the right and left side of the station are ... it is the omen of Ashurbanipal, king of the universe, (of whom it is said) that Šamaš and Ištar walk at the side of his army and |
| 13    | killed (his enemies) in the midst of battle and effected their defeat.   |
| <hr/> |  |
| 14    | [If ...] in the lift of the head of the right lung there is a sign/omen (predicting) the annihilation of the army, it is an omen of Šamaš-šum-ukin,                                      |
| 15    | [the treacherous brother, who] fought against the army of Ashurbanipal, the beloved of the great gods, (but) was defeated.   |

- 16 ... they seized in the midst of battle and ... in front of Ashurbanipal, king of the universe.
- 17 [omen of?] Šamaš-šum-ukīn, unfavorable.
- 
- 18 [I have sent] to the king my lord, [the omens from the *bārūtu* series, which I have previously excerpted from the series.
- 19 The king my lord may see the earlier ones, these are the omens of the king, my lord.
- 20 [Whatever is] acceptable to the king, my lord, we will enter into the series ... of Tammaritu
- 21 [who] plots for the help of Šamaš-šum-ukīn.
- Edge
- 22 .... we have written for the omens of Tammaritu.
- 23 May ... of your gods ...<sup>230</sup>

With the demand to be entered in the omen series, Ashurbanipal revived the tradition of historical omens, which is last known to have been applied to King Nebuchadnezzar I (1125–1104)<sup>231</sup> and King Itti-Marduk-balāṭu (1139–1132 BCE) of the Second Dynasty of Isin in a text that likewise dates to Ashurbanipal's reign. This text is the omen text Rm 2, 134, written in Neo-Babylonian script and dating to Ashurbanipal's reign,<sup>232</sup> which also refers to Hammurabi and Ashurbanipal.

The key revelation of Ashurbanipal's demand as reflected in the letter of the diviner is that he knew about the tradition of historical omens, i.e. entering the names of individual kings into the apodoses of omens and that he deemed it important to be included among the paradigmatic kings in the omen compendia, which encompassed historical and legendary kings alike. Both myth, as represented in the figures of Gilgameš and Etana, and the distant past, as represented by the kings of Akkad and Ur III in the omen tradition, enjoyed the cultural status of sacred truth in ancient Mesopotamian societies. By aligning himself with these figures, Ashurbanipal clearly compares the historical significance of his destruction of Elam with the military achievements of the kings of Akkad, who established the world's "first empire". His victory over Tammaritu II did not just represent an ordinary military campaign, but entailed the obliteration of the state of Elam and the complete destruction of Susa, its political center.<sup>233</sup> For a brief moment in history, Assyrian power appeared to align with the cosmic dimensions perceived by contemporary culture, and Ash-

**230** Bauer 1933, 85–87.

**231** According to Starr 1985, 63 with reference to Thompson, RMA 200 r.5 in an astrological text.

**232** Starr 1985, 63 ff.

**233** Potts 1999, 309 ff.; Fales 2001, 9 f.

urbanipal's entry in the omen series is a direct reflection of such ideological thinking. By inscribing himself into the authoritative and paradigmatic corpus of the omen compendia, Ashurbanipal had stepped outside the system of communication with the gods as controlled by the diviners and turned himself into the epitome of the ideal king in compliance with the cosmic order (*kittu*). This moment of universal control was fleeting, however, and the repercussions of the vacuum left behind by Ashurbanipal's destruction of Elam were manifest in the rise of new political forces like the Medes and the Persians.

The letter of the diviner is unique in several respects, not least on account of its being the latest example of an historical omen intended for inclusion in the omen series relating to extispicy (*iškar bārûti*). The letter confirms that although the notion of a standardized corpus of extispicy series (*iškar bārûti*) and accompanying commentaries was already well established,<sup>234</sup> the compilation process retained its dynamism and remained subject to change. It also attests to the significance of these omen series to Ashurbanipal. As discussed above, the omen compendia differed fundamentally in their function from the practice of taking omens, as omen compendia did not serve the immediate goal of promulgating the message that the individual king's reign had found divine approval and that the king, consequently, had conformed to the expectations of kingship. This purpose can still be ascribed to the earlier kings Daduša and Ibal-pi-El II, because these monarchs recreated a literary text category to convey the view that their ascent to the throne was divinely sanctioned. In the late Sargonid period, however, the rewriting of history through the divine voice reached another level altogether. In his oracle collections, Esarhaddon fashioned a narrative regarding his ascent to the throne that was mediated through the divine voice and constituted a model for irregular succession. Similarly, Ashurbanipal's inclusion of his victory over Elam in the authoritative and paradigmatic corpus of the omen compendia served to convey the cosmic dimensions of his dominion. Through their appropriation of the text categories of oracle collections and omen compendia, Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal turned themselves into paradigmatic model kings.

This development was fostered by the scholars of Nineveh, who subjected the *bārûtu* series to editing by "creating pairs of omens so that 'right'/'left' in the protases corresponded to 'the king'/'the enemy' in the apodoses."<sup>235</sup> In this way, scholars combined their competence in copying omens from their Babylonian predecessors with their creative abilities to ensure the king's centrality in the omen series. Moreover, the version of the *bārûtu* series that dates to the

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<sup>234</sup> Rochberg 1999; Frahm 2011; Veldhuis 2010b.

<sup>235</sup> Jeyes 1997, 63.

reign of Ashurbanipal includes two omens “which state that 1) Sargon defeated Elam and 2) Sargon enlarged his palace.”<sup>236</sup> These entries do not reflect the deeds of Sargon II, but are to be associated with Ashurbanipal, who uses the name of Sargon of Akkad as a foil in order to associate himself with the heroic past. Additionally, these entries betray commonalities with tablets 14–16 of the series ‘interpretation’ (*Multābiltu*), which also contains omens referring to Ashurbanipal.<sup>237</sup>

Further evidence of Ashurbanipal’s involvement in the textualization process of the omen compendia is provided by the hitherto unattested ‘orientation tablet’, which assigns the designation ‘right’ and ‘left’ to each subsection of the liver and the lung. This tablet bears Ashurbanipal’s colophon, which claims that he wrote the tablet in the assembly of the scholars.<sup>238</sup> Another indication of Ashurbanipal’s personal involvement is the fact that commentaries and excerpts from commentaries sometimes contain illustrations of the *kakku* and *padānu* features of the liver or of parts of the lung – these aids are obviously meant to facilitate the king’s reading and comprehension of these texts.<sup>239</sup> Evidence of this kind points not only to Ashurbanipal’s familiarity with tradition, but also to his ability to participate actively in the recreation of scholarly divinatory texts and in the reshaping of the stream of tradition.

Two points are critical to a correct understanding of the royal appropriation of divination. First, the intricate relationship between divination and law fostered a *weltanschauung* in which the divine world, nature, and human agency were all subject to the notion of cosmic stability, order, and regularity (*kittu*). This system of thought was challenged during the first millennium BCE, when Esarhaddon usurped the prophetic voice of Ištar to write an account of his ascension to the throne that purported to be oracular. Second, the intertextual relationship between omen compendia, chronicles, and historical legends as well as astrological omens and literary prophecies reflects a notion of historiography that is paradigmatic in nature and unconcerned with the reconstruction of event history. The king’s appropriation of omen practice and of the textual stream of tradition represented in the omen compendia thus stands out as a

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**236** Jeyes 1997, 63, BM 26472, King, Chron. 2, 3–14 with Omen 1 (obv. 1–3) referring to his defeat of Elam and omen 8 (obv. 27–29) referring to the enlargement of the palace.

**237** Jeyes 1997, 64.

**238** Nougayrol 1968, 34–36; for the most complete one see CT 31 1–5. For the colophon see Hunger 1968, 97 no. 318 (Asb. Type b).

**239** Jeyes 1997, 63 with reference to an Old Babylonian example edited by Nougayrol 1941, 81 r. 26 and examples from Nineveh, Nougayrol 1974, 61–68, for illustrated *padānu* commentaries see CT 20 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, CT 20 27–28 (K 4069) + CT 20 21 (81–2–4, 397); Ki 1904–10–9, 100. Illustrated *hašū* commentaries are: CT 31 38–40; K 3967\*, 81–2–4, 443\*.

key cultural strategy that reflects a notion of cosmic order in which divine intentionality and royal agency were inextricably intertwined: appropriating omen practice serves to proclaim the success of the king's reign, while appropriating the omen series as part of the stream of tradition serves to portray the king as a paradigmatic model.

# 10 The Reinvention of Tradition: The Assyrian State Rituals

## 10.1 Cultic and Ritual Contributions to Assyrian Ideological Discourse

When Assyria developed into a territorial state during the Middle Assyrian period and then a large-scale empire during the Neo-Assyrian period, it faced the problem of integrating local communities and their activities into a more complex centralized organizational system. In order to control conquered regions, Assyria relied not only on its superiority in technological warfare, but also on various economic, ideological, and political strategies.<sup>1</sup> Throughout Mesopotamian history, rulers made use of similar strategies to maintain their authority, favoring one or the other; in Assyria, these strategies were formed into a coherent system and perfected. During the Middle Assyrian period, Assyrian expansion toward the Hābūr and beyond<sup>2</sup> prompted the implementation of economic measures that strengthened Aššur's position as the imperial center. A two-tiered system served to bind the provinces to the administrative and cultic center of Aššur, namely the payment of regular taxes to the palace and the monthly delivery of *ginā'u* offerings to the Aššur temple.

Information regarding the *ginā'u* offering comes from tablets found in ten clay pots at the southwest side of the large forecourt of the Aššur temple of the Middle Assyrian period, rebuilt under Shalmaneser I (1263–1234 BCE). Nearly all of these tablets concern the administration of the *ginā'u* offerings in the Aššur temple.<sup>3</sup> Among these texts are tabular lists that supply data in condensed form regarding the total amount of the four different kinds of *ginā'u* offerings from the provinces of the Assyrian empire that were delivered to Aššur in one year, including cereals, honey, sesame, and fruit. There was a great deal of variation in the quantity and nature of deliveries from the various provinces from year to year, but the average annual total received by the Aššur temple is estimated to be approximately “1000 homer (c. 100 m<sup>3</sup>) cereals, 10 homer (c. 1 m<sup>3</sup>) honey, 100 homer (c. 10 m<sup>3</sup>) sesame and 50 homer (c. 5 m<sup>3</sup>) fruit.”<sup>4</sup> These deliveries were managed by the supervisor of the *ginā'u* offerings

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1 For economy, politics, military, and ideology as the four sources of power see Mann 1986.

2 Pongratz-Leisten 2011b.

3 Weidner 1935–36, 13 with n. 87 and 21 with n. 148; Postgate 1985; Pedersén 1985, 43–53, Archive M 4; Freydank 1991, 1992, 1997, and 2006; Maul 2013.

4 Pedersén 1985, 46.

(*šā muhhi ginā'e*). Three such supervisors are known by name from the period between Tukulti-Ninurta I (1233–1197 BCE) and Aššur-dan I (1169–1134),<sup>5</sup> though during the reign of Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076 BCE) a comparable office – perhaps the same office with a different designation – was held by a person named Ezbu-lēšer, who bore the title *rab ginā'e*.

Although most of the tabular lists of *ginā'u* offerings can be dated to Tiglath-Pileser I, eponyms in some of the texts indicate that the archive begins toward the end of Tukulti-Ninurta I's reign;<sup>6</sup> as such, the archive documents a practice stretching over more than a hundred years. The tabular lists are five column-tablets of horizontal format, of which four columns list quantities of cereals, honey, sesame, and fruit, while the fifth column lists provinces. These tablets give a sense of the territory that was actually under the control of the Assyrian king,<sup>7</sup> and it is interesting to note that the deliveries are designated by the term *maddattu*, “tribute” that was supplied by provincial governors.<sup>8</sup> In other words, only the provinces of the land of Aššur (*māt Aššur*) were obliged to send these regular deliveries – not the vassal kingdoms. Twenty-five tabular lists have been identified thus far.<sup>9</sup> The headings or subscripts of these lists refer either to ‘received regular offerings’ (*ginā'u mahru*)<sup>10</sup> or ‘missing regular offerings’ (*ginā'u muṭṭā'u*).<sup>11</sup> Some lists bear the subscript “later/final? cleared list of the eponym PN” (*tuppu urkītu za(k)kūtu ša lime PN*).<sup>12</sup> The list of provinces obliged to send regular deliveries to the Aššur temple was probably established under Ninurta-apil-ekur (1181–1169 BCE), though the practice essentially dates back to the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I.<sup>13</sup>

The *ginā'u* offerings supplied by the provinces represent only very basic provisions for the Aššur temple, and their purpose appears to have been primarily symbolic. From a financial perspective, the support provided by the *ginā'u* offerings was not of great consequence and could have been provided by the lands of the temple itself. These offerings thus served to express the

5 Aba-lā-ide, Sîn-uballiṭ, and Sîn-nādin-apli, Freydank 1992, 276–278.

6 Pedersén 1985, 44 with n. 7 goes back to Aššur-dan or earlier, while Freydank 1997, 48 assumes a *terminus post quem* around the end of the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I.

7 Weidner 1935–36, 13 n. 87; Postgate 1985, 96 f., more cautiously Freydank 1997, 51.

8 Maul 2013, 564–65.

9 Freydank 2006, 219 f.

10 Freydank 1997, 48 n. 21 with reference to VS 21 21:32, VAT 19200:24 = MARV 5 14; VAT 19206:1; VAT 19198:1 = MARV 9 9; MARV 9 12.

11 Freydank 1997, 48 n. 22 VAT 19208:28.

12 Freydank 1997, 49 with n. 23 referring to VAT 15491:26 = MARV 5 1; VAT 15492:26 = MARV 5 2, VAT 19200:24 = MARV 9 9.

13 Freydank 2006, 221.

binding together of the imperial center and the imperial periphery,<sup>14</sup> a relationship reinforced by the performance of the *tākultu-ritual*, as is discussed below.

A modified system of regular offerings appears to have operated during the Neo-Assyrian period, as is demonstrated by a decree of Adad-nīrārī III (810–783 BCE) concerning regular offerings for the Aššur temple,<sup>15</sup> sealed with the seal of Aššur and Ninurta. In this instance, however, only a few towns – all located in the province of Arbela – had the obligation to supply offerings. This document contains the interesting regulation decreeing that towns, fields, houses, orchards, and people are not to be given to any other governor, only to the one responsible for the Aššur temple.

Several letters from the Neo-Assyrian period sent to the king by temple officials report failure to deliver offerings to the Aššur temple and other temples and ask the king what action should be taken.<sup>16</sup> In the following case, the complaint concerns the failure to deliver livestock:

<sup>1</sup> [To the king], my lord: [your servant, D]adī. [Good health t]o the king, my lord. May Nabû and Marduk bless the king, my lord.

<sup>5</sup> Two oxen and 20 sheep, offerings of the king's heart (to be provided) by the city of Diquqina, have not been delivered. The king, my lord, should inquire about them. Three rams are for the temple of Dag[an, x] are for the town of [... for the me]jal of [...]. It has now been [x] years that they have not been delivering. They have ceased. The king, my lord [should ...] his soldiers.

<sup>1,2</sup> The priest of Aššur consumes [(...)] 20 sheep from the [offerin]gs of Šēbat (XI). Last year I wrote to the king, my lord, about it. The king, my lord, wrote back, saying: "Assign (them) to the storehouse for pickled meat." I assigned (them). Now the temple scribe is saying to me: "Give them to the harem governess of the Inner City." Now then, I have written to the king, my lord. What is it [that] the [ki]ng, my lord, commands?<sup>17</sup>

In addition to the administrative and economic strategies for integrating various communities into a coherent imperial system described above, there was also an ideological dimension. It is breathtaking to observe how from the reign of Šamši-Adad I (1808–1776 BCE) onward, Assyrian and Babylonian scholars creatively engaged with cultural models extant in the Hurrian and Babylonian tradition and interweaved mythology and ritual performance in order to anchor the image of Assyrian kingship in the contemporary *Weltanschauung*.

<sup>14</sup> Maul 2013, 569.

<sup>15</sup> SAA 12 no. 71. SAA 12 nos. 72 and 73 probably represent portions of this text, although SAA 12 no. 73 is apparently a prism fragment.

<sup>16</sup> See the letters written by Dadī, for instance, SAA 13 nos. 18–24.

<sup>17</sup> SAA 13 no. 18.



## 10.2 Three Middle Assyrian Rituals Originating in a Changing Political Matrix

A brief discussion of the meager evidence of ritual texts from the Middle Assyrian period serves as a useful starting point for discussing the Neo-Assyrian state rituals as they provide a glimpse of the intercultural dynamics at the moment of major Assyrian expansion towards the west and the south. These Middle Assyrian ritual texts include a ritual for the god Adad, a ritual for Marduk, which will not be included in Simo Parpola's forthcoming edition of the *Assyrian Rituals*, and a ritual for a mouth-tongue object (KA-EME). All three texts are poorly understood, and I by no means claim to be able to add substantially to their understanding. These texts do, however, offer an insight into the elaborate treatment of ritual performance by scholars already in the Middle Assyrian period, who concerned themselves with various minutiae of ritual performance and with the integration of various cultic locations in ritual performance. I will quote the texts in full in the hope of instigating further discussion of them in the future.

The ritual for Adad, KAR 154, was first edited by Brigitte Menzel. It begins with offerings in the *bīt šalīme*, which was probably located within the Adad temple, and then describes a procession of the god from his temple to the gate of the storehouse (*bīt abusāte*) of Ninurta,<sup>18</sup> located in the Aššur temple, probably near to the entrance area. The procession involves the Aššur Gate located to the west, somewhere between the *mušlālu* and the Aššur temple,<sup>19</sup> the Samuh Gate (location unknown), the *bīt hamri*, and the Quay Gate (location unknown, but probably in the western part of the northern Quay wall<sup>20</sup>), and then returns to the Adad Temple. The procession thus links the entire northern part of the citadel in the city of Aššur topographically. The main participants in the ritual are the *qadištu*-women, who repeatedly perform *inhu*-songs for the god at various locations included in the procession, and the *šangû* of Adad who performs purifications. Ritual prescriptions focus on the movement between the sites at which the cultic performance is carried out by the *qadištu*-women and the *šangû*. The jewelry of the *qadištu*-women is referred to explicitly, and this jewelry is removed upon their return. The text concludes with an exact listing of the distribution of meat, which is shared by the gods and the ritual participants. The divine recipients include Adad, Šala, Taramua, Kubu,

<sup>18</sup> Note that this location is not mentioned among the parts dedicated to Ninurta in the *Götteradressbuch* and may therefore have disappeared by the Neo-Assyrian period.

<sup>19</sup> Unger 1932, 177; Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 26 f.; George 1988, 32.

<sup>20</sup> Schwemer 2001, 248.

and Anu, while the *alahinnu*-official – a high status member of the administrative personnel of the temple responsible for the inspection of the garments, the jewelry, and probably the treasury of the gods – is included among the human recipients alongside the *qadištu* women and the *šangû*.<sup>21</sup> The Aššur temple was apparently provided for first, but the relevant part of the text is only fragmentarily preserved. The king is conspicuously absent from the ritual.

*KAR 154 (Menzel 1981, vol. 2 T 2 ff.)*

- 1 On the day when they ... Adad, they let come out the *qadištu*-women,
  - 2 they prepare x-1/2 Qa bread, 7 bowls, 1 Qa aromatic plants, 2 Sutu beer in the *bit šalime*,
  - 3 from there three silas of bread (and) three bowls (with beer) before the temple of Adad, and 1 sila of bread and one bowl (with beer) (corrupt)
  - 4 The *qadištu*-women recite the *inḫu*-song before (the statue of) Adad, they finish the *inḫu*-song.
  - v5 The *šangû*-priest performs the purification. The *qadištu*-women praise the god.
  - 6 The *šangû*-priest and the *qadištu*-women leave the temple of Adad.
  - 7 They go to the gate of the storehouse (*bit abusâte*) of Ninurta at the Aššur temple, the *šangû*-priest takes a seat and the *qadištu*-women
  - 8 recite the *inḫu*-song. The *qadištu*-women finish the *inḫu*-song, the *šangû*-priest performs the purification,
  - 9 the *qadištu*-women praise the god. He leaves through the Aššur gate and goes to the Sammuḫ-gate. The *qadištu*-women recite the *inḫu*-song,
  - 10 they finish the *inḫu*-song, the *šangû*-priest performs the purification. The *qadištu*-women praise the god. He offers 1 Qa bread,
  - 11 1 bowl, 1 Qa beer by spilling six times from the bowl,
  - 12 and he pours from the libation bowl. He evokes the name of Ea-šarru (and) of Digla, ditto Šamaš.
  - 13 The *qadištu*-women go to the *bit ḫamri*, the *šangû*-priest takes a seat. The *qadištu*-women
  - 14 recite the *inḫu*-song. The *šangû*-priest performs the purification. 1 Qa bread 1 Qa beer ...
  - 15 ... *bit ḫamri* ...
- rest of obverse is broken*  
*beginning of reverse is broken.*
- 1' the *šangû*-priest ...
  - 2' ...
  - 3' ... 1 1/2 Qa bread 5 Qa beer, 1 thigh for the *šangû*-priest, he provides [the temple]
  - 4' of Aššur, ditto of Adad. The length of the thigh ...
  - 5' they destroy. The rest of the bread and the beer at the quay gate the *šangû*-priest and the *qadištu*-women ...

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<sup>21</sup> Menzel 1981, vol. 1, 224–228.

- 6' The *šangû*-priest and the *qadištu*-women return to the Adad temple, they remove the jewelry of the *qadištu*-women.
- 7' 3 Qa bread, 1 sutu beer, 1 sheep, 1 Qa aromatic plants they prepare before Adad.
- 8' From this sheep the breast, the shoulder, the neck, the hocks, 1 thigh, nine ribs;
- 9' 3 ribs, 3 vertebrae before Šala, 3 ribs, 3 vertebrae before Taramua,
- 10' 3 ribs, 3 vertebrae before Kubu of the Adad temple, the left shoulder before Anu,
- 11' the *buqurru*-piece before Kubu of the Anu temple; the intestines (are the share of) the chief musician,
- 12' the front legs (are the share of) the *alaḫinnu*-official, the *qadištu*-women keep the rest of the meat.
- 13' The *šangû*-priest of Adad takes the skin, the sinews and the back meat.
- 
- 14' After the chief musician, the *qadištu*-women and the pupils? have finished their songs, ...
- 15' ..., the bowls, ..., the pot, the wood, the water, the *ḥašbu*-pot, ...
- 16' ...

The central features of this Middle Assyrian ritual are familiar from elsewhere in the Syrian and Northern Mesopotamian region, particularly the association of *qadištu*-women with the god Adad, known from Kiš and Sippar, and with the goddess Annunitu, the warrior aspect of Ištar, known from Mari.<sup>22</sup> The *qadištu*-women are women of special status who could own property, nurse the children of other people, and act as midwives, with which they are associated in the Babylonian Flood Story *Atrahasis*. This is interesting insofar as in the Neo-Assyrian period Ištar assumes the role of midwife for the king, while already in the Early Dynastic period the nu-gig/*qadištu* is a central figure in the cult of Inanna, who herself adopts the epithet nu-gig.<sup>23</sup> Further, according to the catalogue of songs KAR 158, the *inhu*-songs – here performed by the *qadištu*-women for Adad – are supposed to be addressed to Ištar. In a Neo-Assyrian ritual referred to by Joan Westenholz, the *qadištu*-woman uses salt to undo a lightheartedly sworn oath.<sup>24</sup> It should be noted in this regard that in the Middle Assyrian royal inscriptions Adad and Ištar appear together in curse formulas, as they do for the first time in the Old Assyrian *Sargon Legend*. Although the goddess Ištar does not appear in KAR 154, the cultic actions performed for Adad only make sense through his association with her. Consequently, even though the various constituents of this ritual are not always explicit, it nevertheless reflects the cultural context of Middle Assyrian Aššur.

The other Middle Assyrian ritual worth mentioning is VAT 16435, originally published by F. Köcher under the title *Ein mittelassyrisches Ritualfragment zum*

<sup>22</sup> Westenholz 1989, 253.

<sup>23</sup> Zgoll 1997.

<sup>24</sup> Ebeling 1953, 43.

*Neujahrsfest*. Unfortunately, the excavation number is lost, making it impossible to know whether the text is from Aššur or Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta. On paleographical grounds Köcher dated the text between 1200 and 1000, i.e. after the conquest of Babylon by Tukultī-Ninurta I. The language is Middle Assyrian and the choice of the ritual language, i.e. the use of the D stem and Š stem to describe the movement of the deity,<sup>25</sup> also points to Assyrian authorship of the text, as in Babylonia the G stem is used in such contexts instead. Furthermore, it is only Marduk who takes a seat on the *Dais of Destinies* (*parak šimāte*), a practice reminiscent of the much later performance of the new year festival in Sargonid times, where this act is performed by Aššur alone in contrast to Babylonian custom. Köcher suggests an Assyrian setting for the performance of the ritual; this is, however, unlikely, given that there was no *Dais of Destinies* in Aššur at this time, at least according to Sennacherib, who built an entire annex to the Aššur temple in order to install this particular cultic feature.<sup>26</sup> Apart from the fact that there is no archaeological evidence for an architectural structure predating Sennacherib's festival house and that there is also no evidence in later texts that the procession made its way to the festival house on boats, it is hard to imagine that at any time in Assyrian history any divinity could rival Aššur to such a degree in the official cult of the city. My suggestion, therefore, has been to understand this ritual text as a prescription intended to help the Assyrian king to correctly perform the ritual in Babylon – not necessarily during the time of Tukultī-Ninurta, who had abducted the statue of Marduk, but under the reign of a later king, perhaps Tiglath-Pileser I.

*The first lines are very fragmentary*

- 10' [The šan]gû approaches the gods. The king takes the lead of the gods. [The king and  
 11' the šan]gû let Marduk si[t] on the Dais of Des[t]inies.  
 12' All the [rem]aining gods they do not let take a seat.  
 13' [One] brick oven, the DUMU.AN.KI-ti-i-di  
 14' lays out charcoal on top (of it). One live lamb, opposite Marduk,  
 15' they cut up into two (parts). They place (them) on top of the charcoal.  
 16' Half a QA of juniper, half a QA of chopped cedar, three *kallu*-bowls of *mašhatu*-  
 flour, the king  
 17' – inst[ead of] the *šangû* – sprinkles on top of the lamb. One *lahhanu*-flask  
 18' of wine (and) one *lahhanu*-flask of beer, he libates  
 19' on the ground on both sides of the oven. The *šangû* [c]arries water for the [ha]nd  
 of Marduk.  
 20' The *šangû* approaches Marduk. The king goes befo[re] the god.

<sup>25</sup> Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 151.

<sup>26</sup> See my discussion in Chapter 10.4.

- 21' He walks (the length of) two *ikû*-fields. They appease Marduk. The king offers  
 22' two sheep before Marduk. They set up the (two) heads before Marduk.  
 23' The king libates two *lahhanu*-flasks of wine on the ground.  
 24' When Marduk and the gods exit the Gate of Marduk of the city gate of the city,  
 25' they appease Marduk at the cross-bar of the city gate (known as) "He  
 circumambulated and stood, Marduk".  
 26' They appease Marduk. The king offers two sheep before Marduk.  
 27' They set up the (two) heads before Marduk. The king libates two *lahhanu*-flasks  
 28' of wine [on] the ground. He sets Marduk in motion. He [lea]ds (him) to the b[ank  
 of the river]. The king offe[rs] two sheep before Marduk. [The (two) heads]  
 29' he sets up [before] Marduk. The king libates two *lahhanu*-flasks of [wine].  
 30' They make Marduk, Zarpanitu, and Nabû  
 31' [climb the boats]. Ea ... to [...]  
 32' ... the go[ods] to the boats [...]

The third Middle Assyrian ritual worth mentioning is the text KAR 139, which has prompted much speculation regarding the possible existence in Assyria of a mystery cult linked to the goddess Ištar, a view advanced in particular by A. Leo Oppenheim, Simo Parpola, Joan Westenholz, and Eckart Frahm.<sup>27</sup> KAR 139 was first edited by Erich Ebeling<sup>28</sup> and discussed by A. Leo Oppenheim,<sup>29</sup> and has since been edited anew by Brigitte Menzel.<sup>30</sup> Oppenheim argues that Ištar assumes two different roles in this ritual, "first as a center of a secret cult association, and second, as a mediatrix, an intercessor with the gods on behalf of the suffering men who turn to her sacred symbol, called Mouth-and-Tongue, in order to reach out effectively toward the distant gods."<sup>31</sup> A similar view is adopted by Simo Parpola, who also places KAR 139 in the context of a mystery cult. As I have argued in an earlier article,<sup>32</sup> applying the notion of the Greek mystery cult to Assyrian religion is problematic because we do not know of any Assyrian ritual that describes an initiation similar to that of the Greek mystery cults, incorporating the ritual sequence of purification (κάθαρσις), initiation in the form of instruction (λόγος), and vision (τελετή).<sup>33</sup> Attestations of visions, auditions, and ecstasy – which are described in the context of prophecy, especially in the Mari letters – do not amount to a mystery cult linked to Ištar. Further, Oppenheim's suggestion that *piriltu/pirištu* should be connected

<sup>27</sup> Oppenheim 1965, 255; Parpola 1999 xxxiv; Westenholz 1998, 455; Frahm 2001, 39.

<sup>28</sup> Ebeling 1918.

<sup>29</sup> Oppenheim 1965.

<sup>30</sup> Menzel 1981, vol. 2, T 1-2.

<sup>31</sup> Oppenheim 1965, 261.

<sup>32</sup> Pongratz-Leisten 2008, 70.

