

**ICONOCLASM AND TEXT  
DESTRUCTION IN THE ANCIENT  
NEAR EAST AND BEYOND**



**ICONOCLASM AND TEXT  
DESTRUCTION IN THE ANCIENT  
NEAR EAST AND BEYOND**

*edited by*

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*with contributions by*

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Joan G. Westenholz, *and* Christopher Woods

*The Oriental Institute Dedicates this Volume to the  
Memory of Eleanor Guralnick  
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*and*

Thomas G. Urban

*with*

Zuhal Kuru

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*To my daughter Nica for her patience*

וַיִּקַּח אֶת-הָעֵגֶל אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ,  
וַיִּשְׂרֹף בָּאֵשׁ, וַיִּטְחֵנוּ, עַד אֲשֶׁר-דָּק;  
וַיִּזֶר עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם, וַיִּשְׂקֵךְ אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.  
שמות לב, כ

He took the calf that they had made,  
And burned it in fire, and ground it to powder,  
And strewed it upon the water, and made the Israelites drink.  
Exodus 32:20



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## ABBREVIATIONS

### GENERAL

B.C.E.	before the common era
ca.	<i>circa</i> , approximately
C.E.	common era
cf.	<i>confer</i> , compare
cm	centimeter(s)
col(s).	column(s)
DN	deity name
e.g.	<i>exempli gratia</i> , for example
esp.	especially
et al.	<i>et alii</i> , and others
etc.	<i>et cetera</i> , and so forth
ex(x).	example(s)
f(f).	and following
fig(s).	figure(s)
ibid.	<i>ibidem</i> , in the same place
i.e.	<i>id est</i> , that is
lit.	literally
m	meter(s)
mng.	meaning
n(n).	note(s)
no(s).	number(s)
obv.	obverse
p(p).	page(s)
pers. comm.	personal communication
pl(s).	plate(s)
PN	personal name
rev.	reverse
RN	royal name
s.v(v).	<i>sub verbo</i> , under the word(s)
trans.	translation
v(v).	verse(s)

### COLLECTION SIGNATURES

ABL	Assyrian and Babylonian Letters
AO	Department of Near Eastern Antiquities, Musée du Louvre, Paris
BE	Field numbers, Koldewey's excavations at Babylon
BM	British Museum, London
Bo	Inventory numbers of Boğazköy tablets excavated 1906–1912
CBS	Catalogue of the Babylonian Section, University Museum, Philadelphia
EAH	E. A. Hoffman Collection
EŞ	Eski Şark Eserleri Müzesi, Istanbul
IM	Iraq Museum, Baghdad
Ist.	Istanbul Archaeology Museum
JdE	Journal d'Entrée, Cairo Museum
OIM	Oriental Institute Museum, Chicago
Sb	Musée du Louvre, objects excavated at Susa
VA	Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin
YBC	Babylonian Collection, Yale University Library

### HITTITE LANGUAGE AND SCRIPTS

MH	Middle Hittite
MS	Middle Hittite script
NH	New Hittite
NS	New Hittite script
OH	Old Hittite
OS	Old Hittite script

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- ARM 26 Jean-Marie Durand. *Archives épistolaires de Mari*, Volume 1, Part 1. Archives royales de Mari 26. Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1988.
- BBSt Leonard W. King. *Babylonian Boundary-Stones and Memorial-Tablets in the British Museum*. 2 volumes. London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1912.
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- BIWA Rykle Borger. *Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996.
- CAD A. Leo Oppenheim et al., eds. *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1956–2010.
- CHD *The Hittite Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. Edited by Hans G. Güterbock, Harry A. Hoffner, and Theo P. J. van den Hout. Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1980–.
- CTH Emmanuel Laroche. *Catalogue des textes hittites*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1971.
- DNP Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider, editors. *Der Neue Pauly*. 18 volumes. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1996–2003.
- ETCSL The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature. Jeremy B. Black, G. Cunningham, J. Ebeling, E. Flückiger-Hawker, E. Robson, J. Taylor, and G. Zólyomi. Oxford, 1998–2006. <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/>
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- HW<sup>2</sup> Johannes Friedrich and Annelies Kammenhuber, editors. *Hethitisches Wörterbuch*. 2nd edition. Heidelberg: Winter, 1975–.
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- ITT 4 Louis-Joseph Delaporte. *Inventaire des tablettes de Tello*, Volume 4: *Textes de l'époque d'Ur*. Mission française de Chaldée. Paris: E. Leroux, 1912.
- KAI Herbert Donner and Wolfgang Röllig. *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*. 5th edition. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002.

- KAR Erich Ebeling. *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts*, Volume 1: *Autographien*. Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichung der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft 28/2. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1919.
- KBo Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi. Leipzig, Berlin.
- KJV King James Version of Bible.
- KTU Manfred Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín, editors. *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places*. Second, enlarged edition. *Abhandlungen zur Literatur Alt-Syrien-Palästinas und Mesopotamiens* 8. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995.
- KUB Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi. Berlin.
- LKA Adam Falkenstein. *Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Uruk*. Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 1931.
- LS Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott. *Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968.
- MDP 6 Vincent Scheil. *Textes élamites-sémitiques* III. *Mémoires de la Délégation en Perse* 6. Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1905.
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- NJPS *Tanakh: A New Translation of The Holy Scriptures According to the Traditional Hebrew Text*. Philadelphia, New York, Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1985.
- PBS 5 Arno Poebel. *Historical and Grammatical Texts*. *Publications of the Babylonian Section* 5. Philadelphia: The University Museum, 1914.
- PSD *The Sumerian Dictionary of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania*. Philadelphia: The University Museum, 1984-.
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- RTC F. Thureau-Dangin. *Recueil de tablettes chaldéennes*. Paris: E. Leroux, 1903.
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## PREFACE

This volume is a result of the two-day seminar devoted to Iconoclasm and Text Destruction in the Ancient Near East and Beyond, held at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago on April 8–9, 2011. The necessity for research of ancient Near Eastern iconoclasm first came to me while preparing lectures for my courses on Mesopotamian art, during which I realized that ancient statues in the round were hacked. It is my honor and pleasure to express here my sincere gratitude to those whom I owe the intellectual inspiration for bringing the idea of this conference and publication to life.

Thus, my first and deepest thanks are to Victor A. Hurowitz, my PhD supervisor, and to Peter Machinist, who was a referee of my dissertation. In its four pages dedicated to decapitation of the statues and mutilation of their facial features within the chapter on the rituals with severed heads, they discerned the research potential of the theme of iconoclasm, and their comments stimulated my future investigation. Victor's advice and help accompanied me throughout the preparation of the conference and the volume, starting with the idea and the concept, and ending with the choice of the epigraph.

During the two years of preparation for the seminar and publication, two outstanding scholars, to whom the study of iconoclasm owes much, left us forever. It is my sincere hope that the present volume is a modest addition to their work and living memory. To the first of them — Oleg Grabar — I am indebted not only for the great advantage and pleasure of learning from his publications, but for an enthusiasm which he instilled in me through our correspondence. The second, Mark A. Brandes, passed away while this volume was in preparation. In 1980, he published "Destruction et mutilation de statues en Mesopotamie." This publication laid the basis for the further investigation of iconoclasm in Mesopotamia. Its insights pointed to the main features of the phenomenon from the dawn of history on and were fruitfully used and developed by the participants of the conference.

Irene Winter provided a response to the seminar papers and critically articulated some of the problems and possible future directions of the study of iconoclasm. She pointed to "the need for greater attention to the methodology of systematic cross-cultural comparison, not just the juxtaposing or citing of parallel case studies; the criteria for iconoclasm as distinct from other processes of disintegration and destruction; the similarities and differences between 'representation' in image and in text; the need for a systematic typology of events considered as iconoclastic, in which 'intention' can be reconstructed from evidence, not just asserted; and the relationship between iconoclasm and its preconditions of the power vested in both word and image." The insights expressed in Winter's response can be seen throughout the volume, and I am cordially grateful to Irene for the inspiration that she gave to the seminar. Her call for "the need for rigorous cross-cultural study and cross-cutting issues on the table during the symposium" remains a challenge for investigators of iconoclasm to overcome.

I take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude again to the seminar's participants whose vital interest in the topic and insightful research brought this collective volume to light. The logistics of the seminar were expertly handled by Mariana Perlinac, Assistant to the Director, and Meghan Winston, Special Events Coordinator. I thank Miguel Civil, Marian Feldman, Robert Biggs, Janet Johnson, Richard Neer, and Walter Kaegi for serving as chairs during the seminar. I am also indebted to Gil Stein, Director of the Oriental Institute, for creating this series of seminars and publications. The papers of Eleanor Guralnick and Robert Ritner were added on the kind suggestion of Gil Stein and Christopher Woods. Last but not least, I am happy to sincerely thank Thomas Urban, Leslie Schramer, and Zuhail Kuru for their devoted work and cooperation during the publication process.



Seminar participants, pictured, left to right: (front row) Marian Feldman, Hanspeter Schaudig, Joan Goodnick Westenholz, Claudia Suter, Irene Winter, Angelika Berlejung; (middle row) Seth Richardson, JoAnn Scurlock, Robin Cormack, Natalie N. May, Betsy M. Bryan; (back row) Silke Knippschild, Nathaniel Levtow, Petra Goedegebuure, Walter Kaegi, Christopher Woods. Not pictured: Janet Johnson, Richard Neer, Miguel Civil, Robert Biggs, W. J. T. Mitchell, Lee Palmer Wandel



# ICONOCLASM AND TEXT DESTRUCTION IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Natalie N. May, *The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago\**

Без носа человек — черт знает что: птица не птица, гражданин не гражданин, — просто возьми, да и вышвырни в окошко!

— Н. В. Гоголь, *Нос*

... for a man without a nose is the devil knows what — a bird, but not a bird, a citizen, but not a citizen, a thing just to be thrown out the window!

— N. V. Gogol, *Nose*

(an omen says): if an image of the king of the land or an image of his father or an image of his grandfather falls over and breaks, or if its features become indistinct, (then) the days of the king of this land will be short!

— The Building Ritual (*TU 45 rev. 14*)

Destruction of images and texts has a universal character: it is inherent in various societies and periods of human history. Iconoclasm in its diverse manifestations through the millennia of human history has been investigated on many occasions. Recent demolition of communist “visual propaganda” systems, which followed the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the collapse of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe, and the fall of the Berlin Wall, instigated a series of studies and conferences dedicated to the subject.<sup>1</sup> Another stimulant of

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\* I am grateful to Victor A. Hurowitz, Kristin Kleber, Joan Goodnick Westenholz, and Lee Palmer Wandel for their corrections, advice, and suggestions during various stages of preparation of this paper.

<sup>1</sup> Only recent conferences and symposia include: Icons and Iconoclasm, University of Virginia, September 22–24, 2010 (<http://fid2010.wordpress.com/program/>); Iconoclasm: The Breaking and Making of Images, University of Toronto, March 17–19, 2011; The Icon and the Idol, Aniconism and Iconoclasm: The Problem of Divine Anthropomorphic Images, a symposium organized by Joan Goodnick Westenholz, at Käthe Hamburger Kolleg, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany, June 16–17, 2010 (<http://www.khk.ceres.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/de/event/aktivitaeten/das-symbol-und-das-idol/>). Some mono-

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graphs, e.g.: Dario Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997); Alain Besançon, *The Forbidden Image: An Intellectual History of Iconoclasm* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004; revised paperback ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Stacy Boldrick and Richard Clay, eds., *Iconoclasm: Contested Objects, Contested Terms* (London: Ashgate, 2007); Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Exhibitions investigating iconoclasm and “its evil sister, idolatry” (Mitchell, this volume), which took place in the world leading museums (as listed by Boldick and

current attention to the field was the shock experienced by Western society over the obliteration of the Bamian Buddhas in Afghanistan by the Taliban, and the attack on and ruin of the World Trade Center.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to the ancient Near East, where iconoclastic attitudes were conceived and iconoclastic patterns forged to be followed for ages, the phenomenon of iconoclasm has not received proper scholarly attention and has not been persistently and systematically examined.

The primary purpose of the present volume is to analyze the cases of and reasons for mutilation of texts and images in Near Eastern antiquity. Together with the mutilation of human beings it was a widespread and highly significant phenomenon in the ancient Near East. However, the goals meant to be realized by iconoclasm in the ancient Near East differed from those aimed at in other cultures. The main goal of this study is to explore ancient Near Eastern, and primarily Mesopotamian, iconoclasm — a field that previously had barely been touched. The principal aim of this interdisciplinary undertaking was to foster comparison and to investigate the continuity of iconoclastic perceptions and practices from Near Eastern antiquity to modernity. We did not set out to explore iconoclasm of Islam, Byzantium, the Reformation, and the present.<sup>3</sup> My sincere hope is that this research will bring ancient Near Eastern iconoclasm to the attention of the scholarly community and will make it available for interdisciplinary discourse.

## PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Investigation of ancient Near Eastern iconoclasm was launched in 1980 by the pioneering article of Mark Brandes. Brandes concentrated his analysis on the complex of mutilated and then buried votive statues excavated at Khafajah, though he compared this Early Dynastic archaeological record to evidence from later periods in Mesopotamia. He already pointed to the uniformity of damage: decapitation and hacking of noses and extremities.

In 1995 Zainab Bahrani defined the totality of relevant research on iconoclasm as “three brief articles,” those of Nylander (1980a),<sup>4</sup> Beran (1988), and Harper (1992). We can now add some eight more to her list: two articles by Bahrani herself (1995, 2004),<sup>5</sup> another contribution by Nylander (1999), an earlier one by Brandes (1980), and recent articles by Kaim (2000), Heinz (2002), Porter (2009), and Feldman (2009). All these studies either treat particular cases of mutilation or certain aspects of its significance. Especially seminal in this respect is Bahrani’s discussion of the mutilation of an image as a magical and performative act (2004, pp. 117–18; 2008, pp. 53–54).

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Clay 2007, p. 3); *Vie et mort de l’image medieval* (Strasbourg/Bern/Zurich, 2000); *Image and Idol: Medieval Sculpture* (Tate Britain, 2001); *Iconoclasm: Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion and Art* (Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie, Karlsruhe, 2002); *Wonder: Painted Sculpture from Medieval England* (Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, 2002); *Gothic: Art for England, 1400–1547* (Victoria and Albert Museum, 2003). Note also *Idol Anxiety* (Smart Museum, the University of Chicago, 2008) and *Erhalten-zerstören-verändern? Denkmäler der DDR in Ost-Berlin. Eine documentarische Ausstellung* (organized by Das Aktive Museum, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Destruction of this avatar of the Western market capitalism in the most violent terrorist act ever became

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itself “an icon of iconoclasm” (Boldrick and Clay 2007, p. 3).

<sup>3</sup> The intensive research of the recent decades resulted in salient changes in concepts of iconoclasm in Byzantium (Cormack, this volume; Brubaker and Haldon 2011), Reformation (e.g., Wandel 2011), and Islam (Grabar 2009; Flood 2002). Robin Cormack (this volume) does not accept the denial of Byzantine Iconoclasm, but admits exaggeration of the strength of the controversy.

<sup>4</sup> Another article by Nylander written in the same year is a variant of the first one (1980b).

<sup>5</sup> The main ideas presented in these articles were also elaborated in chapters 1 and 6 of Bahrani’s *Rituals of War* (2008).

The specific framework for previous scholarship has been the assault on royal and divine effigies, although the phenomenon was in fact much more universal than the obliteration of imagery only.

## MATTERS OF DEFINITION

“Iconoclasm” is a Byzantine word. But the modern comprehension of iconoclasm is strongly influenced by the Protestant attitude to the divine image, idolatry, and the godhead itself, the grounds of which were laid during the Reformation. Iconoclasm, as a subject of scholarly scrutiny, needs defining. The term itself, as generated by the Byzantine controversy, means “breaking of images.” However, not every occasion of breaking and damaging images is necessarily iconoclasm. “Iconoclasm is always about politics” was noted to me by W. J. T. Mitchell. However, politics involves a complex and inextricable mixture of cultural, religious, and ideological targets and pretexts. It is the motivation and the objective behind the act of destruction that makes an act iconoclastic, be this objective political, religious, magical, economic, or an interlacing of all these.<sup>6</sup> The performative dimension underscored by Bahrani (2004, pp. 117–18; 2008, pp. 53–54) was important and probably even ubiquitous, but it was certainly not the only factor involved in the ancient Near Eastern destruction of images.

Iconoclasm in modern perception is not the assault on images alone.<sup>7</sup> Discussing these matters in the course of the seminar, Robin Cormack observed that the word “iconoclasm” became an umbrella term. David Freedberg long ago noted that “associated objects” — books, insignia, status signifiers, cultic utensils, and even buildings — were attacked in iconoclastic outbursts in Europe (1977, pp. 171–73). Lee Palmer Wandel writes in this volume that Reformation iconoclastic violence was against images, “things,” and persons. Does the modern notion of icon/*Bild* and -clasm/-*sturm* as an umbrella term go back to its perception already in the days of the Reformation?

In the ancient Near East temples were an iconoclastic target inseparable from the cult images inside them, as were church buildings during the *Bildersturm*. To Freedberg’s list I add the sack of cities, especially capital cities, destruction or remodeling of religious liturgies, and demolition and defilement of graves. It is significant that ancient Near Eastern lamentations over the destruction of cities deplore the demolition of images, temples, cities, and peoples in one breath — the Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur<sup>8</sup> — and the

<sup>6</sup> One cannot fail to note that political iconoclasm is not applicable to such phenomena as destruction or claims at destruction of art motivated by various artistic approaches and theories (Gamboni 1997, ch. 13, “Modern Art and Iconoclasm,” pp. 255–86) — avant-garde iconoclasm, for instance, modern iconoclastic performances (Boldrick and Clay 2007, p. 2), or individual assaults (Gamboni 1997, pp. 190–211; Freedberg 1985).

<sup>7</sup> Gamboni attempts at departing from the definition of iconoclasm as “wilful destruction of art” (1997, p. 17), but ends with “iconoclasm ... being the most visible form of disqualification of art” (ibid., p. 336; italics mine). That is despite him pointing to another definition, which includes “assault on beliefs and institutions” (ibid., p. 255), and despite that the material assembled in his book displays a variety of iconoclastic targets beyond any possible relation to art and imagery.

<sup>8</sup> The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur (Michalowski 1989, pp. 36–37, line 5) starts with *úru gul.gul.lu.dè é gul.gul.lu.dè* “in order to destroy the city, in order to destroy the temple,” which is repeated as a lament refrain that fuses variously through the entire composition (e.g., ibid., pp. 42–45, lines 108–09; 116–26, 133–42, and 146–53; pp. 46–47, lines 175–77, 180–82; pp. 48–51, lines 202–03, 207–08, 212–13, 216–17, 219–20, 247–48 (= ETCSL text c.2.2.3, lines 5, 108–09, 116–26, 148–54, 175–77, 180–82, 202–03, 207–08, 212–13, 216–17, 219–20, 247–48). The devastation of the capital city — Ur, and especially of its temple of the moon god Nanna, the tutelary deity of Ur — is described in greatest detail (ibid., pp. 62–65 = ETCSL text c.2.2.3, lines 408–48) starting with cutting down the statues and terminating with the priests leaving the city. Obliteration of the statues is also mentioned in connection with de-

biblical book of Lamentations (esp. Lam 1:10 and 2:7<sup>9</sup>); the obliteration and the deportation of divine statues occurs with the ruining of their temples and cities.<sup>10</sup>

Strictly speaking, the seminar and the book title “Iconoclasm and Text Destruction” is a pleonasm that serves to stress what iconoclasm means. That is because in the ancient Near East the power of images is indistinguishable from the power of the word.<sup>11</sup> Bahrani (2003, p. 169) and Nathaniel Levtow (this volume) point to the “iconic aspects,” or “iconicity,” of the text and magic that happens when harming it (e.g., the biblical text and *kudurrus*; Levtow this volume). The magic of text obliteration was ubiquitous. Curses were erased to annihilate their potency, names were chiseled away to wipe out the persons behind them, and treaties were “broken” in the very literal meaning of the word.<sup>12</sup>

The name of a person gave its bearer existence as did his physical body or his image. In her recent book titled *Die Macht des Namens*, Karen Radner writes:<sup>13</sup>

In den Kulturen des Alten Orients werden Name (sum. mu = akk. *šumum*) und Namensträger als bis zur Austauschbarkeit zusammengehörig empfunden: Die Existenz des einen ist an die Existenz des anderen geknüpft. Dem Akt der Namengebung kommt deshalb genauso viel Bedeutung zu wie dem Schöpfungsakt, auf den er zwingend folgt und mit dem er deshalb weitgehend identifiziert wird: Die Formulierung, jemanden oder etwas “mit Namen nennen” (sum. (mu) *še*<sub>21</sub> = akk. (*šumam*) *nabûm*), bezeichnet gleichzeitig auch die Erschaffung des Namensträgers oder, etwas schärfer formuliert, seine Konkretisierung — die genauere Bestimmung seiner Wesenhaftigkeit, seine “Persönlichkeitsbildung.”<sup>14</sup>

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struction of Gaeš (ibid., pp. 48–49 = ETCSL text c.2.2.3, lines 188–90; see also Woods, this volume) and the destruction of the statue of Nin-e’iḡa (Dahl 2011). It is interesting that the Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur repetitively refers to a devastating storm (ud) that destroys the cities of Sumer (ibid., pp. 48–49). Centuries later Sargon II of Assyria compares himself to the storm(god) — <sup>(d)</sup>Adad, wiping away the cities of his enemies (Letter to Aššur, Mayer 1983, pp. 90–91, line 224; pp. 92–93, line 230; pp. 100–01, line 326; pp. 102–03, line 343). Sennacherib realized the metaphor flooding Babylon “more complete than a deluge” (*eli*(UGU) *ša a-bu-bu*; Luckenbill 1924, p. 84, Bavian inscriptions, lines 52 and esp. 53).

<sup>9</sup> The biblical book of Lamentations does not mention the destruction of images of course, but of Jerusalem, the Temple, and the People.

<sup>10</sup> The most famous example is obviously the sack of Babylon, and devastation of Babylonia by Sennacherib, with deportation of Babylonian deities (and the king, royal family, and nobles; cf. Berlejung, this volume) to Assyria (Luckenbill 1924, p. 83, Bavian inscriptions, lines 43–49; Schaudig, this volume).

<sup>11</sup> See also Radner 2005, p. 17, on congruency between the sign system expressed in writing and images, and Bahrani 1995, p. 372. Regarding the modern investigation of iconology, W. J. T. Mitchell (1994, p. 3) points that “‘Word and Image’ is the name of the commonplace distinction between types of representation.” Nevertheless, unlike “the notion of ‘visible language’ which import the discourse of painting and seeing into our

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understanding of verbal expression” (ibid., pp. 111ff.) in the ancient Near East, especially in earlier periods “imagetext” (ibid., p. 83 and passim) was often the same object (Michalowski 1990, pp. 61ff.). Unlike in modernity, it was not descriptive. The purpose of creation of an “imagetext” monument, like, e.g., a stela or inscribed statue, in ancient Near Eastern antiquity was performative. It came not “to express,” but to exist on its own right as a true enlivenment of its referent prototype.

<sup>12</sup> The very action that accompanied the violation of a treaty survived even into modern languages. So English “to break a treaty,” German “Vertrag brechen,” and Russian “разорвать договор” (to tear a treaty) reflect the physical act of breaking a tablet, a stela, or tearing a parchment upon which the treaty was inscribed.

<sup>13</sup> See Radner 2005, p. 15, with n. 64. She notes further that this comprehension of the name was inherent in Mesopotamia since the earliest, that is, the Early Dynastic (ca. 2850–2250 B.C.E.), period. Radner’s book is the latest and the most elaborate study of the “power of names.” Her book also contains a detailed bibliography on the subject. However, Radner does not mention Freedberg’s *Power of Images* (1989) in her bibliography. Congruency in the German and English titles of their books is an organic consequence of the parallelism in the nature of the might of the image and the might of the name in antiquity and beyond.

<sup>14</sup> Not only in the ancient Near East, but also in antiquity in general, every name was meaningful, and the meaning of the name had a spectrum of functions including magic and apotropaic agency.

The names as well as the images not only confirmed contemporaneous existence of their bearers and referents but also granted them survival into posterity. Rather early<sup>15</sup> in history, statues were inscribed with the names of those they represented. Of significant notice here are the Middle and Neo-Assyrian<sup>16</sup> uniconic stelae from Assur that were defined by the inscriptions they bore as *šalam* PN “image of so-and-so” (Andrae 1913, p. 46ff., nos. 34ff.). It was enough to name the stelae in order to turn them into representations of persons.<sup>17</sup> The name granted eternity, its obliteration — oblivion.<sup>18</sup> Inscribing the name and thereby creating a chance to survive for eternity was pregnant with an anxiety of oblivion resulting from its potential erasure.<sup>19</sup> In the world that just learned to write, the power of a written name was probably felt more strongly than the power of an image.<sup>20</sup> The images were broken and the names erased in order to deprive their bearers of physical existence in their lifetime and of “metaphysical” existence in the afterlife. Both practices — the breaking of images and the erasure of names — continued beyond the ancient Near East and far into modern times. The purposes of name obliteration were as political as they were personal, and both could be magical.<sup>21</sup>

The erasure of names and memory is usually described by the term *damnatio memoriae*, which is firmly rooted in modern languages despite its inaccuracy and actual absence from the Latin sources (Flower 2000, p. xix; 2006; Varner 2004; Cormack, this volume) and as such is also used in the present collective volume.

However, the power of words expanded beyond the power of names. Curses as well as the name had existence and power to affect the existence of the one cursed (Bahrani 1995, pp. 372–74). Curse formulae served as a prophylaxis against iconoclasm from the earliest period of Mesopotamian history<sup>22</sup> onward (ibid., pp. 372–74). Curses were imposed for attempt to avoid a curse impact. These were practiced from at least the Old Akkadian period (2300–2150 B.C.E.), when the endeavor to transfer the impact of a curse to a third party was foreseen (Westenholz, this volume). This practice persisted through many hundreds of years. The evidence of it is the Late Assyrian<sup>23</sup> prohibition of pronouncing an oath with conscious

<sup>15</sup> Already in the Early Dynastic III period (2450–2300 B.C.E.).

<sup>16</sup> Fifteenth–tenth and ninth–seventh centuries B.C.E., respectively.

<sup>17</sup> The same was probably true for the West Semitic *bêt’ēls* and *maššēbôt*, which remained uninscribed, as the early Mesopotamian imagery, and uniconic, as the Assyrian stelae representations. For a comparative study, see Canby 1976. David Freedberg discusses litholatry (1989, pp. 33–37, 66–74), from the Bible and ancient Greece to the Ka’abah. His special stress is on worship of sacred stones in ancient Greece. Nonetheless, one of the terms for these rocks of presumably heavenly origin was *baitylia*, which betrays the ancient Near Eastern connection of their cult (see also *DNP* s.v. *baitylia*).

<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, in the Early Dynastic period in Mesopotamia (2850–2300 B.C.E.; e.g., at Khafajah; Brandes 1980), the votive statuary was not systematically inscribed with the names as later (starting with Early Dynastic III statues from Mari [2450–2300 B.C.E.], statues of Gudea, etc.). Chronology of Early Dynastic and Old Akkadian periods is in accordance with Englund 1998, p. 23.

<sup>19</sup> In antiquity, memory, including historical memory, was sufficiently more valued than today (e.g., Flower 2000). In Mesopotamia this cognition is delivered through careful preservation of royal (historical) inscriptions in the foundation deposits to be read by the future kings. Writing on stone — the most durable and reliable material — was by and large a royal prerogative (e.g., Michalowski 1990, p. 62), as well as creation of monumental imagery, though there are exceptions.

<sup>20</sup> See Radner 2005, pp. 182ff., esp. pp. 254–55, for the power of a “geschriebener Name” (mu sar-ra).

<sup>21</sup> Thus in Egypt *damnatio memoriae* encompassed the erasure of the names in the graves resulting from personal hostility, and by King Akhenaten’s “removing the name of gods other than his favored Aten, and most particularly those of the Theban Amun and his divine family” (Bryan, this volume).

<sup>22</sup> Woods and Westenholz, this volume. On the curses in the Hebrew Bible, see Magdalene 1995, pp. 341–45, and Magdalene 2000 with references to the further literature.

<sup>23</sup> The treaty was concluded in Iyyar, 672 B.C.E.

intention not to keep it in order to escape punishment for breaking the oath. (SAA 2, p. 44, no. 6, §34, lines 385–87).<sup>24</sup>

As well as erasure of the name, the curse could deprive one of memory and progeny (e.g., SAA 2, p. 46, no. 6, §45, lines 435–36).<sup>25</sup> Not the progeny alone, but also the ancestry of the cursed was destined for demolition. Thus the violators of Esarhaddon's Vassal Treaties were doomed to be deprived of ancestors through the defilement of the remains and graves of their dead relatives (SAA 2, p. 46, no. 6, §47, lines 445–46, 451–52). The curses sealing the treaties became reality when Assurbanipal made the sons of Nabû-šum-ēreš, governor (*šandabakku*) of Nippur, grind the bones of their father.<sup>26</sup> Assurbanipal's successor Sîn-šarru-iškun probably instigated exhumation of the corpse of Nabopolassar's father Kudurru, governor (*šākin tēmi*) of Uruk,<sup>27</sup> which was dragged through the streets of Uruk. Destruction of graves and remains ruined the ancestral relationships and deprived one of ancestry, progeny, and existence in posterity as well as destruction of one's name.

Finally, iconoclasm as a phenomenon should be defined as a motivated annihilation of any presence or power realized by an icon through the annihilation of this icon.<sup>28</sup> The annihilation of the past or present power of the icon is aimed at its annihilation for posterity and eternity. The word "icon" in this definition is taken not in its original Greek meaning as an image, but in its modern semiotic denotation as a sign of any kind<sup>29</sup> symbolizing a certain entity.

## ICONOCLASM AS DESTRUCTION OF A SYSTEM OF SIGNIFICATION: DESTRUCTION OF EMPIRES AND THEIR IMAGERY DESTRUCTION OF FIGURATIVE COMPLEXES

Political and ideological<sup>30</sup> systems produce a symbolism of their own, which is designed as a system of signification that organizes and structures the perception of the world in accordance with their (imperial) system of organizing the world. The systematic damage of figurative complexes thus reflects the destruction of the political system that created them.

The ultimate case of demolition of figurative complexes is attested for empires, which created the most powerful imagery and semantic semiotic systems that reflect and propagandize their might. The destruction of the imperial power was the destruction of the semiotic system created by it — destruction of the art of the empire, hence of the art and empire. The might of the imperial imagery is mirrored by the might of its annihilation. These are Old

<sup>24</sup> [šu]m-ma at-tu-nu ki-i (ina) kaq-qar ta-me-ti an-ni-tu [t]a-za-za-a-ni ta-me-tu ša da-bab-ti šap-ti ta-tam-ma-a-ni ina gu-mur-[t]i šā-ku-nu la ta-ta-ma-a-ni "While you stand on the place of this oath, you shall not swear the oath with your lips only but shall swear it wholeheartedly." Other kinds of invalidation and precautions toward the impact of breaking the oath were prohibited as well (SAA 2, p. 43, no. 6, §32, lines 373–76).

<sup>25</sup> Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon: <sup>d</sup>NUMUN-DÛ-tú na-di-na-at MU u NUMUN MU-ku-nu NUMUN-ku-nu ina KUR lu-ḫal-liq "may Zarpanitu, who grants the name and the seed, destroy your name and the seed from the land." Note the parallelism between having the name and the progeny (seed).

<sup>26</sup> Borger with Fuchs 1996, p. 39, Prism A iii 63–67 and p. 108, Nineveh Prism B vi 94–vii 2 // C vii 112–19.

<sup>27</sup> Jursa 2007, pp. 125–26, ABL 469 (48-11-4, 282) obv. 15'–16', rev. 1', and 130–31.

<sup>28</sup> See Boldrick and Clay (2007, p. 10) on the importance of intention in iconoclasm.

<sup>29</sup> Symbol, image, word, name, etc. In fact, "icon" is "image" only in conjunction with Byzantine Iconoclasm. Applied to any other period of human history it is an umbrella term as is iconoclasm itself.

<sup>30</sup> Mitchell insightfully describes ideology as idolatry — "ideolatry" (1986, pp. 164ff.), and its destruction as "ideoclasm" (this volume).

Akkadian (Westenholz, this volume) and Neo-Assyrian (May, this volume) pictorial complexes where indeed the entire memory of a magnificent past is wiped away together with the imperial monuments, graves, and culture. “Probably the most spectacular achievement of the Akkadian empire was its artwork. Large sculptures in the round, stelae with bas-reliefs, and rock sculptures communicated information about nature, society, and a world-view to an overwhelmingly illiterate population. These public monuments contained both historical narrative of military conquests and iconic depictions of royal might” (Westenholz, this volume).

In the late seventh century B.C.E., Babylonian troops allied with the Medes demolished the odious Assyria. As it was with their Old Akkadian predecessors, one of the greatest achievements of the Assyrian empire was its artwork, which included not only stelae and statuary, but above all lavish pictorial narratives of the palatial reliefs.

Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar II, notoriously celebrated devastator of Jerusalem, avenged the violation of his father’s corpse by the Assyrians. In 612 B.C.E. Nineveh was sacked and its palaces and temples plundered and ruined. The uniformity of the damage is amazing. Effigies of the Assyrian king on the palatial reliefs were effaced with systematic obstinacy, as were the images of his courtiers and attendants, scepters, and ceremonial bows. That was the visual destruction of the Assyrian empire.

In all epochs the control over the imperial emblematic system was a privilege of the supreme power (e.g. the king in Assyria, May, this volume). It should be stressed in connection with the nullification of imperial power through nullifying imperial art, that one of the characteristics of curse formulae is that the iconoclast is often expected to be of royalty (e.g., RIMA 1, A.0.78.22, lines 55–67).<sup>31</sup> In Mesopotamia, where iconoclasm is always first and foremost about politics, which is of course royal politics, the destruction of empires present especially severe cases of iconoclasm.

Investigating demolition of the image complexes such as the “wholesale mutilation” of statues of Queen Hatshepsut (Bryan, this volume) is an excellent instance of the politically (and personally) motivated destruction of the imagery and the emblematic system. The statues of the queen “were routinely attacked at the neck or shoulders” and their hands and feet were hacked. The character of damage is very much like that inflicted on the complex of Gudea statues (Suter, this volume; May 2010, p. 106).

We cannot always identify for which purposes iconoclasts would destroy a complex of images. But unlike the destruction of a single symbol, the reason for destruction of a complex can be better grasped when looking for political or ideological motivation. However, the patterns and ways of damage encode the most valuable information and should never be neglected. Destruction of the statues and stelae of Gudea was particularly systematic; but the meticulous analysis by Claudia Suter (this volume) shows that it cannot be correlated with any specific historical setting. The complex of Gudea’s imagery awaits inspection for the character of damage, which is the only means to establish the way in which it was destroyed (Suter, this volume; May 2010, p. 106). Similarly, for the narrative reliefs of the Neo-Assyrian palaces, certain depictions of participants in certain scenes were selected for effacement. But on the reliefs of the main court of the spectacular palace of Sargon II at Khorsabad all the officials were stripped of their main status signifier — the headbands (May, this volume).

<sup>31</sup> This is the curse formula concluding the inscription of Tukulti-Ninurta I which deals with the building of his new capital, Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta. It is an invective against a future “prince” (NUN), who instead of anointing the stela (*narâ*) with the inscription and sacrificing

to it will destroy the city, the stela itself, and erase the king’s name. The god Aššur will overthrow his kingship (*šarrūssu*)! That is, of course, only one of the numerous examples. See also Westenholz, this volume.

The image of one of the main protagonists, Sargon's grand-vizier (and brother) Sîn-aḫu-ušur, was remodeled into a figure of a eunuch. The reason, however, was not iconoclasm but an administrative reform. This figurative complex was not destructed, but deconstructed, that is, assigned a new meaning suiting a new political situation by its very creators.

However, attestations of deconstruction — re-instrumentalization and re-socialization — of the imagery system within its native political system are comparatively rare — although, Irene Winter cited the case of India in her closing remarks to the seminar, with reference to the work of Richard Davis, *The Lives of Indian Images*, where images are deconsecrated/deconstructed on a regular basis. More often deconstruction is inflicted by foreign political power and is interlaced with destruction, as, for instance, the destruction and deconstruction of Babylonian cults by Sennacherib and his descendants scrutinized in this volume by Hanspeter Schaudig. Different circumstances dictated differences in deconstruction and adaptation of local systems of imagery (and beliefs) into the Assyrian system of political and ideological organization of imperial space. Destruction of the cults of the subjugated party could be a punitive measure. Angelika Berlejung (this volume) demonstrates this for the treatment of local cults at Gaza and Ekron in the period of Assyrian domination. But when the (Assyrian) empire destroyed the local cults it destructed them as a complex as well — the entire divine (Schaudig, this volume) together with royal (Berlejung, this volume) families. This naturally caused the degradation of the local political system, and following subjugation to the Assyrian empire.<sup>32</sup>

### ICONOCLASM AND ANICONISM

Through various periods of human history religious iconoclasm connects with the prohibition of figurative representation. In Byzantium the endurance and political and religious significance of Iconoclasm earned it a capital “I.” In 1977, at a conference on Byzantine Iconoclasm, the late Oleg Grabar (1977, p. 53) claimed that the “most obvious difference between Byzantine and Islamic iconoclasm is that the former is usually spelled with a capital ‘I’ and the latter with a small ‘i’.” I dare to challenge the opinion of this now eternally absent *maître*. The primary and “most obvious” difference between European iconoclasm, including that of Byzantium, and Near Eastern iconoclasm of all epochs is that the Byzantines and other Christians demolished images of their own god, not the god (or gods) of others. Furthermore, in the Iconoclast controversy of Byzantium the main theological issue was the identity of the image and its prototype. In Near Eastern antiquity acknowledgment of this identity was the reason for worshipping the image; in Byzantium — for its ban. The Byzantine iconoclast understood the power of images, as did the Mesopotamian and Egyptian, and as opposite to Isaiah (40:19–20; 46:6–7) and the Reformers, who denied the idols being animated and thus having power.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Nonetheless, as Berlejung has shown (this volume), Assyrians did destroy the local cults only if it served their purposes. Otherwise, these cults were eagerly preserved and even restored. The utmost example of restoration of the local cult is when the Assyrian king restored the Israelite cult for the deportees settled in the newly arranged province of Sāmerina in order to appease the Israelite god, for which his priest was brought back from the exile in Assyria. The deportees worshiped

YHWH together with their own gods whom they brought with them (2 Kgs 17:24–33). Curiously similar religious politics brought the Persian kings, and Cyrus in the first place, the fame of religious tolerance (see, e.g., Knippschild, this volume).

<sup>33</sup> The most comprehensive study of perception of images as living beings in the Middle Ages and modern time is of course Freedberg's *Power of Images* (1989, esp. pp. 10–12). But he speaks of “tacit belief that the bod-



In the first half of the twentieth century implacable prohibition of figuration resulting in iconoclasm was ascribed to both Judaism and Islam.<sup>34</sup> But aniconism rejecting anthropomorphic art never existed in any period of human history.<sup>35</sup> Recent research has shown that there was no eschewal of figuration in Israelite religion (Fribourg school; see Hurowitz's contribution for details), in early Jewish art (Urbach 1959), or in Muslim art (Grabar 1977, 2009; Flood 2002). The Qur'an contains no restrictions on figuration, and Muslim opposition to images is based on Hadith (Grabar 2009, p. 34; Flood 2002, p. 643). It was even claimed that image anxiety in the Islamic world arose as a result of the influence of the Byzantine controversy (Grabar 1977).<sup>36</sup> In the period of the formation of Islam iconoclasm was much more widespread in Christian than in Muslim lands. As a matter of fact, the presumed Muslim iconophobic doctrine is grounded in the belief that a human should not compete with the divine creator by attempting to imitate the act of creation through reproduction of representations of living beings.<sup>37</sup> The source of inspiration for Christian theologians of iconoclasm of all epochs was the Hebrew Bible and first of all the second commandment. However, it was probably Luther who best grasped the biblical concept of aniconicity. He never prohibited imagery,<sup>38</sup> but did not accept images as embodiment of godhead (Hofmann 1983, p. 46), and understood idolatry as the veneration of any material object (Lee Palmer Wandel, pers. comm.). Ancient Near Eastern aniconism, including that of the Bible, is not the prohibition of an image *per se* (Berlejung 1998). The Bible prohibits idolatry because idols are useless, helpless, and nothing but unanimated objects<sup>39</sup> (Hurowitz, this volume) — an aspect of idolatry well understood by Reformation theologians (Wandel, this volume). Mesopotamian cult eschews the veneration of an improper image. Improper gods, in this case those opposing Marduk, are perceived as useless and helpless — unanimated and disempowered lumps of wood (Esağil Chronicle, line 36; Schaudig, this volume). This attitude antedates the famous biblical diatribe against the idolater worshiping a lump of wood.<sup>40</sup> But in Mesopotamia a

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ies represented ... somehow have the status of living bodies" (p. 12). It is true to some extent for the two-dimensional palatial reliefs of Assyria, as it is true for two-dimensional painting of the Netherlands (Freedberg 1988, p. 4). However, in Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt the cognition of cult images as living beings was by no means an implicit, but a concrete and very solid "knowledge."

Petra Goedegebuure (this volume) points to the absence of the statue animation ritual in the Hittite culture and connects this and the fact that unlike in Mesopotamia, the killing of the index does not cause the killing of its referent in the Hittite system of belief.

<sup>34</sup> In concern of Islam, see Flood 2002; see *ibid.*, pp. 641, 644ff., on evolution of iconophobic doctrine in Islam.

<sup>35</sup> Freedberg 1989, ch. 4, "The Myth of Aniconism," pp. 54–81.

<sup>36</sup> Oleg Grabar points out that "the forceful destruction of images is usually quite late, and the action of brutal conquerors like the Ghasnevids in India or Nadir Shah attacking the Buddhas of Bamian with his artillery, and almost always directed against non-Muslim monuments" (1977, p. 45). He also notes that the famous edict about images of caliph Yazid, attributed to 721 C.E., "is a very suspicious document, curiously absent from the early sources" (*ibid.*, p. 46).

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<sup>37</sup> Grabar (1977) points that a single verse of the Qur'an — 3:43 — is quoted in theological discussions in this connection. It is the address of Allah to Mary, mother of Jesus, speaking of the god himself breathing life into a bird of clay. A curious comparison in this connection is the definition of a photographer of the 1860s as "the *proletarian of creation*" as opposite to a real creator — an artist (Edelman apud Mitchell 1986, p. 184).

<sup>38</sup> Note that Cranach belonged to Luther's closest circle. Not only did he paint the portraits of the Reformer and his wife, but was also the godfather of their son. Lutherans, unlike Zwinglians and Calvinists, did not instigate *Bildersturm*.

<sup>39</sup> For Islam, see Flood 2002, p. 648: "... the emphasis on the impotence of idols and images in most writings on the subject within the Old Testament tradition espoused by Islam." He continues, showing the ambiguity of image obliteration because of perceived at once potent, and thus possessing dangerous powers to be destructed by killing the image, and impotent, and thus helpless and useless. It seems that Islam fuses both attitudes to idols — the Mesopotamian and the biblical.

<sup>40</sup> [ep-šu] pi-i-šu ik-kam-mu-ú DINGIR<sup>MEŠ</sup> nak-ru-tu lab-šu ár-šu-tu [uk-tap]-p[a-ru] [ki-ma] me-[e-si] "At his command, the hostile gods are bound, and dressed in soiled garments, they are cut to pieces like (mere) *mēsu*-

proper divine image — the one made in a correct way from proper materials and with proper ceremony (see Hurowitz, this volume) — was the real embodiment of a deity entitled to worship. A cult image had to undergo an animation ritual — the mouth-opening ceremony — in order to become the true embodiment of the god on earth and be able to “cut” destinies, grant prayers, and receive offerings (Walker and Dick 2001).<sup>41</sup> Notably, the Mesopotamian cult image was proclaimed not to be created by human hands (Walker and Dick 2001, pp. 73, 76, and 80, lines 49–52; Berlejung 1997, pp. 62–63, 71).<sup>42</sup> The statue was declared “born in heaven by his own power.”<sup>43</sup> The mouth-opening/washing ritual eliminated all the traces of impurity, which might be inflicted in the process of the cult image production, and animated it. Through this ritual of enlivenment, the divine statue became a visible body on the earth of an invisible deity in heaven (Berlejung 1998, pp. 178ff.). This concept persists in multiple and especially sacred, non-manmade (Greek ἀχειροποίητος, lit. “non hand-made”) images in Christianity, a tradition that starts with the Mandalyon (Cormack, this volume).<sup>44</sup> Thus aniconism of the ancient Near East shares with Islam, Judaism, and Christianity the eschewal of worshiping the creature of human hands. Images can be worshiped only when properly created both in “idolatrour” Mesopotamia and in Christian Byzantium.<sup>45</sup>

The concept of aniconism in Near Eastern antiquity differs from that accepted as popular common knowledge in the first half of the bygone age. But this “common knowledge” in turn is a figment of the imagination, because aniconism as the implacable prohibition of figuration never existed. Although there was nothing like a general ban on images in Mesopotamia, the profusion of figural representations should not deceive us. Cult statues were not only god-made, or at least made on divine revelation and some kind of permit, as in the case of the image of Šamaš in Sippar, but anthropomorphic cult statues were also often replaced by divine symbols in imagery and worship.<sup>46</sup> Evolving through millennia, the ancient Near Eastern “aniconic” attitude to cult images was inherited and became inherent in Judaism and Islam, and earned the “Semitic races” the reputation for an “inherent temperamental dislike for representational art.” This reputation persisted in scholarship through the late

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trees.” (Schaudig 2013, p. 272). Compare Isaiah 44:19: לְבוֹל עֵץ אֶצְבֵּיגֹד “I bow to a block of wood.” I am most grateful to Hanspeter Schaudig for granting me access to his unpublished book.

<sup>41</sup> For the cross-cultural comparison of image consecration rites, see Freedberg’s overview (1989, pp. 82–98).

<sup>42</sup> *rum-ma<sup>1</sup>-nu ma<sup>1</sup>-la<sup>1</sup>* [ana] DINGIR<sup>1</sup> BI TE-ú u ú-nu-[ut-su-nu x x x]... ŠU [-su]-nu ina TÚG [B]AR.SI KEŠDA-as ina GÍR<sup>6</sup>Š<sup>6</sup>SINIG KUD-a[s ... ana-ku la DÙ-š]u<sup>2</sup> d<sup>4</sup>nin-*r*d<sup>2</sup>-[gal<sup>2</sup>] d<sup>4</sup>IDIM šá<sup>1</sup>ú<sup>1</sup>[SIMUG] DÙ<sup>1</sup>-šú DUG<sub>4</sub>.GA “all of the craftsmen who approached the god ... you bind their hands with a scarf; and cut (them off) with a knife of tamarisk wood. ... You make (them) say: ‘I did not make him (statue), Ningal (who) is Ea (god) of the smith made him.’”

Similarly, a divine image, as well as the temple, can only be created upon the deity’s blessing and through divine revelation often disclosed through divination. The most famous cases are the restoration of the cult statue of sun god Šamaš in Sippar (Hurowitz 2003, pp. 93–95 and col. ii line 17b–col. iv line 28) or building of temples, for example, by Gudea (Cyl A i 1–xii 20) or Solomon (1 Kgs 5:17; Hurowitz 1992, pp. 38–39 and 131–34 with further Mesopotamian parallels).

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<sup>43</sup> This incantation (an.na ní.bi.ta tu.ud.da.a/àm) was recited in front of the newly made divine image at the very beginning of the rite (Walker and Dick 2001, pp. 70, 74, 77, line 3; text of the incantation *ibid.*, pp. 114ff.; on discrepancy between Sumerian and its Akkadian interlinear translation in this incantation, see Berlejung 1997, p. 53). The idea passes like a red thread through the entire mouth-opening ritual (*ibid.*, pp. 72–73, 76, 80, lines 42 and 54; the text of another incantation, *alam an.na ù.tu.ud<sup>1</sup>.da* “image ‘born in heaven’” [*ibid.*, line 54], did not survive).

<sup>44</sup> Cormack (this volume) points to the absence of “any coherent ‘image theory’ in early Christian writings,” which constitutes a problem for our own modern understanding of the usage of images during the early Christian era.

<sup>45</sup> Cormack (this volume) refers to debates concerning the correct imaging of Christ. Very careful attitude to the cult imagery relating to restrictions in composition, colors, costumes, etc. are well known also for Catholic West and Russian Orthodoxy.

<sup>46</sup> See Hurowitz in this volume for the most comprehensive overview of the related research.

1940s (Creswell 1946, p. 166) and can be still detected even in the late 1970s, when Byzantine Christians were treated as losing a “sense of continuity with” the pagan “Graeco-Roman past” and falling under the spell of the iconoclastic and aniconic Orient (Barnard 1977, p. 7).

It has been shown that there was no iconoclastic and aniconic Semitic East, as opposed to the figuration-tolerant West. Why then would I claim the difference between iconoclasm in the ancient Near East and iconoclasm inspired by monotheistic concepts of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity?

## ICONOCLASM AND POLITICS

I leave it to others to judge if “iconoclasm is always about politics” is applicable to the entire history of humankind. In the ancient Near East the political nature of iconoclasm is most naked and obvious. Iconoclasm of Byzantium, whatever were its political or economical reasons, was fundamentally grounded in religious treatises and theology. Reformation iconoclasm, whether popular in origin (Wandel, this volume) or inspired by theologians, was of primary religious nature. Like in early Christianity there was no image theory,<sup>47</sup> and unlike Byzantium and Reformation there was no “theory” of image destruction in Mesopotamia. In the absence of aesthetic theory, iconoclasm was not an “attack against the work of beauty” (Gamboni 1997, p. 19). In Near Eastern antiquity the political facet of iconoclasm is even more prominent than that of the iconoclasm of the Revolutions.<sup>48</sup> Iconoclasm of the French and Russian revolutions targeted the *Ancient Régime* and its system of symbols, religious inter alia. In the ancient Near East one political entity targeted the god(s) of the other aiming to destroy the enemy through stripping him of divine protection. During social riots in kind iconoclasm is marked with the tacit “upside-down” touch of Bakhtinian carnival, inherent with the overturns. This touch is absent in the ancient Near East.<sup>49</sup> In the ancient Orient iconoclasm was a part of a struggle of states, not a struggle of social strata; the purpose of iconoclasm was perceived not as symbolic, but as the very concrete and literal eradication of the hostile power, royal or divine.

In Near Eastern antiquity religious self-identification expressed through worship of a certain deity was a substitute for ethnic and national identity.<sup>50</sup> The mostly polytheistic but yet monolatrous ancient Near East knew no syncretism in the Greek or Roman sense of the word.<sup>51</sup> Mesopotamians did not have a tradition of equating their own gods with the gods of the others, especially if these were the gods of a subjugated enemy. There was not one storm god, whether Zeus or Indra, Perun or Tarhunzas, at the head of a pantheon, and no attempt was made to identify one’s own gods with the gods of others. What Lambert (1997) defined as syncretism was in fact not syncretism, but the consumption of a conquered deity by the conquering one (Lambert 1975, p. 195). “The name, and so the existence, was transferred to another (divine – *N.N.M.*) owner” (ibid., p. 195). Babylonian Marduk was particularly notorious

<sup>47</sup> See n. 45.

<sup>48</sup> Gamboni (1997, p. 31) states that “French Revolution is generally recognized as a turning point in the history of both the destruction and preservation of art.” But his own point of departure was Byzantium and Reformation. *Bildersturm* and Iconoclasm are exceptional due to their theological background as are their names among the violent assaults defined as ‘iconoclasm’ with ‘i’ in lower case.

<sup>49</sup> Gamboni 1997, pp. 310–11; Scribner 1980; Jones 2007, p. 244.

<sup>50</sup> This attitude has sometimes survived into the present (Mitchell, this volume).

<sup>51</sup> There are cases of syncretism in Mesopotamia as well, such as syncretism of Sumerian and Akkadian deities — a complex and elongated process, which in my view needs further exploration.

in swallowing up the age-old cults of his colleague-deities on his rise to power (together with his city, of course):<sup>52</sup> he consumed the chthonic snake god Tišpak of Ešnunna after its defeat by Hammurabi, and Tišpak's dragon *mušḫuššu* became Marduk's most renowned attribute (Lambert 1985; Wiggermann 1997, p. 48); Marduk "expelled" Enlil from his position as creator-god in the Babylonian Epic of Creation *Enūma eliš* (Lambert 1984; pp. 4–5; Lambert 1997, p. 159). Even the ancient cults of Šamaš were converted to the worship of Marduk under the sun god's epithets (ibid., p. 159). Centuries later Assyrian Aššur attempted to devour Babylonian Marduk (Frahm 2010; Schaudig, this volume). This list is endless, since the wars of the city-states as well as the wars of the empires were the wars of their tutelary deities. Consequently, the abduction and especially destruction of an opponent's cult statues, temples, and practices had effects reaching far beyond a simple demonstration of power. Destruction of an enemy's sanctuaries as an iconoclastic act, so intrinsic in the ancient Near East, is strange to Europe already in Classical Antiquity.<sup>53</sup>

It can be stated clearly that territorial conflicts were the main cause of iconoclasm in the ancient Near East. In the epoch before the second commandment no destruction of the images of one's own culture, such as the Byzantine iconoclasm, the breaking of *jahiliyyah* idols by Muhammad, or *Bildersturm* of the Reformation was possible.

## ICONOCLASM, SPOILIATION, AND DECONSTRUCTION

The notion of "art" was non-existent in ancient Near Eastern cognition (Winter 1995). "The images before art" reflected and represented a common system of belief, world perception, and organization.<sup>54</sup> Iconoclasm was the destruction of the image system of the subjugated party by the victorious one under various political circumstances. In certain, but rare cases, total annihilation took place, as in the cases of the imperial imagery of Akkad and Assyria discussed above. But more often we find spoilage and deconstruction<sup>55</sup> as means of destroying the hostile image system.

No intact divine statues have been found from the ancient Near East.<sup>56</sup> Scholars have tried to explain this fact as resulting from looting of precious materials or disintegration of perishable substances. But in fact all the discovered stone statues of gods and rulers suffered

<sup>52</sup> Lambert 1984; Schaudig, this volume.

<sup>53</sup> See, e.g., Knippschild, this volume. Silke Knippschild points out that the destruction of temples by the Persians was perceived as an inadmissible sacrilege demanding retaliation. The sources illuminating the event and the perceptions that they display, however, are Greek. Knippschild notes that in turn the retribution for the demolition of the temple is unknown in the Near East. Greeks tended to syncretism with, not annihilation of, the deity of the other party, even if of a foe. Deconstruction as well as destruction of temples and churches definitely took place in Europe during the periods of Christianization and Reformation. But whatever were the reasons for these actions, they did not derive from territorial conflicts.

<sup>54</sup> On the nature of "images before the era of art," see Mitchell, this volume. In Near Eastern antiquity an image was created not to provoke emotion or to convey

aesthetic theory but to embody a divinity, an index, or a story. Iconoclasts of any epoch did not perceive the imagery that they smashed as art. Nevertheless, it is indicative that all the vast corpus of cuneiform texts did not render us a single name of an artist (unlike the Bible, which mentions Hiram and Bezalel). Indeed in regard to Mesopotamia, "Eine Geschichte des Bildes ist etwas anderes als eine Geschichte der Kunst" (Belting 1990, p. 9). On ancient Near Eastern aesthetics, see Winter 1995 and 2008, pp. 336–38.

<sup>55</sup> Freedberg denotes the conditioning role of context for the understanding of the image (1989, p. XIX). Change of context, like deportation of a cult statue and placing it in a temple of a victor is enough for the image deconstruction.

<sup>56</sup> In fact the only Mesopotamian cult statue found is that of Narundi (Harper 1992, p. 90; May 2010, p. 107); it derives not from Mesopotamia proper, but from Elam.

intentional damage (May 2010, p. 107). Practice of intentional annihilation of divine statues is described in the early Mesopotamian sources (Schaudig and Woods, this volume; Dahl 2011, pp. 57–59, 63). I believe that the absence among archaeological finds of cult statues or other divine statues in the round is, in first place, a result of their intentional destruction. This process is apparently tied closely with that of spoliation of the statues. A salient problem that needs to be explored is thus whether there was a connection between the abduction of and damage done to divine statues during warfare, on the one hand, and the suppression of the subdued nation's cult and installation of the cult of the invader, on the other. Cogan (1974, pp. 22ff. with further references) takes the spoliation of divine images as a plain statement of divine abandonment. Nonetheless the abduction and especially destruction of an opponent's cult statues had effects reaching far beyond a simple demonstration of power, although the significance of these actions in various periods may well have differed. It should be noted that in Assyria the imperial cult was established in annexed territories and probably sometimes in vassal countries. The subdued population of the provinces incorporated into the empire was obliged to worship Assyrian gods, and for the vassal states a flexible religious policy was employed. Were the local cults also limited by the demolition or abduction of cult statues? It seems to me that each case should be explored individually (Berlejung, this volume). The deportation of the statues of Marduk and other Babylonian deities by Sennacherib could not put an end to their cult (Schaudig, this volume). But the uprooting of entire peoples usually drove them to accept the cults prevailing in their new places of habitation — the assimilation with the Assyrians or other ethnic and religious groups of the empire, as was the case with the Israelite tribes (2 Kgs 15:19, 23; 17:6). Josiah's attempt to regain rule over all territories of Judah and Israel was accompanied by the (re-)installation of the cult of YHWH and destruction of cultic images of the other gods (2 Kgs 23).

Not only divine statues were subject to spoliation and destruction. The choice of deported items is a clue to understanding the nature and purpose of the process at work here. Angelika Berlejung (this volume) demonstrated that under Assyrian reign the population of the vassal states and the families of their rulers shared the fate of their gods and cults.

Both textual and archaeological evidence indicates that not all pillaged items were damaged. Thus the famous stela of Hammurabi, taken by the Elamites from Sippar to Susa, suffered practically no damage. Moreover, it became an object of reverence and pilgrimage at its new location. Sometimes the conqueror would incise inscriptions with his name or a dedication to his gods upon his booty.<sup>57</sup> These acts of superimposition of inscriptions served various purposes, but their primary effect was perceived of as performative. The inscribed object — divine statue, royal stela, and so forth — became subjugated to the king, whose name it bore through the magic power of the word.

Often the abducted monuments were treated with honor. The standard opinion that persisted in research, including that of Carl Nylander (1980a, p. 332; 1980a p. 272; 1999), the pioneer of investigation of Mesopotamian iconoclasm, was that the Elamites destroyed Mesopotamian imagery, applying the same ways of mutilation as to the human beings. Overturning this view, Joan Westenholz has shown that in general defacement was not a standard policy of the Elamite conquerors (Harper 1992, p. 161). Westenholz notes (this volume):

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<sup>57</sup> The Elamite king Šutruk-Nahhunte did this to objects he captured in Mesopotamia, as did Esarhaddon to gods of the Arabs that he then returned to them (Borger 1956,

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p. 53, §27, Episode 14: A iv 10–14; Leichty 2011, p. 19, Esarhaddon 1, iv 1–16).

“Šutruk-Nahhunte states that he took the ancient monuments to ‘protect them’ and indeed he did. He should perhaps be esteemed as an Elamite Lord Elgin. He carefully installed the monuments in the temple of his god Inšušinak.” It is worth noting that Mesopotamian rulers were reluctant to admit to religious iconoclasm. So Sennacherib assigns the destruction of temples and cult images of Babylon to the **hands** of his soldiers (Luckenbill 1924, p. 83, Bavian inscriptions, line 48).<sup>58</sup> Nabonidus, in an attempt to cleanse Nabopolassar of the responsibility for uprooting the cults of the Assyrian gods, imposes all the blame upon the Ummanmanda — the Medes (Schaudig 2001, pp. 516, 523, Nbn. 8, col. ii 1’–41’).<sup>59</sup>

This attitude survived through centuries, and practices of honoring abducted cultic objects are known far beyond the ancient Near East. Somewhat similar deconstruction of the ancient imagery, including divine, is suggested by its accommodation in museums, modern as well as Byzantine (Cormack, this volume; Winter, closing remarks at seminar), where they are referred to and revered as “art.”<sup>60</sup>

Nevertheless, the Elamite looting of the ancient religious centers of Babylonia caused the destruction of the cults even if it was not the primary goal of the invaders, who definitely realized the consequences of their deeds. And thus the Elamites were remembered as iconoclasts in Mesopotamian tradition proper.<sup>61</sup> As in any other epoch, the looting of cult images and destruction of state pictorial propaganda complexes had its effects on the conquered, no matter whether the spoliation meant consequent reverence or annihilation of the spoiled<sup>62</sup> (contra Richardson, this volume).

Hanspeter Schaudig treated cases of restoration of the destructed cults throughout the millennia of Mesopotamian history. He has shown that image abduction was not merely pillaging, but had an ideological agenda starting with the third through the first millennia in Mesopotamia. He notes that the deconstruction of the cults and cult imagery of the losing party “was an elegant and smart diplomatic move.” Abducting and restoring divine statues was a means of building empires and was used as such by Assyrians and Babylonians.

Analyzing the ways of destruction and deconstruction (in Derrida’s usage of the word) of Mesopotamian imagery, Schaudig points to the possibility of co-existence of the various types of iconoclasm — from plain smashing and pillaging to sophisticated deconstruction of the very concept of the subjugated deity — within the same chronological frames.

<sup>58</sup> “The gods dwelling therein, — my people took them with their **hands** and smashed them.” DINGIR<sup>MEŠ</sup> a-šib šā-bi-šū šū<sup>U</sup> UN<sup>MEŠ</sup>-ja ik-šu-su-nu-ti-ma ú-šab-bi-ru-ma.

<sup>59</sup> In contrast, the Fall of Nineveh Chronicle (lines 14–15) reports of the Babylonian and the Medes sacking and plundering Nineveh and its *temples* together (Grayson 1975, p. 94, lines 38–45).

<sup>60</sup> See also Gamboni 1997, pp. 190–91, on modern museums as means of the re-instrumentalizing of art. The most clear-cut case of such deconstruction and re-instrumentalization is accommodation of the Soviet ideological statuary of recognized artistic value in the Muzeon Park of Arts, also known as Fallen Monuments Park. There the famous statue of Dzerzhinsky, once standing at the square of his name in front of the KGB headquarters, and Stalin’s statue with the iconoclast-indicative maiming of the nose are neighboring masterpieces of contemporary art. In the absence of the notion of art Mesopotamian collecting of objects had

more “archeological” than “art historical” character. Muslim reaction to contemporary “veneration” of art in museums (see Flood 2002, pp. 651–55) shares much of its approach with the motives of individual assailants such as suffragette “Ripper” Mary Richardson (*ibid.*, p. 653), who accused modern society of putting art above human life (Gamboni 1997, pp. 93–97).

<sup>61</sup> This perception is a result of the generally negative image of the Elamites in Mesopotamian sources, which do not correctly reflect the real Mesopotamian-Elamite relations. I am grateful to Kristin Kleber for drawing my attention to this fact.

<sup>62</sup> Note the Biblical prohibition on looting precious materials when destroying idols (Deut 7:25): פְּסִילֵי אֱלֹהֵיהֶם, תִּשְׂרֹפוּ בָאֵשׁ; לֹא-תַחַמַּד כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב עֲלֵיהֶם, וְלִקַּחְתָּ לָךְ—כֶּסֶף תִּנְקַשׁ בוֹ, כִּי תִעַבְתָּ אֱלֹהֵי הָאֻמָּה. “The idols of their gods you shall burn in fire; you shalt not covet the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it to yourself, lest you be snared therein; for it is an abomination to the YHWH your god.”

Silke Knippschild (this volume) argues that in Graeco-Persian conflicts, abduction, not destruction, of images was the practice, which in my view is similar to that of the Elamites in connection with Mesopotamian monuments. It might be an indicator of continuity of tradition.<sup>63</sup>

## TEXT DESTRUCTION

Mutilation of texts in the ancient Near East was no less common than the mutilation of images. However, to the best of my knowledge this is the first time that this topic is thoroughly scrutinized. The examples of text destruction beyond the cases of *damnatio memoriae* throughout the ancient Near East were assembled by Nathaniel Levtow in this volume. Levtow<sup>64</sup> notes that the patterns of text destruction were ritualized as were the patterns of image destruction. Archaeological and literary records provide evidence that the modes of text destruction were the same as that of mutilation of the images: smashing, burning, spoilage, sinking, usurpation, erasure/effacement, burial — any form of disempowerment.

Worth noting is that in most cases monuments bearing texts were simply annihilated. For example, only small fragments of the inscribed Assyrian stelae were found in Ashdod and Samaria (Tadmor 1971 = 2011). The famous stela from Tel Dan that mentions the house of David was also smashed to smithereens and strewn over the gate square and probably beyond (Biran and Naveh 1993, p. 81; 1995, p. 2).

Nevertheless, it is common for monumental inscriptions to bear invocations against many possible ways of their destruction and curses against anyone daring to demolish them. In rare cases an inscription or a part thereof was erased while the monument was not broken, as with the stelae of Narām-Sîn (Bahrani 1995, p. 370; Feldman 2009, pp. 43–44; Heinz 2002, pp. 173–75; Westenholz, this volume)<sup>65</sup> or of Adad-nērārī III (Levtow, this volume with further bibliography).<sup>66</sup>

“The possible symbolic breaking, in front of the empty throne in the Nabu temple, of humiliating Vassal Treaties forced by Esarhaddon on the Medes in 672” was already noticed by Nylander in his pioneering study of ancient Near Eastern iconoclasm more than thirty years ago (Nylander 1980a, p. 332). As noted by Scurlock (this volume), text destruction, especially with respect to oaths and contracts, was more than just a literal and symbolic breaking of the vassal obligations to Assyria, but the destruction of the very grounds of the

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<sup>63</sup> Knippschild points to return, not restoration, of the images in this connection, and absence of reference to the destruction of cult images on the Acropolis by the Persians. The Greeks, sharing the same pantheon, looted each other’s gods thus gaining the divine patronage provided by the abducted deity. Naturally they did not destroy the cult image revered by both hostile parties.

<sup>64</sup> Levtow suggests the term “inscriptioclasm,” adopted also by Goedegebuure (both in this volume). As is demonstrated above, both in ancient Near Eastern and in modern cognition, iconoclasm is destruction of a symbol or system of symbols, no matter if in figurative or textual form. Thus the notion of iconoclasm already includes “inscriptioclasm,” and the word “inscriptioclasm” does not embrace all kinds of texts.

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<sup>65</sup> Bahrani and Heinz believe that the stela imagery and inscription were hacked. Joan Westenholz votes for natural damage. Marian Feldman suggests that “Shutruk-Nahhunte did not overwrite or obliterate Naram-Sin’s original inscription, as he did with other captured Mesopotamian monuments.” In my view the stela exposes the iconoclasm-indicative modes of destruction: defacement, chipping out the weapon, obliteration of inscription, stripping the king through erasure of the skirt(?). This points that the damage to the stela was intentional, rather than natural.

<sup>66</sup> Note that the destruction of lines 13–21 of the Tell al-Rimah stela, which describe the deeds of Nergal-ēreš, was in fact symbolic. They are still perfectly legible. The purpose here was a performative act itself (Page 1968, pl. 39).

empire together with the all the possible guarantees — human and divine — of obedience, which these tablets contained. The Median gods mentioned in the copy of the Vassal Treaties that has been found broken in the Nabû temple at Kalḫu drove scholars to the conclusion that these were the Medes who broke them (Porter 2009, pp. 218–19). With respect to their archaeological context, the tablets of Esarhaddon's Vassal Treaties were discovered burned and smashed in a room beside the Nabû temple archives. The tablet fragments were scattered around the throne. Michael Jursa (2007, pp. 131–32) has recently suggested that Nabopolassar was the eldest son of Kudurru of Uruk, whose corpse was violated during the early years of Nabopolassar's uprising. If so, breaking the Vassal Treaties, the curses of which include exhumation of bodies and grinding the bones of their violator's ancestors (SAA 2, p. 46, no. 6, §47, lines 445–46<sup>67</sup>), could be a matter of personal vengeance by Nabopolassar which comprised destruction of graves and palaces of the Assyrian kings.

When studying text destruction as well as mutilation of imagery the correlation between the type of destruction and the type of destructed object is salient. Not always was the same pattern of nullification possible for the text and image, and not only because the text cannot be defaced or decapitated.<sup>68</sup> Levtow points in this connection to the texts, such as the Babylonian entitlement *narû*, the public exposure of which was inherent in their very existence. Change of these monuments' context, such as their removal from public display, for example, by burial, would annihilate the very purpose of their existence. However, the burial of an image (e.g., May 2010, p. 111; May, this volume; Roobaert 1996, pp. 80–82, figs. 1–4), object (e.g., the vase of Lugalzagesi; Westenholz, this volume), or text whose use had expired would be a pious act toward a venerated object antithetic to its annihilation, and not only in Mesopotamia, but also in many religious traditions.<sup>69</sup>

## TYPES AND MODES OF DESTRUCTION

When investigating the evidence of iconoclasm in material culture of any epoch, scholars have usually dealt solely with one type of iconoclasm, namely, the maiming of an icon.

The evidence of written sources provides proof that iconoclastic attacks on images and, as was noticed above, texts most often aimed at their total annihilation. Naturally, complete destruction left no material record since its very purpose was eternal eradication of the icon.<sup>70</sup>

Thus the types and kinds of maiming are the most important and only source for studying iconoclasm preserved in the material culture record. And so, a systematic typology of acts of iconoclasm will be an important step toward broader understanding and generalization, as suggested by Winter (closing remarks).

Although the significance of iconoclastic actions throughout human history may well have varied, many of its modes remained the same through millennia and spread and endured far beyond the ancient Near East. The modes of destruction are also diagnostic for identifying intentional damage.

<sup>67</sup> *ku-um* ŠE.PAD<sup>MEŠ</sup> *eš-ma-ti-ku-nu* DUMU<sup>MEŠ</sup>-*ku-nu* DUMU. MĪ<sup>MEŠ</sup>-*ku-nu* li-*ti-nu* “instead of grain may your sons and your daughters grind your bones.”

<sup>68</sup> Naturally, in modernity a totally new mode of text destruction becomes available — the destruction of a verbal image (Mitchell 1986, p. 10).

<sup>69</sup> See, e.g., Garfinkel 2009 for the Syro-Palestinian custom of burying expired monuments. *Genizah* in Jewish tradition.

<sup>70</sup> The sack of cities and demolition of the buildings can also of course be read in the archaeological record.



## DIAGNOSTIC DAMAGE

*Demolition of Palatial Imagery, Imperial Capitals, and Status Signifiers*

One of the main obstacles in the study of ancient Near Eastern iconoclasm is clarifying whether the damage inflicted on an image and object was intentional or not. Was it ideologically inspired or simply the result of looting (Woods, Suter, Schaudig, all this volume)? Early recognition of iconoclasm in the record of material culture is crucial for the research of the subject. Each case must be scrutinized and investigated in its own context. Most helpful in distinguishing between motivated mutilation and damage done without purpose are patterns, modes, and tools of destruction, which are diagnostic for iconoclasm as well as the systematic character of the damage (May 2010, pp. 106–08).

The systematic obstinacy of the destruction of royal images and insignia on Nineveh palatial reliefs is mentioned above. Striking is that Persepolis, sacked almost three centuries later, displays exactly the same persistence and the same patterns of damage: every royal image was destroyed together with its power signifiers (fig. 1.1, compare to fig. 1.3). Was this a retribution for plundering and burning the Athenian temples, orientalization, or simply long-established iconoclastic practice?<sup>71</sup> The imperial imagery of the Achaemenid empire was destroyed systematically as were the image systems of its Akkadian and Assyrian predecessors and much later Soviet successors. Destruction of palatial imagery was the iconoclasm of the imperial visual propaganda. Sack of the main royal palace and the capital — the avatar of the not yet subjugated empire targeted the sack of the empire. It did not matter that the city surrendered — the empire did not.<sup>72</sup> In the ancient Near East the destruction of a capital city was the priority and privilege of the kings, and salient target and tool of royal policies.<sup>73</sup>

Together with the facial features, destruction of which aimed at killing its referent, the primary targets of ancient Near Eastern iconoclasm were status signifiers — headgear, dresses, staffs, and weapons. Thus the curse formula of the inscription of Sargon of Akkad invokes altering(?) the name and smashing the weapon by the presumed iconoclast who will dare to damage the image upon which it is inscribed (Sargon, RIME 2, 1.1.2 120–131; Westenholz, this volume). The royal staff of Assyrian Sargon II was idiosyncratically chipped away (fig. 1.2), as was the ceremonial weapon of his son Sennacherib (fig. 1.3). Annihilation of status signifiers is diagnostic for iconoclasm, though there are cases when it might reflect political

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<sup>71</sup> Knippschild (this volume) notes the continuity of the ancient Near Eastern iconoclastic practices into the Achaemenid realm.

<sup>72</sup> See Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1993, p. 186. Note that after the fall of the Akkadian empire the city of Akkad becomes insignificant, its site is not yet discovered, maybe due to its degrading already in antiquity. The Curse of Agade describes the splendor of the city, and then its demolition by Gutians (Cooper 1983, pp. 50–63). To the list of the destruction of capitals such as Akkad, Ur (n. 8), Babylon (n. 10), Nineveh, and Persepolis we can add the amazingly detailed description of the sack of Rusa (Ursa) I's "garden city" Ulū found in Sargon II's Letter to Aššur (Mayer 1983, pp. 290–94, lines 200–33). Much

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like the Curse of Agade, Sargon first describes Rusa's unprecedented undertakings in construction of this city, then his own rigid "systematic destruction of all the works and achievements of Ursa" (Zaccagnini 1981, pp. 263–76, esp. p. 274). Ruining of the royal palace and gardens is depicted together with leveling to the ground of its fortifications. I am most grateful to Victor A. Hurwitz for drawing my attention to this episode.