<sup>33</sup> Cancik 1998, 174. For the Greek Mystery religions see the more recent treatments by Burkert 1983, 248–297; and Parker 2005, 334–368.

with a “body of rules imparted in some way exclusively to a particular group of worshippers of a deity”<sup>34</sup> and that these rules refer to moral and behavioral obligations seems far-fetched in the context of Assyrian and even broader ancient Near Eastern religion, as religious knowledge primarily served to enable correct communication with the gods. As I have argued, moreover, exclusivity of knowledge was practiced in scholarly circles; this is conveyed in the *Enmeduranki Legend*, in which the king represents himself as the hinge between the scholars and diviners, transferring divine knowledge to select members of the ancient Babylonian cult centers. Given the explicitness with which texts comment on the relationship between the king and Inanna/Ištar throughout Mesopotamian history, one would expect similar evidence for the members of the mystery cult. Such evidence is, however, lacking: “contrary to the mysteries in which knowledge benefits the individual for his or her personal transformation, in Sumerian and Assyrian-Babylonian ideology knowledge is given to the king to benefit the society and the cosmos as a whole ... If the king refers to this knowledge, he always refers to pragmatic knowledge enabling him to carry out his role as leader. From the perspective of Ashurbanipal’s self-praise, which focuses on his training in scribal, cultic, military, and hunting skills, this knowledge may be defined as education rather than initiation. Finally, ancient Near Eastern culture exhibits no sign of controlling religious behavior or defining boundaries of the accepted religion as do the later mystery religions.”<sup>35</sup>

The ritual described in KAR 139 takes place in the *bīt ēqi* in Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta. It is not yet known whether the *bīt ēqi* was associated with the temple of Ištar, comparable to cultic practice in the city of Aššur. A ritual involving the *ēqu* as an object is only attested in the series *Iqqur īpuš*, in which the king places it in front of Adad.<sup>36</sup> The *ēqu* ritual appears to have originated in the Hurrian milieu, as it is only attested in Nuzi, Middle Assyrian, Neo-Assyrian, and Standard Babylonian, and is geographically confined to the Upper Mesopotamian-Hurrian regions.<sup>37</sup> Daniel Schwemer observes that Hurrian *egi* “spring, innermost part” plays a role in the cult of Ištar-Šauška.<sup>38</sup> This is interesting insofar as the *Götteradressbuch* lists a <sup>d</sup>GAŠAN *ēqi* among the gods of the Ištar temple at Nineveh.<sup>39</sup> The ritual participants in KAR 139 are the *šangû*, the

34 Oppenheim 1965, 255.

35 Pongratz-Leisten 2008, 72.

36 Schwemer 2001, 601 with fn. 4864 with reference to Labat 1965, 104 § 39 and KAR 212 I 49 ff.

37 Schwemer, *ibid.*

38 Schwemer, *ibid.* with reference to Wegner, 1981, 106.

39 Menzel 1981, vol. 2, T 152 no. 64: 98.

owner of the sacrifice, and a ritual object called “Mouth-Tongue” (KA-EME). Such tongue objects are known primarily from eliminatory rites in the Hittite cult in which they serve to materialize curses and maledictions spoken against the royal couple and, once materialized, are ritually discarded. There are, however, also tongue-objects made of silver or gold which represent benedictions.<sup>40</sup> Volkert Haas has already observed that the latter function must have applied to the Mouth-Tongue object used in KAR 139.<sup>41</sup> Here it assumes a mediating function on behalf of the owner of the sacrifice before the goddess Ištar. Such beneficial function of this object is also attested in šuilla-prayers from Aššur addressed to Nusku and Ea.<sup>42</sup> It further occurs in the legends of Kassite seals, which led Wiebke Meinhold to identify this object with the rhombus-shaped symbol in the iconography of Kassite seals and various Neo-Assyrian seals.<sup>43</sup> In its ritual function the Mouth-Tongue object is also attested among the minor deities receiving offerings in the *Coronation Ritual*<sup>44</sup> and in the Neo-Assyrian *tākultu*-ritual.<sup>45</sup> Both texts belong to the official royal cult. Oppenheim notes that the *šangû* does not participate in the ritual actively but speaks in the name of Ištar after the owner of the sacrificial lamb has performed his ritual actions. This seems to be a very important detail because it recalls the context of prophecy in which the prophets convey the oracle of Ištar: “the possibility of a link to prophecy is corroborated by the fact that the text not only mentions the secrets of Ištar, *pirišti Ištar*, but also the *abat Ištar*, ‘the word of Ištar,’ a technical term used later in the Sargonid period to denote the oracles of Ištar.”<sup>46</sup> In my former treatment of the text I conceded that, if this text is supposed to revolve around the figure of the king, one should expect that the cultic participant is addressed as “king” (*šarru*). I still regard it as plausible that the ritual represents a mandatory preparatory step to be performed by the crown prince before becoming king and going through the *Coronation Ritual*, especially as the Mouth-Tongue object figures among the recipients of offerings in the latter ritual. The other possible scenario would be that this ritual represents a ceremony incumbent upon prophets before they assumed their position in the temple, in order to guarantee that the content of the oracles delivered

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40 Haas 2003 vol. 2, 596–605, esp. 596–598.

41 Haas 2003 vol. 2, 598.

42 KAR 58: 38 KA EME *liq-bu-û sig<sub>5</sub>-te* with duplicate King, BMS, no. 6: 33 (Nusku); KAR 59 rev. 12 with a late dupl. SpTU III no. 78: 1' (Ea), see Meinhold 2009, 130–136.

43 Meinhold 2009, 131.134 ff.

44 Parpola SAA 20 no. 7 ii 10.

45 Menzel 1981, vol. 2, T 115, no. 54: iii 7.

46 Pongratz-Leisten 2008, 73.

by Ištar on behalf of the king would not reach any unauthorized person. In this case it is possible to compare this Middle Assyrian ritual to the *protocôle des devins* performed by the diviners when they entered the service of the king in Old Babylonian Mari.<sup>47</sup>

*KAR 139 (Menzel 1981, vol. 2 T1–2):*

- 1 As soon as the right moment is at hand, the owner of the sacrificial animal enters the *bit ēqi*.
- 2 In the *bit ēqi* he approaches, from the right, the offering table, which stands in front of the KA-EME (mouth-tongue).
- 3 He lights the censer, which is in front of the KA-EME, with the torch in his hand.
- 4 He (then) takes the torch in his left hand and twice pours aromatics
- 5 on the censer in front of the KA-EME. He breaks the *la'tu*-bread
- 6 upon the offering table; twice he tilts the bowl (with the beer),
- 7 in two libations he empties the beer into the vat. He (then) scatters mixed
- 8 incense on a *niknakku*-censer. He places a *sassurtu*-object
- 9 weighing half a mina of lead before the KA-EME (and) prostrates himself.
- 10 The *šangû*-priest blesses the owner of the sacrificial animal, saying: “May the KA-EME
- 11 speak nicely of you before Ištar. May it take your word before Ištar.
- 12 As this torch is bright, may Ištar decree brightness and prosperity to you.
- 13 Guard the word and secret of Ištar!”

*Rest of the front of the tablet is broken away.*

*Rev.*

*Beginning of the reverse is broken away.*

- 1' ... he places ...
- 2' The *šangû*-priest blesses him saying: “May Ištar-of-the-Heavens speak nicely to ...
- 3' about you. As [this] torch
- 4' is bright, may Ištar decree brightness and prosperity to you.
- 5' Guard the word and secret of Ištar!
- 6' Should you leak out the word of Ištar, you shall not live,
- 7' and if you will not guard her secrets, you shall not prosper.
- 8' May Ištar guard your mouth and tongue!” (break)

Scenario for the ‘right moment’ in the great *bit ēqi* of Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta.

While at the moment it is difficult to pinpoint the exact contribution of these Middle Assyrian rituals to Assyrian royal discourse, they all reveal in one way or another Assyrian interaction with either Syro-Anatolian or Babylonian cultures and thus directly reflect Assyrian expansion during the second half of the second millennium BCE. They also provide excellent testimony to the fact that political expansion and control over foreign territory went hand in hand

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<sup>47</sup> Durand 1988, 13–5.



with the appropriation or adaptation of cultural practice that was deemed beneficial for the institution of kingship.

## 10.3 The Assyrian State Rituals of the Sargonid Period

### 10.3.1 Introduction

The Assyrian state rituals of the Sargonid period are a powerful mechanism for publicizing the *body politic* of the king in his cosmic function. The corpus of rituals discussed below demonstrate the effective adaptation by Assyrian scholars of Sumero-Babylonian and Hurrian myth and ritual practice in order to generate an Assyrian ideological program centered on the figure of the king as the human agent of the supreme god Aššur. Reading the rituals as a group rather than individually enables us to appreciate the “syntax” of Assyrian ritual, built on a number of constituents that continuously reiterate the king’s primary task of securing the cosmic order; this demonstrates that Assyrian state rituals from the Middle Assyrian period onward were developed by informed scholars for an educated audience that was able to identify the plentiful and sophisticated allusions to mythology that were integrated in ritual performance.

Ceremonial public performance of rituals figures as one of the central devices used to manifest divine support for the king’s authority. The efficacy of the Neo-Assyrian ritual performances pertaining to the Šabatu-Addaru-Nisannu cycle in particular can only be understood when they are approached in conjunction with the cultic commentaries published by Alasdair Livingstone<sup>48</sup> and the extant corpus of ancient Near Eastern mythology centered on the divine figure of the warrior god. Although cultic commentaries have for a long time been perceived as an esoteric genre somewhat disconnected from the rest of cultural production, the corpus of cultic commentaries works to illuminate the meaning of Assyrian rituals and at the very least sheds light on how ritual performances were understood in certain scholarly circles in the late Neo-Assyrian period.<sup>49</sup> To the uninformed reader, prescriptions for ritual performance can appear to be little more than instructions for the preparation of sumptuous offerings and the movement of ritual participants between various localities. Cultic commentaries, however, explain how rituals reiterate a sequence of action that com-

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<sup>48</sup> Livingstone 1986 and 1989.

<sup>49</sup> This has already been recognized to some degree by Thorkild Jacobsen 1975, 74.

bines hunting, warfare, cosmic battle, and the renewal of the king's status as ruler of the universe in a continuum of confrontation with the forces of chaos, which are defeated and brought under Assyrian control. Unlike Greek drama, this reenactment of the cosmic battle does not operate in a linear narrative. Instead, ritual prescriptive texts, ritual reports, and commentary literature choose key moments of action, along with objects, songs, and words that reference these moments, and use these to evoke two elements of the common cultural memory, namely 1) the well-known battle narrative revolving around the warrior god Ninurta, and 2) theogony referencing the notion of regicide.

The ideological implications of these Neo-Assyrian state rituals reflect the ancient world's perspective on kingship, in which the king's function as guarantor of civic and cosmic order is central. It is this royal obligation that explains the pervasiveness of combat myths and their ritual reenactment in royal contexts. Myth and ritual serve as explanatory patterns for the developing ideological framework, which not only asserts a utopian vision of the king mastering any potential disruptive forces but also conveys a notion of cohesion and consent among all the peoples of the empire. Myth and ritual were a key part of cultural discourse and were as important as pragmatic action in the consolidation and stabilization of Assyrian power and control, both in the imperial heartland and in the provinces. Myth and ritual were powerful means for visualizing and negotiating the asymmetrical power relationships represented by the monarchical system, and, as is apparent in the correspondence between the king and his scholars, they were carefully orchestrated to reinforce the king's historical and cosmic role.

A family of exorcists located in Aššur, known primarily through the figure of its chief Kišir-Aššur (the author of several state rituals) and his apprentices, was responsible for organizing the cult of the Aššur temple, i.e. the state cult, in the Sargonid period.<sup>50</sup> Throughout Assyrian history, even when it was not the political capital, the city of Aššur retained its status as a cultural and religious center of primary importance and as a center for the creation, elaboration, and performance of state rituals, as well as serving as the burial place of Assyrian kings. As is discussed below, the purpose of Assyrian state rituals transcends the legitimization of the status quo and the enhancement of royal authority. Although these rituals embody certain views of how the world and society are constructed,<sup>51</sup> they also respond to specific historical situations and are therefore capable of transforming and reinventing tradition.<sup>52</sup> This applies

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<sup>50</sup> Maul 2010.

<sup>51</sup> Kertzer 1991, 89.

<sup>52</sup> Hobsbawm 1983, 2.

to the Assyrian versions of the *akītu*-festival and the *tākultu*-ritual in particular, as they developed in Assyria during the late Sargonid period. In Assyria, these state rituals demanded not only the physical presence of the king, as they did in Babylonia, but also the king's active participation in his role as chief *šangū* of the god Aššur.

Assyrian state rituals demonstrate the capacity of Assyrian scholarly experts to evoke the spatial dimensions of the empire and to implement a sacred topography that includes even the most distant regions of the territory controlled by the king. In the composite and varied nature of Assyrian state rituals these sites constitute a mental topography of the empire that merges with elements of mythology, ancestor worship, and theological visions of divinity. Taken as a whole, these various strands ultimately delineate the Assyrian concept of divine and human rulership, performed in tandem by the god Aššur and the human king.

### 10.3.2 The *Tākultu*-ritual

#### 10.3.2.1 Envisioning a Unified Territory: The Development of the *Tākultu*-Ritual

The *tākultu*-ritual is the earliest attested of the major state rituals and is known from the Old Babylonian period.<sup>53</sup> In Babylonia, Sum. *gišbun*/Akk. *tākultu* appears simply to have implied a festive meal or banquet (< *akālu*, “to eat”), as is described in *Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave* when Lugalbanda prepares a meal for the gods in gratitude for his recovery.<sup>54</sup> The adoption of this festival in northern Mesopotamian tradition, by contrast, adds a strong spatial component that binds the periphery to the center. The Sargonid variants of the *tākultu*-ritual text invoke all the gods of Aššur, the Assyrian heartland, and incorporated provinces, and offer sacrifices to them in order to elicit their blessings for the city of Aššur, Assyria, and the Assyrian king. Because of these spatial implications, *tākultu* differs from Sum. *bur*/Akk. *naptanu*, which is also translated as “meal” or “ceremonial banquet” in the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*.<sup>55</sup> A protocol (SAA 20 no. 33) and numerous accounts listing the kinds of food that are to be distributed to the numerous officials and courtiers of the royal court (SAA 7 nos. 148–157) suggest that the *tākultu*-ritual has a different pur-

<sup>53</sup> Frankena 1954; Pongratz-Leisten 2007a.

<sup>54</sup> *ETCSL* 1.8.2.1, ll. 371 and 376; Black 2004, 11–22; for further references see *CAD* T, 90–91 s.v. *tākultu*; add Dalley 2009, no. 75 ll. 9–10.

<sup>55</sup> *CAD* N/1, 319–323, s.v. *naptanu*.

pose.<sup>56</sup> The *tākultu*-ritual should also be distinguished from the *qerītu*, likewise a banquet festival, but one dedicated to only one deity and that could serve as a synonym for the *akītu*-festival of the god Aššur, among others.<sup>57</sup>

The *tākultu*-ritual is attested in the period of Šamši-Adad I (1808–1776 BCE) on a vase inscription dedicated to the god Dagan. While Šamši-Adad I's inscription is fragmentary, it seems that the festival was already part of the cult of the city of Aššur at this point. Furthermore, it was considered so important that the king deemed it worthy of mention in a dedication to another deity:

	[ <sup>d</sup> utu]-šī- <sup>d</sup> [iškur]	Šamši-Adad
2	lugal <sup>r</sup> da-[n <sup>u</sup> m]	mig[hty] king,
	ša-ki-in <sup>d</sup> [en-lil]	governor of [Enlil],
4	ensi <sub>2</sub> <sup>d</sup> a-š[ur]	stewart of Ašš[ur],
	na-ra-am <sup>d</sup> da-g[an]	beloved of Dag[an],
6	mu-uš-te-em-k[i ma-]a-tim	pacifier <sup>58</sup> of the [la]nd
	bī-ri-it <sup>17</sup> idigna	between the Tigris
8	ù <sup>17</sup> buranun-na	and the Euphrates,
	ru-ba [ma-r] <sup>ki</sup>	prince of [Mar]i,
10	lugal é-ká[l-la-ti]m <sup>ki</sup>	king of Ekal[latu]m,
	ša-ki-in š[u-ba-at- <sup>d</sup> e]n-[lil] <sup>ki</sup>	governor of Š[ubat-E]n-[li],
12	tu-a-mi a-na [ <sup>d</sup> ]a-gán	twin vase for Dagan
	ù ša-ku-la-at [...]	and the <i>tākultu</i> -banquets
14	[x] x <sup>d</sup> a-šur a-n[a ...]	... Aššur ...
	(...)	
rev.		
	na-ru-x x x [...] <sup>59</sup>	

The *tākultu*-ritual is attested again in inscriptions from the Middle Assyrian period onward, beginning with the inscriptions of Adad-nīrārī I (1295–1264 BCE), that is, with the first major westward expansions following the end of Mitannian overlordship. Potsherds recovered from the Aššur temple point to the ritual's performance:

*Adn. I, RIMA 1, A.O.76.27*

(Property) of the [temple of the god Aššur]. Of the *tākultu* at the beginning of the sovereignty of Adad-nīrārī, overseer.

<sup>56</sup> See SAA 7 nos. 148–157.

<sup>57</sup> See Sennacherib OIP 2, 143:9, 136:25. For further examples see CAD Q, 240–41, s.v. *qerītu*.

<sup>58</sup> See AHw 2, 643 s.v. *mekū*; Šamši-Adad I uses the same epithet in his inscription on stone tablets from the Aššur temple, see RIMA 1, A.O.39.1:5–6.

<sup>59</sup> Charpin 1984, 50–51; RIMA 1, A.O.39.7.

*Adn. I, RIMA 1, A.O.76.28*

(Property) of the temple of the god Aššur. Adad-nīrārī, king of Assyria, made (it) at his third (var. fourth) *tākultu*.

Similar vessel inscriptions from the reign of Adad-nīrārī I's son and successor Shalmaneser I (1263–1234 BCE) were buried under the floor of the Aššur temple.<sup>60</sup> As meager as the evidence is, it seems that Šamši-Adad I's vision of territorial dominion over Upper Mesopotamia and the subsequent expansionist ambitions of the Middle Assyrian kings from Adad-nīrārī I (1295–1264 BCE) onward correspond with a deliberate attempt to foster territorial control also by ritual means. The *tākultu*-ritual is a major component of this cultural strategy and originates in a time when Aššur retained its role as Assyria's political center.

No written evidence survives from the many centuries that follow. It is therefore difficult to ascertain whether the *tākultu*-ritual was practiced continuously in the Assyrian cult throughout the Neo-Assyrian period. Only in the Sargonid period – and particularly during the reigns of Sennacherib (704–681 BCE) and his successors, when Assyria reached its maximum territorial extent – do written sources again attest to the celebration of the *tākultu* festival (SAA 20 nos. 38–47).<sup>61</sup> Although the term *tākultu* is not explicitly mentioned in text SAA 20 no. 37, this text, written by Ashurbanipal's (668–631/27? BCE) chief exorcist Kišir-Aššur, is likely to be an abbreviated version of the ritual. Several other texts survive from the reigns of Ashurbanipal<sup>62</sup> and Aššur-eṭel-ilāni (627–625? BCE),<sup>63</sup> stemming from Nineveh,<sup>64</sup> Aššur,<sup>65</sup> and Sultantepe.<sup>66</sup> The festival, consequently, must have been celebrated on several occasions during the reign of a single king or, if celebrated solely at his coronation, may have been celebrated in numerous cities simultaneously or have warranted study in multiple places.

In the copy of the *tākultu* festival performed for Sennacherib (SAA 20 no. 38), the ritual begins with an invocation of the gods of the Aššur temple and continues with the gods of other major temples in Aššur before proceeding to invoke the gods of Nineveh. Subsequently, the text returns to the gods of

<sup>60</sup> RIMA 1, A.O.77.25–27.

<sup>61</sup> Porter 1997a, 233 with fn. 38.

<sup>62</sup> SAA 20 nos. 40–41.

<sup>63</sup> SAA 20 nos. 42–44.

<sup>64</sup> SAA 20 nos. 40; 46.

<sup>65</sup> No. 37 – for Ashurbanipal?; SAA 20 no. 41 dupl. to 40 for Ashurbanipal; SAA 20 nos. 42–44 for Aššur-eṭel-ilāni.

<sup>66</sup> *Tākultu* festivals – for Sennacherib, SAA 20 no. 38, and for Esarhaddon?, SAA 20 no. 39.

several temples in Libbi-āli/Aššur before embracing a wider geographical scope by invoking the gods of the eastern Tigridian region, Esagila and Babylon, and Der. The end of the ritual closes the geographical circle by returning to Aššur, invoking the names of the Divine Judges in the Aššur temple, and finally proceeding to Nineveh, invoking the gods of the political capital and the king's political residence. This first large section listing the divinities that are to be invoked by the king or the priest is sporadically interspersed with brief requests for blessings and with ritual prescriptions. Below follow some examples:

iv 5'–16' [... may hea]ven and earth, the manifest [gods], all the [gods] who dwell in sanctuaries accept [wit]h you, may they listen [with] you! [Bles]s the city of Aššur, [bles]s the land of Aššur, [bless] Sennacherib, our [lord]!

and

v 14'–16' [The gods] who[s]e names [you in]voke in the morning and in the evening [for N]ineveh,

Prayers in the ritual beseech blessings for the king:

rev. ii 1'–6' Give Sennacherib, our lord, [lo]ng [days, everlasti]ng y[ears], a strong weapon, a long [re]ign, and supremacy [ov]er kings! [He w]o [gave] these to his gods – [give him lo]ng , wide [...].

Sennacherib's *tākultu* text ends with a section (rev. V 5 ff.) that is separated from the previous part by a double ruling. It differs entirely from the preceding lists in that it offers detailed ritual prescriptions for how to provide for the gods of Ištar's temple in Nineveh. The formula to be spoken by the ritual performer is similar to those spoken during the *tākultu*, so it is certainly possible that this is a ritual prescription for a *tākultu* performed exclusively in Nineveh. It is also possible that the author of the text chose to go into specific and precise detail regarding ritual performance because the ritual prescription concerned the Emašmaš, the temple of Ištar of Nineveh. Ištar of Nineveh is known to have played a central role in empowering the Assyrian ruler in his office and in mediating between the supreme god Aššur and the king through prophecy, so that the goddess and the king contributed together to securing the cosmic order. Ištar's importance to the crown prince and the king is explicitly stated only in hymns dating to the time of Ashurbanipal, who claims to have known no father and mother and to have been descended from the Ištars of Nineveh and Arbela instead.<sup>67</sup> Allusions to Ištar's roles as goddess prophesying on behalf of the king

<sup>67</sup> SAA 3 no. 3:10: *bīnūt Emašmaš*; 13 *ul idi abī u ummī ina burki<sup>1</sup> Ištarātiya arbā anāku*. See also the fictive *Dialogue between Nabū and Ashurbanipal*, SAA 3 no. 13.

and as supporter of the king in his political and military activities, however, are attested as early as the Old Babylonian period.<sup>68</sup> Yet it is not until the Sargonid period that Ištar's prophecies<sup>69</sup> emerge as a central stratagem for asserting the legitimacy of irregular succession. In the *Götteradressbuch*, the Akkadian rendering of the Sumerian ceremonial name of Ištar's temple in Aššur – Egišhurankia, which is 'House which carries the designs of heaven and earth' (SAA 20 no. 49:171 *bītu ša ušurāt šamê u eršetim našū*) – clearly indicates her role in revealing the divine plan to the king. This function of Ištar was deemed so important that her cult was introduced in Babylon, where her temple was given the same ceremonial name.<sup>70</sup> Interestingly, in Ashurbanipal's *tākultu* the section on Ištar and the gods of her temple (SAA 20 no. 40 v 24–vi 10) again figures right after the section concerned with Aššur; it also includes a prayer to Ištar that beseeches her to accept the offering presented to her and bless the city of Aššur, Assyria, and the king. Accordingly, there appears to have been a deliberate attempt to single out Aššur not only as Assyria's religious metropolis and as the seat of the chief god Aššur, but also as Assyria's political capital as the seat of the goddess Ištar.

The importance of the *tākultu* for the state cult is further apparent in the fact that surviving colophons reveal that copies were written by or belonged to either the chief astrologer or the chief exorcist of the king. This is true for the chief astrologer Issar-šumu-ēreš<sup>71</sup> and the chief exorcist Kišir-Aššur, who consulted the kings Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal. Issar-šumu-ēreš was involved in the most important cultic affairs and in other highly sensitive matters like the ritual of the substitute king and the return of the Marduk statue to Babylon.<sup>72</sup> Beyond his profession as exorcist, the content of Kišir-Aššur's library bespeaks the literary erudition of its owner and his responsibility for organizing the cultic affairs of the Aššur temple. Both Issar-šumu-ēreš and Kišir-Aššur would have been very familiar with the conditions of the Aššur temple, and yet the *tākultu* text for Ashurbanipal (SAA 20 no. 40),<sup>73</sup> written by Issar-šumu-ēreš, and the *Götteradressbuch* (SAA 20 no. 49), written by his

68 ARM 26 no. 192:16 and 379 f.; see *Chapter 3* in this volume.

69 Parpola, SAA 9.

70 George 1992, 60–61 Tintir.KI iv 32.

71 Issar-šumu-ēreš, son of Adad-šumu-ušur, chief exorcist of Esarhaddon, belonged to a family of astrologers and exorcists whose genealogy can be traced back to Gabbi-ilāni-ēreš, chief scholar to King Aššurnāširpal II, see Parpola 1983b, XIX chart 3.

72 SAA 10 nos. 1–38.

73 With regard to the temples of Aššur and Nineveh, this text is a literal copy of the text of the *tākultu* for Sennacherib (SAA 20 no. 38) and matches the information given in the text of his cultic reforms (SAA 20 no. 52).

contemporary colleague Kišir-Aššur, differ in their perception of the divinities residing in it. Kišir-Aššur's *Götteradressbuch* provides precise information regarding the location of particular divinities' pedestals; in contrast, Issar-šumu-ēreš's *tākultu* for Ashurbanipal (SAA 20 no. 40), represents a sophisticated and elaborate scheme of divine agency focusing on Aššur's action in concordance with the other gods (discussed below).

**Tākultu for Ashurbanipal (no. 40)**

Aššur-Enlil  
 Mašmaš  
 Aššur-Adad in front of Aššur-dugul  
 Aššur-Adad in front of Aššur-Conqueror  
 Enlil  
 Anu  
 Ea-šarru  
 Šin  
 Adad  
 Šamaš  
 Ištar  
 Queen-of-Heaven of Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta  
 Šerua  
 Great Gods  
 Tašmētu  
 Nusku  
 Ninurta  
 Kippat-māti  
 Kippat-māti-image  
 Kutatāti

Enlil  
 Dagan  
 Aššur-Tiara  
 Sun-image  
 Aššur-Lahmus  
 Aššur-Judges  
 Ea-Kittu  
 Šin (and) Šamaš  
 Aššur-Conqueror  
 Ea, Kittu and Mišaru  
 Dibar,  
 Ninurta (and) Aššur  
 Aššur-Šakkan-Tišpak  
 Aššur-Judges  
 Lubelim  
 Gimagan  
 Ilipada  
 Couch

**Götteradressbuch (no. 49)**

Aššur  
 Lord Tiara  
 Aššur of *Reading*  
 Šerua  
 Kippat-māti  
 window of Tašmētu  
 Šin  
 Šamaš  
 Šulpaamaša  
 Šulpaguna  
 three gods of the room  
 the Conquerors  
 Weapon  
 Axe  
 Kunuš-kadru  
 image of Tiglath-Pileser (**total of cella**)  
 Ninurta  
 Kakka (**right side room of portico**)  
 Nusku (**left side room of ditto**)  
 Seven Sons-of-Truth (**before window openings of the roof**)  
 Mullissu  
 Mullissu of *Reading*  
 Tambaya  
 Šamšaya  
 Ulaya (**cella of Mullissu**)  
 Enlil  
 Dagan  
 Bēl-labria  
 Judges of the Dais  
 Mišaru  
 Bēlet-ili (and) another Bēlet-ili  
 Šakkan (**total (of gods) in the 'Pantry'**)  
 Haya and Kusu (**side room on courtyard**)  
 Kittu and Tišpak (**in courtyard above well**)  
 Ea-šarru  
 Damkina  
 Išhara  
 Qingu



**Tākultu for Ashurbanipal (no. 40)**

Image-of-the-Sun-of-the-Lands  
Rivers (and) Usumû

Aššur-images  
Kunuš-kadru  
Elaborate Door  
Images of the cities  
Lamassus  
Deposed Gods  
Sons-of-Truth

Tišpak-images

Forts  
Rivers  
Kubus  
Golden Doors  
(Break)

**Götteradressbuch (no. 49)**

Maliku  
Ugurtu (**total of (gods) in the cella of Ea-šarru**)

Kalkal  
Bel-tarbaši  
the Šakkans  
the Lions  
the Enpis  
Nēš-ili-māti

Ninurta of the storehouse (**total of Gatekeepers of Ešarra**)  
[DN]. Allatu, Nergal (**total of the cella of Allatu**)

gatekeeper of the Šarhat gate  
Siriš in the brewery  
**Total of gods in the house of Aššur**

**[Reconstruction from Sennacherib's tākultu (no. 38) which partially overlaps with preceding entries]**

Thunderbirds  
Nēš-ili-māti  
Mullissu images  
Tambaya  
Šamšaya  
The Enpis  
The Aššur-Cherub  
The Lahmus  
Kalkal  
Kalkal-images  
Šakkans  
Lions  
Wild Bulls  
Thunderbirds  
Ea-šarru (and) Damkina  
The gods of Subartu  
The mountains and Rivers  
Aššur-Judges  
Maliku  
The Sons-of-Truth  
Kittu  
Mišaru  
...  
Dibar

**[Reconstruction from Sennacherib's *tākultu* (no. 38) which partially overlaps with preceding entries]**

Telitu  
 Bēlet-ili  
 The Mouth-and-Tongue  
 The Bull-Son-of-Šamaš  
 The Lahmus  
 The Steps  
 The emblem  
 (Break)  
 Allatu  
 Bēl-šarru  
 Daglanu  
 Siusa  
 Šerua  
 Mullissu  
 Ištar

Many of these gods feature as recipients of stones in the Middle Assyrian coronation ritual, generally even in the same sequence.

**10.3.2.2 The Legal Implications of the *Tākultu*-Ritual**

Although the name of the *tākultu*-ritual suggests a focus on consumption, the text variants make relatively little reference to the preparation of offerings and the feeding of the gods. In this regard, the *tākultu*-ritual differs profoundly from other Assyrian rituals, which generally provide a detailed guideline for the quantities, preparation, presentation, and distribution of the meals for the gods and the personnel involved.<sup>74</sup> Sennacherib's *tākultu* is an exception: at the very end, in addition to occasional ritual prescriptions, it dedicates a longer section to ritual performance. Even in this case, however, the emphasis is on the strewing of salt rather than on the preparation of food offerings:

38 v 5–9 When you are to provide for the House of the God (lit. 'gods') of Nineveh, when you are to st[rew] salt, [you say]: "Aššur-Ištar, Šin, Šam[aš, and Mardu]k, king of the gods, [accept] life!"

This is followed by the purification of Ištar's temple by means of swinging a censer in order "to release" it. While incense is placed on the censer, Ištar is

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<sup>74</sup> See the discussion of the offerings made in the city of Emar by Sallaberger 2012; for the notion of ritual killing versus sacrifice see Pongratz-Leisten 2007b; for the notion of offering see Pongratz-Leisten 2012.

invoked and requested to accept the offering and to listen. Salt is strewed on bread and a glass vessel; the same request is made to the gods of Elam, among them the goddess Narudi, who is the earliest attested Elamite divinity. Elamite tradition ultimately ceases to refer to Narudi,<sup>75</sup> but Akkadian sources continue to list her together with astral divinities, such as the Sebeti (*Šurpu* viii 27) and other stars (*Šurpu* ii 182f.), as do the *tākultu* texts (SAA 20 no. 38 ii 35; no. 38 iv 38; iv 58: v 30). Whether attestations of Narudi in invocations represent the actual survival of this deity in the Assyrian cult or simply a literary reflection of an earlier cultic situation cannot be stated with certainty. A similar situation exists with regard to Hurrian divinities (discussed below), some of whom also survive into the Neo-Assyrian period.<sup>76</sup> Other gods who are addressed with the request to accept and listen are Nikkal and Kidinbirbir (SAA 20 no. 38 v 35–36), Nusku and Bēl (SAA 20 no. 38 v 41–42), Igigi and Anunnaki, and again Nusku.

The same combination of rites, namely the strewing of salt accompanied by the request to the gods to “accept life” followed by the purification of the temple by means of a censer, occurs at the beginning of the *Rituals of Šebat* (SAA 20 no. 1:12ff.; no. 2 15’–23’). The reports referring to these rituals mention a combination of hand-water and strewing of salt (SAA 20 no. 9:18–19), an offering of plates with salt (SAA 20 no. 9 iii), and an offering of salt along with the pouring of a libation bowl (SAA 20 no. 9 rev. iii 25’).

In addition to the long lists invoking the gods of the temples of Aššur, Nineveh, and other cities, the *tākultu* for Ashurbanipal (SAA 20 no. 40 with dupl. 41), by contrast, mentions the offering of sheep instead of the strewing of salt (SAA 20 no. 40 v 14–15; 21–23; rev. ii 22’–254’; v 23’–24’, vi 15’).