<sup>73</sup> Stalin's 1933 "plan of 'reconstruction' of Moscow," which erased most of the historical face of the city, is an example of the continuity of such practices in modernity. However, they evolved in the twentieth century. Note the "revolutionary" redecoration of the German cities, especially of Berlin (Hiller von Gaertingen 2007, pp. 215–40).

changes not backed by struggle, but by reform such as remodeling of Khorsabad courts I and VIII (May and Guralnick, this volume).

Mutilation of symbols of divinity and divine protection had special meaning. Patterns of destruction of divine statues were established in Mesopotamia in its early antiquity. The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur describes the demolition of the statue of the goddess Nin-e'iga (Dahl 2011, pp. 57–59, 63). The statue was pruned and then seated in dust. The horns of the goddess, the indicator of her divinity, were cut off. Then the statue's previously cut-off head (= crown) was put in the dust, and the goddess' symbols of fertility destroyed. Decapitation and cutting down of the statues became established Mesopotamian practice through millennia (May 2010; fig. 1.4 herein). Especially indicative is cutting off the symbol of divine status — the horns. The horns of all the few surviving Mesopotamian divine statues were hacked, and the horns of Ti'āmat in the mystical Assyrian commentary to *Enuma eliš* were chopped off (May 2010, p. 107).

### *Mutilation of Body, Alive or Imagined*

“Visiting vengeance or shame on the image as if on the body of a living person, iconoclasts engage with the image as if it were animate” (Flood 2002, p. 646).<sup>74</sup> The main, and consistent, pattern of iconoclastic practice in ancient Mesopotamia starts very early. It is effacement, most often erasing the mouth or nose (fig. 1.4; May 2010, p. 105; Kaim 2000, pp. 517–19). The parallelism with corporal punishment practiced in ancient Near Eastern antiquity is obvious (Nylander 1980a, p. 332; 1980b, p. 272; 1999; May 2010, pp. 110–11). Nonetheless, erasure of mouth and nose in conjunction with images, especially for the statues in the round, was clearly tied to the essential role of these organs as instruments of breath and consumption of food and drink for the image as an animated and living substance. Mutilation of the nose and mouth was thus an act antithetical to the mouth-opening ceremony that brought an inanimate object to life (May 2010, pp. 105, 112; Heinz 2002, p. 176 with n. 6). Mesopotamian gods could be mortal (Schaudig, this volume), so the animating mouth-opening ritual should be constantly repeated in order to keep them alive (Suter and Richardson, both this volume; Civil 1967, p. 211). The death of the cult image was the death of its referent god, and even maiming it would cause the god's death, making the repetition of the mouth-opening ceremony impossible. Damaging of the nose and mouth is diagnostic for iconoclasm in Near Eastern antiquity, as is decapitation (May 2010).<sup>75</sup> It is no coincidence that they are the first target of iconoclasts also on two-dimensional images.

In Egypt the connection between the physical body and the image was even more prominent. “The Egyptians both preserved the human body and its imaged embodiments and also attempted to destroy both when a threat was perceived” (Bryan, this volume). Diagnostically the Egyptian ritual of Opening of the Mouth was discovered in a tomb together with texts anxious about statue (or anthropoid coffin) mutilation (Bryan and Ritner, this volume). The Egyptian text of the mouth-opening ceremony is particularly concerned with decapitation,

<sup>74</sup> This is the primary source of image anxiety of all epochs. It does not matter if a belief in the animated image was conscious or tacit. Compare Freedberg 1989, p. 12 and Mitchell 1986, p. 3, for modern context of this fear.

<sup>75</sup> Note in this conjunction that the Curse of Agade draws parallel between noses (Cooper 1983, p. 59 translates

“mouths”) and heads. The latter often were piled in heaps: giri<sub>1,7</sub> ba-dub-dub saĝ ba-dab<sub>5</sub>-dab<sub>5</sub> giri<sub>1,7</sub> ba-dub saĝ numun-e-eš ba-ab-ĝar “Noses were punched(?), heads were smashed(?), noses(?) were piled up, heads were sown like seeds” (ETCSL text c.2.1.5, lines 187–88).

which in conjunction with “routine” beheading of the Hatshepsut statues reveals how important was the head or its absence for the needs of image animation.

Images were perceived of as living objects, virtual parts of gods, or persons; damage to the images thus was perceived of as inflicting damage on the depicted, divine or human, alive or dead. Taken as animated, effigies were mutilated as humans. As a parallel to the decapitation of flesh-and-blood enemies, statues were also beheaded, their hands and feet cut off from the very beginning of Mesopotamian history (fig. 1.5; May 2010).<sup>76</sup> Severing of ears (figs. 1.2–4) was aimed therefore not only at humiliation tied to one of the legal penalties for criminal offences, but also at depriving the depicted image of wisdom symbolized in Mesopotamia by wide ears. The purpose of this practice was symbolic, magical, and performative, resulting in loss of power by, and “murder” and humiliation of the depicted person. Proving the existence of long living cross- and trans-cultural traditions of iconoclastic behavior, during *Bildersturm*, images “seem to have received the same violence as a human being might.” Paradoxically, when the Reformation theologians, following the Old Testament (, this volume), have denied idols, these “lumps of wood,” being animated and having power (Hurowitz and Wandel, this volume).<sup>77</sup>

## Tools

The above described iconoclastic patterns and practices outlived ancient Near Eastern civilization and survive today in modern Europe in imagery and in the modern Orient in reality.<sup>78</sup> As the modes of destruction endured for ages, so the tools remained the same, though Joan Westenholz (this volume) traced regional differences already in the Old Akkadian period.

Tools of assault might also persist through millennia. It is interesting that assailants used weapons to kill the images as if they were killing human beings. In the ninth-century *Book of Idols*, one of the early accounts of the Prophet Muhammad’s iconoclastic activities, Muhammad is reported to have gored the eyes of *jahhiliyya*-idols with the point of his arrow (Flood 2002, pp. 644–45). Babylonians and their allies at Nineveh chose to target the faces of Assyrian gods, kings, and courtiers to exercise their shooting skills many centuries before the *hijra* (May, this volume). The width of the strokes that defaced the effigy of Sennacherib on the Lachish room relief (fig. 1.3) suggests that an ax was used.

Chisels and hammers came to complete the systematic destruction through chipping, smashing, and decapitation. Nylander suggested that the ears and nose of the Akkadian copper head from Nineveh were cut off with a chisel (1980a, p. 329). Traces of multiple narrow blows of a chisel are clearly visible on the photographs provided by him (*ibid.*, figs. 1–10).

<sup>76</sup> Barbara Kaim even finds conceivable existence of obliteration of a statue ritual which started with its beheading (2000, p. 516).

<sup>77</sup> Compare with the attitude to image-creating in Islam (n. 39).

<sup>78</sup> So the noses were cut off recently of the bust of Che Guevara by neo-Nazis in Vienna (<http://derstandard.at/1240549981975/Neonazi-Anschlag-auf-Guevara-Bueste>) and of an obstinate wife by the Taliban (“What Happens if We Leave Afghanistan” *Time* magazine cover of the noseless Afghan girl Aisha).

## PUBLICITY

Iconoclasm as a media event seeks publicity, targeting demonstration of its “achievements.” It is aiming art, which seeks publicity by definition, or public monuments in the era before art,<sup>79</sup> despite that iconoclastic movements do not recognize an art to be an art. The goal of collective iconoclastic acts is collective — and thus public (Boldrick and Clay 2007, p. 6). Iconoclasm of individuals starting with Herostrates is “an attention seeking act” (Freedberg 1985, pp. 5, 25).

Search for publicity results in the need of an iconoclastic act to be exposed. Joan Westenholz showed that the Babylonian stela and statues looted by the Elamites were put for observation by the public in Susa. The rulers of Babylon likewise displayed looted and defaced images at the processional road to the Ištar Gate. Looted monuments were exposed for public view to glorify the victor, and abducted cult statues and objects were accommodated in the temples of his gods<sup>80</sup> as minor deities and attendants of the lord of the temple, for instance, as doorkeepers,<sup>81</sup> or incorporated into the victorious party pantheon, as was the Hittite practice (Goedegebuure, this volume). Notably, in the Mesopotamian Epic of Creation, Marduk does create the images of Ti’āmat’s tumbled-down monsters and puts them at the gates of Apsû to commemorate his victory (*Enuma eliš* V 73–75).

Similarly, in the eleventh–twelfth centuries C.E., Gaznevid sultans of Afghanistan displayed abducted, mutilated, humiliated, and decapitated Buddhist statues at the entrances to the mosques and palace (Flood 2002, pp. 650–51). The suffragist movement as well as individual assailants used attacks on museum items to publicize their political demands (Gamboni 1997, pp. 191, 197–98). Nowadays iconoclasm itself has become an artistic performance (Boldrick and Clay 2007, p. 2).

## AIMED AT AND LEFT BEHIND

The aim of Iconoclasm and Text Destruction in the Ancient Near East and Beyond — the seminar and the volume — was first and foremost the ancient Near East. Despite the great effort made by the contributors to achieve cross-cultural dialog, much still remains to be done to develop interdisciplinary research beyond a simplistic case comparison. As one important line of advance in this area I see further comparative investigation of aniconism and prohibition of figuration in various cultures and confessions. Another important perspective of development is the study of evolution and continuity of iconoclastic patterns and practices.

The Egyptian, Islamic, Byzantine iconoclasm, as well as iconoclasm in the Reformation and modern periods, are well investigated, and books dedicated to these subjects occupy many shelves. In addition to their importance and value in their own right the contributions in this volume, those dedicated to “beyond” are especially salient here in conjunction

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<sup>79</sup> With one, but sufficient difference in conjunction with the ancient Near East: the cult statuary was not only not exposed, but purposely hidden from the eyes of laity in the holy of holies of the temples.

<sup>80</sup> Westenholz, this volume; Schaudig this volume; ark of the covenant (1 Sam 5:2).

<sup>81</sup> Richardson, this volume. Woods (this volume) refers to a headless diorite statuette of Enmetena (Woods, fig.

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2.2) found at Ur in a gateway attributed to Nabonidus. Woods suggests that the statuette was preserved at the gateway for about 2,000 years. It might serve as a “doorkeeper.” In the time of Nabonidus, this “archaeologist on the throne,” it could become a “museum item.” Note the existence of similar practices also in Mediaeval Muslim Gaznah (Flood 2002, pp. 650–51).

with ancient Near Eastern iconoclasm and permit its better understanding in the context of comparative discourse. Iconoclasm in Egypt is scrutinized in the article of Betsy Bryan.<sup>82</sup> Silke Knippschild discusses iconoclasm in the course of the territorial conflicts in the Classical Greek world, using broad comparison with the ancient Near Eastern practices. Robin Cormack assesses the character of “iconoclasm” in Byzantium. Lee Palmer Wandel revises the interplay of theology and popular violence in the *Bildersturm* of the Reformation. W. T. J. Mitchell disputes the “return of idolatry and its ‘evil twin,’ iconoclasm” in contemporary culture.

The present volume will bring ancient Near Eastern iconoclasm to the attention of the scholars of the periods, for which this phenomenon is well investigated. The contributions dedicated to iconoclasm in the ancient Near East embrace all of its chronological and geographical space, starting with Sumer (Christopher Woods, Hanspeter Schaudig, and Claudia Suter<sup>83</sup>) and Akkad (Joan Goodnick Westenholz), and including Assyrian (Angelika Berlejung, Natalie N. May, Seth Richardson, and Hanspeter Schaudig) and Hittite (Petra Goedgebuure) empires. Questions of text destruction and idolatry are discussed as well by Nathaniel Levtow and Victor Hurowitz respectively. The articles by Suter and May analyze the cases of demolition of figurative complexes.

Nonetheless, to embrace in one volume all aspects of iconoclasm in the ancient Near East would be impossible. I can only hope that this book is the beginning. Winter (closing remarks) stressed both cross-cutting issues linking cases and challenges in methodology as well as greater precision in terminology. Beyond this, certain aspects of the phenomenon of iconoclasm in the ancient Near East remained beyond our reach. Particularly should be noted:

- *Iconoclasm in the destruction of the Assyrian empire.* An extensive article scrutinizing all aspects of the demolition of the signification system of the Assyrian empire is presently in preparation by myself for subsequent publication in a future collective volume on iconoclasm.
- *Destruction of graves.* Written and archaeological sources reveal that destruction and defilement of graves and human remains were profound acts of iconoclasm in the ancient Near East, but the concept behind these deeds differs from the modern one. Together with mutilation and spoliation of the cult images, destruction of graves was a magical and performative act, aimed at once at annihilation of the apotropaic ancestral cult and the erasure of local tradition. Betsy Bryan in this volume investigated the cases of tomb defilement in New Kingdom Egypt, distinguishing between two types: the politically motivated, and resulting from personal hostility. Her classification is definitely valid for the ancient Near East in general, for which the destruction of graves awaits further research.
- *The magic of iconoclasm.* This remains another extensive field to be investigated. The term “power of images” was stressed by David Freedberg (1989), who stated that “the magical properties of images is that the distinction between the image and the person represented is to some extent eliminated” (Freedberg 1977, p. 167). The definition should be applied first and foremost to the ancient Near Eastern

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<sup>82</sup> Some cases of iconoclasm in Egypt were added by Robert Ritner, this volume.

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<sup>83</sup> Suter’s paper discusses the assemblage of Gudea statues, however, the author did not define the time of its mutilation.

perception of figuration (or “representation” — Winter closing remarks; and see Bahrani 2003).

In Mesopotamia images were specially created and destroyed in voodoo-like magic rituals in order to destroy the foe (*maqlû*, lit. “burning”; Meier 1967). Even accidentally broken royal images were conceived of as omens of destruction of the land and dynasty and would require an apotropaic ritual.<sup>84</sup> Desecration and neutralizing of images created by the enemy himself was believed to realize his physical obliteration. Mutilation of symbols and representations — avatars of power — targeted and dissolved power itself.

- *The sack of (capital) cities.* This phenomenon was extensively and eloquently depicted in literary sources, among them those most often classified as lamentations. Only some points of their possible comparative study in the discourse of iconoclastic assault were referred here. Investigation of the written sources can be supplemented by abundant archaeological record of the destruction of the cities.

The efficacy of iconoclasm appears to reach much further than symbolic annihilation. With all the complexity of the modes, targets, and motivations iconoclasm arose as, first and foremost, an instrument of politics used to literally wipe out cults, cultures, and historical memory.

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<sup>84</sup> DIŠ ALAM LUGAL KUR.BI *lu-u* ALAM AD-šú *lu-u* ALAM AD AD-šú ŠUB-*ut-ma* 𒄩AŠ-*ir lu-u bu-un-na-an-ni-šú uk<sup>1</sup>-kil* LUGAL KUR.BI UD<sup>MEŠ</sup>-šú LÚGUD.DA<sup>MEŠ</sup> “(An omen says): if an image of the king of the land or an image of his

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father or an image of his grandfather falls over and breaks, or if its features become indistinct, (then) the days of the king of this land will be short” (The Building Ritual, *TU* 45 rev. 14, ed. Linssen 2004, pp. 285, 287).

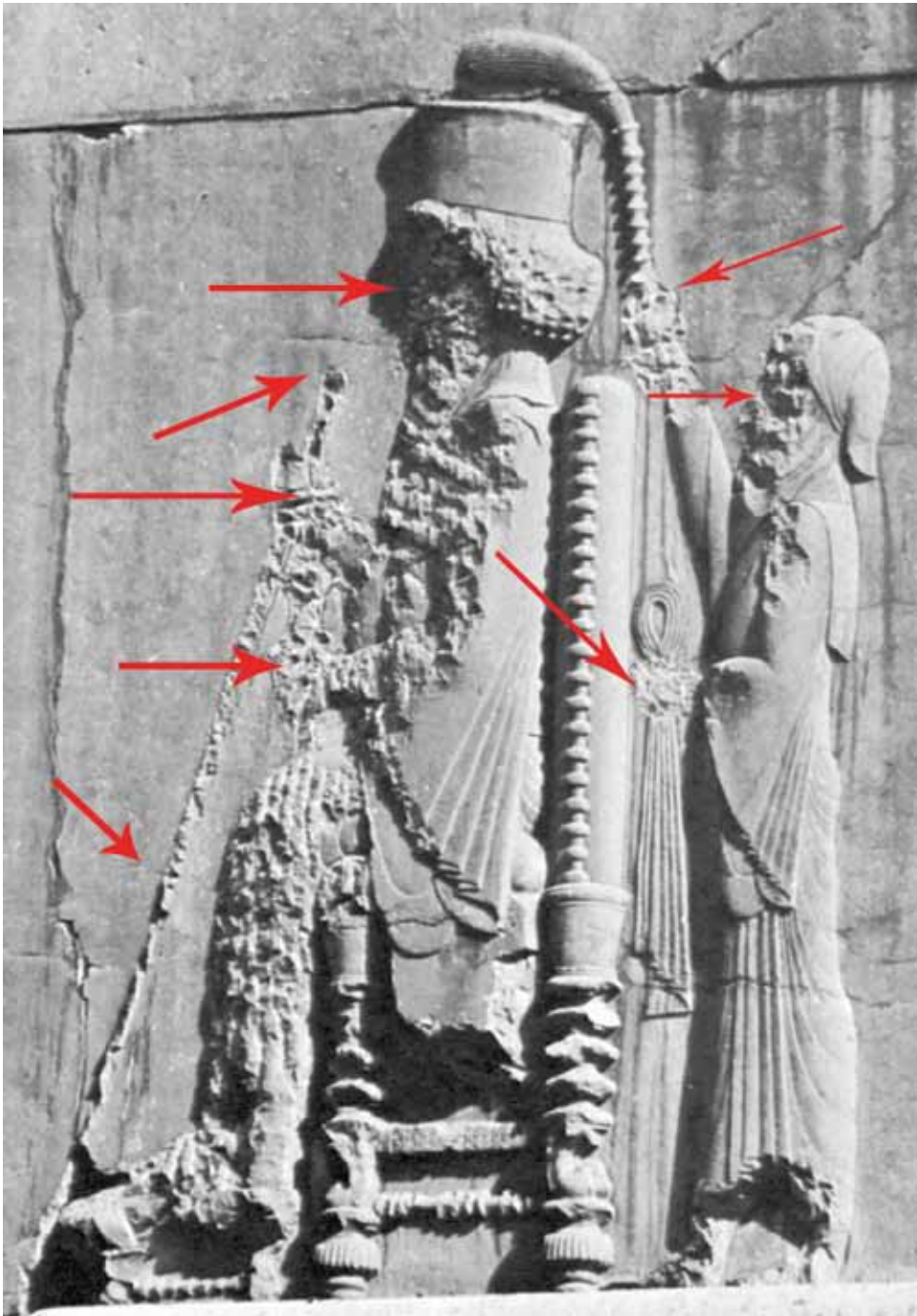


Figure 1.1. Persepolis, the Throne Hall, destroyed in 330 B.C.E. The Great King and his attendant are defaced, their hands chiseled out. The king's staff is chipped away and his feet are hacked off (after Schmidt 1953, pl. 105)



a



b

Figure 1.2. (a) Stela of Sargon II (721?–705 B.C.E.) of Assyria. VA 968. Mutilated facial features, hands, and chipped away royal staff; (b) Detail of the chipped away royal staff (courtesy Natalie N. May)





Figure 1.3. Defaced image of Sennacherib (704-681 B.C.E.) at Lachish, 701 B.C.E., with hacked off ceremonial weapon (bow and arrows) and right hand. Relief from the South-West Palace at Nineveh, destroyed 612 B.C.E. Detail of slab 11, room XXXVI, British Museum WAA 124911 (courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum)



Figure 1.4. Severed head of a statue dedicated by Puzur-Ishtar and his brother with erased tips of the horns of the divine crown, chopped off right ear, mouth, and nose. Twenty-first century B.C.E. Vorderasiatisches Museum VA 8748 (courtesy Natalie N. May)



Figure 1.5. Mutilation of prisoners of war. Balawat Gates (648 B.C.E.), Band X, 3, lower register: the burning of Kulisi and the impaling and mutilation of its male inhabitants (King 1915, pl. 56)

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## MUTILIATION OF IMAGE AND TEXT IN EARLY SUMERIAN SOURCES

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The deliberate destruction of images and texts was surely a common phenomenon during the earliest phases of Mesopotamian history even if indisputable physical evidence of these acts is relatively scarce when compared to that from later periods. As discussed by our contributors, some of the most iconic works of Mesopotamian art were subjected in antiquity to the indignity of politically motivated effacement and mutilation — from the first-millennium disfiguring of the copper head of a Sargonic ruler, to Shutruk-Nahunte’s deportation and repurposing of the Victory Stela of Naram-Sin,<sup>1</sup> to the defacing of several well-known reliefs after the fall of Nineveh.<sup>2</sup> Text-wise we may cite the careful and selective erasure of the Tell al-Rimah stela of Adad-nirari III,<sup>3</sup> and most notably, the smashing of Esarhaddon’s vassal treaties,<sup>4</sup> an act of revenge and liberation when Nimrud was sacked in about 612 B.C.E. Comparable dramatic evidence of this kind, that can be convincingly contextualized, is in short supply for the earliest historical periods, though the fragmentary and beheaded state in which we have found much of our stelae and statuary — the so-called Mask of Warka<sup>5</sup> and Eanatum’s Stela of the Vultures<sup>6</sup> being two famous candidates — may suggest similar ignominious ends for many other artifacts. Naturally, a distinction must be drawn between the purposeful and programmatic violence to images and texts on the one hand, and the less interesting destruction resulting from wanton acts of plunder on the other, even if the artifacts do not allow us to make this distinction easily in most cases.

For the Early Dynastic period, we must content ourselves primarily, but not exclusively, with the indirect evidence offered by texts that report on such events and the prohibitions that curse formulae provide against them. Although the evidence is far from overwhelming,

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*The Sumerian Dictionary of the University of Pennsylvania Museum.*

<sup>1</sup> See J. Westenholz, this volume.

<sup>2</sup> See May, this volume.

<sup>3</sup> Page 1968; Levtow, this volume.

<sup>4</sup> Wiseman 1958; see also the contributions of Berlejung, Levtow, and May (*Introduction*) in this volume.

<sup>5</sup> UVB 11, pls. 1, 21, 32 — note the broken nose and the absence of inlays of semi-precious stone and metal that would comprise the eyes, eyebrows, and hair (Brandes 1980, p. 34; UVB 11, 20).

<sup>6</sup> de Sarzec 1884–1912, vol. 2, épigraphie xxxviii–xlii, pls. 3, 3 bis, 4, 4 bis and 4 ter, 48, 48 bis.

it demonstrates that the effacing of inscriptions goes back virtually to the beginnings of recorded history, while the ritual mutilation of images must have much older origins still. Conversely, the instances of the purposeful destruction of text and image attested in later second- and first-millennium sources have close parallels in the early Sumerian corpus. Continuity and stasis characterize these phenomena in Mesopotamia, which, it must be stressed, were not primarily religious in nature though often couched in theological terms, but were political — what might be qualified as politically motivated iconoclasm.

The destruction of inscribed monuments, which likely also bore images, figures prominently in the earliest well-documented historical episode, the Lagash-Umma border conflict, a dispute over a fertile irrigated tract of land, the Gu'edena, which lay between the two city-states. A number of inscriptions dating to the twenty-fifth- and twenty-fourth-century Lagash rulers Eanatum, Enanatum, and Enmetena, and the Umma ruler Gishagkidug recount the vicissitudes of the dispute and make clear that the border was demarcated by inscribed stelae, *na-ru<sub>2</sub>-a*, which were considered to be divinely sanctioned. Politically, the stelae were tangible embodiments of the agreement that was arbitrated by a third party, Mesilim, king of Kish, who must have exercised some degree of sovereignty over portions of southern Mesopotamia. The identification of the agreement with the physical monuments themselves was such that violating the border reciprocally involved the destruction of the stelae. Theologically, the stelae embodied the divine will of Enlil, who, as head of the pantheon, determined where the boundary between the domains of Ningirsu and Shara, the patron deities and divine owners of Lagash and Umma respectively, should lay. Transgression of the border was considered an affront to the gods, an act that warranted divine retribution. Indeed, the inviolability of monuments of this type is demonstrated by the fact that they were often deified — the Sumerian term, *na-ru<sub>2</sub>-a*, capable of taking the divine determinative<sup>7</sup> — with the monuments themselves being revered, receiving offerings, and possessing temples and temple personnel.

Enmetena, recapitulating the early history of the conflict from the Lagash perspective, gives an account of the fate of the stelae that Mesalim had erected, recording that the ruler of Umma, in an act of arrogance, destroyed them, and marched on Lagash:

- (1) <sup>d</sup>En-lil<sub>2</sub> lugal kur-kur-ra ab-ba diġir-diġir-re<sub>2</sub>-ne-ke<sub>4</sub> inim gi-na-ni-ta <sup>d</sup>Nin-ġir<sub>2</sub>-su <sup>d</sup>Šara<sub>2</sub>-bi ki e-ne-sur Me-silim lugal Kiš<sup>ki</sup>-ke<sub>4</sub> inim <sup>d</sup>Ištaran-na-ta eš<sub>2</sub> GANA<sub>2</sub> bi-ra ki-ba na bi<sub>2</sub>-ru<sub>2</sub> Uš ensi<sub>2</sub> Umma<sup>ki</sup>-ke<sub>4</sub> nam-inim-ma dirigi-dirig-še<sub>3</sub> e-ak na-ru<sub>2</sub>-a-bi i<sub>3</sub>-PAD-PAD eden Lagaš<sup>ki</sup>-še<sub>3</sub> i<sub>3</sub>-ġen <sup>d</sup>Nin-ġir<sub>2</sub>-su ur-saġ <sup>d</sup>En-lil<sub>2</sub>-la<sub>2</sub>-ke<sub>4</sub> inim si-sa<sub>2</sub>-ni-ta Umma<sup>ki</sup>-da dam-ġa-ra e-da-ak

Enlil, king of the lands, father of the gods, by his firm command demarcated the border for Ningirsu and Shara. Mesilim, king of Kish, at the command of Ištaran surveyed the field and erected stelae there. (But) Ush, ruler of Umma, acted arrogantly — he ripped out (or smashed)<sup>8</sup> those stelae and marched on the steppe of Lagash. Ningirsu, warrior of Enlil, at Enlil's just command, did battle with Umma. (RIME 1, 9.5.1 i 1–27)

<sup>7</sup> See Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1999, with references.

<sup>8</sup> Reading bur<sub>9</sub>(PAD) = *nasāhu* “to tear out,” or alternatively pad = *kasāpu* “to break (into bits)”; the former

reading would appear more likely to judge from the majority of parallels.

The inscription goes on to tell how Enmetena's predecessor, Eanatum, having repelled the Ummaite incursion, "inscribed his own stelae at the (boundary) dike and restored the (original) monuments of Mesilim, but did not cross into the steppe of Umma."<sup>9</sup> Underscoring the belief that the border was demarcated by divine decree and enjoyed the protection of the gods, Eanatum built shrines there to Enlil, chief deity and divine arbitrator, Ninhursag, the mother goddess representing earth where the border lay, Ningirsu, patron of Lagash, and Utu, the god of justice. When Umma subsequently violated the border once again, we are informed that its ruler, Urluma, "set fire to the stelae and ripped them out (or smashed them) and destroyed the erected<sup>7</sup> chapels of the gods that were built on the (boundary-levee called) Namnunda-kigara."<sup>10</sup> As these shrines no doubt contained images or symbols of the gods to whom they were dedicated, the text describes what may be the earliest historical claim for the purposeful destruction of religious icons.<sup>11</sup> Not surprisingly, the only account of the conflict from the Umma perspective, an inscription of Gishagkidug,<sup>12</sup> presents a mirror-view of these events. Gishagkidug claims himself to have set up stelae demarcating the boundary in the name of Shara, to have restored the original monuments, and to have maintained the integrity of the border. Notably, the Gishagkidug inscription concludes with a curse (ex. 7) against any ruler who should destroy and remove the stelae. Again, these monuments were considered to be more than mere symbols of agreement between the two cities, but the physical manifestations of the divinely bestowed covenant itself.

More direct and certain evidence for the intentional and malicious destruction of cult images comes from an Uruiningina inscription, which concerns itself with the late history of the Lagash-Umma conflict.<sup>13</sup> The inscription gives a ledger-like enumeration of the ravages wrought by Lugalzagesi's foray into Lagash territory and his pillaging of shrines situated near the frontier.<sup>14</sup> Lugalzagesi, it is claimed, bears the responsibility for plundering and burning the shrines, and for "dismantling their precious metals and lapis lazuli."<sup>15</sup> These materials did not simply belong to the sanctuaries, but likely adorned the statues of the gods themselves. As known from later sources, cult statues were richly decorated with rare and precious

<sup>9</sup> eg<sub>2</sub>-ba na-ru<sub>2</sub>-a e-me-sar-sar na-ru<sub>2</sub>-a Mesilim-ma ki-bi bi<sub>2</sub>-gi<sub>4</sub> eden Umma<sup>ki</sup>-še<sub>3</sub> nu-dib<sub>2</sub> (RIME 1, 9.5.1 ii 4-10). Note that Eanatum's own inscriptions (e.g., RIME 1, 9.3.2) corroborate the Ummaite destruction of the boundary monuments (note also the repeated oath on the Stela of the Vultures, e.g., na-ru<sub>2</sub>-bi ba-ra-PAD-re<sub>6</sub> "I will not rip out (or smash) the stelae" [RIME 1, 9.3.1 rev. i 22-23]).

<sup>10</sup> na-ru<sub>2</sub>-a-bi izi ba-šum<sub>2</sub> i<sub>3</sub>-PAD-PAD barag ru-a diğir-re<sub>2</sub>-ne Nam-nun-da-ki-ğar-ra ab-du<sub>3</sub>-a i<sub>3</sub>-gul-gul (RIME 1, 9.5.1 ii 36-42).

<sup>11</sup> Ur-Nanshe's extensive fashioning of cult images may suggest an earlier episode of cult statue destruction, particularly when considered in connection with his widespread temple and canal building projects. Plausibly, Ur-Nanshe's efforts reflected a rebuilding program following a prior conflict, which resulted in the destruction or deportation of many of the province's

cult statues (Bauer 1998, p. 450). Schaudig (this volume) attributes these supposed hostilities to the early history of the Lagash-Umma border conflict. Given that this episode is not recorded in any of the extant sources that detail Lagash's long and difficult struggle with Umma over the Gu'edena (though certainly our sources are far from complete, and the lost portions of the first columns of the Stela of the Vultures could certainly accommodate such an event), it is at least equally plausible that hostilities in question were distinct from the Gu'edena conflict, one quite possibly involving Ur as recounted in RIME 1, 9.1.6b rev. i-vi (see also Cooper 1983, pp. 23, 34).

<sup>12</sup> RIME 1, 12.6.2.

<sup>13</sup> RIME 1, 9.9.5.

<sup>14</sup> See Powell 1996.

<sup>15</sup> kug za-gin<sub>3</sub>-bi ba-ta-keš<sub>2</sub>-keš<sub>2</sub> (RIME 1, 9.9.5 pas-sim).

materials including gold, silver, and lapis lazuli.<sup>16</sup> In fact, the additional detail included in the description of the plundering of Amageshtinana's shrine — where these materials are stated specifically to belong to the goddess — supports the interpretation if taken literally:

- (2) Saḡ-<sup>r</sup>ub<sub>x</sub>(EZEN×BAD) E<sub>2</sub>-<sup>d</sup>Ama-ḡeštīn-na-ka šu bi-bad kug za-gin<sub>3</sub>-na-ni ba-ta-keš<sub>2</sub>-keš<sub>2</sub> <sup>r</sup>pu<sub>2</sub>-<sup>r</sup>ba i<sub>3</sub>-šub

In Sagub, (Lugalzagesi) plundered the temple of Amagestinana, dismantled her precious metals and lapis-lazuli and threw her in a well. (RIME 1, 9.9.5 vi 11–vii 6)<sup>17</sup>

One of the fundamental tenets of Mesopotamian religion was the identification of a deity with his or her cult statue. While we may stop just short of saying that the statue was the god, the identity was such that the cult statue was considered to be imbued with the divine presence. That these statues were regarded as animate on a certain level is suggested by the verb *tud* “to give birth,” which is used to refer to the creation or manufacture of statues. Abstract notions of the divine were equated, in a very real sense, with their concrete man-made embodiments, so that whatever misfortune befell the statue was considered to have befallen the god. In short, there were real-world, practical consequences for the abduction or destruction of a cult statue — the cult simply could not function properly without the physical presence of the cult image. As I will discuss further, it is a conceptualization, pervasive in Mesopotamian thought, which seeks an identity between symbols and their referents.

There are well-known episodes of the foreign capture and return of cult statues in Mesopotamian history, one example being Shu-ilishu's return of the statue of the moon god Nanna that had been plundered and carried off to Anshan.<sup>18</sup> And an earlier deportation of divine statues may be described in a fragmentary inscription of the Pre-Sargonic ruler of Uruk, Enshakushana.<sup>19</sup> Theologically, these episodes are typically explained as the god's willful withdrawal and subsequent restoration of divine favor. What Uruinimgina describes is a sacrilege of a different kind — a native Babylonian desecration of cult sanctuaries. The text, focusing upon the ills that have befallen the city rather than the accomplishments of its ruler, stands alone thematically among the Pre-Sargonic royal inscriptions. In many ways the inscription anticipates the city laments of later periods, which mourn the ruin of various cities and the abandonment of their cult sanctuaries. The devastation at the hands of the enemy would naturally include plundering the cult statues, as recorded in the Lamentation over Sumer and Ur:

<sup>16</sup> See, for instance, Hurowitz, this volume. Relatively early evidence for the destructive decommissioning of a cult statue is likely to be found in Inana's Descent (probably composed during the Ur III period), where the goddess's demise in the Netherworld is couched in terms of a dismantled cult statue: a-[a] <sup>d</sup>Mu-ul-lil<sub>2</sub> du<sub>5</sub>-mu-zu mu-lu kur-ra nam-ba-da-an-GAM-e kug sag<sub>9</sub>-ga-zu saḡar kur-ra-ka nam-ba-da-ab-šar<sub>2</sub>-re za-gin<sub>3</sub> sag<sub>9</sub>-ga-zu zadim-ma-ka nam-ba-da-an-si-il-si-il <sup>8</sup>taškarin-zu ḡiṣ nagar-ra-ka nam-ba-da-andar-dar-e ki-sikil <sup>d</sup>Ga-[ša]-an-na kur-ra nam-ba-da-an-GAM-e “O Father Enlil, don't let your daughter be killed in the Netherworld! Don't let your precious metal be debased with the dirt of the Netherworld! Don't let your precious lapis lazuli be cut up among the

lapidary's stone! Don't let your boxwood be chopped up among the carpenter's timber! Don't let young lady Inana be killed in the Netherworld!” (ID 43–47).

<sup>17</sup> The interpretation given here assumes that the statue of the goddess, rather than the valuable metals and lapis lazuli, was thrown in the well.

<sup>18</sup> ud <sup>d</sup>Nanna An-ša-an<sup>ki</sup>-ta Urim<sup>5</sup><sup>ki</sup>-še<sub>3</sub> mu-un-tum<sub>2</sub>-ma-a “when (Shu-ilishu) brought back (the statue of) Nanna from Anshan to Ur” (RIME 4, 1.2.1 8–11).

<sup>19</sup> alan-bi kug za-gin<sub>3</sub>-bi <sup>r</sup>ḡiṣ<sup>r</sup> niḡ<sub>2</sub>-ga-bi <sup>d</sup>En-lil<sub>2</sub>-la [N]ibru<sup>ki</sup>-še<sub>3</sub> <sup>r</sup>a<sup>r</sup> [m]u-na-ru “(Enshakushana) dedicated their (i.e., Akshak's and Kish's) statues, their precious metals and lapis lazuli, their timber and treasure, to Enlil at Nippur” (RIME 1, 14.17.1 3'–8').

- (3) ki Lagaš<sup>ki</sup> Elam<sup>ki</sup> šu-ni-a im-ma-ši-in-gi<sub>4</sub> ud-bi-a nin-ga<sub>2</sub> (variant: nin-e) ud-da-a-ni sa<sub>2</sub> nam-ga-mu-ni-ib-dug<sub>4</sub> <sup>d</sup>Ba-u<sub>2</sub> lu<sub>2</sub>-u<sub>18</sub>-lu-gin<sub>7</sub> ud-da-a-ni sa<sub>2</sub> nam-ga-mu-ni-ib-dug<sub>4</sub> me-li-e-a ud-de<sub>3</sub> šu-ni-a im-ma-ši-in-gi<sub>4</sub> u<sub>4</sub> uru<sub>2</sub> gul-gul-e šu-ni-a im-ma-ši-in-gi<sub>4</sub> ud e<sub>2</sub> gul-gul-e šu-ni-a im-ma-ši-in-gi<sub>4</sub>

The province of Lagash has been handed over to Elam. At that time, My Lady's day also arrived. Bau (i.e., the statue of the goddess), as if she were human, her day also arrived. "Woe is me, I have been handed over to the storm! Handed to the storm that destroys cities! Handed over to the storm that destroys temples!" (LSU 173–174)

- (4) Ga-eš<sup>ki</sup> ga-gin<sub>7</sub> ur-re ba-an-de<sub>2</sub> i-gul-gul-lu-ne alan dim<sub>2</sub>-ma ulutim<sub>2</sub> sag<sub>9</sub>-ga-bi im-ze<sub>2</sub>-er-ze<sub>2</sub>-er-e-ne a uru gul-la e<sub>2</sub> gul-la-ğ u<sub>10</sub> gig-ga-bi im-me

They destroyed Gaesh as if it were milk poured out to dogs, and shattered its finely wrought statues. "Alas, the destroyed city! My destroyed temple!" bitterly she cried. (LSU 188–190) Note also: <sup>urudu</sup>alan uzug<sub>x</sub>(AN.ZAG)-ge/ge<sub>4</sub> si-a-bi/ba gu<sub>2</sub>-guru<sub>5</sub> ba-an-ne-eš "The statues that were in the shrine were cut down." (LSU 408/444)

The Uruinimgina inscription raises several interesting issues as to how events of this kind were presented and justified theologically by the parties involved. Among the sanctuaries despoiled are those of Enlil, Utu, and Inana — major gods of the pan-Babylonian pantheon, who were acknowledged and worshiped no more in Lagash than they were in Umma. Lagashite propaganda naturally exploited this paradox by portraying the event as a sacrilege, a violation of the natural order pregnant with divine consequences as the conclusion of the text makes clear:

- (5) lu<sub>2</sub> Umma<sup>ki</sup>-k[e<sub>4</sub>] r eğir Lagaš<sup>ki</sup> ba-ğul-a-ta nam-dag <sup>d</sup>Nin-ğir<sub>2</sub>-su-da e-da-ak-ka-am<sub>6</sub> šu in-ši-DU-a-am<sub>6</sub> e-ta-kud-kud nam-dag Uru-inim-gi-na lugal Ğir<sub>2</sub>-su<sup>ki</sup>-ka nu-ğal<sub>2</sub> Lugal-zag-ge-si ensi<sub>2</sub> Umma<sup>ki</sup>-ka diğir-ra-ni <sup>d</sup>Nisaba-ke<sub>4</sub> nam-dag-bi gu<sub>2</sub>-na ħe<sub>2</sub>-il<sub>2</sub>-il<sub>2</sub>

It is (the case) that leader of Umma, having sacked Lagash, has committed the sin against Ningirsu! The hand that he has raised against (Ningirsu) shall be cut off! It is not the sin of Uruinimgina, king of Girsu. May Nisaba, the god of Lugalzagesi, ruler of Umma, make him bear the sin around his neck! (RIME 1, 9.9.5 vii 10–ix 3)

The invocation of Nisaba underscores the act as a sacrilege that assaulted basic Babylonian beliefs as it requires not Ningirsu, patron of Lagash, or Enlil, head of the pantheon, but Lugalzagesi's own personal god to bear the responsibility for meting out punishment. Elsewhere, Lugalzagesi claims a special bond with Nisaba in his inscriptions, enjoying the epithets lu<sub>2</sub>-mah priest and son of Nisaba. The invocation of Nisaba, the goddess of grain, was particularly fitting given that the disputed land in question, the Gu'edena, derived its importance from its remarkable agricultural production. Further, if the goddess were at this time venerated in Lagash<sup>20</sup> (as she was at the end of the third millennium when she was later identified as the sister of Ningirsu and Nanshe), this would have presumably assured her impartiality in this case. The Umma perspective on this event is unknown. But leaving

<sup>20</sup> Note, however, that Nisaba's connection to Lagash during the Early Dynastic period is apparently limited to two texts in which she receives offerings (ITT 4, 7310

ii 23', HSS 4, 54; see Heimpel 1981, p. 111), and more indirectly her mention in the Nanshe Hymn (Michalowski 2001, p. 578).

aside issues of political spin and whether such an act against Babylonian gods would find its way into a royal inscription, it is unlikely that the pillaging of the shrines would have been conceptualized in Umma the way it was in Lagash. If the basic facts as presented in the Uru-inimgina inscription stand, then we must conclude that the Ummaite intention was not to attack the gods in their abstract, detached forms, but to destroy their local manifestations, the *versions* in which they lent divine patronage and protection to Lagash. The mutilation of these images, from this perspective, would be politically rather than religiously motivated, with Lagash rather than the gods themselves the object of the despoliation.

\* \* \*

In terms of the artifacts themselves, there are several good Early Dynastic candidates for the calculated destruction of images and inscriptions. One such — counting as an example for both image and text — is the badly damaged diorite statue of Lupad, which dates to the Fara period (fig. 2.1).<sup>21</sup> The statue was clearly mutilated in antiquity: the decapitated head with nose broken off was discovered separately from most of the body, and parts of the inscription appear to have been purposely chiseled away. The text describes the acquisition of at least three groups of fields by Lupad, who is identified as the field recorder of Umma. Remarkably, however, these fields were not located within Umma, but within the province of Lagash,<sup>22</sup> which accounts for the fact that the statue was found at Girsu. Given the tortured history of these two rival cities during this period, what was in essence a territorial conflict — and that Lupad was citizen of Umma purchasing Lagash real estate — we can plausibly suggest that the statue was mutilated not by an invading Umma army but by citizens of Lagash in retaliation, perhaps, for one of Umma's documented incursions into the Gu<sup>2</sup>edena.

Another mutilated piece with a suggestive history is a headless diorite statuette of En-metena (fig. 2.2).<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, it was found at Ur in a gateway attributed to Nabonidus. Presumably, it was preserved at this point — some 2,000 years after its manufacture — as an ancient relic, a fitting testament to Nabonidus's well-known antiquarian interests.<sup>24</sup> Woolley observed that the break at the neck had been polished, not by a tool or stone, but as if something softer had been repeatedly applied, suggesting that the statue had been mutilated in its early history, set up as a trophy, and subjected to constant handling.<sup>25</sup> Naturally, we can only speculate about the chain of events. The text on the back of the statue leaves little doubt that it was originally set up in Lagash. There is a strong suggestion in the texts concerned with the Lagash-Umma conflict that Umma was at various points in league with Ur and Uruk.<sup>26</sup> It may have been at some point during the long history of this conflict that the statue was carried off to Ur, as Woolley suggests, as a war trophy and ritually mutilated in a symbolic act of revenge.<sup>27</sup>

Other candidates include an Early Dynastic alabaster bull-man, which purportedly comes from Umma.<sup>28</sup> It is one of a pair, but the inscription on the right shoulder of this one has

<sup>21</sup> De Sarzec 1884–1912, vol. 1, p. 448, vol. 2, pp. LIV–LV and pls. 6 ter 1 a+b, 47,2; Gelb, Steinkeller, and Whiting 1991, vol. 1, pp. 72–74, vol. 2, pls. 38–39.

<sup>22</sup> See Gelb, Steinkeller, and Whiting 1991, vol. 1, p. 74 comm. iii 30.

<sup>23</sup> RIME 1, 9.5.17.

<sup>24</sup> See Schaudig 2003, with previous literature.

<sup>25</sup> Woolley 1955, pp. 47–48.

<sup>26</sup> See Cooper 1983, pp. 23, 34.

<sup>27</sup> Woolley 1955, pp. 47–48.

<sup>28</sup> Frankfort 1939, p. 12 and pl. 115E; Lloyd 1946, pp. 1–5 and pl. 3.

been erased, as Lloyd noted, “with a precision that could be deliberate.”<sup>29</sup> Assuming that the inscription was identical to that found on the companion piece, the erased inscription would have notably belonged to an Early Dynastic ruler of Umma.<sup>30</sup> There is also evidence for the reuse and repurposing of inscriptions. An example is provided by the twenty-fifth-century Uruk ruler Lugalkignedudu’s dedication of several rough-hewn stone blocks to the god Enlil. Although the blocks were inscribed, they went unused and were stored away in the god’s temple in Nippur.<sup>31</sup> Some four hundred years later, Amar-Sin of Ur recovered one of these blocks from the temple’s storerooms and turned it into a door socket, inscribing his own dedication to Enlil around the pivot cavity.<sup>32</sup> There is reason to believe that Amar-Sin may have taken his cue from Sharkalisharri, as Hilprecht reports that the same Lugalkignedudu inscription is found on a diorite door socket that also bears an inscription of the Sargonic ruler.<sup>33</sup> More than acts of usurpation — and far from ones of mutilation — these appropriations were demonstrations of reverence. By linking their inscriptions to that of an esteemed predecessor of ages past, notably maintaining the earlier inscription, they won greater legitimacy and significance for their own dedications, promoting their reigns as the continuation of an ancient historical narrative.

\* \* \*

Irrefutable, if indirect, evidence for acts of mutilation takes the form of the prohibitions against the potential obliteration of images and texts found in curse formulae. The proscriptions that conclude royal inscriptions reveal that violence against royal images, dedications, and the texts they bear was a regular occurrence and a legitimate concern of rulers.<sup>34</sup> Although neither homogeneous nor a rigidly formulaic element of royal inscriptions as in the following Sargonic period, the Early Dynastic curses already exhibit patterns that anticipate later prohibitions, a likely indication of their origins in older oral traditions. In fact, the rare and sporadic appearances of Pre-Sargonic curses may testify to the gradual transition of such prohibitions from the realm of the strictly oral to the written.<sup>35</sup> The earliest known examples of concluding curses are encountered in two Eanatum (ca. 2450) royal inscriptions, and it is perhaps significant that in one, the Stela of the Vultures, the text contains sequences of oaths sworn orally by the ruler of Umma and subsequent curses against any future ruler of Umma who violates that oath. The second attestation, a fragmentary text dedicating a mortar to Nanshe, ends with an elaborate curse protecting the mortar and its inscription:<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Lloyd 1946, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> For the companion piece bearing the inscription (RIME 1, 12.1.1), see Aruz 2003, pp. 51–52, and Ortiz 1996, no. 15. Note also the inscription of the so-called Lumat-ur stone tablet, which was clearly deliberately erased (Gelb, Steinkeller, and Whiting 1991, vol. 1, pp. 74–80, vol. 2, pls. 40–41). However, since the inscription was apparently unfinished in the first place, the erasure was likely in response to some mundane practical concern rather than any type of insidious politically motivated mutilation.

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<sup>31</sup> RIME 1, 14.14.3a; BE 1/2, pp. 28–30, 46.

<sup>32</sup> RIME 3/2, 1.3.6.

<sup>33</sup> RIME 2, 1.5.1; see Hilprecht’s description in BE 1/2, p. 46 and BE 1/1, p. 47; note also A. Westenholz 1987, no. 42 — apparently, the whereabouts of this inscription are now unknown.

<sup>34</sup> See Franke 1995, pp. 214–15 [Pre-Sargonic], 216–27 [Sargonic].

<sup>35</sup> See similarly Radner 2005, p. 254.

<sup>36</sup> See Franke 1989.

- (6) E<sub>2</sub>-an-na-tum<sub>2</sub>-me mu-na-dim<sub>2</sub>-ma lu<sub>2</sub> na-ab-dab<sub>5</sub>-e nam ur zag-bi pad-da mu-sar-ra-bi sub<sub>6</sub>(TAG)-sub<sub>6</sub>(TAG)-ba [...] K[A ...] na-dib-be<sub>2</sub> lugal Kiš<sup>ki</sup>-bi na-dib-be<sub>2</sub> <sup>d</sup>Nanše nin kur sikil GUM-[m]aḥ <sup>d</sup>Nanše ki gub-ba-bi taka<sub>4</sub>-e-ba ensi<sub>2</sub> Lagaš(NU<sub>11</sub>.BUR.LA)<sup>ki</sup> [...] na[m ur] zag-bi pad-d[a] ḡeštug<sub>2</sub>-ni al-zu-zu-a mu-sar-ra-bi ab-ta-ul<sub>4</sub>-a ḡeštug<sub>2</sub>-ni al-zu-zu-a izi ba-sum-mu ḡeštug<sub>2</sub>-ni [al-zu-zu-a] ṛmu<sup>ṛ</sup> [...] ḡešt[ug<sub>2</sub>-ni] al-zu-zu-a igi <sup>d</sup>Nanše-še<sub>3</sub> diḡir-ra-ni na-dib-be<sub>2</sub> a-ne na-dib-be<sub>2</sub>

[The mortar which] Eanatum fashioned (for Nanshe) — no one should confiscate it! If a stranger smashes it to bits or to efface its inscription ... may he never pass (before Nanshe!) May he, even if he is a “King of Kish,” never pass (before Nanshe)! As for Nanshe, the mistress, the pure mountain — if the ruler of Lagash removes the large mortar of Nanshe from its pedestal, ... if a stranger has been instructed to smash it to bits, or instructed to damage<sup>7</sup> its inscription, or instructed to set it on fire, or instructed to ... may his personal god not pass before Nanshe, and may he himself not pass before (Nanshe!) (RIME 1, 9.3.11 ii 4’-v 7’)<sup>37</sup>

As is stereotypical of later inscriptions, the prohibition displays a concern for transgressors who would attempt to circumvent the curse and avoid its consequences by inciting a third party to destroy the inscribed object or erase its inscription. The aforementioned inscription of the Umma ruler Gishagkidug ends with the following protective curse against any leader who would tamper with his inscribed monument demarcating the border between Umma and Lagash:

- (7) na-ru<sub>2</sub>-bi ki-bi bi-gi<sub>4</sub> inim <sup>d</sup>Ištaran-ta ki-ba na bi-ru<sub>2</sub> lu<sub>2</sub> kur-ra ki-bi al<sup>2</sup>-gul-la ṛšu ba<sup>ṛ</sup>-ta-ṛti<sup>ṛ</sup>-a ab-zaḥ-a ur[u<sup>ṛ</sup>-ni<sup>ṛ</sup>] ki muš ḥul-a-gim saḡ il<sub>2</sub> na-du<sub>12</sub>-du<sub>12</sub> e<sub>2</sub>-gal ḥul-a-na ensi<sub>2</sub>-bi zu<sub>2</sub> gig ḥa-ma-du<sub>3</sub><sup>1</sup>(NI)-ṛe<sup>ṛ</sup>

(Gishagkidug) restored (the boundary levee’s former) stelae, and by the command of Ishtaran, erected (new) stelae on that spot. If another leader destroys it there, or takes it away and makes off with it, may his city, like a place (infested with) harmful snakes, not allow him to hold his head high! May poisonous fangs bite at that ruler in his ruined palace! (RIME 1, 12.6.2 i 79-93)

In the Sargonic period, the curse formula became a basic element of monumental inscriptions, consistently reproduced with only minor variations. The standard Sargonic curse formula threatens whomever should destroy the inscription with the annihilation of person and progeny: *ša ṭuppam šu’a ušassakūni šamaš išdēšu lissuḥ u zērašu lilqut* “whoever tears out this inscription, may Shamash uproot his foundations and pluck out his progeny!”<sup>38</sup> In a bilingual inscription, the Sumerian version uses mu-sar-ra “inscription,” literally, “inscribed name,” rather than dub as an equivalent to Akkadian *ṭuppum* “tablet”:

<sup>37</sup> For philological notes, see Cooper 1984, pp. 91–92 and Frayne 2008, pp. 159–60, i.e., ur = *nakru* “foreign, strange” (Erimḥuš II 134); zag-bi for zag-bi-še<sub>3</sub> “completely”; sub<sub>6</sub>(TAG) = su-ub “to rub.” For taka<sub>4</sub>, cf. the curse in Gudea Statue B viii 25 (RIME 3/1, 1.7.StB). For ḡeštug<sub>2</sub>-ni al-zu-zu-a Cooper (1984, p. 90; 1986, p. 45)

understands “(and) it is brought to his (i.e., the ensi’s) attention.”

<sup>38</sup> Franke 1995, pp. 216–17; Michalowski and Walker 1989, p. 391; Radner 2005, pp. 254–55; J. Westenholz, this volume.



- (8) ʾlu<sub>2</sub> mu-sar-ra-e<sup>1</sup> ab-ḥa-lam-e-a<sup>d</sup> UTU suḥuš-a-ni ḥe<sub>2</sub>-bu<sub>3</sub>-re<sub>6</sub> numun-na-ni ḥe<sub>2</sub>-ga-ri-ri-ge = ša DUB ʾśu<sub>4</sub><sup>1</sup>-a u-ša-sa<sub>3</sub>-ku-ni<sup>d</sup> UTU SUḤUŠ-śu li-su<sub>2</sub>-uḥ<sup>u<sub>3</sub></sup> šE.NUMUN-śu li-il-qu<sub>3</sub>-ut

Whoever tears out this inscription, may Shamash uproot his foundations and pluck out his progeny. (RIME 2, 1.1.1 96–102 [Sargon]; see also RIME 2, 1.2.18 20–27 [Rimush])

By the reign of Rimush, these curses commonly single out the ruler’s written name, proscribing against its erasure and replacement with that of a successor:

- (9) ma-na-ma MU Ri<sub>2</sub>-mu-uś LUGAL KIŠ u-sa<sub>2</sub>-sa<sub>3</sub>-ku-ma al DUL<sub>3</sub> Ri<sub>2</sub>-mu-uś MU-śu i-śa-ka<sub>3</sub>-nu-ma DUL<sub>3</sub><sup>mi</sup>-me i-qa<sub>2</sub>-bi<sub>3</sub>-u<sub>3</sub><sup>d</sup> En-lil<sub>2</sub> be-al DUL<sub>3</sub> śu<sub>2</sub>-a u<sub>3</sub><sup>d</sup> UTU SUḤUŠ-śu li-su<sub>2</sub>-ḥa u<sub>3</sub> šE.NUMUN-śu li-il-qu<sub>3</sub>-ta<sub>2</sub> NITA a i-di<sub>3</sub>-na-śum maḥ-ri<sub>2</sub>-iś i<sub>3</sub>-li<sub>2</sub>-su e DU

As for anyone who removes the name of Rimush, king of the world, and puts his own name on the statue of Rimush, and says “(This is) my statue” — may Enlil, lord of this statue, and Shamash tear out his foundation and destroy his progeny! May they not grant him a male (heir)! May he not walk before his (personal) god! (RIME 2, 1.2.6 104–130)

With the onset of the Ur III period, Sumerian unilingual inscriptions begin to exhibit a more complex curse formulary.<sup>39</sup> More than their Sargonic counterparts — yet reminiscent of the Pre-Sargonic curse attested on Eanatum’s mortar (ex. 6) — these describe potential circumstances by which the object and the inscription it bears might be perturbed or destroyed in the future. Scribes drew upon a stable of stock phrases that sought to eliminate loopholes in the logic of the curse and increase its efficacy, providing against attempts to circumvent it.<sup>40</sup>

- (10) lu<sub>2</sub> mu-sar-ra-na šu-ni bi<sub>2</sub>-in-ʾur<sub>3</sub><sup>1</sup>-a mu-ni bi<sub>2</sub>-ʾib<sub>2</sub><sup>1</sup>-sar-a ʾaš<sup>1</sup>-ba-la<sub>2</sub>-a-ʾke<sub>4</sub>-eš<sub>2</sub><sup>1</sup> lu<sub>2</sub> kur-ra ʾḥe<sub>2</sub>-ni<sup>1</sup>-in-dab<sub>5</sub> ib<sub>2</sub>-zi-ʾra<sup>1</sup>-a bala-a-ni ʾḥe<sub>2</sub>-kud<sup>1</sup> ʾnumun-a<sup>1</sup>-ni ʾḥe<sub>2</sub><sup>1</sup>-til An lugal d[iḡir-re-n]e ʾd<sup>1</sup>Inana ʾnin<sup>1</sup> Unug<sup>ki</sup>-g[a] in-x-(x)-x-ʾna<sup>1</sup> ʾnam ḥa-ba<sup>1</sup>-d[a-kud]-ne

Whoever erases the inscription (of Utu-hegal) and writes his own name there, or who, because of this curse has someone else take hold of it and remove it, may his reign be cut short and may his progeny come to an end! May An, king of the gods, and Inana, lady of Uruk ... curse him! (RIME 2, 13.6.6 5–17)

- (11) lu<sub>2</sub> E<sub>2</sub>-an-na-ta ib<sub>2</sub>-ta-ab-e<sub>3</sub>-e<sub>3</sub>-a ib<sub>2</sub>-zi-re-a mu-sar-ra-ba šu bi<sub>2</sub>-ib<sub>2</sub>-ur<sub>3</sub>-a<sup>d</sup> Inana nin kur-kur-ra-ke<sub>4</sub> saḡ-ḡa<sub>2</sub>-ni unkin-na nam ḥe<sub>2</sub>-ma-kud-e ḡi<sup>š</sup>gu-za gub-ba-na suḥuš-bi na-an-gi-ne<sub>2</sub> numun-a-ni [ḥe<sub>2</sub>]-til bala-a-ni [ḥe<sub>2</sub>-kud]

The ruler who removes (the statue of Gudea) from the Eana, who destroys it, or who erases its inscription — let Inana, lady of the lands, curse his very person in the assembly! May she not secure the foundations of the throne erected for him! May his progeny come to an end and his reign be cut short. (RIME 3/1, 1.7.StC iv 5–17)

<sup>39</sup> See Michalowski and Walker 1989, pp. 391–94.

<sup>40</sup> In an inversion of this formula, we also encounter the positive entreaties for the invocation and perpetuation of the inscribed ruler’s name: mu-bi ḥe<sub>2</sub>-pad<sub>3</sub>-de<sub>3</sub>

lu<sub>2</sub>-bi ku-li-ḡu<sub>10</sub> ḥe<sub>2</sub>-am<sub>3</sub> mu-ḡu<sub>10</sub> ḥe<sub>2</sub>-pad<sub>3</sub>-de<sub>3</sub> “May (that future ruler) invoke the (temple’s) name! May he be my friend and invoke my name!” (RIME 3/1, 1.7.StI iv 5–7 [Gudea]).

Ironically, the curse formula inscribed on Gudea Statue K<sup>41</sup> was unable to save the statue from its eventual fate, for the beheaded and fragmentary statue was almost certainly intentionally mutilated in antiquity. To be included among these examples is the lengthy and complex curse formula found in Gudea Statue B (only relevant portions of which are reproduced here):

- (12) lu<sub>2</sub> E<sub>2</sub>-ninnu-ta im-ta-ab-e<sub>3</sub>-e<sub>3</sub>-a mu-sar-ra-bi šu ib<sub>2</sub>-ta-ab-ur<sub>3</sub>-a lu<sub>2</sub> ib<sub>2</sub>-zi-re-a ... en<sub>3</sub>-du KA-keš<sub>2</sub>-ra<sub>2</sub>-ġu<sub>10</sub> mu-ġu<sub>10</sub> u<sub>3</sub>-ta-ġar mu-ni ba-ġa<sub>2</sub>-ġa<sub>2</sub> ... tukum<sub>x</sub>(ŠU.TUR)-bi mu-bi šu ur<sub>3</sub>-de<sub>3</sub> ġeštug<sub>3</sub> ħe-em-ši-gub mu-ni e<sub>2</sub> diġir-ra-na-ta dub-ta ħe<sub>2</sub>-em-ta-ġar

Whoever removes (the statue of Gudea) from the Eninnu, who erases its inscription, or destroys it ... whoever deletes my name from my collected songs and replaces it with his own name ... if (the future ruler's) mind is set on erasing this inscription, let his (own) name be removed from the tablet in the temple of his (personal) god (RIME 3/1, 1.7.StB viii 6–ix 16; for image, see fig. 3.7b in this volume).

Provisions of these kinds — designed to protect the dedication and its inscription, to safeguard the inscribed name of the ruler from erasure and replacement — would become the template for the curse formulary of the royal inscriptions of the mature Ur III and Old Babylonian periods.<sup>42</sup>

More than mere verbiage, the prohibition against the erasure of a ruler's name speaks to a fundamental Mesopotamian belief in the power of names.<sup>43</sup> A name was not simply an index, but represented the very essence of its bearer. Name and identity were inextricably intertwined. A name had substance; it had essence. In short, a name was, on a certain conceptual level, existence itself — to have a name was to exist; to be deprived of a name was non-existence and chaos. An inscribed name, that is, a permanent manifestation of a name, was the lasting testament of its owner. Thus, to erase a name was to erase all memory of its bearer, to condemn its owner to oblivion — it was an act of *damnatio memoriae*. This is

<sup>41</sup> lu<sub>2</sub> mu-sar-bi [š u ib<sub>2</sub>]-ta-ab-[ur<sub>3</sub>-a] “Whoever erases this inscription ...” (RIME 3/2, 1.7.StK iii' 1'–2'); see Suter (this volume) for the purposeful mutilation of Gudea's statues.

<sup>42</sup> For instance, Ur-Namma: [lu<sub>2</sub> m]u-sar-ra-ba šu bi<sub>2</sub>-ib<sub>2</sub>-ur<sub>3</sub>-ru-a mu-ni bi<sub>2</sub>-i[b<sub>2</sub>]-sar<sup>1</sup>-re-a [aš<sub>2</sub> bala-a]-ba-ke<sub>4</sub>-eš lu<sub>2</sub>-kur<sub>2</sub> šu ba-an-zi-zi-a [mu-s]ar-ra-ba šu bi<sub>2</sub>-ib<sub>2</sub>-ur<sub>3</sub>-ru-a mu nu-<sup>r</sup>sar-de<sub>3</sub><sup>r</sup> in-na-ab-[s]ar [lu<sub>2</sub>-b]i lugal ħe<sub>2</sub>-a en ħe<sub>2</sub>-a ensi<sub>2</sub> ħe<sub>2</sub>-[a] ... “Whoever erases this inscription and writes his own name on it, or, because of this curse, incites another to erase the inscription and write for him a name that should not be written, be he a king, an en-priest, or governor ...” (RIME 3/2, 1.1.20: Concluding formula 1–4; Wilcke 2002, p. 326); Shulgi: lu<sub>2</sub> mu-sar-ra-ba šu bi<sub>2</sub>-ib<sub>2</sub>-ur<sub>3</sub>-a mu-ni bi<sub>2</sub>-ib<sub>2</sub>-sar-a <sup>d</sup>Nin-sun<sub>2</sub> diġir-ġu<sub>10</sub> <sup>d</sup>Lugal-banda<sub>3</sub><sup>da</sup> lugal-ġu<sub>10</sub> nam ħa-ba-da-kud-ne “Whoever erases this inscription and writes his own name there, may Ninsun, my goddess, and Lugalbanda, my master, curse him!” (RIME 3/2, 1.2.85 7–14 [Shulgi]); Shu-Sin: lu<sub>2</sub> a<sub>2</sub> niġ<sub>2</sub>-ĥul-dim<sub>2</sub>-ma [ib<sub>2</sub>-ši-a]ġ<sub>2</sub>-ġe<sub>26</sub>-a mu-s[ar-r]a-ba šu bi<sub>2</sub>-ib<sub>2</sub>-[ur<sub>3</sub>]-ur<sub>3</sub>-a [mu]-ni [bi<sub>2</sub>]-ib<sub>2</sub>-sar-re-a niġ<sub>2</sub>-dim<sub>2</sub>-ma-ġu<sub>10</sub> ib<sub>2</sub>-ze-re-a lu<sub>2</sub>-ba <sup>d</sup>E[n-l]il<sub>2</sub>

lugal kur-kur-<sup>r</sup>ra<sup>1</sup>-ke<sub>4</sub> <sup>d</sup>Nin-lil<sub>2</sub> nin diġir-re<sub>2</sub>-e-ne-ke<sub>4</sub> nam ħa-ba-an-da-[kud-r]e<sub>6</sub>-ne “Whoever gives orders to do evil (against this statue), who erases its inscription, who writes his own name, who destroys my handiwork, that man, may Enlil, master of the lands, and Ninlil, lady of the gods, curse him!” (RIME 3/2, 1.4.3 vi 34–vii 16); Iddin-Dagan: lu<sub>2</sub> a<sub>2</sub> niġ<sub>2</sub>-ĥul-dim<sub>2</sub>-[ma] [i]b<sub>2</sub>-ši-aġ<sub>2</sub>-ġe<sub>26</sub>-a niġ<sub>2</sub>-d[im<sub>2</sub>-ma-ġu<sub>10</sub>] ib<sub>2</sub>-zi-re-[a] mu-sar-ra-ba šu bi<sub>2</sub>-i[b<sub>2</sub>-ur<sub>3</sub>-a] mu-ni bi<sub>2</sub>-ib<sub>2</sub>-sar-[re-a] aš<sub>2</sub>-bal-a-ba-ke<sub>4</sub>-eš lu<sub>2</sub>-<sup>r</sup>kur<sub>2</sub><sup>r</sup> šu ba-an-zi-zi-a lu<sub>2</sub>-bi lugal ħe<sub>2</sub>-a en ħe<sub>2</sub>-a u<sub>3</sub> lu<sub>2</sub>-ulu<sub>4</sub> saġ-zi-ġal<sub>2</sub> mu-ni sa<sub>4</sub>-a ħe<sub>2</sub>-a lu<sub>2</sub>-bi mu nan-tuku-tuku numun na-mi-i-i ... “Whoever gives orders to do evil against (the statue), has my handiwork destroyed, or erases its inscription and writes his own name on it, or because of this curse incites another to do so, whether he be a king, an en-priest, or just an ordinary human being, may that man be deprived of a name and progeny ...” (RIME 4, 1.3.2 25–36). Sumerian curses of this type are attested as late as the reign of Ashurbanipal; see ex. 17.

<sup>43</sup> See now Radner's (2005) comprehensive treatment of this topic.

tacitly demonstrated by the apodoses of those curses that in reciprocal retaliation for the erasure of the inscription, or specifically the erasure of the ruler's name, promise the end of the transgressor's progeny (exx. 8–11 and n. 38). More broadly, this rationale is cognate with the conception of boundary stelae as embodiments of divinely sanctioned treaties, and cult statues as vessels of divine presence, and, of course, with the symbolism that motivates iconoclasm itself. The distinction we culturally draw between the signified and the signifier the ancients purposely blurred.

Reflexes of this conceptualization are widespread. Most basically, it is demonstrated lexically by the Sumerian and Akkadian words for “name,” *mu* and *šumu* respectively, both of which carry the extended meanings “fame” and “reputation,” particularly as expressed in the senses of “posterity” and “progeny.” Theologically, for instance, one god could be identified or merged with, or absorb, another god by taking his name. And in literature, both Sumerian and Akkadian, the notion constitutes a common motif. Among the many possible examples that could be cited, we can point to Gilgamesh's quest for immortality. Most closely associated with the Standard Babylonian epic, the theme is already well articulated in the Sumerian story Gilgamesh and Huwawa. Realizing the impossibility of everlasting life, Gilgamesh sets out to secure the next best thing — he will establish his everlasting renown by making a name for himself. The imagery of permanence conveyed by the inscribed written name is a metaphor for the reputation his actions will shape for posterity.<sup>44</sup> From the perspective of conceptions of cosmogony, creation is also couched in terms of naming. Thus, in Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld, the creation of humankind is metaphorically described as the time when the name of humanity was established.<sup>45</sup> And, of course, from later literature there is the prime example of *Enuma Elish* and its opening lines, which explicitly couple naming to existence, not to mention the enumeration of the fifty names of Marduk at the hymn's conclusion.<sup>46</sup>

Interestingly, the destruction of names, as representatives of their bearers, is expressed differently from that of images and texts. With anthropomorphic images, the head and face,

<sup>44</sup> En-ki-dug<sub>3</sub> eĝir<sub>6</sub> ĝuruš-e til<sub>3</sub>-la saĝ ti[l]-bi-še<sub>3</sub> la-ba-ra-an-e<sub>3</sub>-a kur-ra ga-an-ku<sub>4</sub> mu-ĝu<sub>10</sub> ga-am-ĝar ki mu gub-bu-ba-am<sub>3</sub> mu-ĝu<sub>10</sub> ga-bi<sub>2</sub>-ib-gub ki mu nu-gub-bu-ba-am<sub>3</sub> mu diĝir-re-e-ne ga-bi<sub>2</sub>-ib-gub “O Enkidu, after a man's life is finished, he cannot emerge (from the grave) in order to live again. I want to go into the mountains and establish my reputation (lit., set up my name): where it is possible to establish one's reputation, I will establish my own reputation; where it is not possible to establish one's reputation, there I will establish the reputations of the gods” (GHA 4–7).

<sup>45</sup> ud ul niĝ<sub>2</sub> ul-e pa e<sub>3</sub>-a-ba ud ul niĝ<sub>2</sub> ul-e mi<sub>2</sub> zid dug<sub>4</sub>-ga-a-ba eš<sub>3</sub> kalam-ma-ka ninda šu<sub>2</sub>-a-ba im-šu-rin-na kalam-ma-ka niĝ<sub>2</sub>-tab ak-a-ba an ki-ta ba-da-bad-ra<sub>2</sub>-a-ba ki an-ta ba-da-sur-ra-a-ba mu nam-lu<sub>2</sub>-u<sub>18</sub>-lu ba-an-ĝar-ra-a-ba “In those days of yore when the ancient customs had become manifest, in those days of yore when the ancient rites had been carefully tended, when bread had been

consumed in the shrines of the land, when the ovens of the land had been fanned ablaze, when heaven had been split asunder from earth, when earth had been parted from heaven, when mankind had been created (lit., when the name of mankind was established)” (GEN 4–10).

<sup>46</sup> e-nu-ma e-liš la na-bu-u<sub>2</sub> ša-ma-mu šap-liš am-ma-tum šu-ma la zak-rat ABZU-ma reš-tu-u<sub>2</sub> za-ru-šu-un mu-um-mu Ti-amat mu-al-li-da-at gim-ri-šu<sub>2</sub>-un A.MEŠ-šu<sub>2</sub>-nu iš-te-niš i-ĥi-qu-u<sub>2</sub>-ma gi-pa-ra la ki-iš-šu<sub>2</sub>-ru šu-ša-a la še-u<sub>2</sub> e-nu-ma DIĜIR.DIĜIR la šu-pu-u ma-na-ma šu-ma la zuk-ku<sub>2</sub>-ru ši-ma-tu<sub>2</sub> la ši-i-mu ib-ba-nu-u<sub>2</sub>-ma DIĜIR.DIĜIR qe<sub>2</sub>-reb-šu<sub>2</sub>-un “When on high the heavens had not been named, the earth below had not been given a name, primeval Apsu, their begetter, (and) creatrix Tī'amat, who bore them all, mingled their waters together; no grassland had been formed, nor canebrake founded; when no gods had been brought into being, had been pronounced by name, or had their destinies determined — (at that time) the gods were created within them” (EE 1–9; after Michalowski 1990, p. 384).

the salient indexes of identity, are the natural and common targets for mutilation. To a certain extent, the damage inflicted on anthropomorphic statues is symbolic of the real-world punishments dealt to individuals. Several Ur III texts refer to the cutting or the marking (pa-ağ<sub>2</sub>-zi<sub>2</sub>) of the noses of fugitives, while later laws sanction various facial mutilations.<sup>47</sup> The noses, in particular, of many Early Dynastic statues, including those of the largest male figure of the Tell Asmar hoard (the so-called Abu statue) and the figure of Išqi-Mari, king of Mari, were purposefully mutilated in antiquity.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, images of decapitations and beheaded captives are a common theme in the commemorative art of martial victories. Well documented in Neo-Assyrian reliefs, third-millennium examples include the Stela of the Vultures and the Standard of Ebla (fig. 2.3), while scenes earlier still, encountered in the proto-literate glyptic, depict prisoners of war being subjected to various acts of mutilation and torture (fig. 2.4).<sup>49</sup> Of course, the severed head of Huwawa, preserved in literature and art, presents us with the most famous decapitation from Mesopotamia, an aetiology, perhaps, for the apotropaic use of Huwawa heads.<sup>50</sup> Sumerian texts do not describe the decapitation of statues, but, as the examples given above attest, more generally refer to their dismantling (-ta+keš<sub>2</sub>), removal (e<sub>3</sub>), and moreover destruction (gu<sub>2</sub>-guru<sub>5</sub>-dug<sub>4</sub>, zi.r).<sup>51</sup> Inscriptions, as described by the provisions detailed in curses, could likewise be destroyed (ḥa-lam, ul<sub>4</sub><sup>?</sup>, zi.r), as well as burned (izi-šum<sub>2</sub>), or erased (šu-ur<sub>3</sub>). And while inscribed names could be removed (-ta+ğar) and replaced (ğar), to destroy a name itself — the converse of bestowing a name, a performative act of creation and perpetuation — was to consign its bearer to non-existence. The notion is manifest in the idiom mu(-PRONOUN) ... ḥa-lam “to cast into oblivion,” literally “to wipe out, destroy the name.”<sup>52</sup> As observed above (ex. 8; see also ex. 13), the same verb, ḥa-lam, is used in the Sargonic period to describe the destruction of inscriptions, mu-sar-ra, literally, “the inscribed name.” The idiom mu(-PRONOUN) ... ḥa-lam is encountered in royal inscriptions as early as the Sargonic period (ex. 13), and as late as the reign of Ashurbanipal (ex. 17). In mu(-PRONOUN) ... ḥa-lam, the name, mu — an abstraction, an intangible index of its referent — is conceptualized in terms of its concrete written form, a physical entity that can be removed, erased, destroyed. A curse prescribing the annihilation of descendants, the perpetuation of the individual, was deemed the appropriate retribution for the erasure of the written name, the lasting token inextricably bound up with the identity of its referent. To be deprived of a name, like being deprived of progeny, was to be condemned to oblivion and wiped from memory.<sup>53</sup>

- (13) lu<sub>2</sub> mu-<sup>r</sup>sar-ra-e<sup>r</sup> a[b]-ḥa-lam-e-a An-ne<sub>2</sub> mu-ni ḥe<sub>2</sub>-ḥa-lam-e <sup>d</sup>En-lil<sub>2</sub>-le numun-na-ni ḥe<sub>2</sub>-til-le <sup>d</sup>Inana-ke<sub>4</sub> e x dumu-na-ni ḥe<sub>2</sub>-kud-<sup>r</sup>e<sup>r</sup>

Whoever destroys this inscription, may An destroy his name! May Enlil bring his progeny to an end! May Inana cut off his ... offspring. (RIME 2, 1.1.11 38–48 [Sargon]; the Akkadian for these lines is omitted)

<sup>47</sup> Molina and Such-Gutiérrez 2004, with references to the laws on p. 8.