What was the meaning of salt in this ritual context? It appears to entail more than enhancing the taste of cooked meat, as is attested for the offering on the 20<sup>th</sup> of Nisannu for Bēlat-dunāni (SAA 20 no. 15 ii 41–42). A letter of Nabû-ušallim (governor of Uruk during the early years of Sennacherib’s reign and responsible for reporting on the activities of the Arameans to the king) mentions a rite involving salt that served to bind the tribes into an alliance, which may illuminate our question:

Anyone who tasted the salt of the tribe of Jakīn (and) from whose mouth you have heard talk of peace, the king, my lord should uproot them so that the land may be well (again).

This reference is reminiscent of the Mari letters, which refer to the Turrukkeans having taken salt (MUN<sub>6</sub> *ilqû*) after their arrival (ARM 4 21:8) – this reference

<sup>75</sup> Koch 1999.

<sup>76</sup> Pongratz-Leisten 2012.

could be interpreted in a similar manner as that of the letter quoted above.<sup>77</sup> The use of salt appears to have a legal connotation and serves to bring into force an alliance between the gods and the city of Aššur, Assyria, and the Assyrian king. In other words, strewing salt and burning incense as preparatory acts for the offering are intended to establish a context and determine a framework that has binding implications for all parties. This interpretation finds further support in the textual variant dating to the reign of Aššur-eṭel-ilāni, which starts with the appeal to the gods to drink water or wine: [Aššur], drink! Enlil, drink! Anu, drink! Ea-šarru, drink! Queen of the [Gods], drink! Sîn, drink! Šamaš, drink! Adad, drink! Ištar, drink! etc. (SAA 20 no. 42: I 1 ff.). This recalls Ištar's asking the gods, her fathers and brothers, to drink water on the occasion of the *Meal of the Covenant*. In that case, her prophetic message mythologizes the performance of the loyalty oath by transposing political action to the divine level.<sup>78</sup>

Drinking water and eating (bread with) salt are well suited to the meaning of the lengthy ritual invocations of gods from all over the Assyrian empire as performed in the *tākultu*-ritual. In practical terms, seeking the blessing of the gods involved an attempt to marshal their support and loyalty and thus connotes a binding force comparable to that of the symbolic gesture of strewing salt:

may they accept (the offerings) and listen (to the prayers), may they bless the city of Aššur, may they bless the land of Assyria, may they bless the king our lord.

The manifest gods – you invoke their names in the morning and in the evening (SAA 20 no. 40 iv 4–8).

The *tākultu*-ritual aimed at legally binding the gods spread throughout the empire into a relationship of mutual obligations with Aššur, Assyria, the Assyrian king, and each other. This purpose was enhanced by the fact that not only deities but also deified mountains, rivers, and deified regions were requested to pronounce their blessing. Such divinized cosmic features do not normally appear in Assyrian rituals. Instead, their inclusion recalls the Old Babylonian treaties from Tell Leilan and Hittite-Hurrian treaties in which divinized geographical features appear alongside the gods to serve as witnesses for the swearing of oaths.<sup>79</sup> This particular view of nature as a “repository for value”<sup>80</sup> that wields legal authority in its own right is characteristic of the northern Mesopotamian,

<sup>77</sup> Streck 2008, 596, against Durand 1987c, 199, and *AEM* 26/2 493.

<sup>78</sup> SAA 9 no. 3.4. For symbolic gestures performed during treaty ceremonies see Charpin 2010, 43–52.

<sup>79</sup> Eidem 1991.

<sup>80</sup> Daston and Vidal 2004, 21.

Hurrian, and West-Semitic traditions.<sup>81</sup> As part of Assyrian cultural memory, it resurfaced in the context of the *tākultu*-ritual, and one of the lengthiest such sections occurs in the *tākultu* for Aššur-eṭel-ilāni (no. 42, r. iii. 3 ff.).

In Sennacherib's *tākultu*, the combination of divinized geographical features with Tišpak images (SAA 20 no. 38 i. 39 ff.) and the gods of Subartu (SAA no. 38 i 56–58), i.e. Hurrian divinities, and with divinities of the eastern Tigridian region (no. 38 iv 1'–10') explicitly associates this cultural practice with the erstwhile Hurrian cultural horizon. Accordingly, adoption of this practice can be understood as yet another indication of the reinvention of an older tradition. Such penetration of Hurrian tradition into Assyrian ritual is also apparent in Ashurbanipal's *tākultu*, which has a section that lists the Hurrian divinities of the Hābūr area (SAA 20 no. 40 ii 38'–41')<sup>82</sup> whose cult persisted into the Neo-Assyrian period.

The invocation of the heavenly bodies at the end of Ashurbanipal's *tākultu* (SAA 20 no. 40 vi 15'–28') – reminiscent of Assyrian treaties and loyalty oaths – can be construed as further evidence of the close association between law and religion. This list of astral bodies is interesting because the tablet on which it is recorded is said to belong to Issar-šumu-ēreš, Ashurbanipal's chief astrologer and advisor. It is difficult to determine whether the inclusion of heavenly bodies in Ashurbanipal's *tākultu* is a product of Issar-šumu-ēreš's own idiosyncratic choice or whether he intended to invoke these divine stars as further guarantors of the blessed status of Aššur, Assyria, and the Assyrian king in a manner similar to the invocation of the heavenly bodies at the beginning of Esarhaddon's loyalty oaths (SAA 2 no. 6).

### 10.3.2.3 The Dynamics of Relational Space

Conceptually, Assyrian rituals endeavored to create a relational space in which all cities and their panthea would be tied to the imperial center, thereby fostering social bonds on a large spatial scale and envisioning a unified territory under divine guidance. This recalls Narām-Sîn's inscription on the Bassetki Statue,<sup>83</sup> in which the Akkadian king similarly creates a sacred topography of the empire by invoking the gods of the Sumerian cities whose rebellion he had previously crushed in a military campaign. Instead of referring to the political elites of the various cities, Narām-Sîn appropriates the patron deities of these cities and depicts them as active contributors to his military and political suc-

<sup>81</sup> See Mander and Durand 1995, 241–246, on the evidence in Mari.

<sup>82</sup> Pongratz-Leisten 2011b.

<sup>83</sup> RIME 2, E2.1.4.10; see also Pongratz-Leisten 2014b.

cess. A similar case can be made for Hammurabi in the Prologue to his Law Code, in which he portrays himself as the caretaker of the cults of Babylonia instead of referring to his conquest of the cities of Babylonia.<sup>84</sup>

Although the *tākultu* text is a ritual and not a royal inscription, it pursues the same strategy for mapping the empire's geographical scope. In contrast to the Narām-Sîn text and Hammurabi's prologue, however, the Assyrian mode of mapping imperial territory draws attention to the Assyrian heartland and its relationship to the rest of the empire. This relationship is unlike the hierarchy of the pantheon as laid down in the god lists, which obviously determined the choice made in Hammurabi's inscriptions. Ashurbanipal's *tākultu*-ritual (SAA 20 no. 40), for instance, begins by invoking the deities of the Aššur temple as well as the deities of other temples in the city of Aššur. It continues by invoking the deities of the temples of the Assyrian royal residences Nineveh and Calah and of the cultic centers of Kurbail, Arbail, and Tua. Subsequently, it proceeds to list the deities in the region of Kilizi and Bit-Bēlti and moves west to the Hābūr area before turning north and listing the divinities of Urartu together with other established northern Syrian divinities, including Nergal-of-Hubšalum and Eblaītu (albeit without reference to their cultic centers). The ritual ends with an invocation of the winds, the gods who rule over the camps, divine weapons, Dahurate, Adad of Rains, Assyrian cities, sanctuaries, frontiers, wastelands, mounds/ruins, the royal throne, the cultic socle, the cella, and the sanctuary of Assyria, as well as of the mountains, springs, and rivers of the four directions. This section is followed by a long blessing, which appears to have stood at the end of the text before Sennacherib's sack of Babylon. In Sennacherib's *tākultu* (SAA 20 no. 38) the last two columns of the text were added later, and they list the gods of Marduk's temple Esagila and of Babylon, as well as the deities of a nameless city, the city of Der, and yet another unidentified city, before returning to the gods of Nineveh. Ashurbanipal's *tākultu* restricts the final list to the gods of Babylon, omitting Der and the other cities before concluding with Aššur. As already mentioned, the author Issar-šumu-ēreš replaced these omissions by adding a long list of heavenly bodies, includ-

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**84** Roth 1997, 76 ff. Hammurabi's sequence of cities and divinities does not follow geographical rules. Instead, if one includes the first section describing An and Enlil's choosing of Ea's son Marduk as the patron deity of Babylon, the text reflects the contemporary hierarchy of the supra-regional pantheon of Babylonia, with Anu, Enlil, Ea, Marduk (city god of Babylon, capital of Hammurabi's Babylonia), Sîn (of Ur), Šamaš and Aya (of Sippar and Larsa), Anu and Ištar (of Uruk), Zababa and Ištar (of Kiš), Erra (of Kutha), Tutu (of Borsippa), Uraš (of Dilbat), Mami (of Keš), Ištar goddesses (of Zabalam, Akkad, Nineveh, Babylon), Adad (of Karkar), Ea and Damkina (of Malgium), Dagan (of Mari and Tuttul), Tišpak and Ninazu (of Ešnunna), see also Groneberg 2004, 245.

ing the planets. The political-geographical dimensions laid out in the ritual text reflect the dynamics of a flexible and dynamic imperial border and correspond to Assyrian political realities.<sup>85</sup> In its spatial dynamics, the *tākultu* banquet clearly differs from the Assyrian *akītu*-festival. The *tākultu* has an unambiguous centripetal effect,<sup>86</sup> drawing divine focus to the imperial center and thereby enhancing the ideological value of regular deliveries to the Aššur temple.

### 10.3.2.4 The Theological Vision of the *Tākultu*-Ritual

The unique way in which the divinities of the Assyrian heartland were conceived in the *tākultu*-ritual merits further attention. Although the genre of the god lists did not motivate the *tākultu*'s sequence of topographical entries, the geographical mapping of Aššur's empire in the *tākultu*-ritual has a theological underpinning of a different kind. All *tākultu* text variants begin by listing the divinities of the Assyrian cities Aššur, Nineveh, Nimrud, and Arbela, effectively defining the heartland of Assyria proper with Aššur at its very center. The particular theological expression of these texts cannot, however, be considered purely pragmatic. The names of the patron deities of these cities and some other deities are juxtaposed with Aššur, as in Aššur-Ištar, Aššur-Adad, Aššur-Tiara, Aššur-Lahmus, Aššur-Lahmus, Aššur-Conqueror, and Aššur-Šakkan-Tišpak. Assyria's heartland is thus expressed theologically, and the patron deities and other city deities of the region are represented as extensions of the chief god Aššur. Jan Assmann coined the term *hyphenation* for this type of divinity in the context of Egyptian theology,<sup>87</sup> which must be understood as a tool of systematic description, as there was no such thing as *hyphenation* in writing in either Egypt or in Mesopotamia. In both cultures the names of the divinities are written side by side such as in <sup>d</sup>Aššur-<sup>d</sup>Enlil or Horus-Re. As a theological strategy, the juxtaposition of divine names does not imply the same sort of identification as it does in the case of the *translatio Graeca*. Instead, the second divine element defines a quality or particular manifestation of the divinity.

In Assyria, the concept of *hyphenation* is first apparent during the reign of the Middle Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I, under whom the name Aššur-Enlil was introduced in an effort to consolidate Aššur's rank as supreme deity while simultaneously demoting the former Sumero-Babylonian chief god Enlil to a secondary position. Because Enlil epitomized the concept of rulership, called

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85 Liverani 2001, 29.

86 On the spatial dynamics of festivals in creating a cultic topography see Pongratz-Leisten 1994 and 1997.

87 Assmann 2004.

*Illilūtu*, the newly introduced *hyphenated* name Aššur-Enlil qualified Aššur as the supreme god of Assyria. Excluding the case of Aššur-Enlil, however, hyphenation does not signify that Aššur assumes the qualities of other deities.<sup>88</sup> On the contrary, the theological intention in such cases is to define juxtaposed divinities as extensions of Aššur's agency and thereby to concretize and broaden his scope of action.<sup>89</sup> *Hyphenation* in the Assyrian *cultic* context of the *tākultu*-ritual should thus be understood as a sophisticated and typically Assyrian variation on the invocation of a divinity, directed at expressing its particular form of agency. The expression of agency in the invocations performed during the *tākultu*-ritual – such as in Aššur-Adad, signaling “Aššur-acting-as-the-storm-god-Adad,” Aššur-Ninurta, signaling “Aššur-acting-as-the-warrior-deity-Ninurta,” and Aššur-Enlil signaling “Aššur-acting-as-the-supreme-god-Enlil” – explains the *tākultu*-ritual's deviation from the list of divinities presented in the *Aššur Directory*. The second element in the *hyphenated* name represents the modifying function defining a particular feature of Aššur's agency. *Hyphenation* should thus be understood as a variation of the theological “summodeism” found in hymns of the first millennium BCE, particularly those addressed to Marduk and Ninurta concerned with broadening the scope of divine agency.<sup>90</sup> According to Mark Smith, summodeism is a form of theism in which “deities are regarded as aspects or functions of a chief god, with political power often key to its expression.”<sup>91</sup> Smith regards summodeism as a theological response to the growth of empires, which supplants the notion of divine translatability that is characteristic of the era of a multiplicity of powers in the ancient Near East during the second millennium BCE.

As is clear from the Sumero-Babylonian case, the supra-regional pantheon developed from an amorphous mass of divinities into an integrated whole and was structured after socially familiar patterns such as the family, the royal court and its retinue, and incipient bureaucracy to form a coherent system of action. Polytheism reflects this kind of coherent system of action (*Handlungssystem*) in which every divinity contributes according to their skill-set to guarantee the functioning of the cosmic order; this system is in continuous flux, reflecting changing historical conditions. In the summodeism of the god lists or hymns of the first millennium BCE, the accumulation of various roles, functions, and qualities in one deity marks the developing consolidation of divine

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<sup>88</sup> This suggestion was made by Parpola, SAA 9, p. LXXXI, fn. 13.

<sup>89</sup> Pongratz-Leisten 2011a; similarly Parpola 2000, 166 who classifies the Assyrian gods other than Aššur as hypostatized powers and attributes.

<sup>90</sup> Smith 2008, 170 ff.

<sup>91</sup> Smith 2008, 169.



power in one divine agency. The following oft quoted passage from a first millennium god list must suffice to illustrate the case:

Uraš (is)	Marduk of planting
Lugalidda (is)	Marduk of the abyss
Ninurta (is)	Marduk of the pickaxe
Nergal (is)	Marduk of battle
Zababa (is)	Marduk of warfare
Enlil (is)	Marduk of lordship and consultations
Nabû (is)	Marduk of accounting
Sîn (is)	Marduk who lights up the night
Šamaš (is)	Marduk of justice
Adad (is)	Marduk of rain
Tišpak (is)	Marduk of troops
Great Anu (is)	Marduk ...
Šuqamuna (is)	Marduk of the container
[ ] (is)	Marduk of everything. <sup>92</sup>

By contrast, the political and cultic realities of Aššur, Nineveh, Arbail, and Nimrud – the Assyrian heartland – are expressed by the various invocations of Aššur in Nineveh, among them Aššur-Aššur as the carrier of Assyrian identity, Aššur-Enlil to index his rank of supreme deity, and Aššur-Ištar representing the mediation of Aššur’s divine command. In Assyria, hyphenation represents a sophisticated variant of the summodeism elaborated by Assyrian scholars in an attempt to combine theology with the spatial dimension of political realities. The invocation of the various aspects of Aššur’s agency in the *tākultu*-ritual combines an emphasis on the space represented by the gods of the various cities of the Assyrian empire with the notion of divine agency as an integrated and coherent scheme in which the god Aššur constitutes the overarching and binding principle. Invoking Aššur with this kind of *hyphenation* in the temples of Aššur, Nineveh, Arbail, and Nimrud thus establishes the unlimited potential of Aššur’s agency and its ability to absorb other gods as extensions of his body and his scope of action. The implied conceptualization of the gods as a fundamental unity comprising complementary and interdependent parts functioning like a *single body* is further apparent in expressions like “Aššur and the great gods,” which does not grant the other gods with identities separate of that of Aššur. As discussed by Simo Parpola,<sup>93</sup> religious expressions of this kind reflect the political relationships that tie the king to his governors and demonstrate the deep interconnectedness of power structures, political ideology, and religion.

<sup>92</sup> CT 24 50 with translation from Lambert 1975, 198; Smith 2008, 171–172.

<sup>93</sup> Parpola 2000, 168 n. 7.

The *tākultu*-ritual's centripetal dynamic rests exclusively on the invocation of the gods of the empire. This invocation is reminiscent of the invocation of the divinities of the respective treaty partners as witnesses to oath swearing in international treaties, which is preferred to the physical participation of delegations, envoys, or divinities sent as representatives from the periphery to the center. With its long lists of north Syrian, Hurrian, Urartian, and Elamite divinities, the *tākultu*-ritual demonstrates the authors' deep engagement with textual and cultic traditions, turning the *tākultu*-ritual into a deeply intellectual experience. The *tākultu*-ritual is not concerned with fostering a common identity for the peoples represented by the divinities of the various cities. It lacks any tangible sensory experience, which is generally associated with cultic performance as a means of creating and fostering a community.<sup>94</sup>

Instead, as a scholastic ritual, the *tākultu* constructs Assyrian identity by mapping Aššur's agency onto a mental topography of the Assyrian heartland by means of hyphenated names, in the process drawing divine agency from the conquered regions of the empire into the imperial center through the invocation of the names of their local divinities. Beyond the offerings made to the gods, the only other physical materialization of divine agency is represented in language in the form of the blessing that the gods are to speak in favor of the city of Aššur, Assyria, and the king. By replacing the god Aššur in the original trinity of god-city-land with the figure of the king, the blessing heralds the king's function as the human agent and extended arm of the god Aššur (*mutîr ṭēm A[N.Š]ÁR*), as stated in the *Tablet of Destinies* from the time of Sennacherib.<sup>95</sup>

## 10.4 The Ritual Cycle of the Months of Šabaṭu, Addaru and Nisannu

Another important ritual complex in the city of Aššur was the large festive cycle that began in the eleventh month, Šabaṭu, and ended with the *akītu*-festival in the first month of the year, Nisannu. This ritual complex, constructed out of various major cultic ceremonies, demonstrates how Assyrian scholars reshaped and reinvented rituals in the Sargonid period by linking the royal ancestor cult with the king's re-investiture and the *akītu*-festival to define the king's role in the cosmic scheme. The ritual complex of the month Šabaṭu ap-

<sup>94</sup> For the creation of such communities by means of pilgrimage see for instance the various essays assembled in Elsner and Rutherford 2005.

<sup>95</sup> George 1986, 134 K 6177+8869 Text B 13.

pears to have been introduced by Aššurnāširpal II, who dedicated it to the warrior god Ninurta. Along with the Ninurta festival celebrated in the month of Šabaṭu, Aššurnāširpal II also established a ritual complex for Ninurta in the month of Elulu:

I adorned the room of the shrine of the god Ninurta, my lord, with gold and lapis lazuli, I stationed bronze .... On his right and left, (and) installed wild ferocious dragons of gold at his throne. I appointed his festivals in the months of Šebat (and) Elul. The name of his festival in the month Šebat I called ‘Splendor’. I established for them food (and) incense offerings. I created my royal monument with a likeness of my countenance of red gold (and) sparkling stones (and) stationed (it) before the god Ninurta, my lord.<sup>96</sup>

The choice of the months Šabaṭu and Elulu was probably motivated by astral observations, as in the eleventh month Sirius, the star of Ninurta, “stands exactly in the south at sunset and in the sixth month it stands there at sunrise.”<sup>97</sup> In this case, the astral opposition presents an image of symmetry and cosmic balance, which is also evident in the *Hymn to Ninurta as Sirius*:<sup>98</sup>

O greatest Ninurta, warrior god,  
 vanguard of the Anuna-gods,  
 commander of the Igigi-gods,  
 Judge of the universe, who oversees (its) opposition = equilibrium,  
 Who makes bright darkness and illumines gloom,  
 Who renders verdicts (*pāris purussê*) for teeming mankind!  
 O my splendid lord, who satisfies the needs of the land,  
 ...  
 Who grasps truth and justice and destroys [...],  
 Indefatigable arrow (*šukūdu*) that [kills] all enemies,  
 Great storm, who grasps the leadrope  
 [of heaven and netherworld],  
 Judge of verdicts (*dayyān purussê*), diviner of oracle[s ...] (*bārû tērēti*)  
 Conflagration that incinerates and burns up the wick[ed ],  
 Whose name in heaven is “Arrow Star,”  
 Whose name is greatest among the Igigi-gods,  
 Among all your gods your divinity is doubled.<sup>99</sup>  
 At the rising of the stars your face shines like the sun.  
 ...

<sup>96</sup> RIMA 2, A.O.101.30 69–78.

<sup>97</sup> Annus 2002, 135.

<sup>98</sup> Burrows 1924.

<sup>99</sup> Burrows translates “Fixer of Harmony,” Foster 1996, 634 translates “your divinity is singular.” Mayer 2005, 54: “in der Gesamtheit aller Götter ist deine Gottheit die ungewöhnlichste”. Both group the reference with CAD Š/1, 403 ff., s.v. *šanû* B “to change” rather with *šanû* A “to do again, to repeat”.

In this hymn the notion of cosmic balance is apparent in Ninurta's roles as judge and warrior, which work to secure civic order and were defined as the primary duties of the king in Late Assyrian ideology.<sup>100</sup> Although in the Šabaṭu cycle as reconceptualized under Ashurbanipal, Ninurta only appears in procession on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Šabaṭu and otherwise plays no major role, everything suggests that in this ritual complex the king emulates Ninurta's role as warrior deity and that his installation as king was thought to parallel Ninurta's investiture as recounted in mythological narratives and exegetical texts like SAA 3 no. 39.<sup>101</sup> While not necessarily tied to the coronation ceremony, the Šabaṭu cycle can be interpreted as re-enacting the king's investiture and thus as annually reconfirming the king's claim to wield legitimate power and authority over Assyria.

It is in the prescriptive rituals relating to the Šabaṭu Cycle (SAA 20 nos. 1–6), the *Reports on Rituals Performed by Ashurbanipal in Šebat-Addar* 650 (SAA 20 nos. 9–11), and the *Manual for Chanters* (SAA 20 no. 12) from the reign of Ashurbanipal that the rituals of the months Šabaṭu, Addaru, and Nisannu become recognizable as components of a complex whole centered on human and divine kingship. Further evidence for the unity of these ritual complexes comes from a tablet listing the cultic reforms undertaken by Sennacherib (SAA 20 no. 52 and related fragments) recovered from the *House of the Exorcists* at Aššur. Together with their scholars, Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal went to great lengths to reorganize the ritual cycle of the city of Aššur and to integrate the royal office in the overarching cosmic scheme. The following observations build on Stefan Maul's detailed and comprehensive description of the festive cycle.<sup>102</sup>

It must be stressed that both the prescriptive rituals and the ritual reports have breaks, which makes it difficult to determine the extent to which their ritual syntax corresponds. Major distinctions are, however, apparent with regard to the days on which certain rituals are performed, cultic locales, some of the rites themselves, and the sequence of rites. Prescriptive ritual texts survive for the period between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of Šabaṭu. The ritual reports, by contrast, describe rites for the period between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of Šabaṭu and for the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> of Addaru. The cultic reform texts refer to the processions of Aššur and the gods: on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of Šabaṭu Aššur goes to the *bīt Dagan* and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of Šabaṭu Aššur's chariot leaves for the *bīt Dagan*.

**100** Postgate 1974 and Tadmor 1986.

**101** See Livingstone 1986, 146–147; Maul 1999, 211; Annus 2002, 100–101.

**102** Maul 2000. This text listing ritual performances spanning a series of days in these months was first treated by van Driel 1969, 122–131 and 196–197; Menzel 1981, vol. 2, T 32–40.

Regarding cultic locales, in the prescriptive rituals performance moves between the king's palace, the Aššur temple, and the *bīt Dagan* (in the Old Palace). In the ritual reports, by contrast, the *bīt Dagan* is mentioned only for the 16<sup>th</sup> of Šabaṭu, while in the cultic reforms (SAA 20 no. 52 rev. ii 36') it appears only for the 22<sup>nd</sup> of Šabaṭu. In the ritual reports, moreover, ritual performance moves between the king's palace, the Aššur temple, and the Anu-Adad temple.

The visit to the *bīt <sup>d</sup>Dagan/dugani* must have been central to the beginning of the festive cycle; the ritual prescriptive texts provide a detailed description of the rites performed during this visit and while the king moved between the palace and the *bīt Dagan*. G. van Driel<sup>103</sup> originally suggested that the *bīt Dagan* should be equated with the *bīt hurše* in the Aššur temple, but this view was rejected by Brigitte Menzel, who thought it was in the Old Palace, before Karlheinz Deller again identified the *bīt Dagan* with the slaughterhouse or kitchen in the Aššur temple.<sup>104</sup> Because ritual performance centers primarily on two locations, namely the palace and the Aššur temple, I am inclined to follow Menzel and locate the *bīt Dagan* in the Old Palace. There were two palaces in Aššur, the so-called Old Palace and the New Palace. The latter, originally built in the Middle Assyrian period, was still used by Aššurnaširpal II before he built his new palace at Nimrud. Since the ritual refers to the performance of the *kispu*-offering in the Aššur temple on the 18<sup>th</sup> – probably for the ancestors – and since six tombs were uncovered in the southeastern part of the Old Palace, of which three were identified as belonging to Šamši-Adad V (Gruft II), Aššur-bēl-kala (Gruft III), and Aššurnaširpal II (Gruft V),<sup>105</sup> it is likely that É.GAL denotes the Old Palace.

According to several inscriptions found in the area of the Old Palace, the New Palace, and the Aššur temple, Sennacherib was also buried in Aššur. One inscription is particularly revealing with regard to the meaning attributed to the burial place of the Assyrian kings as a place of social identification and consolidation of the dynastic line:

(This is) the palace of repose (*bīt tapšuhti*),  
the dwelling for eternity (*šubat dārât*),  
house of the dynasty (*bīt kimti*) which is firmly grounded,  
of Sennacherib, great king,  
strong king, king of the universe, king of Assyria.<sup>106</sup>

103 Van Driel 1969, 40–43.

104 Deller 1985, 362–364.

105 Haller 1954, 170–181; Lundström 2003 and 2009; Pedde 2011; Lundström and Pedde 2008, 145.

106 OIP 2, 151 no. 13; for a slightly different version see no. 14. On Sennacherib's tomb see most recently Frahm 1997, 181 f.

The assumption that the *bit Dagan* was located in the Old Palace, is further corroborated by two Middle Assyrian administrative documents that mention the offering of red wool for the weapons of some deceased Middle Assyrian kings<sup>107</sup> on the occasion of the “return of the god” (*tu’āri ili*); this offering took place in the palace (É.GAL). According to the observations of Peter Miglus, the burials of the late Middle Assyrian king Aššur-bēl-kala and the Neo-Assyrian kings were situated exactly where the Old Palace of the Old Assyrian period had its throne room or major hall. Such architectural organization evokes the traditions known from Amorite Mari and Tuttul, which equally combined royal residence and royal burials, and links the practice of the Assyrian ancestor cult with the Syrian cultural horizon.<sup>108</sup>

Further links with Syrian tradition can be observed in the *kispu*-offering performed in the Aššur temple to honor the royal ancestors; it is reminiscent of the Amorite tradition attested in the text known as the *Genealogy of Hammurabi*. In this text the living king, whether at the moment of his investiture or as part of an annual ritual, honors the ancestors and members of the Babylonian royal dynasty by reciting the list of the ancestral names and performing the offering for the dead. It is worth noting in this context that two of the five versions of the Neo-Assyrian *King List* were written on tablets whose format resembles amulet tablets,<sup>109</sup> suggesting that they were used within a cultic context and possibly also read during the *kispu* ceremony. Genealogies are easily manipulated,<sup>110</sup> and both the *Genealogy of Hammurabi* and the *Assyrian King List* primarily serve to promote the view that the institution of kingship was continuous and unbroken, thereby contributing to the reinvention of tradition.<sup>111</sup> The *kispu* ceremony generally consisted of a communal meal with the ancestors, which not only served the needs of the dead but also consolidated the social position of the head of the family by regularly reaffirming social hierarchies. In the case of the king, the successfully performed *kispu* ceremony was an additional form of cognitive reliability<sup>112</sup> that reinforced his place within the dynastic line of the kings of Aššur.

Communication with the ancestors by means of the *kispu*-offering must have had a transformative effect, as when the king enters the *bit Dagan* he

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**107** MARV IV 138 and MARV 4 140, Erišum I, Aššur-nādin-ahhē, Shalmaneser I, Tukulti-Ninurta I, Ninurta-apil-ekur, see Cancik-Kirschbaum 2012b.

**108** Miglus 2003, 262–267; Lundström and Pedde 2009; Cancik-Kirschbaum 2012, 47. One can now further add the archaeological evidence of Middle Bronze Age Qatna.

**109** Version B is from Khorsabad and C is probably from Aššur, Yamada 1994, 37.

**110** Michalowski 1984, 245; Wilson 1977.

**111** Pongratz-Leisten 1997.

**112** Platt 2011, 238.

wears the Tiara of Aššur (Bēl-Agû) on his head. Aššur's tiara as a symbol of Assyrian world dominion represents still another central aspect of the rites performed during the month of Šabaṭu. Only the ritual prescriptions allude to the governor, queen, crown prince, and grand treasurer providing for the wedding ceremony of Mullissu (*quršu ša* <sup>d</sup>Mullissu, see SAA 20 no. 1 r. 18; no. 2 ii 8', iii 35'); this wedding ceremony is not mentioned in the ritual reports of Ashurbanipal. In a theogamy the goddess generally intercedes with her consort on behalf of the king to secure divine blessing for his rulership,<sup>113</sup> so the inclusion of Mullissu's wedding ceremony (*quršu*) perfectly suits the purpose of this ritual component, which aims at celebrating and reaffirming the king's rulership through divine consent. A large part of SAA 20 no. 1 is broken, but the preserved part refers to rites performed on the 20<sup>th</sup> of Šabaṭu. The king enters the *bit Dagan* wearing Bēl-Agû on his head, while the gods accompanying him are identified as Aššur, Mullissu, Bēl-Agû, Sîn, Šamaš, Anu, Adad, Nergal, the Chariots-of-War, Šerua, Kippat-māti, Kakka, Mandanu, the Conquerors (*Kāšidūti*), the deified weapon (<sup>d</sup>*Kakku*), and the deified Axe (<sup>d</sup>*Kalappu*). These gods largely overlap with the list of gods walking in procession and driving on the chariot to the *akītu*-house in Nisannu (compare SAA 20 no. 1: r. 20–24 and no. 54). The symbolic meaning of this configuration of deities walking in procession suggests that this ritual component connoted the symbolic re-enactment of Aššur-Ninurta's/the king's victorious battle against the forces of chaos. Along with some other divinities, the same gods are mentioned in the text describing the image of Aššur's battle against Tiāmat on Sennacherib's bronze door for the *akītu*-house, in which it is stated explicitly that the divine weapon and the Kāšidūti travel together with Aššur on his chariot.<sup>114</sup> Not only the procession itself but also the group of gods accompanying Aššur communicated a standardized narrative that applied to the supreme god of the imperial pantheon, Aššur in the case of Assyria and Marduk in the case of Babylonia; the outcome of this standardized narrative was common knowledge among the participants. The procession, consequently, functioned as an effective means for materializing the combat myth and reinforcing imperial theology.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of Šabaṭu the king performed an *Opening-of-the-Mouth* ritual that reaffirmed his status. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of Šabaṭu the king went to the Aššur temple and illuminated the face of the gods. He performed offerings before Aššur and Mullissu and provided for the gods of the Aššur temple in the *bit Dagan*. In addition, the king accompanied Aššur to the *bit Dagan*, performed further offerings, and then returned to the palace (SAA 20 no. 3).

113 Pongratz-Leisten 2008.

114 See most recently Frahm 1997, T 183 (pp. 261–264).

The ritual reports appear to describe a different syntax for the ritual cycle. First of all, they do not mention the *kispu*-offering in the *bīt Dagan* and all the rites centered on Bēl-Agū are moved to the 20<sup>th</sup> of Šabaṭu and the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of Addaru. For the 16<sup>th</sup> of Šabaṭu (not extant in the prescriptive ritual texts), the ritual reports record the entry of Šerua, Kippat-māti, and Tašmētu into the *bīt Dagan*. It is possible that this visit of the female goddesses implies their role as mediators who intercede with the ancestors on behalf of the king. On the following day the king entered the city (SAA 20 no. 10), and on the 18<sup>th</sup> of Šabaṭu he made offerings before Aššur and Bēl-Agū in the Aššur temple as well as before Aššur of the Reading, Kippat-māti, and possibly some other divinities whose names are not preserved (SAA 20 no. 10: 11–24). Further offerings took place before Ninurta and Nusku, the gods of the Aššur temple, the Conquerors (*Kāšidūti*), the Golden Chariot (of Aššur), and Bēl and Nabū. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of Šabaṭu further offerings took place before Aššur and Mullissu and the priests circumambulated the Aššur temple and all the other temples. On this day, the king accompanied the goddesses Šerua, Kippat-māti, and Tašmētu into the Anu temple. Since this visit took place on the day before the king was to wear Bēl-Agū on his head, it is tempting to assume that it implied a negotiation of the king's legitimate status in the presence of the divine assembly of Anu in which the female goddesses interceded on the king's behalf.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of Šabaṭu the king escorted Aššur and his consort Mullissu together with Bēl-Agū to the dais of destinies (*parak šimāte*). While no commentaries on this particular rite are extant, this gathering of Aššur, Mullissu, and Bēl-Agū may be considered the Assyrian version of the Babylonian assembly of the gods who acknowledge and confirm the king in his office at their first gathering during the Babylonian *akītu* on the 8<sup>th</sup> of Nisannu. The gathering of Aššur, Mullissu, and Bēl-Agū is in all likelihood to be distinguished from the assembly of all the gods (*puhur ilāni*) that took place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of Addaru.

The arrival of the gods at the dais of destinies had a transformative effect on the king, who wore Aššur's tiara on his head on the following day – the 22<sup>nd</sup> of Šabaṭu – and drove to the *bīt Dagan* on a chariot. It is not clear whether it was only at this point that king performed the *kispu* to his royal ancestors, as no mention of this is made in the surviving texts. A transformation in the king's status must nevertheless have occurred, as on that day he was crowned with Aššur's tiara. When it was paraded in procession, Aššur's tiara communicated the legitimate claim to power of its bearer. The king's reconfirmation as legitimate occupant of the throne entitled him to undergo the mouth washing-ritual (KA.LUH.Û.DA) on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of Šabaṭu, itself designed to turn him into the *body politic* and holder of the royal office.<sup>115</sup> The mouth washing-ritual was

115 On the body politic of the Assyrian king see the discussion in *Chapter Six*.



generally intended to transform the statue of either the king or the gods into an agent on their behalf. In this case, however, the ritual serves as a potent means of ritual transformation whereby the king becomes an official *body politic* and so reaffirms his own power, status, and authority as the god Aššur's agent.

As is discussed in *Chapter Six*, the king's role as Aššur's agent consisted of the emulation of Ninurta's role as steward. This role included the executive aspect of power, particularly the obligation to extend the borders of the Assyrian empire in order to align them with the boundaries of the known universe, a duty also communicated in the Assyrian coronation ritual. As such, it is perhaps unsurprising that a cultic commentary associates the 23<sup>rd</sup> of Šabaṭu with battle.<sup>116</sup> It is not necessary to assume, however, that the king performed an actual battle ritual to demonstrate his abilities as war lord or hunter, as described in ritual no. 18.<sup>117</sup> As noted in the commentary, the implication of the king's ritual performance during the months of Šabaṭu and Addaru was his rightful and legitimate participation in the establishment of cosmic order by assuming the warrior aspect of Aššur, i.e. Aššur-Ninurta. Seeing the two war chariots and Aššur's deified weapons, <sup>d</sup>*kakku* and <sup>d</sup>*kalapu*, during the procession of the gods accompanying Aššur to the *bīt Dagan* – in addition to seeing the head of the sea-monster (mentioned in no. 52 v 47'–48') – sufficed to materialize and evoke the cosmic battle in the minds of both the participants and the observers and functioned to trigger the memory of the narrative of Marduk/Aššur fighting Tiāmat as recounted in *Enūma Eliš*. The king's assumption of Aššur's crown on the 24<sup>th</sup> of Šabaṭu provided a similar cue, as is revealed by the same commentary, which identifies that day as the day on which the king wears the crown of Aššur.<sup>118</sup> The crown as icon communicates the outcome of the combat myth's standardized narrative in a condensed form to the viewer, in which Aššur-Ninurta or Marduk becomes king of the universe after fighting a victorious battle.<sup>119</sup> As a "signature element"<sup>120</sup> of divine rulership, Aššur's crown does not simply announce that the king's rulership is divinely sanctioned but transforms the king into an extension of Aššur's agency, merging divine and human kingship in a single unitary intentionality. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of Šabaṭu the image of Aššur that had remained in the *bīt Dagan* throughout the preceding four days returned to the Aššur temple.

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116 SAA 3 no. 40:10.

117 Pace Maul 2000, 395.

118 This compares to the visual cues constituting meaning in art as discussed by Ross 2005.

119 For icons and portable objects facilitating the communication during ritual performance see De Marrais, Castillo, and Earle 1996, 18.

120 Winter 2009, 258.

At some point between the 23<sup>rd</sup> of Šabaṭu and the 3<sup>rd</sup> of Addaru the king opened the vat, a rite that the cultic commentary SAA 3 no. 37: 18' explains as Marduk defeating Tiāmat with his penis.

According to the ritual reports, the *bīt Dagan* and the Aššur temple functioned as the main cultic localities in the month of Addaru. The festive cycle continued on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Addaru with offerings to Aššur, and on the following day to Mullissu. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of Addaru the gods again made their way to the *bīt Dagan* in a procession in order to assemble (*puhur ilāni*) and probably to confirm divine and earthly rulership.<sup>121</sup> The 8<sup>th</sup> of Addaru represented a pivotal moment in the festive cycle. After his performance of offerings before Aššur and Mullissu, the king accompanied both gods to the Anu temple where the tiara was placed on the socle of Aššur. Like the 24<sup>th</sup> of Šabaṭu, the 8<sup>th</sup> of Addaru is called the “day on which the king wears Aššur’s crown”<sup>122</sup> in the cultic commentary. Wearing Aššur’s tiara, the king left the Aššur temple through the Kalkal gate, which links the southwestern courtyard with Sennacherib’s newly built additional courtyard,<sup>123</sup> and re-entered the temple through the same gate – thus moving into the semi-public sphere of the outer courtyard of the temple. When Esarhaddon finished his renovations to the Aššur temple, he held a banquet in this courtyard for three days, to which he invited his magnates and his people.<sup>124</sup> Regardless of who precisely is meant by “his people,” the king’s remark reveals that at least part of the population had access to the outer courtyard of the temple. The king’s leaving and re-entering through the Kalkal gate must have served the purpose of integrating the public sphere into the ritual space and thus publicizing the king’s active partaking in the divine and terrifying splendor radiated by Aššur’s crown. The king’s spatial movement involving semi-public space was reinforced by the incantations “The crown’s terrifying splendor” and “the Weapon,” recited by the exorcists (SAA 20 no. 11 r. 4). Both evoke the image of Aššur’s overwhelming splendor spreading throughout the universe and forcing everyone to submit to his yoke. Together with Aššur, Šerua, Kippat-māti, Tašmētu, the Axe and Mandanu, the king went to the Adad temple, stopping at the cella of Anu (SAA 20 no. 11 r. 5 ff) before returning to the Aššur temple on the same day.

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**121** As noted by Maul 2000, 397 f. this assembly of the gods was already known under Adad-nirāri III, see SAA 12 no. 69: 27 ff. Here the rites for Šabatu and intercalary Addaru are called *pandugāni ša šarri*. There is no attestation for a *pandugani ša šarri*, which according to Deller 1985–86, 47 seems to have been a banquet of a more secular kind, after Adad-nirāri III.

**122** SAA 3 no. 40 rev. 16.

**123** Van Driel 1969, 47.

**124** RINAP 4 no. 57 vii 26–30.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of Addaru a ritual took place that seems to have been designed to add to the materialization of the changed status of the king. The king came out of the palace and stood in the courtyard, where the priest placed a vat of wine before him and then placed a peeled pomegranate on a platter of salt. This pomegranate was then put in the mouth of the cupbearer, who was brought before the king. The head of the female singers announced the good news three times before entering the temple of Anu: “Šerua has given birth!” The king then entered the temple of Adad, lit the censer, and illuminated the face of the god. The peeled red pomegranate possibly symbolizes the female blood and the white salt the male semen, thus visualizing the idea of a sexual reunion before the announcement “Šerua has given birth!” and indicating the king’s new status.<sup>125</sup> By means of the ritual just described, the king’s changed status was emphasized during Ashurbanipal’s reign at the expense of the notion of the divine couple blessing and legitimizing the king in his office as effectuated by the wedding ceremony of Mullissu.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of Addaru the king set the table and gave gifts to the temple-enterers.

Overall, it seems that the reforms undertaken during the reign of Ashurbanipal emphasize the king’s position as agent of the god Aššur – visualized by the king’s wearing of Aššur’s Tiara – even more strongly than do the prescriptive rituals that probably date to the reign of Sennacherib.

## 10.5 The *Akītu*-festival in Aššur

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of Addaru a further section of the ritual complex ended, beginning again on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of Nisannu with the *akītu*-festival. The Assyrian endeavor to reformulate older rituals and imbue them with new meaning also applies to the Assyrian *akītu*-festival. As with the *tākultu*-ritual, the earliest evidence for an Assyrian *akītu*-festival dates from the period of Šamši-Adad I (1808–1776 BCE), who ordered his son Yasmah-Adad in Mari to send mules and horses for an *akītu*-festival in Aššur on the 16<sup>th</sup> of Addaru.<sup>126</sup> There is no other evidence for such a festival in Aššur until the reign of Sennacherib, who reintroduced the *akītu*-festival following his destruction of Babylon in 681 BCE.<sup>127</sup> The reincorporation of Babylonia into the Assyrian empire did not only result in the reformulation of Assyrian political ideology. Under Sennacherib, the scholars

<sup>125</sup> This suggestion was made to me by my student Anthony Soohoo.

<sup>126</sup> ARM 1 50.

<sup>127</sup> K 1356: 2–3; KAH 122: 24 ff.; KAH 117–119; SVAT 1; ARRIM 3, 5 ff.

of the king reinforced and elaborated on the theological discourse centered on Aššur, the chief god of the Assyrian pantheon. From the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I onward, Aššur, written AN.ŠÁR ('universe of the Heaven'), acquired increasing astral dimensions that matched the king's imperial claim to universal control.<sup>128</sup>

Materializing Aššur's astralization was central to Sennacherib's reorganization of the cult of Aššur and is reflected in the architecture of his temple, as is discussed in detail below. In this endeavor Sennacherib relied to some extent on the Babylonian model of the god Marduk, transferring some of the Marduk theology to the Assyrian god Aššur. Under Sennacherib, Assyrian scholars rewrote the *Enūma Eliš* so that Aššur rather than Marduk now figured as its protagonist,<sup>129</sup> clutching the Tablet of Destinies to his chest.<sup>130</sup> Furthermore, Sennacherib institutionalized the annual performance of the *akitu*-festival, for which he reshaped Aššur's cultic topography.<sup>131</sup> Sennacherib added the Eastern Annex to Aššur's cella in the Aššur temple in order to house the dais of destinies, where the fates were determined. This architectural undertaking is described at length in several inscriptions and the required changes to the layout of Aššur's cella could only be implemented after the permission of the gods had been obtained by means of extispicy, as the following passage relates:<sup>132</sup>

In the wisdom which Ea bestowed on me, with the cleverness with which Aššur endowed me, I took counsel with myself alone, and to open the gate of Ehursaggalkurkurra to the East instead of the South, my heart moved me. The will of Šamaš and Adad I sought to learn (by extispicy) and they gave me a firm positive answer; that that door should open towards the East instead of the South, Šamaš and Adad commanded. On that day, I cut through its wall and toward the breast of Aššur, my lord, instead of the South, I opened a new door, and I called its name Gate of Royalty.<sup>133</sup>

The above passage from one of Sennacherib's inscriptions demonstrates the king's awareness that the adaptation of mythical, theological, and ritual concepts required changes to the existing ground plan of the Aššur temple. This

**128** On the interaction of political ideology and religion see Lanfranchi 1995; on the astralization and solarization of Aššur see Pongratz-Leisten 2011a, 175 ff.

**129** Three copies of the Assyrian version are known KAR 117+118, KAR 173 from Aššur and one from Nineveh (CT 13 pl. 24 f.); see comments by Frahm 1997, 284 ff.

**130** George 1986, K 6177 + 8869 Text B 6: *ṭuppi šimāti ... [š]a Aššur šar ilāni qātuššu iṣbatuma itmuhu [irtuššu]*.

**131** George 1989, 119; Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 60–64.

**132** KAH 122, Stele Eṭ 7847, ed. by V. Donbaz and H. Galter, ARRIM 3, 1985, 4–7, KAH 117, 118, 119, for all these inscriptions see the comments of Frahm 1997, 173 ff.

**133** KAH 2 124 10 ff.

is one of the finest examples in the archaeological record and in textual sources of the close relationship between ritual and cultic topography. Sennacherib's extensive reconceptualization of Aššur's theology and cult is thus evident in five actions, namely 1) the rewriting of *Enūma Eliš* to provide the Assyrian chief god with a history that fostered his position as supreme god, 2) the writing of Aššur's name with the logogram AN.ŠĀR, i.e. the name of one of the primeval gods preceding Marduk/Aššur in *Enūma Eliš*, 3) the transformation of the Aššur temple in order to integrate the socle of destinies necessary for the celebration of the *akītu*-festival, 4) the building of the *akītu*-house outside Aššur, and 5) the introduction of the *akītu*-festival itself.<sup>134</sup> The composition of the *Marduk Ordeal*, which explicitly places Aššur/AN.ŠĀR as prior to the creation of heaven and earth while Marduk emerges only after city and temple had come into being,<sup>135</sup> served to establish Aššur's transcendent character, apparent also in his epithet "the one who creates himself" (*bānū ramānišu*).<sup>136</sup> Several new cultic texts were concerned with the performance of the *akītu*-festival and the hierarchy of the gods who marched in procession alongside Aššur.<sup>137</sup>

In his inscriptions, Sennacherib strives to present his cultic reforms as religiously motivated and embeds them in a new astral-cosmic symbolism. This astral symbolism applies to his capital Nineveh, the plan of which was said to be drawn for eternity in the constellations (*šītir burumme*, lit. "writing of the firmament").<sup>138</sup> It also characterizes the toponymy of the newly annexed courtyard in Aššur, which represents an astral commentary on the determination of destinies during the *akītu*-festival and simultaneously emphasizes Aššur's universal rulership (*bāb šarrūti* "gate of royalty").<sup>139</sup> The external gate in the southeast of the annexed courtyard (*bāb burumme* "gate of the firmament") and the southeast gate leading into the temple complex called "the door of the road of Enlil" (*bāb harrān šūt* <sup>d</sup>*Enlil*) reflect the astral aspect of Aššur, who is said to dwell in the shining firmament in the inscriptions of Sennacherib.<sup>140</sup> Aššur's consort Mullissu is referred to in the name of the "gate of the wagon star" (*bāb* <sup>mul</sup>*ereqqi*). The astronomical manual MUL.APIN associates the <sup>mul</sup>*ereqqi* with the Sumerian goddess Ninlil, the consort of Enlil, who was equated with Mullissu in the Neo-Assyrian period. As is discussed above, on the twen-

134 Machinist 1984–85; Frahm 1997, 282–288.

135 *Marduk Ordeal*, SAA 3 no. 34:54–55.

136 Frahm, *Sanherib-Inschriften* T 183:1.

137 Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 115–132.

138 Frahm, *Sanherib-Inschriften*, T 4:62; T 10:6–7.

139 Lanfranchi 1995, 148.

140 Luckenbill, *OIP* II, 149 l. 5: *āšib burūmū ellūti*; Frahm, *Sanherib-Inschriften*, T 183.

tieth of Šabaṭu Aššur took his seat on the “socle of destinies” (*parak šimāte*, SAA 20 no. 9 i 23) together with Mullissu and Bēl-Agû. The courtyard name “courtyard of the row of the stations of the Igigi” (*kisal sidir manzāz* <sup>d</sup>Igigi) and the gate names “gate of the entrance of the Igigi” (*bāb nēreb* <sup>d</sup>Igigi) and “gate of the prostrating Igigi” (*bāb kamšū* <sup>d</sup>Igigi) refer to the great gods’ attendance during Aššur’s procession to the *akītu*-house and, according to *Enūma Eliš*, to the acclamation of Marduk/Aššur as king of the gods.

As it was celebrated in Babylonia, the *akītu*-festival originally served to visualize and commemorate the victory of the chief god Marduk over the forces of chaos. Marduk’s victory resulted in the creation of the cosmos and his uncontested rise to the position of chief god of the Babylonian pantheon. The text was rewritten with Aššur replacing Marduk as the chief protagonist and the ritual, in addition, provided the perfect foil for the king who, while accompanying the chief god in his cosmic role as defender of the civilized world against the forces of chaos, annually reconsolidated his own position and concomitantly stabilized and consolidated the existing social and civic order. Cultic performance thus established a timeless continuity between the mythic past and the present, and history was, in a sense, abolished.

As is discussed above, similar mythic concepts are articulated in the festive cycle of Aššur; the Assyrians, however, used the *akītu*-ritual to legitimize “*changed* political arrangements.”<sup>141</sup> Esarhaddon chose the *akītu*-festival as the moment for the performance of the loyalty oath on behalf of his younger son and future king Ashurbanipal, whom Esarhaddon favored at the expense of his older brother Šamaš-šum-ukīn. The swearing of the oath probably took place in the Nabû temple in the presence of Marduk and Nabû, as is suggested by a letter sent to Esarhaddon regarding Ashurbanipal’s appointment as crown prince and by the ivories found in the so-called throne room of the Nabû temple that depict the performance of the loyalty oath:<sup>142</sup>

The scribes of the cities of Nin[evēh], Kilizi, and Arbela (could) ent[er] the treaty; they have (already) come. (However), those of Aššur [have] not (yet) come. The king, my lord, [knows] that they are cler[gy]men<sup>143</sup>. If it pleases the king my lord, let the former, who have (already) come, enter the treaty; the citizens of Nineveh and Calah would be free soon (and) could enter (the treaty/loyalty oath) under (the statues of) the gods Bēl and Nabû on the 8<sup>th</sup> day (of Nisannu).

141 See Barbara Kowalzig’s discussion of the relationship between myth and ritual in the Greek context, Kowalzig 2007, 27.

142 SAA 10 no. 6:6 ff., Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 99.

143 Literally “temple-enterers” ([<sup>lū</sup>ērib-bīt<sup>m</sup>]<sup>es</sup>).

In Babylonia, the performance of the *akītu*-festival extended over a period of eleven or twelve days. Its climax was the procession of the gods who, after having assembled on the dais of destinies in Marduk's temple in Babylon in order to determine the fate of the king of the gods, left the temple and proceeded toward the *akītu*-house located outside the city. The procession symbolized Marduk's battle against Tīāmat, as is apparent in the ceremonial name of the *akītu*-house, which is "House that binds the sea (Tīāmat)" (É.(A).AB.BA.UG<sub>5</sub>.GA).<sup>144</sup>

In order to enact the procession according to the Babylonian model in Assyria, Sennacherib had to build the *akītu*-house outside of Aššur, an act that he presents as a restoration of ancient customs.<sup>145</sup> There are no surviving Assyrian ritual texts that describe the procession in detail. The *Calendar of Psalms and Lamentations in the Aššur Temple*,<sup>146</sup> the tablet of the *Cultic Reforms and Religious Practices at Aššur*,<sup>147</sup> a text similar to it,<sup>148</sup> and a duplicate<sup>149</sup> do, however, list the gods that accompany Aššur into the *akītu*-house while marching in front or behind his chariot.

The mythological connotations of the procession in Aššur are more or less identical to those of the procession in Babylonia, the only major difference being the substitution of Aššur for Marduk as the champion who defeats Tīāmat. In contrast to the Babylonian tradition, there is no evidence for the splitting of the Assyrian procession into a number of different stages,<sup>150</sup> nor is there any attestation of gods visiting from other cities of the empire in order to attend the procession, as was envisioned in the centripetal Babylonian model. Instead, the spatial focus in the Assyrian procession is on the god Aššur as patron deity of the city of Aššur and as chief god of Assyria. The procession of the gods led through the city walls to the outskirts of the city where the festival house was located, generally at a distance of less than half a mile from the city itself.<sup>151</sup> The festival house for the city of Aššur was newly built by Sennacherib

<sup>144</sup> Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 75 after A. R. George *NABU* 1993/43. For other readings of the Sumerian ceremonial name of the *akītu*-house see A. Livingstone *NABU* 1990/87 and Frahm 1997, 224 T 184.

<sup>145</sup> Ebeling 1954, no. 1.

<sup>146</sup> SAA 20 no. 12 r. 19–28.

<sup>147</sup> SAA 20 no. 52 iv –v 16'.

<sup>148</sup> SAA 20 no. 53 i 1' – ii 31'.

<sup>149</sup> SAA 20 no. 54.

<sup>150</sup> Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 37–84.

<sup>151</sup> This is true for Aššur and Uruk, where the precise location of the *akītu* houses has been identified.

despite the fiction that he merely renovated it.<sup>152</sup> Because of its location outside of the city walls, the *akītu*-house was symbolically associated with the steppe, the realm of chaos. Although in reality the festival house was located in the suburbs or in the agricultural belt surrounding the city, any site outside of the city walls was symbolically associated with the notion of chaos, a point underscored by the name of the festival house, sometimes called ‘*akītu*-house of the steppe’ (*bīt akīti ša šēri*). In the mental mapping of the festival, land beyond the city walls is not considered part of the territory controlled by the king and the god. Therefore, the steppe as the realm of chaos functions as the perfect setting for the battle against Tiāmat,<sup>153</sup> since this battle could not take place in the city itself, which was of course the paradigm of both social and cosmic order.

This interpretation of the procession as a performative setting for some kind of “cultic drama” is supported by the Assyrian ritual texts of the *akītu*-festival, which mention a monster.<sup>154</sup> Instead of performing the battle in mimetic representation as known from the Greek model, Assyro-Babylonian tradition appears to associatively reenact the cosmic battle by assigning symbolic meaning to ritual gestures and reciting liturgical songs referencing the mythic event. The god’s victory over Tiāmat and his procession back to his temple in his city thus symbolize his *adventus* in the city and serve to visualize and stabilize his supreme position in the divine hierarchy anew, year after year. Accordingly, the procession symbolizes a change in the status of the chief god: by returning to his temple in the city following his victorious excursion beyond the city walls, the chief god can legitimately claim his supreme position within the pantheon.

Like its Babylonian counterpart, the Assyrian *akītu*-festival appears to have extended over eleven days. More detailed information is available in only two texts, one of which belonged to Marduk-kabti-ilāni, chief *šangū* of Aššur and offspring of a family of priests in Aššur,<sup>155</sup> and the other of which is a text fragment<sup>156</sup> similar to the *Cultic Reforms and Religious Practices at Aššur*.<sup>157</sup> SAA 20 no. 53 i 16’-ii 30’ begins with a ritual prescription for the 2<sup>nd</sup> of Nisannu,

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152 KAH 122, *OIP* 2, 135–139.

153 Lambert 1963, 189.

154 SAA 20 no. 53 ii 28’ and 52 r. v 47–48. In Babylonia, by contrast, it seems to have been evoked by means of songs performed by the *kurgarru* and *assinnu*-mimes Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 74 ff. For the notion of “drama” in the ancient Near East see Pongratz-Leisten 2013a.

155 SAA 20 no. 15.

156 SAA 20 no. 53.

157 SAA 20 no. 52.



the day on which the king offers cooked meat before Aššur. Subsequently, the chariot driver (LÚ.*mukil appâte*) carries the god on his chariot, drawn by white horses, in a ceremonial procession to the *akītu*-house while a singer intones several songs. The text is very fragmentary, but it seems that the god Aššur does not remain in the *akītu*-house and returns to his own temple in the city of Aššur. In a very fragmentary section, mention is made of the Ubšukkinakku and the monster. The respective exegetical comment in the cultic commentary reads as follows:

SAA 3 no. 37 24'–28'

[The chariots] which they dispatch, and the 'third man' who [puts] the whip in [the king's] hand, takes him by the hand, leads him into the presence of the god and shows the whip to the god and the king, is Nabû, who is sent against Illil and defeats him, whom Nergal to[ok] by the hand, introduced into Esaggil and showed the weapon in his hand to Mar-duk, king of the gods, and Zarpanitu, while they kissed and blessed [him].

Here the commentary appears to conflate the combat myth and parricide, or at least the demotion of an older god. Theogony involving parricide or the demotion of the ancestor gods by a god representing the younger generation is a mythic stratagem used as an explanatory pattern for the organization of power and perhaps even for the fact of usurpation. While this stratagem is not indigenous to Sumero-Babylonian thought, it does appear to structure the myth of the *Theogony of Dunny*,<sup>158</sup> which is linked to the mythology centered on the Hurrian god Kumarbi.<sup>159</sup>

The high priest's tablet (SAA 20 no. 15) appears to have been some kind of an excerpt tablet combining ritual prescriptions for the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of Nisannu and for the *tākultu*-ritual, with the latter listing the same sequence of cities that is displayed in other *tākultu* texts, i.e. Nineveh, Aššur, Kilizi, Arbail, Nimrud, Tarbišu, Kurbail, Tue, Harran, and Nineveh again. The text then covers days seven and eight of the *akītu*-festival, noting intriguingly that the ritual performance could be carried out 'whether in Nineveh, or in Nimrud, or in an enemy country' (SAA 20 no. 15 i. 55'–56'). This suggests that the king did not necessarily have to remain in Aššur for the entirety of the *akītu*-festival. Unfortunately, the beginning of the tablet is destroyed; it does, however, look like the gods had already entered the *akītu*-house by the 7<sup>th</sup> of Nisannu at the latest, as the first date mentioned in the following is the 8<sup>th</sup> of Nisannu (SAA 20 no. 15 i 55'), which according to the information gleaned from the cultic commentary

158 CT 46:43; Lambert and Walcot 1965; Jacobsen 1984; Dalley 2000, 278–281; Hallo 1997, 402–404.

159 See the myth "Lied vom Königtum im Himmel," Güterbock 1946; Meriggi 1953.



**Fig. 56:** Stele of Aššurnāṣirpal II, Nimrud (after Orthmann 1975, fig. 197).

SAA 3 no. 37, includes a number of the ritual gestures performed by the king, which symbolically reflect Marduk’s cosmic battle. From Sennacherib’s description of Assur’s battle against Tīāmat as depicted on the gate of the *akītu*-house, we know that the gods accompanied Aššur into battle in a prescribed order. Because this battle ultimately entails Marduk’s/Aššur’s ascent to the position of supreme deity of the Babylonian pantheon and the relegation of both the older generation of gods (including Anu, Enlil and Ea) and their sons to an inferior position, the commentaries explain the king’s ritual performance as mirroring Marduk’s performance of parricide.

An interesting detail in the ritual prescriptions is the reference made to the pectoral “of the gods” that the king wears around his neck during the ritual performance. This pectoral appears to be similar to the one Aššurnāṣirpal II wears on his stele from Nimrud<sup>160</sup> (fig. 56) and on the relief representing him in front of the sacred tree in the throne room of his palace (fig. 22).<sup>161</sup> In both

<sup>160</sup> Orthmann 1975, figs. 197 and 198.

<sup>161</sup> In contrast to the pectoral that is suspended from the back of Ashurbanipal’s couch in the Banquet Scene, which consists of “seven rows of barrel-shaped beads,” see Albenda 1977.

cases the pectoral consists of a row of divine symbols like those generally depicted on the Assyrian victory steles, thus conjuring the presence of the most important deities of the Assyrian pantheon: Sîn, Šamaš, Ištar, Aššur-Enlil-Anu<sup>2</sup>, and Adad. The commentary elucidates the pectoral's protective power in the following 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 (SAA 3 no. 37: 16'–17').<sup>162</sup>

In the ritual text fragment SAA 20 no. 15, the king lights a censer and steps upon a pedestal, following which a man-woman (LÚ<sup>1</sup>.SAL) raises the weapon and shouts "Ebirna! Ebirna!" opposite Ištar (SAA 20 no. 15 i 1'–5'). Subsequently the king goes to a spring close to the *akītu-house* and performs offerings of sheep and blood before throwing a fish and a crab into the spring and pouring oil, honey, and wine into it. He then appears before the public swinging a purification device (SAA 20 no. 15 i 1'–13'). Only the reference to the spring corresponds to a section in a cultic commentary – SAA 3 no. 37: 3'–4' – that in fact refers to a well rather than a spring and compares the king's action with "[Marduk] who cast a spell against Enlil in the Abyss (Apsû), and consi[g]ned him] to the Anunnaki." The king's visit to the spring is followed by a visit to the *akītu-house*, where he offers salt and sheep before the gods of heaven and then returns to the palace. Subsequently, the king once again visits the *akītu-house* and provides cooked meat. After a broken passage, ritual performance resumes with further offerings of sheep and cooked meat. Additionally, the king burns a female goat kid before the gods (SAA 20 no. 15 i 46'), a ritual gesture that, as mentioned above, is encoded with the mythic meaning of killing the sons of Enlil and Ea. Creative engagement with mythic knowledge is further apparent in the interpretation of the ensuing rite, the 'opening of the vat,' as Marduk defeating Tiāmat with his penis (SAA 3 no. 37: 18'). As Simo Parpola demonstrates, the penis is to be equated with the bow (*qaštu*) as the weapon of Ištar:

In Enūma eliš, Marduk fashions a bow, designates it as his weapon (IV 35), and defeats Tiāmat with it (IV 101); later Anu lifts it up, kisses it, calls it 'my daughter', and fixes it as a constellation in the sky (VI 82–92). The constellation in question, 'Bow Star' (MUL.BAN), our Canis Maior, rose in Ab (August), a hot month with death and netherworld connotations (see Abusch, JNES 33, [10974] 260 f), and its equation with Ištar in her destructive aspect is well attested (e.g., "Ab, the month of the Bow Star, the heroic daughter of Sin," Streck *Asb.* pp. 72 ix 9 f and 198 iii 1; 'Bow Star = Ištar Elammatu, the daughter of

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**162** It seems that this pectoral has to be distinguished from the "stones" (NA<sub>4</sub>.MEŠ), which are listed among the insignia of the king in a purification ritual (discussed in *Chapter* 9.7) and treated in detail by Schuster-Brandis 2008, 162 ff.