<sup>48</sup> See Evans, forthcoming, chapter 5.

<sup>49</sup> See Dolce 2006; Glassner 2006; and J. Westenholz, this volume, for later depictions.

<sup>50</sup> See Wiggermann 1992, p. 146, with references.

<sup>51</sup> See also ID 43–47 cited in n. 11.

<sup>52</sup> Note the primary lexical equations ḥa-lam = ḥalāqu “to disappear,” mašû “to forget,” besides nasāku (III) “to remove, cast aside.”

<sup>53</sup> Cf. the parallel idiom numun ... ḥa-lam, e.g., numun nam-lu<sub>2</sub>-ulu<sub>3</sub> ḥa-lam-e-<sup>r</sup>de<sub>3</sub><sup>r</sup> [nam-bi ba-tar] “It has been decided that the seed of mankind is to be wiped away” (Flood Story Seg. C 23); numun nam-lu<sub>2</sub>-ulu<sub>3</sub> ḥa-la-me-de<sub>3</sub> “In order to destroy the seed of mankind” (DG Seg. F 124 [Me-Turan]; see also Seg. F 31 [Me-Turan]).

- (14) numun-na-<sup>r</sup>ni<sup>1</sup> ḫe<sub>2</sub>-eb<sub>2</sub>-til-<sup>r</sup>ne<sup>1</sup> mu-ni ḫe<sub>2</sub>-eb<sub>2</sub>-ḫa-lam-e-n[e]  
 May they bring his seed to an end and cast him into oblivion! (RIME 3/1, 1.7. “StS” ii’ 6–8 [Gudea])
- (15) <sup>d</sup>En-lil<sub>2</sub> lugal kur-kur-ra-ke<sub>4</sub> mu-bi ḫa-lam-e-de<sub>3</sub> ... a<sub>2</sub>-bi mu-da-an-a-aḡ<sub>2</sub>  
 Enlil, the king of all the lands entrusted (Utu-hegal) ... with wiping out the name (of Gutium). (RIME 2, 13.6.3 15–23 [Utu-hegal])
- (16) saḡ ḡi<sub>6</sub> zi-ḡal<sub>2</sub> mu-tuku-ba mu-bi ḫa-lam-e-de<sub>3</sub>  
 In order to cast into oblivion its famous black-headed people. (RIME 3/2, 1.4.4 ii 1–3 [Shu-Sin])
- (17) lu<sub>2</sub> mu-sar-ra-ḡu<sub>10</sub> šu bi<sub>2</sub>-ib<sub>2</sub>-ur<sub>3</sub>-e-a ḫa-ba ki-bi kur<sub>2</sub>-ru-da <sup>d</sup>EN.ZU <sup>d</sup>Nin-gal diḡir bad<sub>3</sub>-gal-ḡu<sub>10</sub> mu-bi ḫe<sub>2</sub>-en-ḫa-lam-e-ne  
 Whoever erases my inscription or would change its position, may Sin and Ningal, my divine protectors, wipe out his name! (RIMB 2, B.6.32.2001 32–38 [Sin-balassu-iqbi])

In the Old Babylonian period the idiom occurs in several literary texts:

- (18) ba-dug<sub>4</sub>-ga-ke<sub>4</sub>-eš mu-ni ki-ta ḫa-lam-ke<sub>4</sub>-eš  
 Was it commanded that his (i.e., Huwawa’s) name should be wiped from the earth? (GHa 188M)
- (19) mu-bi dug<sub>4</sub>-dug<sub>4</sub>-ga nam-ba-e-da-ḫa-la-me-eš  
 Their names (i.e., of the dead), once uttered, cannot be forgotten! (DG Seg. K 8)
- (20) ḡen-na ba-ug<sub>5</sub>-ge-en na-nam-ma-am<sub>3</sub> mu-zu ga-ba-da-ḫa-lam-e  
 Begone! You are dead! And so it is that your name shall be forgotten! (InBl 100)
- (21) <sup>d</sup>En-lil<sub>2</sub>-me-en nam a-na-tar-ra-ḡa<sub>2</sub> mu-bi na-ab-ḫa-lam-e  
 May he not cast into oblivion all that I, Enlil, have decreed. (ExNin 224)

\* \* \*

To this point, the evidence surveyed conforms to our expectations for the motivations behind the mutilation of texts and images, namely, that these were primarily malicious and politically motivated events. But we must not overlook the fact that the deliberate destruction of these objects, without negative connotation, was also part and parcel of everyday life in Mesopotamia. Indeed, the evidence discussed above should be considered within the context of inscriptions and statuary as physical artifacts and native conceptions of the relationship between medium and message.

Stone was a rare and valuable<sup>54</sup> natural resource, and so the recycling and repurposing of stone objects is not unexpected.<sup>55</sup> The Sharkalisharri and Amar-Sin door sockets discussed above, upon which these rulers added their inscriptions — notably maintaining that of a Pre-Sargonic predecessor — are royal examples of the practice. Reuse of this kind was presumably more common with frequently used everyday objects, particularly those whose original owners had died or were forgotten. Cylinder seals, for example, were commonly recycled and re-cut; stone weights could be reused and transformed. In one remarkable case, the original owner of a seal had to suffer the indignity of having his name replaced with the picture of a dog.<sup>56</sup> In another, a large one-talent weight was converted into what is likely a door-socket.<sup>57</sup> The original inscription was erased to accommodate the cavity. Curiously, a new inscription was added in the Kassite period that was a poor imitation of a Sumerian inscription of nearly thousand years earlier. We might speculate that the motivation for doing so was that the original inscription dated to the Ur III period. Also to be considered, although constituting disposal rather than destruction, is the ritual burial of statues as an act of veneration. Such may have been the case with the Oriental Institute's Tell Asmar statues. Carefully stacked with the heaviest on the bottom, these statues were buried next to an altar, possibly as part of a ceremonial decommissioning.<sup>58</sup>

Tablets were frequently erased and recycled as a matter of course in scribal training. Teacher-student exercises, for example, consist of two columns: the left one written in a larger script with the teacher's master text, and the right one with the pupil's copy. The pupil's side was regularly erased resulting in an asymmetrical tablet with a thinner, more fragile right half.<sup>59</sup> More generally, scribal exercises were often deliberately broken after completion, possibly to prevent their reuse by other students. In one extraordinary case, teeth marks indicate that the student broke his exercise by biting off a section.<sup>60</sup> As a matter of course, scribal exercises were frequently recycled by soaking the unbaked tablet, and returning the clay to its original form. Rooms associated with scribal activity excavated at Isin and Sippar-Amnanum have included basins; in the case of Sippar-Amnanum, the basin was filled with recycled clay and several exercise tablets.<sup>61</sup>

Text destruction was also fundamental to basic Mesopotamian administrative practice. Loan documents, for instance, were destroyed after they were repaid. When a loan was made, a loan document would be prepared and deposited with the creditor. After the loan was repaid, the borrower would take possession of the document and destroy it by breaking it. This step was necessary as the document itself had a value equivalent to the loan amount, and a lost or misplaced document could be recovered and presented for repayment.<sup>62</sup> The procedure is known from legal cases, and loan documents themselves, which frequently include

<sup>54</sup> Evans, for instance, suggests that the frequent presence of drilled holes and use of bitumen in Early Dynastic statuary may be evidence of the re-assembly and re-use of component parts, rather than of repair in antiquity, as is typically assumed. That is, these statues were composites that were assembled from recycled components of decommissioned and disassembled statues. Evidence of burning, on the other hand, may indicate the recycling of gypsum into plaster, following a ritual decommissioning of the statue (see Evans, forthcoming, chapter 4).

<sup>55</sup> On the recycling and preservation of stone statues, cf. the contributions of Berlejung and Suter (this volume).

<sup>55</sup> Møller 1992, pp. 43, 45, no. 75 — a dog or lion? Collon 1995, fig. 59:c (description on p. 79) depicts a cylinder seal in which a seal has been recut, erasing the original inscription replacing it with reeds.

<sup>57</sup> Friberg 2007, pp. 127–29.

<sup>58</sup> Frankfort 1939, pp. 3–7.

<sup>59</sup> Veldhuis 1997, pp. 31–32.

<sup>60</sup> Guinan and Leichty 2010.

<sup>61</sup> Veldhuis 1997, p. 25, with references.

<sup>62</sup> Steinkeller 2002, pp. 113–14.

the notation *zi-re-dam*, meaning “it (i.e., the tablet) should be annulled (literally broken).”<sup>63</sup> Moreover, it was standard procedure to break an invalidated document in Mesopotamia — an administrative practice that sheds some light on the perceived legal consequences associated with the malicious destruction of boundary stela and other legal texts. In fact, the ritual destruction of texts may have, in origin at least, been in mimicry of the administrative practice of voiding documents through physical breakage, an action to which friable dried clay tablets particularly lend themselves.

In a rarely attested third-millennium administrative practice, inscriptions could be transformed into instruments of torture, used to exact punishment through facial mutilation. Sale transactions were commonly inscribed on clay cones or nails, which in the case of the sale of a house, for instance, would likely be driven into the wall of the sold property to mark the completion of the transfer.<sup>64</sup> Frequently, these documents include an eviction clause that stipulates that if the buyer is evicted because the seller was not the rightful owner of the property, the seller will face some penalty for breach of contract.<sup>65</sup> Often this takes the form of monetary compensation, but in several instances the clause stipulates a corporal punishment whereby the clay nail will be driven through the seller’s mouth or teeth.

(22) *lu<sub>2</sub> am<sub>6</sub>-ma-du<sub>3</sub>-da kag-bi KA-KA<-na> e-gaz*

If someone else holds (the real estate), this nail will be driven through (his) mouth/  
teeth. (*TIM* 9, 94 B ii (v') 8'-9')

This was an act of mutual annihilation — mutilating the seller’s mouth or teeth, and so branding him as a scofflaw,<sup>66</sup> while simultaneously crushing and destroying the clay nail. The symbolism is clear: the seller’s oral misrepresentation made the written document null and void; the document, which at any rate would require annulling through physical destruction, in turn, becomes the instrument for invalidating the source of the false statement. It is a legal practice that reflects the conceptualization of inscriptions as not merely vehicles for text but as physical objects innately bound up with the meaning of the words they bear. More broadly, the practice ties into the aforementioned conception of the inseparability of symbols from their intrinsic meanings, and the particular Mesopotamian tendency to find tangible analogues for abstract concepts. As discussed, the divine was reduced to, symbolized by, and identified with lifeless statues, which were perceived on some level as animate; entities were represented by and equated with their indices — names that could not only

<sup>63</sup> E.g., 4.4. *še gur lugal dub Lugal-TUG<sub>2</sub>.MAH Ur<sub>3</sub>-re-ba-ab-du<sub>7</sub> in-da-ġal<sub>2</sub>-am<sub>3</sub> inim Lugal-TUG<sub>1</sub>.(MAH)-a di im-mi-ib<sub>2</sub>-dug<sub>4</sub> Ur<sub>3</sub>-re-ba-ab-du<sub>7</sub> dub-ġu<sub>10</sub> zi-ra-ab [in-n]a-dug<sub>4</sub>-ga [Lugal]-TUG<sub>2</sub>.MAH nam-erim<sub>2</sub>-bi kud-dam* “The tablet of Lugal-TUG.MAH (recording the loan) of 1,440 liters of barley remains with Ure-babdu (the creditor). (Ure-babdu) has brought a legal case against Lugal-TUG<sub>2</sub>.MAH (concerning the loan in question). Lugal-TUG.MAH must take an oath that he had said to Ure-babdu, ‘Destroy my tablet!’” (*NG* 208 i 11-20); 2 *gin<sub>2</sub> la<sub>2</sub> igi-6-ġal<sub>2</sub> kug ki Lugal-nam-tar-re-ta Ri-zu baġar<sub>2</sub> u<sub>3</sub> Lu<sub>2</sub>-dug<sub>3</sub>-ga šu ba-ti ki Ri-zu baġar<sub>2</sub> u<sub>3</sub> Lu<sub>2</sub>-dug<sub>3</sub>-ga-ġu<sub>10</sub> mu-de<sub>6</sub> Lugal-nam-tar<sup>l</sup>-re šu ba-ti dub-ba-ne-ne u<sub>2</sub>-gu ba-de<sub>2</sub> al-pad<sub>3</sub> zi-re-dam* “Rizu, the potter, and Ludugamu borrowed 1½ shekels of silver from Lugal-

namtare. (The silver) was brought back from Rizu, the potter, and Lu-dugamu. Lugalnamtare received it. But their (loan) tablet had been lost. When it is found, it must be destroyed” (*TuM n.F.* 1/2, 47) — references after Steinkeller 2002, pp. 126-27.

<sup>64</sup> Gelb, Steinkeller, and Whiting 1991, vol. 1, p. 241; an ancient *kudurru*, the Ushumgal Stela, may depict such a cone in situ (Gelb, Steinkeller, and Whiting 1991, vol. 2, pl. 14 side A).

<sup>65</sup> Gelb, Steinkeller, and Whiting 1991, vol. 1, p. 246.

<sup>66</sup> Hackett and Huehnergard 1984, p. 271. As discussed by the authors, this particular talionic punishment, first attested in Sumerian sources, has a long history in the ancient Near East, as attested in Old Babylonian, Nuzi, Emar, and biblical sources.

be given, but were perceived as having a certain physicality like their bearers as they could be destroyed (ḥa-lam). Implicit to the conceptualization is the paradox of equating the abstract with the concrete, and so describing a duality in which counterparts are diametrically opposed — the phenomenon known as *coincidentia oppositorum*.<sup>67</sup> Not limited to these cases, this reasoning permeates Mesopotamian thought: nam-tar “fate, destiny,” me-lam<sub>2</sub> “divine aura, awe,” and most conspicuously me “essence” — to give a few examples of abstractions *par excellence* — could each be conceived as tangible, physical objects that could be held, manipulated, worn, cut. The abstract and the invisible were understood to have a basis in concrete reality, being conceptually inseparable from their corporeal icons.

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<sup>67</sup> See further Woods 2009, particularly pp. 197, 217, 223.





Figure 2.1. Statue of Lupad (de Sarzec 1884–1912, vol. 2, pls. 47:2 and 6 ter 1 a + b)



Figure 2.2. Statue of Enmetena. IM 5 (Orthmann 1975, fig. 31)



Figure 2.3. Inlay from the so-called Standard of Ebla (Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)

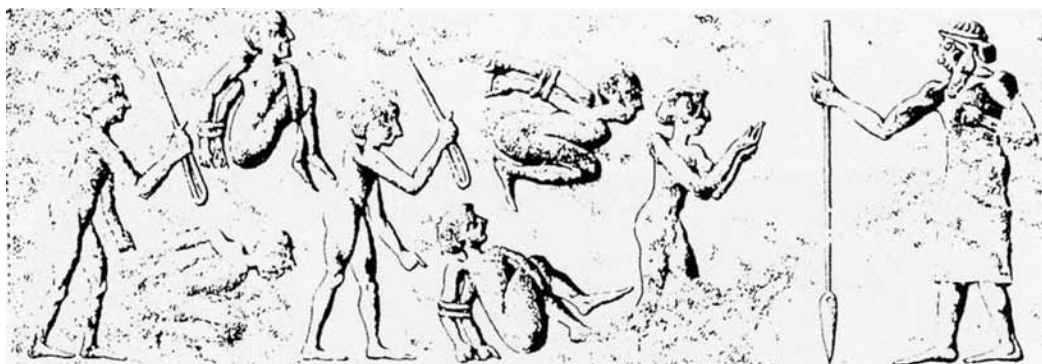


Figure 2.4. Uruk-period sealing depicting the En with prisoners of war (Brandes 1979, Tafel 1 [Rekonstruktion])

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## GUDEA OF LAGASH: ICONOCLASM OR TOOTH OF TIME?

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“By and large, iconoclasm represents the most heightened form of making plain one’s superiority over the power of both image and prototype, of our liberation from their unearthly thrall.”

— David Freedberg (1989, p. 28)

Iconoclasm is evidenced in Mesopotamia since its earliest history. As shown by Christopher Woods in this volume, Early Dynastic royal inscriptions attest to the tearing down of boundary stelae manifesting divinely sanctioned border agreements, the dismantling of adversaries’ divine statues, and curses on royal monuments insinuate that royal images were assaulted with the intention of erasing their patrons from memory. Woods and also Joan Westenholz (this volume) stress the political nature of Mesopotamian iconoclasm. This contrasts with the theologically founded Byzantine iconoclasm or the *Bildersturm* of the Reformation. In Mesopotamia, images of stone and precious metal were commissioned by the king and his entourage, and the erection of stelae was clearly a royal prerogative. All these monuments were symbols of political power.

At the same time both divine and royal statues were imbued with life and partook of certain sanctity, an unearthly thrall. Mark Brandes, one of the first to draw attention to iconoclasm in ancient Mesopotamia more than thirty years ago, deduced an essential characteristic of Mesopotamian statuary from the negative aspect of deportation, destruction, and mutilation: divine statues must have been conceived of as living incarnations of deities, and royal statues shed light on the sacred nature of Mesopotamian kingship.

As much as the political and religious nature of Mesopotamian images cannot be neatly separated, it is hard to classify iconoclasm. Examining individual acts of iconoclasm in more recent times, David Freedberg (1989, p. 25) discerned three types of motives: attention-seeking, breaking the image’s hold on the beholder’s imagination, and damaging symbols of power. Yet he immediately adds that it is often difficult to distinguish the latter from the former two, that is, the political from the psychological. Iconoclasts relish the sudden loosening of normal social and psychological restraints.

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\* I thank Natalie May for inviting me to this inspiring conference. My contribution has profited from discussions with its participants as well as with the participants of the immediately preceding workshop in Detroit (see n. 46 below), especially Eva Braun-Holzinger and

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Piotr Michalowski. In addition, I am grateful to Walther Sallaberger for his constructive criticism on an earlier draft and for his kind permission to reproduce the map in fig. 3.1, and to Jacob Dahl for furnishing me with an electronic image and the reproduction rights for fig. 3.2.

In the material legacy of Mesopotamia, indisputable cases of iconoclasm date to the first millennium B.C.E. Neo-Assyrian palace reliefs show a pattern of systematic and deliberate mutilation of selected images and their details, which can be ascribed to those who brought about the fall of the empire.<sup>1</sup> The Bowdoin relief, in particular, makes this clear: not only was the Assyrian king defaced, but facing him was added in graffiti the head of an Elamite king, archenemy of Mesopotamia throughout the millennia (Porter 2009). The iconoclasts obviously acted in vengeance for the violence suffered under Assyrian dominion, a clear case of damaging symbols of power of a just-defeated totalitarian regime, comparable to the toppling of statues of Stalin and Lenin after the fall of the Soviet Union, or those of Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

The most often cited example of iconoclasm inflicted on an early Mesopotamian (third millennium B.C.E.) monument is the mutilated copper head of an Old Akkadian king found at Nineveh in an uncertain, but probably late context: one eye is hacked out, the nose received a blow, both ears are completely cut off, as is the end of the beard (see fig. 4.11 in this volume). Carl Nylander (1980) attributed this systematic damage to the Medes during the Median-Babylonian sack of Nineveh in 612 B.C.E., since the damage closely corresponds to Darius's treatment of the Medes less than a century later. More recently, Julian Reade suggested that the assaulters may have been Assyrians themselves,<sup>2</sup> and Joan Westenholz (this volume) now wonders whether the head was booty that Samsi-Addu, king of Upper Mesopotamia (1792–1775 B.C.E.), removed from Assur. In view of their reverence for Old Akkadian kings,<sup>3</sup> however, I cannot imagine that either Samsi-Addu or later Assyrian kings mutilated this head. Although Nylander's attribution remains hypothetical, I find his late dating convincing: not only would it make little sense to keep a mutilated statue of an Old Akkadian king on display in Nineveh, but also the types of mutilation are in line with both iconoclasm on Neo-Assyrian reliefs and physical punishment of war captives and criminals in the Neo-Assyrian and Achaemenid empires.

In contrast to these cases and despite the texts informing us that early Mesopotamian images were “broken,” it is difficult to categorically identify acts of iconoclasm in earlier periods. No cult images have survived, since they were fashioned of perishable and reusable materials, and many statues of deified kings were apparently similar in make.<sup>4</sup> Although the extant stone statues are often found decapitated and stone stelae in a shambles of fragments, as Brandes observed, we have hardly any clues as to when and how they attained their present condition. Royal monuments were hardly ever found in their original setting.

<sup>1</sup> For a history of research on iconoclasm in Neo-Assyrian reliefs, see Nylander 1999, pp. 74–75; more recent contributions are Reade 2000a; Porter 2009; May 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Reade (2000a, pp. 613–14) does not specify circumstances, but only states “alternatively, the Assyrians themselves had captured and mutilated this statue.” In an article that appeared in the same year (Reade 2000b, p. 396), he suggests that the copper head may have belonged to the statue of an Elamite king that Assurbanipal deported, mutilated, and displayed in Nineveh, based on a text recording this treatment for a statue of Hallusu (partial and slightly diverging translations have been offered in Radner 2005, p. 261; Bahrani 2008,

p. 164; and May 2010, p. 108). However, the copper head is Old Akkadian and not first-millennium Elamite; for its chronological place, see Braun-Holzinger 2007, p. 83 on Akk 15, with pl. 47.

<sup>3</sup> Bonatz 2002, pp. 185–87; Charpin 2008, p. 176, with literature cited there.

<sup>4</sup> This may explain the near absence of Ur III royal statues at Ur noted by Braun-Holzinger (2004, p. 128). For the mutilation and pillage of divine statues, see Brandes 1980, pp. 31–34; for the materials of which they were made, Berlejung 1998; and for statues of deified kings, Suter 2010, pp. 330–32.

Gudea of Lagash has left us more royal monuments than any other early Mesopotamian ruler. His many statues, most of which were found headless, have repeatedly been mentioned in the context of iconoclasm, albeit without further analysis.<sup>5</sup> My contribution re-examines Gudea's statues and stelae from this perspective. I will look not only at the damage in their present condition, but also at their previous "life," since Gudea's inscriptions and administrative texts pertaining to him provide important clues for the purpose and functioning of early Mesopotamian royal images and, with this, for an understanding of why such images would be assaulted. Before turning to the monuments, I present a historical background for their discussion.

### GUDEA'S REIGN, POSTHUMOUS VENERATION, AND GIRSU'S HISTORY THEREAFTER

Gudea ruled the state of Lagash toward the end of the third millennium B.C.E. This economically powerful state was watered by the Tigris and bordered on the Persian Gulf and Susian plain (figs. 3.1–2). It incorporated several cities, of which the following four, moving from north to south, were the most important: Girsu, modern Tello, which was the capital under the Second Dynasty of Lagash; Lagash, modern al-Hiba, which had been the capital in Early Dynastic times; Ningin, modern Surghul; and the unidentified harbor city Guabba. Being agriculturally rich and having access to trade routes, Lagash thrived as an independent state in Early Dynastic times and again under the Second Dynasty, whose best-known ruler was Gudea. During its dependence from the kings of Akkad, who united Mesopotamia for the first time under one rule, it seems to have been their prime administrative center in the south, possibly directly run by the royal family, while after the Second Dynasty it became the largest and most important province of the Ur III hegemony.<sup>6</sup>

Both internal and external chronologies of the Lagash II dynasty remain problematic. To confuse matters further, in his edition of a just-published clay tablet in the Schøyen Collection, Claus Wilcke (2011) casts doubts on the little that seemed established. He sees in the fragmentary bilingual text dating to the time of Rim-Sin of Larsa (1822–1763 B.C.E.) a copy of a monumental inscription of Gudea and proposes radical changes for the timing of his and other Lagash II rulers' reigns. However, even if this intriguing tablet refers to data known from Gudea's own inscriptions, I doubt that its novel information can be taken at face value. Although it is not entirely inconceivable that a Gudea inscription was copied in Old Babylonian times, even if it would be the only exemplar of the Lagash II dynasty so far, I instead agree with Gianni Marchesi, who considers the text a product of Old Babylonian scribal school (Wilcke 2011, p. 29 n. 1). In view of the mention of 537 statues that Gudea allegedly made of himself (lines iv 7b–8b, v 11), I would even go a step further and wonder whether it was not a parody, like the contemporaneous Lagash King List (Glassner 2004, pp. 144–49). The proposed historical reconstruction, which places Gudea in Shulgi's reign, is hard to accept not only because of this, but also because it relies on a largely restored passage and conflicts with other evidence.

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<sup>5</sup> For example, Brandes 1980, p. 36; Beran 1988, p. 57; Heinz 2002, p. 179; Bonatz 2002, pp. 198–99; Radner 2005, p. 261 n. 1330; May 2010, p. 106; Westenholz, this volume.

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<sup>6</sup> Foster 1985, p. 29; Sallaberger 1999, p. 192; Lafont 2010.

Gudea's reign probably initiated less than a generation after the fall of Akkad and overlapped with the formation of the Ur III state under its founder Ur-Namma.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to the hegemonic kings of Akkad and Ur, Gudea never claims control over territories other than Lagash-state. Yet his reign must have been prosperous: he pursued an impressive construction program, building or re-building a myriad of temples within his state and furnishing them with his statues, stelae, and other dedicatory objects, for which he procured precious resources, many of them from distant lands.<sup>8</sup> The diorite for his statues, for example, he imported from Oman, like late Early Dynastic rulers of Lagash and the kings of Akkad before him.<sup>9</sup>

According to the extant sources, Gudea's only military conflict was with Elam.<sup>10</sup> In accounts of his construction of Eninnu, temple of Lagash's divine patron Ningirsu, he mentions that "he defeated the city of Anshan and/of/in Elam and delivered its booty to Ningirsu in the temple Eninnu" (Statue B vi 64–69)<sup>11</sup> and claims that Susians and Elamites came to him for building this temple (Gudea Cylinder A xxv 6–7). Moreover, a foundation tablet of Gudea, which allegedly comes from Tepe Surkhegan in Iran, records a temple he built for Nanshe of Adamdun (Stève 2001).<sup>12</sup> This is the only inscription of a Lagash II ruler relating to a temple outside of Lagash. As mentioned, Elam was an archenemy of Mesopotamia throughout the millennia: contacts between Mesopotamia and the Susian plain go back to prehistoric times (Potts 1999); late Early Dynastic rulers of Lagash claim victories over Elam and so do kings of Akkad and again Ur III dynasts, starting with Ur-Namma.

Gudea was followed by his son Ur-Ningirsu, three little-known rulers, and Nammahani, who married a sister of his wife and is mentioned in the prologue of the Ur-Namma Law Code. Under Nammahani and late in Ur-Namma's reign, Lagash lost its independence to Ur.<sup>13</sup> In all likelihood, it was incorporated peacefully rather than taken by force.<sup>14</sup> Neither Ur-Namma nor Shulgi boast of having conquered it, nor has any destruction layer dating to this time been discovered at Tello. Some functionaries who served under Gudea remained in office into Shulgi's reign and funerary offerings for Lagash II rulers were continued throughout the Ur III period. Moreover, under the Ur III hegemony, Lagash, referred to as the province of Girsu in Ur III records, was governed by the grand vizier, who was the second man after the

<sup>7</sup> For a good discussion of the chronology, see Sallaberger 2004, pp. 29–37. A more recent but not entirely convincing reconstruction is offered by Huh 2008, pp. 295–304. See now also Visicato 2010.

<sup>8</sup> For an overview of Gudea's construction program, see Suter 2000, pp. 18–25, for the procurement of resources, pp. 143–46.

<sup>9</sup> The term "diorite" is used here out of convention for hard dark igneous stone, such as diorite, dolerite, olivine gabbro, and similar composites; more precise petrological identification is hardly ever available or feasible; see Reade 2002. For diorite statues of Gudea's Early Dynastic predecessors, see Marchetti 2006, p. 157, cat. nos. 8–10, and of kings of Akkad, Eppihimer 2010. Gudea's statue inscriptions are the first to consistently mention the import of diorite (<sup>na</sup>esi) from Oman, ancient Magan (Suter 2000, pp. 47–48); for the mention of diorite and "dark stone" in Old Akkadian inscriptions, see Eppihimer 2010, p. 366 nn. 12–13.

<sup>10</sup> As Potts (1999, p. 9) observed, Elam was both a land and a concept. Michalowski (2008) specifies that before the Old Babylonian period the term *elam* generally designated the highlands and highlanders without the Susiana. I am using it here in the wider sense of Mesopotamia's eastern neighbor.

<sup>11</sup> This translation follows Michalowski 2008, p. 113.

<sup>12</sup> Potts (2010, pp. 246–47) places a question mark on the reliability of its origin. On Adamdun, see also Michalowski 2008, pp. 114–21.

<sup>13</sup> Only Shulgi left us records of temples he built in the state of Lagash; they cover his entire reign (Sallaberger 1999, p. 151). For Ur III finds in Tello, see Huh 2008, pp. 313–15.

<sup>14</sup> It is now generally accepted that the old translation of Ur-Namma Law Code lines 75–78, according to which Ur-Namma killed Nammahani, must be abandoned; see Sallaberger 2004, p. 34 n. 42; Wilcke 2011, p. 33 n. 18; Michalowski 2011, p. 67.

king. Based on Lagash's prominence prior to the Ur III state, together with the compelling new thesis that the office of the grand vizier originated in Lagash and continued to be held by an important lineage from there under its dependence from Ur, Piotr Michalowski (2011, pp. 66–67) suspects that this office “was instituted by the government at Ur as part of that province's acquiescence to membership in the new state.”

The grand vizier's main responsibility was foreign affairs, and he was closely related to the eastern provinces.<sup>15</sup> The most prominent office holder was Arad-Nanna, whose long tenure lasted from the late years of Shulgi into the early years of Ibbi-Sin (Michalowski 2011, pp. 64–70). At that time, Susa and Adamdun were under Ur III control.<sup>16</sup> When Ur grew weak under its last king Ibbi-Sin due to a number of factors, the Elamites retaliated, sacked Ur in his twenty-fourth year, and deported both the king and the statue of his city-patron.<sup>17</sup>

Like other provinces, Girsu broke away from the Ur III state in the early years of Ibbi-Sin, probably as the last one in his sixth year. Hardly anything is known about the eighteen-years interval between then and the king's removal. Arad-Nanna is last attested in Ibbi-Sin's third year and must have been old by then. It has been suggested that two priests of the goddess Nanshe, who left inscriptions without mention of an overlord, might have governed Girsu independently (Frayne 1997, pp. 427–31). There are indications that the river Tigris changed its course early in the reign of Ibbi-Sin and deprived Girsu and other cities of Lagash of indispensable water for a longer time beyond the end of the Ur III period.<sup>18</sup> This would explain the absence of local rulers and the ceasing of sources.

Gudea's posthumous veneration bespeaks the special status of Lagash within the Ur III state and fits well with Michalowski's thesis that the Ur III grand viziers came from a prominent Girsu clan. Gudea became a local hero:<sup>19</sup> he was posthumously deified, his name was used as a theophoric element in personal names, just like that of deified Ur III kings, and the same priestly offices that are associated with the cult of deified Ur III kings (*gudu*<sub>4</sub>, *NIN-dingir*) are also attested for him.<sup>20</sup> Offerings for deceased rulers in the Ur III cultic calendar are exceptionally well attested in Girsu.<sup>21</sup> In addition to daily offerings, Gudea received regular extras twice a month on moon holidays plus practically every month on various annual festivals; his statue was re-animated once a year, and apparently traveled in procession out to the fields on the *še-il<sub>2</sub>-la* festival (table 3.1).

<sup>15</sup> So much so that the post-Ur III dynasty of Susa adopted his title (*sukkal-maḥ*) in the place of a royal title. A good illustration is Arad-Nanna's door socket inscription from Girsu, which lists a myriad of titles related to the eastern provinces (RIME 3/2, 1.4.13).

<sup>16</sup> Several royal inscriptions record temple buildings or dedications of objects in Susa (RIME 3/2, 1.2.30–32, 49; 1.4.10).

<sup>17</sup> On the fall of Ur III, see now the excellent study by Michalowski (2011, pp. 170–215).

<sup>18</sup> About 150 years later, kings of Larsa apparently restored the river course; on this issue, see now Michalowski 2011, pp. 175–76.

<sup>19</sup> See Sallaberger 1993, p. 94, and Fischer 1996, pp. 223–24.

<sup>20</sup> A *NIN-dingir* of Gudea appears in BM 12293 (= MVN 17, 59) rev. i 4', and BM 14306 (= UNT 16) iii 19; a *gudu*<sub>4</sub> of the deified Gudea in Ist. L 731 (= TCTI 1, 731) i 14. On these offices with regard to the royal cult, see Brisch 2006. In addition, two cupbearers (*sagi*) of the deified Gudea are attested; see Fischer 1996, p. 224, and Michalowski in a forthcoming Festschrift.

<sup>21</sup> This is due to the fact that the administrative texts of Girsu constitute archives of the governors, in whose personal care were royal and ancestral cults (Sallaberger 1993, p. 277). Similar offerings in Umma show that Girsu was not a unique case in this respect; see Sallaberger 1993, pp. 250–51, 254–55, 264.

Table 3.1. Offerings for the deceased Gudea in the Ur III cultic calendar

<i>Occasion and Date of Texts</i>	<i>Offering</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Reference</i>
ki-a-nag offerings every new moon and full moon (AS-ŠS)	beer, flour	Together with Arad-Nanna's personal god Shulpa'e, the deceased governor Ur-Lama, and the deceased Shulgi	Sallaberger 1993, p. 94, T-28
During the ga-ku <sub>2</sub> e <sub>3</sub> -a festival, probably four times a year on the 1st, 5th, 9th, and 11th months (ŠS 5-8)	sheep	Together with city gates, boathouse of Ningishzida's barge, Shulpa'e, and Ur-Lama	Sallaberger 1993, p. 299, T-106a
ki-a-nag offerings during the festival of the mourning mother goddess Lisi in the 3rd month (early Ur III)	sheep	Together with deceased Lagash II rulers, two Lisi-goddesses, and Gudea's personal god Ningishzida	BM 18474; see Maeda 1988
Mouth opening of Gudea's statue in the 3rd month (AS 5-ŠS 7)	flour, oil	Probably related to the mourning procession for Ningishzida in the same month	Sallaberger 1993, pp. 281-83, T-101
ki-a-nag offerings in the 6th month, named after Dumuzi (early Ur III)	butter	Together with deceased Lagash II rulers, deities, temple furniture, priests, and Ninhedu, the still-living wife of Nammahani	Perlov 1980
ki-a-nag offerings from Baba's priestess and the e <sub>2</sub> -kas <sub>4</sub> in the 8th month, named after the Baba festival (Š 35-ŠS 6)	kid, beer, flour, oil	Together with his wife, presumably because the Baba festival celebrates Baba's marriage to Ningirsu	Sallaberger 1993, pp. 290-91
During the u <sub>2</sub> -šim festival of Baba in the 11th month (later Ur III)	beer	Together with two Lama deities and Dumziabzu	Sallaberger 1993, p. 293
During the ezem še-il <sub>2</sub> -la festival in the 12th month, when Gudea('s statue?) goes out to the field (ki-še) (later Ur III)	beer, flour, goats	Together with Ur-Lama	Sallaberger 1993, pp. 294-95

AS = Amar-Sin; Š = Shulgi; ŠS = Shu-Sin

Two late Ur III seal impressions give a visual glimpse of Gudea's veneration (figs. 3.3-4): one is dedicated to Gudea as if he were the reigning Ur III king, the other depicts him not only in the place otherwise reserved for Ur III kings or deities, but also with a scepter, unlike any other early Mesopotamian king.<sup>22</sup> Gudea's veneration overshadowing other members of his dynasty must have begun shortly after his death. It is already apparent in early Ur III times, when he receives good cow's butter while all other Lagash II rulers receive only sheep's butter of second quality (table 3.1; Perlov 1980). By the late Ur III period, the deified

<sup>22</sup> Not a mace as Fischer (1996, p. 228, fig. 12) restored; these seals will be discussed in detail in a forthcoming Festschrift.

Gudea had his personal *gudu*<sub>4</sub>-priest, while another single *gudu*<sub>4</sub>-priest took care of all other ancestors (Ist. L 731 i 13–14).

Gudea's prominence in the cult throughout the year, and especially the periodical re-animation of his statue(s?), leaves no doubt that his monuments were still standing in late Ur III times. The Lagash King List, which ends with Gudea (ETCSL 2.1.2), his mention in a praise song to Baba preserved in an Old Babylonian copy from Nippur (ETCSL 2.3.2), and the above-mentioned Schøyen tablet show that his memory was still alive two hundred years later.

With the fall of the Ur III state, Girsu declined to never again become a capital or city of any significance. The site, however, was not immediately or entirely abandoned; scattered finds date to the Isin-Larsa and Old Babylonian periods (Parrot 1948, pp. 274–95; Huh 2008, pp. 316–21). During this time, Girsu seems to have been controlled alternately by the dynasties of Isin and Larsa, fell in the hands of Hammurapi of Babylon (1792–1750 B.C.E.), but was lost, together with the entire south, to his son Samsuiluna (1749–1712 B.C.E.). At this point Girsu fell into oblivion.

About 1,600 years later, the Greco-Aramaean ruler Adad-nadin-ahhe built a palace on top of Gudea buildings at Tello and the site was very modestly inhabited for another 400 years (Parrot 1948, pp. 309–14). Adad-nadin-ahhe is known only through his building inscriptions from Tello, which can be dated to the second century B.C.E. based on paleography (Oelsner 1986, p. 99, with n. 333). He must have witnessed the beginnings of the Characene, an essentially independent Mesopotamian kingdom during the disintegration of the Seleucid empire and later under the Parthians and a Roman interlude (Schuol 2000). Its conquest by the Sassanid great king Ardashir in the beginning of the third century C.E. marks the definitive end in the ancient history of Tello.

## GUDEA'S STATUES AND STELAE IN THEIR ORIGINAL SETTING

Twenty-four inscribed statues of Gudea are known, although the authenticity of some is disputed.<sup>23</sup> One reason for this unusually large number is that Gudea had them made of stone, mostly diorite, which is hard and, therefore, especially suited for durability. As an introduction to an unusually long and unparalleled curse section, his Statue B (vii 49–54) specifically states: “This statue is neither applied with silver nor with lapis lazuli, nor with copper, tin, or bronze; nobody shall reuse (these materials) for (other) work; it is (exclusively) of diorite.”<sup>24</sup> This unique statement reveals Gudea's awareness of the destruction of royal statues made of reusable materials, like divine statues, and his intention of avoiding such a fate for his own images. In contrast to the kings of Akkad and Ur III, there is no evidence for Gudea statues made of materials other than stone.<sup>25</sup> The large number of stone statues must have earned Gudea a reputation already in antiquity; as mentioned above, the Schøyen tablet speaks of 537 statues.

Gudea dedicated his statues to various deities of the Lagashite pantheon and set them up in their respective temples (table 3.2). Aside from the names of the royal dedicant and

<sup>23</sup> For a catalog, see Suter 2000, pp. 328–33; on their authenticity, see also below.

<sup>24</sup> *alan-e, u<sub>3</sub> ku<sub>3</sub> nu za-gin<sub>3</sub> nu-ga-am<sub>3</sub>, u<sub>3</sub> uruda nu u<sub>3</sub> nagga nu, zabar nu, kin-ga<sub>2</sub> lu<sub>2</sub> nu-ba-ga<sub>2</sub>-ga<sub>2</sub>, <sup>na</sup>esi-am<sub>3</sub>.*

<sup>25</sup> One possible exception is an Ur III administrative text recording the delivery of cloths for a Gudea statue (BM 14306 = UNT 16 ii 1'–7').

divine addressee and an optional temple building account, his statue inscriptions include a formulaic passage concerning the statue's creation and consecration: they record the import of the material in the case of diorite, the fashioning expressed with the verb *tud* "to give birth," the naming, and finally the "entering" or installation in the temple.<sup>26</sup> Irene Winter (1992, pp. 21–24; 2000) suggested that this formulaic passage refers to rituals that endowed the human-made artifact with a cultic life, which then allowed it to communicate with the divine. Mesopotamian divine and royal statues were infused with life in the so-called mouth opening ritual, which was also known in Egypt. In Mesopotamia, written instructions for this ritual date to the first millennium B.C.E. (Walker and Dick 2001). The above-cited Ur III administrative texts regarding the mouth opening of Gudea's statue (table 3.1) constitute the only reference to this ritual before the Neo-Assyrian period.<sup>27</sup>

Table 3.2. Inscribed Gudea statues

<i>Statue</i>	<i>Deity</i>	<i>Temple</i>	<i>Provenience</i>	<i>Material and Size</i>	<i>Condition</i>
B: sitting with plan	Ningirsu	Eninnu	Tello: Tell A	Diorite, life size	Headless
D: sitting	Ningirsu	Eninnu	Tello: Tell A	Diorite, over life size	Headless
G: standing	Ningirsu	Epa (of Eninnu)	Tello: Tell A	Diorite, life size	Headless
K: standing	[Ningirsu]	Eninnu	Tello: Tell A	Diorite, life size	Headless
E: standing	Baba	Esilasirsir	Tello: Tell A	Diorite, life size	Headless
H: sitting	Baba	Esilasirsir	Tello: Tell A	Diorite, life size	Headless
F: sitting with tablet	Gatumdu	Temple in Urukug	Tello: Tell A	Diorite, life size	Headless
C: standing	Inana	Eanna in Girsu	Tello: Tell A	Diorite, life size	Headless
A: standing	Ninhursag	Temple in Girsu	Tello: Tell A	Diorite, life size	Headless
I: sitting	Ningishzida	Temple in Girsu	Tello: Tell V	Diorite, under life size	Complete
P: sitting	Ningishzida	Temple in Girsu	Unknown	Diorite, under life size	Complete
Q: sitting	Ningishzida	[Temple in Girsu]	Unknown	Diorite, under life size	Complete
M: standing	Geshtinanna	Temple in Girsu	Unknown	Paragonite, under life size	Complete
N: standing with vase	Geshtinanna	Temple in Girsu	Unknown	Calcite, under life size	Complete
O: standing	Geshtinanna	Temple in Girsu	Unknown	Steatite, under life size	Complete
U: standing	[Nanshe]	[Esirara]	Tell Hammam	Dolerite, over life size	Torso

<sup>26</sup> For an edition of Gudea's statue inscriptions, see Edzard 1997, pp. 29–67; for a discussion of their components, Suter 2000, pp. 46–49.

<sup>27</sup> So Walker and Dick 1999, p. 58. Whether the copy of an Ibbi-Sin inscription refers to a mouth opening of

Nanna's statue remains uncertain (RIME 3/2, 1.5.3); the restoration and emendation of the word in broken context in Gudea Statue R (iv 4) is unlikely (contra Selz 1997, p. 177).



The names of early Mesopotamian statues and other dedicatory objects often express a wish that the divine addressee bless the dedicant, usually with long life, and this is also the case for the Gudea statues (Radner 2005, pp. 43–55). In this sense, the names can be understood as an address of the statue to the deity. Gudea's Statue B (vii 21–48) includes in addition and directly following the consecration formula a direct speech to the deity, in which Gudea informs Ningirsu that he built his temple in accordance with the required social norms.

While the statues received an identity through their name, label inscriptions on some statues' right shoulder leave no doubt who they represented and on whose behalf they were to interact with the divine: the labels reiterate Gudea's name and title, as if his repeated mention in the main text was not in itself enough to secure his name. The erasing of the written name was one of the most common offenses against which curses were to protect royal monuments (Radner 2005, pp. 252–66). Gudea's preoccupation with the fame of his name finds expression also in the divine blessings he claims to have received for building Ningirsu's Eninnu, including the following exclamation in a direct speech, probably by Enlil, chief of the Sumerian pantheon: "May your name extend from south to north!" (Cylinder B xxiv 2).<sup>28</sup>

Another means Gudea employed to preserve his memory beyond his death was the prescription of regular offerings for the cultic maintenance of his statues. Although the establishment of offering funds for royal statues is only rarely mentioned in their inscriptions, it seems to have been common practice.<sup>29</sup> In its first column separated from the main text by indentation, Statue B details these offerings and protects them with a curse:

From the House of Ningirsu, his master, the regular offerings for the statue of Gudea, ruler of Lagash, who built the Eninnu are: 1 liter of beer, 1 liter of bread, ½ liter of flour for spreading, and ½ liter of emmer groats. May the offerings of a ruler who revokes them and thus curtails the divine essence of Ningirsu be revoked from the House of Ningirsu and may his (statue's) mouth stay shut.<sup>30</sup>

Two more statues mention offerings, albeit only in the curse section in order to protect them (Statue E ix 11–12; K iii 7–10). Statue K details them as "1 liter of flour for spreading and 1 liter of emmer groats."<sup>31</sup> Whether the differences between these offerings and those of Statue B are related to a difference between standing and sitting statues or have other reasons remains open to speculation. The Schøyen tablet also mentions offerings that slightly differ (Wilcke 2011, p. 41), possibly because they correspond to the time of the tablet.

One would assume that the statues received offerings from the moment they were consecrated. However, this cannot be proven. The extant administrative texts relating to offerings for Gudea postdate his death (table 3.1). Two come from the early Ur III period,<sup>32</sup> while the

<sup>28</sup> sig-ta nim-še<sub>3</sub> [m]u-zu he<sub>2</sub>-gal<sub>2</sub>.

<sup>29</sup> See Radner 2005, p. 60, with n. 266.

<sup>30</sup> e<sub>2</sub> <sup>d</sup>nin-gir<sub>2</sub>-su, lugal-na-ta, alan gu<sub>3</sub>-de<sub>2</sub>-a, ensi<sub>2</sub>, lagaški, lu<sub>2</sub> e<sub>2</sub>-ninnu, in-du<sub>3</sub>-a-ke<sub>4</sub>, 1 sila<sub>3</sub> kaš, 1 sila<sub>3</sub> ninda, ½ sila<sub>3</sub> zi<sub>3</sub>-dub-dub, ½ sila<sub>3</sub> nig<sub>2</sub>-ar<sub>3</sub>-ra ziz<sub>2</sub>-an, sa<sub>2</sub>-dug<sub>4</sub>-ba gal<sub>2</sub>-la-am<sub>3</sub>, ensi<sub>2</sub> inim bi<sub>2</sub>-ib<sub>2</sub>-gi<sub>4</sub>-gi<sub>4</sub>-a, me <sup>d</sup>nin-gir<sub>2</sub>-su-ka, ba-ni-ib<sub>2</sub>-la<sub>2</sub>-a, sa<sub>2</sub>-dug<sub>4</sub>-na, e<sub>2</sub> nin-gir<sub>2</sub>-su-ka-ta, inim he<sub>2</sub>-eb<sub>2</sub>-gi<sub>4</sub>, ka-ka-ni he<sub>2</sub>-keš<sub>2</sub>.

<sup>31</sup> Statue K iii 7–8: 1 sila<sub>3</sub> zi<sub>3</sub>-dub-dub, 1 sila<sub>3</sub> nig<sub>2</sub>-ar<sub>3</sub>-ra ziz<sub>2</sub>-an.

<sup>32</sup> It has often been claimed that Gudea received offerings already in Lagash II times, and Sallaberger (1993, p. 94 n. 406) refers to these two texts (Perlov 1980; Maeda 1988) as examples. However, although neither text is dated, both include funerary offerings for Nammahani, the last Lagash II dynast. Moreover, the Perlov tablet lists offerings in the month of Dumuzi, which was introduced in the Lagash calendar in the early Ur III period (Cohen 1993, p. 69).

others span over the second half of Shulgi's reign to the early years of Ibbi-Sin when Ur III kings were deified in their lifetime and Gudea posthumously. Rather than daily offerings, they record deliveries of extras on particular festivals. Moreover, the texts do not mention his statue but only his name or his *ki-a-nag*. Even of the four texts relating to the mouth opening of his statue, only one specifically refers to the statue itself. Given the laconicism of administrative texts, it is often assumed that Gudea's name refers to his statue. Yet it did not necessarily do so, since some texts clearly distinguish between Gudea and his statue.<sup>33</sup> It thus remains uncertain whether any of the offerings in table 3.1 were administered to statues.<sup>34</sup> Even those for the mouth opening may have been intended for the ceremony rather than for "feeding" the statue.

The inscription of Gudea's Statue B (vii 55) links this statue to *ki-a-nag*: "let it stand at/for the *ki-a-nag*" (*ki-a-nag-e ḥa-ba-gub*). This statement has led to the assumption that *ki-a-nag* offerings were administered to statues. It is, however, the only testimony that links a statue to *ki-a-nag*, aside from a poetic text that probably echoes it. The precise implications of the term, literally "place where water is poured," are difficult to grasp.<sup>35</sup> As far as one can tell, *ki-a-nag* pertains to funerary offerings, especially for royals, which started with the burial of the deceased and may have been continued for some time. Such offerings are well attested in Early Dynastic Lagash and again for the Lagash II and Ur III dynasties; the recipients received them daily, with extras during certain festivals (Jagersma 2007). In literary texts, the deceased receive them at the entrance to the Netherworld, and *ki-a-nags* of the great gods can be desecrated in war times.<sup>36</sup> When building Eninnu, Gudea installs Ningirsu's trophies, each in a different location around the temple, and sets their mouth toward *ki-a-nag*, since they are dead heroes (Gudea Cylinder A xxv 24–xxvi 19, and compare A xxii 14–15).

Because of its etymology, *ki-a-nag* is generally understood as a place and interpreted as a funerary chapel.<sup>37</sup> Bram Jagersma (2007, pp. 294–98) now suggests identifying it with an assumed mortuary chapel located above the tomb. It seems however, that this was not the only meaning. Marcel Sigris (1992, pp. 182–84) suggested that, in addition to the place where funerary offerings were administered, *ki-a-nag* could also designate the offerings themselves or the ceremony during which they were consumed. Recently published texts from Garshana reveal that in the later Ur III period such ceremonies could include large banquets: Hagan Brunke (2011, pp. 215–20, also 192–93) identified *ki-a-nag-deliveries* (*sa<sub>2</sub>-dug<sub>4</sub> ki-a-nag*) as the ingredients for bread, soup, and a sweet dish that would have served up to 400–600 people, together with ingredients for the "pouring of beer" (*kaš-de<sub>2</sub>-a*).

<sup>33</sup> BM 12293 (= MVN 17, 59), for example, lists among deliveries to Ningirsu's Bagara-Tempel in Lagash 1 liter of bread and 1 liter of soup for Gudea, immediately followed by ½ liter bread and 1 liter of soup for Gudea's statue (obv. i 14–17), and the same tablet also lists deliveries to Gudea's *ki-a-nag* and *NIN-dingir* in broken context (rev. i 3'–4').

<sup>34</sup> Four administrative texts that mention a Gudea statue are not in table 3.1, because they do not pertain to the cultic calendar or the occasion for the deliveries remains obscure: BM 12293 i 16–17 is mentioned in the previous note; Ist. L 7310 (= MVN 6, 301) rev. i 28–30 and EAH 126 (= MVN 9, 116) 3 list beer and bread for a Gudea

statue, together with the grain goddess Ashnan or in her temple; BM 14306 (= UNT 16) ii 1'–7' mentions a Gudea statue in broken context in a list of cloths for various deities and cult personnel in different cities of Lagash.

<sup>35</sup> On *ki-a-nag*, see Gomi 1976; Michalowski 1977, p. 221; Sigris 1992, pp. 182–84; Jagersma 2007; Owen and Mayr 2007, pp. 300–06; Brunke 2011, pp. 215–20.

<sup>36</sup> Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld = ETCSL 1.8.1.4, version from Ur (UET 6, 58), lines 21, 24; Uruk Lament = ETCSL 225, line 73.

<sup>37</sup> E.g., Steinkeller 2001, p. 68; Winter 1992, pp. 24–29.

Coming back to Gudea, Statue B was set up in the temple Eninnu rather than by his tomb. No tombs of Gudea and his dynasty have been identified at Tello. Yet in parallel with other royal tombs, I would expect them in the neighborhood of the palace rather than within the temple district, where Eninnu was located.<sup>38</sup> I suspect that the link of statue and *ki-a-nag* is mentioned in line vii 55 because it was novel or unusual. It has been noted that the section on diorite in the poem *Ninurta's Exploits*, the only other text linking a statue to *ki-a-nag*, is suspiciously reminiscent of Gudea's Statue B:<sup>39</sup> diorite is to be extracted from Magan and worked with tools stronger than copper; it is suited for Ningirsu's heroism and, by extension, also for the statue of the king who establishes his name for remote days, sculpts his image for distant days, and sets it up for funerary offerings in Eninnu. If this passage echoes Gudea's Statue B, it corroborates the latter's uniqueness. Gudea Statue B is unique also from a visual point of view: it is the only royal statue known to depict the king as temple builder with a plan on his lap.

Because neither Early Dynastic nor Ur III texts ever mention statues in connection with *ki-a-nag*, Eva Braun-Holzinger (2007, pp. 45–46, 130–31) pleads for drawing a distinction between dedicatory statues in temples and funerary cult. Gudea's Statue B was set up in the temple and the offerings prescribed for it in the first column of its inscription were funded there. The appearance of line vii 55 in the introduction to the curse, where it is preceded by the above-cited statement about the durability of diorite and followed by the exclamation “nobody shall forcibly damage it (the statue)” (*nig<sub>2</sub> a<sub>2</sub> zi-ga-ka, lu<sub>2</sub> nam-mi-gul-e*), betrays a connection between stone statue, funerary offerings, and remembrance beyond death. The latter is precisely what the poem *Ninurta's Exploits* emphasizes by the repeated reference to eternity. I propose to explain the anomalous link of Gudea Statue B with *ki-a-nag* in a figurative rather than literal sense. Both stone statues and funerary offerings were intended to commemorate the ruler's name for eternity. If Gudea wished his statue to stand for *ki-a-nag*, he may simply have invoked that it may keep alive his memory for future generations, just as funerary offerings were intended to do.

In view of the lack of evidence regarding offerings for Gudea during his lifetime, I wonder whether also his statues received offerings only after his death. This may find corroboration in the fact that Statue B's first column detailing the offerings for this statue was added after the main inscription, as observed by Braun-Holzinger (1991, p. 229): it is indented, written in a smaller script, and overlaps with the fringe of the statue's dress. Moreover, the mention of offerings for the other two Gudea statues occurs in their curse section.

Like other curses intended to protect royal monuments from iconoclasm, Gudea's statue inscriptions invoke against removing the statue from the temple, tearing it out, lifting it off its pedestal, rubbing off its inscription (literally, its written name), and, as mentioned, curtailing its regular offerings.<sup>40</sup> Statue B's unusually long and partly unique curse also invokes against disregarding Gudea's divinely sanctioned decree at New Year, revoking his gifts, replacing his name with one's own in the collection of his songs, and against abandoning the festivals(?) he set up in Ningirsu's courtyard. Rather than a curse and preceding the statue's

<sup>38</sup> On the location of royal tombs under the palace, see Moorey 1984, and now also the new discoveries at Qatna, even if the Syrian cult of the dead differed from the Mesopotamian (Novák 2008). On the location of temple district and palace in Lagash II and Ur III Girsu, see below.

<sup>39</sup> ETCSL 1.6.2, lines 466–78. This passage and its relation with Gudea inscriptions have been discussed by Selz (2001).

<sup>40</sup> Statue B vii 49–viii 67; C iv 5–17; E ix 6–12; K iii 1'–20'. In general, see Michalowski and Walker 1989, and Woods, this volume.

creation, Statue I (iii 11–iv 7) expresses the wish that no future ruler be envious(?) of the temple Gudea built for his god, but invoke its name as well as his. Here, too, the emphasis is on the preservation of the name. The curses usually follow upon the statue's consecration ending in its name. The names wishing for a long life of Gudea may have been intended not only to preserve his health as long as he was living, but also, and perhaps mainly, to invoke a long life for his name beyond his death through his animated and ritually attended images.

According to his temple building account, Gudea fashioned seven stelae for Ningirsu's Eninnu in one year and set them up, each in a different location, in one week (Gudea Cylinder A xxii 24–xxiv 7).<sup>41</sup> Similar to the case of the statues, he relates the import of the stone, the fashioning of the stelae, their installation and their naming, albeit in a different manner due to the different type of text. Unfortunately, only vestigial remnants of actual stela inscriptions have survived (Suter 2000, p. 165). By comparison with other inscriptions, however, it is reasonable to assume that they recounted the monument's creation and dedication to a deity in his/her temple, in addition to a(n optional?) temple building account, not unlike his statue inscriptions. Although not preserved, they probably ended with cursing potential iconoclasts.

Since naming was part of creation, Karen Radner (2005, p. 60) suggested that not only statues, but all dedicatory objects that were given a name were submitted to the mouth opening ritual. Although stelae were given an identity through their name, received offerings in the temple from late Early Dynastic times onward and could be deified, I am not convinced that images in relief were perceived as animate as statues. In contrast to statues, the verb "create" (*tud*) is never used for the fashioning of stelae, and stelae were "erected" (*du<sub>3</sub>*) in a temple like inanimate objects, rather than "entered" (*ku<sub>4</sub>*) into it like animate beings. Moreover, stelae are never linked to individual rulers in offering lists; if at all, they are linked to deities. Therefore, it may come as no surprise that while practically all statue names invoke a long life for Gudea, his stela names describe his election by Ningirsu, step by step up to the decree of a good destiny, and end with Baba being his heartbeat (Vogel 2000, p. 69, table 1).

## DISCOVERY AND CONDITION OF THE MONUMENTS

Table 3.2 presents an overview of Gudea's inscribed statues.<sup>42</sup> In terms of their condition, three groups can be distinguished: the headless Statues A–H, the complete Statues I and M–Q, and the torso Statue U. While the first two groups come from Tello or the art market, Statue U was found at Tell Hammam.

Tello, where most Gudea monuments were discovered, happened to be one of the first archaeologically explored sites in southern Iraq. The French worked there from 1878 to 1909, and again from 1929 to 1933. In between these official excavations, the site was repeatedly looted by locals who had become aware of the value Europeans attributed to their booty.<sup>43</sup> Due to both the inexperience of the early excavators with sun-dried brick architecture and the erosion of the site, which declined in the second millennium B.C.E., only scanty architectural remains were recovered.<sup>44</sup> Promontories within the tell serve as points of orientation (fig. 3.5).

<sup>41</sup> For a discussion, see Suter 2000, pp. 272–76, with a translation *ibid.*, pp. 395–96.

<sup>42</sup> It does not include Statue R of Gudea's subject Namhani, nor the remaining small fragments with only scraps of inscription.

<sup>43</sup> For a history of the excavations, see Parrot 1948, pp. 14–33.

<sup>44</sup> For a reassessment of the stratigraphy, see Huh 2008, pp. 23–219.

The headless statues are all made of diorite, about life-size, except for the “colossal” Statue D, and dedicated to major deities worshipped in Lagash’s capital (fig. 3.7a–b). Their temples were located in Urukug, Girsu’s temple district, which extended over the central mound from Tell A to B to I (Suter 2000, p. 32). However, the statues were actually found in Adad-nadin-ahhe’s palace on Tell A: the over life-size Statue D in a specially made niche of its exterior wall and the rest in its main courtyard (fig. 3.6). The Hellenistic ruler not only reassembled Gudea statues, but also integrated an apparently still-standing gate of Gudea’s Eninnu into his palace (hatched in fig. 3.6), and re-buried a foundation deposit of Gudea, together with his own building inscription (Kose 2000). Moreover, he grouped the statues typologically into sitting and standing ones. Dominik Bonatz (2002, pp. 197–202), followed by Karen Radner (2005, pp. 233–34), surmised that Adad-nadin-ahhe utilized the Gudea statues to found his own royal cult in Hellenistic manner. If so, he would have adopted and revered Gudea as an ancestor, perhaps not unlike Saddam Hussein stylized himself as descendant of Hammurapi of Babylon.

The complete statues are all considerably smaller and dedicated either to Gudea’s personal god Ningishzida or his consort Geshtinana (fig. 3.7c–d). While those for Ningishzida are sitting and made of diorite, those for his consort are standing and made of softer stones. Not all of them are intact: head and body of Statue I were found in different excavation campaigns and its left shoulder and nose are damaged; head and body of Statue Q were acquired by different museums; Statues M and P exhibit restored necks, and M’s feet are broken away; Statue N is missing a small chunk of its back and exhibits a slightly damaged nose and feet; and Statue O has a damaged nose.

In this group, only Statue I is provenienced; its head and body were both found on Tell V. Statues M–Q were acquired by various museums and private collectors in the mid-1920s. Henri de Genouillac (1936, pp. 17–19) claimed that locals showed him the place on Tell V from which they had been pillaged in 1924, together with a statue of Gudea’s son Ur-Ningirsu also dedicated to Ningishzida.<sup>45</sup> The latter is a complete standing statuette made of steatite, head and body of which were also acquired by different museums (Braun-Holzinger 2007, p. 138, no. NS 6, pl. 53). The authenticity of the unprovenienced statues is still debated. I suspect that they are a mixed bag with N, Q, and Ur-Ningirsu probably being authentic, but M, O, and P probably fake.<sup>46</sup>

Tell V is situated at the opposite end of the site from Tell A. The finds from there suggest that it was the seat of the royal palace and the temple of the rulers’ personal gods from Akkad through Ur III times. They include tens of thousands of administrative tablets from the

<sup>45</sup> See also Parrot 1948, pp. 158–59.

<sup>46</sup> In his monograph, Oscar Muscarella (2000, pp. 172–74) admitted defeat over the Gudea statues and limited himself to pointing out the subjectivity involved in “Gudea discussions” and condemning two heads (pp. 489–90); but see now Muscarella 2005. The authenticity of Statue M was discussed in an enjoyable and productive workshop organized by Heather Ecker at the Detroit Institute of Arts in April 2011. While philologists continued to plead for the authenticity of its inscription, art historians reaffirmed stylistic problems and brought forth new arguments against the statue’s authenticity, the strongest of which is a misunderstanding of the garment in two crucial details. As a way out of the dilemma, it was

considered a possibility that the inscription or part of it was copied from an authentic object now lost. Statues M–O bear the same inscription, except for the statue’s name; that of M is unusual and could hardly have been faked in the 1920s. While Statue O is simply too ugly to be authentic, Statue N with the overflowing vase is original and may be the only authentic one of the three. In the same vein, the inscription of Statue P, which was the major argument against its authenticity, could have been added later to an authentic statue in order to augment its sale value; yet Statue P is too close a copy of Statue I, while exhibiting several stylistic shortcomings.

archives of the rulers or governors, a number of building inscriptions and objects dedicated to Ningishzida or Geshtinana, and several door sockets of the temple that Arad-Nanna built for the deified Shu-Sin (RIME 3/2, 1.4.13).<sup>47</sup> The buildings that once stood on Tell V may be imagined as a complex with administrative, representational, and cultic areas, like the Palace of the Rulers in Eshnunna (Reichel 2008, p. 146, fig. 7.4): the temple of Gudea's personal god would have constituted a wing in parallel to the "Palace Chapel," and Arad-Nanna's Shu-Sin temple would have been annexed later in parallel to the Shu-Sin temple that Eshnunna's governor Ituria built.

The decapitated body of Statue I was found upside-down in an ash layer associated with Ur III tablets and four meters away from one of Arad-Nanna's door sockets. Su Kyung Huh (2008, pp. 169, 189) dates the floor of this layer to a second building phase of Arad-Nanna that was destroyed by fire and topped by an Isin-Larsa floor. The head came to light not far from there (Huh 2008, pp. 165–66).

Statue U is the most damaged of the statues discussed here: only its torso survives (fig. 3.8). It weighs 400 kg; its material has been identified as uralite-quartz-dolerite (Reade 2002, pp. 273–74, no. 12). The statue was originally over life-size, like Statue D. The early explorer William K. Loftus found the torso in 1857 at Tell Hammam, a Sassanid site located 40 km west of Tello and 12 km south of Umma. He reported that the Gudea-style head that was then in the collection of Captain Lynch of Baghdad, but is now in Boston (Johansen 1978, pls. 92–93), was obtained "in the neighborhood" and plausibly suggested that it belonged to this torso; he further noted that the breaks appeared ancient. The fragmentary inscription on the torso suggests that Gudea dedicated Statue U to Nanshe. Editors of the inscription have assumed that he set it up in her temple Esirara in Ningin (RIME 3/1, 1.7.StU), presumably because Esirara was Nanshe's main sanctuary, which Gudea rebuilt. However, Nanshe was also worshipped at other sites, including a temple in Umma, which is documented in Ur III administrative texts (Heimpel 1998–2001, p. 159 §15). Umma was a stronghold of the northern Zagros tribe Guti in post-Akkad times (Steinkeller 2001, p. 31): while Ur-Namma chased the Guti out of southern Mesopotamia, his brother Utuhegal had previously fought against them near Umma. Could it be that Gudea controlled Umma at some point before that and built the temple to Nanshe there, in which he dedicated Statue U?

Gudea's stelae were found in a shambles of fragments at Tello (figs. 3.10–11). The majority came from a confined area between Tell A and B, while several others were reused in the foundation of Adad-nadin-ahhe's palace (Suter 2000, pp. 162–64). Although it is clear that the fragments belonged to several different stelae and were found within the area where Gudea's Eninnu once stood, it must remain open whether they represent the seven stelae destined for Eninnu according Gudea's Cylinder Inscriptions or whether some may have belonged to stelae dedicated in other temples. In any case, the accumulation of fragments belonging to different stelae in one place and the reuse of some fragments nearly 2,000 years later, seems to indicate that the findspot between Tell A and B was a place where demolished stone objects were gathered for reuse. Evidently, monuments carved in relief were less treasured than statues; this was the case not only in Hellenistic times, but already in the early second millennium B.C.E.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> On the Girsu texts, see Sallaberger 1999, pp. 286–315; on their discovery, Verderame 2008; on the excavations on Tell V, Huh 2008, pp. 160–92.

<sup>48</sup> In Ur, for example, the Enheduana Disk was found in a Larsa-period fill, and Ur-Namma stela fragments were reused in Kassite buildings; see Braun-Holzinger 2004, p. 129, and Canby 2001, p. 3.

## ASSESSING THE DAMAGE

There is no evidence for the deportation of Gudea monuments, none of his extant inscriptions has been erased, nor have his images in relief been systematically defaced. The most obvious damage to his monuments is the decapitation of his statues. All statues from the Hellenistic palace are headless, as is Statue U from Tell Hammam, and even the complete statues exhibit broken necks. Gudea, however, is not the only ruler whose statues were found decapitated at Tello. In fact, hardly any stone statues retained an intact head: his father-in-law Ur-Baba is headless, his son Ur-Ningirsu was decapitated, and so was Shulgi of Ur.<sup>49</sup> The same fate also befell statues of their wives: most were found headless or bodiless; an exception is the famous *femme à l'écharpe*.<sup>50</sup>

The surviving heads are surprisingly well preserved: that of the *femme à l'écharpe* remains intact, and so do three heads of unprovenienced Gudea statues (Statues M, P, Q), while Statue I and the unprovenienced Statues N and O have a broken nose. Two anonymous heads from Tello that may have belonged to Gudea or another local ruler are more damaged (fig. 3.9): in addition to broken noses, the covered head exhibits chipped lips and eyelids, and some cracks along the cap's brim; the bald head misses a piece of the skull together with part of the right ear, while the left ear is scratched.<sup>51</sup>

One could argue that the damage to sensory organs was inflicted in order to incapacitate the statues' full authority. However, the most frequently damaged organ is the nose, which served neither for communicating with a deity nor for consuming offerings, the two "activities" of royal statues set up in temples. The damages to the most damaged heads appear to be accidental compared to the systematic mutilations of the Old Akkadian copper head from Nineveh discussed at the outset. If these Gudea-style heads were willfully mutilated, then one would have to draw a distinction between early Mesopotamia and the Assyrian empire with regard to iconoclasm.

A similarly random damage of royal figures can be observed on Gudea's stelae: while some remain with intact faces, others look defaced.<sup>52</sup> One could argue that Gudea was intentionally defaced on the well-known stela top in Berlin (fig. 3.10), since the gods' faces on the same fragment remain intact. Yet the surface is also damaged on Ningishzida's shoulder and some other places, while Gudea's label inscription remains intact. The stela top in Istanbul shows him with an intact face (Suter 2000, fig. 17). On other stela fragments, it is equally difficult to decide whether a face was intentionally disfigured or whether it simply weathered (fig. 3.11). Even if the monument to which it belonged was intentionally shattered, the surface may have eroded later. After all, these monuments are more than 4,000 years old. If there was any intentional defacement, it was not systematic.

<sup>49</sup> Braun-Holzinger 2007, pls. 53 (Ur-Baba and Ur-Ningirsu), 52 (Shulgi). The findspot is known only for Ur-Baba, who was found on Tell A.

<sup>50</sup> Gudea's wife Ninalla and the *femme à l'écharpe* are illustrated in Suter 2008, figs. 1 and 4. For more candidates, see the examples from Tello (*ibid.*, table 1). Unfortunately, the findspots of the excavated pieces have not been recorded. Moreover, the name of the deity to whom Ninalla dedicated her statue is broken. It is clear, however, that it was a goddess whose name started with "Nin-"; candidates in Girsu would be Ninhursag, Nin-

shubur, and Ninegal, whose shrines were presumably in the temple district.

<sup>51</sup> For more views, see Johansen 1978, pls. 44–49. There are a number of unprovenienced Gudea-style heads, yet their authenticity is questionable; see Johansen 1987, pp. 26–28, pls. 92–114. With regard to the heads, I agree with Johansen's negative assessment, not least because they are attractive collector's items.

<sup>52</sup> Photos are reproduced in Börker-Klähn 1982, pls. 35–90.

The find circumstances of Statue I indicate that it stood in the palace complex under Arad-Nanna, but fell over when parts of the complex came under fire. The fire can be dated to the end of the Ur III period, since it destroyed Arad-Nanna's second building phase, which was sealed by an Isin-Larsa floor. This opens the possibility that the destruction may have been caused by the Elamites, who brought the final blow for the Ur III state. If Statue I was assaulted, the vengeance would have more likely been directed at the Ur III regime, which had controlled Elam at that time or — even more general — as a living emblem of Mesopotamian rule, which had repeatedly dominated Elam over the centuries, rather than at Gudea because he had campaigned against Anshan and may have kept some hold on Adamdun. Whether it would also have been aimed at Arad-Nanna because he was the commander in the eastern provinces, governor of Girsu, and responsible for Gudea's veneration is questionable, since his last traces antedate the Elamite invasion of Ur by twenty-one years. Neither the way in which the statue was damaged nor potential culprits can be ascertained, since the fate of Girsu during the last eighteen years of the Ur III period remains in the dark, as does the question of whether the Elamites came through Girsu on their way to Ur or took another route. If the city had lost its importance due to a change in the course of the Tigris, the Elamites would have had no incentive for attacking it.

When and how Gudea's other monuments were damaged remains open to even more speculation. If the fire in the palace complex was laid by invaders at the end of the Ur III period, these presumed invaders need not necessarily have destroyed royal stone monuments in the temple district. A desecration of temples — if it occurred at all — would probably have been primarily aimed at divine images for two reasons: to deprive the city of divine protection and to plunder the precious materials of which such images were made. Even at Ur, where the Elamites stayed for about ten years following their removal of Ibbi-Sin and his god Nanna until Ishbi-Erra of Isin drove them away, Braun-Holzinger (2004) observed more continuity than is often assumed: Nanna's statue returned already under Ishbi-Erra's son, and many royal stone monuments of the Old Akkadian and Ur III periods, including Ur-Namma's stela, remained on display throughout the Old Babylonian period. In other cities, early Mesopotamian monuments were still standing when the Elamite king Shutruk-Nahhunte conquered Babylon in 1158 B.C.E. and deported a number of them to Susa.

Eva Møller's (1980) suggestion that Ur-Namma conquered Girsu and assembled Gudea statues from different corners of the city on Tell A in order to behead them in a symbolical act is untenable. Not only is it unlikely that Ur-Namma conquered Girsu, but also in view of the statues' tremendous weight, I doubt that iconoclasts would have put such effort in the task. If statues were assaulted, it seems more likely that they were toppled, like those of Lenin, Stalin, and Saddam Hussein in more recent times.<sup>53</sup> Compound verbs with the element *ki-gub* "station, location" in the description of iconoclastic offenses in curses may actually refer to the removal of a monument from its pedestal by knocking it over.<sup>54</sup> In such an act, the head would be the first part to break off due to the narrowness at the neck. When the statue fell down on its face, the nose would be damaged even before the head broke off, and this is the most frequent damage found on the surviving heads.

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<sup>53</sup> On photographic reproductions, I could not make out traces of axes or other weapons or tools in the neck area. Of course, one would have to study the originals for this purpose.

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<sup>54</sup> Usually, *ki-gub—kur<sub>2</sub>* (Michalowski and Walker 1989, p. 393, element D), but in Gudea Statue E (ix 6–10) also *ki-gub—zi-zi*, which Edzard (1997, p. 46) translates: "nobody will lift the statue off its pedestal."