Anu,' Mul Apin I ii 7 and KAV 218 B I 17). Consequently, the weapon by which Marduk defeats Tiāmat actually is Ištar, and the fact that in the mystical text SAA 3 37:18 Marduk defeats Tiāmat with his 'penis' (*ušaru*) proves the existence of the bow = penis association in contemporary mysticism.<sup>163</sup>

The king continues with the last rite performed over the defeated animal, which stands in for the subdued enemy. After performing further libations and showing himself to the public, the king pours a libation of water, beer, wine, milk, and blood upon the heads of the animals; he then sprinkles flour and swings the purification device, places a head before the gods, and libates again before stepping on a pedestal and being given something to eat (SAA 20 no. 15 ii 10'–19'). The head in this case probably represents the head of the monster referred to in the ritual text, so that the ritual of libation over the head itself represents the concluding cultic act familiar from Assyrian reliefs of the lion hunt and from battle scenes like those of Shalmaneser III's (858–824 BCE) *Black Obelisk*, which signal the reestablishment of cosmic order to the gods.<sup>164</sup>

The text is very fragmentary at this point, but it appears that the king finishes the libations of the vat. While the king stands on the pedestal a singer intones "To (Ištar)-Amurritu," which, according to the commentary, associates the king with "Marduk [who] with his bow in his hand cast down Ea, while Venus was ascendant in front of him" (SAA 3 no. 37: 20'–22'). The ensuing sections on the reverse of the tablet pertain to the *tākultu*-ritual.

As is clear from the above discussion, various mythic stratagems inform ritual performance and its exegesis in the cultic commentaries. It is only possible to penetrate the meaning of Assyrian state rituals with a multi-layered perspective that draws from all the extant mythic narratives dealing with the battle against chaos and cultic commentaries. On the basis of cultic commentary SAA 3 no. 37, the following ritual gestures can be understood as signaling various steps in the process of defeating the forces of chaos and securing the rank of rulership:

- |    |  |   |   |
|----|--|---|---|
| a. | Wearing jewelry  | = | Marduk wearing his armor (SAA 3 37 16'),                |
| b. | Burning/roasting a female goat kid                       | = | Burning the sons of Enlil and Ea in fire (SAA 3 37 17') |
| c. | Opening the vat in the race                              | = | Marduk defeating Tiāmat with his penis (SAA 3 37: 18')  |
| d. | The king standing on a pedestal with a heart in his hand | = | Marduk casting down Ea with his bow (SAA 3 37:22')      |

<sup>163</sup> Parpola 1997, XCI fn. 114.

<sup>164</sup> Compare Aššurnaširpal II's libation over either the dead bull or lion as represented in his palace in Calah with Shalmaneser III's libation over Jehu of Jerusalem.

- |    |   |   |  |
|----|---|---|--|
| e. | The tossing of the cake   | = | Crushing Anu (SAA 3 37:19') or heart of Ea, when he pulled it out and [...] it with his hands (SAA 3 37:23') |
| f. | [The chariots] which they dispatch and the 'third man' who places the whip in the king's hand ... | = | Nabû who is sent against Enlil and defeats him (SAA 3 37:24'ff.)   |

The interconnectedness between myth and ritual discussed above transcends Edmund Leach's dictum that "myth implies ritual, ritual implies myth, they are one and the same,"<sup>165</sup> a premise adopted by the Assyriologist Alasdair Livingstone.<sup>166</sup> It also transcends the relationship between myth and ritual originally outlined by representatives of the *Myth and Ritual* school,<sup>167</sup> since my emphasis is on the notion of myth as plotline and on the process of mythologization versus myth as a closed narrative, which allows ritual to be flexible in its adaptation of mythic traditions. As is evident in this chapter, the most important state rituals revolved around the "political" myth centered on the warrior god Ninurta. These rituals annually cemented the institution of kingship in society and the incumbent king's occupation of his office. The paradigm of the combat myth formed the core of the ancient political belief system and served to explain and justify royal action, but at some point the paradigm of theomachy – including parricide and the notion of a generational change of leadership – was incorporated into the prevailing political ideology. Sennacherib's murder might account for this, as it probably engendered ritualized comment and explanation in order to harmonize it with the cosmic order. In myth, changes at the top of the pantheon took place when Marduk relegated his father to the Apsû and replaced Enlil in supreme leadership. State rituals and commentaries reveal that in their adoption of Babylonian and Hurrian tradition (see the Kumarbi Cycle), Assyrians deemed it important to include the notion of parricide in their state rituals as a potential component in the king's rise to power, reenacting it on an annual basis. Although the murder of Sennacherib may have prompted a reworking of ritual performance, it is also interesting to note that already in the Assyrian coronation ritual the deposed gods (*ilû dar-sûte*) in the Aššur temple are listed among the divinities to whom the future king offers stones as gifts (SAA 20 no. 7 ii 4), evoking the notion of generational change as a model.

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**165** Leach 1954, 13 ff.

**166** Livingstone 2006, 115 ff.

**167** For a good overview of the contributions made by J. Frazer, J. E. Harrison, and S. H. Hook see R. A. Segal 2002, 1684–1687; Versnel 1994, 15–88; Ackermann 2002.

## 10.6 The Neo-Assyrian Ištar Rituals

Several of the ritual gestures signaling parricide, theomachy, or the combat myth feature in rituals centered on the goddess Ištar, who, as already stated, played an essential role in mediating between the Assyrian ruler and the god Aššur (SAA 20 no. 16 i 1'–4' and rev. iv 8–34; no. 17 I 7–8; no. 19).

The Ištar ritual SAA 20 no. 19 is particularly well suited for elucidating how the reception of Sumero-Babylonian and Hurrian cultural discourse in Assyria shaped Assyrian royal ideological discourse. Given the available evidence, the precise implications of this reception are difficult to determine; several points can nevertheless be made. The Ištar ritual SAA 20 no. 19 took place either in the Aššur temple or in the Ištar temple, and the first offering was made to Aššur by the king after he brought Ištar into the temple. The divine participants who receive offerings are Aššur, Ištar, the Sebetti, probably Kulitta,<sup>168</sup> and Lisikutu, though offerings are repeatedly presented to Aššur and Ištar. Human participants in the ritual include the king, the singer, the *šangû*-priest, and the magnates. The section describing the active involvement of the magnates is broken, but the extant text refers to the singer, who intones: “My feast, my feast is battle,” establishing an intertextual link with the Assyrian war ritual which includes Ištar in her hypostasis as Bêlat-dunāni.<sup>169</sup> Subsequently, part of the ritual takes place in the bedroom, where the *šipu* dish is offered before Ištar and libations are made; after he performs purification rites with incense, the king offers blood into the pit (*apu*) and pours syrup and oil as well as beer and wine into it.<sup>170</sup> When cuts of roast meat arrive, the king 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, the king casts the neck cut into the pit. Further purification rites involving the censer follow, after which the king opens the vat and completes the libations of the vat, the singer intones a festive Hurrah, and the king and the magnates wield clappers. As soon as the king finishes his part of the meal, the singer performs his offices and the *šangû* performs battle. The francolin (= bird of Kakka = messenger of Anu) is then brought out and the priest gives water to Ištar and the king; still more purification rites and libations follow and the king feeds the foreleg to Lisikutu. The singer intones: “Who opens the house

168 Only <sup>a</sup>Ku-li-[x] is preserved in the text.

169 Menzel 1981, T 82–83; Deller 1992; May 2012.

170 written *a-pi*, see Menzel 1981, vol. 2 T 98 ff. no. 45: Reverse i 10'. Note that a divinity *Ištar ša abi* is attested in Emar 6/3 373:92'. For the use of a sacrificial pit see further Emar 6/3 40' and 46'. For further bibliography see Feliu 1998.

of silver?” and then the king throws the foreleg into the pit and pours syrup, oil, beer, and wine upon it. Finally, the singer fills up the pit and the king places his foot upon it before leaving for the palace.

Two elements in this ritual are conspicuously alien to the Assyro-Babylonian tradition, namely the pit (*apu*) at which the purification rites are performed and the use of blood as part of the purification process. Interestingly, pits are well-known in Anatolian rituals and blood serves as a typical means of purification in Hurrian rituals.<sup>171</sup> Other elements requiring explanation are the allusions to the bed of Ištar, which implicitly refer to a sexual relationship between Ištar and the king, and the involvement of the magnates. Once again the commentary SAA 3 no. 37 provides an exegetical explanation:

- 9' [The brazier] which is lighted in front of Mullissu, and the sheep which they throw on the brazier and which the fire burns, is Qingu, when he burns in the fire. (combat myth)
- 10'–15' The torches, which he lights from the brazier, are merciless arrows from the quiver of Marduk, which are terrible in their shooting off and which, when they hit, slay (even) the strong; drenched in blood and gore, they rain down mountains and lands. The gods, his fathers and brothers, and the evil gods, Anzû and Asakku, were vanquished by them. (theomachy and combat myth combined)
- 16'–17' The king, who wears his jewelry and roasts young virgin goats, is Marduk, who wearing his armor bur[ned] the sons of Enlil and Ea in fire. (theomachy)
- 18' [The ki]ng, who opens the vat in the race, is Marduk, who [defeat]ed Tiāmat with his penis. (combat myth)
- 19 [The ki]ng, who with the high priest tosses the cake, is Marduk (with) Nabû, [who ...] vanquished and crushed Anu (theomachy)
- 20 The king, who stands on the podium with a [heart] in his hand, while the singer chants 'To the Western Goddess', is Marduk, [who] with his bow in his hand cast down Ea, while Venus was ascendant in front of him.

How can Ištar's prominence in the ritual, which evokes battle scenes and which involves the performance of rites in Ištar's bedroom, be explained? Although she is characterized as mistress of battle, with the exception of the first millennium cultic commentaries Ištar's involvement in theomachy is attested only once Sumerian-Babylonian tradition of the Old Babylonian period and can probably therefore not be traced back to the influence of Babylonian scholars in Assyria. Consequently, it is necessary to search for parallels in other cultural horizons, and it is here that Hurrian tradition again provides a possible solution since Ištar is one of the key protagonists in the Hurrian *Song of Hedammu*.

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171 Haas 1993.

This song forms part of a cycle of myths centered on Kumarbi, who represents the older generation of gods and whose position as king of the gods is threatened by the younger Teššub.<sup>172</sup>

The entire cycle of Kumarbi songs is addressed to the *Primeval Deities*, an epithet that is sometimes translated as the ‘Former Gods.’<sup>173</sup> This corresponds well with the associations of the *dromena* and *legomena* performed in our Neo-Assyrian ritual, which – as indicated by the cultic commentaries – implicitly reference the fathers and brothers among the opponents of the younger god Marduk. The *Defeated Gods* in the Old Syrian and Hurrian tradition include Anu, Antu, Enlil, Ninlil, Nara-Napsara, Minki, and Ammunki;<sup>174</sup> Anu and Enlil also figure as defeated gods in the Mesopotamian cultural horizon. While the notion of the *Defeated* or *Bound Gods* is very old and extends back to Sumerian mythology, it generally includes only rebel gods.<sup>175</sup> Only one Sumerian myth of the Old Babylonian period, known as *Enlil and Namzitarra*, has a vague reference to Enlil usurping kingship from Enmešarra. The relevant lines read as follows:

- 17    u<sub>4</sub> <sup>d</sup>en-me-šár-ra šeš ad-da-zu LÚXKÁR-da-a  
 18    nam-<sup>d</sup>en-líl ba-e-de<sub>6</sub>-a ud-de<sub>3</sub>-en-gin, nam /ga\zu-e-še  
 17    When Enmešarra, your father’s brother was captured,  
 18    You carried off kingship saying, ‘As of this day I shall assign destinies.’<sup>176</sup>

Bilingual versions of this myth have been found in Emar and Ugarit,<sup>177</sup> testifying to the possibility of transmission of the trope of theomachy to the north. Another possibility is that theomachy entered Assyrian cultural discourse by way of Hurrian tradition, as the theme of theomachy is central to several tales belonging to the *Kumarbi Cycle*. Theomachy is apparent in the Assyrian cultic commentaries discussed above and then only reappears in detailed narrative form in mythic tales like *Enmešarra’s Defeat* and *The Defeat of Enutila, Enmešarra, and Qingu*, which all date to the Late Babylonian period and seem to revive the Old Babylonian tradition revolving around Enmešarra rather than Anu, Enlil, and Ea as older members of the pantheon.<sup>178</sup> The above attempt to

172 Hoffner 1998, 50–55.

173 Hoffner 1998, 41.

174 Hoffner 1998, 112.

175 Cooper 1978.

176 For the text and its various translations see Civil 1974–1977; Cooper 2011; Lambert 1989; Vanstiphout 1980.

177 See most recently Cohen 2010.

178 For an edition of these texts see Lambert 2013, 281–298 and 326–329, along with the respective commentaries.



locate the ways through which various strands of assorted traditions made their way into Assyrian cultural discourse is indicative of the artificiality and fruitlessness of attempting to identify origins when evidence is as scarce as it is in this case. What is relevant here, however, is that the Assyrian scholars – in their capacity as agents behind the scene – participated in a shared cultural discourse, which was centered on the organization of power and on kingship, and which seems to have been much more prominent in Northern Mesopotamia and Anatolia as revealed by its pervasive presence either in mythic narrative or in ritual. Further, the marked presence of parricide and usurpation in this cultural discourse points to broad similarities in the *weltanschauung* of scholars from different regions, including Assyria and the Hurrian-Hittite milieu.<sup>179</sup> While the trope might have originated in Babylonia, it is its elaborate treatment in Hurrian-Hittite mythology on the one hand and in Assyrian ritual on the other which to my view links both cultures in their discourse.

Yet another feature suggestive of a shared Hurrian and Assyrian mythic tradition is the reference made to the bed of Ištar, implying some kind of sexual performance on her part. Although the trope of the Sacred Marriage<sup>180</sup> might appear to be an obvious explanation, it belongs to the Sumerian-Babylonian tradition of the late third to early second millennium BCE and references the close bond between the Sumerian goddess Inanna and the king. This tradition has no real counterpart in Assyria. Instead, Ištar's close relationship with the Assyrian king was based in her role as wet nurse and nurse to the Assyrian crown prince and in her function as the voice of Aššur in oracles delivered to the king. Accordingly, a different trope is likely to underpin Ištar's sexual role in the Neo-Assyrian Ištar rituals. The Hurrian *Song of Hedammu* again comes to mind, as it is Ištar-Šauška who develops the plan to defeat the sea-monster Hedammu – created by Kumarbi in his effort to gain rulership – by means of her seductive charm. In order to seduce Hedammu, Ištar bathes and anoints herself before walking to the shore in the company of her two maidservants, Ninatta and Kulitta. Ištar exposes her naked body to Hedammu and, though the relevant passage is not preserved, succeeds in or helps in killing Hedammu, the opponent of the younger god Teššub.

Last but not least the song “Who opens the house of silver” in the Assyrian state ritual evokes the Hurrian-Hittite *Song of Silver*, which is also part of the *Kumarbi Cycle*. Here the personified Silver aligns himself with Kumarbi as a member of the older generation of gods against the storm-god and Ištar-Šauška, who represent the younger generation. While there is no reason to believe that

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179 For an excellent discussion of transmission see Gilan 2004.

180 See most recently Lapinkivi 2004 and Nissinen and Uro 2008.

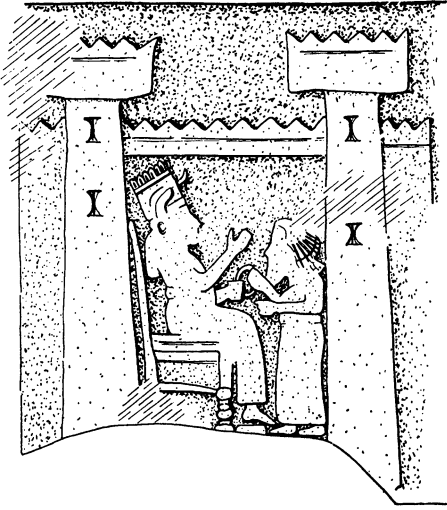


Fig. 57: King in Ištar's *bīt nathi* (after Sollberger 1974, 238, fig. 1).

the Neo-Assyrian ritual from Aššur represents the reenactment of a Hurrian myth, the evidence does suggest that Hurrians and Assyrians possibly shared a mythical tradition that accounts for Ištar's association with the trope of the *De-feated Gods*, an association otherwise alien to Sumero-Babylonian religion.

This Hurrian connection is perhaps confirmed by the use of the term *bīt nathi* 'bedchamber' in Aššurnāṣirpal I's (1046–1033 BCE) epigraph on the White Obelisk. The term refers to Ištar's bedchamber in her temple in Nineveh and is a Hurrian loanword that made its way into the Hittite language and was adopted in Assyria.<sup>181</sup> In the Sargonid period the term *bīt nathi* is superseded by the standard *bīt majāli*, but the image on the White Obelisk representing the king in the *bīt nathi* in front of Ištar (fig. 57) and the term itself possibly refer to the same or at least to similar ritual events.

There are further indications of shared Assyrian and Hurrian cultic traditions. According to the Nuzi texts, the cultic *bīt ēqi* building has an equivalent in the city Ulamme, where it is associated with Bēl-Ulamme.<sup>182</sup> One of the Neo-Assyrian rituals (SAA 20 16) takes place in the *bīt ēqi* of Aššur and involves an offering before the standard (<sup>d</sup>URI.GAL) that accompanied the king on his military campaigns. The ritual prescriptions involve references to the jewelry worn by the king, the priest's placement of two *Anzû*-birds between his (the king's?)

<sup>181</sup> See Chapter 6.4.

<sup>182</sup> Deller 1976, 44.

shoulders, litanies recited before Ištar of the *bīt ēqi*, the “dancing” of the *kamā-nu*-cakes signifying the demotion of Anu and Enlil, and the opening of the vat evoking Marduk’s defeat of Tiāmat. These actions have strong belligerent overtones and, like the ritual discussed above, demonstrate Ištar’s involvement in the defeat of chaos.

## 10.7 The Intermediality of Myth, Ritual, and Cultic Commentaries

Rites associated with combat myths do not appear in the rituals dating to the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I (SAA 20 nos. 24–27), but are attested repeatedly in various Sargonid period rituals. This suggests that the ritualization of the Ninurta mythology and by extension the Marduk mythology as represented by *En-ūma eliš* and the king’s integration in it developed only during the first millennium BCE, possibly only toward the end of the history of the Assyrian empire, subsequent to Sennacherib’s appropriation of the myth and of the *akītu*-festival as celebrated in Babylon. Both the producers of the rituals (the scholars) and the ritual participants (the king in particular) associated rituals with particular meanings reflecting a specifically Assyrian perspective. The analysis of ritual cycle of the months of Šabaṭu, Addaru and Nisannu and of the Ištar ritual has revealed that while movement between sacred places is involved, often even in company of deities, ritual performance predominantly focuses on the king and his cosmic role as conqueror of chaos thus assimilating the role played by Marduk in the Babylonian *akītu*-festival or by Ninurta as told in myth. Rather than performing a *cultic drama* in the Greek style, however, these ritual gestures, as highlighted by the cultic commentaries, symbolically signaled the very moment of defeat or killing and the defeat of the elder generation of gods. Combat myth and parricide were not reenacted in a narrative way. The Assyrian ritual is neither “combat drama,” nor “seasonal drama,” nor “sacred marriage ritual” as suggested by former ancient Near Eastern scholarship<sup>183</sup> in the wake of Sir James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion*, 1890. It did not reenact Aššur’s combat against Tiāmat as depicted on Sennacherib’s gate of the *akītu*-house; rather this role was emulated by the Assyrian king who by his ritual performance evoked a complexity of various strands of tradition relating to combat myth and parricide pinpointing the very outcome of mythic narratives.

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183 Pallis 1926; Labat 1939; Frankfort 1948; Gaster 1950.

The performance of state rituals in Assyria went far beyond the establishment of communion with the gods or among the social circle of scholars, priests, and the king by means of the consumption of a shared meal. In Assyrian state rituals, ritual performance focuses on presencing the divine through engagement with the mythic traditions of the combat myth and theomachy while circumscribing the king's role as a member of the divine circle who is actively engaged in securing the cosmic order through the temporary assumption of the role of the warrior god Marduk or Ninurta. It is in the Sargonid context that this intermediality<sup>184</sup> between myth and ritual was most highly developed, reenacting not one particular myth, but weaving various mythic strands and stratagems into a ritual performance that circumscribed the royal scope of action as preformed in its actual historical dimensions. In other words, the mythic stratagems that found expression in ritual performance were informed by and in turn functioned as the model for royal action. As discussed in earlier sections of this book, this intermediality of myth, ritual, and image is apparent in common themes and motifs on the one hand and in divergent or modified emphases and forms of expression on the other. Intermediality of this kind does not only presuppose profound knowledge of mythic narratives on the part of both ritual producers and ritual participants, but also technical precision in ritual performance, the success of which depended on the education and deep cultural knowledge of its participants. Moreover, by evoking entire narratives in their outcome through particular ritual gestures, intermediality served to increase the efficacy and communicability of ritual performance and to suspend the limits of time and space.<sup>185</sup> It is precisely this deep engagement with cultural discourse in its multimediality that must have resulted in the production of the cultic commentaries. Critically, cultic commentaries not only elucidate the function and meaning of Assyrian state rituals, but also provide the modern scholar with an insight into the ancients' conception of mythic narratives in general. The ancients conceived of their mythic narratives as explanatory models that were defined by a particular emplotment and served as a paradigm for historical as well as cultic constellations the king was engaged in. In ritual these narratives in their iconic outcome were enacted by a particu-

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**184** The concept of “intermediality” developed from the concept of intertextuality in media studies in order to describe the interrelatedness or fusion of various media such as text, theater, dance, music, and film in one work of art and to express the idea that all media exist in relation to other media (Schröter 2010). Intermediality can involve transposition, combination, or references creating an “as if” quality by evoking one medium in another medium (Rajewsky 2005).

**185** On intermediality see Paech and Schröter 2008; May 2012.

lar set of actors representing specific social types that interacted in predetermined constellations, thereby allowing both human (the king) and divine actors to perform the same roles.

Over several millennia, the combat myth was rewritten with the same plot and the same configuration of *types* of actors performing the same functions, namely battling disruptive forces in order to guarantee the functioning of the cosmic and civic order: names and details could vary, but the narrative structure always remained essentially the same. Consequently, local particularities are only evident in the choice of specific mythic actors like Ninurta, Tišpak, Marduk, and Aššur, all of whom took on the role of hero or warrior-god in the battle against the forces of chaos. In all cases their opponent, regardless of individual form or name, whether identified as Anzû, Asakku, Labbu, or Qingu and Tiāmat, sought to usurp or overturn the divinely established order and, more concretely, the legitimate line of succession. However, the particular individual agents – warrior god and his opponent with their characteristic traits – were inserted into the original narrative in particular historical settings. It is in these historical settings that “innovations, modifications, omissions, and fine recalibrations” were introduced into the “widely known and commonly accepted version” of the mythic narrative.<sup>186</sup> In their historical settings, particular iterations of mythic narratives functioned as literary devices that justified the ascent of a certain god to the status of patron deity or to the position of supreme god. When these local iterations became part of the cultural metadiscourse formulated in the cultic commentaries, the “historical” agents were no longer important, variation was minimized, and the emphasis was placed on the general *plotline of the combat myth*. Moreover, the king assumed the role of the warrior god in Assyrian state rituals.

The cultic commentaries’ focus on the commonalities of ancient combat myths as represented by their shared *plotline* and *types* of actors allowed them to engage creatively and imaginatively with the names of particular protagonists, enabling a continuous rewriting of narrative tradition without altering the essential paradigm of the combat myth. Adherence to the combat myth paradigm informing myth, ritual, image, and historiographical discourse demonstrates its truth status and sheds light on the assumptions about society, normative values, and principles of action with which it was imbued by the ancients. This, in turn, explains the persuasiveness and longevity of the combat myth in ancient Near Eastern ideologies and in Assyrian ideology in particular.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Lincoln 2012, 55.

<sup>187</sup> For this argument I draw on the theoretical treatment of myth and ideology by Bruce Lincoln 1999 and Christopher Flood 2002.

## 10.8 The Assyrian Coronation Ritual

In Mesopotamia generally and in Assyria in particular, the mythic concept of kingship originating in heaven, as related in the *Sumerian King List* and other narratives of power, was integral to the ritual performance of the coronation ritual. This ritual was often not performed in the capital; in cases where the religious center and the political capital were not one and the same, the ceremony invariably took place in the religious center, which in Assyria was Aššur. This choice can be explained by the fact that the coronation ritual's objective – through which the king took symbolic possession of the powers of his office – was to connect the individual royal person with the divine world and thus to reassert the link between the king as *body politic* and the gods. By virtue of its performance in the religious center, i.e. Aššur, the coronation ritual served to concretize and materialize the cosmological notion of kingship and, concomitantly, to affirm the intertwinement of the institutions of the palace and the temple of the supreme god Aššur. The coronation ceremonial, consequently, stressed the connection between the symbolic function of the individual king and his relationship with the active center of social and cosmic order represented by the seat of the chief god and the home of the leading religious elites.<sup>188</sup>

The performance of the coronation ritual defined the king's cosmic identity and authoritatively imposed on him his obligation to act by the command of and in compliance with the gods. As part of his heroic destiny, the king was obliged to work toward the conquest and subjugation of the known universe, which was ultimately considered the domain of the gods. At least within Assyrian culture, the cosmic role of the king as divine warrior explains why his military and priestly duties were so closely intertwined. As is done by Maurice Bloch, the theological superstructure of the coronation ritual can be interpreted as a means of legitimating traditional authority.<sup>189</sup> Beyond its legitimating function, however, the Middle Assyrian *Coronation Ritual* also outlined and defined the king's scope of action and shaped and affirmed the particular socio-political organization of the higher echelons of the Assyrian administrative apparatus. Moreover, the royal commemorative inscriptions reveal that the ritual never lost its semantic components. Throughout Assyrian history kings perpetually strove to affirm that they had met the requirements of their office and, consequently, that they corresponded to the image of the ideal king.

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<sup>188</sup> The Mesopotamian model is thus more complex than the case discussed by Geertz 1977, 151.

<sup>189</sup> Bloch 1989.

Given the cosmic and social importance assigned to kingship in the ancient Near Eastern *Weltanschauung*, it is surprising how little evidence survives that can be directly associated with the coronation ritual. There are, however, a few texts attested from the second through the first millennium BCE that list the regalia of the royal office and the host of competences transferred to the king by the gods in order to enable him to successfully fulfill the duties associated with his office; these texts shed much light on the social definition and identity<sup>190</sup> of kingship in Mesopotamia and on the cultural meaning of the coronation ritual in particular. In contrast to Early Dynastic Ebla in Syria, where a ritual for a marriage and coronation ceremony survives,<sup>191</sup> the ritual investiture of the king is not attested in Old Sumerian texts. For the Ur III period and Isin I period, information about the coronation of the king can only be found in administrative texts and literary texts such as royal hymns. Administrative texts from the period of Ibši-Suen record offerings in Nippur, the seat of the supreme god Enlil, on the occasion of the king's reception of the brimmed cap (aga<sub>3</sub>), the most important signifier of rulership. In addition to Enlil in Nippur, the new ruler had to pay homage to Inanna in Uruk, Nanna in Ur, and Ninhursag in Nudur.<sup>192</sup>

The royal hymns of the Ur III kings convey the same message: the coronation of the new king took place in Nippur and not in Ur, their royal residence. Following the king's blessing by Enlil, he travelled to other southern cultic centers, among them Uruk and Ur, in order to receive the blessings of the respective city gods. It should be noted in this regard that in the Ur III hymns the investiture of the king was sometimes connected to his military achievements. Akin to the emplotment of Old Babylonian and later myths, Ur III royal hymns present the act of subduing of the enemy as a prerequisite for the king's promotion. Šulgi's journey to Nippur with the booty collected on his military campaigns very much resembles Ningirsu's triumphal entry into Ekur in order to present his trophies to Enlil and secure the establishment of his cult:

He [=Šulgi] moored the boat at the temple area of Nibru, the temple area Dur-an-ki, at Enlil's Kar-geštinā. He entered before Enlil with the silver and lapis lazuli of the foreign lands loaded into leather pouches and leather bags, all their heaped-up treasures, and with the amassed wealth of the foreign lands.<sup>193</sup>

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190 Bourdieu 1991, 120 f.

191 ARET 11, 1 and 2, see Fronzaroli 1993.

192 Sallaberger 1999: 172–73.

193 Šulgi D ETCSL 2. 4. 2. 04:373–381.

Enlil in turn decrees a good destiny for Šulgi, guaranteeing him a long-lasting and successful reign, whereupon the king travels to the major cultic centers of Sumer to receive the blessings of their patron deities.

An Old Babylonian bilingual text from the reign of Hammurabi inscribed on a stone statue reveals that the Babylonian mandate for rulership also consisted essentially of winning battles in order to maintain the cosmic and social order originally established by the gods. In all periods, the gods are said to bestow the regalia and typical royal characteristics of leadership upon kings primarily to enable them to succeed in this regard. Although the Old Babylonian text has traditionally been classified as a hymn, Wassermann recently categorized it as a secondary textualization of “oracular messages by several gods to Hammurabi, calling him not to wait any longer but to dare and move against his adversaries.”<sup>194</sup>

“Enlil gave you a heroic destiny –  
     as for you, for whom do you wait?  
 “Šîn gave you leadership –  
     as for you, for whom do you wait?  
 “Ninurta gave you an exalted weapon –  
     as for you, for whom do you wait?  
 “Inanna gave you battle and strife –  
     as for you, for whom do you wait?  
 “Šamaš and Adad are watching over you –  
     as for you, for whom do you wait?  
     (*gap*)  
 “ ... gain the victory, make yourself a hero  
     In the four world regions,  
     That your name be invoked forever.  
 “May the numerous peoples be prayerful and supplicant to you,  
 “May they recount of you great (poems) of praise!  
 “May they sound of you exalted adulation!  
     (*gap*)  
 He showed forth his great power to the distant future,  
 Hammurabi, the great warrior king,  
 Who struck down his enemies, a deluge in warfare,  
 Who leveled the land of the foe, who extinguished warfare,  
 Who suppressed insurrections, who destroyed opponents,  
     Like figurines of clay,  
 Who found the way out of numerous difficult crises,  
     (*breaks off*)<sup>195</sup>

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194 Wassermann 1992, 13.

195 Foster 2005, 136 f.; Wasserman 1992.



It is only from the Middle Assyrian period onward that there is concrete evidence for the transmission of the ritual prescription for the coronation ceremony. The Middle Assyrian coronation ritual is complemented by a coronation ritual from the late Sargonid period (seventh century BCE)<sup>196</sup> that for the most part records only the hymns to be recited during the ritual. The beginning of the Middle Assyrian coronation ritual text does not survive, but the remainder of the text suggests that while the magnates and eunuchs perform a particular rite in the Aššur temple, a procession including the king sets out from the palace (mentioned in SAA 20 no. 7 I 33') – in this case probably the Old Palace – and proceeds through the Anzû Gate toward the Aššur temple, in this text referred to as the 'House of God':

SAA 20 7 I 22'–30'

[Having finished] their blessings, [the magnates and the royal eunuchs] place [.....] before Aššur [...]. The king [.....]. touches the king [.....] ... The carrier[s] place [the throne of the king upon their necks] and s[et off] for the House of God (=Aššur temple). They enter the [House] of God. The priest of Aššur slaps [the king's face] in their presence and says thus: "Aššur is king! Aššur is king!" He says so [as far as] the Anzû Gate. [Having r]eached the Anzû Gate, the king [en]ters the House of God.