Since Adad-nadin-ahhe's construction activities seem to have been restricted to Tell A, Béatrice André-Salvini (1998) proposed that he had found the Gudea statues that he installed in his palace on that tell, and wondered whether they had been taken there at the fall of the Ur III state for their protection or for that of Girsu. To remove statues from their consecrated settings, however, cannot have served the purpose of protection, since it would have been precisely what curses inscribed on them aimed at preventing from happening.<sup>55</sup> Neither thesis accounts for the disappearance of so many heads.

Dominik Bonatz (2002, p. 198) claims that the decapitation was obviously willful and that the statues must have lost their heads before Adad-nadin-ahhe's arrival on the site. But one might question whether it was conceivable for a Hellenistic ruler to display headless statues in his palace, especially if they served him as representations of ancestry on which he founded his own cult. Had Adad-nadin-ahhe found the statues in a cache in which they had been buried after an earlier desecration, like Early Dynastic statues, he would have found at least some heads there and would surely have restored them.<sup>56</sup> We cannot entirely exclude the possibility that the statues from the palace were assaulted on their secondary display in an act directed at Adad-nadin-ahhe, whom they served as propaganda. The Characene was not entirely spared the turmoils between Seleucids, Parthians, and Romans in the second century B.C.E. On the other hand, the necks of some statues from Tell A (for example, fig. 3.7a–b) seem secondarily smoothed and if so, this could have been Adad-nadin-ahhe's effort of care to make already headless statues more presentable.<sup>57</sup>

Another possible explanation not yet considered for the decapitation of Gudea statues would be a natural catastrophe, such as an earthquake.<sup>58</sup> Iraq is located at the tectonically active northern and eastern boundaries of the Arabian Plate and has a well-documented history of seismic activity. Historical data for the period 1260 B.C.E. to 1900 C.E. have been shown to be consistent with recent seismic observations (Alsinawi 2006). In such an event, the statues would fall off their pedestals, just as if they had been toppled. Unless iconoclasts further mutilated them, it would be impossible to determine retrospectively whether they had been intentionally toppled or had fallen off their pedestal due to a natural catastrophe. Further mutilation would most probably have focused on the face (Freedberg 1989, p. 26). While most statues are headless, the preserved heads do not exhibit obvious mutilations.

Statue U is not only decapitated, but also lost its arms and lower body and was removed to a Sassanid site. The only reason for this removal I can conceive of is its material value.<sup>59</sup> By that time, neither a deportation as in the case of the statues and stelae of kings of Akkad, Eshnunna, and Babylon that were taken to Susa,<sup>60</sup> nor a removal out of antiquarian interest

<sup>55</sup> For example, Gudea Statue B vii 60–viii 10; C iv 5–7, E ix 6–10.

<sup>56</sup> Compare Nabonidus's claim of restoring a statue of Sargon of Akkad, which he had found during restoration work in the temple Ebabbar (Bonatz 2002, p. 187; Radner 2005, p. 267).

<sup>57</sup> Thomas Beran (1988, pp. 57–58) noticed smooth necks of headless statues not only of Gudea, but also of Enmetena of Lagash found in a Neo-Babylonian context at Ur dated to Nabonidus, and of the seated ruler from Eshnunna that Shutruk-Nahhunte deported to Susa. His suggestion that the smoothness originated from human hands touching the statue in a gesture of triumph, however, does not convince me. Nabonidus was famous for

his archaeological interests and reverence for ancient predecessors (Schaudig 2003), and Shutruk-Nahhunte, although he deported Mesopotamian royal monuments, took good care of them (Bonatz 2002, pp. 192–97). Thus also in these cases the motive for smoothing the necks would have been reverence.

<sup>58</sup> This possibility was suggested to me by Robin Cormack, who pointed out the example of Aphrodisias.

<sup>59</sup> For the reuse of stone in antiquity, see Reade 2000a, pp. 614–15.

<sup>60</sup> For a list of the deported monuments, see Potts 1999, table 7.9; for a discussion of the phenomenon, Bonatz 2002, pp. 192–97.

as in the case of numerous building records of Gudea that were found in first-millennium B.C.E. levels at sites other than the building for which they were destined,<sup>61</sup> is plausible. But what happened before that? If Statue U's original location was Umma, one could consider the Gutu as potential iconoclasts. However, the Boston head is not more damaged than the Gudea-style heads from Tello.

In conclusion, it cannot be proven that Gudea monuments were submitted to iconoclasm. There are no indications that Gudea's reign ended violently; his memory was cherished throughout the Ur III period and, much later, revived by Adad-nadin-ahhe. So, if his monuments were intentionally broken, the act could only have been directed at those who revered his images after his death. Only Statue I certainly broke at the end of the Ur III period; the same fate may have befallen other statues dedicated to Ningishzida or Geshtinanna and set up in the palace complex. The partial fire in the palace complex, however, need not be related to a military intervention. Taking into account that Lagash had in all likelihood lost its importance by the time the Elamites sacked Ur, it is rather unlikely that any monument would have been assaulted at that time. In fact, the only complete and conceivably authentic statue without a broken neck, Statue N, corroborates this. Given Girsu's continued settlement in Isin-Larsa times, the statues and stelae in the temple district may have remained in place for a couple of centuries beyond the end of the Ur III period. The Schøyen tablet echoes the fame of Gudea's statues. By the first millennium B.C.E., a number of his building records were carried off out of antiquarian interest. How and in what condition Adad-nadin-ahhe found the statues he revived, and how they lost their heads, remains open to speculation. However, taking into consideration that practically all ancient statues from Girsu are decapitated and that the surviving heads do not exhibit systematic mutilation, it is more likely that they were damaged in a natural catastrophe rather than by human agency.

This case study on Gudea has revealed the difficulties in identifying willful destruction in the material legacy of such a remote time. Although texts imply that iconoclasm was a common phenomenon in early Mesopotamia, one has to be careful not to jump to conclusions. There are endless possibilities of what might have happened over several millennia to ancient monuments that we find in damaged condition. In the case of Gudea, although a number of uncertainties remain with regard to the events following his reign, two circumstances, if correctly construed, make it rather unlikely that his monuments were assaulted as long as his memory was alive: Ur III politics aiming at the allegiance of Lagash, and a change in the course of the Tigris leading to the loss of Lagash's significance. The survival of so many monuments may be due not only to serendipity, but also — at least in part — to Gudea's obsession with commemorative stone monuments and their cultic maintenance. His statues, in particular, persist in entralling us.

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<sup>61</sup> For a list of displaced Gudea objects, see Suter 2000, pp. 36–38, and for a discussion as well as similar cases of other Lagash rulers, Braun-Holzinger 1997. The only other stone sculpture of Gudea that was found in a city other than that for which it was destined, is a very fragmentary gate lion of Ningirsu's Eninnu found associated

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with Parthian pottery in Uruk (Braun-Holzinger 1997, p. 12 no. 9; Suter 2000, p. 321, no. GL.2). Since this is not a type of object that would be deported for political reasons, the lion fragments were probably also taken there out of antiquarian interest.

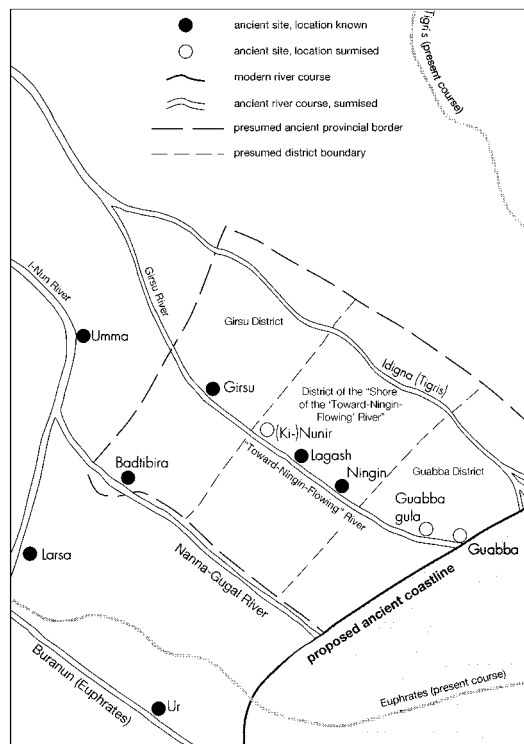


Figure 3.1. Lagash in Ur III times (after Sallaberger 1999, p. 287, fig. 9)

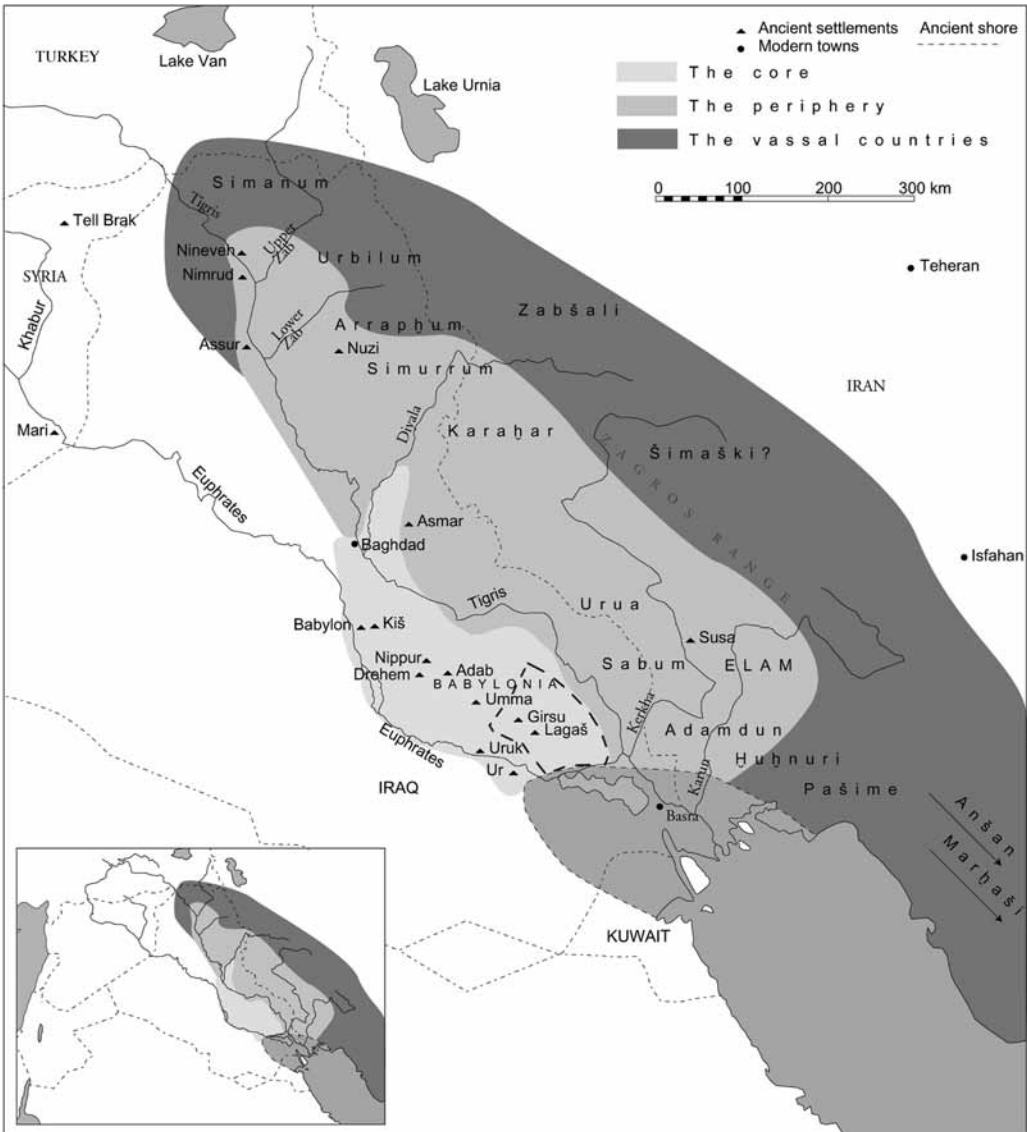


Figure. 3.2. Lagash in the Ur III empire (outlined by author on map in Dahl 2007, p. 6, fig. 1)



Figure 3.3. Seal of Ur-Sharura, servant of the deified Gudea, on a tablet dated to Shu-Sin 8. Scale 2:1 (after Fischer 1996, fig. 10)

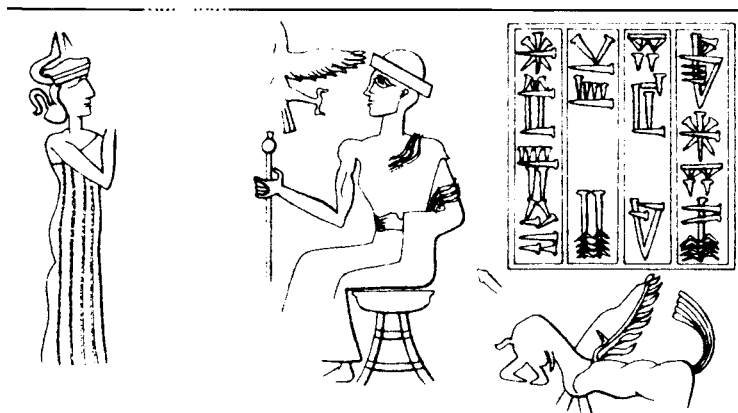


Figure 3.4. Seal of Lu-Dumuzi, son of Mani, cupbearer of the deified Gudea, on tablets dated to Shu-Sin's reign. Scale 2:1 (after Fischer 1996, fig. 12)

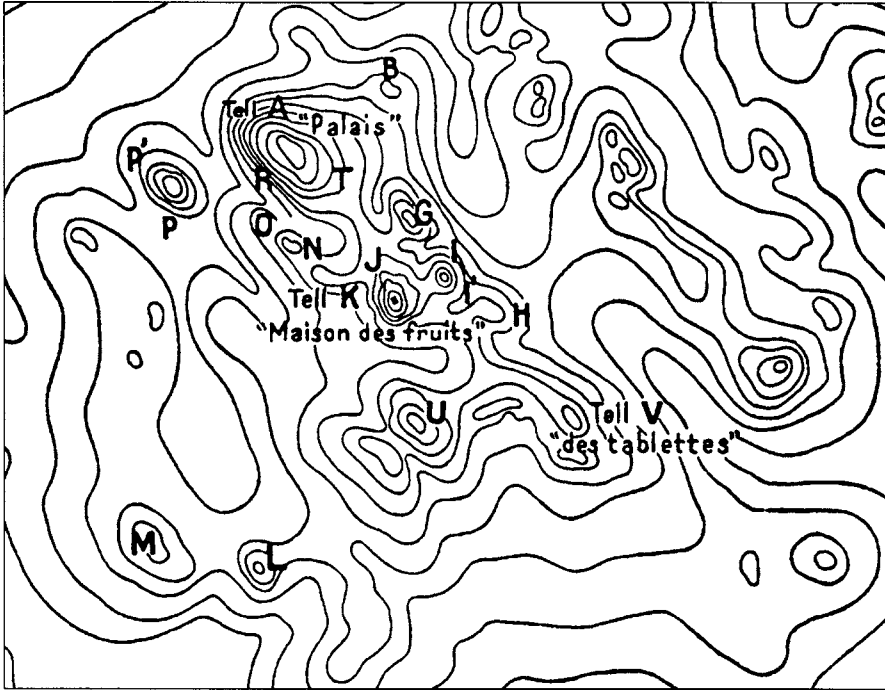


Figure. 3.5. The tells of Tello (after Suter 2000, fig. 2)

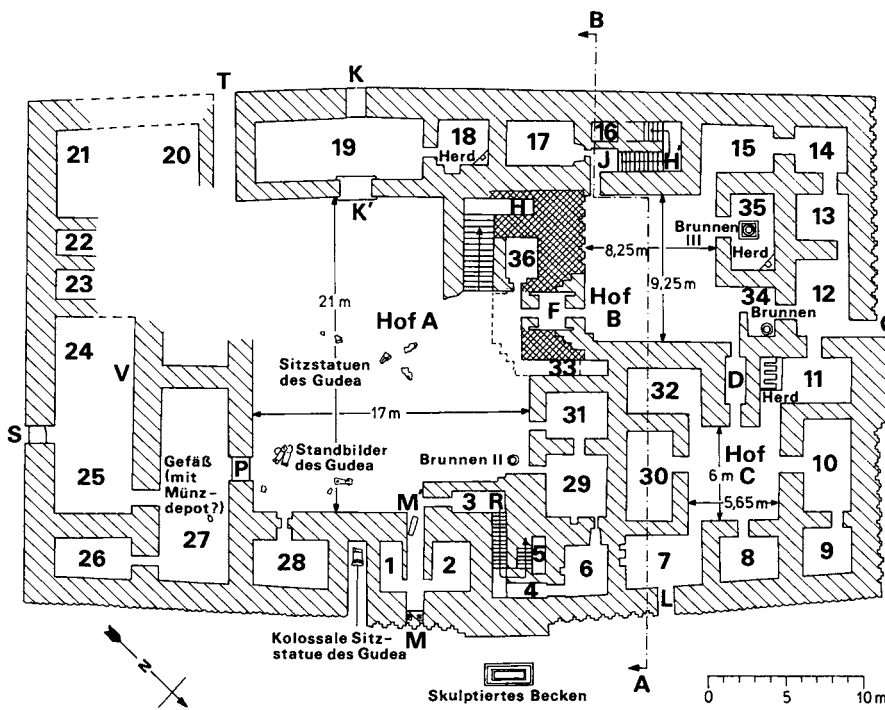


Figure. 3.6. Adad-nadin-ahhe's palace at Tello (after Kose 2000, fig. 21)



a



b



c



d

Figure 3.7. Gudea Statues A (a), B (b), I (c), and N (d). Scale 1:10  
(courtesy of the Musée du Louvre, Paris)



Figure 3.8. Gudea Statue U. Scale 1:10 (courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum, London)



Figure 3.9. Gudea-style heads from Tello. Scale 1:4 (courtesy of the Musée du Louvre, Paris)





Figure 3.10. Gudea stela top. Scale 1:6 (courtesy of the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin)

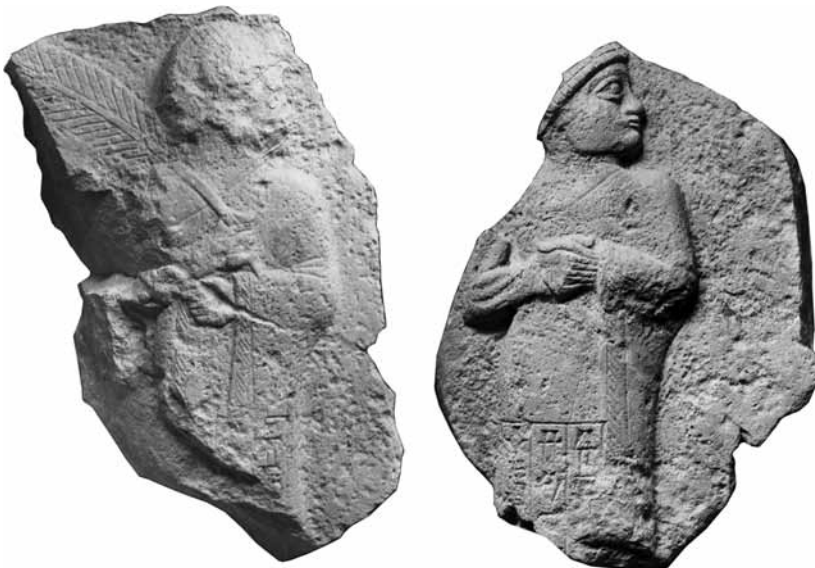


Figure 3.11. Gudea stela fragments. Scale 1:4 (courtesy of the Musée du Louvre, Paris)

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## **DAMNATIO MEMORIAE: THE OLD AKKADIAN EVIDENCE FOR DESTRUCTION OF NAME AND DESTRUCTION OF PERSON**

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It was the common destiny of royal statues to suffer ritual destruction at the hands of a conqueror — an act of *damnatio memoriae*.<sup>1</sup> When Ur-Namma, the founder of the Third Dynasty in Ur, at the end of the third millennium B.C.E., conquered Lagaš, he probably gave the order for an assault on the statues (the effigies of the last city ruler of Lagaš, Nammaḥni, and his wife Ninḥedu are presently headless)<sup>2</sup> and on their inscriptions (the ruler's name has been systematically hacked away from the stone).<sup>3</sup> When he conquered Mari a few centuries later, Hammurabi abducted the statue of Puzur-Eštar and perhaps a number of other royal sculptures and carried them off to Babylon as booty.<sup>4</sup> Of course, the most famous plunderer of note was the Elamite ruler Šutruk-Naḥḥunte I (ca. 1158 B.C.E.).<sup>5</sup>

The belief that the one who destroyed a person's name was thought somehow to have destroyed the person and that this carried forward beyond the grave was fundamental to the religious ideology of ancient Mesopotamia. The ritual of the invocation of the name recalled the past; the performative action of the utterance and writing down of names created a forum for collective recall.<sup>6</sup> The thesis of this paper is that the origin of this rite can be set in the Akkadian milieu and in the Sargonic period, and that, consequently, the need arose for a safeguard, the curse, against the obliteration of the name.

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<sup>1</sup> In this article, the term *damnatio memoriae* is used in its broadest connotation of “memory sanction” in the sense of removal from remembrance. For a discussion of the specific denotation of memory sanctions in Rome and its predecessors, see Flower 2006 and Varner 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Braun-Holzinger 1991, p. 271, St 142, pl. 17, is the only one where enough of the inscription remains to identify the statue as that of Nammaḥni; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 271–72, St 143–48.

<sup>3</sup> Steible 1991a: Nammaḥni 1, line 7 (= RIME 3/1, 1.12.6); Nammaḥni 3, line 4 (= RIME 3/1, 1.12.11, ex. 1); Nammaḥni 4, line 4, ex. C (= RIME 3/1, 1.12.7, ex. 3); Nammaḥni 9, line 4 (= RIME 3/1, 1.12.14); Nammaḥni 10, line 6 (= RIME 3/1, 1.12.17); Nammaḥni 12, line 2' (not in RIME 3/1); Nammaḥni 17 i 4 (= RIME 3/1, 1.12.15); and

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Nammaḥni 18, line 6 (= RIME 3/1, 1.12.13); see also RIME 3/1, p. 194. For a general discussion, see Beran 1988; Bahrani 1995, 2008; Kaim 2000; May 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Torso: BE 65774 = EŠ 7813; head: VA 8748; see Marzahn 1992, nos. 44–45. For the inscription, see RIME 3/2, 4.5.1. For its abduction from Mari, see Durand 1985, p. 159 n. 55. Note that there are seemingly three Mari statues found in Babylon; see Blocher 1999. Blocher (1999, pp. 265–66) has dated the addition of the divine horns to the royal cap of Puzur-Eštar to the period from 750 to 652 and proposed that the statue was decapitated by the Assyrian marauders in Babylon. See further Sallaberger 2006–2008; Braun-Holzinger 2007, pp. 134, 139 (NS 10); Cooper 2008, p. 263, n. 14; and May 2010, p. 107.

<sup>5</sup> Harper 1992.

<sup>6</sup> For a similar formulation of the act of remembrance, see Jonker 1995, p. 2 and *passim*.

Whereas the mere writing of names on objects offered to the gods stems from the Old Sumerian period, the equation of name, personal identity, and embodied statue is only found in the Sargonic period. Consequently, once this linkage was established, a fundamental Mesopotamian belief evolved in the affective power of names. A name became not simply an indexical sign, but rather a symbolic sign of the person.<sup>7</sup> There evolved a semiotic identity of name-sign and person. As Christopher Woods (this volume) has so aptly expressed this concept:

a name was, on a certain conceptual level, existence itself — to have a name was to exist; to be deprived of a name was non-existence and chaos. An inscribed name, that is a permanent manifestation of a name, was the lasting testament of its owner. Thus, to erase a name was to erase all memory of its bearer, to condemn its owner to oblivion, and obliterate his existence — it was an act of *damnatio memoriae*.

Similarly, the destruction of the embodied statue was thought to have negative effects on the organic body of the person (Bahrani 2008, p. 97). In particular, the specific destruction of images of a ruler after his death was considered obliteration of the name and annihilation of the person of the monarch. This paper reviews the evidence for this destruction and considers the effectiveness of the Old Akkadian introduction of the curse formula on their monuments for the protection of the identity and image of the deceased royal. In the following analysis, the term *damnatio memoriae* will be employed in the meaning of any intentional defacement or destruction of a monument or an inscription as a deliberate act with its goal the removal from remembrance and thus obliteration of a person or deed.

The archetypal example of the curse formula introduced by Sargon, the founder of the Old Akkadian dynasty in the twenty-third century B.C.E., presents the parameters of this question:

*ma-ma-na* DÙL *śu<sub>4</sub>-a u-a-ḥa-ru* <sup>d</sup>EN.LÍL MU-*śu li-a-ḥir*<sub>x</sub> GIŠ.TUKUL-*śu li-iš-bir*<sub>5</sub> *maḥ-ri-íś*  
<sup>d</sup>EN.LÍL *e DU*

As for anyone who alters(?)<sup>8</sup> this **image** (DÙL), may the god Enlil alter(?) his **name** and smash his weapon. May he not stand before the god Enlil.

(Sargon, RIME 2, 1.1.2, lines 120–31)

The proscriptions that conclude the Akkadian royal inscriptions suggest that usurpations of this kind occurred regularly and were a legitimate concern of rulers.

## I. PREAMBLE: OLD SUMERIAN EVIDENCE<sup>9</sup>

During the Early Dynastic period, occasional reports on events of effacement or demolition of boundary stones and sacred objects are recorded. Even more infrequent is the

<sup>7</sup> For further discussion of the deconstruction of the identity of image-name-person-body by the destruction of any of the parts of the amalgam, see May, *Introduction*, this volume.

<sup>8</sup> The meaning of the verb *uḥḥuru* is uncertain; cf. CAD U/W *uḥḥuru* B and Gelb 1957, p. 23. Whereas a meaning “to make invisible” based on CAD *uḥḥuru* A mng. 4 “to delay rising, to remain invisible (said of celestial bodies)” might make sense in this context, this late

astronomical nuance is most improbable. Kienast and Sommerfeld (1994, p. 176) posited the meaning “zurückhalten,” “wegnehmen.” Rather than positing two lexemes, Hasselbach (2005, pp. 123, 264) relates this attestation to the Old Akkadian attestation of *uḥḥuru* A “to delay” in a letter from Ĝirsu (RTC 77: 8).

<sup>9</sup> For a thorough evaluation of this evidence, see Woods, this volume.

occurrence of prohibitions and maledictions against such desecration. One extraordinary prohibition is inscribed on a votive gift of a mortar by Eanatum of Lagaš to the goddess Nanše (BM 90832):

E<sub>2</sub>-an-na-tum<sub>2</sub>-me mu-na-dim<sub>2</sub>-ma lu<sub>2</sub> na-ab-dab<sub>5</sub>-e nam ur zag-bi pad<sub>3</sub>-da mu-sar-ra-bi su<sub>x</sub>(TAG)-su<sub>x</sub>(TAG)-ba [...] K[A ...] na-dib-be<sub>2</sub> lugal Kiš<sup>ki</sup>-bi na-dib-be<sub>2</sub> <sup>d</sup>Nanše nin kur sikil GUM-[m]aḥ <sup>d</sup>Nanše ki gub-ba-bi tag<sub>4</sub>-e-ba ensi<sub>2</sub> Lagaš(NU<sub>11</sub>.BUR.LA)<sup>ki</sup> [...] na[m ur] zag-bi pad<sub>3</sub>-d[a] ḡeštug<sub>2</sub>-ni al-zu-zu-a mu-sar-ra-bi ab-ta-ul<sub>4</sub>-a ḡeštug<sub>2</sub>-ni al-zu-zu-a izi ba-sum-mu ḡeštug<sub>2</sub>-ni [al-zu-zu-a] <sup>r</sup>mu<sup>1</sup> [...] ḡešt[ug<sub>2</sub>-ni] al-zu-zu-a igi <sup>d</sup>Nanše-še<sub>3</sub> diḡir-ra-ni na-dib-be<sub>2</sub> a-ne na-dib-be<sub>2</sub>

[The mortar which] Eanatum fashioned (for Nanše) — no one should confiscate it! Since he incited a stranger<sup>10</sup> to smash it completely or to erase its inscription ... may (that man) never pass (before Nanše!) May that “King of Kiš” never pass (before Nanše!) As for Nanše, the mistress, pure mountain — if the ruler of Lagaš neglects the large mortar of Nanše on its pedestal or ... because a stranger has been instructed to rip it out (or smash it) completely, or instructed to damage<sup>7</sup> its inscription, or instructed to thrown into a fire, or instructed to ... may his (i.e., the ruler’s) personal god not pass before Nanše, and may he himself not pass before (Nanše)!

(Eanatum 62, face A ii 4”–v 7”; see RIME 1, p. 161)<sup>11</sup>

This curse demonstrates a concern for and a prohibition against the destruction of a sacred consecrated object. It has no relationship with the person, name, and embodiment of the royal donor. There seems to be no direct evidence for either the essential nature of the name or for any programmatic destruction of monuments. Certainly no attempt is described to expurgate the memory of past kings and events. The unique feature of this formula is the mention of the likelihood of a third party, incited to acts of destruction by a possible malefactor who thus might circumvent the curse and avoid divine retribution.

The first historical act of *damnatio memoriae* may have been that of the Akkadians who could have been responsible for the smashing of the vases of Lugalzagesi (RIME 1, 14.20.1), the vessels connected with a feast for the coronation of Lugalzagesi as king of the land under the auspices of Enlil, high god of Sumer (see fig. 4.1).<sup>12</sup> The Lugalzagesi fragments, and many other Early Dynastic votive objects, were indeed found smashed to pieces, a fact that has been ignored in scholarly discussions. Since the fragments were found in fill under the Kassite pavement, there is no way to deduce whether the smashing resulted from an act of *damnatio memoriae* and/or from reuse. They also may have been salvaged and then buried as a deed of

<sup>10</sup> In this context, the nuance of the lexeme ur is understood as “stranger” (RIME 1, p. 159), which can be further supported by the Akkadian lexical equations (e.g., Secondary Proto-Aa 476, MSL 9, 133) and the bilingual traditions (e.g., *aḡû* in the Instructions of Šuruppak, Alster 2005, p. 68, line 60 “foreigner”). Among the later bilingual texts, a synonymous parallelism occurs between ur and another infrequent lexeme, gir<sub>5</sub>: [me-e] ur-re-men<sub>3</sub> me-e gir<sub>5</sub>-men<sub>3</sub> : *anāku nakrāku anāku ubarāku* “I am a stranger, I am an alien” (Black 1985, p. 61, balaḡ). For a review of the semantic range of this lexeme, see discussion of Cavigneaux and al-Rawi (2000,

pp. 48–52), who concluded that the basic understanding of the lexeme is “dog.”

<sup>11</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of this passage, see Woods, this volume.

<sup>12</sup> RIME 1, p. 434; A. Westenholz 1987–90, pp. 155–56. Note that no credit is taken for this act unless the reference to “purifying” Nippur for Enlil might signify this act (RIME 2, 1.1.6, lines 25–29). According to his inscriptions, Sargon captured Lugalzagesi on the battlefield and led him in a neck-stock to Enlil’s temple in Nippur.

piety toward Enlil's property. It would be most interesting to know what actually happened. Where, and in what form, were all those Early Dynastic votive gifts before they were buried under the Kassite pavement? Did the Kassites find them already smashed when they dug their foundation trenches? By smashing the vases in addition to parading Lugalzagesi in a neck-stock and perhaps, naked, in front of Enlil's temple, Sargon might have demonstrated that Enlil had rejected Lugalzagesi as king (lugal) and had chosen Sargon of Akkade in his stead (A. Westenholz 1999, p. 36).

## II. TEXTUAL EVIDENCE: THE OLD AKKADIAN INSCRIPTIONS

### A. Terminological Problems

#### 1. Name

The essential signification of the name-sign is realized in the matrix of Old Akkadian royal inscriptions. In these texts, the name is the condensed sign of personhood, and of being, present existence, and future survival. The underlying assumption is that the destruction of name is to be equated with the destruction of person for eternity. It is not the individual alone but the continuity of the group to which he belongs. Family names and long genealogies characterize Akkadian texts such as the Maništūšu Obelisk. Thus, the association of the name and progeny<sup>13</sup> occurs as a leitmotiv throughout the curses and is reflected in the literary corpus of the legends of the kings of Akkade:

*wi-il-di-iš ku-ub-[bi-it a-na] // šu-mi-šu ra-[bi-im]*

*a-na Na-ra-am-<sup>d</sup>EN.ZU sú-up-[pi]*

*wi-il-di-iš ku-ub-[bi-it a-na] // šu-mi-šu ra-[bi-im]*

Pay honor to his offspring for the sake of his great name!

For Narām-Sîn pray!

Pay honor to his offspring for the sake of his great name!

(J. G. Westenholz 1997, p. 208, no. 14 ii 2–4; see Radner 2005, p. 78)

The name was manifested in the image and in the written word. The Akkadian logogram MU is rendered by Sumerian me.te “image, counterpart,” in the parallel royal inscriptions of Rīmuš (RIME 2, 1.2.18) indicating the closeness of the name and the image. As the name, the image ensures the existence of the person (Radner 2005, p. 114). Living things have names, stelae have names, statues have names.

Name and identity were divinely bestowed. In his edition of the Jena text of the royal inscription containing an account of the “great revolt against Narām-Sîn,” Claus Wilcke discovered a unique case of šumu “name”:

*Na-<ra-am>/-<sup>d</sup><Su'en> da-núm in sí-ip-rí <sup>d</sup>INANA **šum-šu** LUGAL A-kà-dè<sup>ki</sup> ù LUGAL [ki-ib]<-ra-tim> [ar]<-ba-im> [mu-ta-w]i [<sup>d</sup>INAN]A-[an-nu-ni-ti]m [PA.ŠE]Š [An]-nim ÉNSI <sup>d</sup>EN.LÍL*

<sup>13</sup> Kienast and Sommerfeld 1994, pp. 302–04, s.v. šumu  
c) “Namensträger,” “Sohn,” “Erbe.” For an in-depth discussion of this relationship, see Radner 2005, pp. 77–81.

Narām-Sîn, the mighty, in the service of Inana (‘Aštar), **his name**, King of Akkade, and King of the Four Quarters, who converses with ‘Aštar-annunitum, Anointed Priest of Anum, Steward of Enlil, (followed by further epithets)

(Wilcke 1997, p. 24, text J viii 16–30)<sup>14</sup>

## 2. Statues and Stelae

As Jerry Cooper has pointed out quite a while ago but which is still apt, the terminology for monuments has never been thoroughly discussed.<sup>15</sup> The following discussion is an attempt to understand merely the terms used in the Old Akkadian inscriptions. Ignoring those terms used by the Old Babylonian scribes in their scribal notes, we find that the expected familiar terms are not found in these inscriptions. Neither Sumerian *alan*, the most likely equivalent of Akkadian *šalmu* “figural representation rendered as a statue or bas-relief,”<sup>16</sup> nor the term Sumerian *na-rú-a* /Akkadian *narû* “stela” occur in Old Akkadian inscriptions.

Terms used by the Old Akkadian kings in their own inscriptions are rendered in pseudo-Sumerograms:<sup>17</sup> DUB (“inscription”), DÙL (“image, representation”), as well as the Akkadian word *tamšilum* (“likeness”). In his curse formula, Šarkališarri spelled out the Akkadian word *ši-ṭi-i[r-ti]* for DUB (RIME 2, 1.5.6 ii 7).<sup>18</sup>

Although the use of DUB is understandable, the employment of the logogram DÙL / AN.DÙL is remarkable. The auslaut *-mi* appears as a phonetic complement, indicating that the logogram is to be read *šalmu*.<sup>19</sup> A question that arises is: what is the significance of the choice of the logogram (AN.)DÙL meaning “aegis, protection” (= *šullulu*, *andullu*) to render “image, representation?” It may provide a sub-text indicating the function of the statue. The two words DÙL and *tamšilum* can be used as synonyms in the same sentence:

ì-nu-u **tám-ší-l**[t] ab-ni-[ma] a-n[a] <sup>d</sup>EN.Z[U] áš<sup>l</sup>-ru-uk ... **dùl<sup>mi</sup>** ma-ḥa-ar <sup>d</sup>EN.ZU li-zi-IT

At that time I fashioned **a likeness** of myself and I dedicated (it) to the god Sîn ...  
may my **image** stand before the god Sîn

(RIME 2, 1.4.26 iii 32–iv 10)

In the so-called bilingual royal inscriptions, the Sumerian word *alan* is equated with the Akkadian logogram DÙL. The apparent lack of relationship between the terms used in Sumerian and Akkadian texts would support the thesis that the two versions were separate

<sup>14</sup> While Wilcke (1997, pp. 15–16) interprets “his name” as “in the service of Inana (‘Aštar),” it seems more probable that his name is bestowed upon him by Inana (‘Aštar) as “King.”

<sup>15</sup> Cooper 1990, p. 44. A general review of the terminology used in reference to the divine image, or monument embodying the divine, was undertaken by Berlejung (1998, pp. 62–79). Unfortunately, in its attempt to be comprehensive, it does not divide the terms by period or locality. See also Bonatz 2002; Herles 2006, pp. 12–17; Feldman 2009, pp. 46–49. On the Old Akkadian terminology, see previous discussion by J. G. Westenholz (1998, pp. 53–54).

<sup>16</sup> Cooper 1990, pp. 42, 44; note the discussion of Sumerian *alan* and Akkadian *šalmu* by Irene Winter (1995, pp. 2572–73) and her distinction between “image” and “representation.”

<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of pseudo-Sumerograms used in Old Akkadian, see Krebernik 1991, p. 136.

<sup>18</sup> Written syllabically *tuppu* only in post-Old Akkadian inscriptions; see Kienast and Sommerfeld 1994, p. 310.

<sup>19</sup> On the homonymic basis for this Akkadian logogram, see Krebernik 1998, p. 260; Radner 2005, p. 114, n. 587. However, *šalmu* “black” is always written with the MI sign and never with DÙL.

and independent texts, that the original inscriptions carried only monolingual texts, and that the texts became bilingual in the scribal schools.<sup>20</sup>

## B. The Texts

The curse from the inscription of a statue of Sargon cited above as the case model follows another curse linking inscription (DUB) with “foundations” (sexual potency) and “seed” (semen, progeny):

ša DUB šu<sub>4</sub>-a u-ša-sà-ku-ni <sup>d</sup>EN.LÍL ù <sup>d</sup>UTU SUĤUŠ-šu li-sú-ĥa ù ŠE.NUMUN-šu li-il-qù-tá  
ma-na-na DÙL šu<sub>4</sub>-a u-a-ĥa-ru <sup>d</sup>EN.LÍL MU-šu li-a-ĥir<sub>x</sub> GIŠ.TUKUL-šu li-iš-bir<sub>5</sub> maĥ-rí-ís  
<sup>d</sup>EN.LÍL e DU

As for the one who removes this **inscription**, may the gods Enlil and Šamaš tear out his foundations and destroy his progeny! As for anyone who alters(?) this **image** (DÙL), may the god Enlil alter(?) his **name** and smash his weapon! May he not stand before the god Enlil!

(Sargon, RIME 2, 1.1.2, lines 109–31)<sup>21</sup>

These innovative curses are invoked in all of Sargon’s royal inscriptions. However, there is one element that is missing in them but that appears in all subsequent curses — the obliteration of the name of the king. It is noteworthy that the living king’s name of Sargon cannot be said to be destroyed but rather the power in the object, the statue, and in the royal name must be reflected back to the desecrator whose name is annihilated.

On the other hand, the curses in the inscriptions of Rīmuš trigger total obliteration of the person who eradicates his name:

ma-na-na MU Rí-mu-ús LUGAL KIŠ u-ša-sà-ku-ni al DÙL Rí-mu-ús MU-šu i-ša-kà-nu-ma  
DÙL<sup>mi</sup>-me i-qá-bì-ù <sup>d</sup>EN.LÍL be-al DÙL šu<sub>4</sub>-a ù <sup>d</sup>UTU SUĤUŠ-šu li-sú-ĥa ù ŠE.NUMUN-šu  
li-il-qù-tá NITA a i-dì-na-šum<sub>6</sub> [m]aĥ-rí-ís [i]-lí-šu [e] DU

As for anyone who removes the **name** of Rīmuš, king of the world, and puts his own name on the **image** (DÙL) of Rīmuš and says “(This is) my **image**” (DÙL), may the god Enlil, owner of this **image** (DÙL), and the god Šamaš, tear out his foundations and destroy his progeny. May they not grant a male (heir) to him. May he [not] stand before his (personal) god.

(Rīmuš, RIME 2, 1.2.4, lines 98–124)

The name, however, is written on the statue whose ownership has been transferred to the god Enlil. Thus, the desecrator would commit a sacrilege if he despoils the statue of Rīmuš. The whole unit is an example of inscribed iconography rather than iconism versus textuality. The destruction of the name and destruction of the image was executed on one and the same object.

<sup>20</sup> Galter 1995, p. 31. For further remarks on the bilingualism of the scribes, see A. Westenholz 1995, p. 536, and the articles on bilingualism in Sumer and Akkad in Sanders 2006.

<sup>21</sup> See Kogan 2008, p. 17, for discussion of the morpho-syntactic structure of the text.

Whereas the earlier curses did not identify the despoiler, Narām-Sîn mentions a third party, the alien (LÚ.GIR<sub>5</sub>),<sup>22</sup> the stranger (*awīlum šanīum*), and the enemy (*awīlum narkarum*) in his most elaborate phrasing of the curse formula:<sup>23</sup>

*ma-na-ma MU Na-<ra-am>-<sup>d</sup><EN.ZU> LUGAL A-kà-dè<sup>ki</sup> GÌR.NITA-ni ìl-a-ba<sub>4</sub> u-ša-sà-ku-ma al DUG<sup>1</sup>.KUR.KU.DÙ-ni Na-<ra-am>-<sup>d</sup><EN.ZU> MU-šu i-ša-kà-nu-ma DUG<sup>1</sup>.KUR.KU.DÙ-ni-mì i-qá-bì-ù ù LÚ.GIR<sub>5</sub> LÚ-lam ša-ni-am u-kal-la-mu-ma MU-šu-mì pi<sub>5</sub>-sí-iṭ-ma MU-mi-mì šu-ku<sub>8</sub>-un i-qá-bì-ù <sup>d</sup>INANA-an-nu-<ni>-tum AN <sup>d</sup>EN.LÍL ìl-a-ba<sub>4</sub> <sup>d</sup>EN.ZU <sup>d</sup>UTU <sup>d</sup>[Nergal <sup>d</sup>U-um <sup>d</sup>Nin-kar ì-lu ra-bí-ù-tum in ŠU.NÍGIN-šu-nu ar-ra-tá]m [la-m]u-ut-tám li-ru-ru-uš GIDRU a-na <sup>d</sup>EN.LÍL e u-kí-íl šar-ru<sub>14</sub>-tám a-na <sup>d</sup>INANA e iṣ-ba-at <sup>d</sup>Nin-ḥur-saḡ ù <sup>d</sup>Nin-tur<sub>5</sub> NITA ù MU a i-dì-na-šum*

Whoever removes the **name** of Narām-Sîn, king of Akkade, general of the god Ilaba, puts his **name** on the KUR.KU.DÙ-vessel<sup>24</sup> of Narām-Sîn and says: “(This is) my KUR.KU.DÙ-vessel” or shows it to an alien or a stranger and says: “Erase his **name** and put my **name** (on it),” may the deities ‘Aštar-annunitum, Anum, Enlil, Ilaba, Sîn, Šamaš, Nergal, Ūmum, Ninkar(rak), the great gods in their totality, curse him with a terrible curse. May he not hold the sceptre (of kingship) for the god Enlil (and) may he not retain the kingship for the goddess ‘Aštar. May the goddesses Ninḥursaḡa and Nintur not grant him a male (heir) or name (offspring).

(Wilcke 1997, pp. 25–26, text J xi 14–xii 35)

This Old Akkadian curse is directly comparable to the Old Sumerian one that Eanatum crafted to protect the mortar that he donated to Nanše. Both maledictions mention the instigation of a third party, termed *ur* or *gir<sub>5</sub>*, the alien, the non-citizen, living in their midst. However, whereas Eanatum demonstrated a concern for the destruction of a sacred consecrated object, the curse of Narām-Sîn reveals his apprehension regarding the obliteration of his own name.

### III. VISUAL EVIDENCE: THE STATUE AND THE RELIEF

Monumental public works comprising standardized imposing artwork gave expression to symbolic identification and transmitted the codes of this early monarchy. Probably the most spectacular achievement of the Akkadian empire was its artwork. Large sculptures in the round, stelae with bas-reliefs, and rock sculptures communicated information about nature, society, and a world-view to an overwhelmingly illiterate population. These public monuments contained both historical narrative of military conquests and iconic depictions of royal might. A Sargonic ruler, perhaps Narām-Sîn (see RIME 2, p. 160), tells us in his own words that DÙL KÙ.GI ša da-rí<sup>ri</sup>-a-ti<sup>25</sup> dú-un-ni-šu ù REC 169-e iṣ<sub>11</sub>-a-ru-ni tám-sí-il-šu ib-ni-ma “he

<sup>22</sup> Wilcke analyzed the logogram LÚ.GIR<sub>5</sub> on basis of the lexical equation *gir<sub>5</sub> = ubāru*, which is discussed in Black 1985, pp. 60–62, note to line 347. See now also CAD U/W s.v. *ubāru*.

<sup>23</sup> There are three *exempla* of this text, which was re-edited by Claus Wilcke in 1997.

<sup>24</sup> Frayne and others identified this as the *kurkurru*-vessel and read the -ni as ì for oil. Wilcke (1997, pp. 21–22) suggests reading DUG.NIGIDA KUR.KU.DÙ “1-bushel storage jar (1-Scheffel-Vorratsgefäß)” and in n. 47 re-

jects the suggestion of *kurkurru*. See further examples collected by Sallaberger 1996, p. 102 s.v. <sup>dug</sup>kur.KU.DÙ “pithos.” The Old Akkadian examples are the only ones written with the extra vertical wedge which, similar to Wilcke, Sallaberger also reads as <sup>dug 0.1.0</sup>kur.KU.DÙ. See latest discussion in Civil 2011, p. 278.

<sup>25</sup> Frayne (RIME 2, p. 160) suggested reading *da-rí<sup>ri</sup>-a-ti*, which Gelb and Kienast (1990, pp. 266–67, Narāmsîn C 7, lines 11–16) had read *tá-ab<sup>1</sup>-rí-a-ti*, a reading which was followed by CAD T s.v. *tabrītu*.

made a gold statue for eternity (depicting) his power and the battles that he won” (RIME 2, 1.4.1001, lines 4’–11’). Flaunting their achievements in an ostentatious exhibition of power before the gods, the Old Akkadian kings placed statues of life-size proportions in the temples. As Irene Winter proposes, these royal statues represented “the introduction of the ruler into, and the appropriation of, ritual space hitherto belonging to the god. Presence in the god’s shrine constitutes power; it permits direct access to superhuman authority.”<sup>26</sup>

Statues were also placed in accessible public venues. As today, large images of the ruler remind the people of — among other things — their fealty to him. Thus, statues were erected in the foreign dominions conquered by the Akkadian kings — the Elamite king, probably Hitâ of Awan, agreed in his treaty with Narâm-Sîn to erect a statue of his overlord in Susa.<sup>27</sup> It is said that at the ratification of the treaty, Narâm-Sîn came to Susa in person and together with his minister and oracle-priest dedicated the statue for the occasion.<sup>28</sup>

In the following review of the evidence for the abuse of and damage to images, the intentionality of the damage is difficult to access — whether these works of political art were selected for symbolic destruction or whether they suffered mostly from the ravages of time.

### *Statues and Stelae Found Mutilated in Babylonia*

The first example is a lower part of a carved basalt statue (BM 98069; fig. 4.2), which most probably derives from Qadisiyah (Reade 2002, pp. 262–69, no. 5), a site that has been equated with Akkade by Julian Reade. The proportions suggest that when complete the statue was some 3 m high (extant 1.5 m, weighing 1250 kg), which, according to Reade (*ibid.*, p. 263) would make it the largest known anthropomorphic statue of its kind. The simplicity of the fringes, compared with those from the period of Maništūšu, suggests a date in the reign of Sargon or Rimuš (Reade 2002, p. 264). The statue has suffered heavy and deliberate damage, as well as some weathering caused by the elements and others not fully understood. Most of the original surface of the extant statue has been obliterated by shallow smooth depressions. The damage was at least partly systematic. The upper portion of the toes has been intentionally removed.

Fragments of a smashed victory stela in limestone (AO 2678(+ )2679(+ )YBC 2409<sup>29</sup>) were found on Tell K, 27 m from the corner of the “Construction d’Our-Nina” in a dump or rubbish heap at Ġirsu, modern Tello (fig. 4.3).<sup>30</sup> It depicts a victory over the Lagaš state, and was erected in its capital to remind the population of the dire consequences of revolt. Its exact authorship is in doubt, though Rimuš has been suggested by Benjamin Foster (1985).

<sup>26</sup> Winter 1992, p. 32 (in reference to Ur III royal images). See further Selz 2004.

<sup>27</sup> Scheil 1911, pp. 1–11 no. 88, rev. (p. 9 [copy of reverse], p. 11 [photo of reverse]); col. 2, lines 11–12; see Hinz 1967, pp. 80–81 (comments), 92 viii 11–12 (transliteration), 94 viii 11–12 (translation). For further discussion, see A. Westenholz 1999, pp. 92–93 and fig. 16.

<sup>28</sup> Hinz 1972, pp. 76–77.

<sup>29</sup> For discussions of the fragments of stela, see Foster 1985 and Gelb, Steinkeller, and Whiting 1991, pp. 88–90, no. 24 (AO 2678(+ )2679), and pp. 115–16, no. 39 (YBC 2409), who identify the texts as land sales from the clas-

sical Old Akkadian period of Narâm-Sîn / Šarkališarri, followed by RIME 2, p. 40. For the most recent assessment of the fragments, see A. Westenholz 1999, p. 42 and n. 132, who concludes that “though it is a long shot, Foster’s idea that the stela is the monument to Rimuš’s victory over Lagash, and that the inscription records a reallocation of land in the wake of that event, seems at least a workable possibility.” Even if the text is a land sale, the pictorial narrative of AO 2678 records an Akkadian victory over the local inhabitants of Lagaš.

<sup>30</sup> For its findspot, see Huh 2008, pp. 85, 290, 382.



The discovery of a fragmentary onyx vessel bearing a “standard” Rīmuš inscription (RIME 2, 1.2.20, ex. 3) in near proximity (Huh 2008, p. 85) provides supporting evidence of this identification. In the bas-relief, the Akkadian warriors have been systematically mutilated. The enemies — prisoners being executed — appear to be native (A. Westenholz 1999, p. 43). One Akkadian soldier is depicted severing the head of an enemy with a blade. This image may reflect a common practice — the decapitation of enemies. The destruction of such a visual symbol of its occupation by the inhabitants could be proposed but there is no compelling evidence for deliberate damage.

The next example is a partial head of a ruler (AO 14; Demange 2003), also from Ĝirsu (fig. 4.4). It is usually assigned to the late Old Akkadian period.<sup>31</sup> The material from which it was fashioned is labeled as “diorite,” but it most probably should be identified as the diagnostic Old Akkadian hard Gulf stone.<sup>32</sup> Its findspot, Tell A SH/SE 3b1, may relate to the late veneration of the Old Akkadian kings.<sup>33</sup> It was found in secondary context in the second-century B.C.E. palace of Adad-nādin-aḥḥê under the specially made niche for the colossal Statue D of Gudea. It was apparently also honored when Adad-nādin-aḥḥê reverently reassembled all the Gudea statues together. The head would have belonged to a relatively large statue about half life size. Was the statue decapitated? Was the nose mutilation intentional? As the Gudea statues were found mutilated but apparently buried in Ĝirsu,<sup>34</sup> the remains of this statue of an Akkadian overlord could have been similarly treated.

Two pieces of monumental stelae were uncovered at Sippar (BM 56630, 56631) whose composition has been analyzed as olivine gabbro (fig. 4.5).<sup>35</sup> The fragmentary inscriptions on both pieces comprise the so-called standard inscription of Maništūšu (RIME 2, 1.3.1, ex. 4 and 5). On the basis of the Enlil dedication, the stelae may have originally stood in the Ekur temple of the god Enlil at Nippur. In the absence of other fragments belonging to these stelae from the site of Sippar, Reade (2002, pp. 270–71) posits that the stelae were shattered prior to the transportation of these two isolated pieces to Sippar, where they were placed in a “museum.” However, since these two miserable fragments are not museum pieces, it is just as reasonable to suppose that they were broken in Sippar. Further questions are: who took the stelae from Nippur, and when? They could have been taken by the Nippur émigrés to Dūr-Abiešuḥ, a fortress on the Tigris, in the seventeenth century.<sup>36</sup> An ancillary question is: Is Sippar the origin of the majority of Old Akkadian material taken to Susa?

Remains of a “diorite” Old Akkadian royal seated statue were found smashed to smithereens and strewn over the city of Uruk (fig. 4.6).<sup>37</sup> It is almost identical to that of Maništūšu,

<sup>31</sup> Demange 2003; Huh 2008, p. 291.

<sup>32</sup> While the hard dark stone, of which this sculpture and other Old Akkadian monuments are composed, is commonly designated “diorite,” its petrographic identity in the absence of proper testing is uncertain; see Leslie 2002. On the other hand, petrographic analysis of the Sargon stela fragment (Sb11387) and two fragments of Maništūšu statues (Sb49 and Sb51) proved them to be olivine gabbro (Heimpel 1982), as did the fragments from Sippar (Reade 2002, pp. 270–71). In the cuneiform sources, the stone is referred to as: <sup>NA</sup>esi (Sumerian) // <sup>NA</sup>E.SI, ES1 / *ešium* (CAD U/W s.v. *ušû*) (Akkadian). According to Narām-Sîn (RIME 2, 1.4.13 ii 8–14), he quarried this stone in the mountains of Magan and brought it to Ak-

kade to fashion a statue of himself. For other statues that he fashioned from *ešium*-stone, see RIME 2, 1.4.26, Gadd and LeGrain 1928, no. 275 iii 11–16. For a discussion of the literary references to <sup>na</sup>esi, see Selz 2001, pp. 386–91. See also J. G. Westenholz 1998, pp. 46–47.

<sup>33</sup> For its findspot, see Huh 2008, pp. 32, 291, 368.

<sup>34</sup> See the chapter in this volume by Claudia Suter.

<sup>35</sup> Reade 2002, pp. 270–71, nos. 7–8 (with previous literature).

<sup>36</sup> On this emigration, see Van Lerberghe and Voet 2009.

<sup>37</sup> Becker 1993, p. 74, nos. 964–68, pls. 75–78; Boehmer 1996, p. 145, pls. 6–9. See discussion of the throne and the possibility that it was the seat of a divine statue, in Braun-Holzinger 2007, p. 82.

found in Susa (Sb49; see Amiet 1976, pp. 80, 126, no. 11). The ferocity of the destruction might be attributed to the barbarous Gutians who overran Uruk and were expelled by Utu-ḫegal.

Two flakes (BM 114197, 114198), excavated at Ur, originally belonged to a head from a statue, possibly that of a king.<sup>38</sup> The composition of the material is the dark diagnostic Old Akkadian stone. The ear seems to have suffered deliberate damage. Although it is possible that these pieces were splinters from a boggled decapitation,<sup>39</sup> it is as likely that they are the only remains of a statue smashed to smithereens with furious violence.

The final fragment (BM 32643) has no findspot;<sup>40</sup> it was bought over a century and a half ago. It bears an Old Akkadian dedicatory inscription. Reade (2002, p. 270) highlights its importance as testimony to the ferocity with which Old Akkadian monuments were broken.

### *Statues and Stelae Abducted to Susa by Šutruk-Naḫḫunte I in 1158 B.C.E.*

In general, defacement was not a standard policy of the Elamite conquerors (Harper 1992, p. 161). Šutruk-Naḫḫunte I states that he took the ancient monuments to “protect them,” and indeed he did. He should perhaps be esteemed as an Elamite Lord Elgin. He carefully installed the monuments in the temple of his god Inšušinak. The three Old Akkadian monuments expressly dedicated by Šutruk-Naḫḫunte are two statues of Maništūšu and the Victory Stela of Narām-Sîn.

The highly polished “diorite” statue of the Akkadian king Maništūšu (AO Sb47+9099 [hands]) evidently suffered major damage but when and how it is impossible to determine (fig. 4.7).<sup>41</sup> It could have been smashed and defaced by the Babylonians during their retaliatory campaigns at the end of the twelfth century, or by Ashurbanipal or any number of other invaders. According to Elamite inscription, the statue of king Maništūšu was abducted from the city of Akkade so it was most probably intact at its arrival in Susa.

Obvious also is the damage to Narām-Sîn’s limestone<sup>42</sup> stela commemorating his victory over the Lullubeans (AO Sb4; fig. 4.8).<sup>43</sup> It was taken from Sippar to Susa in the twelfth century B.C.E. but its original location may well have been the Eulmaš, ‘Aštar’s temple in Akkade.<sup>44</sup> However, whether the damage is due to the material of the fabric of the stela — the stone is friable, eroding and/or flaking easily — or from damage inflicted purposely or unintentionally is uncertain. The jagged and uneven edges, in particular the lower edge, could reflect disintegration or could be the result of damage from a sharp blow or impact from falling

<sup>38</sup> Reade 2002, p. 271, no. 9; p. 285, no. 18; and 2011, p. 249 fig. 4, p. 250. Hatz 2003. The attribution of these pieces to the Old Akkadian period is equivocal. On the British Museum website, this fragmentary head is dated to the Ur III period.

<sup>39</sup> Reade 2011, p. 250.

<sup>40</sup> It was published in Reade 2002, pp. 269–70, no. 6.

<sup>41</sup> Amiet 1992c; Braun-Holzinger 2007, p. 101, AKK 3.

<sup>42</sup> See Amiet 1992d. The petrographic examination of the stela in the Louvre identified the stone as a limestone (Bourgeois 1992). In the literature, the stone is still stated to be sandstone (e.g., Winter 1999, p. 71; 2002, pp. 302–04; 2004, p. 624). As Winter emphasizes, the friability of the stone is more similar to sandstone.

See her discussion of the processes of exfoliation and disintegration of the stela (2002, pp. 302–04).

<sup>43</sup> For discussions of the iconography of this stela, see Amiet 1992d; Winter 1996, 1999, 2002, 2004; Bahrani 2008, pp. 101–14; Feldman 2009, pp. 41–45. For the inscription, see RIME 2, 2.1.4.31 (with previous literature). For further discussions of the monument, see J. G. Westenholz 2000, pp. 102–06.

<sup>44</sup> A. Westenholz 1999, pp. 44 n. 138, and 67. He suggests that Narām-Sîn’s victory stela as well as the Maništūšu Obelisk were transferred from Akkade to Sippar in early Old Babylonian times, along with the cults of llaba and Annunitum.

over.<sup>45</sup> As Marian Feldman (2009, p. 44) emphasizes, Šutruk-Nahhunte did not overwrite or obliterate Narām-Sîn's original inscription.

Remains of two victory stelae of Sargon were also found in Susa. While there is no present rededication by Šutruk-Nahhunte, it might once have existed. Five sections of the first victory stela are extant; they formed originally an obelisk-like rectangular monument (AO Sb1+; fig. 4.9).<sup>46</sup> On one side (A) of the largest fragment there are preserved a few lines of the end of a royal inscription beneath the registers with the bas-relief; on the other side (C) of the same piece there is a depiction of the king with an adjoining caption that identifies him as Sargon. Sargon's name remains; it has NOT been obliterated. From this datum, a deduction of intentional damage to the stela is dubious. It may just be from the wear of the ages. It might be possible to exonerate Šutruk-Nahhunte from the crime of vandalism.

The second fragmentary stela (AO Sb2) bears a bas-relief depicting Sargon snaring his enemies in a net and presenting them to 'Aštar.<sup>47</sup> It has an unusual shape; it consists of the upper register of an ogival stela. Similar uncertainties exist concerning this stela as the above ones from Susa. It was found in pieces; was it smashed? If it was smashed, who was the culprit?

## Statues in Assyria

### Assur

The 5-foot-tall body of a "diorite" statue was found next to the eastern corner of the northeast ziggurat of the Anu-Adad temple at Assur,<sup>48</sup> while its head was discovered in the area of the Aššur temple (body: VA 2147 = Assur 7332, head: IM 890000; fig. 4.10).<sup>49</sup> This partition of the statue into two parts and their subsequent dispersal to their findspots could have occurred during the destruction of the city, making it impossible to determine where the statue originally stood. The head has much in common with the copper head of an Akkadian ruler from Nineveh in regard to facial type and treatment of the hair, headband, and beard (fig. 4.11). It is missing its nose and left ear, and the eyes and mouth are somewhat battered. As noted by Evelyn Klengel-Brandt (1993, p. 140), and Natalie May (2010, p. 108), such damage may well have resulted from defacement in antiquity. It seems certain, at any rate, that the head was separated from its torso in the remote past. An obvious possibility is that the decapitation was deliberate and that the heavy torso remained near its original position for many centuries, but that the head was removed to the Aššur temple for display or safekeeping (Reade 2011, pp. 248–49). Klengel-Brandt (1993, p. 141; 1995, p. 43) suggested that the statue may represent Maništūšu.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>45</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the original structure of the stela and its present state, see Winter 2002.

<sup>46</sup> Amiet 1992a; Nigro 1998; Braun-Holzinger 2007, p. 101, AKK 1. For the fragment Sb1 with the inscription, see RIME 2, 1.1.10 (with previous literature).

<sup>47</sup> Amiet 1992b; Nigro 1998 (with previous literature); Braun-Holzinger 2007, p. 101, AKK 2. The origin of this stela is also most probably Eulmaš, 'Aštar's temple in Akkade.

<sup>48</sup> See Klengel-Brandt 1993; 1995; May 2010, pp. 107–08.

<sup>49</sup> Harrak 1988 (with references to original publication). It was found in the Iraqi excavations by Behnam Abu as-Soof in the region of Aššur temple. Evelyn Klengel-Brandt (1993) has demonstrated that the body and head belong together.

<sup>50</sup> For a dating to the Old Assyrian period, see the original Arabic publication of the discovery of the head by Behnam Abu as-Soof in *Sumer* 39 (1983), followed by Ehrenberg 1997.

*Nineveh*

The most significant Old Akkadian object found in Nineveh is the hollow cast-copper head<sup>51</sup> (IM 11331) found in 1930/31, during excavations in the sector around the Ištar temple in Area W at a depth of 7 feet (2.2 m) in later strata.<sup>52</sup> According to the excavator, R. Campbell Thompson, it was found “not far from the largest piece of Shamshi-Adad’s cylinder.”<sup>53</sup> In Mallowan’s 1936 report on the head, he states that “the head was found lying loose in the soil on an Assyrian mud platform within the limits of the temple of Ishtar and it must at some period have been preserved in an Assyrian building.”<sup>54</sup> However, as Renate Gut points out, there is no Assyrian mudbrick platform that can be seen in area W (Gut, Reade, and Boehmer 2001, pp. 78–79). Julian Reade (2005, p. 360) also observed that no trace of the Neo-Assyrian floors, and of the Phase 7 mudbrick foundations, survived in Square W.<sup>55</sup>

The head, besides having lost its torso, had been deliberately defaced in antiquity, with damage to the nose, beard, both ears, and at least one eye. The ears, nose, and eyes of this Sargonic copper head were evidently programmatically — almost ritualistically — mutilated.<sup>56</sup> Similar to the Assur statue that underwent decapitation, the same might have happened to the Nineveh head, except that its metal torso would doubtless have been recycled (Reade 2011, p. 249).

Where was the head originally? Who brought it to Nineveh? When was it mutilated? As early as 1932, Campbell Thompson suggested that it was Ashurbanipal who in 647 B.C.E. brought it as booty among the thirty-two abducted statues from an Elamite campaign (assuming the Assyrians thought that it depicted an ancient Elamite king).<sup>57</sup> As pointed out by Julian Reade, Ashurbanipal boasts of displaying mutilated statues of Elamite kings, which he captured at Susa and which are described as having their noses, lips, and hands cut off.<sup>58</sup> Carl Nylander suggested that the Nineveh head might have been ritually beheaded in 612 B.C.E. by the Medes when they conquered Nineveh, having been on display and whole before the Medes attacked.<sup>59</sup> It could just as easily have been the Babylonians.

A seventh-century B.C.E. context for the Old Akkadian head is commonly assumed.<sup>60</sup> However, there are also possibilities for an earlier date for the mutilation of the head predating the first millennium, either in Elam or in Assyria. Reade even posited that the damage might have been done by the Elamites at the collapse of Akkade rule in the east. Among

<sup>51</sup> The analysis of the metallurgic composition of the head was undertaken in Berlin in the early 1980s; see Strommenger 1985/86; Mooney 1982, pp. 34–35.

<sup>52</sup> Gut, Reade, and Boehmer 2001, pp. 78–79, catalog p. 93, no. 1, pl. 1. For a review of the evidence, see Reade 2005, pp. 358–61.

<sup>53</sup> Thompson and Hamilton 1932, p. 72. Note that on pl. 81, no. 260 (the largest piece of Samsi-Addu’s cylinder), its locus is designated R+1 and W. 8 (it is apparently this fragment, found at W. 8, which is the fragment in question; see its position on the plan on pl. 90, where it seems to be quite far away from the head). See further Reade 2005, p. 361, where he calculates the distance between the cylinders and the head to be 10 m or more. Furthermore, they seem to have been smashed and then exposed to fire consistent with the damage wrought to other monuments visible in the Assyrian capital cities.

<sup>54</sup> Mallowan 1936, p. 105.

<sup>55</sup> See also the plan in Reade 2005, p. 352, fig. 6 and cross section in *ibid.*, p. 355, fig. 8b.

<sup>56</sup> Discussions of this head are to be found in Nylander 1980a and 1980b; Heinz 2002, pp. 168–69; Slanski 2003/04, p. 315; Reade 2005, pp. 358–61; Feldman 2009, pp. 41–44.

<sup>57</sup> Thompson and Hamilton 1932, p. 72.

<sup>58</sup> For the text, see Borger 1996, pp. 54–55; Reade 2000, p. 396. For the discussion of Ashurbanipal’s graphic description of the treatment of the person of Hallusu, king of Elam, see May 2010, p. 110.

<sup>59</sup> Nylander 1980a and 1980b.

<sup>60</sup> Buhl 1978; Nylander 1980a, p. 271; 1980b, p. 329; Mooney 1982, p. 34 n. 158; Braun-Holzinger 1984, p. 16 (see further references on p. 17).

the various scenarios suggested by Reade (2005, p. 361), the only one that can be dismissed is laying the blame on the Elamites who, as seen above, may have deported Old Akkadian monuments from Babylonia, but piously rededicated them.

In 2004, I suggested that the Old Akkadian head may have originated in a third-millennium context in Assur. A third-millennium copper hoard (Ass 16317) was discovered in the Cult Room of the Aššur temple, dating from the time of Samsī-Addu.<sup>61</sup> If the Nineveh head was originally part of the hoard, Samsī-Addu could have reverentially removed the head (or even the complete statue) from Assur and installed it in his newly built Ištar temple in Nineveh which he ascribed to Maništūšu.<sup>62</sup>

In 2005, Julian Reade introduced another factor, an associated object found in the vicinity of the head in Nineveh. The object, a spearhead, was a ceremonial object decorated with a silver band and inscribed with a dedication on its socket.<sup>63</sup> His consideration was that if the head was defaced in 612 B.C.E., as proposed by Mallowan and by Nylander, it would be hard to account for its provenance, survival, and apparent association with the spearhead. Reade (2005, pp. 358–61) posited that the

explanation for the depth, condition and association of both objects is therefore that the head belonged to a statue that was mutilated during or not long after the collapse of the Agade empire, in a period when it was already common practice to vandalize the monuments of disgraced ruler and that it and the spearhead had been displayed and perhaps eventually buried in front of the shrine of the Phase 5–6 temple [Ištar temple at Nineveh] (p. 361).<sup>64</sup>

This premise is suspect because there is no evidence that the spearhead actually originates in the Akkadian period and that it was associated with the head at that time. Reade maintains that when Samsī-Addu built the temple to Ištar (Phase 7), either both objects could have already been in the debris, or they could have been deposited at foundation level by him. He surmised that the head and/or the spearhead could have been made for dedication at Nineveh, or that they could have arrived there as booty, possibly from Assur, but he did not assign this act to Samsī-Addu. Moreover, Reade (2005, p. 361) has further suggested that Ashurbanipal might then have buried the head and spearhead, respectfully or triumphantly, deep below the floor of the temple, with the result that they were protected when Nineveh was captured in 612 B.C.E.

To complicate the situation, there are examples of smashed Old Akkadian texts found in Nineveh. Pieces of two broken stone inscriptions bearing royal dedications of the Old Akkadian king Narām-Sîn were found in the area of the first-millennium Nabû temple. These dedications apparently recorded Narām-Sîn's rebuilding of the Ekur in Nippur and were not concerned with any northern site. Consequently, the original inscriptions, of which these fragments are remnants, were probably brought to Nineveh in the seventh century from

<sup>61</sup> Wartke 1995.

<sup>62</sup> For this scenario, see J. G. Westenholz 2004.

<sup>63</sup> BM 1932-12-10, 55 (BM 123343): Thompson and Hamilton 1932, p. 72; Thompson and Mallowan 1933, pl. 78.42. For its findspot, see diagram in Reade 2005, p. 355, fig. 8b, assigning it to phases 5–7. The inscription is dated to the late third millennium to first half of the second

millennium by Irving Finkel (Reade 2005, p. 359), which means that it could possibly postdate the manufacture of the spearhead.

<sup>64</sup> Reade identifies the phases of the Ištar temple at Nineveh as follows: Phase 5: Late third millennium, from Maništūšu onward. Phase 6: Early second millennium before Samsī-Addu I.

Nippur.<sup>65</sup> They were carried there presumably at the same time as the Šulgi foundation document from Kutha<sup>66</sup> and the Warad-Sin inscription from Ur.<sup>67</sup>

#### IV. EVALUATION OF THE EVIDENCE FOR THE ACT OF *DAMNATIO MEMORIAE*

##### *Erasure of Name*

The act of *damnatio memoriae* is, first and foremost, intended to erase a name in order to eradicate all memory of its bearer, to condemn its owner to oblivion, and obliterate his existence. In the material that we have reviewed, there is no verification of any erasure — Sargon's name lives on in his relief.

Secondary inscriptions were found. Examples of a monarch adding his own name, in particular Šutruk-Nahhunte, were conspicuous. Concerning the interpretation of these secondary texts, it is uncertain whether they should be regarded as examples of text usurpation or as supplementary royal dedications. In reference to this query, other objects might be considered. For instance, a pious rededication of a Narām-Sîn bowl was found in the capital of Ur, dating to the Neo-Sumerian period. Simat-Enlil, the daughter of Šulgi, rededicated a bowl to her father bearing an inscription of Narām-Sîn and placed it in the temple of Ningal attached to the Ĝipar (room C25).<sup>68</sup> Stone was a rare and valuable natural resource, and so the recycling and repurposing of stone objects is not unexpected and is not actually infrequent.

##### *Curse Formula*

In reference to the effectiveness of the Old Akkadian introduction of the curse formula on their monuments for the protection of the identity and the image of the deceased royal, it did indeed ensure deep reverence and high regard for these monuments, on the part of succeeding generations of future kings from Šulgi to Nabonidus. Šulgi claims never to have desecrated an earlier king's monuments, "be he an Akkadian or a son of Sumer, or even a brute from Gutium" (a praise poem of Šulgi [Šulgi B], ETCSL 2.4.2.02, lines 266–69).

##### *Physical Remnants*

The disappearance of images and objects that were originally contextualized in temples is inexplicable. In particular, the absence of the many Old Akkadian statues and reliefs, known to have stood in the sacred precinct of the Ekur, the temple of the high god of Sumer, Enlil,

<sup>65</sup> Frayne 1984, p. 25. According to A. Westenholz 2000, the findspots of the six stone fragments of two inscriptions are:

- a. debris of Neo-Assyrian Nabû temple, Kuyunjik, unearthed during the 1927 excavations.
- b. "Lehmann-Haupt fragment," bought from a priest at Nebi Yunus in 1899 and said to have been found there.
- c.–e. found by Thompson in the central courtyard of the Neo-Assyrian Nabû temple, Kuyunjik, in the 1904/05 season.

f. found by Thompson somewhere in outer parts of the Neo-Assyrian Nabû temple during the 1927/28 season.

See also Gut, Reade, and Boehmer 2001, p. 75.

<sup>66</sup> Steible 1991b, p. 156 (Šulgi 4a) = RIME 3/2, 1.2.23.

<sup>67</sup> Reade 2000, p. 396.

<sup>68</sup> U6355, RIME 2, 1.4.41 + RIME 3/2, 1.2.89, ex. 1 BM 118553; Braun-Holzinger 1991, p. 162, G 213 D and pl. 10, p. 188, G 359.

in the second millennium, when they were copied by faithful scribes at that time, is puzzling. The time and reason for the disappearance of the majority of Sargonic statues from the Ekur is unknown — whether reverent burial or forceful abduction or necessary relocation. However, the fate of one statue may be documented — that of a statue of Maništūšu — the text was first copied by an Old Babylonian scribe when it was on display in the Ekur and the same text was inscribed on a fragmentary statue found in Susa.<sup>69</sup> In addition, another fragment (26.0 x 22.5 x 3.8 cm) of an enormous pedestal of a Maništūšu statue was found, a piece of round basalt that must have been more than a meter in diameter.<sup>70</sup> It also contained the same inscription, which Frayne (RIME 2, p. 74) has labeled the “standard inscription” of Maništūšu. This was found near the southeastern corner of the temple courtyard, probably in Ur III context.

### *Mutilation vis-à-vis Destruction of Old Akkadian Images*

In his statement cited above, Reade (2005, p. 361) maintained that the Agade empire was a period when it was already common practice to vandalize the monuments of disgraced rulers. From the above survey, it can be established that there were two types of vandalism: defacement, in particular of body parts, and demolition, partial or complete of the whole object. The occurrences of mutilation of particular body parts reflects the embodied conceptualization of images and is suggestive of the existence of a belief in the potency of images, and that some body parts were perceived as more powerful than others. The eyes and the face are markers of identity for the species and the individual; inoculation was supposed to remove the power, life, and persona from depictions. As the body was a locus of production of signs that were relevant to the world beyond the body, body parts — head, eyes, ears, lips — were utilized as indexical signs, metonymically and metaphorically. To destroy this process of signification the physical object was subjected to defacement.

The demolition of the image or text by either smashing into smithereens or by decapitation leads to complete severance of the linkage between person and embodied image. Decapitation was also executed on prisoners of war. This act was the physical reflection of the concept of the destruction of the mind of the enemies by the gods.<sup>71</sup> The severed head is both a terrifying image and a figurative signifier of defeat.<sup>72</sup>

The two forms of image and text destruction differ in their geographical diffusion. In the Sumerian south — from cities of Ĝirsu (smashed victory stela), Uruk (smashed seated royal image) and Ur (two fragments of a royal visage) — demolition of image and text were most common, whereas mutilation was prevalent in the Assyrian north. This distribution may reflect differences of the period of destruction and the character of the perpetrators or the strength of the anger and resentment toward the Akkadian dominators.

<sup>69</sup> For the text, see RIME 2, 1.3.1; and for the statue found in Susa (Sb51), see Amiet 1976, pp. 126–27, no. 14. See also Cooper 1990, p. 41.

<sup>70</sup> CBS 19925+unnumbered fragment of a “diorite” stela or statue base (PBS 5, 35); see RIME 2, 1.3.1, ex. 3 = Braun-Holzinger 1991, pp. 336–37, Stele 11. Cf.

Maništūšu Sockel in Braun-Holzinger 1991, p. 348, Weihplatten from Sippar Sockel 4, reconstructed p. 288, image pl. 22.

<sup>71</sup> On the severed head of the defeated king, see Glassner 2006 and Bahrani 2008, pp. 23–48.

<sup>72</sup> See references in Guinan 2002, p. 8 and n. 6.

## CONCLUSIONS

Thus, their inscribed image marked the presence, power, and domination of the Old Akkadian kings just as did those of their successors, the Neo-Assyrian kings.<sup>73</sup> The evidence demonstrates the unity of the name-sign and the icon, which reflects both iconicity and indexicality. Damage to the inscribed images may have been due to pillage or reuse or simply the ravages of time. Nevertheless, this survey of the written material and iconographical evidence relating to the expurgation of the memory of the Old Akkadian kings has shown that there is meager evidence of *damnatio memoriae*, and, as we know, the memory of these kings lived on for millennia after their demise.

Consequently, the Old Akkadian paranoia concerning name and identity as embodied in their images and the defacement of their monuments should be understood as an inversion of the common Mesopotamian literary *topos* that regarded naming and being as conceptually inseparable. Thus, the rite of “invoking the name” began as Akkadian and Sargonic but became part of general Mesopotamian ritual. Its importance in the cult of the dead already in the Neo-Sumerian period can be seen in the lament over the death of Ur-Namma, who is fated to be remembered, his name called upon (ETCSL 2.4.1.1, Ur-Namma A).

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<sup>73</sup> For the significance of the destruction and spoliation of pictorial and textual monuments in respect to ter-

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ritorial, and especially imperial domination, see May, *Introduction*, this volume.





Figure 4.1. Lugalzagesi vase fragments, from Nippur (after Hilprecht 1896, pl. XVIII)



Figure 4.2. Lower half of statue from Qadisiyah. BM 98069  
(courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum)

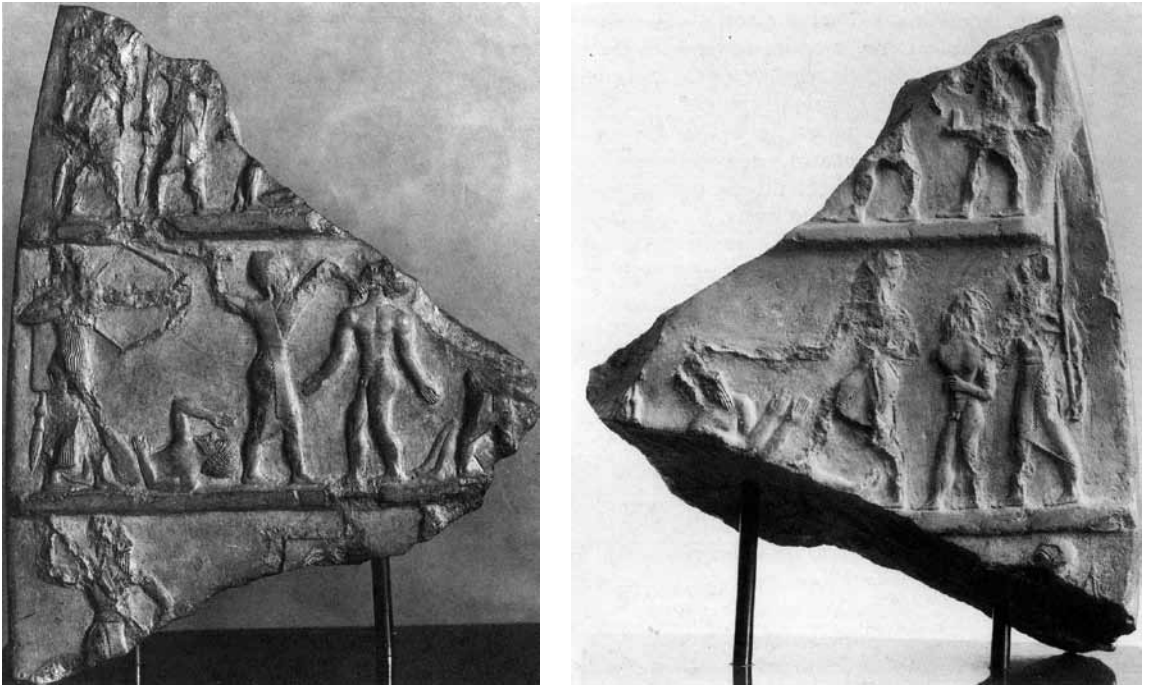


Figure 4.3. Fragments of victory stela, from Ĝirsu. AO 2678[+]2679 (de Sarzec 1884, pl. 5)



Figure 4.4. Partial head of a ruler, from Ĝirsu. AO 14 (de Sarzec 1884–1912, vol. 2, pl. 21:1)



Figure 4.5. Two pieces of monumental stelae from Sippar. BM 56630, 56631 (courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum)



Figure 4.6. Remains of a “diorite” Old Akkadian royal seated statue found at Uruk (after Rainer Michael Boehmer, “Uruk and Madain: Glyptik der Akkad-Zeit.” *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 27 (1996): Tafel 7)



Figure 4.7. Partially preserved statue of Akkadian king Maništušu, found at Susa.  
AO Sb47+9099 (hands; not in this photo) (Musée du Louvre 1936, p. 213)

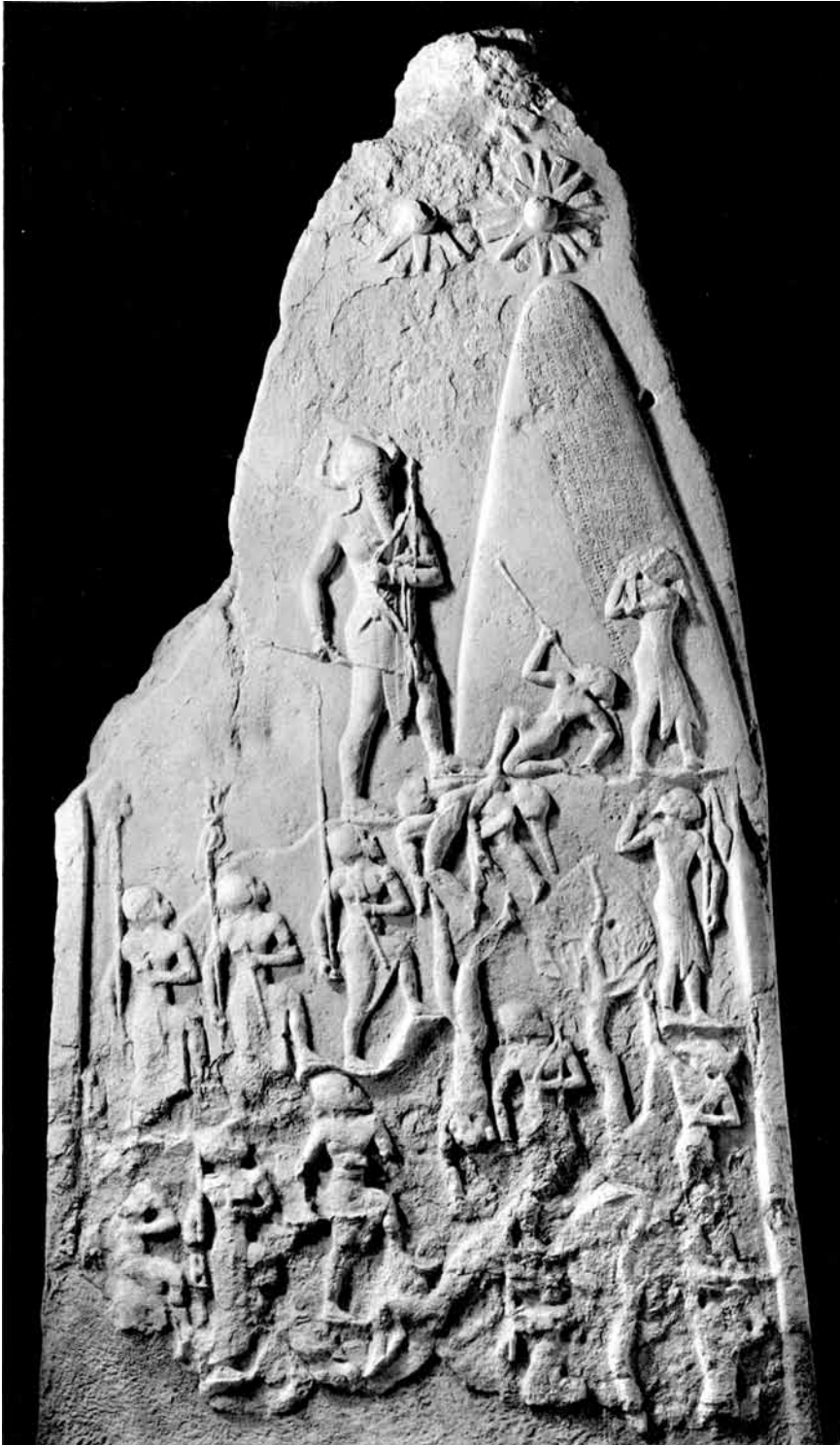


Figure 4.8. Stela of Narām-Sîn, commemorating his victory over the Lullubi mountain people, found at Susa. AO Sb4 (Musée du Louvre 1936, p. 214)



Figure 4.9. Remains of a victory stela of Sargon, found at Susa. AO Sb1+. After Amiet 1976, cat. no. 1a





a



b

Figure 4.10. Headless statue and head found at Assur. (a) Body. VA 2147 = Assur 7332 (photo courtesy of Klaus Wagensonner); (b) head. IM 890000 (Harper 1995, fig. 10)



Figure 4.11. Akkadian head of a ruler found at Nineveh. IM 11331 (Mallowan 1936, pls. 5-7)

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# DEATH OF STATUES AND REBIRTH OF GODS

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## INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of just one of the many civilizations crowding the shores of the Mediterranean, which the Romans later would call *mare nostrum* “our sea,” history sings of a man who was to become the father of a great people. Driven by fate he had to leave his home as a fugitive, but luckily he managed to bring the images of his gods with him to his new home-to-be, and his little son. Sadly, however, his beloved wife dies on the way. As anyone knows, the name of this man was Jacob, his wife Rachel, and his little son Ben-yamin. In another beginning, a very similar story is told about a man called Aeneas. Fleeing from burning Troy, Aeneas managed to rescue his son Ascanius, his father, and the images of his gods. Sadly enough he loses his wife Creusa in the burning city behind. Having suffered many things in war, and cast adrift by fate to the shores of Italy, he finally succeeded in founding a city there. He brought his gods to Latium, whence the Latin race, the Alban fathers, and the walls of lofty Rome.<sup>1</sup>

In another story about the fall of Troy, we see Ulysses and Diomedes steal with gory hands the palladion, the image of the goddess Athena, from her temple on the citadel. Only then, deprived of its protective deity, could Holy Troy be taken by the Greeks.

Jacob fled from Mesopotamia, and Aeneas from Asia Minor. Yet, although deeply rooted in the mentality of the ancient Near East, these stories have become an integral part of Europe’s identity. To us, these concepts are not alien at all, but are easily understood. In either story, the images of the gods are the most important items to be rescued by the heroes. They are the bond of tradition to the former home lost, and the pledge of future glory. If the image would get lost or be damaged or polluted,<sup>2</sup> there would be no history to tell. The presence of the images means any kind of positive existence. They mean good luck, prosperity, growth, wealth, fertility, and divine protection.<sup>3</sup> The absence of the images of the gods

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<sup>1</sup> The similarity of various structural elements of the patriarchal stories of the Hebrew Bible with other Mediterranean (Greek and Roman) stories of colonization and the transfer of cults has like the story of Aeneas been addressed by Weinfeld (1993, pp. 1–6, 11–14).

<sup>2</sup> In either story, there is the motif that the images of the household gods are in danger of being polluted with blood during the flight. In Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Anchises is the one to take and carry the images of the gods, because Aeneas as a warrior has his hands stained with blood (*Aeneid* 2.717–20). In the biblical story, it is Rachel hiding the images by sitting on them while she is menstruating. In the story line that has come down to us, this is a

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cunning lie by which she tricks her father. In an older version, this perhaps might have been the very reason that explains why she is doomed to die in childbirth. The extant version lacks any reasoning why Rachel had to die so fatefully. The *Midraš Berēšit rabbah* (74:4, 9 on Gen 31:14, 32) explains her death by the oath that Jacob swore to Laban: “Anyone with whom you find your gods shall not live” (Gen 31:32). But this is probably not the original reason.

<sup>3</sup> This remains true even though in the redacted form of the story about Jacob, Rachel, and the teraphim, the images (now called “foreign gods”) are disposed of piously, yet deuteronomistically, by burying them under

would of course mean the opposite: disaster, decay, annihilation. The power of an image to do so derived from its being a kind of realization of a transcendental deity.<sup>4</sup> Without being completely identical with the god or goddess, the image incorporated the divine. It was treated very much like a living being: it was clothed and fed, put to bed at night and aroused from sleep with music playing in the morning. The notion that an image was very much a living being is reflected in the Babylonian terms for its production. It would not be “made,” “produced,” or “crafted,” but “born” like a human being.<sup>5</sup> And like a human being, the statue and together with it sometimes even the transcendent deity could die. Although the deity proper could be carefully distinguished from its statue when the point was to be made, the smashing of its statue came very close to the death of the deity. This notion is expressed in a passage from the Lament for Sumer and Ur. At the end of the third millennium, the once famous Third Dynasty of Ur is wiped out by attackers from the Iranian mountains. The cities and temples of Sumer are thoroughly destroyed, and dozens of Sumerian gods are abducted as spoil. In the case of the goddess Baʾu of Lagaš, the deity was even considered to have died in the course of the destruction of her sanctuary and her cult statue by the Elamites. The Lament for Sumer and Ur weeps for the goddess Baʾu, who had died “as if she were human” (Lament for Sumer and Ur, lines 173–77; Michalowski 1989, pp. 46, 137 [scores], lines 173–77):

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 173 | u <sub>4</sub> -bi-a nin-e u <sub>4</sub> -da-a-ni sá nam-ga-mu-ni-ib-du <sub>11</sub>                                |
| 174 | <sup>d</sup> ba-ú lú-u <sub>18</sub> -lu-gin <sub>7</sub> u <sub>4</sub> -da-a-ni sá nam-ga-mu-ni-ib-du <sub>11</sub> |
| 175 | me-le-e-a u <sub>4</sub> -dè šu-ni-a im-ma-ši-in-gi <sub>4</sub>  |
| 176 | u <sub>4</sub> úru gul-gul-e šu-ni-a im-ma-ši-in-gi <sub>4</sub>  |
| 177 | u <sub>4</sub> é gul-gul-e šu-ni-a im-ma-ši-in-gi <sub>4</sub>  |
| 173 | Then, her (last) day overtook also the Lady!  |
| 174 | Baʾu, as if she were human, her (last) day overtook her!  |
| 175 | (She cried:) “Woe is me! He (: Enlil) has handed (me and the city)<br>over to the storm!                              |
| 176 | He has handed (the city) over to the storm that destroys cities!  |
| 177 | He has handed (the temple) over to the storm that destroys temples!”  |

As Heimpel and Selz have shown,<sup>6</sup> the destruction of the “living” cult statue of the goddess Baʾu in the course of the devastation of the cities and temples of southern Mesopotamia by the Elamites at the end of the Third Dynasty of Ur obviously was interpreted here as the physical death of the deity. According to the verbal form, u<sub>4</sub>(-d) in its ambiguity of “day” and “storm” is the subject of the phrase.<sup>7</sup> It is “her (last) day” that reaches the goddess Baʾu, as if she were human: lú-u<sub>18</sub>-lu-gin<sub>7</sub> (= \*lú-lú-gin<sub>7</sub>, line 174) “like all the humans.” The

the oak at Shechem (Gen 35:4). Nevertheless, their original role as tokens legitimizing the claim of Jacob’s line to succession and to the right of inheritance can still be grasped. For a rather recent discussion of the character and function of the teraphim, ancestral and household gods, see van der Toorn 1990.

<sup>4</sup> See Freedberg 1989, chapter 2, “The God in the Image” (pp. 27–40), and chapter 5, “Consecration: Making Images Work” (pp. 82–98).

<sup>5</sup> See below.

<sup>6</sup> Heimpel 1972. Selz 1992, pp. 255–56, in discussing statues as living creatures and the mortality of deities.

<sup>7</sup> Ending in: -ib-du<sub>11</sub> = 3.Sg. inanimate *hamṭu*, with no variants (Michalowski 1989, p. 137; the “storm” is the subject already in line 171). So, Michalowski’s translation with the goddess being the subject is probably to be ruled out: “And then the Queen also reached the end of her time.” The element /-e/ on the form nin-e is not to be regarded as an ergative, but as a directive, dependent upon sá-du<sub>11</sub> “to reach” and avoiding a second absolutive. Even if rarely, the directive can be used with animate beings, as in the present case; see Edzard 2003, p. 44.

motif bears a strong conceptual similarity to Yahweh's much later verdict against his corrupt fellow gods: "You shall die like mortals!" (Ps 82:7).<sup>8</sup> The idea of a god dying or being put to death is also found in the following prophecy from a Neo-Assyrian prophecy collection. The prophecy dates to the reign of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria. The prophet Lā-dāgil-ili from Arbail delivers words of Ištar of Arbail (after Parpola 1997, p. 16, no. 2.3 ii 24'–27'):

24'–25'a     *ilānū ša Esaḡil ina šēr lumni balli šarbutū*  
 25'b–26'a     *arḫiṣ šitta maqlu'āte ina pānīšunu lušēši'ū*  
 26'b–27'     *lillikū šulamka liqbi'ū*

The gods of Esaḡil languish in the steppe of mixed evil.  
 Quickly let two burnt offerings be sent out into their presence,  
 so they may go and order your well-being!

Here we can see how Ištar of Arbail cares for the captured and exiled gods of Babylon, after the destruction of the city by Sennacherib. The "steppe" is the place that evil spirits and the souls of those not properly buried are doomed to roam. Here it is a kind of limbo where the ghosts of the Babylonian gods languish, with their statues smashed.

By and large, the phenomenon of "living" cult statues is known all over the ancient Mediterranean. It is best documented, however, in data from the ancient Near East, that is, in the civilizations of ancient Mesopotamia, Syria and Anatolia, the Levant, and Egypt during the time from the third millennium to the beginning of Common Era. At that time, ancient Near Eastern religion was polytheistic and thoroughly dominated by sacred images depicting gods. As we know from texts, in Mesopotamia these images were usually made of wood and decorated with silver, gold, and precious stones.<sup>9</sup> Only rarely have actual remains of these images survived. Since the gods were the primary source of identity, prosperity, and protection, they also were the primary targets of attack by an enemy in case of war. This is not only because the temples and the images would have been decorated with precious metals and stones that could be easily looted for their material value only. This clearly happened, too. It is because the images' significance was not in their material value but in their idealistic, ideological, or magical relevance. That is why the devastation of shrines and the abduction or destruction of divine images plays an important role in the history of the ancient Near East. In the conquest of a foreign land and nation, the images of the gods were the most prominent captives and hostages the victorious enemy could possibly seize. The Neo-Assyrian reliefs style the abductions of enemy gods by Assyrian soldiers regularly in the guise of orderly processions. A very famous and clear example is preserved on a relief slab from the palace of the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III (fig. 5.1). When it was still complete, it certainly depicted not a single, but two divine families, the one of Syrian, the other of Mesopotamian type.<sup>10</sup> As can be seen from their individual size and various other details of their apparel,<sup>11</sup> the images were ranked according to their status. Certainly, either family was once headed by their divine *pater familias*, following him into exile in an orderly procession. Although these images are clearly enemy gods taken captive and being deported

<sup>8</sup> For a recent and thorough discussion of Psalm 82 and its topic of dying gods, see Machinist 2011. I owe this reference to Jacob L. Wright (Atlanta).

<sup>9</sup> This topic is discussed in detail in the contribution by Victor Avigdor Hurowitz in the present volume.

<sup>10</sup> Pace Uehlinger (2002), who suggests to identify the gods with those of Ḥanūnu of Gaza.

<sup>11</sup> The first seated goddess wears a tiara with a triple pair of horns, and her throne is decorated with lion feet. The seated goddess behind her wears a tiara with a simple pair of horns, and her throne has plain feet.

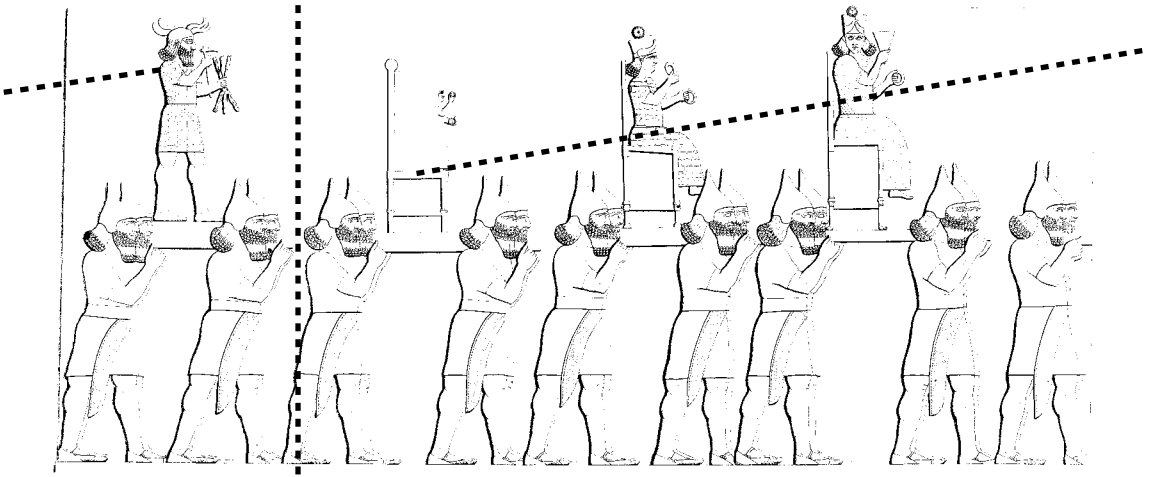


Figure. 5.1. Assyrian soldiers carry off the captured statues of enemy gods in an orderly procession. Relief slab of Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria (744–727 B.C.E.). The vertical dotted line indicates the caesura between the two divine families, the one of Syrian, the other of Mesopotamian type. The ascending horizontal dotted lines indicate the rank of the deities (after Layard 1849, pl. 65)

by victorious Assyrian soldiers, the focus is not on war and chaos, but on order. The gods are not humiliated as spoils of war, but treated with dignity.<sup>12</sup> This relief would say: *The enemies of Assyria defied human and divine law, but the Assyrians have come to bring the enraged gods of the nations piously into safety, to dwell at the feet of their king and father Aššur.* The deities are displayed as leaving the country very much on their own accord, driven by wrath at the sins of their own people. To reach a lasting impact in this argument, it was important to persuade the losing party to join the new relationship dominated by the victor. This meant forcing or luring the vanquished enemy into a very peculiar communication about his new position in the empire and on the reasons of his defeat. There are of course many cases when local traditions and cults were simply extinguished. But this was certainly not the smartest thing to do. As a rule, the victor was dependant upon natives willing to cooperate in resettling and rebuilding a conquered land as part of the empire. The victorious party would resettle the gods in restored cities and temples, then often bearing new names given by the victor. And it was necessary for him to leave his mark of identity, that is, his symbols or inscriptions, on the sources of identity of the vanquished people, that is, in their temples and sometimes right on the very statues of their gods. That is why Assyrian kings are reported to have “embellished” foreign gods before restoring them to their proper places. “Embellishing” would of course have considerably changed and “Assyrianized” the images’ appearance and their character. In some cases a report on the triumph of Assyria and of the god Aššur was even written onto the images, thus literally inscribing Aššur’s supremacy into the other gods’ flesh.<sup>13</sup> The images would be given back by the victorious party only when the vanquished

<sup>12</sup> See also the contribution by Joan Goodnick Westenholz in this volume.

<sup>13</sup> As did Esarhaddon with the gods of the Arabs: [6 names of Arabian gods,] *ilānī ša Aribī anḥūssunu uddišma danān Aššur bēliya u šitir šumiya elišunu ašturma utirma addišu* “I renovated (the statues of) the gods of the Arabs [giv-

ing here the names of six Arabian gods], I wrote the might of my lord Aššur, and an inscription written in my own name on them, and gave them back (to the Arabian king)” (after Borger 1956, p. 53, §27, Episode 14: A iv 10–14).

enemy would show good conduct. Abducting idols and restoring them was a means to build empires and it was consequently employed as such by the Assyrians and Babylonians.<sup>14</sup> After them, the Persian empire exercised the same old procedures on the countries that came into its reach, trying to put down rebellions and breaking resistance in Greece, Egypt, and Babylonia. Most famously, the statues of the Artemis of Brauron and the Apollon of Didyma were abducted to Susa by the Persians from their shrines during the Greco-Persian wars.<sup>15</sup> Following the conquest of the Persian empire by Alexander the Great, it was the noble task of the Diadochi to restore these and various other abducted statues to their shrines in Greece or Egypt. At times, scholars have interpreted these abductions as art theft. The ancient Persians, however, were probably more interested in the meaning and status of these divine images than in their aesthetic value. Yet, inasmuch as one considers art to be a means to create a society's identity, here is probably a transition to the custom of taking works of art as spoils of war in the modern age. In late medieval Italy, the abduction of symbolic items, such as church bells, doors of cathedrals and mosques, harbor chains, and all kinds of works of art and *spoglie* from the time of the Roman empire, played an important part in the struggle of the city-states (Müller 2002).

As stated above, abducting a divine statue and restoring it later under new conditions imposed by the victorious party certainly was an elegant and smart diplomatic move. However, in many cases temples and divine statues and implements were simply destroyed. We can distinguish three major stages, which differ from each other typologically, not necessarily chronologically, although one might be tempted at first sight to see in these examples a development from vandalism to manipulation through the centuries. These three stages are the following:

- a) There is simple smashing, looting, and vandalizing, for example, in the wars between Umma and Lagaš in the third millennium. The classical example is the raid of Lugalzage-si of Ġiša-Umma on the neighboring city-state of Lagaš in the twenty-fifth century B.C.E. In the city-state of Lagaš, numerous temples were looted and burnt, statues were robbed, dismantled, destroyed, and dumped. A similar event just prior to the reign of Ur-Nanše of Lagaš probably forced this king to rebuild his realm massively and to (re-)create the statues of the gods of Lagaš (see below, *Part 1*).
- b) There is smashing with an agenda, that is, deliberately annihilating rival or hostile gods, negating their existence and killing them by destroying their cult statues (see below, *Part 2*).

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<sup>14</sup> Cogan 1974 (pp. 22–34: abductions of divine images, pp. 35–41: restoration of cults, table on pp. 119–21) and Holloway 2002 (pp. 109–11: list of destructions of temples, pp. 123–44: list of abductions of divine images). See also Kutsko 2000, pp. 157–69: “Appendix: Removal, Repair, and Return of Divine Images.” The topic of abduction of divine images has been investigated in detail by Erika Johnson of the University of Birmingham as her Ph.D. thesis (“Stealing the Enemy’s Gods: An Exploration of the Phenomenon of Godnap in Ancient Western Asia”; see also Johnson 2008). Furthermore, Machinist (2011,

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p. 221, with note 77) refers to an unpublished paper by Yoram Cohen (Tel Aviv University): “Acceptance and Rejection: Two Strategies for Representation of the Divine in Mesopotamia,” dealing with abductions and destructions of divine images in the second part of his paper, entitled “Is God Dead? The Destruction of Representation and the Sargonids.” Yoram Cohen has kindly sent me a copy of his interesting paper.

<sup>15</sup> See the contribution by Silke Knippschild in this volume; and Scheer 2000 and 2003.

- c) The most elegant and delicate solution is manipulating and (re-)constructing a god's character and role in the process of restoring his or her statue after an earlier destruction. We see this effect on the cult statues of Marduk and Aššur below in *Part 3*.

## 1. UR-NANŠE OF LAGAŠ CREATES HIS GODS ANEW AFTER DESTRUCTION

Very much at the beginning of written history, in the middle of the third millennium in Sumer, the scene opens with a dreadful war between two Sumerian cities, Umma and Lagaš. Roughly in the twenty-fifth century B.C.E., Lugal-zage-si, king of Ĝiša-Umma, launches a fierce attack on the neighboring city of Lagaš, ruled by Eri-enim-gina. Lugal-zage-si loots, destroys, smashes votive statues, and plunders and burns countless shrines of gods who were venerated throughout Sumer, and also at Umma itself.<sup>16</sup> We know of the devastation by Lugal-zage-si from a sort of lamentation composed against all odds by the losing party, King Eri-enim-gina of Ĝirsu-Lagaš. The text documents the destruction and the sacrileges done by Lugal-zage-si.<sup>17</sup> In one particular case, the soldiers of Lugal-zage-si did not just loot the precious materials (“silver and lapis lazuli”) as they did a dozen times before, but they even defiled the goddess stripped of her jewelry by dumping (the wooden core of) the statue into the well of the temple (Steible 1982, vol. 1, pp. 336–37):

(VI:11) saĝ- $\Gamma$ ug<sub>5</sub> (VII:1) é dama-ĝeština-na-ka (2) šu bé-bad

(3) dama-ĝeština-ta (4) kù za-ĝin-na-ni (5) ba-ta-kéš-kéš

(6) pú-ba ì-šub

In the Saĝ-ug, the temple of Ama-ĝeština he plundered.

From (the statue of) Ama-ĝeština he picked off her silver and lapis lazuli, and he cast (the statue) into the well there.

Furthermore, “the man of Ĝiša-Umma” or his soldiers appear to have committed another sacrilege by touching the statue of Nin-Ĝirsu, the tutelary deity of the city-state of Ĝirsu-Lagaš:

(VII:10) lú  $\Gamma$ ĝiša-kúšur $\Gamma$ ki-k[e<sub>4</sub>] (11) egi[r]  $\Gamma$ lagaš $\Gamma$ ki (12) ba- $\Gamma$ ul-a-ta (VIII:1) nam-

dag (2)  $\Gamma$ nin-ĝír-su-da (3) e-da-a<sub>5</sub>-ka-am<sub>6</sub> (4) šu in-ši- $\check{r}$ e<sub>6</sub>-a-am<sub>6</sub> (5) e-ta-

ku<sub>5</sub>-ku<sub>5</sub>

The man of Ĝiša, afte[r] he had devastated Lagaš, did (also) commit a sin against Nin-Ĝirsu (directly)! (His) hands which he had laid upon him are to be cut off!

Although these outrageous sacrileges appear to be the peak of the strained relationship between Umma and Lagaš, the raid of Lugal-zage-si was only one battle in an extended war between the two city-states which went on for generations. Very much the same appears to have happened some centuries earlier just prior to the reign of Ur-Nanše of Lagaš (ca. twenty-seventh century B.C.E.). In this case, we do not have a description of the destructions as in the case of the war between Lugal-zage-si and Eri-enim-gina, but we have an elaborate list

<sup>16</sup> On the pantheon of Lagaš, see Selz 1995 and Falkenstein 1966, part B.

<sup>17</sup> Clay tablet, Eri-enim-gina (Uru-ka-gina) 16 vii 10–ix 3; copy: Sollberger 1956, p. 58, Ukg. 16; edition: Steible 1982, vol. 1, pp. 333–37. See also RIME 1, 9.9.5. Detailed,

but a little bit outdated discussion: Hirsch 1967. See also Powell 1996. The raid of Lugal-zage-si is also discussed in detail in the contribution by Christopher Woods in the present volume.



of reconstructions of shrines and cult statues by Ur-Nanše (*Appendix 1*). There are temples restored together with the statues of their tutelary deities, there are divine couples, statues of divine children and entourage. It is the most massive restoration of sacred buildings and cult statues ever documented in the state of Lagaš. As Bauer (1998, p. 450) points out, there is only one more single note about the restoration of a cult statue in the whole corpus of royal inscriptions from Lagaš, that is, a statue of Nanše made by E'anna-tum (Ean. 62 I iv 6–7). Although we actually do not know why this huge construction work was necessary, the most plausible explanation is that Ur-Nanše had to rebuild the temples and to fashion anew the statues that had been destroyed during a war prior to his reign. It is highly conceivable that already then Lagaš had been engaging in the bitter conflict with Umma about water and the arable land of the Gu'edena.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, Ur-Nanše did not recreate the complete pantheon of the city-state. Ur-Nanše obviously had to fill in gaps and to restore losses. I do not want to stretch this point too far, but it appears that in particular the more local gods of the state of Lagaš suffered from the attack and had to be restored by Ur-Nanše. Among those statues restored by him, there is no Enlil, no Enki, no Utu, no Inanna “reborn,” although these gods had their shrines in Lagaš, too. For the Ibgal of Inanna, Ur-Nanše created the statues of Inanna's local, Lagašite entourage.<sup>19</sup> There was certainly also a statue of Inanna, but it was not in need of restoration. And in the Abzubanda of Enki, there must have been a statue of Enki, but only the statue of his local daughter Nanše is mentioned. Likewise, during the raid of Lugal-zage-si, shrines were looted and destroyed that were dedicated to gods who were worshipped all over Sumer, like Enlil, Enki, or Utu. However, we are not told that their cult statues were smashed. The statues (alan) that are reported to have been destroyed are certainly votive statues dedicated to the temples, not cult statues, because these are never distinguished verbally from the deity by the term alan “statue.” So perhaps there is more than simple vandalizing. Perhaps the soldiers of Umma picked local gods of Lagaš in particular and destroyed them, in order to harm and punish the state of Lagaš that had done wrong. So, what the king of Lagaš in his lament calls “destruction,” the king of Umma might have called “de-construction” of a political-religious item that in his view had no legitimacy in the wider context of the conflict. As it appears, the soldiers of Umma restrained themselves from smashing the statues of the major, supraregional Sumerian gods, like Enlil, Enki, Utu, or Inanna, even if they laid hands on their treasuries.

When Ur-Nanše of Lagaš created or restored the cult statues of the deities of the city-state of Lagaš, he used the Sumerian verb /tu(-d)/ “to give birth to” (*Appendix 1, B and C*). This underlines that the statues he fashioned were regarded as living beings. The expression used is not the technical term dím (= epēšu) “to produce / to fashion,” and it is not gibil<sub>(1/2)</sub> (= edēšu G/D) “to renew.” The term “to give birth to” (tu(-d) / walādu) is a hallmark of the ritual *Born in Heaven* dealing with the creation or restoration of divine statues down to the

<sup>18</sup> See Cooper 1983, pp. 22–23, on the conflict about the Gu'edena “before Urnanshe,” and pp. 23–24 under “Urnanshe and Akurgal” (see also Selz 1995, p. 185). That Ur-Nanše also battled with Ur and Umma is documented in rev. I–VI of his “victory stela” (Steible 1982, vol. 1, pp. 112–16, Urn. 51. RIME 1, 9.1.6b). See also Huh 2008: 274–75, briefly on the origins of Ur-Nanše and his dynasty. Bauer's (1998, p. 450) alternative explanation, that the deities were represented until then only as symbols,

is certainly less probable. Given the rather scarce and fragmentary character of the historical information from the early third millennium, the sketch I put forward here is of course only a tentative interpretation. See also the discussion of the conflict between Umma and Lagaš in the contribution by Christopher Woods in the present volume.

<sup>19</sup> See the remarks in *Appendix 1* below.

first millennium.<sup>20</sup> Agnès Spycket (1968, pp. 37–38) interpreted the phrases as reports about Ur-Nanše creating his own statues, dedicated to the various deities. This however is certainly completely improbable. The phrase used by Ur-Nanše is <sup>d</sup>DN mu-tu, which is easily and unambiguously translated as “he fashioned (the statue of) DN.” It is certainly not a shortened version of the equally unambiguous phrase, amply documented in later inscriptions: \*alan-na-ni mu-tu <sup>d</sup>DN-ra é-a-ni-a mu-na-ni-ku<sub>4</sub> “he fashioned his (own) statue and brought it as a present to DN into his/her temple.” Even in the archaic orthography of Ur-Nanše’s times this phrase would have been written: \*alan(-na-ni) mu-tu <sup>d</sup>DN(-ra é-a-ni-a) mu(-na-ni)-ku<sub>x</sub>(DU).<sup>21</sup> Spycket’s interpretation obviously derives from her reluctance to accept anthropomorphic statues of deities prior to the late Early Dynastic period. This reluctance, however, and the idea that gods should have been represented by symbols only, is not corroborated by the material evidence or by the Sumerian and ancient Near Eastern attitude toward images at all. It seems to be rooted in the negative assessment of images as being unworthy and incapable of rendering the divine.

## 2. MARDUK KILLING ENEMY GODS

For our next example we make a great leap through time and space to Babylon in the early first millennium, and to a most interesting case of deliberate destruction of statues and temples. This agenda is laid out in lines 34–39 of the so-called *Esağil Chronicle*, a normative text dealing with the status and role of the god Marduk of Babylon. The text informs its audience that, supplanting Enlil, Marduk has risen to the head of the pantheon. Marduk is not to be ignored or even opposed. This is the rather simple and straightforward moral which the author wants us to learn. The *Esağil Chronicle* uniquely conceptualizes the power and the right of Marduk to kill the gods who dare to oppose him. This is a very rare example when the common ancient Near Eastern practice of seizing and destroying foreign gods and shrines is put into a line of arguments. Asking by what right foreign gods were captured and deported, we are given an answer which is of course within the horizon of the ancient Near East, dominated by patriarchal and royal authority. Yet, it is not as simple as “winner takes all” or “law of the jungle.”<sup>22</sup> The power to capture or even to kill enemy gods was part of the supreme authority of the king of the gods, that is, Enlil in the Sumerian pantheon, or Marduk and Aššur in Babylonia and Assyria respectively. Despite the bias that is bluntly apparent to the modern eye, authoritative divine hierarchy together with treaties sworn by the gods made up an early form of international law in those days. In the case of Marduk, his right and power is expressed verbally in lines 34–39 of the *Esağil Chronicle*:<sup>23</sup>

34a [a]na ili āli šāšu ilānū rabātu ša šamē u eršeti

[T]o the god of this city the great gods of heaven and earth

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., the incantation “In heaven (the statue) is born by itself, on earth it is born by itself” used in the creation or restoration of divine statues: \*én an-na ní-bi-ta tu-ud-da-àm ki-a ní-bi-ta tu-ud-da-àm; Walker and Dick 2001, pp. 59, 63, 73, 74, 110, 114 (transliteration), 119 (translation).

<sup>21</sup> Krecher 1987; used, e.g., on the mace-head dedicated by Mesilim: <sup>d</sup>nin:ğír:ʿ su<sup>1</sup>(-ra)/mu-(na-n)-ku<sub>x</sub>(DU) (Steible 1982, vol. 2, p. 215, Mesalim 1:5–6. RIME 1, 8.1.1).

<sup>22</sup> For the use of the abduction, destruction, and restoration of pictorial and textual monuments in politics and ideology of the empires, see Natalie May’s *Introduction* to this volume.

<sup>23</sup> Formerly also known as the Weidner Chronicle; last edition by Glassner 2005, pp. 263–69, no. 38; new edition by Schaudig 2013.

- 34b *ûrta u[l iddinû] u tēm ūmīšunu ibašši itti[šu]*  
do n[ot give] order, but (to give them) their daily order is up to [him (: Marduk).]
- 35b (...) *ana milkīšu nakli ilu mamman ul i'âr*  
(...) No god opposes his ingenious counsel,
- 35c *šūma ša libbi b[arû ittišu]*  
It is [up to] him (: Marduk) to s[can] the (thoughts) of the heart.
- 36 *epšu pišu ikkammû ilānû nakrûtu labšû aršûti uktapparû kīma mēsi*  
At his command, the hostile gods are bound, and dressed in soiled garments, they are cut to pieces like (mere) *mēsu*-trees.
- 37a *ilu ša ana ili āli šāšu ugallalu*  
The god who sins against the god of this city,
- 37b *kakkabšu ina šamê ul izzaz ana aširtīšu liltammû rābišû*  
his star will no longer stand in the skies, and demons shall beleaguer his shrine.
- 38 <sup>1</sup>*šarrūssu iqatti<sup>1</sup> haṭṭašu inneṭṭir išittašu itâr ana tili u k[armi]*  
(As to that god and his chosen king,) his kingship will cease, his scepter will be taken, his treasury will turn into a heap of rubble and r[uins].
- 39 [(...) *ay] išmēšūma šar kišš[at šam]ê u eršet[i] umma ilānû ša šamê u eršeti šāšu ašruš [idâma]*  
The King of al[l heav]en and earth [may not] listen to him, (but say): “Gods of heaven and earth, [reject] him and his place!”

The most prominent divine culprits who were put to death by Marduk are Ti'āmat and her spouse Qingu.<sup>24</sup> But on certain occasions, also Anu, Enlil, and even Ea, Marduk's father, were found among the “enemies and rebels” (*ayyābīšu lā māgirīšu*) who would dare to oppose Marduk. In due course, the gods are subjugated, defeated, killed, and sent down to the netherworld.<sup>25</sup> Livingstone, George, and Scurlock are certainly right in interpreting these mythological statements as conflicts (*Myths of Conflict*) between the gods and their priest-hoods about their position in the pantheon.<sup>26</sup> Under other circumstances, it could also be Marduk who had to roam the netherworld because he had dared to oppose a god superior to him, or at least stronger than him. After Babylon had been destroyed by Sennacherib in 689 B.C.E., the author of the Assyrian Marduk Ordeal comments upon Meslamta'ea, a name of the god of the netherworld: “Meslamta'ea is Marduk who goes up and down to the netherworld because Aššur chased him into the hole and opened its gate (from time to time, allowing him to come up).”<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> See Dietrich 1991 and Krebbernik 2002 on the killing of Ti'āmat and Qingu in *Enūma elīš*, on the killing of the god Wē in the Epic of Atram-ḥasis, and on the killing of the “Alla” gods in the so-called KAR 4 myth. See also Machinist 2011, p. 189.

<sup>25</sup> For a summary, see Livingstone 1986, pp. 151–53. A Neo-Babylonian mythological narrative actually describes how Marduk waged war against Enlil and Nip-pur; see Oshima 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Livingstone 1986, p. 154. Al-Rawi and George 1994, p. 137. J. Scurlock, “Marduk and His Enemies: City Rivalries

in Southern Mesopotamia,” paper read at the 54<sup>th</sup> Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Würzburg, July 20–25, 2008.

<sup>27</sup> SAA 3, 39, VAT 8917 rev. 7. The text cleverly plays on the element /<sup>d</sup>MES/ “divine-youth,” used to write a name of Marduk and the god Meslamta'ea “*The-divine-youth-who-has-come-up-from-the-netherworld*.” For another example of the gods of Ešāgil roaming the netherworld after the destruction of Babylon by Sennacherib, see above in the introduction.

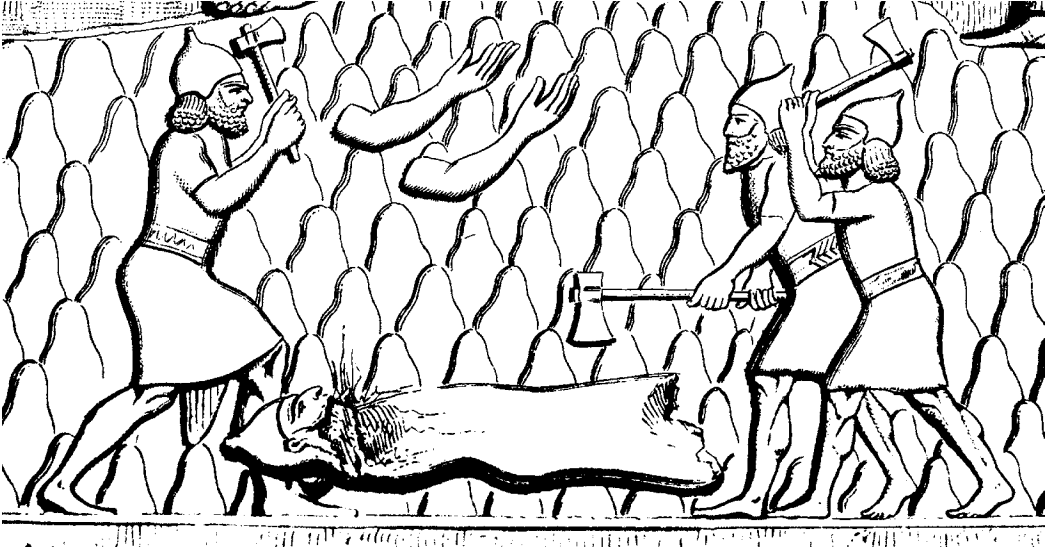


Figure 5.2. Assyrian soldiers chop up the statue of a human Uartian warrior or king, perhaps Rusa I, Sargon's well-hated enemy (as suggested to me by JoAnn Scurlock). Detail from a Neo-Assyrian relief depicting the destruction of Muṣaṣir by Sargon II (after Botta and Flandin 1849, vol. 2, pl. 140)

In line 36 of the *Esaḡil Chronicle*, Marduk's power to give and to deny life is exemplified on the element “*mēsu*-tree,” which was the material the cores of the statues of Mesopotamian gods were usually made of. The line tells us that gods who would dare to oppose Marduk are denied existence and are treated like a mere lump of wood, fit to be chopped up to pieces. The relief in figure 5.2 depicts Assyrian soldiers chopping up the statue of a human king or warrior in the sacking of the sanctuary of the god Ḫaldi at Muṣaṣir by Sargon II.<sup>28</sup> In this relief, the statue that is destroyed is not the statue of a god. But being chopped up like this, and being sacked like Muṣaṣir, is precisely what Marduk's ideologists wanted to happen to the statues and shrines of rivaling gods. The wording of line 36, using *kapāru* D “to cut to pieces,” and *mēsu* “*mēsu*-tree,” draws on a catchphrase that is used repeatedly in the cultic poetry of Babylonian lamentations. It comes originally in Sumerian and is given an Akkadian translation. The phrase deals with the power of Enlil, respectively Marduk, and can be reconstructed as follows:<sup>29</sup>

\*(umun eneḡani) mes galgala guguruṣame

\*(ša bēli / Bēl amāssu) mēsi rabbūti ukappar

He (/ The Lord's word) cuts the great *mēsu*-trees to pieces.

The “great *mēsu*-trees” are the other gods of the universe. The wood of the *mēsu*-tree, native to Babylonia, and that of the imported *musukkannu* (ḡi<sup>3</sup>mes-má-kan-na, the

<sup>28</sup> On destruction and mutilation of statues and images, see Brandes 1980; Beran 1988; and May 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Examples from *Udam ki'amus*, *Agalgal buru susu*, and *Uruḫulake* of Gula. The individual references for that

phrase are given in the commentary on line 36 of the *Esaḡil Chronicle*, in Schaudig 2013.

“*mēsu*-tree-from-Makan”), probably a kind of teak, was prominent among the materials the statues of Mesopotamian gods and cultic furniture were made of. The cores of these statues were mostly carved from these kinds of wood, given the epithets *šir ilī* “the flesh of the gods” and *išu dārū* “everlasting wood.”<sup>30</sup> The term *mēsu* is also used in the description given by the Babylon Stela of Nabonidus on the destruction of Assyrian temples and cults as done by the king of the Medes:<sup>31</sup>

*ušalpitma mēsišun — manāma lā īzib*

He ruined their *mēšū* (“cults,” or statues made of “*mēsu*-wood”), not sparing a single one.

The short sentences belong together and form a unit made up of two halves. The phrase is usually and quite correctly taken to refer to the destruction of Assyrian cults (*mēšū*). Yet, it has never been discussed whether the line also contains a pun on the cult statues made of *mēsu*-wood. And this is odd, since with *manāma* (“whoever”) the composer of that line had used the personal indefinite pronoun, not the impersonal one, which would be *mimma* (“whatever”) to go with the “cults.” Of course we can take *manāma* to refer to the human inhabitants of the ruined cities, yet before and after that verse, the whole passage is not on humans, but on shrines and sanctuaries. So one may wonder whether the Babylonian scribe deliberately gave a hint for a second reading, indicating that together with the Assyrian cults (*mēšū*) the cult statues of the Assyrian gods were destroyed, once personalized (*manāma* “whoever”), but now reduced to the mere *mēsu*-wood their cores were made of.

But Marduk’s wrath would not only destroy the statues, that is, the material bodies of enemy gods. He would also annihilate the celestial, transcendent deity proper. This is expressed in the following line 37b of the *Esaḡil Chronicle*, stating that the god’s “star will no longer stand in the skies” (*kakkabšu ina šamē ul izzaz*). This refers to the scene portrayed in *Enūma eliš* IV when the assembly of the gods gives Marduk the full power to destroy and to create by his command (the following lines from *Enūma eliš*, tablet IV, lines 17–18, 21–24; Talon 2005, p. 51):

(17) *Bēlu ša takluk napištaš gimilma*

(21) *šimatka Bēlu lū maḥrat ilīma*

(23) *epšu pīka liʾabit lumāšu*

(18) *u ila ša lemṇēti iḥuzu tubuk napšassu (...)*

(22) *abātu u banū qibi liktūnū*

(24) *tūr qibišumma lumāšu lišlim*

(17) Bēl, spare the life of the one who trusts in you, (18) but spill the life of the god who plots evil! (...) (21) Your fate,<sup>32</sup> oh Bēl, may be foremost among the gods! (22) To destroy and to create may be firm (with you) for all time, order (it)! (23) By your command let the star be destroyed, (24) and order again, so that the star may be safe and sound again.

<sup>30</sup> *mēsu šir ilāni* (...) *iššu ellu* “The *mēsu*-tree, flesh of the gods, (...) the pure tree” (Poem of Erra, tablet I, lines 150–51; Cagni 1969, p. 74). For more examples, see CAD M s.v. *mēsu* a and c (*išu dārū*); CAD D s.v. *dārū* 2b: *išu dārū* “everlasting wood” as epithet for *musukannu*. The “everlasting *musukannu* wood” finds its echo in the image polemics of biblical literature, in referring to the wood as *עץ לא-ירקב* ... *הקטקבן* (Isa 40:20) the “*musukannu*-wood,

the wood that does not rot” being the wood the images were made of; see the discussion by Dick (1999, p. 23 with note j), and see the contribution by Hurowitz in this volume.

<sup>31</sup> Schaudig 2001, p. 516, no. 3.3a ii 25’–27’: *ú-šá-al-pi-it-ma / mé-e-si-šu-un / ma-na-ma la i-zib*.

<sup>32</sup> This means: “bestowed upon you” as well as “decreed by you.”

Testing and demonstrating his power, Marduk destroys and re-creates a star (*Enūma eliš*, tablet IV, lines 25–26), turning it off and on again. Today, this test bears an awkward affinity to a boy playing with a light switch. But in its day, that scene was nothing less than an intimidating proof of absolute power over life and death, even of gods.

### 3. AŠŠUR TURNS INTO MARDUK, MARDUK IS REBORN AS ASARLUḪI

Under other circumstances, it could also be Marduk who had to roam the netherworld. In the second and the first millennia B.C.E. the city of Babylon witnessed at least four deportations of statues of the god Marduk and about half a dozen raids by the Hittites, Assyrians, and Elamites. On these occasions, the city had been devastated more than once, and it was virtually wiped out by Sennacherib in 689 B.C.E. When the Assyrians laid their hands on Babylon in the mid-eighth century, Marduk and Aššur unavoidably became rivals for the position of the Enlil of the state. For some time, the Assyrians tried to obey both lords, but this did not work out for long. After another severe crisis, the Assyrian king Sennacherib sent his troops against Babylon and had the city razed and destroyed, with its temples and gods.<sup>33</sup> The cult statue of Marduk was abducted to Assyria, where the god was sitting like a prisoner at the feet of his father Aššur for about twenty years. During this time the cult of Marduk in Babylon ceased. Apart from the destruction of the cult of Marduk at Babylon, Sennacherib's religious reforms affected heavily the cult of Aššur. He was in fact remodelled into an Assyrian Marduk, supplanting the Babylonian one. Sennacherib transferred the Babylonian New Year festival to Assur and built an *akītu*-house on the outskirts of the city according to the Babylonian model. He had an Assyrian recension of the Babylonian Epic of Creation prepared, with Aššur (AN.ŠÁR) replacing Marduk throughout the text.<sup>34</sup> And he had a new statue of Aššur made, which visibly incorporated the changes and the new character of Aššur. Simultaneously, Sennacherib tried to turn Marduk back again into the kind of god he was before he had become the Babylonian king of the gods. That is, he tried to turn him back from Marduk-Enlil into Marduk-Asarluḫi, the god of incantations.<sup>35</sup> Necessarily, the new roles of Aššur and Marduk also became apparent in their cult statues and paraphernalia. There is no depiction of the cult statue of Aššur before the cultic reform by Sennacherib, and no depiction of Marduk after it. But we can see the change in Marduk's symbol, the spade (*marru*), and there is a heated debate over Marduk's dress in the Assyrian Marduk Ordeal texts.

As proved by various textual references and a caption to a relief on a *kudurru*,<sup>36</sup> the "spade" (*marru*) is well known as the symbol of Marduk. The tradition from Elam also connects it to Marduk's son, Nabû (*Appendix 2, ex. a*). Representations of the spade of Marduk are amply found from the late Old Babylonian period onward, especially on seals, *kudurrus*,

<sup>33</sup> Sennacherib was very clear: "The gods dwelling therein, — my people took them with their hands and smashed them. Their [property] and goods they seized" (*ilāni āšib libbīšu qāt nišiya ikšussunūtīma ušabbirūma [bušā]šunu makkūršunu ilqūni*, Luckenbill 1924, p. 83, Bavian inscriptions, line 48). — "After I had destroyed Babylon and smashed its gods" (*ištu Bābil aḫpū ilāniša ušabbiru*, Luckenbill 1924, p. 137, lines 36–37, the "Temple of the New Year's Feast" foundation stela from Assur). His son Esarhaddon, who found himself faced with the necessity to reconstruct Babylon, tried to play down the damage

done by his father, explaining that "the gods went up to heaven" (Borger 1956, p. 14, Episode 8).

<sup>34</sup> Lambert 1997; Frahm 1997, pp. 223, 282–88.

<sup>35</sup> K 100 (T 179), obv. 15: Marduk listed among the gods in the eighth place only, and called *apkal ilāni mašmaš ḏigigi u ḏA[nunnaki]* "the wise among the gods, the exorcist of the Igigu and the A[nunnaku-gods]"; the text dates after the destruction of Babylon. Frahm 1997, pp. 216, 288.

<sup>36</sup> Seidl 1989, pp. 117–21; caption: p. 120, *kudurru* no. 29.

and on royal stela. In Babylonia proper, the symbol was styled as a pointed triangle with a flat base, mounted on a shaft. The bronze model from Elam (ex. a) shows a flat, lanceolate blade, fitted into the mouth of a snake whose body forms the spade's shaft. The shallow relief on the stela of Adad-nīrārī III from Tell ar-Rimāḥ (ex. d), the stylized relief on a *kudurru* of Sargon II (ex. f), the elaborate design in a seal impression from Uruk dating to the reign of Cambyses (ex. l), and a rock relief from the vicinity of Tayma dating to the reign of Nabonidus (ex. m) propose a slightly convex blade with a vertical central rib, very much like the back of a modern spade. The spade (*marru*) does not play any prominent role in myths or rituals, and so we do not know anything certain about its ancient meaning. Nevertheless we may suppose that its meaning was characterized by its main function as a building implement used in the construction of canals, temples, and cities. By virtue of his spade, Marduk appears to have originally been the tutelary deity of canal-digging and irrigation,<sup>37</sup> apart from his perhaps secondary role as Asarluḫi, the god of incantations. At least in the first millennium the spade probably was understood as denoting the powers of Marduk as a cosmic builder and creator. It recalls the relationship between Enlil and his hoe (ĝi<sup>3</sup>al / *allu*), celebrated in the Sumerian Song of the Hoe.<sup>38</sup> But in the course of Sennacherib's religious "reform," the symbol of Marduk, the spade (*marru*), was obviously interpreted by the Assyrians. The spade changed its form to a cone (*Appendix 2*, exx. g–j), used in purification rites, in order to establish Marduk's new and restricted role as the god of incantation and purification only (= Asarluḫi). The Late Babylonian specimens (exx. k–m) make it perfectly clear that the interpretation of the spade as a cone forced upon the symbol in the course of the religious reform of Sennacherib was straightened out quickly by the Babylonians after the downfall of the Sargonid Assyrian empire. Then, the spade even displayed slightly toothed edges (clearly in ex. l, discernible also in ex. m), defiantly revoking its earlier interpretation as an ovoid cone by the Sargonids in a countermovement.

Sennacherib's cultic reform also affected the cult statues of Aššur and Marduk.<sup>39</sup> From Marduk, Aššur adopted the *mušḫuššu*-dragon and the divine weapon by which Marduk had slain the chaos. And Aššur took over the "flouncing" dress of Marduk, which was interpreted by the Babylonians as living water. This item, which characterized Marduk as a primeval god and a god of creation, is attacked sharply by the Assyrian scholar who wrote an aggressive and hostile commentary on the cult of Marduk (the Marduk Ordeal; after SAA 3, 34 lines 53–56):

šer<sup>2</sup>itu ša ina muḫḫišu ša iqabbūni mā mē šunu — sili<sup>2</sup>āti šina  
 šū ina libbi Enūma eliš iqtibi kī šamē eršetu lā ibbanūni Aššur (AN.ŠÁR) it[tabšī]  
 kī ālu u bētu ibšūni šū ittabšī mē ša ina muḫḫi Aššur (AN.ŠÁR)  
 (...) lā mē labiš

The outfit which is on him (: Marduk) and of which they say: "It is water," — that is a lie. It is said in *Enūma eliš*: "When heaven and earth had not yet been created, Aššur ca[me into being]." Only when city and temple (already) existed, he (: Marduk) came into being. The waters are (those) which are upon Aššur. (...) He (: Marduk) is not clad in water."

<sup>37</sup> Oshima 2006, kindly pointed out to me by Joan Goodnick Westenholz in the discussion.

<sup>38</sup> Last edition: Edzard 2000.

<sup>39</sup> Form and appearance of the statue of Aššur have been dealt with by Seidl (1998 and 2000), and by Berlejung (2007), without discussing his garment, which is the topic of the lines below.

During the reigns of the Assyrian kings Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Assurbanipal, it was Aššur who was clad in a flouncing dress depicting water, as can be seen on a delicate Assyrian relief found at the city of Assur, depicting the god Aššur and his consort Mullissu (fig. 5.3).<sup>40</sup> Aššur and Mullissu behind him are clad in flounced garments designating flowing water, with wavy lines and sappy drops (fig. 5.4). This relief is the perfect match to the explanation given in the Marduk Ordeal quoted above. This must mean that Marduk in those days probably was dressed differently. There are also other cases when the dress of deities became a topic. A special attire of Marduk, called “the *good-dress*” (túg-sig<sub>5</sub> = *tuqsiqqû*) of Marduk-Bēl occurs in a text describing the sacrileges of the wicked king Nabû-šum-iškun (ca. 760–748 B.C.E.).<sup>41</sup> There, we are told that Nabû-šum-iškun blasphemously clad the god Nabû in the “*good-dress*” of his father Marduk.<sup>42</sup> Although we do not know any details about the particular meaning of this attire, we can surmise that it denoted a special rank, power, and character of Marduk as king of the gods that was not just free to be taken over by his son Nabû. When Marduk’s statue was reborn in an Assyrian workshop in the reign of Esarhaddon, it certainly did not look exactly like the statue that Sennacherib had smashed, or that he at least had desecrated and abducted. The statue no longer depicted the lord and creator of the universe, clad in primeval waters, but only a god of incantations, a son and scion of Aššur, secondary to him. It was an Assyrianized Marduk, not the old Babylonian one. I think it is quite telling that the cylinder seal<sup>43</sup> that Esarhaddon returned and rededicated to Marduk of Esaġil does not show Marduk clad in the flouncing dress that had come under attack by the Marduk Ordeal, but in another type of garment. It is an old seal, older than Sennacherib and Esarhaddon, but certainly carefully checked and rated as unproblematic before it was given back. I am absolutely sure that on the very day when Nabopolassar rose against the Assyrians and made himself king of Babylon, the statue of Marduk entered the workshop at Babylon and was refurbished again and dressed in water, as befits the lord of the universe.

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<sup>40</sup> VA 6726, found at the city of Assur (Andrae 1938, pl. 74b). Figure 5.3 is a detail from the excavation photograph, published here by the kind permission of the Trustees of the Vorderasiatisches Museum Berlin. Another, more well-known example of the flouncing dress interpreted as water is the garment of the famous water goddess from Mari from the Old Babylonian period. The flounces of her dress dissolve into delicately incised lines of running water, with fishes floating in it (Parrot 1937, p. 80, with pl. 13). This does not mean that the flouncing dress, which had been the standard costume for gods in Mesopotamia from the third to the second millennium B.C.E., was always and everywhere inter-

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preted as water. In the case of the sun god Šamaš or the fire god Girra the Babylonians may have interpreted the fringes as beams of light or fire.

<sup>41</sup> Von Weiher 1988, pp. 8, 265, no. 58, obv. ii 11–12. Last edition by Cole 1994, pp. 228, 234, commentary on p. 239.

<sup>42</sup> Cole (1994) assumes that the wicked king dresses himself in the garment of Marduk. This, however, is certainly a misunderstanding of the text.

<sup>43</sup> Weissbach 1903, p. 16, fig. 1. The seal had originally been dedicated by the Babylonian king Marduk-zākīr-šumi (ninth century B.C.E.).





Figure. 5.3. The god Aššur clad in the primeval waters. From a relief (VA 6726) found at the city of Assur. Detail from the excavation photograph, published here by the kind permission of the Trustees of the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin

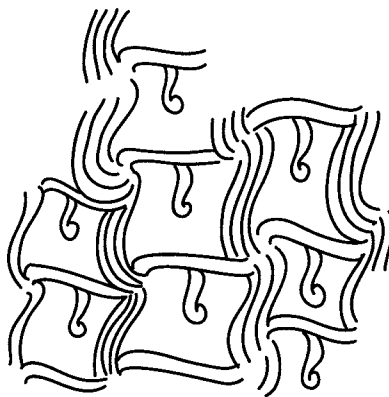


Figure. 5.4. Detail from figure 5.3. Incised design on Aššur's dress

## APPENDIX 1

Royal inscriptions of Ur-Nanše of Lagaš, from the city-state of Lagaš, and from Ur (Urn. 40); Early Dynastic period IIIb (ca. 2500 B.C.E.). Texts quoted without the abbreviation “Urn(anše),” following the numbering of edition of the cuneiform texts by Sollberger 1956 and the edition of the texts by Steible (1982). A new edition is given in RIME 1.

## A. TEMPLES BUILT (MU-DÙ)

1. *Lagaš*

bād lagaš <sup>44</sup>	(24:IV:5) (34:IV:4) (51:obv:V:8)
ba-ġára	(25:V:2) (30:IV:2) (32:III:2) (33:IV:3) (34:II:3) (35:15) (37:14) (51:obv:II:2) <sup>45</sup>
èš ba-ġára	(28:V:1)
é <sup>(d)</sup> ġá-tùm-du <sub>10</sub>	(28:IV:1) (29:III:5) (31:III:5) (33:II:5) (34:III:3) (35:19) (36:10) (51:obv:IV:6)
é-dam <sup>46</sup>	(25:V:4) (27:IV:3) (28:V:3) (29:IV:4) (30:III:6) (31:IV:2) (32:III:4) (33:III:5) (34:II:5) (35:17) (36:12) (51:obv:V:3)
é-PA	(24:IV:3) (29:III:3) (31:III:3) (32:IV:4) (33:III:1) (34:II:7) (36:23)
ib-ġal	(28:III:1) (29:III:1) (30:III:2) (31:III:1) (32:II:2) (34:I:7) (35:11) (36:19) (50:a:6) (51:obv:III:7)
abzu-e	(25:V:6) (28:IV:3) (30:IV:4) (34:III:5) (51:obv:V:6)

2. *Ġirsu*

èš ġír-su	(2:5) (27:II:4) (28:II:2) (29:II:4) (30:II:4) (31:II:4) (33:II:3) (35:6) (39:I:5) (49:V:1) (51:obv:IV:2)
é <sup>(d)</sup> nin-ġír-su	(8:5) (20:a:5) (21:a:5) (22:a:5) (23:a:4) (34:I:5/III:7) (36:6) (37:6)
ká-me <sup>47</sup>	(28:V:5) (51:obv:V:4)
é-sila <sup>48</sup>	(18:II:1)
šeš-ġar	(19:II:1) (22:a:11) (23:b:II:3) (34:II:9) (37:10)
abzu-bànda <sup>(da)</sup>	(20:a:7) (22:a:9) (23:a:6) (37:12)

<sup>44</sup> The city wall of Lagaš, perhaps being the place where the statue of Lugal-uru (“King-of-the-City”) was set up. City walls were regarded sacred structures in the ancient Near East. Their names were incorporated into the lists of the names of shrines, temples, and cultic places (*māḥāzu*) in later periods; see, e.g., George 1993, pp. 46–47; list of temples and city walls, p. 53 note on line 11: *ekurru* (“sacred building”) as a term designating temples as well as city walls; Pongratz-Leisten 1994, pp. 25–34.

<sup>45</sup> And together with the ba-ġára its /é muḥaldim/ (“house of the cook”) and its /ib muḥaldim/ (“yard of the cook”) (51:obv:III:1, 4).

<sup>46</sup> Bauer in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie* 6, 1980–1983, p. 421, s.v. Lagaš: another é-PA is located also at Ġirsu.

<sup>47</sup> Certainly identical with later /ká-mè/ “gate of battle,” the arsenal of the E-ninnu, known from the cylinders of Gudea; Steible 1982, vol. 2, pp. 11–12 on Urn. 28, referring to Falkenstein 1966, pp. 123:3, 126:13; Bauer 1998, p. 448.

<sup>48</sup> Later é-sila-sír-sír.

### 3. In the Vicinity of Ĝirsu<sup>49</sup>

ti-ra-áš (25:V:8) (28:IV:5) (32:III:6) (34:III:1) (35:21) (51:obv:IV:8)  
 é ti-ra-áš (41:6)

### 4. Niĝin / Nina

é<sup>d</sup>nanše (20:a:9) (22:a:7) (23:b:II:1) (27:II:2) (28:II:4) (29:II:2) (30:II:2) (31:II:2)  
 (33:II:1) (34:I:9) (35:9) (36:8) (37:8) (51:obv:III:9)  
 nin-ĝar (24:IV:1) (32:II:6) (33:IV:1) (51:obv:IV:10)

### 5. Kinunir

ki-nir (28:III:3) (30:III:4) (32:II:4) (33:IV:5) (34:II:1) (35:13) (36:21)  
 (51:obv:IV:4)

### 6. Gu'abba

é<sup>(d)</sup>nin-MAR.KI (29:IV:2) (31:IV:4) (36:14) (51:obv:V:1)

### 7. Unlocated, within the State of Lagaš

a-eden<sup>50</sup> (24:III:7) (32:IV:2)  
 abzu<sup>51</sup> (27:IV:1)

### 8. Ur

é<sup>!</sup>d[en?.]z[u]<sup>52</sup> (40:II:4)

<sup>49</sup> Probably like the Anta-surra in the vicinity of Ĝirsu, close to the border to Umma; see Falkenstein 1966, p. 169; Selz 1995, p. 233, no. 66a.

<sup>50</sup> According to its name ("house <of the> steppe" / "house <that fills the> steppe"), probably located in the open steppe; Selz 1995, p. 184 n. 844.

<sup>51</sup> Either the Abzu-ega in Lagaš, or the Abzu-banda in Ĝirsu.

<sup>52</sup> From the stela found at Ur; reading proposed by Sollberger 1960, p. 83, no. 72 ii 4. Ur-Nanše has fought victoriously against Ur and Umma, and may well have made Ur a part of his realm for some time (text: Steible 1982, vol. 1, pp. 115–16, Urn. 51 rev. i–vi; Bauer 1998, p. 448).

## B. TEMPLES BUILT AND STATUES CREATED (É DN MU-DÙ — DN MU-TU)

é	<sup>d</sup> nanše	mu-dù	<sup>d</sup> nanše	mu-tu	(24:I:6-II:2)
é	<sup>d</sup> nanše	mu-dù	<sup>d</sup> nanše nin uru <sub>16</sub>	mu-tu	(25:I:6-II:3)
é	<sup>d</sup> ġá-tùm-du <sub>10</sub>	mu-dù	<sup>d</sup> ġá-tùm-du <sub>10</sub>	mu-tu	(25:IV:5-V:1)
é	<sup>d</sup> nin-MAR.KI	mu-[dù]	<sup>d</sup> lama-šita <sub>4</sub> -è	mu-tu	(26:III:2-6)
èš	ġír-su	mu- <sup>r</sup> dù <sup>1</sup>	<sup>d</sup> šul-šà-ga	mu-tu	(25:II:4-6)
èš	ġír-su	mu-dù	<sup>d</sup> šul-šà-ga	mu-tu	(26:II:1-III:1)
			gú-šu-du <sub>8</sub>	mu-tu	
			<sup>d</sup> kínda-zi	mu-tu	
k[i]-ni[r]		mu-dù	<sup>d</sup> nin-REC <sub>107</sub> -èš <sup>53</sup>	mu-tu	(25:III:6-IV:4)
			<sup>d</sup> nin-PA	mu-tu	
ib-gal		mu-dù	[ <sup>d</sup> ]lu[gal]-ur-t[ùr]	mu-tu	(25:II:7-III:5)
			<sup>d</sup> lugal-URU×KÁR	mu-tu	
abzu-bànda <sup>da</sup>		mu-dù	<sup>d</sup> nanše nin uru <sub>16</sub>	mu-tu	(34:IV:6-V:2)

## C. STATUE CREATED (MU-TU), WITH NO CONTEXT GIVEN

Èš-ir <sup>54</sup>	(> é <sup>d</sup> nanše ?)	(24:III:1)
<sup>d</sup> lugal-URU	(> bàd lagaš ?)	(24:V:1)
<sup>d</sup> nin-MAR.KI		(51:obv:VI:3)
<sup>d</sup> nin-REC <sub>107</sub> -èš		(51:obv:VI:5)
<sup>d</sup> nin-PA		(51:obv:VI:7)
šul-šà		(51:obv:VI:9)
kínda-zi		(51:obv:VI:11)
<sup>d</sup> gú-šu-du <sub>8</sub>		(51:obv:VI:13)
<sup>d</sup> lama-šita <sub>4</sub> <sup>l</sup> -èš <sup>55</sup>		(51:obv:VII:2-3)
<sup>d</sup> lugal-ur-tùr <sup>56</sup>		(51:obv:VII:5)

<sup>53</sup> Reading of the divine name with Selz 1995, p. 269.

<sup>54</sup> Selz 1995, p. 133 = <sup>d</sup>Èš.ir.nun.èš.

<sup>55</sup> Selz 1995, p. 159.

<sup>56</sup> Selz 1995, pp. 162-63 = <sup>d</sup>lugal.URU×KÁR ?