Given the general conception in modern scholarship of the Assyrian king as a despot, the participation of the magnates and royal eunuchs in the ritual performance and their role in confirming the king in his office is notable, as they are assigned at least a symbolic part in his enthronement. During his coronation, the Assyrian king endured humiliation by being slapped in the face by the *šangû*, which is comparable to the king's humiliation in the Babylonian *akītu*-festival.<sup>197</sup> This humiliation was not so much a temporary degradation in status as in the Babylonian case, but was intended to stress the Assyrian king's inferior status vis-à-vis Aššur, i.e. his stewardship, with kingship being reserved for the supreme god.

Once in the temple, the Assyrian king presents numerous stones to a variety of deities.<sup>198</sup> The long lists of stones presented as offerings to the gods are peculiar to this ritual and are not attested elsewhere in Assyrian rituals on a

<sup>196</sup> Livingstone, SAA 3 no. 11. For the text see *Chapter 5.4*.

<sup>197</sup> See most recently Pongratz-Leisten 2014a.

<sup>198</sup> Annus 2002, 162 suggests that this offering is reminiscent of the section in *Lugal-e* in which Ninurta judges the stones, variously cursing and blessing them while assigning either good or bad properties to them. The cursing and blessing scene is modeled after judgment in court, and the stones are evaluated according to their behavior in the battle against Ninurta. For the stones see also Postgate 1997.

comparable scale.<sup>199</sup> Following the offering of stones, the Middle Assyrian ritual continues with prescriptions regarding the crown of Aššur and the weapons of Ištar-Mullissu as well as the king's headgear (*kulūlu*). Subsequently, while the *šangû*-priest places the royal headdress on the head of the future king, the magnates and royal eunuchs recite the following blessing:

SAA 20 7 30 ff.

"May Aššur and [M]ullissu, the owners of your crown, co[v]er you with your crown for a hundred years!

May your foot be good in the temple and your hands be good [a]t the chest of Aššur, your God!

May your priest[hood] and that of your sons be pleasing to Aššur. Expand your country with your just scepter! Expand your country with your just scepter! May Aššur give you command (*qabā*), understanding (*šemā*),<sup>200</sup> obedience (*magīra*), justice (*kitta*)<sup>201</sup> and peace (*salīma*)!"

By combining the cultic and political actions of the king, this blessing provides a religious foundation for royal action in general. After blessing the king, the magnates and courtiers pay homage to him and kiss his feet. The king leaves the Aššur temple through the courtyard of Nunnamnir and returns to the palace. Once they have performed a ritual on the *rēš hameluhhi*, which is part of the palace, the cultic specialists carry the king first to the terrace (*tamlū*), which was built at the latest under Tukultī-Ninurta I,<sup>202</sup> and then to the *bīt labbūni* located in the northeastern annex and dating to the Middle Assyrian period, where they place him on the royal throne. Again the magnates and courtiers pay homage to the king, while he remains seated on the throne. The courtiers then present gifts to the king, of which the first is taken to the Aššur temple and placed before Aššur as the revenue of the *šangû*.

Another key moment in the ritual takes place at this point, involving the reinstatement under the new king of those who are part of the Assyrian state apparatus. The grand vizier, the second vizier, and other officials and cultic personnel divest themselves of the insignia of their office and present themselves to the king as individuals bereft of their previous positions. The king then addresses them with the words, "Everybody may keep his office!" After paying homage yet again, the officials return to their hierarchically determined places. A list of stones offered to various gods follows.

199 See SAA 20 no. 7 II 4 for a similar kind of offering.

200 Parpola, SAA 20 no. 7 35 has "attention."

201 Parpola, SAA 20 no. 7 36 has "truth."

202 Miglus 1986, 201.

The subscript of the tablet states that its prescribed offerings were to enter the temples of the gods of Kār Tukultī-Ninurta; additionally, the tablet states that the gods of Kār Tukultī-Ninurta dwell in Aššur, thus indicating that the text must have been written after the reign of Tukultī-Ninurta I, when his new capital had been abandoned and its gods had been returned to Aššur. Following a ruling, the text continues to list offerings for gods.

All three blessings or speech acts performed by the king or the magnates and eunuchs establish and reinforce the reality of the Assyrian organization of power by means of their perlocutionary force. The first blessing acclaims the kingship of the god Aššur and implicitly establishes the inferior status of the Assyrian ruler as his steward. The second blessing acclaims the king in his role as the chief *šangû* of Aššur, which, as stated earlier in this book, includes the king's role as a warrior who is divinely commanded to expand the borders of Assyria, thus introducing a cosmological concept of war preceding the creation of order. As is the case in the rhetoric of the Assyrian royal inscriptions, the internal logic of this cosmological concept is that only by means of war and the defeat of the enemy can the king achieve peace and justice. This is also why Aššur is entreated to bestow eloquence, understanding, obedience, justice, and peace on the king only after the king is instructed to expand Assyria's borders. The third speech act was performed by the king himself, who reinstated the magnates and eunuchs in their offices, thereby making clear their dependence on the institution of kingship and their inferior status in relationship to it. No other text expresses so clearly how the Assyrian state hierarchy and power structure were ideally conceived: 1) the god Aššur, 2) the king as steward and *šangû* of Aššur, 3) the courtiers, and 4) other officials. Indeed, establishing this hierarchical organization appears to have been the central concern of the coronation ritual.

The transformational quality of the coronation ritual's performance is implicit in the annalistic texts of Adad-nīrārī II (911–891 BCE), which include a beautiful example of the idea that high rank and status is intrinsically linked with perfection in outer appearance – a concept that, as we have seen, is also integral to the *Gilgamesh Epic*.<sup>203</sup> Only the perfect royal body can be turned into a *body politic* and be entrusted with kingship by the gods:

The great gods, who take firm decisions, who decree destinies, they properly created me, Adad-nārārī (II), attentive prince, [...], they altered my stature to lordly stature (*nabniti bēlūti*), they rightly made perfect my features (*šikin bunnannīya*) and filled my lordly body (*zumur bēlūtiya*) with wisdom. After the great gods had decreed (my destiny, after) they

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203 See *Chapter 4.11*.

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 (*melamme šarrūti*), they made my almighty name greater than (that of) all lords, the important name Adad-nārārī (II), king of Assyria, they called me. Strong king, king of Assyria, king of the four quarters, sun of all people, I.<sup>204</sup>

The various text categories that have appeared in the preceding discussion – hymn, ritual, and royal inscription – demonstrate that we should not subscribe to the categorical divide between ritual as practice and discourse as represented in the theological superstructure. While authorizing social structures and hierarchies, ritual must evoke the cosmological discourse in order to map the institution of kingship onto the larger cosmic scheme, which brings us back to Gumbrechts' concept of "presencing."<sup>205</sup> The affective force of the coronation ritual consisted in re-doing the hierarchical relationships in a formalized way (*dromena*) and substantiating them through the verbal specification of this act (*legomena*) in order to physically and mentally shape and materialize the organization of power between temple and palace and between god, king, courtiers, and officials in the Assyrian state. The Assyrian coronation ritual includes ritualized elaborations of functional movements like moving between palace and temple, various prostrations performed by the king in front of the god and by the magnates and officials in front of the king, slapping the king's cheek, and moving the insignia of kingship. All of these acts contributed to the bodily, physical experience of the intended hierarchy of power and enhanced its experience and communication.<sup>206</sup>

## 10.9 Sacralizing the Regalia of Kingship

Exercising authority involves and depends upon the use of nonverbal instruments and media,<sup>207</sup> among them the regalia of kingship. Insignia such as the scepter, weapon, crown, and throne function as signifiers of the royal office and distinguish the king's status from that of the rest of the population. As "iconic emblems," they announce the authority of their bearer to a given audience and within a circumscribed context or sphere of activity.<sup>208</sup> Incantations dedicated to the royal insignia dating to the Neo-Assyrian period reveal that

**204** RIMA 2, Adad-nārārī II A.O.99.2:5–10.

**205** See the remarks in my introduction.

**206** Rappaport 1999, 50 f.

**207** Lincoln 1994, 5.

**208** Lincoln 1994, 7.

they were considered to be of divine origin, created by divine craftsmen like Ninildu (the carpenter of Anu), Ninagal (the goldsmith of Anu),<sup>209</sup> and Kusu (chief *šangû* of Enlil).<sup>210</sup> Divine craftsmanship of this kind was understood to imbue the king's regalia with divine agency, which guaranteed the functioning of the cosmic order. Consequently, the king's regalia not only announced his authority but effectuated the success of his performance in office. In this light, the presentation of the insignia to the king during the coronation ritual was thus a prerequisite for his successful rulership, and their destiny to serve the king had been determined by the gods.<sup>211</sup>

As is discussed in *Chapter Five*, these iconic emblems were listed among the ME and were often used as synecdoches for rulership<sup>212</sup> in text and image. In the ancient *Weltanschauung*, they not only represented kingship but could act as secondary agents<sup>213</sup> of the king or the office of kingship, divine and human. In ritual performance, the king's attire or garment could serve as a representation of the king's presence, which is attested in the celebration of the Assyrian *akītu*-festival in the imperial periphery; in the festive cycle in the city of Aššur the king wore Aššur's tiara to signal the god's and the king's uncontested kingship.

In his discussion of deified emblems and paraphernalia, which are listed in the early god lists from Fara and Abu Šalabiḥ, Gebhard Selz observed that items like "the Crown," the "Headband" or "Turban," the "Princely Ring(?)," "the Staff (of) the Leader," and the "Nose Rope," "were actually thought to contain the respective powers of the respective office."<sup>214</sup> Although Selz is certainly correct in emphasizing that "these objects were not mere 'attributes,'" but "were thought to contain 'ideas' materially"<sup>215</sup> that linked the concept of rulership to the 'office' rather than to the person holding that office, I stress the agency of these objects in the experience of the human mind for precisely this reason.<sup>216</sup>

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**209** In the ritual for the reconstruction of a temple from Uruk it is Guškinbanda who functions as the divine goldsmith, Thureau-Dangin 1921, 46–47.

**210** See the incantations addressed to the royal throne (K 4906 + 1–5 and K9276+ rev. 4, Berlejung 1996, 21 f.), the royal weapon (K 4906+ 58–85 and K 9276+ rev. 6, Berlejung 1996, 26–27), and the royal bow (K 4906+ 134–172+, Berlejung 1996, 28–29).

**211** Berlejung 1996, 32.

**212** See *Chapter 5.1*.

**213** While Selz 2008 works with the concept of "prototype," I prefer the notion of "secondary agent" (Pongratz-Leisten 2011a).

**214** Selz 2008, 18 and *Chapter 5.1* of this book.

**215** Selz 2008, 19.

**216** Pongratz-Leisten 2011a.

The agency of deified objects is apparent in the fact that in the Assyro-Babylonian *Weltanschauung* there were limitations when these iconic emblems happened to fall into the hands of usurpers. In the *Anzû Myth*, for instance, the lion-eagle Anzû poses a threat to the cosmic order who can wield power effectively once he steals the Tablet of Destinies from its rightful owner Enlil, the chief god of the Babylonian pantheon. Anzû cannot, however, perform the office of kingship because the gods do not accept the legitimacy of his status. Accordingly, “offices, insignia, and office holders all advance claims which are most effective when correlated with one another.”<sup>217</sup> The ritual context of the king’s “negative confession” during the Babylonian *akītu*-festival offers a perfect example for the correlation between office, insignia, and office holder, as the word of the king is considered effective and worthy of the acceptance of the people represented by the priest only if he is the rightful occupant of the office and has correctly performed his duties toward Marduk and the Babylonian elites.<sup>218</sup> A similar notion of legitimacy has been noted in the Assyrian rituals with regard to Aššur’s crown, as its legitimizing potential is enforced through the cult for the ancestors.

As stated above, the regalia of kingship – the scepter, crown, and throne – were conceived of as being of divine origin, a concept whose literary origins can be traced back to the myth of the *Eridu Genesis*. In that text, the notion that the emblems originate with the divine represents a strategy for sacralizing the institution of kingship:

When the royal [s]c[e]pter (<sup>gi</sup>ššibir nam-lugal-la) was com[ing] down from heaven, the august [cr]own (men-mah) and the royal [th]rone (gu-za nam-lugal-la) being already down from heaven, he (the king) [regularly] performed to perfection the august divine services and offices (garza me mah), laid [the bricks] of those cities [in pure spots.] They were [n]amed by name and [al]lotted [ha]lf-bushel baskets.<sup>219</sup>

Accordingly, whoever performed the office of kingship in the rightful possession of the royal insignia implicitly asserted a connection to the gods mediated through a line of kings<sup>220</sup> that reached back to the time before the flood. The deification of the royal insignia – attested from the Early Dynastic period through to the Neo-Assyrian period – and the ascription of agency to them confirms the notion that they were originally regarded as the property of the gods, who entrusted them to the legitimate ruler.

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217 Lincoln 1994, 8.

218 Pongratz-Leisten 1997d.

219 Jacobsen 1987, 146.

220 Lincoln 1994, 104.

A ritual centered on the purification and animation of the royal insignia served to ensure the king's effective and successful performance of the duties of his office.<sup>221</sup> Among these insignia were the royal garments, the throne, the scepter, the tiara, the weapon, the bow, the staff, and the jewelry. The ceremony probably took place in the temple<sup>222</sup> where the *mīs pī* and purification rites were enacted upon the garment, the throne, and the ritual throne at night, under the stars, thus indicating that the ceremony must have been performed on the roof or in the courtyard of the temple. These insignia were then placed before the following gods and stars, who were addressed with prayers: Enlil, Ištar, Anu, Nusku, Ursa Minor, Šin, Gula, Šamaš, Papsukkal, Ea, Marduk, Zarpānītu, Nabû, and Tašmētu. Preparations for the installation of the king ensued, beginning with an incantation for Šamaš, Ea, and Marduk-Asalluhi, and followed by the king's prayers to his personal god and goddess. Subsequently, the exorcists (*mašmaššu*) gave all the royal insignia to the king while reciting incantations as the king faced toward the east, probably toward the rising sun. The king then returned to the palace facing north. He was given the boomerang and underwent an exorcistic ritual involving the release of a bird. Another incantation followed and then the text breaks off.

The principal reason that this ritual should not be identified as the coronation ritual is that the participants differ; in the actual coronation ritual it was the *šangû*-priest who installed the king, while in this ritual the cultic experts involved are the exorcists. This prescriptive ritual should be categorized as the annual reaffirmation of the king in his office. The king participates actively in the ceremony, and he again does so in his role as Ninurta. This is indicated by the incantation that he himself recites when he is invested with the insignia of royalty:

- 1 He stands before the Gate of the Sunrising<sup>223</sup>, you put ...
- 2 All baldric you put on it, respectively one exorcist stands on the right and the left side of the king.
- 3 They carry a purification sprinkler.

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**221** Originally classified as *mīs pī* (Meier 1937–38). In his 1966 dissertation on the *mīs pī* ritual, Christopher Walker recognized that the various fragments published by Meier belonged to a different ritual, and was followed by Berlejung 1996; for Walker's publication of the *mīs pī* ritual see Walker and Dick 2001.

**222** On the basis of a recitation from Anu's New Year festival at Uruk that is known to have been performed at the end of a procession in the temple, Berlejung 1996, 11 fn. 40 and p. 16 assumes that the ritual also started with a procession of the king into the temple.

**223** The question is whether this gate can be equated with the city gate known from the Aššur Directory, Menzel 1981, T155, GAB 129 *mukin kussī*(AŠ.TE) *šarrūti* (MAN-ti) = *abul niphi* (KÁ.GAL KUR-i).

- 4 You give the scepter to the king and you recite [the incantation “Wood of the S]ea,”
- 5 You sprinkle water on the tiara,
- 6 You give the golden tiara and you recite the incantation “Tiara, its Awe-Inspiring Sheen,”
- 7 You give the bow and you recite the incantation “Long Bow,”
- 8 You give the staff and you recite the incantation “Great Lord, (clothed in) Awe-Inspiring Sheen,”
- 9 You give the stones and you recite the incantation “Great Stone, Great Stone.” When you are done with the recitations,
- 10 and he has put on the golden tiara and the stones, and he carries the scepter in his hand,
- 11 you receive the bow, the weapon and the staff and you put them on the throne.
- 12 He prostrates himself, enters the palace and puts his face towards North.
- 13 You give to him the curved staff and you recite the incantation “I Lifted My Curved Staff.”
- 14 He puts his hand on the fermenting vat and
- 15 you make [him recite] “Sirius, who appeases god and humankind,”
- 16 When he is done with the recitation, he removes the stopper from the fermenting vat.<sup>224</sup>

Since in this ritual it is the exorcist who bestows the regalia, it seems that the purification ceremony might have been repeated annually.<sup>225</sup> Claus Ambos has suggested that it might have been performed together with the *bit salā’ mē* ritual during the Babylonian *akītu*-festival in the month of Tašritu. While the *bit salā’ mē* ritual was equally performed in Assyria, it seems that there it was linked with the substitute king.<sup>226</sup>

It should also be noted that in this ritual every object belonging to the king – not only his throne, scepter, and tiara, but also his weapon, bow, staff, and jewelry – is purified and, I suggest, given agency by means of an incantation, which delineates each object’s scope of action in a performative manner. See, for instance, the bilingual incantation addressed to the royal weapon:

- 58 f. Incantation: Weapon bestowed with *namruru*-splendor, made suitable for kingship,
- 60 f. Eminent *miṭṭu*-weapon, which is made perfect for the hand (lit.: arm) of the king,
- 62 f. Surrounded by the ferocious *melammu*-splendor, to whose side nobody can come close,

**224** Text: K 9276+ //BM 64358+; Edition: Berlejung 1996, 8 ff.

**225** Suggested by Claus Ambos, who considers the *bit salā’ mē* to be part of the annual re-enactment of the coronation ceremony performed on Tašritu 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, see the note in Salla-berger 2007, 426 § 4.3 and Ambos 2010.

**226** SAA 10 219, 309, and 352.



- 64 f. To level the hostile lands and to strike down the enemy.  
 66 f. Enki/Ea, king of the Apsû,  
 67 f. called upon Ninildu, chief carpenter of Anu, and gave him the following order:  
 69 f. ‘Go Ninildu, chief carpenter of Anu,  
 71 f. into the pure forest, whose woods have grown high ...’  
*The following lines are lost and then the text turns very fragmentary.*<sup>227</sup>

The royal regalia were made of precious metals and woods, as was the royal throne, which – as is described in *Enki and the World Order* – was fashioned from the wood of the highland *mēsu* trees.<sup>228</sup> An incantation related to the investiture of the king describes the wood as being brought from Dilmun: “Tree of the Sea grown in the pristine place, oak, *mēsu*, tree of the Sea, brought from Dilmun, whose destiny is decreed by Enlil ...”<sup>229</sup> The tiara or crown is frequently said to be made of gold. Being the most impervious of all metals to rust, gold in Mesopotamia was probably also “understood as a form of matter not subject to the degenerative forces of time.”<sup>230</sup>

In Assyrian cultural discourse, the royal regalia served simultaneously as concrete instruments of kingship entrusted to the king during the coronation ritual and as the visual symbols of kingship.<sup>231</sup> The bestowal of the insignia was conceptualized in both mythology and iconography as an act performed by the gods. This is reflected in an Assyrian ritual commentary that equates the king with Ninurta:

The king, who wears on his head a golden tiara from 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 scepter, throne and the staff, adorned him with the splendor of kingship, and he went out to the mountain.<sup>232</sup>

A depiction on an Assyrian helmet represents the only pictorial scene dedicated to the theme of royal investiture. It portrays the gods Aššur and Ištar bestowing the regalia of kingship upon the king (fig. 30).<sup>233</sup>

**227** Berlejung 1996, 26–267.

**228** *Enki and the World Order*, ETCSL 1.1.3, 221–222: kur gi<sub>2</sub> giš-zu gal he<sub>2</sub>-em giš<sup>ti</sup>-tir-zu mes kur-ra he<sub>2</sub>-em 222<sup>giš</sup>gu-za-bi e<sub>2</sub>-gal lugal-la-ke<sub>4</sub> [me]-te he<sub>2</sub>-em-mi-ib-gal<sub>2</sub> “Black land, may your trees be great trees, may your forests be forests of highland *mes* trees! Chairs made from them will grace royal palaces.”

**229** Berlejung 1996, 21.

**230** Lincoln 1994, 104.

**231** Cancik-Kirschbaum 1999, 240.

**232** SAA 3 no. 39 r. 20 ff.

**233** Born and Seidl 1997, 36–37.

Amar Annus has collected the evidence depicting Ninurta as the holder of the royal regalia and has also illuminated parallels between the gods Ninurta and Nabû in the bestowal of royal insignia.<sup>234</sup> In the first millennium *akitu*-festival in Babylon, it is Nabû who bestows the royal insignia on the 4<sup>th</sup> of Nisannu in his temple *Nabû ša harê*. Nabû adopted this role from Ninurta in Middle Babylonian Nippur, where the *Nippur Compendium* records that there was a Chapel of the Scepter (é.<sup>giš</sup>gidru = *bīt haṭṭi*) that should probably be located in Ninurta's temple Eumeša. Andrew George suggests that Nabû's role was modeled on Ninurta and that Ninurta's ceremonial bestowal was the "prototype after which the priests of Nabû *ša harê* at Babylon, and later Aššur, modeled their own ritual."<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Annus 2002, 51 ff.

<sup>235</sup> George 1996, 384 f.

# 11 The Voice of the Scholar

## 11.1 Tradition and Scholarly Agency

My intention in this book has been twofold: to trace the formation of Assyrian ideological discourse in light of intercultural interaction and as mediated in text, ritual, and imagery throughout the history of Assyria, and to bring to life the agency behind it. As pointed out by Hayim Tadmor, *Sargon II's Eighth Campaign* is currently the only text that unequivocally identifies the king's scholar (*ummānu*) as the author of a royal inscription.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, some of the primary characteristics of Assyrian ideology, namely its richness, diversity, intertextuality with literary texts, and intermediality with other media including ritual and image, can only be accounted for if we conceive of the scholars in the entourage of the king as being actively and permanently involved in the construction of his *body politic* as it was presented to the world and to the gods.<sup>2</sup>

The discussions in *Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight* centering on intertextuality between myth, epic, and royal inscriptions and in *Chapter Ten* on the link between myth and ritual have demonstrated that royal ideology in ancient Near Eastern cultures cannot and should not be treated as a purely political discourse. Rather, ideology implicitly responded to and was in negotiation with the long-existing religious tradition guarded, preserved, and transmitted by *hommes de lettres* over the course of hundreds and even thousands of years. Although this tradition was subject to historical realities, its notion of kingship in particular geographical regions proved relatively consistent through the centuries. This consistency also characterizes what I have defined as the typical Tigridian cultural discourse of the end of the third and beginning of the second millennium BCE. The transmission and transfer of Tigridian cultural discourse encompasses Lagaš, Akkad, Ešnunna, Mari, and Aššur from the Pre-Sargonic through to the Old Babylonian period, and was firmly established by the time of Šamši-Adad I (1808–1776 BCE). *Literati* close to the king – including the experts (whether diviners or exorcists) who organized the local cult and calendar in the various centers through which Tigridian cultural discourse spread – functioned as the carriers of that cultural interaction, while the efforts of kings to compete with the image-making of their peers served to drive the process of cultural diffusion forward.

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1 Tadmor 1997, 328.

2 This was already proposed by Hayim Tadmor in 1981, 31–32 on the basis of the thoughts of Otto Schroeder and revived again in 1997, 328.

At the beginning of this book I defined tradition as the growing body of cultural memory informed by social values and practices, which materializes in a constantly reformulated and reconceptualized cultural discourse mediated in myth, historiography, architecture, iconography, and ritual. While there is a conservative element to tradition that aims to preserve the *status quo* or, as in the Mesopotamian case, strives for a return to the golden age of the time before the flood, the constant reformulation of tradition in cultural discourse and in ideology as its subcategory is in practice an extremely dynamic and innovative process that is always in negotiation with actual historical events. This tension between conservatism on the one hand and re-actualization and reinvention on the other is evident in the development of royal ideological discourse throughout Mesopotamian history.

Royal ideological discourse was dominated by particular tropes centered on the king as warrior and as caretaker of the cult, which were formulated for the first time during the Late Uruk period in the emerging city state of Uruk and which survive in both the monumental art and miniature glyptic iconography of the time. This discourse developed further in Pre-Sargonic Lagaš and was then reformulated during the Akkad period in the various media of royal ideology. From there, it inspired the royal discourse of the kingdom of Ešnunna and that of Šamši-Adad I and was reworked in Old Babylonian myth and in epic literature centered on the Sargonic kings – though the latter facilitated also the articulation of a critical position regarding the institution of kingship. Subsequently, the warrior ideology was reformulated in the Assyrian heroic epics of the Middle Assyrian period before being incorporated in Assyrian royal inscriptions in which it defined the ideal *chaîne opératoire* for the respective king. In the Tigridian region (i.e. Lagaš, Ešnunna, and Aššur), this ideology centered on the heroic king in the role of the warrior god is – some gaps notwithstanding – preserved in various permutations throughout antiquity, regardless of who was actually in control of a given territory.

With regard to the articulation of a particularly Assyrian royal ideological discourse, the evidence suggests three periods of major stimuli: (1) the reign of Šamši-Adad I, during which an Old Babylonian cultural discourse centered on the kings Sargon and Narām-Sîn of Akkad was introduced to Assyria; (2) the Middle Assyrian period from Adad-nīrāri I (1295–1264 BCE) onward culminating in the reigns of Tukulti-Ninurta I (1233–1197 BCE) and Tiglath-Pileser I (1115–1077 BCE), during which the Ninurta mythology was introduced into Assyrian ideological discourse and a host of regicentric literature centered on the figure of the king was produced; and (3) the Sargonid period, during which control of the stream of tradition is manifest not only in the very existence of Assyria's extensive libraries, but equally in the creation of a rich corpus of texts

which abound in intertextual relationships and in intermediality with ritual. It is at the very end of the Sargonid period that the iconography of palace reliefs and steles is supplemented by the endeavor to present the king as being in constant dialogue with the gods, an effort apparent in the genres of *divine letters* to the king and of *royal reports* to the god Aššur, as well as in the textualization of the Ištar oracles and in unique compositions like the *Fictive Dialogue between Ashurbanipal and Nabû*.

Such a dynamic interaction with tradition implies that at any given historical moment the king and the scholars were in intense conversation, since they had to agree on the ideological message that they ultimately intended to convey.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, this final chapter scrutinizes the various settings in which scholarly agency (as exercised by scholars in the entourage of the king) might be discernible.

## 11.2 The Scholars at the Assyrian Court

Explicit references to cooperation between Assyrian kings and their scholars are scarce prior to the surviving correspondence between Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal and their scholars, which allows us to establish nuanced profiles for some of the experts consulted by these two kings. Until the Sargonid period, scholars as individuals are thus consigned almost entirely to the shadows. Occasionally, however, either through the coincidental discovery of their seals or their libraries or through particular collections of texts, it is possible to gain some insight into the actual persons acting on behalf of royal interests.

Although scholars must have been associated with the Assyrian royal court from very early on, a chief scholar tied to the king (as indicated by the title ‘scribe of the king’, *ṭupšar šarri*) only emerges as a distinct figure in the textual sources under Aššur-uballiṭ I (1353–1318 BCE). This *ṭupšar šarri* can be considered the predecessor of the later *ummânû*, who are listed together with the kings that they served in the *Synchronistic King List*.<sup>4</sup> In addition to this kind of explicit reference, several scribes and scholars are attested in the colophons of literary and lexical texts from the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE at Aššur, bearing witness to lively literary creativity at the time of Aššur’s expansion toward the west, when the city gained control over what had been Hanigalbat

<sup>3</sup> A similar scenario has been suggested by Machinist 2003b.

<sup>4</sup> This interpretation follows Grayson 1980, 117 who edited the *Synchronistic King List*, which mentions Issar-šumu-ēresh as the chief astrologer under Esarhaddon and his predecessor Nabû-zēru-lēšir, who is identified as *rab ṭupšarri*.

up to the Balih River under the kings Tukulti-Ninurta I (1233–1197 BCE) and Tiglath-Pileser I (1115–1077 BCE). Middle Assyrian titles such as ‘diviner of the king’ (*bāri šarre*)<sup>5</sup> and ‘exorcist of the king’ (*āšip šarre*)<sup>6</sup> point to the existence of close relationships between the king and scholars; the continuity of such intimate working relationships is indicated by the aforementioned *Synchronistic King List*. The *Synchronistic King List* was first composed under Ashurbanipal (668–631/27? BCE) or shortly thereafter, and the list originally commenced with the kings Erišum I of Assyria and Sumulael of Babylonia and ended with Ashurbanipal/Kandalanu. The *Assyrian King List*, *Babylonian King List*, and *Chronicles* must have formed the *Vorlage* for the *Synchronistic King List*, which lists the names of the chief scholars of the respective kings of Assyria and Babylonia alongside the names of the kings themselves from the tenth century onward. Two chief scholars are listed for Sennacherib, namely the Babylonian astrologer Bēl-upahhir and Kalbu, who eventually conspired against the king.<sup>7</sup>

The extensive collections of epistolary literature, extispicy queries, and astrological reports from the Late Sargonid period represent the most lively witnesses to the cooperation between Assyrian kings and their Assyrian and Babylonian scholars.<sup>8</sup> Both the king and the scholars participated in the effort to assemble comprehensive libraries, which not only reflected the cultural knowledge of the time but, as demonstrated by the extremely large number of divination texts and texts related to exorcistic lore, were also intended to respond to the challenges posed by everyday politics.<sup>9</sup> In some cases scholars are referred to by name, and are thus identifiable as individuals. Particularly rich evidence survives from the reign of Adad-nirāri III (809–783 BCE, Nimrud) and the Sargonid period, as libraries have been excavated in Sennacherib’s Southwest Palace, Ashurbanipal’s North Palace, the temples of Nabû and Ištar on the royal citadel in Nineveh, and the temple of Nabû in Nimrud.<sup>10</sup> These finds are complemented by the discoveries from Aššur, which include traces of Middle and Neo-Assyrian libraries in the Aššur temple and the library of a family of exorcists.<sup>11</sup> Colophons preserved on tablets from these libraries allow us to

5 Jakob 2003, 522–528.

6 Jakob 2003, 528–535.

7 SAA 10 no. 109.

8 Pongratz-Leisten 1999; now also Radner 2011 and Robson 2011. For the presence of Babylonian scholars and texts written in Babylonian script see Fincke 2004.

9 Parpola 1983; Fincke 2004.

10 Outside of the Nabû temple, a number of texts have been found intermingled with archival documents in Nimrud’s Northwest Palace and in Fort Shalmaneser, see Black 2008.