## OVERVIEW

Statues of tutelar deities, fashioned anew together with their temples

- Ġatumdu
- Nanše. The goddess Nanše is the only deity to be given an epithet: nin uru<sub>16</sub> “the mighty lady.” Later tradition credits Ur-Nanše especially with building Nanše’s sanctuary at Niġin.<sup>57</sup>

Statues of divine couples:

- Nin-REC<sub>107</sub>-èš and Nin-PA, worshipped in the sanctuary of Dumuzi-Abzu at Ki-nunir.<sup>58</sup>

Statues of divine spouses:

- Lugal-ur-tùr and Lugal-URU×KÁR, two manifestations of the Dumu-zi, the spouse of Inanna at the Ib-gal of Lagaš.<sup>59</sup>

Statues of divine children and entourage:

- Šul-šaga(nâ), Gu-šudu, and Kinda-zi in the main “sanctuary of Ġirsu” (= probably E-ninnu), dedicated to Nin-Ġirsu
- Nanše in the Abzu-banda of her father Enki
- Nin-MAR.KI, the daughter of Nanše and tutelary deity of E-Nin-MAR.KI, built by Ur-Nanše (B), is mentioned without context (C)

Not mentioned, but certainly extant (i.e., not damaged, destroyed or abducted):

- Nin-Ġirsu and Ba’u, the tutelary divine couple of the state of Lagaš

There must have been several statues of Nin-Ġirsu, at least in the following temples:

- Baġara at Lagaš
- Eš-Ġirsu / E-Nin-Ġirsu (= E-ninnu) at Ġirsu
- Tiraš near Lagaš
- Nine-ġara (“Set-up-next-to-the-Sister” = next to Nanše) at Niġin
- E-dam (“The-House-of-the-Spouse” at Lagaš, i.e., probably for Nin-Ġirsu, Ba’u’s husband)

There must have been statues of Ba’u at least in the following temples:

- E-sila-sirsira (1), the temple of Ba’u at Lagaš
- E-sila-sirsira (2), the temple of Ba’u at Ġirsu
- Eš-Ġirsu / E-Nin-Ġirsu (= E-ninnu) at Ġirsu

There must have been statues of the gods:

- Inanna, the tutelary deity of the Ib-gal at Lagaš
- Enki, the tutelary deity of the Abzu-ega at Lagaš and the Abzu-banda at Ġirsu
- At least a third statue of Nanše in her temple Šeše-ġara (“Set-up-next-to-the-Brother” – next to Nin-Ġirsu) at Ġirsu
- Nin-dar, the spouse of Nanše

<sup>57</sup> “Rulers of Lagaš,” lines 153–56 (Sollberger 1967, pp. 281–82 [transliteration] and 285 [translation]).

<sup>58</sup> See Selz 1995, p. 269.

<sup>59</sup> See Selz 1995, p. 163 on <sup>d</sup>Lugal-ur-tùr §3, and pp. 163–64 and 168–69 on Lugal-URU×KÁR §§2, 19–21.

## APPENDIX 2

The spade (*marru*) of Marduk, interpreted as the “cone” of Marduk by the Assyrians after the destruction of Babylon by Sennacherib in 689 B.C.E.

## I. Middle- (a) and Neo-Babylonian (b–f) Representations:

- a Spade of Marduk’s son Nabû from Tshogha Zambil; bronze; detail after de Mecquenem and Dossin 1938, p. 130, fig. 1.
- b From a *kudurru*; eleventh year of Marduk-zākir-šumi I; detail after Seidl 1989, p. 58, fig. 21, no. 100.
- c From a *kudurru*; eighth year of Nabû-šuma-iškun; detail after Seidl 1989, p. 60, fig. 22, no. 103.
- d From the stela of Adad-nirari III from Tell ar-Rimāḥ; after the photograph in Oates 1968, pl. 38.
- e From the stela of Bēl-Ḥarrān-bēla-ušur, palace herald under Shalmaneser IV (when the stela was made) and Tiglath-pileser III; after the photograph in Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 232.
- f From a *kudurru*; eleventh year of Sargon II; Seidl 1989, p. 61, fig. 23, no. 108.

## II. Late Neo-Assyrian Representations (from Sennacherib on):

- g From a rock relief of Sennacherib; after Börker-Klähn 1982, nos. 189–99.
- h From a stela of Esarhaddon (Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 219); after the photograph Jakob-Rost 1992, p. 180, fig. 116. A very similar ovoid example occurs in a badly preserved rock relief of Esarhaddon (Börker-Klähn 1982, nos. 211–16).
- i Nimrud, Central Palace, relief from the reign of Esarhaddon, a demon (*laḥmu*) wielding the spade(?) on a long shaft; detail after Barnett and Falkner 1962, p. 164, pl. 112. Barnett and Falkner (1962, p. 24) compare the figure to a *laḥmu* wielding a spear on a relief of Assurbanipal. The tassles nevertheless suggest that the instrument is a divine symbol and not a spear. Wiggermann (1992, p. 86) interprets the relief as a depiction of a *laḥmu* holding a *marru* (spade).
- j Pine cone, held by a genie in a purification rite. Khorsabad, palace of Sargon II; detail after Botta and Flandin 1849, vol. 1, pl. 28; cone turned from horizontal to upright position.

## III. Late Babylonian Representations (post Sennacherib):

- k After Ehrenberg 1999, no. 39. Uruk, seal of Nabû-aḥa-iddin, *bēl piqitti* of Eanna, date: Nabonidus 17.
- l After Ehrenberg 1999, no. 120. Uruk, seal of Imbīya, *šākin tēmi* of Uruk, date: Cambyses 6.
- m Detail from a rock relief in the vicinity of Tayma, North Arabia; reign of Nabonidus; after Jacobs and Macdonald 2009, p. 372, fig. 4.

*Provenance:* Elam (a); Babylonia (b–c, f, k–l); Assyria (d–e, g, i–j); Syria (h = Zincirli); North Arabia (m = Tayma).

*Date:* Middle- (a) and Neo-Babylonian; Late Neo-Assyrian; Late Babylonian.

I. Middle- (a) and Neo-Babylonian (b-f) Representations



a



b



c

On monuments issued by Neo-Assyrian kings and officials:



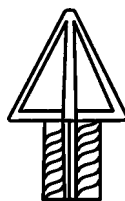
d

Adad-nirari III



e

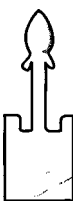
Bēl-Ḫarrān-bēla-ušur



f

Sargon II

II. Late Neo-Assyrian Representations (from Sennacherib on)



g

Sennacherib



h

Esarhaddon



i



j

(a pine cone for comparison)

III. Late Babylonian Representations (post-Sennacherib)



k



l



m

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## SHARED FATES: GAZA AND EKRON AS EXAMPLES FOR THE ASSYRIAN RELIGIOUS POLICY IN THE WEST

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On the basis of all available sources, this article describes the well-documented Assyrian religious policy in Ekron and Gaza. Both city-states can be considered as examples for the Assyrian pragmatism in religious affairs. In sum, it can be observed that the Assyrian religious policy was not iconoclastic against the deities of their vassals. In fact, the Assyrians made local differences depending on their interest in a city/state. Their policy did not intend to destroy local divine images, but to use them in order to control the local king. If a city and its king (as Ekron) were loyal pro-Assyrian, the royal family and the local religious policy were free from Assyrian interventions. If a city and its king (as Gaza) were rebellious, the royal family and the gods were used as hostages and punished. Thus, the divine and royal rulers shared the same fates.

### PRELIMINARY REMARK AND THE AIM OF THIS PAPER

In the archaeological record it is often hard to say anything about the identification of the destroyer(s) of images — we only see the results. But it seems as if four types of “iconoclasm” (Greek for “image-breaking”) and image destruction can be distinguished. The first three can be considered intentional, i.e., the iconoclasm.

1. Intentional damage or destruction of images. Iconoclasm of this type can be the deliberate destruction within a culture of the culture’s own religious icons and other symbols or monuments, usually for religious, social, or political motives. The latter can also be the motives for the destruction of images of foreign cultures, which is usually the demonstration of power, control, and supremacy of one culture over the other and therefore an instrument of governance. The intention of the destructive aggression against the images of foreign cultures is to undermine their symbolic system and identity. In the Neo-Assyrian period this latter type occurs very rarely in conjunction with divine images (only attested in the reigns of Sennacherib and Assurbanipal<sup>1</sup>). More frequently it applies to royal images. The identity of the destroyer(s) is not explicitly indicated on the damaged images but usually has to be deduced from the historical

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\* I wish to thank Natalie N. May for organizing this inspiring conference and for inviting me to participate.

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<sup>1</sup> Assurbanipal: Borger 1996, p. 168, Prisma T V 1 TTafI IV 3, and p. 52, Prisma A V 119 F IV 61. For the other periods, see Brandes 1980, pp. 33–37.

context or the textual evidence. The literary sources can be helpful, but are also sometimes contradictory (e.g., Sennacherib and the destruction of the gods of Babylon).<sup>2</sup>

2. Mutilation, rededication, and intentional re-shaping of images with foreign symbols. This re-shaping happens not within the images' own cultural system, but has been motivated by an external power. Images of kings and deities can be stripped of their signs of authority and put under another authority (e.g., the christianization of pagan divine art: crosses on the forehead of statues of kings and/or gods<sup>3</sup>). This happened apparently during the reign of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal when they "renovated" the Babylonian divine statues (which had been deported by Sennacherib) and inscribed "the might of Ashur" upon them.<sup>4</sup> This re-modeling of foreign images is not purely destructive, but also contains the constructive tendency of indoctrination and re-education.
3. Recycling of images and their re-modeling to adapt to the new (political, religious, or social) local situation (using local symbols). Renovations with intentional innovations and the recycling of images can happen deliberately within a cultural system of the culture's own religious icons and other symbols. This re-shaping is motivated by an internal self-determined decision (and not by an external oppression). The make-over of a cultural system's own images de-constructs old paradigms but constructs new ones depending on a culture's own motives and decisions.<sup>5</sup>
4. Unintentional changes and damages. The images suffer changes and damages in the course of time, or they are just neglected and forgotten. Renovations can also generate unintentional changes, when the renovation included some unintentional innovations. This last type is in fact not a guided destructive action against images and therefore not a real iconoclastic act.

In all four cases it makes a difference whether images of gods, kings, or others are involved, and whether the treatment of the images is self-determined within a culture or is an intervention from outside against a foreign culture. The interest of this contribution is limited to the treatment of divine images by the Assyrians as their external intervention against foreign cultures in the subjugated areas of their empire, especially in Gaza and Ekron. Both cities (which had been Assyrian vassals) are considered as representative examples for the religious policy of the Neo-Assyrian empire in the West. Referring to Gaza and Ekron, archaeological, epigraphical, and iconographical sources are available that can be used in order to construct the following historical, cultural, and religious interpretations. Assyrian royal inscriptions are also included with the caveat that they have been composed with the purpose to construct and to promote the "ideal reality" of Assyria, its king, and its state-god Ashur. According to this royal propaganda the god Ashur and his representative on earth, the

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<sup>2</sup> Referring to Sennacherib and Marduk of Babylon the texts are contradictory: some texts refer to the destruction of Marduk's graven image, others to its deportation (discussed in Landsberger 1965, pp. 22–27; Frahm 1997, p. 225; Berlejung 1998, pp. 158–62; Schaudig, this volume). The destruction is mentioned in Luckenbill 1924, p. 137, lines 36f. (Sennacherib destroyed the gods himself) and p. 83, line 48 (the hands of his soldiers

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broke the images). The Babylonian Chronicles (Borger 1956, pp. 124f. ad 669/8 B, and Grayson 1975, pp. 35f. no. 16:1–3) and Assurbanipal (RIMB 2, B.6.32.2, lines 37–41; B.6.32.6, lines 7–9) only mention Marduk's exile in Assur.

<sup>3</sup> Cormack, this volume.

<sup>4</sup> Berlejung 1998, pp. 160–71 (Esarhaddon/Assurbanipal).

<sup>5</sup> See Schaudig, this volume, on the deconstruction of the religious imagery and symbols.



Assyrian king, were invincible warriors, “masters of the universe,” sovereigns of creation, history, and order.<sup>6</sup>

In the current contribution I pose the following research questions:

1. How did the Assyrians use their religion, Assyrian gods, and images of gods outside of Assyria, namely, in the West? Did they introduce the Assyrian gods into the temples of their vassals promoting a systematic religious policy for the empire?
2. How did the Assyrians act toward the religions of their Western vassals? Were the Assyrians iconoclasts, that is, did they purposely smash non-Assyrian gods and replace them with Assyrian gods (iconoclasm type no. 1, above) or did they re-shape local gods and “assyrianize” them (iconoclasm type no. 2, above)? Can we detect traces of a purposely prepared religious “assyrianization” in the West?

In order to answer these questions we take a closer look on the cities of Gaza and Ekron.

## BASIC INFORMATION AND STATISTICS

The first Neo-Assyrian campaign toward the Mediterranean Sea took place in the reign of Assurnasirpal II, between 876/5 and 869/7 B.C.E.<sup>7</sup> The last campaign was carried out in 645 B.C.E. by Assurbanipal. In the roughly 230 years in between, the majority of the Western states lost their political independence and were successively integrated into the Neo-Assyrian empire as vassals or provinces. The means of Assyrian domination are well known and are not repeated here.<sup>8</sup>

In their treatment of the non-Assyrian “periphery” and the policy of foreign affairs, the Assyrians made clear local distinctions based on pragmatical reasons. A closer look at the histories of the Phoenician and Philistine cities, Aram-Damascus, Israel, Judah, Moab, Ammon, Edom, or of the Arabian tribes in the Neo-Assyrian period, reveals that even within the limited area of the southern Levant there was already a whole range of different possible actions and interactions with Assyria. It can be observed that the Assyrians were sometimes willing to give more than one chance to a political ruler and to go back to a former status quo. A royal pardon from the Assyrian king, a successful plea from the non-Assyrian side, or Assyrian political pragmatism — of course also depending on Assyria’s actual power during the decade in question — led to very different means of Assyrian governance. The Assyrians wanted to conquer, plunder, collect, and control all available resources, but there were completely different levels and intensities of interaction between Assyria and other political entities. The key idea behind Assyrian policy was the Assyro-centric economy and/or strategy and to get maximum profit with minimal investment.<sup>9</sup> This was the reason why the Assyrians treated the Phoenician and the Philistine cities, the coastal area of Palestine (here, the area between Wadi el-Arish and Mount Hermon), its states in the hinterland, and the Negev Arabs

<sup>6</sup> For Assyrian royal propaganda and programmatic historiography, see Tadmor 1997; Liverani 1999–2001; Liverani 2004; Rollinger 2008, pp. 684–92. For the conceptual conglomeration of warfare, kingship, and order, and the cosmological background of Assyrian royal ideology, see Crouch 2009, pp. 21–28, 191f.

<sup>7</sup> It is unclear if RIMA 2, A.0.101.1 iii 56–92 (compare RIMA 2, A.0.101.2, lines 25–31, 43–51) refers to one or two campaigns (1. to Karkemish; 2. from Karkemish to the Mediterranean Sea). In any case, the exact date is unknown.

<sup>8</sup> For a survey, see Berlejung, in press.

<sup>9</sup> See Berlejung, in press.

in the steppe in very different manners. The Phoenicians were needed because of their skills in the construction and handling of ships and ship trade. The nomadic desert tribes/Arabs were purported to breed camels, to organize overland trade, to provide water in the desert, to control the Egyptian border, and to bring the Assyrian army through the desert toward Egypt.<sup>10</sup> Coastal Philistine cities were important for the ship trade, hinterland Philistine cities for the regional economy, collection and transfer of goods.

Even within the limited number of the Philistine cities in southern Palestine, the Assyrian kings made clear differences indicating that they had a very good knowledge of the local specifics (social stratification, economical possibilities, resources, and local parties). This thesis is not only valid with reference to politics, diplomacy, and economy but also to religion. The local gods were considered by the Assyrians as part of the local societies, of the politics/loyalty of the local kings, and of the local vassal treaties. Within this system the local divine and human rulers, i.e., native gods and kings, were pro-Assyrian or anti-Assyrian and therefore, in the eyes of the Assyrian overlord, as the divine and royal ruling elite, they had to share the same fate: divine and royal rulers of a political entity had to “sign” and observe the vassal treaty,<sup>11</sup> to face Assyria’s blessings/reward and curses/punishment. The Assyrian religious policy was more a case-to-case reaction to a local situation than a systematic, deliberate, and programmatic religious “assyrianization.”<sup>12</sup> This is shown using the evidence from Gaza and Ekron.

## THE CASES OF GAZA AND EKRON IN THE CONTEXT OF SOUTH PALESTINE

South Palestine, namely, the area south of Jerusalem to the Wadi el-Arish, attests examples of both strategies of Assyrian imperialism. Judah was an Assyrian vassal (from 734 on; Tiglath-pileser III)<sup>13</sup> and was never transformed into a province. The city-states Ekron (since 720 or 711; Sargon II), Ashkelon (King Mitinti/Rukibtu after 734; Tiglath-pileser III),<sup>14</sup> and Gaza (King Hanunu after 734; Tiglath-pileser III) were vassals during the Neo-Assyrian period, while Ashdod was a vassal that was transformed for a short period into a province. The province Ashdudu was established in 711 (after the rebellion of Yamani; Sargon II) and ended after 699.<sup>15</sup>

## GAZA AND ASSYRIAN RELIGIOUS POLICY

Gaza’s<sup>16</sup> King Hanunu (a West Semitic name meaning “He who has found mercy”) was an Assyrian vassal since Tiglath-pileser III’s campaign of the year 734. During this campaign the city was plundered and the royal family and local gods were seized, but the king himself

<sup>10</sup> Compare Borger 1956, pp. 112f., and Radner 2008, pp. 306f., 310.

<sup>11</sup> See the blessing and curse sections of the vassal treaties in SAA 2, pp. 45f., lines 414f.

<sup>12</sup> For this term, see Parpola 2003, 2004.

<sup>13</sup> For the historical (re-)construction, see Rainey and Notley 2006, pp. 225–53; Berlejung 2009b, pp. 107–20.

<sup>14</sup> Tadmor 1994, pp. 170f., Summ 7 rev. 10’–12’, with reference to the tribute of Arpad, Ammon, Moab, Ashkelon,

Judah, Edom, Gaza, and Tyre (line 16’). For Ashkelon, see further Ann 24 line 12’ and Ann 18 line 8’ (pp. 82f.), and Bagg 2007, pp. 117f.

<sup>15</sup> A governor of this province is attested as eponym of the year 669 B.C. For Ashdod in Neo-Assyrian sources, see Bagg 2007, pp. 30–32.

<sup>16</sup> For Gaza in Neo-Assyrian sources, see Bagg 2007, pp. 103f.

escaped the Assyrian army and fled to Egypt (Tefnakht). But he returned and was reinstalled as king and vassal by the Assyrian king who gave him a second chance. Tiglath-pileser III founded an Assyrian trade and taxation center, a *bēt kāri*, within the vassal state of Gaza.<sup>17</sup> In the following years the city became a commercial center for trade with Egypt and the Arabs.<sup>18</sup> At the beginning of Sargon II's reign (720 B.C.E.) Hanunu formed an alliance with the commander in chief (*turtānu*), Re'e, and was crushed at Raphiah by Sargon II. Gaza was conquered again. Hanunu was caught,<sup>19</sup> exiled (gods are not mentioned), and brought in fetters to Assyria. Gaza once again became a vassal and remained loyal until the end of the Neo-Assyrian empire: King Šillibel of Gaza was a loyal vassal of Sennacherib and received (after 701) parts of the Judean Shephelah. In 673 the same king is mentioned as one of the kings who supported Esarhaddon in the rebuilding of his *ekal māšarte* in Nineveh,<sup>20</sup> and later, in 667, he is numbered under the loyal vassals of Assurbanipal (see below).<sup>21</sup>

Referring to Gaza's religious treatment by Tiglath-pileser III, some formulas in his royal inscriptions have been understood as associated with the deportation of Gaza's divine statues and the forced import of Assyrian gods into the vassal state with the purpose to impose their cultic veneration outside of Assyria. Well known are Tiglath-pileser III's inscriptions after the conquest of Gaza (734) (Tadmor 1994, pp. 176–79, lines 15'–19').<sup>22</sup>

- 15' [Ḫazzutu ... akšud/erub x bilat] ḫurāšu 800 bilat kaspu nišē adi maršitišunu aššassu mārē[šu mārātēšu ...
- 16' ... bušāšu ilānišu ašlul/ēkim] šalam ilāni rabūti bēlēja <u> šalam šarrūtija ša ḫurāši [ēpuš]
- 17' [ina qereb ekalli ša Ḫazzutu ulziz ana ilāni mātišunu amnuma ... -šu]nu ukīn u šū ultu māt Mušri kīma iṣṣū[ri ipparšamma]
- 18' [... ana ašrišu utiršuma ... x-šu ana bēt kāri ša māt] Ṛ Aššur amnu šalam šarrūtija ina āl Naḫal Mušur Ṛ nāru Ṛ [ša ... ulziz]
- 19' [... + 100 bilat] kaspu assuḫamma ana māt Aššur [urā]
- 15' [The city of Gaza ... I conquered. x talents] of gold, 800 talents of silver, people together with their possessions, his wife, [his] sons, [his daughters ...]
- 16' [... his property (and) his gods, I seized/took away as booty/I plundered]. An image of the great gods, my lords, an image of my royalty out of gold [I made] (ša-lam DINGIR. MEŠ GAL.MEŠ EN.MEŠ-ia <ù> ša-lam LUGAL-ti-ia ša KU<sub>3</sub>.SIG<sub>17</sub> [DU<sub>3</sub>-uš]).
- 17' [I set it up in the palace of Gaza (izuzzu š). I counted (it = the victory stela) among the gods of their land.] Th[eir offering?/deliveries?] I established. And as for him (= Hanunu), like a bi[rd he flew] from Egypt.
- 18' [I returned him to his position and his city? as bēt kāri of] Assyria I counted. The image of my royalty in the city of the Brook of Egypt/Nahal Mušri a river-[bed I set up] ...
- 19' [... x + 100 talents of ] silver I carried off and [brought] to Assyria.

<sup>17</sup> Yamada 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Rainey and Notley 2006, p. 229.

<sup>19</sup> According to Uehlinger (1998, pp. 751–53, 756, 758, figs. 6 and 7), the battle, the siege of Gaza, and the capture of Hanunu are depicted in Khorsabad room V O–2, and slab 5–9 (lower part).

<sup>20</sup> Borger 1956, p. 60, Nin A Episode 21; see also Borger 1996, p. 18.

<sup>21</sup> Borger 1996, pp. 19 and 212 = Prism C ii 42.

<sup>22</sup> Parallel is pp. 138–41, lines 9'–15', and p. 188 rev. 13–16, and the composite text pp. 223f. §§1, 2, and 3. See also the discussion in Uehlinger 1997, pp. 308–11; Rainey and Notley 2006, p. 229.

The deportation of divine statues together with objects or humans as booty was part of the Assyrian war practice since Tiglath-pileser I.<sup>23</sup> Tiglath-pileser III also applied this measure, but apparently preferably in Babylonian cities.<sup>24</sup> Gaza would be the only case in the southern Levant. But the deportation of the gods of Gaza to Assyria by Tiglath-pileser III can be doubted. The text itself does not mention it, and the lines with the verb (expected are *ekēmu* or *šalālu*) are broken in all available sources. The further fate of Hanunu, who received a royal pardon after his return from Egypt, seems to point to another direction. The conjectural restoration of the broken and missing verb at the end of the line could also refer to the looting of the statues.<sup>25</sup> What is also missing in all variants of the text is the standard formula: *assuḥamma ana māṭ Aššur [urâ]* “I carried off and brought it/them to Assyria,” which should be expected if the royal family and the gods would have been deported to Assyria. Nothing of a transport to Assyria is mentioned in the closer context of Gaza, but only later with reference to the material booty of the “Brook of Egypt.” Therefore it could be possible that Gaza’s royal family and gods were seized temporarily only as hostages and freed (maybe only partly) after Hanunu’s return and surrender.

On this background the famous wall relief of Tiglath-pileser III from the South-West Palace at Nimrud/Calah<sup>26</sup> has to be re-examined (fig. 6.1). Hermann Thiersch and Christoph Uehlinger suggested<sup>27</sup> to identify this slab with the deportation of Gaza’s gods to Assyria. But it seems more plausible to follow Hayim Tadmor,<sup>28</sup> who proposed (after Richard D. Barnett<sup>29</sup>) to identify the gods on this slab with the gods of the capital of Unqi (Kullani/Kunalia) or Arpad (in any case, wars from an earlier *palû*). The iconography also supports this thesis:<sup>30</sup> even if the gods on the relief are stereotyped anthropomorphic deities,<sup>31</sup> some characteristics seem to point to Syria and not to Philistia.

The outer appearance of the first male god of the relief, standing on the left with lightning bolt and ax, points to a Baal-Hadad-type storm god, which fits perfectly together with the Syrian religious symbolic system, while nothing of this statue’s iconography seems to refer to Philistine deities.<sup>32</sup> Also the neighboring three female statues (one standing upright, two seated) with rings in their left hands<sup>33</sup> are stereotyped. One of the seated goddesses turns her head to the viewer and holds a ring and sheaves of grain or a flower.<sup>34</sup> This attribute of

<sup>23</sup> The deportation of gods is a well-known Mesopotamian practice since the Early Dynastic period; see Brandes 1980. Assyria practiced god-napping since Tiglath-pileser I. For the material, see Cogan 1974, pp. 22–41 with table 1; Spieckermann 1982, 348f. with n. 92; Holloway 2002, pp. 123–51, 193–97. See further Livingstone 1997.

<sup>24</sup> For other god-nappings of Tiglath-pileser III, see Tadmor 1994, pp. 162–63, Summ. Inscr. 7, lines 17–21 (*šalālu*). The cities of Sarrabanu, Tarbašu, Yaballu, Dur-Balihaya, and Shapazza (Babylonian Chronicle) are all in Babylonia. See Holloway 2002, pp. 131–34, table 3 nos. 27, 29–32 (his no. 28 refers to the relief discussed below, and no. 33 to Queen Shamshi; see the following note).

<sup>25</sup> The seizure/looting of the gods (thrones, arms, staffs) of Queen Shamshi is mentioned in Tadmor 1994, excursus 5 pp. 226, 228, 229 §2. Summ. Inscr. 4, lines 21’f., mentions the plundering of the paraphernalia of the gods, not an exile (*ekēmu*); Summ. Inscr. 8, lines 25’f., seems to refer to the looting of divine equipment, too

(verb lost); the lines of Summ. Inscr. 9, rev. line 18, are very damaged. In sum, it seems as if Shamshi’s gods were plundered, not deported.

<sup>26</sup> Layard 1849, pl. 65; Tadmor 1994, fig. 12.

<sup>27</sup> Thiersch 1936, pp. 210f.; revived by Uehlinger 2002.

<sup>28</sup> Tadmor 1994, p. 240.

<sup>29</sup> Barnett and Falkner 1962, pp. xxiv–xxv and pp. 29, 42.

<sup>30</sup> Holloway (2002, p. 132) suggests “Median territory(?)”, which cannot be supported by the iconography.

<sup>31</sup> So already Ziffer 2010, p. 90.

<sup>32</sup> Contra Ben-Shlomo 2010, pp. 98f. A short summary of Philistine deities as far as is now known is provided in Ziffer 2010, pp. 86–90. For Philistine iconography, see now Ben-Shlomo 2010, pp. 98f. (for Gaza).

<sup>33</sup> What the goddesses held in their right hands is unclear, but surely not rings; see Uehlinger 2002, pp. 101f.

<sup>34</sup> Ben-Shlomo (2010, pp. 98, 178) follows Uehlinger (2002). He proposed a cup and refers to an Aegean style of seated goddess.

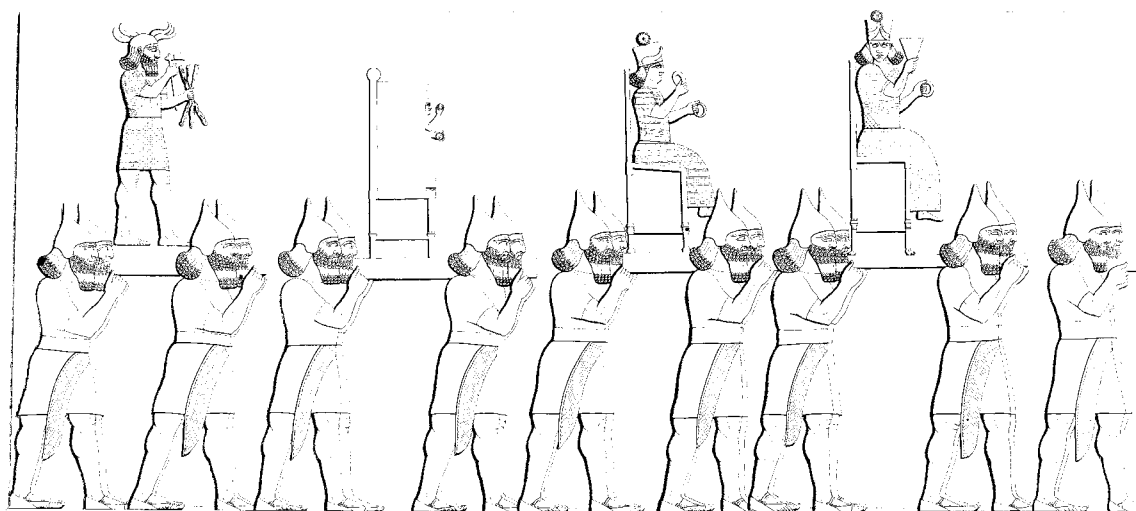


Figure. 6.1. Relief of Tiglath-pileser III from the South-West Palace at Nimrud/Calah (Layard 1849, pl. 65)

grain can be related to a Kubaba-type earth goddess, while the horned polos headdresses with rosettes of both seated goddesses alludes to an Ishtar-type goddess.

Compared to material remains of Philistine gods and goddesses there are obvious differences. The imagery of the 120 Yavneh terra-cotta stands, for example, shows another iconography: naked females, lions, bulls, sphinxes, caprids/goats and tree, cow-suckling calf, star/rosette, and winged disk are well attested and deeply rooted in Levantine traditions. Furthermore, David Ben-Shlomo notes a stylistic classification of human depictions in Philistine art: “the Aegean-style female figurines,<sup>35</sup> the Iron Age II Canaanite figurines, and the Egyptian-style depictions on ivory inlays and seals” ... and “a hybrid style representing a mixture of Aegean, Canaanite, Philistine and sometimes Egyptian traditions.”<sup>36</sup> This classification (which has to be supplemented by Phoenician traditions!), the well-known (deriving from Mycenaean prototypes) terra-cotta figurines of the seated mother-goddess<sup>37</sup> (“Ashdoda,” attested in Ashdod [37 figurines], Ekron [6], Ashkelon [14–16], Gath [1], and some other sites) and Ekron’s iconographic relicts (see below) have nothing in common with the gods on Tiglath-pileser III’s slab. Even if Gaza is not Yavneh, Ashdod, or Ekron, the Philistine origin of Gaza and the Aegean orientation of the city cannot be doubted.<sup>38</sup> Western affiliation and Levantine homeland were fused in the Philistine art of the Iron Age II period echoing Mycenaean and Cypriote (and even Egyptian and Phoenician) features, while (Syro-)Palestinian traits dominated. Nothing of this kind is visible on Tiglath-pileser III’s relief, while Syria’s storm god with lightning bolt and the Kubaba-type goddess would fit together with

<sup>35</sup> These figurines can be interpreted as goddesses, priestesses, devotees, and votives; see Ben-Shlomo 2010, pp. 178f.

<sup>36</sup> Ben-Shlomo 2010, p. 99.

<sup>37</sup> Ziffer 2010, p. 87; Ben-Shlomo 2010, pp. 45–51, 179. The Ashdoda is attested until Iron Age II.

<sup>38</sup> Referring to Dagon, whose temple in Gaza and Ashdod is mentioned in the Bible (Judg 16:23–31; 1 Sam 5:1–15, 1 Macc 10:83f.; 11:4; place name: Josh 19:27); see Ziffer 2010, p. 88.

gods from a Syrian city, even if it has to remain open whether the gods of Unqi, Arpad,<sup>39</sup> or of another place are depicted.

Returning to Tiglath-pileser III's inscriptions, we have to assume that the royal family — except for the king himself — and the divine statues shared the same fate: they were seized, perhaps taken as booty, surely taken as hostages in order to force Hanunu to surrender. The context makes clear that the Assyrian god-napping policy belonged to the war politics of the Assyrians, which included the god, the king, the royal family, the people, possessions, and resources. God-napping was (in analogy to king-napping, royal kid-napping, deportation of manpower) a punitive measure meant to intimidate the enemy, disrupt native political and social structures, and undermine personal (= royal) or local resistance. It de-constructed the identity and power of the enemy. But the Assyrians did not fill the generated vacuum with Assyrian identity or religion. Their aims were Assyro-centric related to economy and not to religion. This can also be observed in the settlements of deported people, who were never prevented from practicing their old cults in their new homelands.

The formula (known from Tiglath-pileser III, Sargon II, Sennacherib), *šalam ilāni rabūti bēlēja <u> šalam šarrūtija ēpuš/ulziz* “I made and/set up (*izuzzu* Š) an image (*šalam*) of the great gods, my lords, and an image (*šalam*) of my royalty,” seemed in the past to support the claim of different scholars (mainly since Hermann Spieckermann<sup>40</sup> [1982]), that the Assyrians imported their divine statues into the conquered areas and tried to uproot and undermine non-Assyrian religions. It is said that they imposed the cult of Ashur on the vassals and provinces and had a systematic program of assyrianization in religious matters. God-napping or iconoclasm would therefore be the preparation for subsequent religious indoctrination.

But this formula should not be understood as the making of a royal statue *and* the making of divine statues.<sup>41</sup> The use of the verb *izuzzu* (Š) and the singular of the (one!) “image of the great gods” do not support this translation.<sup>42</sup> One statue of several great gods is not possible. And statues are usually established with *wašābu* and *ramû* Š/G-stem indicating their dwelling in their houses. The kings are talking here about their standard royal victory-stelae,<sup>43</sup> which depict the king surrounded by symbols of the great Assyrian gods and/or wearing them as necklaces.<sup>44</sup> The cultic scenes on these stelae happen between the king and his gods. The perfect unity and harmony of the victory stela are displayed to the viewer, who had to understand the Assyrian supremacy. Emperor cult was not intended.<sup>45</sup> This kind of stela was only in exceptions (they are all in Babylonia and Syria) set up in temples.<sup>46</sup> Their usual installation place was a public place or the palace of the defeated king. This was also

<sup>39</sup> Tiglath-pileser III's inscriptions do not mention the deportation of the gods of Unqi, Arpad, or of any other city in the West; see Holloway 2002, table 3.

<sup>40</sup> Spieckermann 1982, pp. 322–44; Ahlström 1993, pp. 762f. Revival: Parpola 2003, pp. 103–05; Parpola 2004, p. 10; Pola 2005. Other scholars contest that the Assyrians used any pressure in religious affairs of the vassals; see, e.g., already McKay 1973, pp. 60–66; Cogan 1974 (following Landsberger 1960, p. 177), pp. 60f., 85; Cogan 1993; Mayer 1995, pp. 65, 481f.; Grayson 1995. Holloway (2002, pp. 80–216) argues convincingly for the “flexible nature of Assyrian religio-political coercive measures” (p. 216). A new summary is given in Bagg 2011, pp. 271–308; Laner 2006, pp. 63–79. Laner argues that the religions of the vassals and provinces underwent only a natural (not

forced) cultural influence; similarly now Smith 2010, pp. 149–53.

<sup>41</sup> See already Tadmor 1994, p. 177 ad line 16'. For the discussion, see Berlejung 1998, pp. 344–46; contra Spieckermann 1982, p. 326.

<sup>42</sup> See the arguments in Berlejung 1998, pp. 343–46.

<sup>43</sup> Compare the variants in Fuchs 1994, p. 105, Ann 100 Saal II (*šalmu*) and V (*narû*). Royal images in the periphery are usually reliefs (and not statues in the round); see Magen 1986, pp. 41f.

<sup>44</sup> Following Uehlinger 1997, pp. 310f.; see also Tadmor 1994, p. 177 ad line 16'.

<sup>45</sup> Contra Parpola 2003, pp. 100f. n. 4.

<sup>46</sup> Holloway (1995, pp. 276–79, 293–296) is surely correct when he claims that Babylonia and Harran were an

the case in Gaza (line 17'). Tiglath-pileser III's royal stela was installed in the palace and not in a temple. In the palace the stela had to watch over the vassal king's loyalty and the vassal treaty.<sup>47</sup> The stela marked the presence, power, and domination of the Assyrian king, who acted in close cooperation with his gods. The Assyrian king and his gods wanted to keep the vassal treaty and this was also expected from the non-Assyrian divine and royal partners. However, the formula — [*ana ilāni mātišunu amnuma ... -šu*]nu ukīn “I counted (it = the victory stela) among the gods of their land.] Th[eir offering?/deliveries?] I established ...” (see above, line 17') — indicates a special treatment of Gaza that is attested only sparsely in Assyrian royal inscriptions and never again in Tiglath-pileser III's *opus*.<sup>48</sup> The victory stela was apparently counted among the gods of Gaza; perhaps even offerings(?) or regular services were established, but here the noun is missing. In any case, this cult of the great Assyrian gods was not meant as replacement<sup>49</sup> of the local gods but as a supplementary addition. “The gods of their land” remained intact. In the polytheistic system the new gods were integrated into the local pantheon, maybe in this context with special tasks, for example, the surveillance of the loyalty of the vassal, who had previously been disloyal. Again it must be noted that the royal stela with Assyria's great gods was introduced into the palace (not into a temple) and therefore supplemented the king's (not the people's) pantheon, while the rest of Gaza's divine society, the temples and cults, were not affected.

That the Assyrians had a strong interest in potent local gods who were able to grant treaties can be deduced from the vassal treaties. These treaties were always under the protection of Ashur and of the foreign gods, implying their cooperation. This can be seen in Esarhaddon's succession treaty VTE §3<sup>50</sup> and his treaty with Baal of Tyre.<sup>51</sup> The content of these treaties is purely political and economical. No conversion to Assyrian religion is required.<sup>52</sup> The gods

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exception, since they were direct Assyrian neighbors of strategic importance. Several “Ausnahmefälle” (= exceptions) rather than an Assyrian religious “mission” is also the position of Keel (2007, 1, §570).

<sup>47</sup> It has to be noted that the introduction of royal statues into *temples* is attested, but it is limited to north Syria (see the following note) and to Babylonia; compare: SAA 10, 350 (statues of Sargon in Borsippa); SAA 10, 358 (Esarhaddon in Ezida of Borsippa or Etusha in Esagila); and further Parpola 1983, pp. 283f. (statues of Esarhaddon in Esagila and other temples in the city of Babylon).

<sup>48</sup> Royal victory stelae and statues in local *temples* outside of Assyria are attested under Shalmaneser III: RIMA 3, A.0.102.2 ii 62f. (in Gilzanu; Kurkh Monolith; *izzuzu* Š without mentioning any offerings), RIMA 3, A.0.102.16, lines 160'f. (in the city Laruba on the southern Phoenician coast; statue of Calah; *izzuzu* Š; no offerings mentioned); and RIMA 3, A.0.102.14, line 156 (erected by the new local ruler for Shalmaneser III in Kinalua in Unqi; the Black Obelisk; *izzuzu* Š); see also the parallel in RIMA 3, A.0.102.16, lines 284'–86' (statue of Calah).

<sup>49</sup> Contra Uehlinger 2002, p. 111. Also the reliefs discussed by Uehlinger (*ibid.*, p. 116 with fig. 4) do not imply that the defeated king had to exchange his local gods against the Assyrian gods. The sequence of the reliefs (which — contra Uehlinger 2002 — do not refer to Gaza but to a city in Syria; see above) with the divine

and royal protagonists are another (now visual) example that gods and their kings shared the same fate (see the reconstruction in Tadmor 1994, fig. 12). The divine statues are carried behind their defeated king, who is kneeling under the feet of Tiglath-pileser III, wearing the necklace with the symbols of the Assyrian gods. Gods + king and gods + king face each other. The defeated side had to surrender together and to face their common fate, which was in the hands of Assyria; the victorious side, the Assyrian king and his gods, display their unity in success and power. The divine and royal representatives of the conquered side lost their rank and honor together and had to accept their new subordinated state.

<sup>50</sup> SAA 2, 6.

<sup>51</sup> SAA 2, 5. Gods of Assyria and Phoenicia are asked to watch the treaty.

<sup>52</sup> VTE §34 (SAA 2, 6), lines 393–96, mentions *ana arki umē ana umē šāti Aššur ilikunu Aššur-bani-apli mār šarri rabū ša bēt ridāti bēlkunu mārēkunu mārētēkunu ana š'ā'šu lipluhu* “In the future and forever Ashur will be your god, Asurbaniapal, the great crown prince designate, will be your lord. May your sons and your grandsons fear him.” Parpola (2003, pp. 100f. with n. 4) claimed that this passage forces the treaty partners to accept Ashur as the only god and the Assyrian king as overlord. But the god Ashur is not(!) included into this order to fear (the object of the fear is not in plural). It is only the king/crown prince who has to be feared (as is indicated by *šāšu* in the 3rd person masculine singular).

of the foreign people and of Assyria have to watch over the treaty together. Maybe this idea stood behind the introduction of Tiglath-pileser's royal stela with Assyrian gods into Gaza's palace. The divine protection of the vassal treaty was strengthened from the Assyrian side. The seized/looted gods of Gaza, who had failed to watch over the first treaty, were — after their highly probable return to Hanunu (after his return from Egypt) — put under the eyes of Assyria's gods; maybe this was indicated by an Assyrian inscription (in the style of iconoclasm type 2) — but the texts are silent about that. Together they were charged with the responsibility to watch over the new vassal treaty and Gaza's second chance. Therefore we can conclude that the very special treatment of Gaza by Tiglath-pileser III has to be seen in the particular context of the events, Hanunu's flight, forced return (divine and royal hostages), and the importance of Gaza as an economic and strategic center. Even in this very precarious situation there are no signs of Assyrian religious intolerance, iconoclasm, or destructive measures to uproot the local cults in Gaza. There are no traces of changes in Gaza's temples and cults and of Assyrian temple constructions. This fits quite well into the general picture that can be drawn from Assyrian religious policy and engagement. No evidence has yet been found for the hypothesis that the Assyrians installed their divine statues in the temples of the conquered cities — vassals or provinces. And there is no proof that they built Assyrian temples for their gods outside the heartland — with the few exceptions of chapels within Assyrian fortresses (e.g., Tell Abu Salima for Nabu),<sup>53</sup> which were meant for Assyrians living in the periphery — not for the indoctrination of the periphery.

As Tiglath-pileser III's inscriptions indicate, the statues of the deities of Gaza were seized together with the royal family in order to generate some pressure on Hanunu and to force him to surrender. Royal family and divine statues shared the same fate and became hostages. Divine and royal ruling classes were treated in analogy. That, in Assyria's view and visual arts, gods and officials shared the same fate is also indicated by the sequence of the Assyrian reliefs. They depict the deported divine statues usually in profile<sup>54</sup> and parallel to the trek of human deportees (also in profile). This evokes the impression that the fates of the human and divine population are the same, both being controlled by Assyria. Humans and gods lost the war together and went together to exile where they had to serve Assyria's gods, kings, and people.

## EKRON AND ASSYRIAN RELIGIOUS POLICY

Ekron<sup>55</sup> was conquered by Sargon II, probably already in 720 (together with Gaza) or later in 711 B.C.E. (together with Ashdod).<sup>56</sup> Sargon's siege of Ekron is depicted on slab 10-11 of the lower register in Khorsabad room V (fig. 6.2).<sup>57</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Reich 1992, pp. 221f. See further Parker 1997: according to ND 2666 (letter of the governor of Duri-Ashur of Tushhan [southeast of modern Diyarbakir] to Tiglath-pileser III) the constructions of Assyrian forts in the periphery could contain a shrine for Assyrian gods (in this case, Ishtar).

<sup>54</sup> An exception is the seated goddess on plate 65 in Layard 1849 (fig. 6.1, here); Tadmor 1994, fig. 12. She

seems to be designed under the aspect of addressing the viewer of the relief; see Berlejung 1998, p. 42 n. 223.

<sup>55</sup> For Ekron in Neo-Assyrian sources, see Bagg 2007, pp. 10f.

<sup>56</sup> Tadmor (1966, p. 94) voted for 712/1. Na'aman (2003, pp. 82f.) voted for 720. Undecided is Fuchs (1994, p. 421).

<sup>57</sup> See Franklin 1994, p. 270, fig. 8; Uehlinger 1998, pp. 754f. with fig. 5, slab 0-1 and 10-13 lower part; Gitin 2010, p. 355, fig. 6.



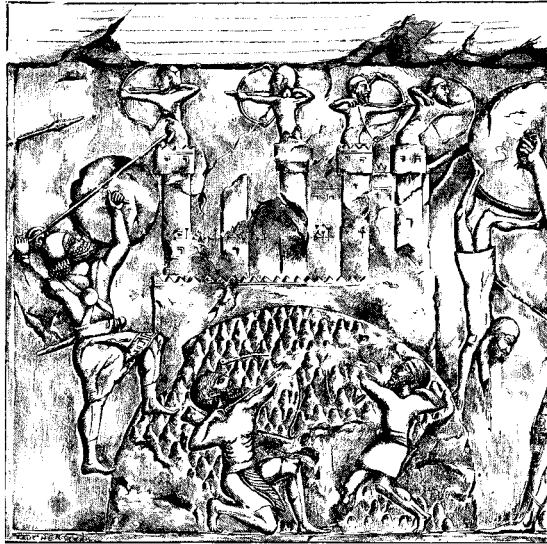


Figure 6.2. Relief of Sargon II from Khorsabad, room V, depicting the siege of Ekron (identified by an inscription) (Maspero 1900, p. 250)

With the unexpected death of Sargon II on the battlefield in 705 B.C.E. rebellions broke out in the empire and in the West.<sup>58</sup> Ashkelon, some nobles in Ekron (but not the king Padi!), and Hezekiah of Judah attempted an anti-Assyrian revolt, which was suppressed by Sargon's son Sennacherib. The renitent king of Ashkelon, Šidqi, was deported (together with his family and his family gods) to Assyria and replaced by Sharru-lu-dari, the son of the former pro-Assyrian king Rukibtu (who had been replaced by Šidqi), and the vassal treaty was renewed.

Ekron's fate during this revolt was linked to Jerusalem. Padi, the king of Ekron, had been handed over to Hezekiah of Jerusalem — obviously because he was pro-Assyrian and did not support the rebellion. The anti-Assyrian Hezekiah was besieged in Jerusalem and forced by Sennacherib (third campaign 701 B.C.E.) to release Padi, who was re-installed as king in Ekron, while the nobles and officials who were responsible for the anti-Assyrian revolt were killed. Mitinti of Ashdod, Padi of Ekron, and Šillibel of Gaza got parts of the Judean Shephelah, which indicates that Sennacherib realized that the loyal vassal kings earned a reward. The disloyalty of Ekron's nobles was punished, but this punishment did not involve all human or divine rulers of the city. Sennacherib made clear differences between non-guilty and guilty individuals. With the latter he stated an example by making their dead bodies to an "icon of horror":<sup>59</sup>

(7) ... ana Amqaruna (8) aqribma šakkanakkē rubūte ša hiṭṭu (9) ušabšū adūkma ina dimāte (10) siḫirti āli ālul pagrēšun mārē āli (11) ēpiš anni u gillati ana šallati amnu (12) sittūtešunu la bābil hiṭṭi (13) u gullulti ša aranšunu la ibšū (14) uššuršun aqbi Padi šarrašunu (15) ultu qereb Ursalimmu ušēšamma (16) ina kussi bēlūti elišun ušēšibma (17) mandattu bēlūtija ukīn šerrušu

<sup>58</sup> For the following historical (re-)construction, see Rainey and Notley 2006, pp. 234–50; Berlejung 2009b, pp. 107–20.

<sup>59</sup> For the Assyrian tendency to create "icons of horror" with corpses and bodies, compare Berlejung 2009a.

(7) ... to the city of Ekron (8) I draw near. The officials (and) nobles who had committed (9) a sin, I killed and on stakes (10) around the city I hanged their corpses. The citizens of the city (11) who had committed misdeeds and crimes I counted as booty. (12) The rest of them who did not bear any sin (13) or crime, who were not guilty, (14) I ordered their release. Their king Padi (15) I brought out of Jerusalem and (16) installed him on the throne of lordship over them and (17) imposed upon him the tribute of my lordship.<sup>60</sup>

The gods were not mentioned, but they were obviously on the side of King Padi and not guilty. They remained untouched in analogy to the pro-Assyrian officials, Padi, and the royal family. In the following years Ekron remained a loyal Assyrian vassal<sup>61</sup> until the end of the Neo-Assyrian empire. In the year 673 the kings Šillibel of Gaza, Ahimilki of Ashdod, Mitinti of Ashkelon, and Ikausu of Ekron were among the kings who supported Esarhaddon in the rebuilding of his *ekal māšarte* in Nineveh (see above).<sup>62</sup> The year 667 B.C.E. is the last confirmed date that the Philistine kings (the same as in 673) supported Assyria, in this case, Assurbanipal against Egypt.<sup>63</sup> But the historical reliability of this source is in doubt, since Assurbanipal's list of the foreign kings is completely identical with Esarhaddon's list of 673 and may be the result of an ancient "copy and paste" procedure.

As far as we know, the gods of Ekron remained untouched during the Neo-Assyrian period. Ekron's kings remained loyal vassals also after Padi. As a consequence the city flourished. Referring to Ekron in the seventh century, Seymour Gitin has convincingly argued that the prosperity of the site (oil and textile production/marketplace) after Sennacherib's conquest in 701 B.C.E. was indebted to Assyria.<sup>64</sup> Similar processes of economic wealth during the *pax Assyriaca* can be observed in Ashdod (pottery production), Tel Batash/Timna,<sup>65</sup> and Beth-Shemesh<sup>66</sup> (oil production). It is difficult to decide whether the economic progress in the region was motivated by the Assyrians, or whether it was a matter of self-organization. In any case, Assyrian agreement with the re-organization of the local economy and joint-venture cooperations has to be taken for granted.

The deities of Ekron under Assyrian rule in the seventh century B.C.E. are very international<sup>67</sup> and prove that the city was free in religious affairs. No traces of Assyrian religious indoctrination have been detected so far. Iconography attests Ishtar on a striding lion surrounded by the Pleiades, a winged disk, and moon crescent. In front of the goddess stands a worshipper extending both arms toward the deity in a (non-Assyrian) gesture of prayer. This only attestation of the Assyrian goddess in the city was engraved on a silver amulet.<sup>68</sup> The pendant is dependent on Assyrian iconography, but it seems to be a local product of the late eighth–seventh centuries B.C.E. with Syrian intermediate inspiration (see the parallels

<sup>60</sup> Lines according to the Chicago and Taylor Prism iii 7–17; see Luckenbill 1924, p. 32. For Rassam Cylinder and parallels, see Frahm 1997, p. 54, lines 46–48.

<sup>61</sup> See, for example, Padi's shipment of one talent of silver to Assyria in the year 699 B.C.E., in SAA 11, 50, maybe also in this context SAA 11, 34, line 14' (damaged).

<sup>62</sup> Borger 1956, p. 60, Nin. A, Episode 21; see also Borger 1996, p. 18.

<sup>63</sup> Borger 1996, pp. 19 and 212 = Prism C ii 44 (647\*).

<sup>64</sup> Gitin 1997; Gitin 2010, pp. 340–46.

<sup>65</sup> For the industrial pottery workshops in Ashdod, see now Gitin 2010, p. 328. Also Tel Batash/Timna experienced some regeneration during the Assyrian periods; see Gitin 2010, pp. 346f.; Kelm and Mazar 1995, pp. 139–71.

<sup>66</sup> Fantalkin 2004.

<sup>67</sup> For the material, see Kamlah 2003; Gitin 2010, pp. 341–46.

<sup>68</sup> Ben-Shlomo 2010, pp. 84f.; Gitin 2010, pp. 344 and 359, fig. 11; Ornan 2001, pp. 246–49 with fig. 9.7. The amulet was found in a silver cache, unearthed in the upper city, Stratum IB.

from Zincirli). It is a leftover of the personal belief of an individual and surely no proof for the cult of the goddess in Ekron. More popular than Assyrian were apparently Egyptian gods. As figurines, Bes, Uraeus, and a female head (maybe Assyrian war booty from Egypt) have to be mentioned. Stamp seals,<sup>69</sup> figurative amulets,<sup>70</sup> and ivories<sup>71</sup> keep Egyptian/-izing iconography.

Connections to Phoenicia also left their traces in the iconographical record of the city. A typical Phoenician-type bell-shaped female clay figurine was found in the cella of the pillared sanctuary of temple complex 650.<sup>72</sup> Special features are the Iron IIB–C (Stratum II or IB destruction layer = eighth–early seventh century) handle-less bull libation(?) vessels with button-shaped tails from Ekron with a capacity of about 1 liter.<sup>73</sup> It is debated whether they come originally from Phoenicia or if they are a late Philistine regional type, typical for Ekron.<sup>74</sup>

The iconographic program, as far as attested from Ekron, can be summarized as follows. The main influences are the Aegean, local “Canaanite”/Phoenician, and Egyptian.<sup>75</sup> Assyria left only very few traces in its vassal city. This is also supported by the other archaeological findings of the site.

The seventeen four-horned incense altars (twelve portable) made of stone point to local and private southern Levantine/Palestinian incense practices.<sup>76</sup>

Epigraphy on the seals attests a considerable number of well-known Egyptian deities,<sup>77</sup> larger inscriptions mention Anat, Ashera(t) (*qdš lʾšrt* “holy to Asherat”; dedicatory storage jar inscriptions in ink from the temple auxiliary building 654 field IV in the elite zone south of temple 650),<sup>78</sup> *ptg/nyh* (royal dedicatory inscription, temple 650; see below), and Baal. Seymour Gitin and Mordechai Cogan claimed that the dedicatory inscription reading

*lbʿl. wlpdy.* “for Baal and for (the king) Padi,”

which was found incised on a storage jar in one of the southern side rooms of temple 650 (room p), would represent a new type of dedicatory formula:<sup>79</sup> “This is the first instance of

<sup>69</sup> Keel 2010, Ekron 1–74.

<sup>70</sup> Herrmann 2006, no. 46 (area III, sq. 3, no. 3588, Bastet or Sechemet with sun disk and uraeus, Iron Age IB–IIA); see further *ibid.*, no. 103 (area IV, sq. 4, group of deities [broken], Iron Age IIB), no. 178 (area IV, sq. 4, Paetaecus, Iron Age IIB–C), no. 260 (area I, sq. 1, falcon, Iron Age IIB), no. 376 (area IV, sq. 4, Udjat eye, Iron Age IIC), no. 385 (area III, sq. 3, Udjat eye, Iron Age III). For Udjat-eyes that come presumably from Gaza, see *ibid.*, nos. 419–21.

<sup>71</sup> For the Egyptian/-izing ivories found in the temple 650, see n. 88, below.

<sup>72</sup> Gitin 2003, p. 287 with fig. 4 (with parallels); Ben-Shlomo 2010, fig. 3.35.2. The head is molded, the headdress is Phoenician.

<sup>73</sup> See Ben-Shlomo 2010, pp. 110–14. One of the headless pieces was found in room V behind the cella of temple-palace complex 650.

<sup>74</sup> Ben-Shlomo 2010, p. 114.

<sup>75</sup> The majority of the depictions in Ekron are human female Aegean (23), human female “Canaanite” (11),

Egyptian/-izing amulets (29), non-Aegean bulls (56), Aegean birds (41), and non-Aegean birds (18). From the vegetative motifs, the tree (15) and the pomegranate (5) are attested; see table 2 in Ben-Shlomo 2010, p. 171.

<sup>76</sup> Gitin 2010, p. 344 and fig. 12. According to Gitin (2003, pp. 289–91), six altars were found in the temple auxiliary buildings 651, 653–654 (two each), two come from the domestic zone, and nine from the olive-oil industrial zone.

<sup>77</sup> See Keel 2010, Ekron 1 (Amun; Twenty-second Dynasty); Ekron 6 (Horus; Twenty-sixth Dynasty); Ekron 25 (Bastet; Iron Age IIB); Ekron 31 (“Lady of the sycamore”; Iron Age IIB–C); Ekron 36 (Re; Iron Age IIB–C).

<sup>78</sup> According to Gitin 2003, p. 289, the spelling and writing of the goddess is Phoenician. Also the other epigraphical remains in building 654 support Phoenician influence: The *lmqm* (“for the shrine”) inscription and (on the same vessel) the use of the Phoenician numbering system (three horizontal lines indicating thirty units).

<sup>79</sup> Cogan and Gitin 1999; Gitin 2003, pp. 288f. with fig. 8; Gitin 2010, p. 342.

a West-Semitic inscription in which a god and king are joined in a single dedication and is understood as a calque of the Assyrian phrase indicating the duties incumbent upon Assyrian citizens” (Gitin 2010, p. 342). Gitin and Cogan argued that this formula would emulate Assyrian phraseology (*paliḥ ili u šarri* “revering god and king”) and therefore it would mirror Assyrian influence on the linguistic sphere. But this is surely not the case. If a Neo-Assyrian dedication formula would have been copied by the Ekronites it should be:

*ana* + divine name + royal name (donor) + <donated object> + verb + aim/  
purpose of the dedication

This is the standard Mesopotamian dedication formula since the third millennium B.C.E., which is not quoted in Ekron. The jar and its inscription belong to the temple-palace complex 650 and its management. It seems to be more plausible to connect the Ekronite inscription with other Northwest Semitic formulas.<sup>80</sup> Then two options seem to be more plausible:

1. The inscription is not a dedicatory/votive inscription but a property note. It only marks the owners of the vessel and of its content. The jar was found in the oil installations and therefore the inscription was intended to ensure that the content of the inscribed jar was only used for Baal and for Padi. Therefore no “duties incumbent upon Assyrian citizens” are implied with this inscription, but the use of the vessel’s content within the temple-palace complex 650 was limited and individualized.<sup>81</sup>
2. The inscription is a dedicatory inscription and combines a god and a king in a single text. This has a close parallel in a Phoenician amulet that was recently published.<sup>82</sup> The text of this amulet combines the dedication/votive to the goddess Ashtarte of Byblos with a donation to the king Shipit-Baal of Byblos, who is supposed to act as priest or to proceed the donations to the local high priest.

Therefore, the close relationship of a god and a king in a single inscription is not limited to Ekron, but is also attested in Phoenicia. Phoenicia and not Assyria seems to be one of the most important key cultures in Ekron. This view is also supported by the famous temple inscription of Ikausu/Achish of Ekron,<sup>83</sup> the format of which follows Phoenician prototypes.<sup>84</sup> The inscription can be dated to the first half of the seventh century B.C.E. It refers to the construction of a temple in the city which has been excavated (temple 650 with the size 43 × 57 m):

*bt.bn.ʿkyš.bn.pdy.bn.yzd.bn.ʿdʿ.bn.yʿr.šr ʿqrn.lptg/nyh.ʿdth.tbrkh.wtšm[r]h.wtʿrk.ymh.wtbrk.[ʿ]ršh*

(This is) the temple which built Achish, son of Padi, son of Ysd, son of Ada, son of Yaʿir, king of Ekron, for *ptg/nyh*, his lady. May she bless him, and protect him and prolong his days, and bless his land.

Temple building is a sign of prosperity, of the control of the internal affairs of a state, of access to financial resources, and organization of the official cult. In Ekron these matters

<sup>80</sup> The formula of Northwest Semitic dedicatory inscriptions is analyzed in al-Ghul 1991.

<sup>81</sup> For an inscription indicating the owner of an object, compare KAI no. 8.

<sup>82</sup> Lemaire 2003, 2008; Berlejung 2011, no. 1.4 (ca. 500 B.C.E.).

<sup>83</sup> For the publication, see Dothan, Gitin, and Naveh 1997; Gitin 2010, p. 343 with figs. 8 and 9; Gitin 2003, pp. 284–87 with fig. 3.

<sup>84</sup> Compare, for example, KAI no. 7 (Byblos), and al-Ghul 1991, type 1 (attested since the tenth century B.C.E.).

were obviously in the hands of the local ruler (and not of an Assyrian official). Ikausu/Achish (= “the Achaeon”/“the Greek”) — at this time vassal of Esarhaddon and (later) of Assurbanipal — was allowed to build his temple for the local goddess *ptg/nyh*, who has Aegean origins.<sup>85</sup> He was not obliged to include Assyrian gods or to follow Assyrian architecture! There are no traces of Assyrian cult images that were installed in the temple’s cella. Furthermore, the plan of the temple in building 650 is surely not an Assyrian one,<sup>86</sup> but is more closely related to Phoenician temple architecture.<sup>87</sup> Ekron proves that in a loyal vassal state the internal religious affairs could obviously be arranged without Assyria and without Assyrian gods.

We can therefore conclude that in Ekron local indigenous Palestinian/“Canaanite,” Philistine, Aegean, Assyrian, Egyptian, and Phoenician influences came together. The religious symbolic system in Ekron was international, not Assyrian, and the people and royals were free to venerate whatever they chose. In the seventh century B.C.E. Ekron reached its greatest physical and economic growth under Assyrian domination and enjoyed the freedom to shape the official cult and temple according to the local Philistine king’s (*śr*) preferences. The temple building and the royal dedicatory inscription of Ikausu follow Phoenician prototypes; the only trace of any Assyrian influence is that the temple inscription uses the word *śr* (Akkadian *šarru*; Hebrew *śar*) to describe Ikausu’s title and function as “king,” not (the expected and conventional) *mlk*. There are no traces of any Assyrian iconoclasm, but rather of the Assyrian policy to reward loyal vassals. After Padi, Ekron’s gods shared the fate and wealth of the local king. They lived in peace and prosperity in a brand-new temple building. If Gitin’s suggestion is correct, and the Egyptian/-izing ivories which have been discovered in Ekron temple 650 of the seventh century were war booty, then not only the king (compare already Padi’s reward in 701 B.C.E., when Sennacherib handed over parts of the Judean Shephelah), but also his goddess *ptg/nyh* could profit from Assyria’s military successes. These ivories (objects and fragments) are partly considerably older than temple-complex 650; they date into the Late Bronze or Iron I Ages. Some of them seem to be of Egyptian origin.<sup>88</sup> If Gitin’s suggestion is correct, the goddess *ptg/nyh* of Ekron received ivory gifts from the war booty of Esarhaddon’s (or less probable, Assurbanipal’s) Egyptian campaign.<sup>89</sup> But even if Gitin is not right, and the ivories always belonged to Ekron and were preserved and handed down

<sup>85</sup> Schäfer-Lichtenberger (2000) proposed *πυθωγαῖα* based on the reading as *ptgyh* (a mother-earth goddess). Based on the less possible reading *ptnyh*, Demsky (1997) argued in favor of the Greek *πότνια* “mistress,” a title or name shared by several Greek goddesses. Also Finkelberg (2006, p. 114) reads *ptnyh* and votes for Ino-Leukothea (“white goddess”), a sea goddess who shared with Aphrodite Ourania the epithet of Potnia. The Greek epitheton *Πελαγία* for Aphrodite “Marine” and the Anatolian alternation of t/d and l led Lipiński (2006, pp. 89f.) to Aphrodite/Ashtarte “Marine” and to the most plausible solution.

<sup>86</sup> Contra Gitin 2003, p. 284, followed by Ben-Shlomo 2010, p. 187. However, Gitin (2003, p. 284; 2010, pp. 341f.) accepts that the pillared temple building is based on

Phoenician temple architecture while he claims that the temple-palace complex 650 with throne room is indebted to Assyrian prototypes. For the arguments against any Assyrian influence in building 650 and the throne room interpretation, see Holloway 2002, pp. 208–11.

<sup>87</sup> That the plan of the temple in building 650 has no Assyrian architectural features has already been pointed out in Holloway 2002, pp. 207–09; Kamlah 2003.

<sup>88</sup> For the Egyptian/-izing ivories found in temple-complex 650, see Ben-Shlomo 2010, pp. 92f.; Gitin, Dothan, and Brandl forthcoming. For a (Late Bronze/Iron Age I) flask in the shape of a (breast-holding) woman from the temple 650, see Fischer 2007, p. 264 with table 76.

<sup>89</sup> So Gitin 2010, pp. 342f.

from the Late Bronze Age to the seventh century B.C.E.,<sup>90</sup> it is worth mentioning that the Assyrians did not plunder or confiscate them, and Ekron was allowed to keep its ivories.<sup>91</sup>

What can be further observed in Ekron is that the Assyrian vassal system got its stabilization not only from fear but also from the Assyrian combination of loyalty with profit-sharing and freedom for the vassal king's internal politics.

Ekron is also a good example of the general development of the West. The religious symbolic system became not Assyrian but very international. The conquered people could adopt Assyrian lifestyle and religion, but this happened voluntarily and without pressure. It cannot be ruled out that local elites accepted some Assyrian gods and goddesses voluntarily because the Assyrian cult was connected with matters of prestige for the local elites.<sup>92</sup> The very limited number of remains of Assyrian deities on Palestinian ground, however,<sup>93</sup> points to the fact that the Assyrian gods were not regarded as very attractive, convincing, and plausible by the indigenous southern Levantine populations. Maybe the Assyrian gods were too closely connected with the Assyrian king in the eyes of the Levantine people and therefore shared the same fate: they were feared as terrifying invaders, accepted as economical partners, but not loved and appreciated as protective powers.

## RESULT AND SUMMARY

The cases of Ekron and Gaza make clear that Assyria handled the different regions of the empire with care and took into consideration the local situation. The preferred type of governance in the Levant was the vassal system. Even after rebellions, vassals (the same king!) could immediately get a second chance (Gaza). Or after the revolt the renitent king was allowed to remain a vassal, but suffered severe restrictions and losses (Hezekiah in Judah). Internal affairs in societies, which were split into pro-Assyrian and anti-Assyrian branches, were re-organized and cleared according to Assyrian interests (Ekron). Ashdod is an example of a vassal state which was transformed into a province. In fact the Assyrians experimented in the Levant with different instruments of domination (compare also Cyprus, Phoenicia, or the Arabian tribes) and made very different attempts to control local kings, elites, and their gods in order to get maximum profit for Assyria with minimal investment.

The questions of this paper have to be answered as follows:

1. How did the Assyrians use their religion, Assyrian gods, and images of gods outside of Assyria, namely in the West? Did they introduce the Assyrian gods into the temples of their vassals promoting a systematic religious assyrianization for the empire?

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<sup>90</sup> This is the tendency of Fischer 2007, p. 32.

<sup>91</sup> The ivories were found in the two auxiliary rooms at the western end of the sanctuary, opposite the entrance, together with hundreds of complete ceramic vessels and gold, silver, and bronze objects. Some other ivories come from the sanctuary's side rooms. This massive concentration of ivories (the largest concentration that has yet

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been found in the southern Levant and dating to the Iron Age) cannot be a cache, it is surely the treasury of temple 650, and in case of a war, the very first place where plundering made sense.

<sup>92</sup> For the adaptation of Assyrian cult as matter of prestige for local elites, see Smith 2010, pp. 155f.

<sup>93</sup> See Berlejung, in press.

A closer look only to Gaza and Ekron makes clear that there was no systematic and deliberate assyrianization or indoctrination of the West with Assyrian religion. The weapon of Ashur was not displayed in the West at all, no Assyrian temples were founded for the indigenous people, and anthropomorphic Assyrian divine statues are not attested at all. Visual signs of Assyrian presence were only the royal victory stelae with the Assyrian gods depicted on them in their symbolic shapes. Ekron did not even get such a piece, while Gaza did. The installation of a victory stela was not a standard procedure that was done in each conquered city. The victory stela was not installed to replace the local gods, but rather to supplement them. In Gaza the stela was set up in the palace (not in the temple!) in order to claim victory, power, and possession and maybe also to keep an eye on the local ruler and his gods. The Assyrian god-napping was not the preparation for the following religious indoctrination with Assyrian gods, and Assyrian iconoclasm (attested in Babylonia) is neither attested in Gaza, Ekron, nor anywhere in the West. A systematic indoctrination of southern Palestine with Assyrian religion did not take place.

2. How did the Assyrians act toward the religions of their vassals in the West? Were the Assyrians iconoclasts, that is, did they purposely smash non-Assyrian gods and replace them with Assyrian gods (iconoclasm type no. 1, above) or did they re-shape local gods and “assyrianize” them (iconoclasm type no. 2, above)? Can we detect traces of a purposely prepared religious “assyrianization” in the West?

In the corpus of Neo-Assyrian royal letters, topics dealing with the religions of the vassals and provinces are almost lacking. According to the Assyrian royal correspondence, the local gods of the periphery did not get very much Assyrian attention in everyday life. The Assyrians only focused their attention on the local gods when a local king started anti-Assyrian activities. Then the non-Assyrian gods became part of the conflict and were mentioned the Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions dealing with campaigns. The fact that in case of disloyalty and war the local gods of the enemy were attacked just as the local royal family could create the impression that the Assyrians were iconoclasts and acted against non-Assyrian gods when they met them. But in the analysis of Assyrian political and religious activities the context has to be taken into account.

The information given in the royal inscriptions and reliefs draws a picture of Assyrian religious policy that made clear differences between the treatment of the kings of Gaza and the kings of Ekron — and the gods of Gaza and the gods of Ekron. The analogy of the Assyrian perception and evaluation of a king and “his gods” are obvious. Therefore we can conclude that the Neo-Assyrian religious policy was closely related to the political activities of the local king, to his loyalty or disloyalty. In both cases, his gods became part of the Assyrian system which reacted quite directly to the politics of the local king: if the local king was a loyal vassal as in Ekron, he and his gods enjoyed freedom in internal affairs and even profited from Assyrian warfare and booty. Loyal vassals were allowed to build temples for local deities. There were no restrictions and no pressure to import Assyrian architecture or Assyrian gods.

If the local king was a disloyal vassal as Hanunu of Gaza, his gods were treated in the same way as was the royal family. They shared the same fate and became hostages of Assyria. But even in this case the Assyrians made no efforts to replace the local gods with Assyrian gods. Since the local gods had failed to watch over the first (broken) vassal treaty, the local pantheon was supplemented (not replaced!) by a victory stela depicting the Assyrian gods

and their king. Still worth mentioning is that Tiglath-pileser's stela was set up in Gaza's palace and not in the temple. This indicates that the victory stela and its gods were meant for the king's eyes and his pro-Assyrian motivation only.

In sum, it seems as if religious tolerance vs. intolerance and iconoclasm were not the category for Assyrian policy. The basic idea was that (in Assyria and the rest of the world) gods and kings acted together, therefore they were together classified as being pro-Assyrian and loyal or anti-Assyrian and disloyal. According to this evaluation there was reward or punishment for the human and divine rulers of a political entity. Reward and punishment were carried out with the physical and earthly bodies of the kings or gods. The king and "his gods" had to watch over and to guard the vassal treaty and therefore they had to face the consequences together. In Assyrian ethics you always get what you give, no matter if you are a king or a god.

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## GETTING SMASHED AT THE VICTORY CELEBRATION, OR WHAT HAPPENED TO ESARHADDON'S SO-CALLED VASSAL TREATIES AND WHY

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As the Medes stormed through the palaces of Assyrian kings, they took time out from looting and indiscriminate slaughter to destroy key documents, particularly copies of the so-called Esarhaddon vassal treaties to which their ancestors had been parties.<sup>1</sup> We surmise that this is what happened, since copies of Median versions, and only the Median versions of these treaties, were discovered in rather fragmentary condition<sup>2</sup> in the throne room of the temple of the god Nabû<sup>3</sup> at one of the Assyrian capitals, the city of Nimrud, ancient Kalhu. The original excavator of Nimrud, Sir Max Mallowan, no stranger to purple prose, delighted in imagining the Medes howling with hatred as they hurled these tablets to the ground.<sup>4</sup> But was the tablet smashing actually an expression of hatred or of some other, less “noble” emotion?

When the Assyrian king Esarhaddon set about ensuring the succession of his son Assurbanipal to the throne, he imposed a series of loyalty oaths on all citizens of Assyria, great and small, including semi-incorporated areas like Media (as in the Medes and the Persians).<sup>5</sup> These oaths were to be binding not just on the participants but also on their sons and grandsons, who were similarly to be loyal to the sons and grandsons of Assurbanipal.

Failing to live up to the terms of this agreement brought the swearers in for some serious punishment, some of it quite poignant, some picturesque, even grimly humorous. “May the goddess Belet-ili ... deprive your nurses of the cries of little children in the streets and squares.”<sup>6</sup> “Instead of grain, may your sons and your daughters grind your bones.”<sup>7</sup> “May one man clothe himself in another’s skin.”<sup>8</sup> “Just as a snake and a mongoose do not enter the same hole to lie there together but think only of cutting each others’ throats, so may you and your wives not enter the same room to lie down on the same bed; think only of cutting each others’ throats!”<sup>9</sup> “Just as you blow water out of a ‘tube’, ... may they blow you out. May

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<sup>1</sup> So, most recently, Porter 2009.

<sup>2</sup> See Wiseman 1958, pls. 9–10.

<sup>3</sup> For the location of this room, see Mallowan 1966, p. 232, fig. 194, and fig. 11.9 in this volume.

<sup>4</sup> Apud Porter pp. 218–19. Porter echoes Mallowan in seeing this as fully justified by Esarhaddon’s infliction of the treaties on the Medes in the first place.

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<sup>5</sup> For a full discussion, see Watanabe 1987.

<sup>6</sup> SAA 2, 6 437–39.

<sup>7</sup> SAA 2, 6 445–46.

<sup>8</sup> SAA 2, 6 450–51.

<sup>9</sup> SAA 2, 6 555–59.

your streams and springs make their waters flow backwards.”<sup>10</sup> “May they make you like a fly in the hand of your enemy, and may your enemy squish you.”<sup>11</sup>

To unpack this, we need to remember that treaties are a form of contract. Many Neo-Assyrian legal contracts end with formulae in which the person who fails to live up to his side of the bargain agrees to perform literally impossible tasks or to suffer horrible punishments to be dealt out by various gods. My personal favorite is when they allegedly scattered a quart of seeds all the way along the road between two cities and the violator of the contract was supposed to pick up the seeds with his tongue and refill the empty measure with them.<sup>12</sup>

Included in these threats is a curious formula which invoked the loyalty oaths sworn by Assyrian citizens to their king as enforcer of law and order: “May (his) covenant with the king call him to account.”<sup>13</sup> The Akkadian term *adê*, which I am translating “covenant,”<sup>14</sup> is also used to describe the relationship between the god Aššur and his people as well as international treaties such as that between Aššur-nirari V and Mati-ilu of Arpad.<sup>15</sup>

Assyrian covenants were not spectator sports, but involved actively enacted self-cursing. In the Mati-ilu treaty, a spring lamb was brought out and dismembered while appropriate analogies were drawn.

This spring lamb has not been brought out of its fold for sacrifice, nor for a banquet, nor to be purchased, nor to be used (in treating) a sick person nor to be slaughtered ‘for’ [...]. It has been brought to conclude the covenant of Aššur-nirari, king of Assyria with Mati-ilu. If Mati-ilu [sins] against ‘this’ covenant, then, just as this spring lamb has been brought from its fold and will not return to its fold and [not behold] its fold again, may, alas, Mati-ilu, together with his children, [his magnates] and the people of his land [be ousted] from his country, not return to his country, and not [behold] his country again.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, in Esarhaddon’s loyalty oaths, a ewe got slaughtered and had the flesh of her young placed in her mouth. This was to signal a similar situation in which the gods would force men and women to eat their children out of necessity during a long siege.<sup>17</sup>

We may best visualize the resulting ceremony from a closely parallel and much earlier set of oaths, which the Hittites administered to young men who were destined to become soldiers.

He places wax and sheep fat in their hands and then he casts it on the flame and says: “Just as this wax melts and just as the sheep fat is rendered, whoever breaks the oath and takes deceptive action against the king of Hatti, may he melt like the wax and may he be rendered like the sheep fat.”<sup>18</sup>

<sup>10</sup> SAA 2, 6 563–66.

<sup>11</sup> SAA 2, 6 601–02.

<sup>12</sup> See Postgate 1976, p. 20.

<sup>13</sup> *a-de-e ša LUGAL ina šU<sup>11</sup>-šú lu-ba-’i-u*. See Deller 1961.

<sup>14</sup> The exact connotations of this term, apparently borrowed from Aramaic, are a matter of dispute (see Watanabe 1987, pp. 6–8; Parpola 1987, pp. 180–83; Tadmor 2011). However, the Arabic equivalent is “*ahd* or *’ahad*, consisting of a solemn promise, or an act implying a promise, by which he who makes the promise or performs the act is believed to expose himself to supernatural danger in case of bad faith” (Westermarck 1926,

p. 564). In the case of this cognate, there is little doubt that a covenant in the biblical sense is meant (ibid., pp. 564–69). Parpola, considering the Assyrian evidence for the *adê*, states: “‘Covenant’ would probably be the closest equivalent in English, but ‘treaty,’ ‘pact,’ and even ‘loyalty oath’ are equally acceptable, depending on the context” (1987, p. 182).

<sup>15</sup> See Parpola 1987, pp. 180–83, and SAA 2.

<sup>16</sup> SAA 2, 2 i 10’–20’.

<sup>17</sup> SAA 2, 6 547–50.

<sup>18</sup> Collins 1997, §5; Oettinger 1976, p. 8.



At the end of each section, the soldiers were to say: "Amen."

Curses of this sort were not, and could not be automatic. Instead, they sat harmlessly by the side until such time as the cursee did something he promised he would not do or did not do something that he promised to do. At this point, the curses themselves and/or the gods invoked in the curses and/or the god Aššur who stood as guarantor of the curses would swing into action, assuming that the breach was called to their attention.

Subsequently, the victim would suffer — more usually suffer than actually die, or at least not instantly, and not before plenty of suffering had ensued. In the curse section of the Mati-ilu treaty, each of the various gods invoked was to punish in his/her own way. Sîn of Harran was to inflict leprosy and to cause a dung shortage.<sup>19</sup> The storm god was to bring famine by withholding rain: "May dust be their food, pitch their ointment, donkey's urine their drink, papyrus their clothing, and may their sleeping place be in the dung heap."<sup>20</sup> Ištar, goddess of love and war, was to turn Mati-ilu and his soldiers into women, prostitutes no less, and to make him a mule with old women for wives.<sup>21</sup>

Most to be feared by oath swearers was the wrath of the national god, Aššur: "If our death is not your death, if our life is not your life ... then may Aššur, father of the gods, who grants kingship, turn your land into a battlefield, your people to devastation, your cities into mounds, and your house into ruins."<sup>22</sup> Even in this dread situation, however, a remnant would be left to repent of having sinned against their covenant and to glorify the king of Assyria.<sup>23</sup>

And in case that did not persuade, the gods of the swearer were also enlisted to enforce compliance. So, the Mati-ilu treaty invoked Hadad of Aleppo, Ramman of Damascus, Dagan, Mušuruna, Melqart of Tyre, Ešmun of Sidon, and Kubaba and Karḫuḫa of Kargamiš.<sup>24</sup> In the treaty between Esarhaddon and Ba'alū of Tyre, Bethel and Anath-Bethel were supposed to deliver the oath breakers to the paws of a man-eating lion,<sup>25</sup> Ba'al Šamaim, Ba'al Malagê, and Ba'al Saphon were supposed to "raise an evil wind against your ships to undo their moorings and tear out their mooring pole; may a strong wave sink them in the sea and a violent tide [rise] against you."<sup>26</sup> Melqart and Ešmun took the role of Aššur in delivering the land to destruction and the people to deportation<sup>27</sup> and Astarte brought defeat in battle.<sup>28</sup> "Median" gods listed in the Esarhaddon loyalty oaths are, curiously, Aramiš, Bethel, and Anath-Bethel plus Kubaba of Kargamiš, doubtless now local gods as a result of Assyrian population exchanges.<sup>29</sup>

If this sounds terribly biblical, that is no accident. Deuteronomy is not just any book of the Torah but precisely that book whose discovery by Josiah, according to tradition, provided the sign from God that the substitution of veneration of the Law for worship in the Temple was in accordance with His will. And Deuteronomy describes a ceremony of self-cursing which has long been compared to Esarhaddon's loyalty oaths.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>19</sup> SAA 2, 2 iv 4–5, 7.

<sup>20</sup> SAA 2, 2 iv 14–16.

<sup>21</sup> SAA 2, 2 v 8–15.

<sup>22</sup> SAA 2, 2 v 1–2, 5–7.

<sup>23</sup> SAA 2, 2 vi 3–5.

<sup>24</sup> SAA 2, 2 vi 18–24.

<sup>25</sup> SAA 2, 5 iv 6'–7'.

<sup>26</sup> SAA 2, 5 iv 10'–13'.

<sup>27</sup> SAA 2, 5 iv 14'–15'.

<sup>28</sup> SAA 2, 5 iv 18'–19'.

<sup>29</sup> SAA 2, 6 466–71.

<sup>30</sup> There is a long literature on the subject including many who would be willing to see just about any parallel other than Assyrian to Deuteronomy. For a good introduction to the subject, see Tigay 1996, pp. 494–97 (Excursus 27), with previous bibliography on pp. 542–43.

Here, with heaven and earth as witnesses (Deut 30:19), six tribes are sent up to the top of Mount Ebal to pronounce curses on the people of Israel (Deut 27:11–13). The use of this self-cursing to underpin the Mosaic law is evident in the following twelve curses (Deut 27:14–26), which condemn such obviously illegal acts as moving the neighbor’s landmarks, sleeping with one’s sister, and being paid to kill someone. These end with: “Cursed be he who fails to fulfill any of the provisions of the law! And all the people shall answer, ‘Amen.’”

The full implications of self-cursing are, moreover, laid out in hair-raising detail. Partly, (Deut 28:36–37, 49–69; cf. Lev 26:23–39) the “curses” describe the fate of Judah at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, but the remainder (Deut 28:15–48; cf. Lev 26:14–22) are eerily similar to the curses of Esarhaddon’s loyalty oaths.

*Deuteronomy 28:64–65 and 23:* “The Lord will scatter you among the nations ... (where) you will find no repose, not a foot of ground to stand on.” “The sky over your heads will be like bronze and the earth under your feet like iron.”

*Esarhaddon:* “May as many gods as [have their names recorded] on [this] covenant tablet make the ground as narrow as a brick for you. May they make your ground like iron so that nothing can sprout from it. Just as rain does not fall from a brazen heaven, so may rain and dew not come upon your fields and your meadows; instead of dew, may burning coals rain on your land.”<sup>31</sup>

In Esarhaddon’s loyalty oaths, the swearers are required to keep a copy of the oath tablet sealed with the seal of Aššur, “king of the gods.”<sup>32</sup> This copy was to be set up “in your presence” and guarded/obeyed (*našāru*) “like your god.”<sup>33</sup> Since this tablet was the physical image of a covenant, treating it to veneration in this way is strikingly reminiscent of the place of the Torah shrine in a synagogue, a subject mentioned by Levtow in this volume. Indeed, the local inhabitants of what is now Tell Tayinat apparently took these instructions quite literally. The excavators discovered to their great surprise a copy of Esarhaddon’s loyalty oaths apparently set up, like the laws of Solon,<sup>34</sup> on a swivel post, but in the main temple’s cella, a part of the building which they have dubbed the “holy of holies.”<sup>35</sup> We have every reason to suppose that all the other copies of these tablets, the Median copies included, were set up in local temples as objects of veneration.

Fast forward to the last Assyrian king Sîn-šar-iškun, who was Esarhaddon’s grandson. As the Medes, now allied with Assyria’s archenemy Babylonia, stormed through the palaces of Assyrian kings, they took time out from looting and indiscriminate slaughter to destroy key documents, particularly the Medes’ copies of the Esarhaddon vassal treaties to which their ancestors had been parties. Not only that, but the venue in which they chose to destroy them, namely the throne room of the Nabû temple, was a very likely venue, given the association of the god Nabû with the crown prince,<sup>36</sup> for the swearing of the original loyalty oaths by their fathers and grandfathers to Esarhaddon’s crown prince Assurbanipal.<sup>37</sup> By Achaemenid times, and possibly already in this period in Media, Nabû was equated with the local sun god

<sup>31</sup> SAA 2, 6 526–33.

<sup>32</sup> For a drawing of this seal, see Wiseman 1958, p. 18, fig. 4.

<sup>33</sup> SAA 2, 6 406–09.

<sup>34</sup> See MacDowell 1978, p. 43.

<sup>35</sup> See Lauinger 2012; Harrison and Osborne 2012.

<sup>36</sup> See Parpola 1983, pp. 330–31, and George 1996, pp. 377–85.

<sup>37</sup> See Pongratz-Leisten 1999, p. 240.

Mithra,<sup>38</sup> also a protector of royal succession, and a potential guarantor of such oaths in his own right.<sup>39</sup>

This is not to be interpreted as freedom-loving democrats (never an empire for Medes!) throwing off the yoke of wicked oppression in hated defiance of an evil nation so out of line with the practices of decent humanity that it would actually impose oaths of this sort on anybody.<sup>40</sup> In fact, decent humanity, Medes included, has historically welcomed being submitted to oaths of precisely this sort. We must remember the continuing custom of swearing oaths on the Bible, a process by which the swearer unwittingly calls upon him- or herself every gruesome curse listed in Deuteronomy.<sup>41</sup> By way of comparison, note the geonic oath sworn by Jews who had to give testimony in an Islamic court of law. While rams' horns were played, a hole was dug in the earth and the oath taker symbolically buried, thus relegating himself to instant death and destruction should the testimony he was about to give prove to be false. Oaths of this sort were still being taken in Yemen in the early twentieth century.<sup>42</sup> The persistence of these customs points up the fact that, theology aside, there is much to be said for the social usefulness of this mechanism of self cursing. Not only does it allow persons to be trusted across class, gender, and even sectarian lines, to make covenants, treaties, and contracts or to give testimony in court, but it also provides a minimal cost enforcement for folk law and makes it possible for the falsely accused to clear themselves of guilt when no other proof of innocence can be found.

Nothing would actually happen unless the self-curser violated conditions of which he was aware and to which he had agreed. So there was nothing to worry about unless you did what you said you were not going to do. The problem was that the Medes had done precisely that, and on every count. So they needed some serious help in undoing the curses attached to the treaties before their land got baked like a brick, they wound up wearing each others' skins, and they were at daggers' drawn with their wives.

If you knew you were going to break a treaty, you could always take precautions before you swore. Various possibilities are envisaged in the Esarhaddon loyalty oaths themselves. You could swear with your lips only (the ancient Mesopotamian equivalent of crossing your fingers behind your back) or you could pretend to be ill to avoid the oath ceremony.<sup>43</sup> You could also smear your face, hands, and throat with fat to protect yourself (by hiding) from the assembled gods or bind a charm into the hem of your garment or use other unspecified methods to loosen the curse.<sup>44</sup> Actual examples of such charms exist; they were known as É.GAL.KU<sub>4</sub>.RA, and could be used to gain favor from a ruler or to incapacitate opponents in a court of law, rituals more or less teetering on the knife's edge of legitimate praxis.

A number of examples<sup>45</sup> have charmed oil being smeared on the face and hands. KAR 71 obv. 14–25 envisages a three-stranded cord of lapis wool being bound into the hem. Other methods included magic rings over which this sort of thing got recited: “Heavens, pay

<sup>38</sup> Mithra is the Persian equivalent of Greek Apollo with whom Nabû was equated in the Hellenistic period. In addition, Mithra, like Nabû, was the son and deputy of the chief god of the pantheon. See Pomponio 1998.

<sup>39</sup> See Oettinger 1994.

<sup>40</sup> So most recently Porter 2009, pp. 218–19.

<sup>41</sup> Similarly, third-century Jewish tomb inscriptions invoke “all the curses written in Deuteronomy” to deter would-be robbers. See Tigay 1996, p. 261.

<sup>42</sup> Wagner 2011, esp. p. 134.

<sup>43</sup> SAA 2, 6 385–92.

<sup>44</sup> SAA 2, 6 373–76.

<sup>45</sup> LKA 104 rev. 3–8, 9–16, KAR 237 obv. 1–6, 7–12, 13–17, 18–23, LKA 107 rev. 1–3.

attention; things of the earth, hear my voice, until I strike the cheek of my legal adversary (and) rip out his tongue. I will return his words to his mouth; his mouth will revolt against talking. I will not even allow him to fart!"<sup>46</sup> The practitioner of this particular spell clearly had a weak case, assuming he was not trying with malice aforethought to pervert the course of justice.

A similar problem arose in second-millennium Mari, where treaties were finalized by means of a donkey foal which was "killed" for the occasion. The term used is a West Semitic loan word (*qatālu*) which is used only in the context of killing donkey foals for the purpose of making treaties.<sup>47</sup> The exact procedure is not specified, but it is conceivable, in view of the apparent parallel with "covenant sacrifices,"<sup>48</sup> that the donkey in question was halved and the treaty partners expected to pass between. The full implications for the covenanted party of such a sacrifice are made explicit in Jeremiah 34:18–20, where a covenant between the Jerusalemites and Yahweh on the subject of freeing slaves is described as having been signed by cutting apart a calf and having the princes of Judah and the people pass between the parts of the calf. Having done this, and subsequently violated the covenant, those who had passed between were to become "like the calf which they cut in two, between whose two parts they passed," that is, handed over to their enemies to be slaughtered and their corpses left for the birds.

Specific self-curses are occasionally mentioned in Mari-period treaties. So, for example, the Bedouin making a treaty with Zimri-Lim were made to wish upon themselves so severe a defeat in battle that the hand of the enemy would finish off the pasturage and extinguish the tribe.<sup>49</sup>

This did not leave a lot of wiggle-room for would-be oath breakers. A situation of this sort seems to have arisen in ARM 2, 37 6–14, where the Haneans and Idamaraz were supposed to have "killed the donkey foal." Instead of a donkey foal, however, a puppy and a goat<sup>50</sup> were proffered. We may unpack this strange choice of treaty animals by having a look at Hittite purification rituals. These involve a wide variety of scape-animals including the obvious goat but also particularly featuring puppies. Of particular interest is a rite which specifically involves men marching between halved puppies. This was designed to cleanse a defeated army.<sup>51</sup>

Let us suppose that the oath was broken and the gods became angry. Normally, they would express their anger by causing the oath breaker to be defeated in the resulting war. Not in this case, however! Having cleansed himself of any possible consequences in advance, the would-be miscreant was free to break his oath at his leisure.

But what if it was too late for that? An Old Babylonian creditor named Kuzullum had the goods on his hapless debtor, one Elali, son of Girni-isa. The wretched man borrowed money to pay off his debts and to arrange for his wedding but then refused to pay his creditor as he had promised. Kuzullum, suspecting trouble, had made Elali swear before the weapon of Nanna calling various gods including Nanna and Šamaš, god of justice, as witnesses that if he did not pay up, he (Elali) would be covered with leprosy, poor, and have no heir. So Kuzullum

<sup>46</sup> KAR 71 rev. 1–11.

<sup>47</sup> For references, see CAD H s.v. *ḥāru* and CAD Q s.v. *qatālu*. Cf. Limet 1986, p. 289 ad 761. For a full discussion of this practice and its relevance to Assyrian treaties and Hebrew covenants, see Tadmor 2011, pp. 214–19.

<sup>48</sup> See Scurlock 2002, pp. 400–01. Cf. also Hasel 1981.

<sup>49</sup> Durand 1991, pp. 50–52.

<sup>50</sup> See Sasson 1987.

<sup>51</sup> See Collins 1990, pp. 219–21, cf. pp. 223–24.

had written a formal petition to Nanna asking for justice in the form of the infliction of these curses on the man who had wronged him.<sup>52</sup>

When one paid back one's money, the creditor was supposed to turn over the loan tablet to be broken. This canceled the contract and rendered useless any attempt to call down divine enforcers on the debtor's head. We know this because occasionally the tablet in question could not be found, requiring another text to be drawn up with a clause specifying that when the original was finally located, it was to be broken.<sup>53</sup>

For the treaties signed by the Medes with Esarhaddon, a similar strategy suggested itself. Legal contracts generally were sealed by one party and kept by the other; in this case it was Esarhaddon who sealed the tablets with his father Sennacherib's seal,<sup>54</sup> and those who swore the oaths described themselves as "owners" of the covenant.<sup>55</sup>

In Esarhaddon's loyalty oaths,<sup>56</sup> the Medes were specifically warned not to remove their copy of the tablet from its current location, or to try burning it, throwing it into water, burying it in earth, or by any cunning device knocking it down, making it disappear, or effacing it. Indeed, there was possible danger to be encountered with this iconoclastic strategy, as appears in the examples quoted by Levtow in this volume. Magical language is very short on phonology and very long on syntax with the result that the same ritual action can, unless properly contextualized, bring about quite opposite effects. So, for example, in Hellenistic magic, curses are actually unleashed on their victims by burning the carrier of the curse or by submerging it in water. And this is what seems to have happened, deliberately in the case of Jeremiah's curse on Babylon, which was submerged in water to make it work, and quite accidentally, one might with justice say suicidally, in the case of Jehoiakim, who actually burned and thereby unleashed the curses that destroyed him.

Similarly, Moses's breaking of the Tablets of the Covenant had the effect, not of making it possible for the calf worshippers to carry on without fear of consequences, but quite the contrary of bringing down the curses of God on their heads,<sup>57</sup> an analogy only too relevant to the Medes' breaking of their covenant. But what could the Medes do? If they wanted to avoid just punishment for betraying their grandparents' oaths, they had no choice but to try and cancel the curse.

These tablets were, as we have noted, the physical images of a covenant, and this covenant, like its biblical analogue, was enforced by gruesome curses which the Medes had been required to call down on their own heads in the name of their own gods. In passing let it be noted that the gods of the Medes included Bethel and Anat-Bethel and that Zagros settlements from this period have complete assemblages of Syrian pottery, indicating that Assyrian transplantation policies (fig. 7.1)<sup>58</sup> were not, and were not intended to, include cultural genocide.

<sup>52</sup> See Moran 1993, pp. 114–16.

<sup>53</sup> For references, see CAD H s.v. *ḥepû mng. 2*.

<sup>54</sup> For a drawing of this seal, see Wiseman 1958, p. 16, fig. 2.

<sup>55</sup> For references, see CAD A/1 s.v. *adû A in bēl adê*.

<sup>56</sup> SAA 2, 6 410–13.

<sup>57</sup> Curses are never automatic; it is up to the enforcer of the curse to take action or not, as he/she sees fit. In this

case, Moses was able to talk God out of unleashing his wrath (Exod 32:7–14).

<sup>58</sup> The fragment is from a larger panel from the South-West Palace of Sennacherib, court LXIV. This is illustrated in Barnett, Bleibtreu, and Turner 1998, pl. 451:606a–607a, which clearly shows that this is part of a scene of peoples being moved from one place to another. Similarly also a scene from South-West Palace, room 45 illustrated on pls. 380–81 and *passim*.

So long as the images (i.e., the tablets) existed, the curses recorded on them were connected to this world. As such, they could be notified of breach and were in a position to inflict appropriate punishment. Damaging or destroying the tablets was supposed to break the communication chain or to turn the curses into harmless wraiths or both, not that anybody cared what happened as long as they did not get hurt. Of course Esarhaddon had made their ancestors specifically swear not to try this or any other method of canceling curses, but did I say they had no choice?

So the Medes apparently brought their copies with them from Media to Assyria and smashed them in the throne room of the Nabû temple at Kalhu. And just for good measure, they defaced the reliefs of Assyrian palaces, breaking the king's bow, cutting wrists and ankles, and poking out eyes (fig. 7.2).<sup>59</sup> The ancient Greeks did similar things to the body of a man they had murdered. It was called "arm pitting" and it prevented the angered ghost from taking a just vengeance.<sup>60</sup>

If we are to imagine the emotions of the Median soldiers running amuk in Assyrian palaces, we need not think of hatred, but of guilt-ridden fear. And in the end, the Medes got their comeuppance in the form of Cyrus and then Darius. Dare we suggest that, in the long run, the breaking of the tablets did indeed unleash the curses imprinted upon them?

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<sup>59</sup> For details, see Porter 2009, pp. 203–18.

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<sup>60</sup> For details, see Johnston 1999, pp. 156–59.



Figure 7.1. Sennacherib's soldiers remove the people and their gods. Detail of a relief from Sennacherib's palace, now in the Civic Museum of Venice (photo by JoAnn Scurlock)



Figure 7.2. Detail of Assurbanipal's face showing the damage inflicted. Detail of a relief from room C, northeast wall 13–15, now in the British Museum (photo by JoAnn Scurlock, courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum)



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# **<sup>m</sup>ALI-TALĪMU — WHAT CAN BE LEARNED FROM THE DESTRUCTION OF FIGURATIVE COMPLEXES?**

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*To Pauline Albenda, whom I never met, as a sign of a great appreciation*

Поймите, что лишь только Вы сели и открыли тетрадь, он уже перестал слушать Вас. Да, да. Он соображал о том, как распределить роли, как сделать так, чтобы разместить основоположников, как сделать так, чтобы они могли разыграть Вашу пьесу без ущерба для себя ... .

— М. А. Булгаков, “Театральный роман. Записки покойника”

Look here: you must realize that as soon as you sat down and opened your script he had stopped listening to you. Yes, yes. He was thinking how to cast the play, how to find parts to suit the founder-members, how they could stage your play without creating trouble for themselves ... .

— М. А. Bulgakov, “A Dead Man's Memoir: A Theatrical Novel”

## DESTRUCTION OF FIGURATIVE COMPLEXES

The cases of systematic damage inflicted on a complex of two-dimensional images or statues are of particular interest in connection with iconoclasm. The most renowned instance in the ancient Near East is the destruction of the statues and stelae of Gudea.<sup>1</sup> Similarly systematic, but on a dramatically larger scale, was the destruction of the whole system of visual, dynastic, and cultic symbolism of the Assyrian empire in the time of the Median-Babylonian invasion. The Assyrian temples and cults, Assyrian royal tombs, and the Assyrian palaces of Nineveh and, probably, Kalḫu were destroyed not only by the Medes, as Nabonidus later pretended (Schaudig 2001, pp. 516, 523, col. ii lines 1'–40', esp. lines 14'–40'), but also by the Babylonians themselves, as we learn from the Fall of Nineveh Chronicle (Grayson 1975, pp. 93–94, lines 29–45, esp. lines 43–45). If it were not for the later evidence of Persian period,

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<sup>1</sup> May 2010, p. 106; Feldman 2009, n. 28 and fig. 11; Suter, this volume. The article of Joan Westenholz (this volume) relates to the destruction of imagery complex of the empire of Akkade.

Late Antique, and Medieval sources, we would think that the Assyrians had been erased from the face of the earth. The Assyrians were not, but the Assyrian empire was.<sup>2</sup>

In the narrative reliefs of the Neo-Assyrian palaces, certain images or scenes were selected for effacement. Sometimes objects along with human beings were chiseled out. The choice here was not casual but quite intentional. By investigating the motivation of those who carried out these actions, we can better understand the social, political, and ritual significance of the depictions themselves. Iconoclasm as one of the channels of obliteration of the Neo-Assyrian empire deserves a separate research.<sup>3</sup>

On this occasion I undertake only case studies of some episodes of the destruction and restructure of figurative complexes.

### RELIEFS OF THE PASSAGE LEADING TOWARD THE IŠTAR TEMPLE, SOUTH-WEST PALACE OF SENNACHERIB AT NINEVEH

During the sack of Nineveh, the overwhelming majority<sup>4</sup> of the effigies of the king were defaced to some degree, royal insignia were damaged, and many of the images of the royal attendants display erasure of at least their mouths and noses, and at times also their attributes of status and power. On the reliefs of the passage, which is the only surviving representation of religious character in Sennacherib's entire palace (Barnett, Bleibtreu, and Turner 1998, pls. 473–96, pp. 133–37), all the iconoclastic patterns are present. The subject matter of these two relief sequences (moving up and down hill) represented a highly significant ceremonial procession. It has been suggested that these two sets of slabs depicted the king going to and from the Ištar temple. The king is shown in his wheeled throne pulled by courtiers and preceded by the crown prince and royal magnates. He is followed by attendants, bodyguards, and an orchestra of two kettle-drummers, five women beating tambourines and a sistrum, and four harpists, two of which are priests (*ibid.*, pls. 491–95, nos. 670b–674b, p. 136). The relief sequence obviously represented a procession pregnant with religious significance of the state cult (fig. 8.1).

Every face (35 figures; e.g., fig. 8.2), even that of the horse-head image adorning the wheeled throne, was damaged (fig. 8.3; and *ibid.*, pls. 474, 475, 478, 480, 481, 482, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 491, 493, 495, 496).<sup>5</sup> The damage to the images of the higher-ranked individuals is more severe than that of the simple soldiers: the king was completely effaced and both his hands, but especially the right, erased, which is reflected even in the drawing (fig. 8.4). The crown prince's face was chiseled away, nose and mouth separately (fig. 8.5). On his second representation his nose together with the mouth were chiseled out, eye gouged, ear, beard, and arm damaged with strokes, and the rosette of the bracelet erased (*ibid.*, pl. 496).

<sup>2</sup> See Parpola 2000 with further bibliography.

<sup>3</sup> In preparation by the author for the second collective volume on iconoclasm in the ancient Near East and beyond.

<sup>4</sup> There are only four intact images of the king on the Nineveh palatial reliefs, all notably related to the royal hunt, and not to the triumphal parades. They are Barnett 1976, pl. 8, room C, slabs 13–15; pl. 49 = pl. 50, room S, slab 16, BM 124872; pl. 51, room S, slab 12, BM 124876;

and pl. 57, room S<sup>1</sup>, slab D, BM 124886 (the libation over killed lions).

<sup>5</sup> The reliefs were personally examined by the author. The drawings (Barnett, Bleibtreu, and Turner 1998, pls. 473, 476, 477, 483, 488, 490, 497) do not reflect intentional damage. The exceptions are *ibid.*, pls. 479 and 495, nos. 660a and 674a, representing the king and the harpists respectively.

The king, the crown prince, and two attendants following the wheeled throne received special treatment. The rest of the human figures display various degrees of facial damage: from slight erasure of the nose and sometimes the mouth, to the removal of the entire front part of the face. The eyes of the priests and their harpist companions are gouged out.

One instance is peculiar: the widely dispersed strokes around the horse head adorning the wheeled throne, and the faces of the eunuchs who pull it, betray that they were shot with arrows (fig. 8.3).<sup>6</sup> All the slabs but one have been broken and removed from their place. It is difficult if not impossible to establish whether the breaks are of intentional or accidental character and who removed the slabs. But it is indicative that only the intact and the less damaged ones are of lesser and of no religious significance: they represent bodyguards (*ibid.*, pl. 485, no. 667 [intact] and 668; pls. 486, 487). The rest are broken into small pieces.

No doubt that the iconoclasts knew whom they were targeting. They were also aware of the significance of the relief sequence as a whole and its subject matter. The slabs were discovered by Hormuzd Rassam, presumably in a pit, halfway between the South-West Palace and the temple of Ištar (*ibid.*, p. 133). If so, it is plausible that the slabs were carefully brought to the ceremonial burial.<sup>7</sup>

However, each case of complex destruction not only deserves but also demands a meticulous investigation. Damage or image alteration was not always an attempt to mutilate, and not every remodeling was an iconoclastic act.

The following investigation is inspired by the palatial reliefs of Sargon II of Assyria (721?–705 B.C.E.), among them those excavated by the Oriental Institute.

#### CASE OF DESTRUCTION OF FIGURATIVE COMPLEX: PALACE OF SARGON II AT DŪR-ŠARRUKĒN (KHORSABAD)

The case presented here is particularly misleading in regard to iconoclasm. The re-carved details of the reliefs of Sargon II's palace were status signifiers, obliteration of which is diagnostic for iconoclasm. Nevertheless, it will be demonstrated that the cause of the remodeling of the Dūr-Šarrukēn palatial reliefs was different.

The palace of Sargon II at Dūr-Šarrukēn, modern-day Khorsabad (fig. 8.6), was no doubt the most splendid of the Assyrian palaces, exceeding even that of his son at Nineveh. It is remarkable by its enormous size and by the most elegant execution of its reliefs, which are palatial in all senses of the word. Palace courts I and VIII were adorned with carvings of unprecedented splendor. For instance, the largely preserved northwest side of facade n of the throne-room courtyard VIII alone was 82 m long; the size of the human figures is almost twice normal height.

The subject matter of the reliefs of courtyard VIII (that is, the main court, the court through which the throne room was accessed) is remarkable. The reliefs of the northwest wall of facade n (fig. 8.7a), which was originally excavated by Botta and Flandin, and then

<sup>6</sup> Arrow shooting has been exercised on the deity in the winged disk depicted atop the stylized tree and the two figures of the king attending it on the glazed brick panel of Šalmaneser III (Reade 2000, p. 613). Examining the reliefs at the British Museum, I discerned that the face of Assurbanipal on his hunt relief from the North Palace at Nineveh, room C (Barnett 1976, pl. 11, slabs 20–21, BM

124850–1), displays traces of being the target of arrow shooting as well.

<sup>7</sup> See for comparison Roobaert 1996, pp. 79, 87; May 2010, p. 111. The rest of the Neo-Assyrian palatial reliefs were found in their original position lining the walls or fallen down in near proximity as a result of natural dilapidation.

re-discovered by the expedition of the Oriental Institute, in 1928/29, are now partly housed in the Oriental Institute Museum. They display a long row of courtiers and attendants led by the crown prince toward the king. Some of them bear royal insignia and throne-room furniture, including the throne itself, the foot stool, staff, tables, and so forth (fig. 8.7b). It is a representation of the inauguration of the palace in general and of the throne room in particular, which took place in 706 B.C.E. together with the inauguration of the city, or, possibly, in 707 B.C.E. together with inauguration of the temples. As noted in the Oriental Institute publication of the excavations (Loud 1936, p. 38):

... Botta gives drawings of this procession, one showing the actual state in which the reliefs were found by him and another giving his restoration of them [fig. 8.7a — *N.N.M.*]. It is evident that he and his associates did not find the slabs later uncovered by our excavations, [fig. 8.7b — *N.N.M.*]<sup>8</sup> for they do not appear in his restoration. Obviously imagination played some part in putting together in pen and ink this scene.

The reliefs of facade L (fig. 8.8) in the smaller inner court I as they appear on Flandin's drawings represent the same subject matter with some variation, for instance, the royal wheeled throne and the royal chariot are shown among the objects carried in by the attendants. The processions of the courtiers on the reliefs of Dūr-Šarrukēn are the longest in Neo-Assyrian art.<sup>9</sup>

Julian Reade (1972, pp. 90 with n. 21, 95; 2000, p. 609 with n. 11; 2009, pp. 259–60) noticed long ago that all the headbands of the officials, the main status signifier from the most ancient times, were remodeled on the facades of court VIII and on facade L of court I.<sup>10</sup> The incised headbands on the court VIII reliefs were erased and the texture of hair was carved in their place (fig. 8.9). On facade L the headbands were not incised, but marked by red paint. They were later remodeled as strands of hair and painted black over the red paint of the headbands, which was preserved. Reade's explains these changes as "mistakenly designed" "superfluous" headbands that were "subsequently removed" (2009, p. 260). He suggests that "the carving may have been done by foreigners, who were not particularly conversant with metropolitan proprieties" (2000, p. 609).<sup>11</sup> This explanation, however, is not consistent with the facts that we know about the process of preparation and approval of the royal reliefs.

<sup>8</sup> The sequence shown here does not attempt to restore the actual succession of the slabs, but only illustrates the subject matter of facade n. It mostly follows Albenda's suggestions (1986, pp. 173, 177).

Albenda suggests to restore all the slabs found by the expedition of the Oriental Institute to facade n (OIM A7366 as slab 33, OIM A7367 as slab 28, OIM A7368 as slab 36, IM 18628 as slab 29, IM 18629 as slab 30, and IM 18631 as slab 31). Figure 8.7b follows her interpretation. In this connection it should be noted that IM 18629, though attributed in Flandin's reconstruction of facade n (fig. 8.7a), appears among the detailed drawings of facade L (Botta and Flandin 1849, fig. 18). Nothing like IM 18628 and IM 18630 (also discovered in the debris of facade n) is found in the reconstruction of facade n (fig. 8.7b), but the high-backed chair and a table were depicted on the reliefs of facade L (fig. 8.8). The details in position of the hands of the attendants and the decor of the furniture nevertheless differ (compare Loud 1936, figs. 42,

44; and Botta and Flandin 1849, pp. 18–19). The upper part of OIM A7367 was not revealed in the excavations. In the presently restored slab on display at the Oriental Institute Museum casts of the heads occur, and it is impossible to establish whether bearded or clean-shaven officials were represented, but on the surviving part of this relief the officials wear swords and armlets with gazelle-head terminals, absent in the drawings (Loud and Altman 1938, fig. 39).

<sup>9</sup> The sequence of facade n consisted of twenty-one persons, including the crown prince, officials, and the Assyrian attendants (fig. 8.7a–b); cf. Botta and Flandin 1849, pl. 30.

<sup>10</sup> See also Albenda 1986, pp. 156 (AO 1432), 169 (BM 118825, 118826), 181–82 (A. 089), figs. 40–43.

<sup>11</sup> Reade (2000) further noticed that "the relief of these Khorsabad sculptures is unusually high, and people had recently been deported from Carchemish (near Til-Bar-sip), where stone-masons were accustomed to carving

First, if that were the case we would have to admit that all the diadems of all the courtiers were originally carved or marked “mistakenly.” That would be gross and unlikely negligence on the part of Sargon II’s most skillful artists. Both courts, especially the throne-room courtyard, were too important by their function and subject matter to suggest such a pervasive “mistake.”

Second, of Sargon II’s successors, neither Sennacherib nor Assurbanipal ever represented their officials as wearing diadems.<sup>12</sup>

Last and decisively, the sketches of the palace reliefs and royal effigies were approved by the king. The correspondence of Esarhaddon reveals how attentively the details of the royal dress and position of the hand were observed:

SAA 13, p. 36, no. 34, obv. 12–rev. 6, Nabû-ašarēd to the king:

obv. 12 2 *šal*-[*mu* LUGA]L<sup>MES</sup>-*ni*  
 13 *ina* UGU ʾLUGALʾ *nu-se-bi-la*  
 14 *šal-mu* LUGAL *ša mi-ši-ri*  
 15 *a-na-ku e-te-ši-ri*  
 16 *šal-mu* LUGAL *ša ḥúb-bu-ši-te*  
 17 *šu-nu e-ta-ap-šu*  
 18 LUGAL *le-mur ša pa-an*  
 19 LUGAL *ma-ḥi-ru-ni*  
 20 *ina pu-te né-pu-uš*  
 edge 21 LUGAL *a-na šU*<sup>11</sup>  
 22 *a-na zu-qe-te*  
 23 *a-na SÍK.KAS*  
 rev. 1 *ú-zu-un liš-ku-nu*  
 2 *ša šal-mu* LUGAL *ša e-pa-šu-ni*  
 3 <sup>GIŠ</sup>*haṭ-ṭu ina pa-an a-ḥi-šú*  
 4 *pa-ra-ak-at*  
 5 *Á-šú ina si-qi-a-ni-šu*  
 6 *šá-ak-na-at*

We have sent two ro[yal im]ages to the king. I sketched a *drawing* of the royal image. They made a royal image, which is defective.<sup>13</sup> Let the king have a look, (and) whichever the king finds acceptable/whichever matched the king’s face, we will execute

in higher relief.” As has been noticed the reliefs of these courts are unusual from all points: their outrageous size, the elegance of execution, splendor in general. High relief is another element of the exceptional quality of the reliefs of Khorsabad palace courts. Foreigners or not, the masons would have had to consult the approved sketches before executing the main relief sequence of the palace, especially in concern of such an important issue as the status signifiers — the headbands.

<sup>12</sup> Two exceptions should be noted here: the relief from Khorsabad, now in the British Museum (Albenda 1986, p. 162 with fig. 74), wearing something defined by Reade as a “turban” (Reade 2009, p. 257 with fig. 17). The exact provenance is unknown, and the headbands of the Khorsabad court VIII officials were different, as Reade himself notices (*ibid.*, p. 260). Another case is a eunuch on Assurbanipal’s North Palace relief (Barnett 1976, pl. 5, room C, slabs 5–6, second register). He is wearing a kind

of double cirlet, but he is not an official, but rather a part of the king’s eunuch bodyguard, surrounding and watching the hunt arena. His headdress might mark his elevated position among his colleagues.

<sup>13</sup> Cole and Machinist (SAA 13) transliterate *kab-bu-si-te* and translate “which is *in the round*.” \**Kabbusītu* would be a *hapax* (CAD K s.v. *kappusītu*). *Ḥubbušite* (< *ḥabāsu* or *ḥamāsu*) — “defective” (CAD H s.v. *hubbušu*), however AHw. 351a — “hart geschwollen,” is more plausible in the light of explicitly negative attitude of the letter’s author to the described image, and the Neo-Assyrian “accent” of the letter (note in this connection *nu-se-bi-la*, obv. line 13). Feminine of *hubbušite* / *kabbusītu* remains unexplained. \**mišīru* (< *ešēru*) in line 14 is a *hapax* as well, but corresponds with *e-te-ši-ri* in line 15, and might be a variant of many derivatives of this verb (*mišru*, *mišātu*, *išru*, *išrātu*).

accordingly/on the facade. Let the king pay attention to the hands, to the chin, (and) to the headdress. Concerning the image that they made, the scepter is placed athwart his side/arm, and his arm is resting on his lap/hem.

The disapproval of this “inappropriate” image by the author of the letter follows.

The other letter belongs to Šumu-iddin, a member of a team that restored statues and temples of Babylonian gods.

SAA 13, p. 147, no. 178, obv. 10–20, Šumu-iddin to the king:

10 ALAM<sup>MEŠ</sup> šá LUGAL šá <sup>m</sup>DUMU-<sup>d</sup>15 iš-šá-a  
 11 um-ma a-mur-ra-ma šá šá-lam li-iz-zi-<iz>  
 12 a-na-ku u <sup>L</sup>um-ma-nu ARAD<sup>MEŠ</sup> šá LUGAL  
 13 a-ḥa-meš ki-i nu-kal-li-mu  
 14 ŠÀ-bu-ú ALAM šá a-na LUGAL EN-já ú-še-bi-la  
 15 šá-lim ki-i šá a-na LUGAL EN-já MURUB<sub>4</sub><sup>MEŠ</sup>-šú  
 16 i-rak-ka-su-ma a-na pa-an <sup>d</sup>AMAR.UTU DINGIR-ka  
 17 te-ru-bu ŠÀ-bu-ú ALAM šá ana LUGAL EN-já  
 18 ú-še-bi-la ri-ik-su šá LUGAL EN-já  
 19 ŠÀ-bu-ú ina BAL.TIL<sup>ki</sup> ina UGU <sup>G</sup>iššub-ti šá <sup>d</sup>EN  
 20 ú-šá-az-zi-zu ina É.SAG.GIL u É.KUR<sup>MEŠ</sup>  
 21 šá TIN.TIR<sup>KI</sup>

(Concerning) the images of the king that Mār-Issar brought, saying: “Inspect (them) and may the perfect (one) stand.” When I and scholars, the king’s servants, inspected (them) together, (the one which is) like<sup>14</sup> the image that I sent to the king, my lord, is perfect. That one on which the king, my lord, is girding (himself), (when) you enter in front of Marduk, your lord. (This is one which is) like the image that I sent to the king, my lord. The girding(?)<sup>15</sup> of the king, my lord, is like that (of the images) which they are setting up in Assur upon the dais of Bēl (and) I have set up in Esagil, and the temples of Babylon.

The sketches and the images were examined either personally by the king as in the first case, or by a committee of learned specialists, as in the second. Dress, headdress, position of the hands, and insignia were checked, and only the “proper (or perfect) image” — *šalmu ša šalam/lim*<sup>16</sup> would be approved for installation. The king was either involved in the design of the royal and palatial imagery himself, or received reports of its acceptability from specialists.

Another member,<sup>17</sup> and possibly the head, of the team responsible for the restoration of the Babylonian cults reports that a sketch of a bed (*liṭu ša erši*) of Marduk was sent to Esarhaddon on his demand (SAA 13, pp. 145–46, no. 175, line 6). Assurbanipal would probably draw the sketches of his stelae himself!<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> See CAD L s.v. *libbu*, 4a, 2', the meaning for which the writing *lib-bu-ú* is attested.

<sup>15</sup> The exact meaning is unclear; for the variety of possibilities of translation, see CAD R s.v. *riksu*.

<sup>16</sup> As opposite to a “defective” one (*hubbušitu*) of the previous example.

<sup>17</sup> It is worth noting that a great part of the letters concerning the restoration of Babylonian cults is connected

to the Babylonian clergyman and scholar(?) — Rāši-ilu (Pearce 2002).

<sup>18</sup> LUGAL *be-lí li-iṭ-ṭu e-te-šir ú-su-mit-tu iz-za-qápl a-na* <sup>r</sup>UN<sup>r</sup>.ME<sup>l</sup> <sup>r</sup>uk<sup>r</sup>-tal-lim “the king, my lord, has drawn a sketch, erected a stele (and displayed it to the people” (SAA 10, p. 180, no. 227, rev. lines 24–25).



The above-discussed evidence shows that the subject matter of the reliefs was well known to the king.

In the case of Sargon II, his personal involvement in the construction of the city of Dūr-Šarrukēn, its palace and temples, is well known (Parpola 1995, esp. pp. 52–53). Moreover, particularly in regard to the diadems and names of the officials and governors, their design and incision on the reliefs of Dūr-Šarrukēn palace were discussed in the correspondence between Sargon and his chamberlain, who was responsible for the construction of the palace and the city, as follows from the letter of Tāb-šar-Aššur, the chamberlain (*masennu*) to Sargon II (SAA 5, p. 99, no. 282 obv. 4–10, rev. 2–4):

obv. 4 ša LUGAL be-lí iš-[pur-an-ni ma-a]  
 5 MU<sup>MEŠ</sup> ša LU\*.EN.N[AM<sup>MEŠ</sup> ina x x x]  
 6 a-ta-a la za-qu-[pa...MU<sup>MEŠ</sup> LUGAL be-lí]  
 7 ú-da hu-li-ni [pa-ni-ú]  
 8 ša a-na KUR Man-na-<sup>r</sup>a<sup>1</sup>-[a x x x]  
 9 <sup>r</sup>ni<sup>1</sup>-il-lik-u-ni in[a É.SIG<sub>4</sub><sup>MEŠ</sup>]  
 10 [ša] É.GAL la-bir-[te x x x x]  
 ...  
 rev. 2 [M]U<sup>MEŠ</sup> LUGAL<sup>MEŠ</sup> LÚ.x[x x x x]  
 3 [p]i-tu-a-te ina i[GI x x x x]  
 4 MU<sup>MEŠ</sup>-šú-nu x [x x x x x]

As to what the king, my lord, wr[ote me]:

“Why are the names of the gov[ernors] not fixed of [the reliefs]?” — [the king, my lord,] knows that our [previous] campaign which we directed to Mannea [... is depicted] o[n the walls of] the Ol[d] Palace.<sup>19</sup> ...  
 [the na]mes of the kings and the [...] officials, [d]iadems in fr[ont of ...].

Such attentive examination of the images of the palatial reliefs and the officials upon them by the king himself excludes a possibility of a massive mistake in the very insignia of the Assyrian elite represented on the reliefs of the main courtyards of Sargon II’s palace.

### Sargon II’s Administrative Reform

What then could have caused the remodeling of the throne-room courtyard (court VIII) and court I reliefs? I believe that the reason was the great administrative changes of Sargon II, proof of which can be found in the written sources. I argue that from Sargon II’s very ascension to power he started to carry out vast and extensive administrative reforms that lasted throughout his entire reign.

If we turn to the Eponym Lists we find that from the very start the traditional order of the eponym officials was altered:

The Eponym Lists (after Millard 1994, pp. 46–47, 60):

Year 719	ṁŠarru-kēn šar māt [Aššur]	Sargon II, king of [Assyria]
" 718	ṁZēru-ibni šakin Ra[šappa]	Zēru-ibni, governor of Rašappa
" 717	ṁTāb-šar-Aššur ma[sennu]	Tāb-šar-Aššur, chamberlain
" 716	ṁTāb-šil-Ešarra šakin Libbi-āli	Tāb-šil-Ešarra, governor the city of Assur

<sup>19</sup> Lit., “the road ... that we took to Mannea.”

"	715	<sup>m</sup> Taklāk-ana-bēli ditto Našibin	Taklāk-ana-bēli,	"	of Našibina
"	714	<sup>m</sup> Ištar-dūri ditto Arrap[ḫa]	Ištar-dūri,	"	of Arrapha
"	713	<sup>m</sup> Aššur-bānī ditto Kalḫa	Aššur-bānī,	"	of Calah

The commander-in-chief (*turtānu*), palace herald (*nāgir ekalli*), the chief butler (*rab šāqê*), who had to occupy the eponym office after the king and still follow the king in this order in the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III (Millard 1994, pp. 11, 43–44), as well as governor of the land (*šakin māti*) and the chief eunuch (*rab ša rēši*), who hold the sixth and the seventh eponymate after the chamberlain (*masennu*) disappear from the Eponym Lists, some of them never to return. The only trace of the previous list is the *masennu*, who would be the fifth eponym, if the order were regular. Mattila notices that evidence for the administrative role of the *masennu*, long known as an eponym, is “limited to the reign of Sargon” (2000, p. 162). The rest are provincial governors in standard order, but not in standard place in the list after the king. Thus the governor of Rašappa is the second after the king, followed by the chamberlain, who appears to be the third. The other governors follow in due order, but appearing in the earlier year after the king than they should be. Moreover, the same Eponym Chronicle states that in the eponymate of the chamberlain, Dūr-Šarrukēn was founded (year 717 B.C.E.; *ibid.*, p. 47). The chamberlain was responsible for the construction of the palace (Parpola 1995, pp. 50–52), and as we already know from the above-quoted letter of Ṭāb-šar-Aššur (SAA 5, p. 199, no. 282), for its pictorial program. We also learn from the same Eponym Chronicle that the governors were appointed only two years later, in 715 B.C.E.,<sup>20</sup> after which the standard eponym order, but only including the governors and not the higher officials, in fact starts. The appointment of all the governors anew was an administrative reform on its own.

Millard also notices the disappearance of the stelae with the names of eponyms from the *Stelenreihen* in the city of Assur around the middle of the eighth century B.C.E. (1994, p. 12). Finally, starting with the sixth year of Sargon II and continuing through the entire reign of Sennacherib, an unprecedented phenomenon is attested: double, sometimes even triple,<sup>21</sup> dating of the documents, both by eponym and by the regnal year of the king. Earlier the eponym alone would appear as the document’s date. Sargon II’s sixth year,<sup>22</sup> in which this double dating starts, is the one preceding the appointment of the governors (715 B.C.E.) and one following the founding of the new capital at Dūr-Šarrukēn (717 B.C.E.).

Another tremendous administrative change of Sargon II was the introduction of the new offices. It was first of all the division of Assyria’s most important office, that of the commander in chief (*turtānu*), and the introduction of the “commander of the left” — *turtānu (bēt) šumēli* — in 708 B.C.E., after the annexation of Kummuhu (Fuchs 1994, p. 179, Ann 409). The position most powerful in the reigns of the previous kings of the Neo-Assyrian empire was split into two: that of “commander of the right” (*turtān imitti*) and “commander of the

<sup>20</sup> Millard ascribes “their absence from the list” to the “apparently abnormal circumstances in which Sargon came to the throne” (1994, p. 10 n. 5). But neither of the Sargonids kept the standard order of eponyms of the ninth and eighth century. Millard himself notes that the eponym order was not observed in the reign of Sennacherib either (*ibid.*, p. 10 n. 4). All the high officials are absent from the list in the reign of Sennacherib except for *turtānu* of the right (year 686; *ibid.*, p. 51). It was the administrative reform that caused the change in the

order of eponyms, but the “abnormal circumstance” was definitely one of the reasons for this reform.

<sup>21</sup> The third date is in accordance with the year of “Sargon, king of Babylon.” Note that some of these colophons belong to the famous scholar Nabû-zuqup-kēnu. Among his colophons with triple dating, one is that of the twelfth tablet of the Epic of Gilgamesh (Hunger 1968, pp. 90–91, colophons nos. 293, 294).

<sup>22</sup> The date of Sargon II’s accession is debatable. The dates given by Millard 1994 are used in this paper.

left.” Noteworthy is that Sargon describes this event saying: “I placed my eunuch upon them and called him the commander of the left” — <sup>LÚ</sup>šú-ut-SAG-ja <sup>LÚ</sup>EN.NAM<sup>L</sup> UGU-šú-nu [aš]-k[un] <sup>[LÚ]</sup>ú[tur<sup>L</sup>-t]a-nu É GÙB aq-bi-šú-ma. He does not bother to mention the name of the newly created magnate.

The office of the chief judge — the *sartinnu*,<sup>23</sup> also rises in the epoch of Sargon II (Mattila 2000, p. 167) and remains important. In the late reign of Esarhaddon *sartinnu* becomes an eponym and continues to fulfill this function until the fall of the empire.

Here we should mention that Sargon’s commander-in-chief, palace herald, the chief butler, and the chief eunuch disappeared, but only from the Eponym Lists. They are well known from the contemporary documents and correspondence (Mattila 2002, pp. 115ff., 33ff., 49ff., 70ff. respectively). That means that the king stripped his magnates of certain functions, gradually diminishing their power, and this found its expression in the visual representation in stripping their headbands as a symbol of status. Mattila (ibid., p. 153) had observed that not only the office of the commander in chief was divided, but under the Sargonids part of his function as the head of the army was transferred to the chief eunuch, who was connected to the cavalry — a military detachment of growing importance. Sargon liked to use eunuchs in his administration. He often installed them as governors of newly annexed provinces (e.g., Fuchs 1994, p. 88, Ann 16–17; p. 102, Ann 94; p. 104, Ann 98). This is also visualized in his palatial reliefs (Botta and Flandin 1849, passim), in which the beardless officials prevail. The remodeling of the headgear of the officials on the reliefs of Khorsabad courts VIII and I is not evidence of iconoclasm, but of centralization of the king’s power, parceling the power of most of the royal magnates, and diminishing them to a lower and rather undifferentiated level.

### *Sargon II’s Introduction of the Office of (Grand) Vizier — sukkallu*

The main reform of Sargon II was the introduction of a new office that was little known in the Neo-Assyrian period before, and which was assigned great power only during his reign. It is the installation of the office of vizier — the *sukkallu*, the most powerful of Sargon’s officials.

*Sukkallus* are very well attested in the Middle Assyrian period. Both the chief vizier (*sukkallu rabiu*) and the second vizier (*sukkallu šaniu*) play a prominent role in the Middle Assyrian Coronation Ritual (Müller 1937, p. 14, lines 8–12). They are the first among the courtiers to lay down(?) their insignia — in case of the *sukkallus*, their staffs — before the king. The Middle Assyrian Law Code notably mentions *ilten ina sukkallē* “one of the king’s *sukkallus*” (Roth 1995, p. 177, Middle Assyrian Laws B, col. iii line 30). A stela from the *Stelenreihen* in Assur bears inscriptions of Eru-apla-ušur *sukkallu rabiu* and *šakin Ḫalaḫḫi* (Andrae 1972, p. 85, no. 128, lines 2–3), and two more stelae were installed by descendants of individuals who had the double title *sukkallu rabiu* (SUKKAL.GAL) *šar māt Ḫanigalbat* — “grand vizier, king of Ḫanigalbat” (ibid., nos. 63+137a, 129) in the reign of Tukultī-Ninurta I (Bloch 2010).<sup>24</sup> A dynasty of *sukkallu rabiu* is reconstructed by Freydank (1991, pp. 59–61).<sup>25</sup> However, this double

<sup>23</sup> Only once attested before Sargon, as an eponym (Mattila 2000, p. 77), but in the reign of Sargon neither *sartinnu* nor *sukkallu* held an eponymate.

<sup>24</sup> In stelae nos. 63 and 137a these titles are partially reconstructed. For further interpretations of reading of the name <sup>md</sup>E-RU-A-PAB, see Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, p. 28 with n. 118.

<sup>25</sup> These are Qibi-Aššur of stela no. 63+137a in the *Stelenreihen*, Aššur-iddin and Ilī-padā of stela no. 129. Eva Cancik-Kirschbaum (1996, p. 19 with nn. 62, 63) refers to the documents describing Aššur-iddin as *sukkallu* and *sukkallu rabiu*, as well as certain Salmānu-mušabši, but none of these Dūr-Katlimmu texts she relates to have been published. For the most recent review including chronology, see Bloch 2010, esp. pp. 3–4.

title was well known in Neo-Assyrian times, obviously since the stelae were still standing. It survived in the double title of Abī-rāmu, who was both *sukkallu* and governor (*šakin māt*) of Ḥanigalbat in the time of Esarhaddon.<sup>26</sup> This notion of *sukkallu* having a title of a king of an important province is extremely significant for the understanding of the emergence and role of this office in the reign of Sargon II. Noteworthy is that the Qibi-Aššur *sukkallu* of Tukultī-Ninutra I held the eponym office after the king, as would *turtānu* in first-millennium pre-Sargonic Assyria.<sup>27</sup> He, the founder of this Middle Assyrian *sukkallu*-dynasty, was also of royal blood — the grandson of Adad-nīrārī I, the cousin of Tukultī-Ninurta I, the king (ibid., pp. 59–61).

In the Neo-Assyrian period the office of *sukkallu* is important and prominent for the first time only under Sargon. The title itself is hardly known before in the first millennium: *sukkallu rabiu* had to provide offerings for the temple of Aššur in Assur in Adad-nērārī III's decree (Kataja and Whiting 1995, p. 76, no. 69, rev. line 16) in the intercalary Adar of the year 809 B.C.E. He appears somewhere in the middle of a long list of courtiers between two provincial governors, and his offering is the same as theirs. The estate of *sukkallu* is mentioned in the letter of Nergal-uballiṭ, perhaps from 735–727 B.C.E., but it could also be dated to the early reign of Sargon II (Saggs 1958, pp. 187, pl. 38, col. xli line 17; 208).<sup>28</sup> Two servants (a goldsmith and a weaver) of the *sukkallu*'s household appear as witnesses on the document dated to 734 B.C.E. (SAA 6, p. 22, no. 19, rev. 7', 10').

The first firmly dated appearance of the *sukkallu* under Sargon II (715 B.C.E.) is attested in two documents.<sup>29</sup> The same person probably continues to occupy the office of *sukkallu* in the early years of Sennacherib, possibly until 694 B.C.E.<sup>30</sup>

Both the grand vizier and the second vizier (*sukkallu dannu/rabiu* and *sukkallu šaniu*, as well as just *sukkallu*) occupy the eponym office only starting with 677 B.C.E. (Mattila 2000, pp. 91, 93). After that date four *sukkallus* (both *dannu/rabiu* and *šaniu*)<sup>31</sup> held the eponymate and are known from the Eponym Lists (Millard 1994, pp. 53–54, 61–62; as eponyms they appear in the date formulas of various documents). In their own right and not as eponyms they are comparatively rarely mentioned in documents (thirty times altogether in the reign of Esarhaddon and through the fall of the empire, i.e., within about sixty-seven years),<sup>32</sup> and only

<sup>26</sup> Mattila 2000, p. 93; and Borger 1964, p. 21, with the reference to the related sources.

<sup>27</sup> Bloch 2010, p. 31 with further references.

<sup>28</sup> Thus dated by Saggs who suggests 712 B.C.E. if the letter belongs to the time of Sargon II. Note, however, that the name of the other person mentioned in this letter — Bēl-apla-iddin — is only known from the reign of Sargon.

<sup>29</sup> For the first time we learn about him as a judge in the case of division of the field (Mattila 2000, p. 104, VAT 10049, lines 5–7). The second document, also from 715 B.C.E., is a land acquisition contract, in which a cupbearer of *sukkallu* serves as a witness, and which concerns a plot adjacent to the land of *sukkallu* (SAA 6, p. 15, no. 12, obv. 5 and rev. 3).

<sup>30</sup> Note that this is the year of abduction of Aššur-nādin-šumi, Sennacherib's heir, appointed by him king of Babylon. Babylonians handed Aššur-nādin-šumi to the Elamites. On 10 XII 694 B.C.E. the *sukkallu* imposes a very high fine — 40 minas of copper — on a governess

(*šakintu*; SAA 6, p. 73, no. 83, line 2; SAAS 5, p. 57, no. 35), probably acting again as a judge. In a court decision from the same year thieves were said to refuse to be sent to Nineveh to be judged by *sukkallu* and *šartinu*. Ten years later (684/3 B.C.E.) Inurta-na'di, *sukkallu dannu*, was a witness on a list of donations of Sennacherib to the *akītu*-house of the steppe. According to Mattila (2000, p. 92 with n. 5), Inurta-na'di, *sukkallu dannu*, and [DN-ib]ni, *sukkallu šaniu*, are witnesses on another royal gift document, which she also suggests to date to 684 B.C.E. Noteworthy is that both follow after *sartinu* in these lists, which points to the decline of the status of the office.

<sup>31</sup> The cases of Silim-Aššur and especially Banba, which appear both as *sukkallu dannu* and *sukkallu šaniu* (Mattila 2000, pp. 93–94), might indicate a confusion in titles.

<sup>32</sup> Mattila 2000, pp. 93–96, 100–06. In nine cases it is Silim-Aššur, of which in eight he serves as a witness on the documents of Rēmāni-Adad, chariot driver of Assurbanipal.

twice in correspondence (SAA 18, pp. 22–23, no. 21; pp. 53–54, no. 70<sup>33</sup>), while in this entire period only one letter (SAA 18, pp. 22–23, no. 21) is addressed to a *sukkallu*.<sup>34</sup>

This picture contrasts dramatically with the evidence for *sukkallu*, the vizier, which derives from the reign of Sargon II and continues into the beginning of the reign of Sennacherib. *Sukkallu* is mentioned eight times within ten years in the documents, most from the reign of Sargon II, and some from that of Sennacherib.<sup>35</sup> The *sukkallu* is the addressee of seventeen letters (twelve from the time of Sargon II and five from the time of Sennacherib), none of which is written by the king — evidence of the importance and independence of the office.

In my opinion a complete absence of correspondence between the vizier (*sukkallu*) and the king might indicate that the *sukkallu* accompanied the king for the entire time span covered by the letters from Sargon II's reign.<sup>36</sup>

The *sukkallu* is mentioned in five letters written to the king, one of them by Sennacherib the crown prince.<sup>37</sup>

Parpola (1981, pp. 119–20) writes that “96% datable letters (ca. 2300)” are sent to or by the Assyrian kings. The remaining 4 percent are mainly letters sent to or by governors or other administrative officials. The total is about ninety-two letters, though in fact it must be less since this number “2300” includes joins made later, and letters with an unknown addressee. Even of these putative ninety-two, almost a fifth, namely seventeen, are written to the *sukkallu* of Sargon and Sennacherib. The *sukkallu* of Sargon II was the only magnate to receive such a large amount of letters in the entirety of Neo-Assyrian history. It is more than any other Assyrian official received, second only to the king himself. This person was powerful indeed!<sup>38</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Also related to Silim-Aššur.

<sup>34</sup> Noteworthy is that *sukkallu* is very often acting as a judge after the reign of Sargon II, while in the time of Sargon he occurs in this function only twice (Mattila 2000, p. 88).

<sup>35</sup> SAA 6, pp. 7, 14–15, 28, 82–83; nos. 6, 12, 30, 96, dated to 713, 715, 710, and 695(?) B.C.E. respectively. Members of the *sukkallu*'s household act as witnesses in these documents. In SAA 6, p. 73, no. 83 and pp. 119–20, no. 133, mentioned above (both from 694 B.C.E.), *sukkallu* is a judge. SAA 7, pp. 72–73, no. 57, and p. 161, no. 155 (both from the time of Sargon II) are discussed below.

<sup>36</sup> SAA 1, p. 97 and p. 151, nos. 123, 191; SAA 5, pp. 124–25, no. 168 (ca. 714 B.C.E. since Urartu is mentioned); SAA 15, pp. 96 and 115–16, nos. 138 (709 B.C.E.), 169 (710 B.C.E.). See SAA 15, pp. XL–XLVII for the dates. SAA 17, pp. 21, 22, 61, 62, 70–71, 71–72, 87–88, 116, 118–19, 121–22, 154–55, nos. 20 (710 B.C.E.), 21 (710 B.C.E.), 64 (709–710 B.C.E.), 66 (709–710 B.C.E.), 77 (710 B.C.E.), 78 (710 B.C.E.), 95 (time of Sennacherib), 132 (710 B.C.E.), 136 (time of Sennacherib), 141 (time of Sennacherib), 142? (time of Sennacherib), 177 (early years of Sennacherib). SAA 17, pp. 154–55, no. 177, was probably addressed to both the king and the vizier (see lines rev. 2–6). For the dates, see SAA 17, pp. XXXV–XXXVII.

<sup>37</sup> SAA 1, pp. 35–36, no. 34, and p. 48, no. 49; no. 34 is written by Sennacherib. The others are SAA 5, p. 5, no. 3, concerning the Urartu affairs; SAA 15, pp. 122–23, no.

183 (710 B.C.E.); SAA 1, pp. 99–100, no. 112 (706–692, but most probably 704 B.C.E.).

<sup>38</sup> For comparison from what I was able to track:

1. Among other officials who receive letters, but not from the king in Sargon's time are:
  - Tāb-šar-Aššur, chamberlain of Sargon (*masennu*) — three letters (SAA 5, pp. 77, 78, 87, nos. 96, 97, 110).
  - Sennacherib as a crown prince receives one letter (SAA 1, p. 122, no. 153).
  - Certain Nabū-dūru-ušur — three letters (SAA 1, pp. 165, 170–71, nos. 215, 220, 221).
  - Palace herald (*nāgir ekalli*) — one letter (SAA 5, pp. 111–12, no. 147; from Urzana, king of Mušasir!).
2. One letter from the time of Sennacherib:
  - Chief eunuch (*rab ša rēši*) — one letter (SAA 17, p. 50, no. 53, from Bēl-ibni, the puppet king of Sennacherib in Babylonia, 703–700 B.C.E.).
3. In the times of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal I found twenty-seven letters which are written not to or by the king:
  - The king's son, most probably Assurbanipal, but possibly Šamaš-šumu-ukīn, receives fifteen letters, at least five of them while a regent, and sends two (SAA 10, pp. 108–09, 114, 145–47, 153, 158, nos. 136, 180, 182, 186, 195; SAA 13, pp. 70–71, 128–29, nos. 78, 158; SAA 1, pp. 32–33, 35, 68, 101, 106, nos. 34, 35, 37, 38, 69, 70, 116, 124; SAA 18, pp. 7, 9, nos. 6, 7).

There is even more clear-cut proof of the prominence of the *sukkallu*'s position with indications of his closeness to the royal family. These are various distribution lists of goods:

1. In the distribution list of tribute and the audience gifts, which is in the letter of Sennacherib to the king (contains SAA 1, pp. 35–36, no. 34), the *sukkallu* is the fourth person to be mentioned after the king, the queen, and the crown prince:

rev. 2' [x] GÚ.UN KUG.UD 40 MA.NA KUG.UD *ku-um* Z[Ú-A]M<sup>1</sup>.[SI]  
 3' 20 TÚG<sup>6</sup>GADA<sup>MEŠ</sup> [2]0 TÚG<sup>6</sup>šad-din 3 DUG.LA *ma-qar-te*  
 4' 10 [I]a-at-[tú K]U<sub>6</sub> 1-lim KU<sub>6</sub><sup>MEŠ</sup> PAP *ma-da-tú*  
 5' 1 GIL KUG.GI 20 *kap-pi* KUG.UD 10 TÚG<sup>6</sup>GADA<sup>MEŠ</sup> 10 TÚG<sup>6</sup>šad-din  
 6' 4 TÚG<sup>6</sup>šad-din š[a n]a-me-di 1 DUG.LA *ma-qar-te* KU<sub>6</sub>  
 7' PAP *na-mur-tú* PAP *an-ni-ú* ša É.GAL  
 8' 5<sup>1</sup> MA.NA KUG.UD 5 TÚG<sup>6</sup>šad-din 5 TÚG<sup>6</sup>GADA<sup>MEŠ</sup> 1 DUG.LA *ma-[qar-te* KU<sub>6</sub>]  
 9' 1 *la-at-tú* KU<sub>6</sub> 1-lim KU<sub>6</sub><sup>MEŠ</sup> PAP *ma-da-te* MÍ.É.[GAL]  
 10' 10 MA.NA KUG.UD 5 TÚG<sup>6</sup>šad-din 5 TÚG<sup>6</sup>GADA<sup>MEŠ</sup> 1 DUG.LA [*ma-qar-te* KU<sub>6</sub>]  
 11' 1 *la-at-tú* KU<sub>6</sub> 1-me KU<sub>6</sub><sup>MEŠ</sup> PAP *ma-da-te* DUMU.LUGAL  
 12' 6 MA.NA KUG.UD 5 TÚG<sup>6</sup>šad-din 2 TÚG<sup>6</sup>GADA<sup>MEŠ</sup> LU\*SUKKAL *dan-nu*

[...] talents of silver, 40 minas of silver in place of i[vory], 20 tunics, 20 togas, 3 potfuls of iced (fish), creels of 1,000 fish all tribute; one mural crown of gold, 20 silver bowls, 10 tunics, 10 togas, 4 togas *made to measure*, one potful of iced fish; all audience gift: all this to the palace;

5 minas of silver, 5 togas, 5 tunics, one potful of ic[ed fish], 1 creel of 100 fish all tribute: the queen;

10 minas of silver, 5 togas, 5 tunics, one potful of [iced fish], 1 creel of 100 fish; all tribute: the crown prince;

6 minas of silver, 3 togas, 2 tunics: the “strong *sukkallu*.”

Here he receives less silver than the crown prince and the *turtānu*, who follows him in the list and receives 10 minas. On the obverse of this letter the officials' titles are broken away (lines 18ff.), but when restored as on the reverse it appears that the vizier receives 1 talent and 10 minas of silver, while the queen receives 13 minas and the crown prince only 3 minas. All together, though the fourth in line, he receives the highest amount of silver after the king.<sup>39</sup> The figures of other commodities he is assigned are also higher than that of the queen and the crown prince.<sup>40</sup>

- The queen mother, presumably Naqī'a, receives nine letters (SAA 10, pp. 14–15, 118, 250, nos. 16, 17, 154, 313; SAA 13, pp. 66–67, nos. 76, 77, 188; SAA 18, pp. 7, 9, nos. 10, 85).
- *Sukkallu* of Esarhaddon receives one letter (SAA 18, pp. 22–23, no. 21).
- King's (Esarhaddon's) daughter receives one letter (SAA 18, p. 41, no. 55).
- Certain lady Balṭi-lēšir, addressed as a male (EN-ja), as is usually the queen-mother receives one letter (SAA 16, pp. 48–49, no. 56).

There is also one letter by šērū'a-ēṭirat to the lazy Libbāli-šarrat (SAA 16, p. 23, no. 28), four letters of

priests (SAA 13, pp. 39–41, nos. 39, 40, 41, 42), and three of scholars to each other (SAA 10, pp. 147, 309, 315, nos. 183, 372, 384). This correspondence includes of course only the letters found in royal archives, and not in the provincial ones (Postgate 1973).

<sup>39</sup> Total amounts of silver, which are a share of Sargon II's close circle in the tribute and audience gifts according to SAA 1, pp. 35–36, no. 34:

The king (= the Palace)	2+x talent 60 minas
The queen	18 minas
The crown prince	13 minas
The (grand) vizier	1 talent 16 minas

<sup>40</sup> See Mattila 2000, p. 144, for comparative table.

2. In the distribution list of silver (SAA 7, pp. 72–73, no. 57 i 1–5), the *sukkallu* appears second after the crown prince, and presumably the third after the king. He is followed by the right and left *turtānus*:

col. i	1	[ x x ] x KUG.UD	[...] of silver
	2	[D]UMU.MAN	[x] the crown prince
	3	[x <sup>L</sup> ]SUKKAL	[x], the vizier
	4	[x <sup>L</sup> ]tur-tan ZAG [x]	commander in chief of the right
	5	[x <sup>L</sup> ]tur-tan KAB <sup>L</sup> [x]	commander in chief of the left

3. The *sukkallu* (together with *sukkallu šaniu*) appears after the queen and the crown prince and before the “king’s seed” in a list of junketers (or banquet meal distribution?; SAA 7, p. 161, no. 155, lines 1–6):

1	2?-te? BUR <sup>L</sup> ṛšá <sup>L</sup> É <sup>L</sup> .[GAL?]	second meal of the palace
2	1 MÍ.É?.[GAL?]	1, the queen
3	[1] DUMU.LUGAL	1, the crown prince
4	[x] LÚ*SUKKAL dan-[nu]	... the “strong” vizier
5	[x] LÚ*SUKKAL 2-[u]	... the second vizier
6	[x LÚ*]NUMUN?.[MAN]	... the king’s seed

All the evidence cited above clearly demonstrates that during the reign of Sargon II the *sukkallu* was the third person after the king and the crown prince in the administration, and he probably had connections to the royal family.

### Identification of Sargon II’s *sukkallu*

Naturally the question arises: can we call the man by his name? It seems to me that we can. Sargon II had a brother with a telling name: *Sîn-aḫu-ušur*, which means: “(the god) *Sîn*, protect the brother!” His name is attested only three times in Sargon’s entire reign: first in Sargon II’s Letter to Aššur (Mayer 1983, pp. 80–81, line 132) praising Sargon’s prowess in attacking the enemy with only *Sîn-aḫu-ušur*’s detachment. This episode took place during the Urartian campaign, in which the *sukkallu* (SAA 5, pp. 5, 124–25, nos. 3 and 168) participated, according to the correspondence. The second time *Sîn-aḫu-ušur* is mentioned, it is in his three almost identical inscriptions, most probably dated to 707 or 706 B.C.E. (fig. 8.10),<sup>41</sup> incised into the stone carpets of the thresholds of Palace L at Dūr-Šarrukēn, a structure second in splendor only to the royal palace located directly next to it. So reads the inscription of inauguration of *Sîn-aḫu-ušur*’s palace (Loud and Altman 1938, p. 104, C; Meissner 1944, pp. 37–38):

<sup>m</sup>dEN.ZU-ŠEŠ-ú-šur LÚSUKKAL.MAḪ ta-lim <sup>m</sup>MAN-GIN MAN kiš-šat  
 MAN KUR Aš+šur<sup>KI</sup> ĠR.NÍTA. KÁ.DINGIR.RA<sup>KI</sup> MAN KUR EME.GI, u URI<sup>KI</sup>  
 mi-gir DINGIR<sup>MEŠ</sup> GAL<sup>MEŠ</sup> É šá-a-šú \*TA UŠ<sub>8</sub>-šú EN gaba-dib-bi-šú

<sup>41</sup> *Sîn-aḫu-ušur*’s inscription most probably dates to 707 or 706 B.C.E. because it relates to the time after inauguration of the Dūr-Šarrukēn temples, and Palace L should have been finished before the inauguration of the city

in 706 B.C.E. (Eponym Chronicle; Millard 1994, p. 48). On this inscription as Palace L inauguration inscription, see Hurowitz 2012. I thank Professor Hurowitz for sharing his manuscript with me.

*ir-ši-ip ú-šak-lil* DINGIR<sup>MEŠ</sup> GAL<sup>MEŠ</sup> *a-ši-bu-ut*  
 KUR Aš+šur<sup>KI</sup> ù URU šá-a-šú *ina qer-bi-šú iq-re-ma* UDU.SISKUR.<sup>MEŠ</sup>  
 KÙ<sup>MEŠ</sup> *ma-ḥar-šú-un iq-qi ina ku-un lib-bi-šú-nu* KÙ<sup>m</sup>MAN-GIN  
*ik-tar-ra-bu-ma šá* md<sup>(l)</sup>30-PAP-PAB ŠEŠ *ta-lim-me-šú iq-bu-u šá ṭa-bu-uš*

Sîn-aḥu-ušur, the grand vizier (*sukkalmahḥu*), *talīmu* of Sargon, king of the universe, king of Assyria, governor (*šakkanakku*) of Babylon, king of the land of Sumer and Akkad, favorite of the great gods, erected (and) completed this house from its foundation to the crenellation. He (Sargon) invited the great gods dwelling in Assyria and in this city to enter it, and performed pure sacrifices before them. In the constancy of their pure hearts, they permanently blessed him, and pronounced (a destiny) of good for Sîn-aḥu-ušur, his *talīmu*-brother.