11 Pedersen 1985 and 1986.

reconstruct several scholarly families who served numerous Assyrian kings; in some cases, these families appear to have been of Babylonian origin.<sup>12</sup>

Close cooperation between kings and scholars can occasionally be documented over several generations, as is the case for Adad-šuma-iššur, who was not only an eminent exorcist and advisor of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal, but also the grandson of Gabbi-ilāni-ēreš, himself a scholar of Ashurnasirpal II and Tukulti-Ninurta II. The brother of Adad-šuma-iššur was Nabû-zēru-lēšir, who similarly worked as chief scribe and scholar under Esarhaddon and who was succeeded in this capacity by his descendant Issar-šumu-ēreš. Both Adad-šuma-iššur and Nabû-zēru-lēšir were sons of the illustrious Nabû-zuqup-kēnu, well-known for his “editorial work from tablets dated in the reigns of Sargon and Sennacherib from Nineveh,”<sup>13</sup> some of which were written in Nimrud. Nabû-zuqup-kēnu’s library primarily comprised omen texts, but also included Tablet XII of the *Gilgamesh Epic*, which seems to be the only extant literary tablet written by him.<sup>14</sup>

Whether the cache of 400 tablets found in Sultantepe was intended to be kept safe from invaders around 610 BCE is not clear, but their scribes are all known to have been members of a family of *šangûs* in the service of the gods Zababa and Bau of Arbail, including Qurdî-Nergal and his sons Mušallim-Bau and Nabû-zēr-kitti-lēšir.<sup>15</sup>

A fragmentary letter from the reign of Sargon II (721–705 BCE) suggests that the Babylonian king Marduk-apla-iddina II collected the writing boards stored in the temple library and hid them away in a safe place to prevent them from being pillaged by the Assyrian king.<sup>16</sup> Cooperation between the king and his scholars is vividly reflected in a letter of Ashurbanipal, preserved in two copies, in which the king commands his scholars to collect all texts from private scholarly collections in Babylonia that were not yet included in the collections of the libraries of Nineveh:

<sup>1</sup>Message of the king to Šadānu: <sup>2</sup>I am well, you may be content. <sup>3</sup>As soon as you read this tablet, <sup>4</sup>take Šumâ, son of Šumu-ukin, <sup>5</sup>Bêl-ēṭir, his brother, <sup>6</sup>Aplâ, son of Arkat-ilāni, <sup>7</sup>and the scholars of Borsippa, whom you know <sup>8</sup>and tablets, as much as there are in their houses, <sup>9</sup>and tablets, as much as there are stored in Ezida, <sup>10</sup>dig out. And the tablets, the amulets (for the neck) of the king, <sup>11</sup>for the rivers for the days of Nisannu, <sup>12</sup>the amulet of

**12** See for instance the scholar of Adad-nirāri III, whose great-grandfather Issaran-mudammiq was an official of Aššurnasirpal with Babylonian ancestry, see Black 2008, 263.

**13** Black 2008, 263. See also Lieberman 1987, 204–17 and Frahm 1999, 78.

**14** Frahm 1999, 78.

**15** Gurney 1997; Robson 2011, 559 f.

**16** SAA 17 no. 201, discussion Fincke 2004, 55.

the rivers for the month Tašritu, for the “house of water sprinkling,”<sup>13</sup> amulet of the rivers of the verdict of the day,<sup>14</sup> amulets for the head end of the royal bed and the foot end of the royal (bed)<sup>15</sup> “Weapon (made) of *erū*-wood” for the head end of the bed of the king,<sup>16</sup> the incantation “Ea and Asaluhhi may<sup>17</sup> gather wisdom” collect.<sup>18</sup> The incantation series (for the) battle, as much as there is,<sup>19</sup> in addition to the rare “long tablets”<sup>20</sup> as many as there are.<sup>21</sup> “In battle the arrow should not approach man.”

rev. 22 “When walking in the steppe,” “Entering of the Palace,”<sup>23</sup> the rituals, “šulla-prayers,”<sup>24</sup> inscriptions on? stones and<sup>25</sup> what is good for kingship.<sup>26</sup> The purification ritual URU.IGI.NIGIN.NA (*šūd pāni*)<sup>27</sup> “Out of concern” and whatever is needed<sup>28</sup> in the palace, as much as there is, and rare tablets<sup>29</sup> which are known to you<sup>30</sup> but do not exist in Assyria, look out for it,<sup>31</sup> bring them here. Simultaneously

<sup>32</sup> have written to the chief administrator and the prefect (*šakin tēmi*).<sup>33</sup> You shall deposit (the tablets) in your storeroom. Nobody<sup>34</sup> is allowed to withhold a tablet for you. And as for any tablet or<sup>35</sup> ritual that I have not written to you about and you think<sup>36</sup> good for the palace,<sup>37</sup> carry them away as well<sup>38</sup> and bring them here.<sup>17</sup>

In this particular case, the response of the scholars of Borsippa is preserved in a letter written in a beautiful style, which, as indicated by its colophon, became part of the scribal tradition:

By command of Bēl and Bēltiya, let it be a success!

To Ashurbanipal, great king, mighty king, king of the world, king of Assyria, king who can do as he pleases, [to whom *Marduk, who dwells in E-sangil,*] <sup>2</sup>gave charge and delegated the kingship of Assyria and (on whom) he conferred the kingship of the entire country, (who) grasps in his hand a fair scepter [that subdues] <sup>3</sup>the insubmissive, (who) bears in his right hand the staff that lays low the aggressor, on whom Nabû, who dwells [in E-zida,] <sup>4</sup>bestowed broad understanding and who like me is bowed to the scribal art, we send [word, thus:]

<sup>5</sup>May the great lord Marduk, who dwells in E-sangil and determines destinies, bestow on you as a gift a fair scepter, a true staff <sup>6</sup>and a magnificent crown! May Nabû, who dwells in E-zida, intercede for you <sup>7</sup>before Marduk, the father who sired him! May Nanāya, the lady of E-ur-šaba, lay low your enemy and destroy your [foe]!

<sup>8</sup>Further: The dutiful Borsippans will send back to the king the instruction that he wrote <sup>9</sup>as follows, “Write out all the scribal learning in the property of Nabû and send it to me.

<sup>10</sup>Complete the instruction!” Maybe the king says to himself, we (are ones) who, like the citizens of Babylon, will shirk (it) <sup>11</sup>by (using) confusing language. Now, we shall not shirk the king’s command. We shall strain and toil day and night to complete the instruction for our lord the king. <sup>12</sup>We shall write on boards of sissoo-wood, we shall respond *immediately!* And regarding the board in Sumerian, the glossary <sup>13</sup>about which you sent word, there is none but that in E-sangil. Let enquiries now be made before our lord the king.

<sup>14</sup>[You should] send word to the citizens of Babylon. Our destiny and their destiny <sup>15</sup>are [...] like [...] that they possess judgments and decisions, (is) true <sup>16</sup>[...] in Babylon [...] ... with them, our lord the king. We shall write <sup>17</sup>[...] ... [...] all, we shall complete the instruction.

17 CT 22 1 (BM 25676 and 25678), see Lieberman 1990.



<sup>18</sup>[May Marduk and Nabû, the] bonds of the great gods, the lords of heaven and underworld, <sup>20</sup>decree in the life of our lord the king a favorable destiny, <sup>19</sup>[long duration of reign, soundness of body, soundness of mind and straightness of bone.

<sup>21</sup>This inscription was copied on to a tablet (or tablets) of alabaster and sent to all the *colleagues*.

<sup>22</sup>Written according to its original, checked and collated. Tablet of Bêl-uballissu, son of Nabû-mušētiq-uddi, descendant of Mušēzib. <sup>23</sup>Hand of (=written by) Nabû-mušētiq-uddi, his son. He who fears Šamaš must not erase my hand(writing).<sup>18</sup>

Note that in his letter Ashurbanipal requests original clay tablets, while the Borsippa scholars respond that they will deliver writing boards – probably because they wished to retain the original tablets in their own library.<sup>19</sup>

The inventory tablets of Nineveh’s libraries<sup>20</sup> reflect the intense acquisition of tablets following Ashurbanipal’s destruction of Babylon in 647 BCE: “Approximately two thousand tablets and three hundred writing boards were taken from Assyrian and Babylonian private scholars, who gave away compositions they did not need for their professional work.”<sup>21</sup> The colophons of tablets from the Nineveh libraries identify them as the property of the royal palace (*tuppi/u’ilti Aššur-bāni-apli*, and *ekal Aššur-bāni-apli*) and promote the king as the patron of the arts. During the Late Neo-Assyrian period this discourse developed from a portrayal of the king as a ‘collector’ and ‘connoisseur’ of cultural knowledge to a deliberate representation of the king as a sage and active participant in scholarly discourse, who was fully conversant in the divinatory techniques. This development is first apparent in Esarhaddon’s claim that he separated the diviners into several groups in order to compare the results of their respective extispicies.<sup>22</sup> This motif also occurs in the composition *Sin of Sargon*, which probably dates to Esarhaddon’s reign:

(10) “[Let me examine] by means of extispicy the sin of Sargon, my father, let me then determine [the circumstances] and le[arn the .....; let me make] the sin he committed against the god an abom[ination to myself], and with the god’s help let me safe myself”. (13) I w[ent and collected the haruspices], who guard the secret of the god and king, the courtiers of my palace, divided them [into several (lit. three or four) groups] so that they could not ap[proach or speak to one another], and [investigated] the sins of Sargon, my father, by extispicy, [inquiring of Šamaš and Adad].”<sup>23</sup>

**18** Frame and George 2005.

**19** Fincke 2004, 57.

**20** SAA 7 nos. 49–52.

**21** Fincke, 2004, 57.

**22** Leichty, RINAP 4, no. 48 72b–79a.

**23** Tadmor, Landsberger, and Parpola 1989, 11.

By the time of Ashurbanipal, this theme is elaborated so that the king himself now claims to have learned how to interpret the written sources and to perform divination:

I have mastered the craft of the sage Adapa, the guarded secret(s) of the whole scribal art. I can observe the signs of the heavens and the earth and discuss them in the meetings of the scholars, I am capable of debating with the learned oil masters the (chapter of the diviner manual entitled) “if the liver is a correspondence of the sky,” and I can solve the most complicated mathematical divisions and multiplications that have no solution (provided with the problem). I have read the most complicated (bilingual) text whose Sumerian is obscure, and whose Akkadian version is difficult to unravel. I have studied stone inscriptions from before the flood of the complicated (text whose opening line is) *kakku sakku*.<sup>24</sup>

Whether Ashurbanipal really acquired the ability to check his scholars’s interpretations of the liver, “to correct imprecise citations” of texts by reference to the originals, and whether he indeed knew, “independently, when his course of action was correct,”<sup>25</sup> must remain open to debate.<sup>26</sup> Ashurbanipal’s patronage of scholarly work – as realized in his library – should, however, certainly be considered as “the material realization of an elementary principle of political behavior: that is, that culture and art are intimately connected with the art of government. Like Cosimo and Lorenzo de’ Medici, both warriors and politicians who strongly favored new editions of Classical texts, and, more generally cultural and artistic development, Ashurbanipal was deeply convinced that enhancing culture was one of the most powerful instruments of political control.”<sup>27</sup>

The trope of the king’s involvement in the discovery of the divine will through divinatory means, as addressed in both the royal inscriptions and the epistolary literature, is equally apparent in the literary texts of the first millennium. The late version of the *Cuthean Legend*, for example, stresses that the king should communicate and interact with the gods through divination and adhere to the conclusions of the divinatory process, while the first millennium version of the *Gilgameš Epic* and the *Cuthean Legend* both emphasize the importance of transmitting knowledge gained through experience to future gener-

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<sup>24</sup> Quoted after Michalowski 2005.

<sup>25</sup> Lieberman 1990, 329.

<sup>26</sup> This question should not be confused with questions concerning whether or not Ashurbanipal was literate, which he was, see most recently Livingstone 2007, who, unfortunately, misunderstood my take on Ashurbanipal’s deep involvement with the construction of cultural discourse.

<sup>27</sup> Lanfranchi 1998, 155.

ations. It therefore comes as no surprise that copies of these texts have been recovered from the royal Assyrian libraries, underscoring the importance of these notions to the Assyrian conception of successful kingship.

### 11.3 The King as Sage and the Mobilization of Asymmetrical Relationships

From Sennacherib onward cultural accomplishments involving knowledge of divination and other skills were ascribed to the mythical sage Adapa. Alongside the image of the king as successful warrior, the image of the knowledgeable, skillful, and wise king – often through the evocation of the Adapa motif – developed into a powerful constituent of the royal *body politic* in Assyrian ideological discourse. Sennacherib’s *Bull Inscription*, which is concerned with the building of his “Palace-Without-Rival,” combines the motif of the skillful and knowledgeable king with an intertextual reference to the myths of *The Creation of Man and King* and *Atrahasis* by dwelling on the role of the mother goddess Bēlet-ilī and the god Ea in his conception:

“Bēlet-ilī, the goddess of procreation, looked upon me with favor (while I was still in the womb of the mother who bore me, and watched over my conception, while the god Ninšiku (Ea) provided a spacious womb and granted me vast comprehension.”<sup>28</sup>

In the building inscription dedicated to his construction of the arsenal in Nimrud, Esarhaddon (680–669 BCE) extols himself in the following terms:

“As for me, Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, pious prince, to whom the prince, the god Ninšiku (Ea), gave (wisdom) equal to that of the sage Adapa, that terrace was on my mind and I (text: “he”) thought about it. I incorporated unused land as an addition (and) raised the terrace with massive stone blocks from the mountains.”<sup>29</sup>

The Adapa motif was not only incorporated in the royal inscriptions, but equally came to be embraced as a trope by the king’s scholars, albeit for a slightly different purpose: they employed it to emphasize their asymmetrical relationship with the king. In a very fragmentary letter, the chief haruspex of Ashurbanipal compares the deeds of Esarhaddon to those of Adapa,<sup>30</sup> while he locates the king in the direct lineage of the antediluvian sage:

<sup>28</sup> OIP 2, 117, Undated Bull inscription (I 1).

<sup>29</sup> RINAP 4, no. 77: 45–49.

<sup>30</sup> SAA 10 380 3’–4’: *epšētu šarri [bēliya] / [a]na ša adapi mušlā*, “Now, th[en], the deeds of the king, [my lord], are like those of (the sage) Adapa.”

Aššur, in a dream, called the grandfather of the king, my lord, a sage (*apkallu*); the king, lord of the kings, is an offspring of a sage (*apkalli*) and Adapa: You have surpassed the wisdom of the Abyss and all scholarship.<sup>31</sup>

Likewise, Ashurbanipal's chief astrologer emphasizes the king's "membership" in the learned circle of scholars by acknowledging his education as a scholar:

[The king, my lord], is made [li]ke a sage; he has understood their counsels ...<sup>32</sup>

The use of the trope could even be extended to the queen mother:

... – the mother of the king is as able as the (sage) Adapa!<sup>33</sup>

These quotations from the letters of scholars not only reflect the seminal role of scholars in shaping the ideological discourse centered on the image of the king, but are also very revealing with regard to how the scholars positioned themselves in direct relation to the king. By assigning the role of Adapa – the mythic *heros eponymos* of their guild – to the king, the scholars simultaneously positioned the king in close proximity to the gods and defined him as the mediating channel between themselves and the gods.

Even while stressing their asymmetrical relationship with the king, however, the scholars obliquely insinuated that cultural authority now lay with the sages, i.e. scholars, rather than with the antediluvian kings. When used by the scholars to honor the king as their social superior, the trope of comparing the king to Adapa thus had a twofold effect. Although it distinguished the king from the rest of the population, it also entailed obligations toward and dependencies on those who elevated him to his lofty position, i.e. the members of the political and scholarly elites. Accordingly, the rhetoric of *exclusivity* bound up with *limited access* to knowledge and the designation of the king as the ultimate source of authority constituted a notion of distinctiveness that also encompassed the scholarly *elites*. Texts like the *Catalogue of Texts and Authors*,<sup>34</sup> which establishes an intellectual genealogy of scholars that originates with the god Ea, and the *Enmeduranki Legend*, which identifies the king as the mediator between the gods and the scholars,<sup>35</sup> were both found in the libraries of Nineveh and constitute literary reflections on this self-definition of the scholarly

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31 SAA 10 no. 174: 7–9.

32 SAA 10 no. 29 2. 2–3.

33 SAA 10 no. 244: r. 7–9.

34 Lambert 1962.

35 Lambert 1998.

elites, implicitly defining them as central and indispensable to royal achievement.<sup>36</sup>

Cultural texts like omen compendia and myths were understood to be divine creations, as is illustrated by the *Catalogue of Texts and Authors* and the *Enmeduranki Legend* and its attendant commentary literature.<sup>37</sup> The former text, with its particular assemblage of titles belonging to the body of traditional texts, demonstrates that Assyrian scholars conceived of a close relationship between magical knowledge and political leadership. The *Catalogue of Texts and Authors* begins by referring to the knowledge of the exorcist and the astrologer, as represented by the titles of important omen compendia, and to the Ninurta mythology, as expressed through the titles of two major poems dealing with Ninurta's deeds (in which Ninurta functions as the divine model of the human king); the origin of all of these texts is assigned to the god Ea. This combination of texts and their attribution to Ea – who, with his son Marduk-Asalluhi, should be regarded as the patron god of magic and pragmatic knowledge – offers a valuable insight into the ancient vision of kingship, with regard both to kingship's interaction with divination and to the role kingship was assigned in ancient historiography.

In his capacity as administrator of Enlil and as warrior defending the cosmic order against chaos, Ninurta epitomizes the ancient conceptualization of the mission of kingship. Foreknowledge of the divine will was crucial to successful royal performance, as royal actions had to align with the original cosmic scheme and with the notion of *kittu*, cosmic truth and stability. By coupling divination and the Ninurta mythology under the aegis of the god Ea in the ancient *Catalogue*, scholars inscribed the mandate of kingship into the cosmic scheme designed by the gods.

In shaping the image of royal perfection, the scholars stressed the king's expertise and scholarly knowledge, which allowed him to access the divine world and maintain the cosmic order. Interestingly, it is in the late Sargonid period, when the scholars had long since managed to secure their position at the Assyrian royal court and had made themselves indispensable through their authoritative knowledge of extispicy, astrology, and exorcism, that they active-

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<sup>36</sup> Machinist 2003b.

<sup>37</sup> Frahm 2011, 24; such reasoning entails a different notion of the sacredness of the text, as the notion of inalterability applies to the content rather than to the textualization process of the individual text. Notwithstanding the message of the colophons affirming that the scribe did not alter the text, there was no notion of a closed canon. Rather, the ancients considered their cultural texts as part of the cosmic truth and stability (*kittu*) determined by divine decree in the mythical past; see Démare-Lafont 2011.

ly stressed the superiority of the king and concomitantly their asymmetrical relationship with him. Epithets describing the king as the “image of the god” (*tamšīlu*) or as the “flesh of the god” (*šīru*) are attested primarily in letters written by scholars to the king in which the king’s absolute power and authority is emphasized explicitly. The context for the verbal iteration of this asymmetrical relationship is always linked to the expression of a scholar’s gratitude or obligation to the king. In this vein, the royal advisor Adad-šumu-ušur expresses his gratitude to Esarhaddon for having decided to retain him and his family in the royal entourage by likening the king’s will to the will of the god Marduk in his capacity for care:

“The father of the king, my lord, was the image of Bēl,  
And the king, my lord, is the image of Bēl.”<sup>38</sup>

A passage from an astrological report to the king (perhaps Esarhaddon) is even more explicit, as it plays with an opposing couplet that refers both to Marduk’s care and to his devastating wrath, a motif well known from prayer literature and *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*:

“The compassionate Lord, the warrior Marduk,  
Was angry at night,  
but relented in the morning.  
O king of the world, you are the very image of Marduk.  
When you were angry, we  
suffered the anger of the king our lord,  
(but) we (also) saw the king relent.”<sup>39</sup>

In another letter the king is equated with the sun god, an image that emerges in Assyrian ideology in the time of Tukulti-Ninurta I (1233–1177 BCE) as part of the discourse relating to the solarization of divine and human kingship. As Peter Machinist stresses, the ruler’s sovereign control over the known world is akin to the sun god’s manifestation of “the light of his rule over the world.”<sup>40</sup> In one of his letters, Adad-šumu-ušur plays with this metaphor to persuade Esarhaddon – who is suffering from an illness – to show himself to his officials and assert his authority:

Why, then, today, for the second time, has this table not been brought before the king, my lord? Who is in the dark longer than Šamaš, the king of the gods – staying in the dark

<sup>38</sup> LAS I no. 228 obv. 18–19.

<sup>39</sup> SAA 8 no. 333.

<sup>40</sup> Machinist 2006, 172.

for a full day and a night, even for two days? The king, the lord of all the lands, is the very image of Šamaš. He should be in the dark for (only) half a day.<sup>41</sup>

In one of his letters, Adad-šumu-ušur elaborates on a proverb by playing with the double meaning of the word *šillu*, which means either “shadow” or “likeness/image:”

“The shadow of god is man, and the shadow of man is man.” (This man is) the king, (for) he is the likeness of the god (*muššuli ša ili*).<sup>42</sup>

These textual sources reveal a scholarly elite that draws on exclusive ritual and theological knowledge to secure its elevated status and to distinguish itself from the rest of the population, even as it takes great care to emphasize the king’s uncontested authority. The more that the scholars usurped rhetorical strategies formerly reserved for the king, however, the more they limited the reservoir of strategies that could convey the king’s ultimate authority and unrivalled status. The *Enmeduranki Legend* is illustrative of the way that scholars could work to reinforce their position in the social hierarchy. In this text, haruspices tie themselves to the king while emphasizing their privileged origin in the ancient cult centers, going so far as to exclude colleagues from the rest of Babylonia. The legend exemplifies how scholars could situate themselves alongside the king in the direct line of the transfer of divine knowledge, and is therefore a clear example of scholars co-opting the institution of kingship in order to strengthen their own position.

The textual evidence points to a complex balance between power and authority. In Mesopotamia, power and authority were not united seamlessly in a single agent.<sup>43</sup> While power was the preserve of the king – who could make life and death decisions regarding his subjects and treat his scholars abominably – the scholars nevertheless retained their authoritative voice as the rightful guardians of tradition. In assuming their role as transmitters and producers of symbolic systems and cultural practices, the scholars played a key role in creating the authority of kingship. While political elites could choose to ignore their scholarly advisors, in the end they could not escape the cultural definition of the universal order articulated by the scholars and the place that kingship was assigned within it.

Together with the palace officials and the clergy of the temples, whose power derived from their control over substantial economic resources, the

<sup>41</sup> LAS I no. 196 obv. 14–rev. 6, quoted after Machinist 2006, 173.

<sup>42</sup> SAA 10 no. 207 r. 10–13.

<sup>43</sup> Lincoln 1994, 37 ff, esp. 38.

scholars tacitly acknowledged the hierarchical relations of power and actively contributed to its symbolic system, which was ultimately deployed in diverse media including text, ritual, and image. These various social groups constituted both the agents in and the audience of the public manifestation of power and authority. They were all actively engaged in the production and reproduction of the ceremonial etiquette, the code of gestures, officially prescribed rites, and the language of power.<sup>44</sup> The dynamic interaction between the king and the scholars in designing the royal *body politic* demonstrates that “power” and “authority” were relational concepts that even in the Assyrian monarchical system were built on constellations of social groups and interdependencies.<sup>45</sup> These power relations were reflected and publicized in the constellations of the gods in the polytheistic pantheon, who entered a process of mutual legitimization together with the king. Accordingly, rather than thinking in terms of totalitarian and despotic power, we should aim to decode the cultural strategies deployed by the political and religious elites to construct *social distinction* and to define their position of *authority and prestige*. My emphasis here, of course, is on the *participation* of the elites in *shaping* and *sharing* the discourse of power.

As pointed out by Jean-Jacques Glassner,<sup>46</sup> the king and the political elites originated in the same social class, and very often the highest offices were occupied by members of the royal family, groups that were close to the royal family, and other people of social prestige. This type of interdependent social fabric already existed in the archaic period<sup>47</sup> and persisted throughout the history of Mesopotamia. It functioned on the basis of familial relationships, as well as on the principle of exchange of gifts and royal grants. Nonetheless, over the centuries we constantly see the king deploying additional strategies to define his authority, which operated on the notion of limited access (as expressed in architecture and protocol), invisibility, and exclusivity.

## 11.4 Texts as the Voices of the Scholars

Beyond the textual evidence for individual scholars in the various text genres discussed at the beginning of this chapter, it is possible to consider literary

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<sup>44</sup> Bourdieu 1977 and 1991, 112.

<sup>45</sup> Weber 1976, 28; Holm 1969; Gladigow 1998.

<sup>46</sup> Glassner 1993, 18.

<sup>47</sup> Glassner discusses the social groups of the Usar.re<sub>2</sub>.ne, who included people close to the royal family, and the lu<sub>2</sub>.IGI.NIGIN<sub>2</sub>.ne, who according to Glassner and Selz must have been part of the “aristocracy”, see Selz 1989, 121 who translates “Leute von Ansehen.” While both



texts themselves as evidence of the presence of scholars in the entourage of the king and as carriers of tradition. Since it is possible to draw a distinction between bureaucratic literacy and higher education, the presence of literary texts indicates the presence of people capable of engaging with the cultural discourse.

There is clear evidence of intense communication between educated scribes or scholars from Aššur and learned circles further south at the beginning of the second millennium BCE. Of particular significance in this respect is the creation of an Assyrian *Sargon Legend* rich in allusions to literary texts from the Sumero-Babylonian horizon,<sup>48</sup> the discovery of Old Assyrian incantations, some of which contain traces of *Hymnic Epical Dialect*,<sup>49</sup> the unearthing of an exemplar of the *Sumerian King List* at Tell Leilan, and the elaborate and culturally rich character of Šamši-Adad I's inscriptions. I have suggested that the schools of the kingdom of Ešnunna (including Meturan and Šaduppum) might be one of the key venues through which the Babylonian stream of tradition was transmitted to Aššur. This possibility gains further credence from the fact that traces of a school tradition that includes a royal ideological discourse are already attested at Ešnunna during the Akkad period,<sup>50</sup> thus testifying to a longstanding scholarly tradition in that eastern Tigridian kingdom. This 'school of Ešnunna' may ultimately derive in large measure from the cultural traditions that developed in the city state of Lagaš during the Pre-Sargonic period. Lagaš was a powerful city-state and continued to be an important economic center through the Old Akkadian period and into the Ur III period. The importance and continuity of the culture of Lagaš is apparent in the adoption of its calendar by the craftsmen's guilds of the Ur III state.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, the iconography of Eannatum's *Stele of the Vultures* provided the model for the later steles of King Sargon (Louvre Sb 2/6053), for Narām-Sîn's *Victory Stele*, and for the Daduša Stele, which depicts the king smiting the enemy in the role of Ninurta. Lagaš, Ešnunna, and Aššur all share a conception of the status of the city-ruler vis-à-vis the city god that is expressed in the title ENSI<sub>2</sub>, along with commonalities in their royal inscriptions, particularly regarding their extensive military reports. These cultural similarities support the idea that there

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scholars interpret the term as indicating a social distinction, Renger understands it as a certain group of professionals in the temple of the goddess Baba (*RIA* 4, 440). I would like to thank Gonzalo Rubio for the lexicographic information.

48 See *Chapter* 3.5.2.

49 Michel 2004; Barjamovic and Larsen 2008.

50 Westenholz 1974–77.

51 Sallaberger 1999, 236.

was a network of scholarly communication and transmission along the Tigris River. When the evidence from Mari is included in this picture – as attested in the inscriptions of Yahdun-Līm – it becomes possible to delineate a network of intense scribal and scholarly interaction and to define a northern cultural horizon that encompassed Ešnunna, Aššur, and Mari. This interaction may have promoted and facilitated the movement of Babylonian scholars to Aššur and Šubat-Enlil. The contribution of the Sargonic kings to later Assyrian ideological discourse, as mediated through Šamši-Adad I, cannot be overemphasized in this dynamic. It is unique in the development of intertextuality in Mesopotamia insofar as it is the only example of an ideological discourse formulated in royal inscriptions that went on to impact the production of mythic and legendary texts rather than the other way around. The Sargonic contribution promoted the creation of a rich corpus of legends centered on the kings Sargon and Narām-Sîn.

During the Old Babylonian period, the intertextual relationship between the Old Assyrian *Sargon Legend* and one of Šamši-Adad I's commemorative inscriptions represents the earliest example of the epic tradition influencing the rhetoric of royal inscriptions, in this case with regard to the geographical notion that the territory controlled by Sargon extended from the Mediterranean Sea to the region of the Turukkeans. From the Middle Assyrian period onward myth and epic formed the primary platform for the debate on kingship; the fruits of such reflection then percolated into the royal inscriptions of the Assyrian kings.

The dynamics by which epic or mythical discourse articulated particular thoughts and concepts about the institution of kingship that were subsequently incorporated into royal ideology are apparent, for example, in the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*. This epic – which draws on the *Etana Myth* – anticipates a rhetoric that justifies the military campaigns of Assyrian kings with reference to the treacherous behavior of their enemies, a rhetoric that was ultimately integrated into Assyrian royal inscriptions.<sup>52</sup> In addition to their use of the Standard Babylonian dialect, the distinct literariness of Assyrian royal inscriptions is evident in their plotment, which follows the gist of the combat myth or other mythic narratives. Further, figurative speech and intertextual literary allusions have been noted as expressions of the scholarly voice underlying royal inscriptions (see *Chapters Six, Seven and Eight*).

But it is possible to go much further. The form and content of particular texts, as well as the meaning that they gain through their relationship with other

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<sup>52</sup> See *Chapter Seven*.

texts<sup>53</sup> – as discussed in *Chapter Eight* – are to my mind key indicators of a highly erudite circle of scholars responsible for the production of cultural discourse in general and of ideology as its subdiscourse in particular. Instead of adhering to a Western notion of authorship,<sup>54</sup> treating the literary qualities and cultural sophistication of ancient Mesopotamian texts as witnesses to the voice of the scholar appears to me to be a legitimate means of bringing the *producers* of ideological discourse into the foreground.

It should be kept in mind that during the Sargonid period cuneiform writing was still a privileged vehicle for the preservation and production of cultural memory. Cuneiform signs are polysemic and can be read as logograms, phonetic elements, or classifiers.<sup>55</sup> Cuneiform writing, moreover, always has the potential to be read logographically and can represent multiple languages simultaneously, resulting in a level of semantic flexibility that is particularly evident in the fluidity marking the relationship between written Sumerian and Akkadian.<sup>56</sup> This semantic flexibility generated a scholarly mindset that was necessarily adept in the production of textual interpretations and commentaries. In addition to fostering “scribal traditionalism in the antiquarian devotion to a script and language,”<sup>57</sup> this scholarly mindset promoted a predilection for the various forms of intertextuality discussed throughout this book. Cuneiform texts transcend their plain meaning and were not written or read with only the most obvious interpretations in mind; the intertextuality and intermediality of text, ritual, and image serve as an inexhaustible reservoir for those seeking to read between the lines, with reference either to the polysemy of the signs and icons themselves or with the reference to the rich web of discursive expressions pertaining to cultural memory.

The transmedial scope of my analysis in this book has focused primarily on myth, royal inscription, and ritual, and has outlined the procedures for world-construction in these contexts, revealing in the process the mythic dimensions of the narrative way of world-making.<sup>58</sup> The “storyworld” of the combat myth enabled us to make “inferences about situations, characters, and occurrences

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53 Bloom 1975.

54 See the discussion about hymns attributed to Enheduanna, daughter of Sargon of Akkad, Civil 1980, Black 2002, Rubio 2009, 27–28, Lion 2011 and Brisch 2011. On authorship see further Foster 1991.

55 Woods, 2010, 43; Frahm 2011.

56 Rubio 2006.

57 Rubio 2006, 49.

58 Herman 2009. Herman’s approach goes back to Nelson Goodman’s study of *Ways of World-making* published in 1978. He defined five procedures of worldmaking: composition and decomposition, weighting, ordering, deletion, and supplementation.

either explicitly mentioned in or implied by a narrative text or discourse.”<sup>59</sup> As such, the combat myth serves as a mental model “of situations and events being recounted – of who did what to and with whom, when where, why, and in what manner.”<sup>60</sup> This storyworld cuts across media, genres, and communicative contexts to fashion the image of the Assyrian king and to manipulate and communicate the experience of the institution of kingship. Although a core of world-making procedures is common to the various media and text categories, the choice of genre retains its meaning with regard to conditioning the reception of a particular message. In regicentric literature – including heroic poems and royal inscriptions – and in ritual, for instance, the historical king is introduced into a framework articulated and defined by myth. The discussion of various text categories has revealed that the choice of genre is crucial in the process of meaning-production. While the legends centered on the kings of Akkad stylize these figures as models of kingship and are much more diversified in their choice of motifs, individual kings aspired to demonstrate in their inscriptions that they had met the cultural expectations associated with kingship. In other words, narrative structures functioned as carriers of meaning, constituting content<sup>61</sup> and shaping the royal message. The poetic or narrative form thus extended and concretized the meaning-production generated by myth, while its aesthetic dimension informed its reception.

Particular choices concerning world-making procedures were made by scholars and are already apparent in *Eannatum's Stele of the Vultures* (Pre-Sargonic), the victory steles of the kings of Akkad, and the steles of Daduša and Šamši-Adad I. Beyond the medium of the image, these world-making procedures are evident in the literary texts and royal inscriptions contemporary to these monuments. Intertextuality between texts and intermediality between image, text, and ritual enhanced the efficaciousness of the message that was conveyed.

As is clear from the collections of rituals, incantations, omen reports, and omen series that have been recovered from the libraries of scribes and scholars, the authors or text producers of these works were concerned with the supervision of, involvement in, or simply being knowledgeable about cultic, divinatory and exorcistic practices. The earlier chapters of this book demonstrate that dividing the production of texts along ‘historiographic’, ‘literary,’ and practice oriented lines is inappropriate. Although the educational process pertaining to liturgical, magical, and divinatory texts might have differed from the educa-

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<sup>59</sup> Herman 2009, 72.

<sup>60</sup> Herman 2009, 72–73.

<sup>61</sup> White 1987; Iser 1994; Nünning 2013.

tional process related to the broader bureaucratic curriculum in the Old Babylonian period,<sup>62</sup> it is obvious that scholars, whether diviners or exorcists, were responsible for scribal training and the production of texts unrelated to the curriculum. In light of this, it must be asked whether a clear-cut distinction between the supposedly independent school milieu of the Old Babylonian period and the purely utilitarian scribalism in thrall to the royal court that has been posited for the first millennium can still be maintained.<sup>63</sup> It is true that except for the *Erra Epic* few new major mythical narratives were produced during the first millennium, but many other genres of a highly literary character were created, revealing that while scholarship was steeped in the stream of tradition, it nevertheless retained its creativity and inventiveness and devised new forms of expression. The libraries of exorcists in both Old Babylonian Meturan and in Sargonid Aššur are remarkably similar with regard to the social standing of their owners, who were authoritative figures involved in the production of world-making; further, the houses to which these two libraries belong have in common their role as institutions concerned with collecting and producing scholarly lore (see especially texts such as the *Sargon Geography* and the *Weidner Chronicle* in the exorcist's library in Aššur), their work on behalf of the palace, and their function as centers of education. Hard evidence of a close relationship between intellectual loci of this kind and the palace is tenuous for the early periods, but surviving texts and monuments indicate that such cooperation was standard. The kings relied on the scholars as the authoritative guardians of tradition, who could shape the royal image at any given historical moment. For the Tigridian area at least, then, the sweeping claims made by some modern scholars – particularly those interested primarily in the literary, lexical, and mathematical text corpus from Southern Babylonia – concerning the independence of scholarship in the Old Babylonian period should be reconsidered.

The chapters of this book have opened a succession of windows that are intended to offer some insight into what a discussion of royal ideology in its relationship to religion and cultural discourse actually entails. By adopting a diachronic approach, I demonstrated how tropes accumulated and were reworked through time. The complexity that characterizes Sargonid period cultural production represents the culmination of the work of scholarly circles concerned with shaping Mesopotamian cultural discourse over the course of millennia. This chapter has demonstrated once again that those texts, images, and rituals that fashioned the image of the *body politic* of the Assyrian king

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<sup>62</sup> Tinney 2013, 589.

<sup>63</sup> Vanstiphout 1999: 92–93.

could only have been created by scholars very well versed in the various media that constituted the cultural memory of Assyria and Babylonia. Far more than a scholarly demonstration of erudition and skill in handling various media was at stake, however. Anchoring a text, image, or ritual in the rich web of intertextuality and intermediality created or made visible a particular truth, a truth that connected historical reality with the mythic past and thereby sanctioned the individual ruler as the legitimate occupant of the royal throne.

# Appendix

## No. 1 LKA 62

Ebeling 1949; Edzard 2004

- 1 [la-a-i]ḫ a-a-bi da-i-iš na-ki-ri-i-šu
  - 2 [ba-'ir<sup>2</sup>]x i-me-ri KUR-i da-li-hi bu-lu EDIN
  - 3 [ba-A-A-ru] ḏA-AŠ-šur tuk-lat-su ḏIM ri-šu-šu
  - 4 [a-l]i-ik a-na pa-ni-šu a-šá-red DINGIR.MEŠ ḏMAŠ
  - 5 ba-a-a-ru a-na i-me-ri i-ka-pu-da qab-l[u]
  - 6 a-na qi-it na-piš-ti-šu-nu ú-sa-ha-na pa-tar-šu
  - 7 i-iš-mu-ú i-me-re-<sup>r</sup>e<sup>r</sup> i-da-ku-ku ina re-e-ši
  - 8 pu-lu-uh-tu šá ba-a-a-ri e-li-šu-nu la tab-kât
  - 9 i-ma-ha-ru te-šu-ú a-a-ú šá i-si-ni-qa-a-na-ši
  - 10 šá qe-ri-ib-ni la i-mu-ru ú-pa-ra-du pu-hu-ur-<sup>r</sup>ne<sup>r</sup>(coll.)
  - 11 a-ni-nu ú-zu-ba-a-ni ina ki-pa-(at) KUR-i šá-qu-ti
  - 12 i-ma-si-ri šá ša-du-e šu-pa-ta-ni ma-a ra-ma-at
  - 13 šá-a-ra šá ba-a-a-ri li-šá-i ki-pa-su-ma
  - 14 ši-<sup>r</sup>la<sup>r</sup>-at qa-al-ti-šú e li-il-li-ka (ka)-šá-da pu-hu-ru-ti
  - 15 iš-me-e ba-a-a-ru šá bu-lu KUR-i da-ba-bu
  - 16 šá-an-su-ku ḫè-šú-nu si-qi-ri-šú-nu pi-it-ru-du
  - 17 ma-a(la) pi<sub>5</sub>-(i) ši-ir-'a-an-šú-nu zi-ka-ru ma-a-la mal-du
  - 18 a-na qu-ra-de-e šá e-li [KUR]-<sup>r</sup>di<sup>r</sup> pu-tu-ú i-zaq-qa-ar
  - 19 ni-i-li-ik šá bu-li KUR-di ḫa<sup>r</sup>-ga-al-ta-šú-nu ni-iš-kun
  - 20 i-ka-ki-i-ni-i šá sa-ha-an [d]a-mi-šú-nu ni-qi
  - 21 a-de-e-ni ú-me-šu il-tap-pa-ta pu-ha-di
  - 22 il-ta-mar ki-ma ḏIM ḏŠá-maš i-ši-me-di ma-ši-ri
- Rev.
- 23 har-ra-an še-<sup>r</sup>lal<sup>r</sup>-ti u<sub>4</sub>-me ir-ti-di [x x x]
  - 24 a-du la ḏŠá-maš na-PÁ-hu i-bi-ru-šu-nu an-qu-lu
  - 25 ú-šir-ri-ḫi lib-bi a-ra-ti ú-na-pi-il la-ku-ti
  - 26 ša da-nu-ti-šú-nu ú-na-ki-is ki-šá-da-ti
  - 27 qu-tu-ru ma-ti-šú-nu ERÍN.MEŠ-šú-nu i-<sup>r</sup>te<sup>r</sup>-di-il
  - 28 ša a-na Aš+šur i-ha-ḫu-ú i-me-i kar-mi-iš
  - 29 la-za-mu-ru li-it Aš+šur da-'a-na ša i-tal-la-ka a-na ḫ[u-la-ti]
  - 30 il-la-ta kib-ra-ti i-sa-at-ka-na li-i-t[ú]
  - 31 li-iš-me ma-hi-ru u a-na ar-ki-i lu-šá-[an-ni]

**Commentary:**

**Vs. 1** The participle *lā'itu* normally refers to gods rather than humans, see CAD L, 113 s.v. *lātu*. The expression *dā'iš nakirišu*, by contrast, is a typical epithet of the Assyrian king, see CAD D, 121 s.v. *dāšu*.

The occurrence of an anaptyctic vowel to dissolve a consonant cluster is typical of Neo-Assyrian and indicates the transitional linguistic stage of the Assyrian language towards the end of the second millennium. It occurs several times in this text: *išiniqanāši* (l. 9); *šupātāni* (l. 12); *siqirišunu* (l. 16); *išimedi* (l. 22); *ūšerriṭi* (rev. 3); *lazzammuru* (rev. 7), see Luukko, SAAS 16, pp. 102–108; Hämeen-Anttila, SAAS 13, pp. 34–35. Note that according to Luukko, SAAS 16, p. 102 “anaptyctic vowels always follow the quality of the preceding vowel.” The word *šupātāni* (l. 12) seems to go against that rule, since it follows the quality of the following vowel (*šuptāni* > *šupātāni*). Anaptyxis thus seems to include regressive vowel dissimilation and progressive vowel assimilation: *šup-tāni* > \**šuputāni* > *šupātāni*.

**Vs. 2** The occurrence of ‘overhanging’ vowels (überhängende Vokale) is likewise typical of NA: *dālihi* (l. 2); *išimedi* (l. 22); *ūšerriṭi* (rev. 3); *lazzammuru* (rev. 7), see von Soden GAG<sup>3</sup>, § 18e. Concerning these “overhanging” vowels and their possible syntactical function, see Luukko, SAAS 16, pp. 108–9.

**Vs. 5** *ba-A.A.ru* must be a nominal form of the participle *bā'eru*, see also AHw, vol. 1, 97a, s.v. *bajjāru*. See also the fragmentary hymn of Assurnaširpal I praising the king as hunter, which has the writing *ba-ia-ru*, Frahm 2009b, no. 77 l. 8.

**Vs. 6** The use of the verb *suhhunu* meaning ‘to sharpen (a dagger)’ is unusual; AHw, vol. 2, 1004a suggests “to draw a dagger.” Royal inscriptions usually have *šêlu* in this context, s. Tigl. RIMA 2, A.0.87.1 I 36–37 *šatammu širu ša ḏAššur kakkīšu uša'ilu*.

**Vs. 7** Edzard 2004, 85 in his commentary on line 7 suggests that the unusual plene writing in *i-iš-mu-ú* is meant to symbolize the braying of the donkeys, but it seems that he is confusing spelling with actual utterance. Lambert, *BWL*, p. 328 called this an instance of Vorschlagsvokal and regarded it as common among Middle Assyrian scribes. Such unnecessary extra vowels in verbal prefixes occur already in Old Assyrian, see Hecker, *GKT*, pp. 36–37, § 23d). For abnormal plene spellings see further Aro 1953.

**Vs. 8** *puluhtu kabtat* generally occurs in affirmative clauses and not in negative constructions, as was observed by Edzard 2004, 85 in his commentary on l. 8.



**Vs. 10** According to Edzard 2004, 83 Vs. 10, Maul's collation shows the sign /-ne/ after *pu-hur*.

**Vs. 11** *uzzubāni* is the Assyrian form of the stative 1. Pl. of *ezēbu* D versus Babylonian *uzzubānu*, see v. Soden, GAG § 75b; Hecker, GKT § 72a, and Kouwenberg 2010, p. 180.

**Vs. 12** *i-ma-si-ri* represents a sandhi-writing *immāseri* for *ina mēseri* “in the enclosure.”

**Vs. 13** meaning according to CAD Š/2, 243 s.v. *šā'u* uncertain; AHW vol. 3, 1205b has *šā'u* II “laufen” D Stem, Standard Babylonian. Here I follow the suggestion of A. Salonen, *Jagd und Jagdtiere im alten Mesopotamien*, 1974, 44, who considers *šāru* to be the subject of the sentence with its final /-a/ representing an assonance intended by the author. The previous sandhi writing and other poetic features justify such a suggestion.

**Vs. 14** The change of /-št-/ to /-lt-/ is typical of the Middle Assyrian dialect. The following verbal form *ē lillika* must be a vetitive as the speech of the donkeys continues to refer to the hunter. Edzard reads *ši<sup>r</sup>da<sup>ˀ</sup>-at qa-al-ti-šú e li-il-li-ka šá* DA *pu-hu-ru-ti* with *šiddu* ‘length’ instead of *šilūtu* ‘bowshot’ and *šá* DA for *šá tēhi* “close by” following a suggestion by Michael Streck.

**Vs. 15** *ša būlu ... dabābu* is an anticipatory genitive typical of poetic texts.

**Vs. 16** *šansukū* is a Stative 3. pl.m. with Assyrian vocalization (Babylon.: *šus-sukū*). *tēššunu* exhibits consonantal assimilation: *tēššunu* < *tēnšunu* < *tēnšunu*. *si-qi-ri-šu-nu* = *siqrū* is the Assyrian form corresponding to Babylonian *zikru* “utterance”.

**Vs. 17** Edzard assumes a direct speech introduced by the particle *mā* instead of reading *ma-a-(la)* at the beginning by analogy with what follows in the second half of the line. Edzard, however, cannot make sense of the line. Rather it seems that the speech of the hunter only starts with line 19. The reading /pi<sub>2</sub>/ for the sign NE and to assume the word *pū* “chaff” is problematic because it is attested only in Old Assyrian. To assume the reading *bī-(i)* is equally difficult because the sign /bī-/ is so far not attested in the Genitive of *pū*.

**Vs. 18** Foster 2005, 336 reads *pu-tu* linked with *petū* “to open” and translates “who will make breaches”. Note that D-stem of the verb is attested for the first time during Tiglath-Pileser I, see CAD P, 354 s.v. *petū* 6 i.

**Vs. 19–20** *nillik* and *niqqi* are forms of the cohortative *i nillik* and *i niqqi* as attested in Neo-Assyrian (GAG § 81g).

**Vs. 20** *ikkakkīni* is again a sandhi-writing for *ina kakkīni*. Although *sahān dāmišunu* looks like a status constructus I prefer to connect it with *kakku* in analogy with line 6.

**Rev. 23** *šalaštu* > mA/mB *ša/ēlaltu* is a feminine form of *šalaš*.

**Rev. 24** With *adu* we have the Assyrian variant of Babylonian *adi* otherwise only attested in the Neo-Assyrian dialect.

**Rev. 27** *lazzammur* is the Assyrian Precative of the Gtn stem (Babylonian: *luzzammur*), *lītu* is often paired with the noun *danānu*, mA/nA *da'ānu* in Assyrian royal inscriptions, thus literally: “let me sing the victory and the might of Assur.” At the end of the line Edzard prefers to follow Maul’s collation, which reads SAL without making sense of it. Note, however, that *šūlātu* (pl. t.) “battle” is used in poetic language.

**Rev. 30** *issatkana* is the Assyrian Gt Perf. (GAG § 30g)

### Orthography, Language, and Style

The text has many paleographic features, which are typical of Middle Assyrian: For instance BA, ZU, SU, RU, TU, LI, QU; the signs ŠA, RA are written with four horizontal wedges instead of three (see Cancik-Kirschbaum, *BATSH* 4, pp. 73–87) Note the defective writing of double consonants, which is already typical of Old Assyrian writing, such as *i-ka-pu-da* for *ikappuda* (l. 5), *ú-sa-ha-na* for *usahhana* (l. 6), *i-ma-ha-ru* for *imahharū* (l. 9), *ú-pa-ra-du* for *uparradū* (l. 10), *ki-pa-(at)* for *kippat* (l. 11), *ki-pa-su<sup>1</sup>-ma* for *kippassuma* (l. 13), *ni-i-li-ik* for *nillik* (l. 19), *i-ka-ki-i-ni-i* for *ina kakkīni* (l. 20).

Furthermore, the writings *siqru* for Babylonian *zikru* and *izaqqar* for *izakkar* also constitute Assyrian features (see, for instance, Luukko, SAAS 16, pp. 75–76).

Several phonological features are known primarily from Neo-Assyrian texts, such as the insertion of the anatyptic or epenthetic vowel into a consonant cluster, vowel harmony, full assimilation, and “overhanging” vowels. These features probably account for von Soden’s late dating of this composition in his *Akkadische Handwörterbuch*. Phonological features such as the *-lt-* for *-št-*, however, in addition to the clearly Middle Assyrian paleography, suggest a Middle Assyrian date; perhaps one should date the text towards the end of the Middle Assyrian period.

This date finds further support in the occurrence of words that are otherwise attested only in literary texts, such as *šagaštu/šagaltu* and *šūlātu*, as well

as the expression *puhādi lapātu*, which is reminiscent of the Sumerian term *lú.máš.šu.gíd* designating the profession of the haruspex, and combination of words that seem unattested elsewhere such as *illat kibrāti* and *[lā'i]ṭ ayyābi*.

Some lexems are clearly Assyrian, such as *adu* for *adi* and *siqru* for *zikru*. The writing *izaqqar* represents a mixed form with both Babylonian and Assyrian features. The choice of the vowel in *illatu* constitutes likewise a Babylonian writing rather than Assyrian *ellatu*. Furthermore, the vocalization of the Stative *šansuku* / Babylonian *šassuku* and the Precatives *lazzamur* and *lušanni*, and the otherwise Neo-Assyrian form of the Cohortative, which uses only the Preterite without the particle *i* are additional Assyrian dialectal features, although the latter might also occur in early Standard Babylonian texts, see GAG § 81g.

In contrast to another poetic Middle Assyrian text ascribed to Tiglath-Pileser I, LKA 63, this composition has only one form of the hymnic-epic dialect, which is *karmiš* (rev. 6).

### Thematic and Poetic Structure of the Text

LKA 62 can be divided into five strophes or stanzas, which thematically deal with the following subjects:

1. Introduction of the hunter and his plan to hunt down the donkeys
2. The recalcitrant donkeys
3. The king's reaction and performance of extispicy
4. The military campaign and the defeat of the enemy
5. The praise of the god Assur

These strophes can be further subdivided in hemistichs, monostichs, couplets, triplets and quatrains. This is supported by grammatical, syntactic and phonological elements, as well as the use of alliterations and assonances. The convergence of content and poetics justifies treating them together.

The first strophe consists of the first six verses and can be subdivided into three couplets. The first couplet describes the hunter and follows a parallel structure predicated on the sequence of four participles *[lā'i]ṭ*, *dā'iš*, *[nā'ir]* and *dālihi*, each one subdividing the verse into two hemistichs.

The following two verses are also part of the titulary, which proceeds with details concerning the divine support for the king. Both verses are nominal sentences: the first one plays with the assonance of /a/ and /u/, while the second one is marked by the repetition of the vowels /a/ and /i/. Lines 3 and 4 consist of synonyms given in parallel constructions: in line 4, *ālik pānišu* is complemented by *ašarēd ilāni* thus constituting the climax of the verse. This

epithet of Ninurta is also attested in LKA 63 rev. 8. This climax is stressed by placing the name of the god Ninurta at the end of the sentence.

Lines 5 and 6 form also a couplet introducing an opposition between the hunter and the donkeys, marked by the repetition of the vowels /a/ and /u/ for the hunter (*bayyāru ... ikappuda qabla / usahhana pataršu*) and the repetition of the vowels /a/ and /i/ for the donkeys (*ana imēri / ana qit napištišunu*). These alliterations would emphasize their hostile encounter by means of the sound. Both verses are syntactically parallel with regard to the position of the verb, which is placed at the beginning of the verse and show similarities with LKA 63:

LKA 62 : 5–6     *ikappuda qabl[u] ana qit napištišunu usahhana pataršu.*

LKA 63 : 6'–8'     *ikpudu ... tuqumta ... išēlū kakkēšunu.*

Note, however, that the pairing of “sound” and “meaning” in this fashion has been challenged by some scholars, who regard it as based on the so-called enactment fallacy; see Barry 1980 and Terry 1999.

The positioning of the object *qablu* ‘battle’ and *pataršu* ‘his dagger’ steers the reader’s or auditor’s attention toward the imminent event of the hunt, i.e. the battle.

Further stylistic features of the first strophe show in various forms of parallelism. The lines 1–2 each have two couplets with a parallelismus membrorum. The second verse (l. 2) in addition offers an antithetical parallelism by introducing the contrast between mountain and steppe, which continues in a parallelism with line 1. Both verses further introduce the parallelism of hunt and war as it is negotiated in great detail in the royal inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser I.

While in the first couplets of the strophe the motives of war and hunt are clearly separated, they completely merge in the third and last couplet of the strophe by means of the juxtaposition of the lexemes *bayyāru* and *qablu*.

The following second strophe includes 8 verses (ll. 7–17) and describes the recalcitrant donkeys who resist the subjugation. This motif compares with the insurrection and rebellion as described in LKA 63: 17'–18'. The exact structuring of the strophe is complicated as the direct speech of the donkeys starts in the midst of line 9 continuing until line 14. The second half of the strophe divides clearly into two couplets ll. 11–12 and 13–14. The couplet ll. 11–12 is formed by the chiasmic positioning of the staves *uzzubāni* and *rāmat* as well by the *parallelismus membrorum* of *ina kippat šadî* and *immāseri ša šadê*. The analysis of the four first verses of the second strophe (ll. 7–10) is difficult as verse 9 starts with the direct speech in its second hemistich; on the other hand the lines 7 and 10 have both two hemistichs forming a framework based on the syntactic parallelism.

The third strophe describing the king's reaction toward the recalcitrant donkeys has equally eight verses, which divide into one quatrains and two couplets. The quatrains is built after the model ABBA, whereby the verses 15 and 18 can be read as one sentence, which, in addition, shows a synonym parallelism in the use of the verbs *dabābu* and *zaqāru*. Line 15 stresses the speech of the donkeys by means of its anticipatory genitive. The verses 16 and 17 with two completely parallel hemistichs form an insertion into this sentence. Both hemistichs further use synonymous staves with their use of *mala* form a chiasm.

The following couplet contains the response of the king. Both verses 19–20 form a syntactic unity with their use of the anticipatory genitive and the three cohortatives *nillik*, *niškun*, and *niqqi*. And again our text compares with LKA 63 by the use of rebellious speech, the plan to kill the enemy and its realization (see LKA 63: 19' and 24' *šagaš nakrē* and *hulluq nakrē ušā šaptēšu*).

Similar to the first strophe, the following fourth strophe consists of six verses accounting the battle and subsequent destruction of the enemy. The text has now left the context of the fable moving into human reality with the description of the treatment of pregnant women and babies.

The two announcements of the time *šelalti ūmē* and *adu la Šamaš* characterize the verses 23 and 24 as couplet. Likewise the two following verses form a unity based on the Tricolon *ušerrīti*, *unappil*, and *unakkis* as well as on the antithesis *lakūti // dannūti*. The poetical structure of lines 27 and 28 is disputable. On the one hand one could consider them as a unity based on their images of the 'smoke' (*quturu*) and 'like a ruin' (*karmiš*). On the other hand one could consider line 27 as the concluding verse of the battle account with verse 28 forming the theological quintessence acting as transition towards the Abgesang, the praise to the god Assur.

The last part consists of three verses, ll. 29–31; with regard to its content it is reminiscent of the introduction to the *Anzû Myth* representing a praise to the warrior god Ninurta, and further the *incipits* of the *gangiṭtu*-songs in the song catalogue KAR 158 rev. V 12–14 (Hecker, TUAT NF vol. 7, 54–63) as well as of LKA 64, a heroic poem of Assurnasirpal I.

The pair of the words *mahru arku* in the context of transmission will occur again in the Abgesang of *Enuma elish* VII 157–158 *tak-l[im-tū] mah-r[u-ú i]d-bu-bu pa-nu'-uš-šu // ištur-ma iš-t[a]-kan ana ši-mé-e ar-ku-ti* "The revelation (of the names), which is the first one spoken before him (Marduk), he wrote down and established (it) for posterity to hear."

Hurowitz and Westenholz have already collected the parallels of LKA 62 with the hunting reports in the annals of Tiglath-Pileser I, which I would like to reprint here referring to RIMA 2 for the sake of completeness:

- LKA 62 : 2 *dālihi būlu šēri // mugammer mu''ur šēri* (RIMA 2, A.O.871 vi 57),  
 LKA 62 : 6 *ana qīt napištīšunu // napištāšunu ušeḡti* (RIMA 2, A.O.871 vi 67),  
 LKA 62 : 11 *ina kippat šadī šaqūte // ina qereb huršāni šaqūte* (RIMA 2, A.O.871 vii 8–9).

The previous analysis allows for the following structuring of the text:

Strophe	Lines	Poetical Unit	Theme
I	1– 2	couplet	Introduction of the hunter
	3– 4	couplet	Divine support
	5– 6	couplet	Preparation of the hunt
II	7–10	quatrain	The recalcitrant donkeys
	11–12	couplet	Their notion of security
	13–14	couplet	Their contempt for the hunter
III	15–18	quatrain	Reaction of the hunter
	19–20	couplet	His speech to his soldiers
	21–22	couplet	Performance of extispicy
IV	1– 2	couplet	Military campaign
	3– 4	couplet (Tricolon)	Destruction of the enemy
	5	monostich	Complete wipe-out
	6	monostich	Theological quintessence
V	7– 9	triplet (Abgesang)	Praise to Assur

The comparison between the poetic texts and the historiographic texts allows for an insight into Assyrian poetics. Here the encounter of the acting parties is presented in a dramatic way, as the enemy is represented as an active counterpart who acts and speaks thus having a profile of his own in contrast to the Assyrian royal inscriptions, which tend to draw the enemy as completely passive entity. The enemy and the Assyrian king appear as equal partners. The use of imagery such as the one of the hunter sharpening his dagger to cut the throat of the victim enforces the poetic character of the text.

The use of the motive of the inquiry into the oracles attested in later Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions is not yet part of the Middle Assyrian ones but represents an intertextual link with the *Tukulti-Ninurta I Epic* (iii = A obv. 41' ff.) and perhaps the *Cuthean Legend*. Tiglath-Pileser I only goes into battle after the gods have indicated to him the propitious time. Owing to divine consent the king can count on his success within no time, a motif already negotiated in the Sumerian poem of the *Curse of Akkad* as well as the *Cuthean Legend* determining whether the king will enter cultural memory in a positive or negative way (as Heils- or Unheilsherrscher).

## No. 2 Rm 2, 455 (CT 35 pls. 37–38)

Bauer 1933, 85–87

Rev.

- 1 [... <sup>1d</sup>AN.ŠĀR-DÛ]-A šarru(LUGAL) dan-nu rubû(NUN) na-'a-du šá <sup>d</sup>Ištar(15) be-let tahāzi(MÈ) idi(Ā) ummānāte(E[RIN.HI.A]-šú)
- 2 [... Elamti(NIM.MA)]<sup>ki</sup> ina qé-reb tam-ha-ru ikkisû(KUD-su)-ma DUMU <sup>1d</sup>Bēl-iqīša(EN-BA-š[á])
- 3 [...x-tu-uk <sup>1a</sup>E-la-mi-i ina kišādi(GÛ)-šú i-lu-lu-ma <sup>1d</sup>AN.ŠĀR-DÛ-A
- 4 a-na Ninūa(NINA)<sup>ki</sup> āl(URU) be-lu-ti-šú ha-diš i-riš-šú i-te-ep-pu-šú ni-gu-ti
- 5 [šī-i]p-ru? šá <sup>1</sup>Um-man-i-gaš šar(LUGAL) māt(KUR) NIM.MA<sup>ki</sup> ina mahar(IGI) <sup>1d</sup>AN.ŠĀR-DÛ-A šar(LUGAL) kiššati(ŠÚ)
- 6 [i]-duk-ma i-na <sup>gīs</sup>kussī(GU.ZA)-šú ú-šib <sup>1d</sup>AN.ŠĀR-DÛ-A šar(LUGAL) kiššati(ŠÚ) a-na a-mat
- 7 [... <sup>1</sup>Tam-mar-ī]tu šar(LUGAL) māt(KUR) NIM.MA<sup>ki</sup> <<u> qá-du rab-ban-na-ti-šú
- 8 [Ninūa(NIN)A]<sup>ki</sup> āl(URU) be-lu-ti-šú ina mahri(IGI)-šú it-tan-ga-ra-ár-ru
- 
- 9 [...<sup>d</sup>]Ištar(15) i-ram-mu-šú-ma i-na i-na mi-gir lib-bi-šú-nu it-tar-ru-šú-ma <sup>1</sup>Tam-mar-ītu
- 10 [r]i-šu-ti <sup>1</sup>GIŠ-NU<sub>11</sub>-MU-GI.NA šu-um-mu-ru šu-ú <sup>1a</sup>bārû(HAL) u ra-ban-na-ti-šú
- 11 [... illiku-n]im-ma ú-na-áš-šá-qu šēpē(GĪR<sup>11</sup>)-šú <sup>1</sup>Tam-mar-ītu u <sup>1a</sup>bārû(HAL) ina mahri(IGI)-šú ú-kan-nu a-ha-meš
- 
- 12 [... imittu(15) u šumēlu(2,30) mazzāzu(NA) UR amūt(BĀ-ut) <sup>1d</sup>AN.ŠĀR-DÛ-A šar(LUGAL) kiššati(ŠÚ) šá <sup>d</sup>Šamaš(UTU) u <sup>d</sup>Ištar(15) idi(Ā) ummānāte(ERIN.HI.A)-šú illakû(GIN-ku)-ma
- 13 qé-reb tam-ha-ru i-na-ru-ma iš-ku-nu dabdē(BAD<sub>5</sub>.BAD<sub>5</sub>)-šú-un
- 
- 14 [... šīru(UZU) ga-mir ummāni(ERIN-ni) ina niš(MU) rēš(SAG) hašī(MUR) šá imitti(15) it-taš-kan amūt(BĀ-ut) <sup>1</sup>GIŠ-NU<sub>11</sub>-MU-GI.NA
- 15 [...x it-ti ERIN-ni <sup>1d</sup>AN.ŠĀR-DÛ-A na-ram ilāni(DINGIR.MEŠ) rabūti(GAL.MEŠ) tāhāzu(MÈ) ipušū(DÛ-šú)-ma dabdē(BAD<sub>5</sub>.BAD<sub>5</sub>)-šú
- 16 [...q]é-reb tam-ha-ru iš-ba-tu-nim-ma ina mahar(IGI) <sup>1d</sup>AN.ŠĀR-DÛ-A DUMU.UŠ šar(LUGAL) kiššati(ŠÚ)
- 17 [...] <sup>1</sup>GIŠ-NU<sub>11</sub>-MU-GI.NA la ṭa-ab-ti
- 
- 18 [... ba-r]u-tu šaṭ-ru ina mah-ri-i ultu(TA) libbi(ŠĀ) iškari(ĒŠ.GAR) ki-i as-su-ha ana šarri(LUGAL) be-lí-iá
- 19 [...m]ah-ru-tu šarru(LUGAL) be-lí li-mur an-na-ati amāti(BĀ.MEŠ) šá šarri(LUGAL) be-lí-iá
- 20 [...] šarri(LUGAL) be-lí-iá mah-ru ana libbi(ŠĀ) iškari(ĒŠ.GAR) nu-še-rid ki? x(x) šá x <sup>1</sup>Tam-mar-ītu
- 21 [...] ri-šu-ti šá <sup>1</sup>GIŠ-NU<sub>11</sub>-MU-GI.NA il-la-ka
- Edge
- 22 [...ta]l-lī-ku-ni a-na amāti(BĀ.MEŠ) šá <sup>1</sup>Tam-mar-ītu niš-ṭu[r ...]
- 23 [...]-ti ilāni(DINGIR.MEŠ)-ka li-pu-[šú ...]

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