This inscription identifies Sîn-aḥu-ušur as Sargon II's brother, using both the usual word for brother — *aḥu*, and the highly literary *talīmu*.<sup>42</sup> Sîn-aḥu-ušur is there also given the Babylonian title *sukkalmahḥu*, which is a *hapax* in the entire Assyrian corpus of sources.<sup>43</sup>

Can we identify the *sukkallu* with Sîn-aḥu-ušur? I argue that there are grounds to do so:

- The *sukkallu* was obviously the most powerful of all Sargon's magnates. The office was resurrected to its might following the Middle Assyrian model. Middle Assyrian *sukkallus* were of royal blood.
- Sîn-aḥu-ušur's residence was the lavish palace next to that of the king (fig. 8.11). It served as his office as well.
- Sîn-aḥu-ušur incised his own inscription which exalts his position and closeness to the king. Monumental inscriptions, other than royal ones, are rare in the Neo-Assyrian period.
- Both the *sukkallu* and Sîn-aḥu-ušur participated in the Urartian campaign.
- Sîn-aḥu-ušur, the *sukkalmahḥu*, is never mentioned in correspondence and other documents, despite his obviously exceptional position, as follows from his inscription and the fact that he built his palace next to his brother the king. I believe it is because in letters and documents a less pompous title is used; the one for "every day." *Sukkalmahḥu* is a Babylonian title, which Sîn-aḥu-ušur probably received when Sargon entered Babylon and accepted the title *šakkanak Bābili*. *Sukkalmahḥu* was used on a ceremonial occasion and would not be used in the letters, similarly to Sargon being addressed in the letters as *šarru* and not as *šakkanakku*<sup>44</sup> even by

<sup>42</sup> *Talīmu* is a very high literary word used solely for divine, and in Assyria also for royal, counterparts (Nabopolassar clearly follows the Assyrian examples). The application of *talīmu* for designating the relationship between two humans began during the Neo-Assyrian period, particularly in the reign of Sargon II. It was together with the introduction of *sukkalmahḥu* and *šakkanak Bābili* one of the philological experiments of Sargon's scribes. The firmly established use of *talīmu* in the meaning "brother" starts in connection with the brother (*aḥu talīmu*) of Aḥimiti of Ashdod, whom Sargon installed on the throne instead of Aḥimiti (Fuchs 1994, p. 133, Ann 244; p. 219, Ann 94) in 712 B.C.E. or shortly before (Tadmor 1958, pp. 79–80). It seems that

*talīmu* is applied to Sîn-aḥu-ušur as a "title" and not just as a designation of kinship in his inscriptions since *talīm šarrukēn* might be taken as standing in apposition to the grand vizier (*sukkalmah*). Most copious and also reciprocal usage of *talīmu* is found in the inscriptions of Assurbanipal and Šamaš-šumu-ukīn, in which it is used as a grandiloquent word to exalt the relationship of royal siblings. The meaning of the word was a matter of manipulations of the Assyrian royal scribes (May forthcoming).

<sup>43</sup> This word is generally rare; see CAD S s.v. *sukkalmahḥu*.

<sup>44</sup> Sargon II was first to introduce the Babylonian title *šakkanak Bābili* to the Neo-Assyrian milieu. But before him it was only used by Itti-Marduk-balāṭu and his son



the Babylonians. In the Assyrian triple date formulas Sargon II is also called *šarru*.<sup>45</sup> *Sîn-aḥu-ušur* is the only known Assyrian *sukkalmahḫu*.

- The absence of a prominent and powerful royal family member, the king's brother, from the distribution lists is highly conspicuous. Significant is that in the place where the king's brother *Sîn-aḥu-ušur* should be appears the *sukkallu*.
- Sargon's *sukkallu* had a cupbearer (<sup>LÚ</sup>KAŠ.LUL *ša* <sup>LÚ</sup>SUKKAL; SAA 6, pp. 14–15, no. 12). In Assyria only the king, the queen, and the queen mother are known to have a cupbearer (CAD Š/2 s.v. *šākû* A) with probably only one exception (Postgate 1973, p. 130, no. 102, line 7).
- By the beginning of 710 B.C.E. Sargon's *sukkallu* has his own military force (*ki-šir*<sup>MEŠ</sup> *ša* <sup>LÚ\*</sup>SUKKAL;<sup>46</sup> SAA 15, pp. 115–16, no. 169, line 6).

The clear-cut proof<sup>47</sup> that identifies Sargon II's *sukkallu* with *Sîn-aḥu-ušur* comes from the recently published inscription on a long-known bronze mace<sup>48</sup> found in the nineteenth century during French excavations of Dūr-Šarrukēn. It reads as follows (after Niederreiter 2005, pp. 58, 60):

É.GAL <sup>m</sup>MAN.GIN MAN ŠÚ<sup>1</sup> KUR AŠ  
 šá <sup>m<d></sup>30-PAP-PAB SUKKAL GAL-u

Palace of Sargon, king of the universe, king of Assyria.  
 Of *Sîn-aḥu-ušur*, the grand vizier (*sukkalu rabiu*).

Zoltán Niederreiter of course suggests the identification of *Sîn-aḥu-ušur* with the *sukkallu* (2005, pp. 63–64), but wonders why *Sîn-aḥu-ušur* is absent from letters and documents (ibid., p. 65). In letters and documents *Sîn-aḥu-ušur* appears as just *sukkallu*, at best as *sukkallu dannu* (SAA 1, pp. 35–36, no. 34; SAA 7, p. 161, no. 155), as well as the king is not called by name. *Sukkallu*, the king's brother was well known, and his prominent position did not need to be identified with the name in the documents, his title was enough.<sup>49</sup> The title *sukkallu rabiu* (SUKKAL GAL), well known in the time of Sargon II due to the Middle Assyrian stela, was chosen to be written upon the mace obviously for the sake of brevity. It can now be firmly established that *sukkallu* = *sukkallu dannu* = *sukkallu rabiu* = *sukkalmahḫu* of the period of Sargon II is his brother *Sîn-aḥu-ušur*, and the more or less lavish variants of this title are allusions to either Middle Assyrian or Babylonian or even Elamite connotations and meanings associated with *sukkallu*.<sup>50</sup> *Sukkallu dannu* is, however, also Sargon II's invention. The office of *sukkallu*

Nebuchadnezzar I (CAD Š/1 s.v. *šakkanakku* 2b, 2' b'). Sargon II also is called *šakkanak Bēl u Marduk* alluding first of all to the Assyrian *šakkanak* <sup>d</sup>Aššur. I accept Vera Chamaza's (2002, pp. 62–64 with n. 29) interpretation for Marduk being the only real king, and Sargon his earthly proxy, the vicar.

<sup>45</sup> See n. 21.

<sup>46</sup> To the best of my knowledge the only analogy to this expression is *kišir šarri*. I would suggest that *kišir sukkallu* was the actual denomination of *Sîn-aḥu-ušur*'s detachment, the one which was “poetically” described as *perru* in Sargon's Letter to Aššur (Mayer 1983, p. 81, line 132).

<sup>47</sup> This paper was first presented as a lecture at the seventh Oriental Institute Post-doctoral Seminar in April

2010, before the article of Niederreiter was known to me. I have chosen to keep my argumentation here as it was before I became aware of *Sîn-aḥu-ušur*'s mace inscription.

<sup>48</sup> See Niederreiter 2005, p. 58, for bibliography, and Al-benda 1988, p. 17, fig. 25, for the photograph.

<sup>49</sup> See also the above-mentioned letters to the crown prince and the king's daughter (n. 39), in which personal names are not used either.

<sup>50</sup> For the *sukkalmahḫu* designating the king of Elam after the fall of Ur III, see Charpin and Durand 1991; CAD S s.v. *sukkalmahḫu* 2. It is tantalizing to draw a parallel between *Sîn-aḥu-ušur* and the Middle Assyrian mighty official *Bāba-aḥa-iddina*, but there is no evidence of

was restored to its grandeur in the reign of Sargon especially for his brother following the Middle Assyrian patterns.<sup>51</sup> The choice of the name and the title of *Sîn-aḫū-uṣur* is obviously not accidental, taking into consideration Sargon II's love of gematria and esoteric lore (e.g., Frahm 2005). Not only did the title have far-reaching political associations with the Middle Assyrian "king of Ḫanigalbat," but also with *sukkalmahḫu* as the title of the kings of Elam. Not only is the meaning of the name *Sîn-aḫū-uṣur* "Sin, protect the brother,"<sup>52</sup> but it is also often ideographically written as <sup>md</sup>30-PAP-PAB<sup>53</sup> with the allusion to the god Pap-sukkal, the vizier of the gods (Tallqvist 1938, pp. 436–37). In fact, *sukkallu* is an office often "held" by the gods, the only one of Sumerian origin among the Neo-Assyrian office names. The sign ŠEŠ = *aḫū* "brother" can also be read URI<sub>3</sub> = *naṣāru* "to protect." This writing is played upon within the first lines of the Palace L inscriptions (B and C). Line 7 of these inscriptions can also be interpreted as <sup>md</sup>30-PAP-PAB URI<sub>3</sub> *ta-lim-me-šú* "Sîn-aḫū-uṣur, protector of his *talīmu*."<sup>54</sup>

The omega and dromedary, which appear on the mace after the name and title of *Sîn-aḫū-uṣur* (Niederreiter 2005, p. 58) and on two stamp seal impressions from Kalḫu also belonging to *Sîn-aḫū-uṣur*,<sup>55</sup> are definitely "Assyrian hieroglyphs," so much loved by Sargon II.<sup>56</sup> The omega is usually associated with the uterus and motherhood<sup>57</sup> and might signify that Sargon II and *Sîn-aḫū-uṣur* — two figures represented on seal impressions — were sons of the same mother, that is, two full brothers.<sup>58</sup>

### Main Import of Sargon II's Administrative Reform

To return to the above-discussed administrative changes of Sargon II, the essence of his reform was the parceling of the offices of the magnates, limiting and diminishing their power, and leveling the differences in their statuses. The other feature of Sargon's reign is the king strongly leaning on the support of his immediate family: his son and heir Sennacherib,<sup>59</sup> and his brother *Sîn-aḫū-uṣur*. The ancient office of *sukkallu* was resurrected and vested with extended authority and prestige especially for *Sîn-aḫū-uṣur*.

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Bāba-aḫa-iddina being called *sukkalmahḫu* in the ancient sources. This title was assigned to him by modern scholars (Ebeling 1933; Weidner 1959/60).

<sup>51</sup> Already Borger (1964, p. 21) pointed to Esarhaddon's *sukkallu* Abī-rāmu being *šakin māṭ Ḫanigalbat* as an archaism.

<sup>52</sup> See also Niederreiter 2005, pp. 61–63 and 72–73.

<sup>53</sup> Thus on the mace, in the Letter to Aššur, line 132, and in line 7 of *Sîn-aḫū-uṣur*'s inscriptions B and C.

<sup>54</sup> Niederreiter provides convincing archaeological evidence in favor of showing that *Sîn-aḫū-uṣur* was the head of Sargon II's bodyguard (2005, p. 68). However, Thureau-Dangin's translation of line 132 of the Letter to Aššur (Mayer 1983, p. 81), which he quotes in favor of this assumption, is most plausible but uncertain because of *ki-tul-lum* rendered as "le troupe" is an archaizing hapax of unknown meaning (CAD K s.v. *kitullu*) and *perru*, translated by Thureau-Dangin as "l'escadron," usually would mean "labor detachment" (CAD P s.v. *pirru* A), but on this occasion can only be a kind of special military force the exact function of which is not clear.

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<sup>55</sup> As was shown by Niederreiter 2005, pp. 66–69. For publication of these impressions ND. 806 and 809, see Parker 1955, pp. 113–14 with pl. 22:2, 4; and Postgate 1973, pp. 236–37 with pl. 86. Both are firmly dated to 716 B.C.E. by ND. 80, which was found together with them (Postgate 1973, p. 237). Parker's reference to 706 B.C.E. is a mistake.

<sup>56</sup> See Frahm 2005, no. 44 with n. 28 for further bibliography.

<sup>57</sup> See Keel 1989, pp. 56ff. with further literature. Also Parker 1955, pp. 112–13.

<sup>58</sup> It is tempting to suggest that the name *Sîn-aḫū-uṣur* is encoded with these signs, but I did not find any hint that would point to the dromedary as standing for *uṣur*. The third sign that would designate *Sîn* is missing not only on the mace and seal impression ND. 806, on which it could be broken away, but also on the intact ND. 809.

<sup>59</sup> The role of Sennacherib as Sargon's crown prince is well known (Frahm 2002, pp. 1116–17).

## WHY WERE THE FACADE n RELIEFS REMODELED?

Let us return to the remodeled reliefs of the Dūr-Šarrukēn throne-room courtyard, and track what happened to the official following the crown prince in the row of courtiers, the “third man” of the empire. It must be pointed out in advance that though the changes on the first slab of the relief sequence of facade n were far more reaching than those of the others in this sequence (fig. 8.7a–b), it would be methodologically wrong to treat them as not interrelated. These reliefs are one complex and their remodeling should be seen as the remodeling of the complex in its entirety.

Currently a eunuch follows the crown prince in the procession of the officials. His headband was recarved, as were the rest of the diadems of the court VIII officials, but the remodeling of this figure was more extensive than of the others: the original figure had a beard; the remodeled headband was different from that of the other officials, and also from that of the crown prince (fig. 8.12a). Not only was the headband of the king’s third man remodeled, but he also became clean shaven (fig. 8.12b).

The change turned the bearded man, the empire’s highest official and a member of a royal family, into a eunuch. The headband had tassels, which Reade showed to be a feature of the crown princes’ headgear (Reade 1972, p. 93; idem 2009, pp. 249–50). He called it a “diadem with two bands pendant behind” (Reade 1972, p. 93). However, he later tried to show that the tasseled headband can also be worn by high officials (Reade 2009, pp. 252–53).<sup>60</sup>

I argue that the pendent tassels or bands of the headgear are a signifier of the relationship with royalty. The headband with pendent tassels was worn by the kings above the royal fez (fig. 8.13). On its own it is the headgear and the main visual indicator of the Assyrian crown princes (fig. 8.14). A special and unique kind of headband was invented for Šamaš-šumu-ukīn, the Assyrian crown prince of Babylonia. As for the queens, not only do we have representations of them wearing tasseled headgear, but such a headband with one pendent tassel was actually unearthed in the queens tomb II at Kalḫu, and most likely belonged to either Queen Yabâ or Queen Ataliyâ (fig. 8.15), who were buried there, as follows from the inscriptions on the objects found in this tomb (al-Rawi 2008, pp. 136–37, nos. 18, 19, 21, 24). A young woman wearing headgear with a pendent band is represented worshipping a goddess on the golden stamp seal from tomb III. The inscription on the rim says: šá<sup>mi</sup>Ḫa-ma-a MÍ.É.GAL šá<sup>m</sup>Šul-man-MAŠ MAN KUR AŠ kal-lat<sup>m</sup>U-ERIN.DAḪ “belonging to Ḫamâ, queen of Šalmaneser, king of Assyria, daughter-in-law of Adad-nīrārī” (ibid., p. 136, no. 16; fig. 8.16). Finally, a pendent band is attached to the mural crown of a queen (Naqī’a?) depicted behind the king on the bronze plaque from Babylon(?) (fig. 8.17; Streck 2001, p. 930). This last example shows that the pendent tassels or bands could be attached to a different kind of head attire. Thus the “pendent band” of the headdress is a feature identifying royalty, including the king’s closest family and not only a crown prince. It still can be seen that the bands of the re-carved headgear on the Dūr-Šarrukēn relief (fig. 8.12b) were different from that of the crown prince

<sup>60</sup> However, his argumentation fails to convince. An un-inscribed carnelian cylinder seal from the queens’ tomb III at Kalḫu represents a goddess with a feathered and tasseled divine crown to the left of the stylized tree worshiped by the king and a beardless figure with “pendent band” to the right of it. The goddess is firmly identified not only by her crown, but also by her flounced dress.

The beardless figure is most plausibly a queen, and not a eunuch as Reade proposes. Reade’s assumptions concerning the person represented on the second object he discusses are hard to prove. For the history of ideas concerning the “headband with pendant tassels,” see most comprehensively Ataç 2010, pp. 90–91 with nn. 2–4.

Sennacherib (fig. 8.12a), who precedes the figure of the remodeled dignitary — there was probably a single tassel shorter than that of the crown prince, and rounded, not fringed. The recarved headband itself also differs from that of the crown prince: it is of even width, and not wider above the forehead, as is the band of Sennacherib. The original relief depicted the person most powerful in the empire after the king and the crown prince, a member of the royal family — the (grand) vizier (*sukkallu* = *sukkallu dannu* = *sukkallu rabiu* = *sukkalmahḫu*), which is now firmly established to be Sîn-aḫu-uṣur, the brother of Sargon II, the king.<sup>61</sup>

The question remains, why was the image of the (grand) vizier remodeled, or as the Old Babylonian names say, <sup>m</sup>*Ali-talimu* — “where is the (king’s) brother?” Iconoclasm was not the issue here, as well as for the other reliefs of the throne-room court. Sîn-aḫu-uṣur’s inscriptions display no intentional damage, which also excludes iconoclasm. As the above-discussed correspondence and documents testify Sîn-aḫu-uṣur continued to hold the office of *sukkallu* and be active until 694 B.C.E., nine years after his brother’s death. Neither Sargon nor Sennacherib would re-carve his image for any reason, which would suggest iconoclasm in his case. So what could have caused the remodeling? I believe that the first and immediate reason was again Sargon II’s administrative reform. It leveled all the officials, and the purpose of the relief became to show the king attended by his officials who were led by the crown prince. The rest are without status signifiers, though still distinguished by their place in line.

I argue that since a certain point in Sargon II’s reign, to wear a headband was a privilege of the king and the crown prince only. The rest of the officials had to be bare headed, presumably in the king’s presence at least. This rule applied to the grand vizier, the king’s brother as well. The pendent tassels — signifier of royalty — could remain. The evidence of this is a relief from Dūr-Šarrukēn room 6 (fig. 8.18a–b). The man who greets the king and appears in the place of the crown prince does not have a headband, and there are no traces of remodeling.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>61</sup> See Guralnick, this volume. However, her argumentation does not provide proof for this hypothesis. Armlets with gazelle-head terminals (Loud and Altman 1938, fig. 39) adorn the officials on OIM A7367, which, according to Albenda’s reconstruction (fig. 8.7b), was even located remote from the king’s effigy. The rosette bracelet cannot be a signifier of royalty as well, since it adorns at least two eunuchs: the one represented on a relief also from Dūr-Šarrukēn (Albenda 1986, fig. 74) and the one whose statue was broken and subsequently buried at Til-Barsip (Roobaert 1996, figs. 2a–b and 4). Nevertheless, the rosette bracelets might be a signifier of high status. Given that Til-Barsip was within the province of *turtānu* (Mattila 2000, p. 115), and that the left *turtānu* of Sargon II (Fuchs 1994, p. 179, Ann 409) and allegedly Šamši-ilu (Mattila 2000, p. 132) were eunuchs, it is not improbable that *turtānus* wore the rosette bracelets as a symbol of their most prominent position. If so, the remodeled figure on the facade relief after remodeling was meant to represent a *turtānu* — still the empire’s highest official after the crown prince and the *sukkallu*. That would also explain why the rosette bracelet was not removed. Rosette bracelets also adorn the female attendants carrying the whisks in the “Garden Scene” of Aššurbanipal. They are of a different design than that of the king and the crown prince at Dūr-Šarrukēn, but identical with that of the queen in the “Garden Scene.”

The identification suggested by Niederreiter (2005, pp. 72–73) with the bearded official on the relief in room 8 of the Dūr-Šarrukēn is hardly plausible: both men following the king are identical and indiscernible. They don’t have any signifiers of identity. Niederreiter argues that the mace of the first of these two bearded figures is the same as the mace with the inscription of Sîn-aḫu-uṣur. But in fact, on the one hand, maces of both dignitaries are chipped away. On the other, the bronze mace of Sîn-aḫu-uṣur is unique only for its inscription. On facade L a eunuch is represented with his intact mace topped by four lion heads (Botta and Flandin 1849, pl. 13, slabs 20–21). His attire, weapons, and position behind the king do not differ from that of the relief in room 8 except for the beards (ibid., pl. 117, slab 11). Taking into consideration that all these individuals are heavily armed and appear behind the king as is seemly to royal attendants, and not approaching him as do the officials, these are most probably the king’s bodyguard, maybe Sîn-aḫu-uṣur’s “detachment.” Finally, together with Sîn-aḫu-uṣur’s mace was discovered another, but more luxurious, mace also topped by lion heads (Place 1867, pl. 74, no. 12).

<sup>62</sup> So in the photograph (fig. 8.18b). The drawing in Flandin (fig. 8.18a) shows a man of the same corpulent body stature as in the photograph, but represents him with a common crown prince’s headgear consisting of a

Moreover, he is adorned with one hanging tassel and a fringed garment hem crosses his chest. The latter is only attested for the king's attire (Albenda 1986, *passim*), never for the crown prince's. His corpulent body and face are that of an older man than on representations of Sennacherib, the crown prince. My suggestion is that here indeed *Sîn-aḫu-ušur* is depicted.

*Sîn-aḫu-ušur*'s image on the facade relief was however removed completely (fig. 8.12b). What was the reason? The written sources, especially the correspondence of the (grand) vizier, supply the answer: fourteen letters addressed to or mentioning the *sukkallu* are from Babylonia. Mattila already noticed the *sukkallu*'s Babylonian connections (2000, pp. 99, 165). Eight of these letters date to 710–709 B.C.E. (SAA 15, pp. 122–23, no. 183; SAA 17, pp. 22–23, 61, 62, 70–71, 116, nos. 20, 21, 64, 66, 77, 78, 132) and six to the reign of Sennacherib (SAA 17, pp. 87–88, 99–100, 118–19, 121–22, 154–55, nos. 95, 112, 136, 141, 142?, 177). The subject matter varies widely: gifts to Ezida, intelligence, contacts with informants, Chaldean tribes, affairs of Borsippa, military moves, litigation, even the death of Merodach-Baladdan's wife (SAA 17, pp. 99–100, 112), and so forth.<sup>63</sup> The *sukkallu* was deeply involved in Sargon II's Babylonian undertakings from the very start: he arranged Sargon's triumphal entrance to Babylon in 710 B.C.E. (SAA 17, p. 22, no. 20). And most important: according to the Eponym Chronicle, in 707 B.C.E. King Sargon left Babylon and returned to Assyria for the inauguration of the newly built temples at Dūr-Šarrukēn.<sup>64</sup> *Sîn-aḫu-ušur*, the *sukkallu*, remained in Babylonia and destroyed Dūr-Yakīn, the home city of Sargon's most dangerous opponent in Babylonia, Merodach-Baladan, and carried off its magnates and its booty (Millard 1994, p. 48):

LUGAL TA\* [KÁ].DINGIR.RA<sup>KI</sup> is-suḫ-ra SUKKAL' GAL<sup>MEŠ</sup> šal-lu-tu/tú ša URUBÀD-ja-GIN na-ša URUBÀD-ja-GIN na-píl ITI<sup>DU</sup>6.KÙ UTU 22<sup>KÁM</sup> DINGIR<sup>MEŠ</sup>-ni ša URUBÀD-<sup>IM</sup>MAN-GIN ana É<sup>[MEŠ-</sup>šu-nu ...]<sup>65</sup>

The king returned from Babylon; the vizier (*sukkallu*) brought the magnates (as booty — *N.N.M.*) (and) the spoil of Dūr-Yakīn. Dūr-Yakīn (was) destroyed. On 22nd of Tishrei the gods of Dūr-Šarrukēn [entered] their temples.<sup>66</sup>

The evidence of the Eponym Chronicle and the letters clearly show that in the absence of Sargon II, *Sîn-aḫu-ušur* was managing Babylonian affairs, including the most important: the matter of the struggle with the “son of Yakīn,” Merodach-Baladan. I suggest that the *sukkallu*, who by that time should have had a great expertise in Babylonian affairs, was left there by Sargon to administer the region in his absence, while Merodach-Baladan was exiled, and Assyrian rule in Babylonia seemed to be firmly established. Thus he missed the inauguration of the temples and the palace. His absence from the ceremony was another reason why the image of the (grand) vizier was replaced on the reliefs of facade n, which represent was another reason why the inauguration of the palace. Due to their primary importance these reliefs were among the first ones carved in the early stages of the palace decoration.

headband with two pendent tassels. No documentation beyond that presented here survived, and it is not possible to establish if the relief on the photograph could have been restored.

<sup>63</sup> It is beyond the subject of this paper to investigate the activity of *Sîn-aḫu-ušur*, Sargon II's brother and *sukkallu*, thus it will be done elsewhere.

<sup>64</sup> The temples of Dūr-Šarrukēn were inaugurated on Tishrei 22, 707 B.C.E., that is, on occasion of the autumnal *akitu*.

<sup>65</sup> From copy B4, rev. lines 17'–20' (Millard 1994, pl. 16) and B6, rev. lines 4–5 (*ibid.*, pl. 17).

<sup>66</sup> In light of the single stative *našša*, the predicate of *sukkallu*, the only grammatically correct translation will be when taking both *GAL<sup>MEŠ</sup>* and *šal-lu-tu/tú* as direct objects with *ša URUBÀD-ja-GIN* relating to both of them (contra Millard 1994, p. 60; Glassner 2004, p. 175; Postgate and Mattila 2004, p. 235, who ignore the grammatical problem here).

John Brinkman has stressed on many occasions (e.g., 1973, p. 90; 1984, pp. 20–21) that Babylonia was a special case in the Assyrian system of territorial control: the Assyrian kings either ruled it themselves directly or installed puppet kings. But some of these so-called vassal kings were from the royal family, such as Aššur-nādin-šumi, son of Sennacherib (704–681 B.C.E.), or Šamaš-šumu-ukīn, brother of Assurbanipal (669–627? B.C.E.). Sargon was the king of Babylonia for five years (710–705 B.C.E.). For about two years (707–705 B.C.E.) he was not physically present in Babylonia. Both the correspondence and the Eponym Chronicle suggest that the king's brother, Sîn-aḥu-ušur, grand vizier (*sukkallu dannu* = *sukkalmahḥu*) was left behind to administer the affairs in Babylon and “missed the party” at Dūr-Šarrukēn. In this Sargon II probably followed the example of Tukulti-Ninurta I, whose proxy ruled Babylonia before the king assumed the kingship himself (Yamada 2003). That would be the first Sargonid experiment of placing Assyrian royal kin, namely the king's brother, in charge of Babylonia. This kind of arrangement was much like that of the second-millennium Assyria *sukkallu* ruling the most important province of Ḫanigalbat with the title “king of Ḫanigalbat,” of which their Neo-Assyrian descendants were very well aware.

Esarhaddon repeated Sargon II's experiment on much larger scale, advised by the queen-mother Naqī'a, who was already married to Sennacherib in 707–705 B.C.E. (Frahm 1997, p. 4; Streck 2001, p. 929) and should have been aware of Sargon's arrangements in Babylonia. It is diagnostic that in the Assyrian royal family the epithet *talīmu* was only given to Sîn-aḥu-ušur and Šamaš-šumu-ukīn. However, the position of Sîn-aḥu-ušur in Babylonia was different from that of Aššur-nādin-šumi and that of Šamaš-šumu-ukīn, who were officially appointed as the kings of Babylonia, though vassal to Assyria.

The figural images of courtyards VIII and I including that of the king's third man were remodeled for a good reason. The primary causes were the administrative reform, which equalized and diminished the king's magnates, and the increasing role of the king and his heir in the power structure of the Empire. The relief sequences representing the inauguration of the palace visually exalted the king and his heir and abated the status of the officials. The crown prince introduced the courtiers in front of the king. There was no place for anyone else of the equal rank nearby, not even for the king's brother and (grand) vizier. The last one was rewarded by being entrusted with rule over Babylonia. Moreover, as follows from the Palace L inscriptions, Sargon honored Sîn-aḥu-ušur, the *sukkallu*, with the inauguration of the palace of his own — an aggrandizement, which exalted him above all the other officials. He did not need to be represented in one row with the others anymore.

Nevertheless, the relief sequence in question appears on the walls of the throne-room courtyard and is a representation of the throne-room inauguration. The ceremony no doubt had a precise protocol, no less meticulous than the text of the Coronation Ritual (Müller 1937). The representation, though not a photograph, had to be exact. The above-mentioned letter of Sargon II's chamberlain (SAA 5, p. 199, no. 282) is the evidence of how accurate and careful Sargon was concerning the depictions of his officials. Notably, on one of his reliefs the inscription survived saying: *uš-ma-nu šá mTak-[lak-a-na-EN]* “camp of Tak[āk-ana-Bēl],” with reference to the year eponym of 715 B.C.E. (fig. 8.19).

Another obvious consideration was to not offend mighty magnates, who, despite Sargon's charisma and attempts at absolutism, were very influential in his time. As we now know, not only did Sîn-aḥu-ušur write his own inscription, but Nabû-bēl-ka'in also did (Postgate and Mattila 2004, p. 251 n. 50).<sup>67</sup> Nabû-damiq-ilāni was mentioned in royal inscriptions for building a stronghold on the Elamite frontier (Fuchs 1994, p. 170, Ann 382, Prunk 139), naturally in

accordance with the royal order. It is only in the time of Sargon or soon after his death that we learn of campaigns led by his magnates (GAL<sup>MES</sup>; Millard 1994, pp. 47, text B4, rev. line 9'; 49, text B6, rev. line 11'). So a usurper like Sargon II probably had<sup>68</sup> to take into account his own men, and to be careful in their representation at the depiction of such a central event of his reign as the inauguration of his palace.

Thus, despite that it involves status signifiers — the component diagnostic for iconoclastic obliteration — the remodeling of the images in Sargon's palace courts VIII and I are the visual evidence of dramatic and ongoing administrative changes during his rule. It reflects the political reality of the complex management system and balance of powers within the imperial ruling elite by the time of annexation of Babylonia and inauguration of the Assyrian new capital. The remodeling of courts L and facade n reliefs was not an act of iconoclasm, but in a certain sense — deconstruction.

## CONCLUSION

The two cases of destruction of figurative complexes were chosen to be discussed here for the similarity of their media — palatial reliefs, and their subject matter — representation of a ceremony. The careful analysis of the character of damage, possible circumstances that inflicted it, and the details of representation selected for erasure, revealed a totally different picture. The first case, the slabs of the passage to the Iṣtar temple, demonstrates a clear-cut episode of iconoclasm, one in a chain of such episodes of destruction of larger complexes: the South-West Palace of Sennacherib, the city of Nineveh, and the entire Assyrian empire in the course of the Median-Babylonian attack. The second case, the facade n reliefs of Sargon II's palace at Dūr-Šarrukēn, demonstrate the opposite. Despite the political reasons behind their re-modeling, and the re-carving of status signifiers, which would be diagnostic for iconoclasm, these reliefs did not suffer from iconoclasm.

The investigation of destruction of figurative complexes is the most promising branch of research of iconoclasm, because the complex evidence provides detailed and interconnected material for study.

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<sup>67</sup> Mattila (2000, pp. 92, 98, 156), following Parpola (1981, chart 3), suggested Nabû-bēl-ka'in as her candidate for *sukkallu* and did not withdraw him even in the light of the new prism inscription of this individual found at Tell Badaran, in which he appears as a governor of Araphḥa. She still promotes the idea that Nabû-bēl-ka'in could hold "the post of *sukkallu* concurrently with the governorship of Araphḥa" (Postgate and Mattila 2004, p. 251 n. 50). To the best of my knowledge this is the

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only prism inscription of an Assyrian official. This fact reveals an unusually great measure of independence and power that Sargon's magnates enjoyed. However, on the other occasion Parpola (SAA 1, p. XXI) equated letters SAA 1, pp. 97, 151, nos. 123, 191, as written to the (grand) vizier, the king's brother, but without reasoning this idea.

<sup>68</sup> See Vera Chamaza 1992 and Frahm 2005, no. 44 with n. 23, on this matter.

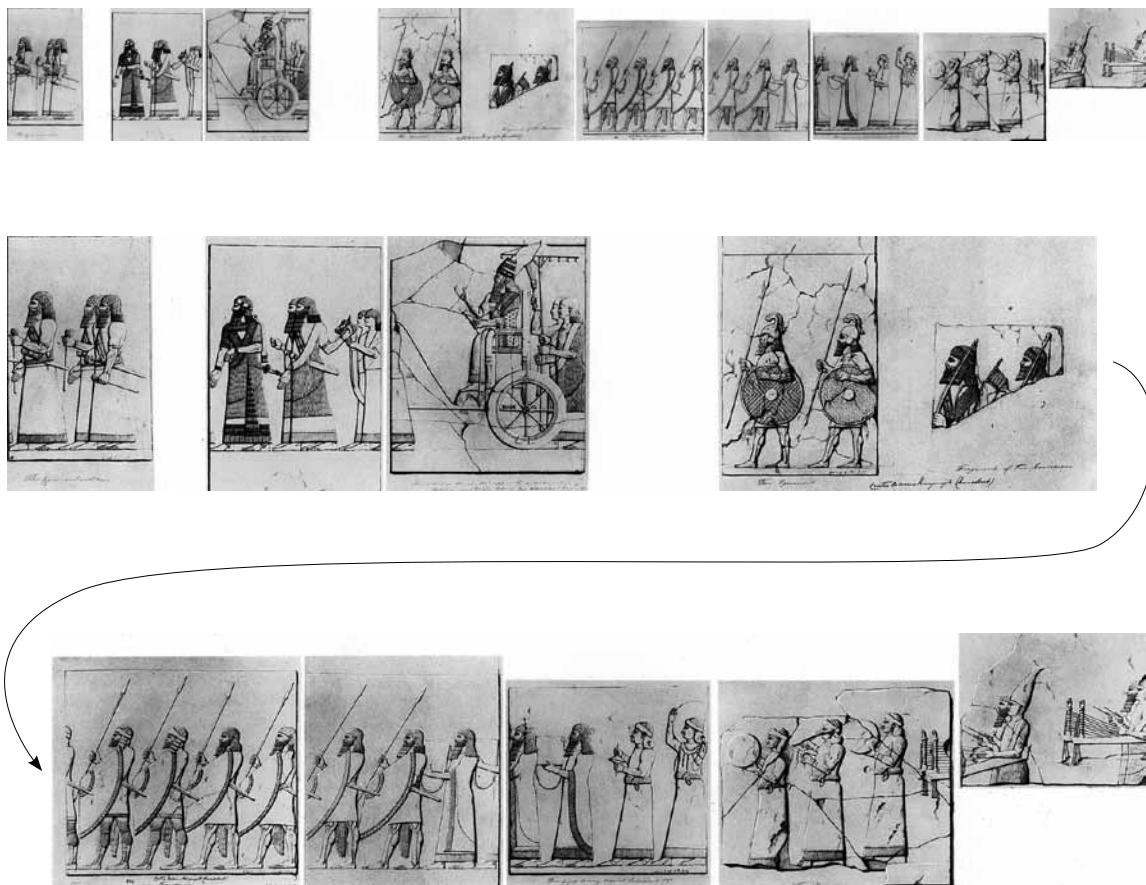


Figure 8.1. Reliefs of the passage leading toward the Ištar temple, South-West Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh (after Barnett, Bleibtreu, and Turner 1998, pl. 473). In sequence (above), and detail (below). Copyright of the Trustees of the British Museum



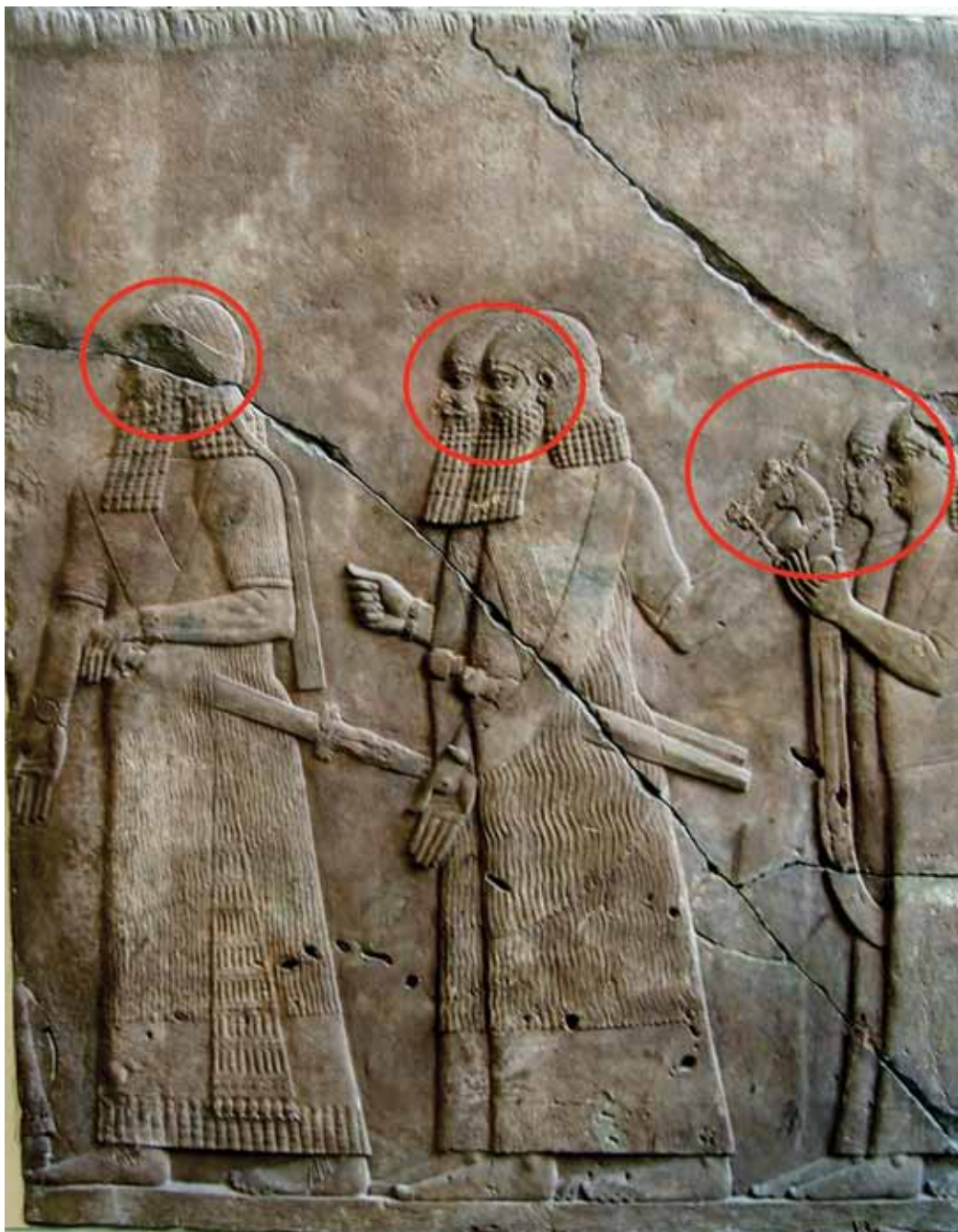


Figure 8.2. The crown prince, followed by two officials and two eunuchs pulling a wheeled throne. Reliefs of the passage leading toward the Istar temple. Slab 4. VA 955 (courtesy Natalie N. May)



Figure 8.3. Detail of the faces of eunuchs and the horse head adorning the wheeled throne, with traces of damage resulting from arrow shooting. Reliefs of the passage leading toward the Ištar temple. Slab 4. VA 955 (courtesy Natalie N. May)

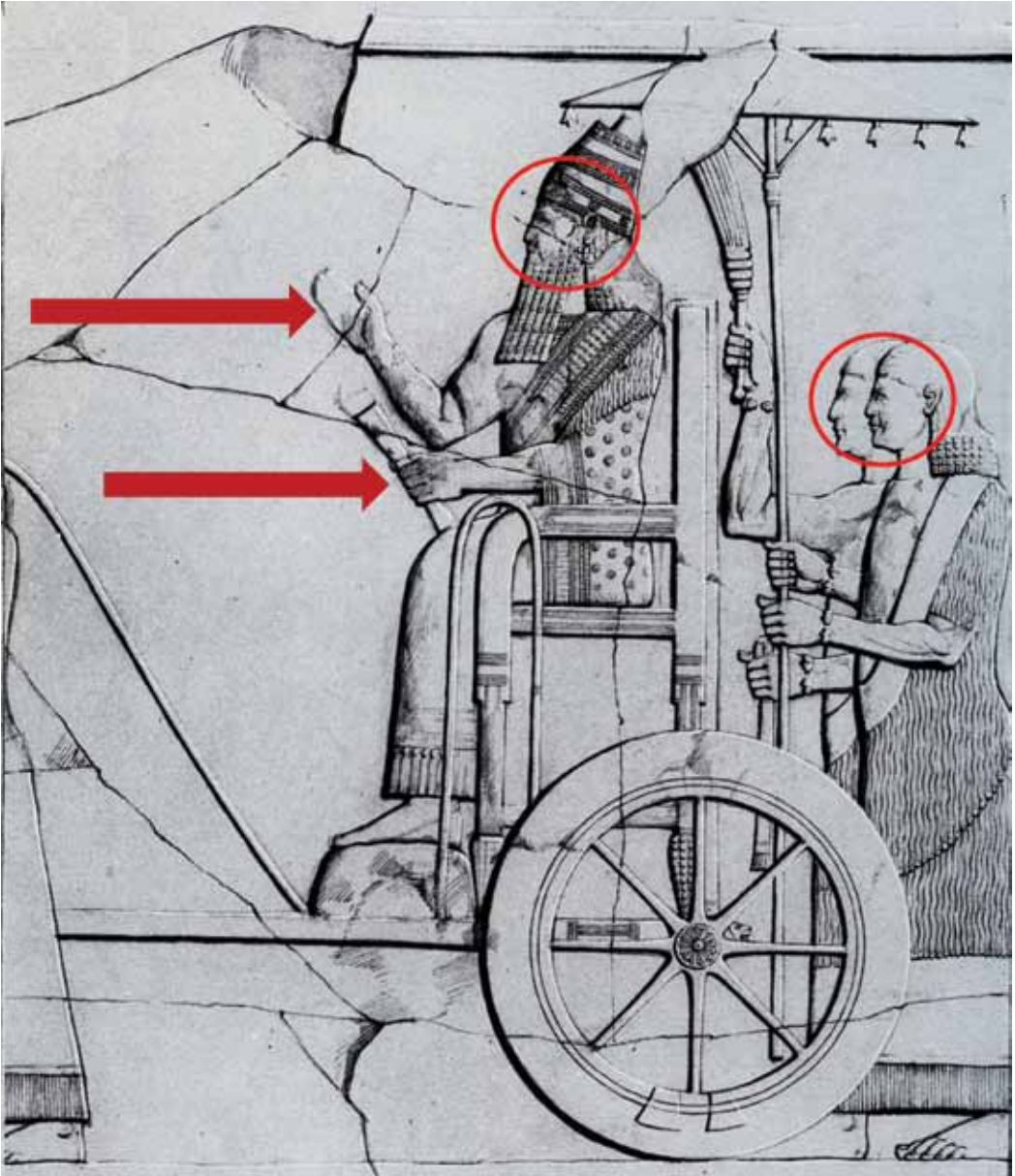


Figure 8.4. The king is on the wheeled throne followed by two attendants. Notice the damage to the faces and hands. Reliefs of the passage leading toward the Iṣtar temple (after Barnett, Bleibtreu, and Turner 1998, pl. 479, no. 660a, original drawing VI, 44; copyright of the Trustees of the British Museum)



Figure 8.5. The face of the crown prince. Notice the damage to the eyes and mouth. Reliefs of the passage leading toward the Iṣtar temple. Slab 4. VA 955, detail (courtesy Natalie N. May)

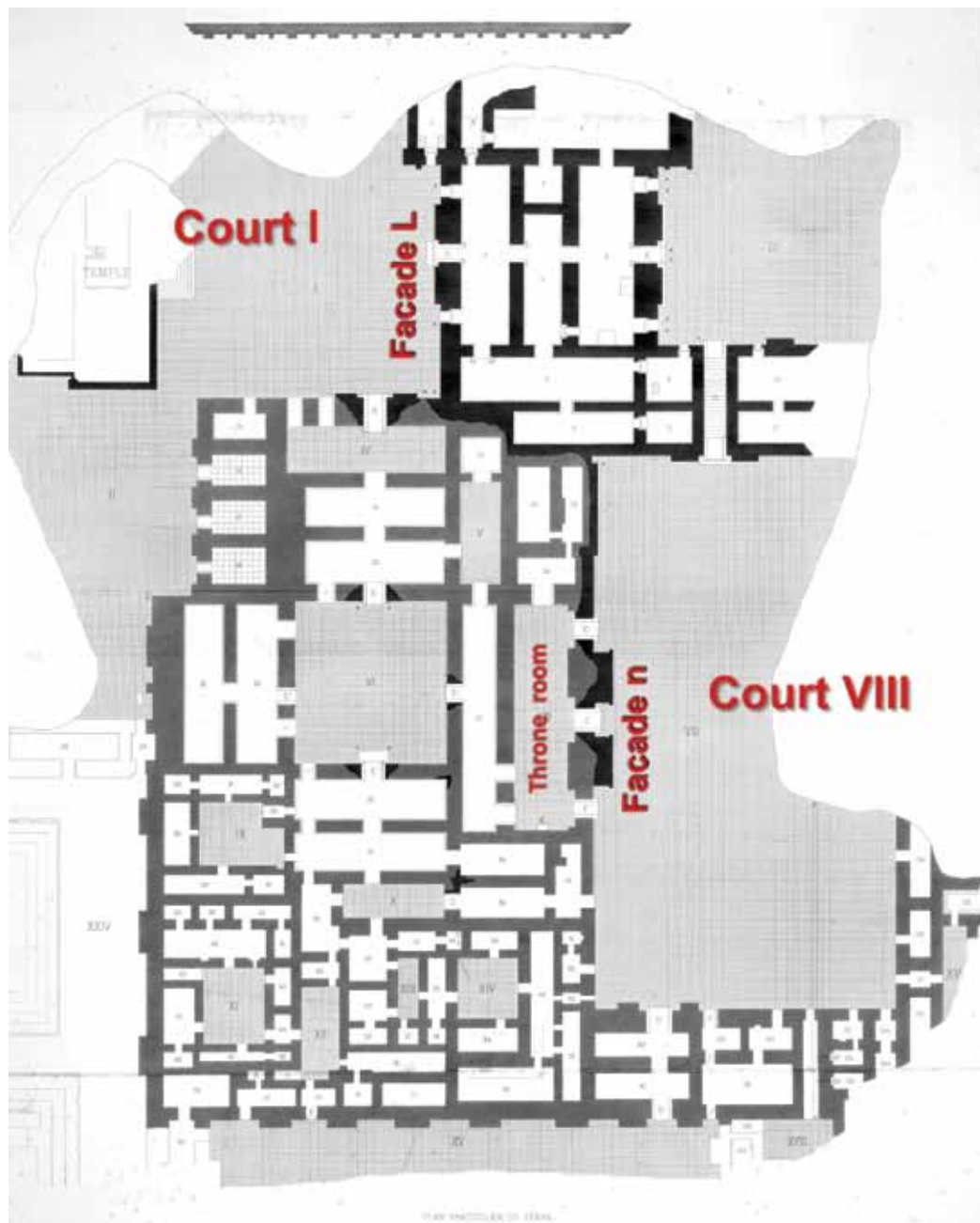
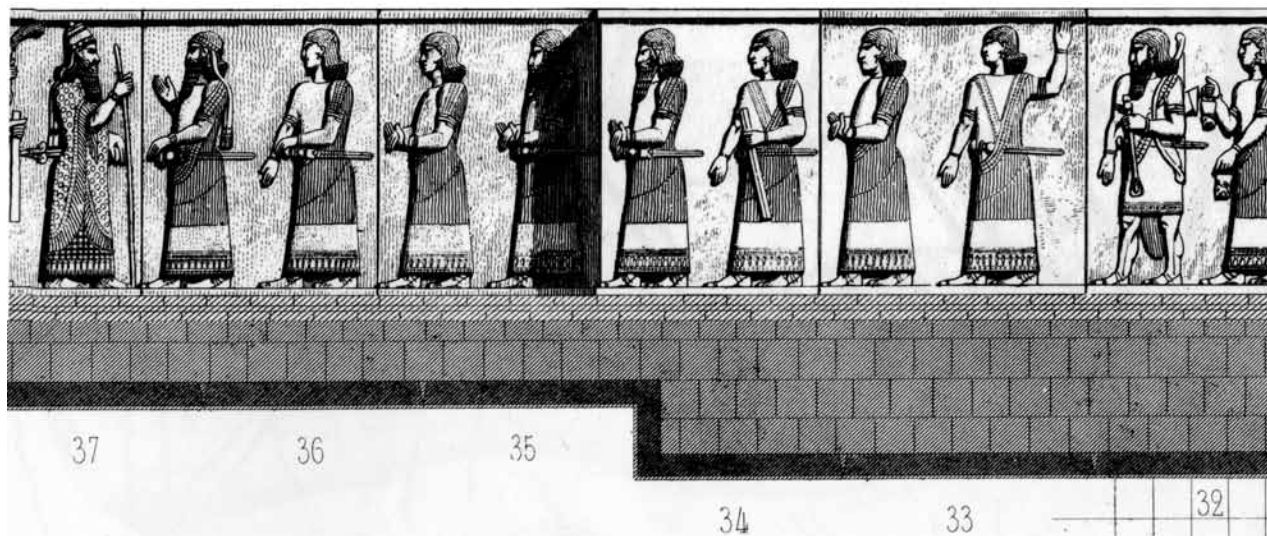
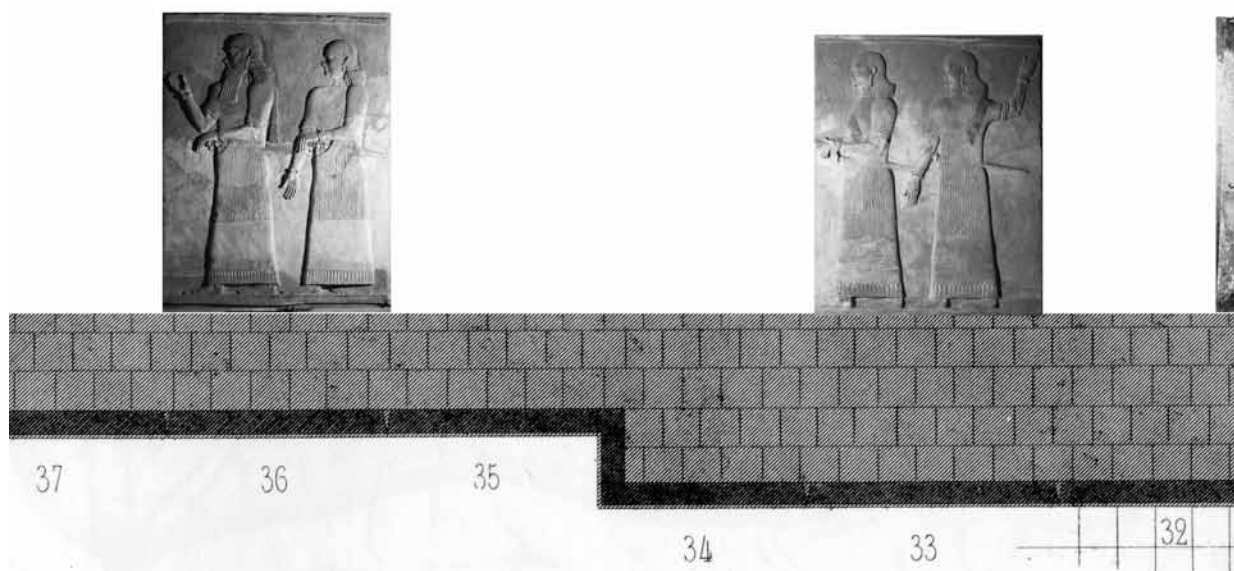


Figure 8.6. Plan of Sargon II's palace at Dūr-Šarrukēn (Khorsabad) (after Place 1867, pl. 3)

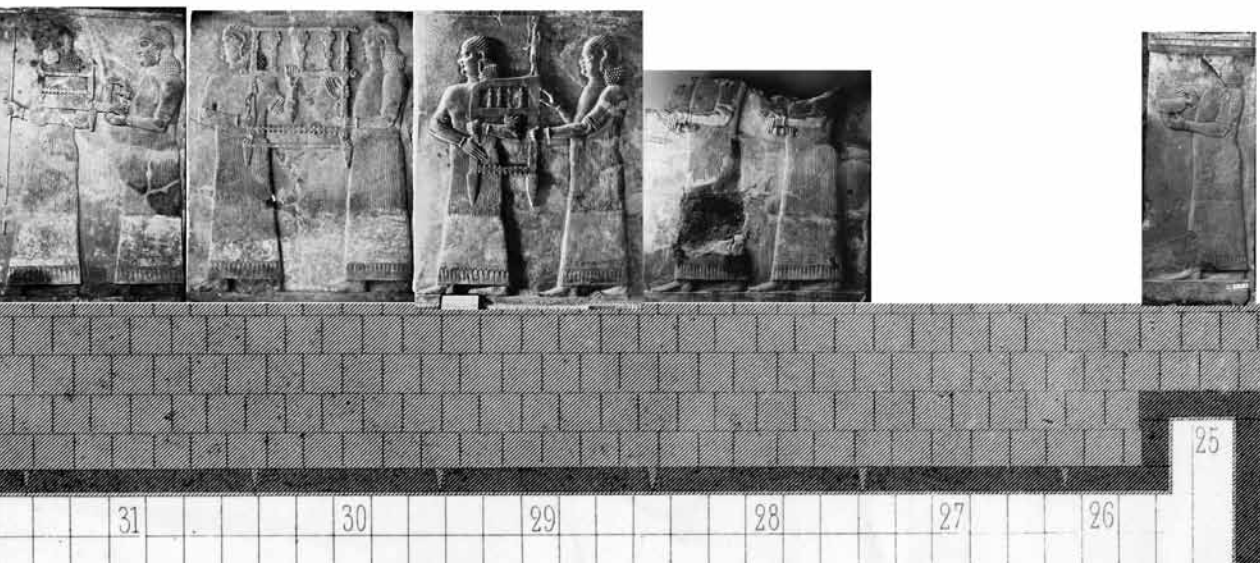
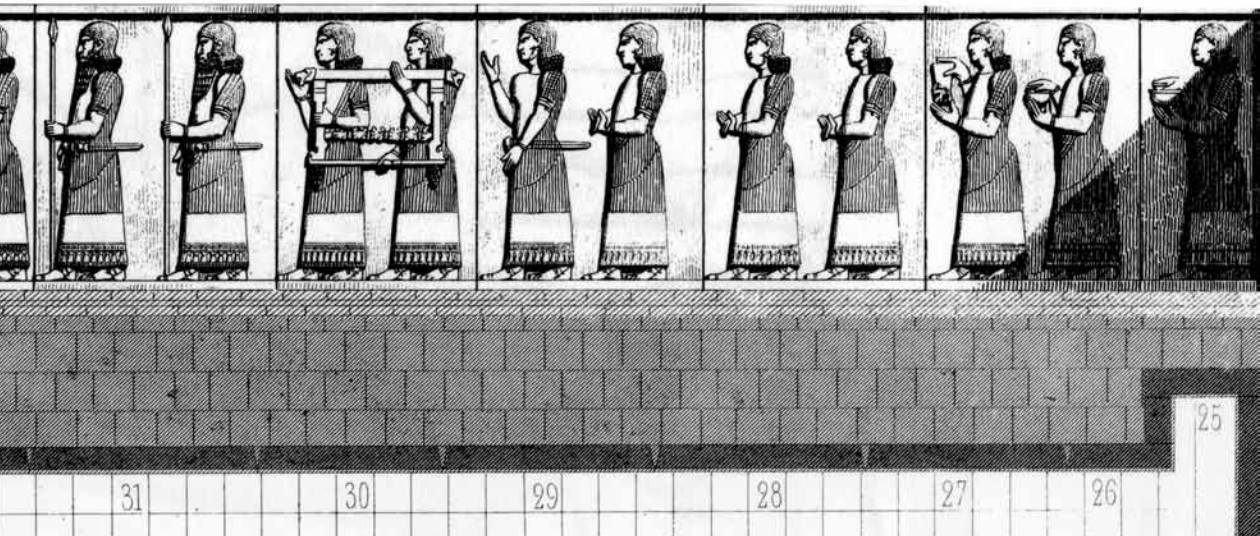


a



b

Figure 8.7. (a) Sargon II's palace at Dūr-Šarrukēn, Facade n. Restoration of Bottà and Flandin 1949, pl. 30; (b) Sargon II's palace at Dūr-Šarrukēn, Facade n. Possible restoration, after Albenda 1986 (see n. 8), involving the surviving slabs OIM A7366-68, IM 18629-31, and IM 11961 (after Loud 1936, figs. 38-44)



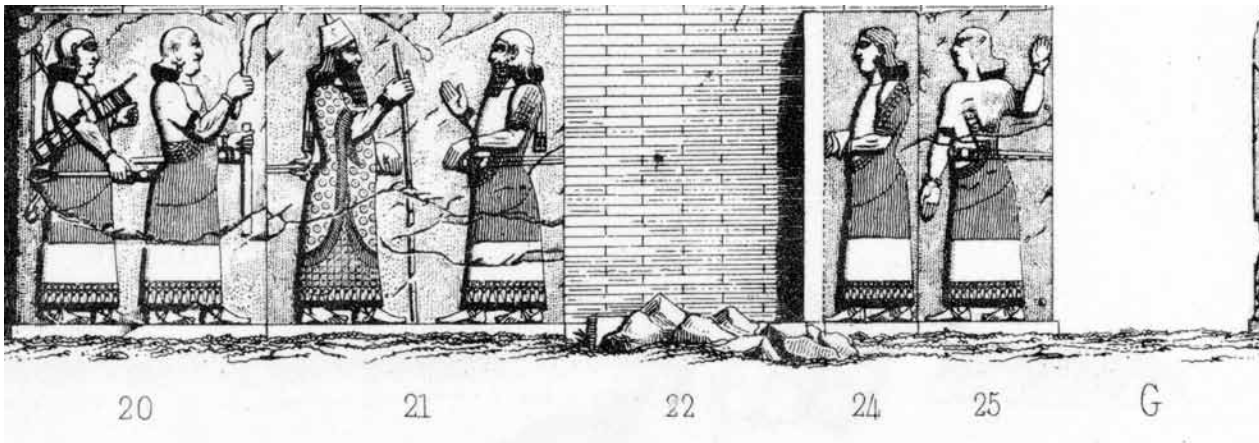
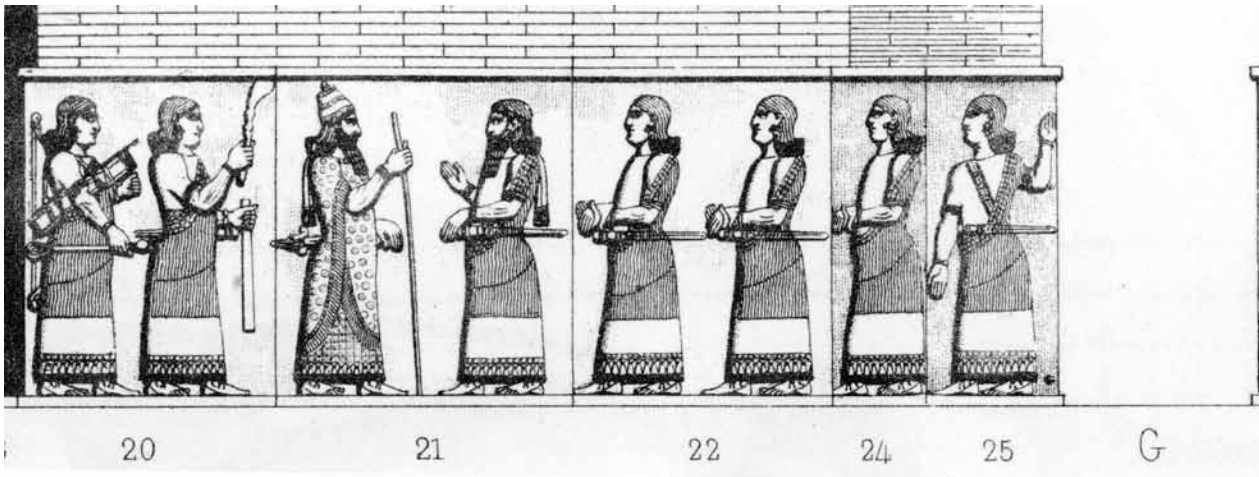
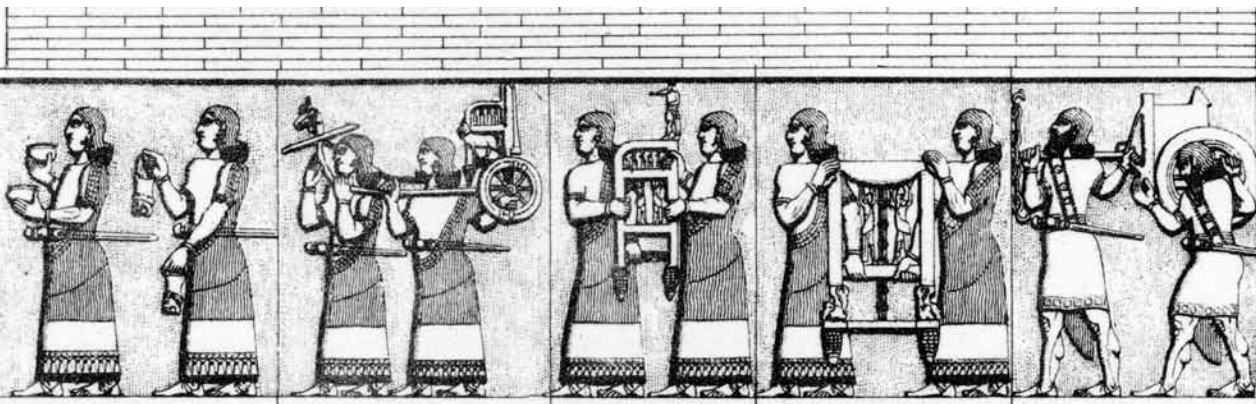


Figure 8.8. Sargon II's palace at Dür-Šarrukēn, Facade L. Reconstruction (*above*) and actual state at discovery (*below*) (Botta and Flandin 1949, pl. 10)





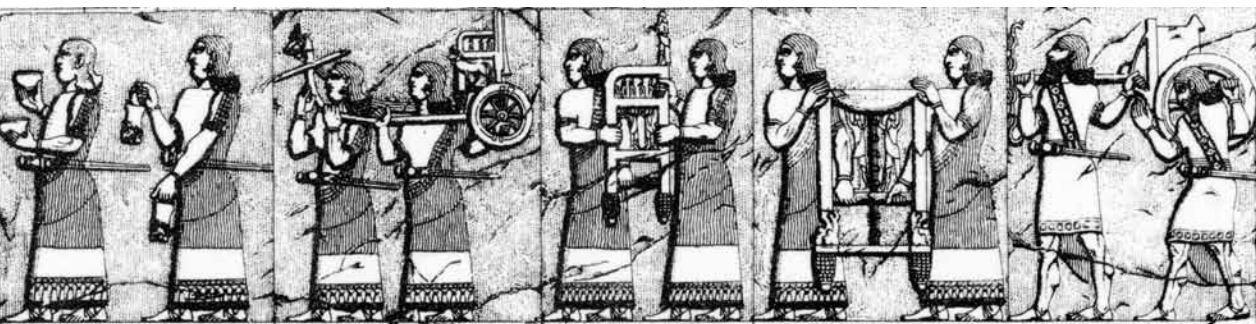
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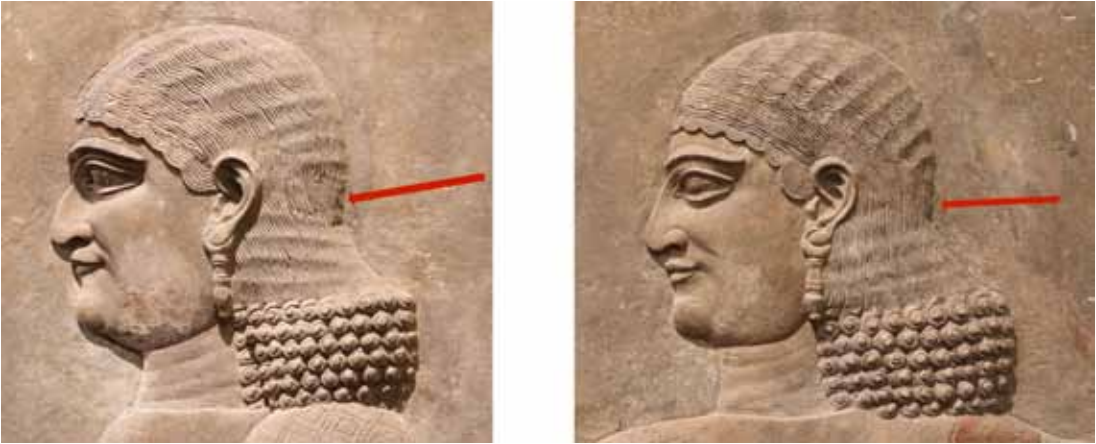


Figure 8.9. Remodeled headbands of the royal magnates on the northwest facade n of court VIII in Sargon II's palace at Dūr-Šarrukēn. OIM A7366 (photos by Anna Ressman)

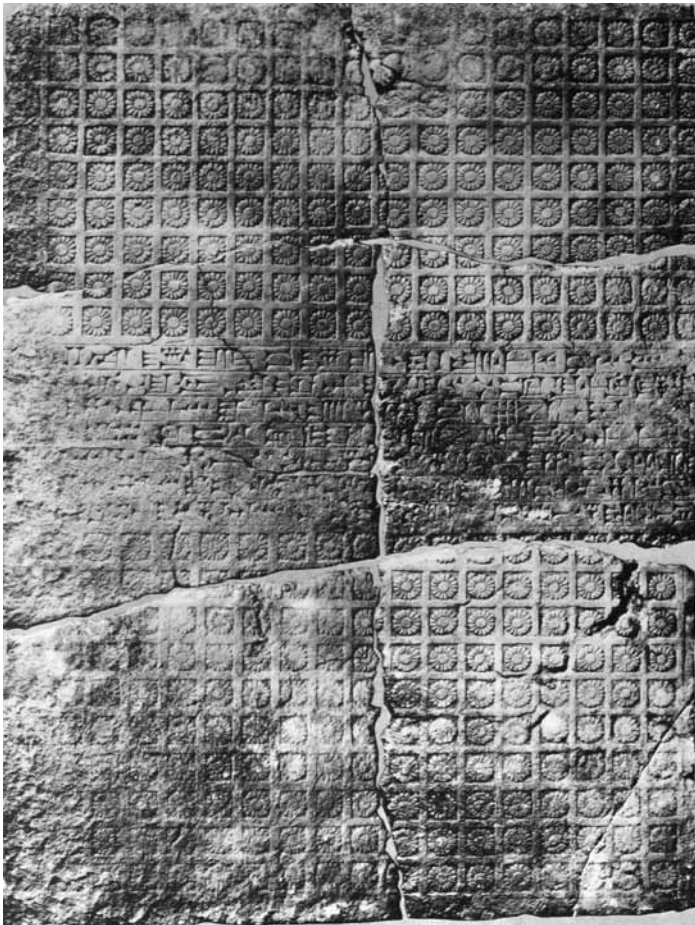


Figure 8.10. Stone carpet from Palace L at Dūr-Šarrukēn with inscription B of Sîn-aḫū-ušur, the grand vizier, brother of Sargon II. OIM A17597, 3.5 × 2.5 m

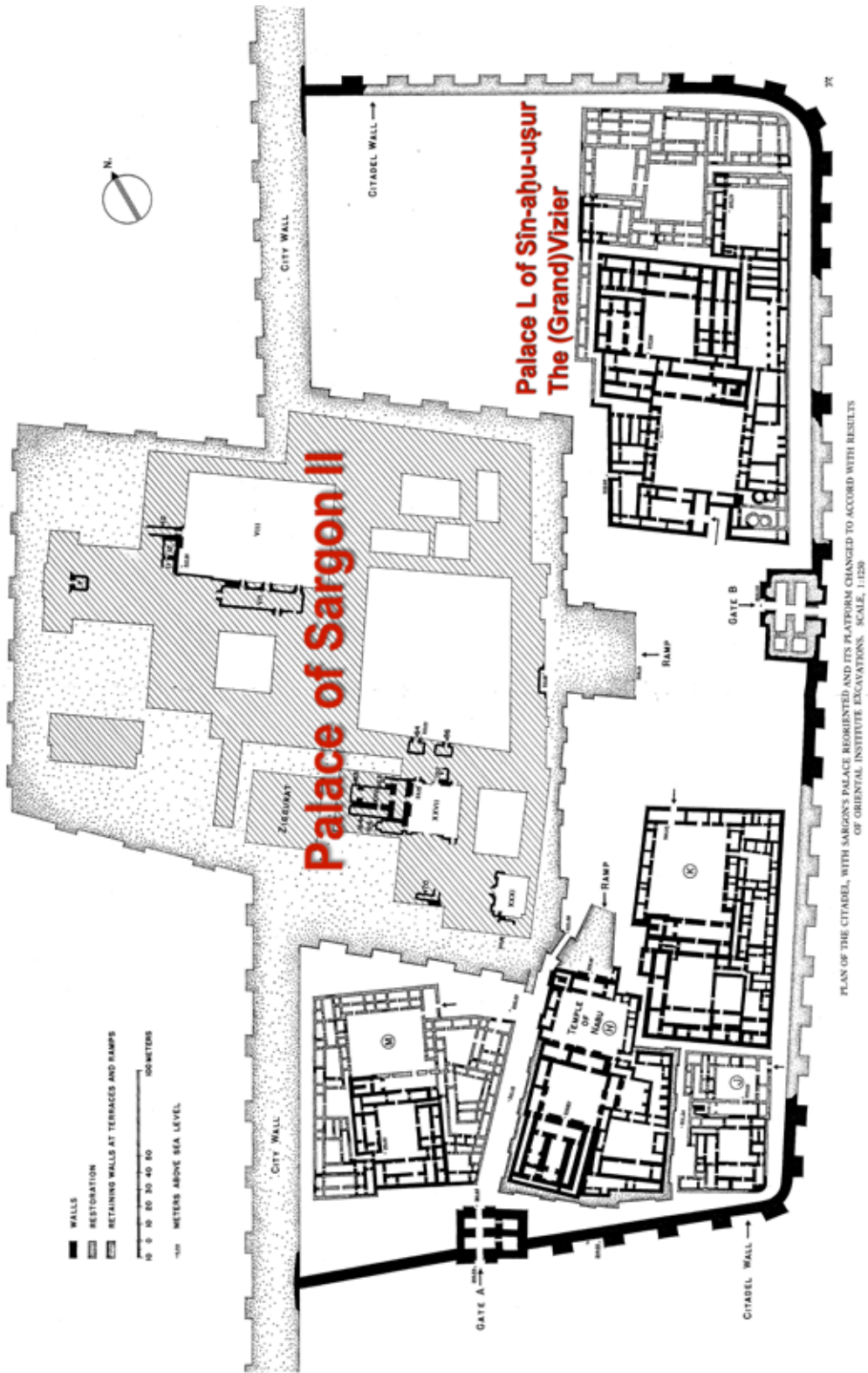


Figure 8.11. Plan of the citadel of Dūr-Šarrukēn (after Loud and Altman 1938, pl. 70)



a



b

Figure 8.12. (a) Crown prince Sennacherib and the remodeled image of the (grand) vizier. Northwest facade n of court VIII, Khorsabad palace, slab 36. OIM A7368; (b) Detail of the (grand) vizier's former image. Note the traces of the erased tasseled headband and beard (photos by Anna Ressler)

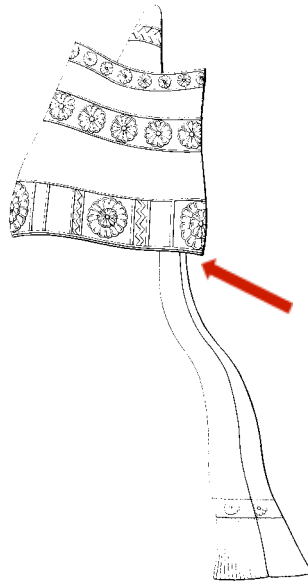


Figure 8.13. Assyrian royal crown with a tasseled headband  
(after Botta and Flandin 1849, pl. 165)

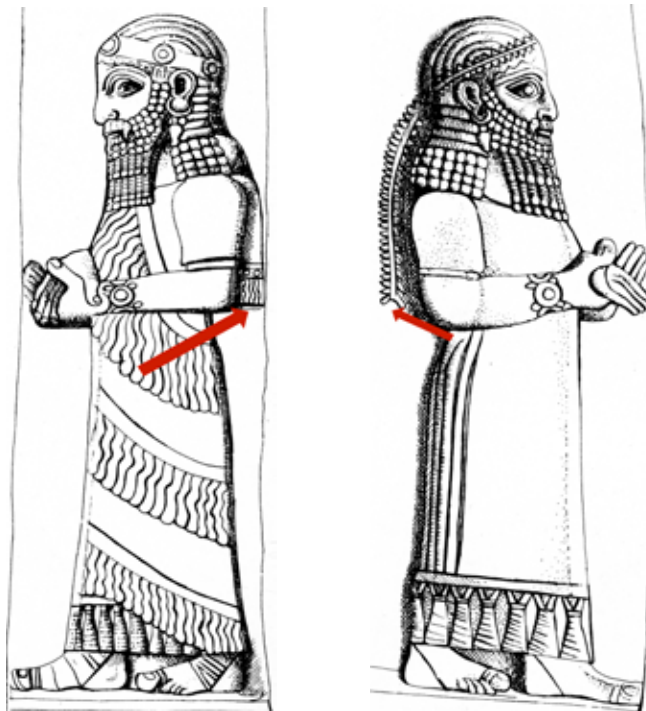


Figure 8.14. Crown princes of Esarhaddon: Assurbanipal (*left*) and Šamaš-šumu-ukīn (*right*) wearing tasseled headbands. Side views of the Esarhaddon stela from Sam'al (after Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 219)

## Tassels on the headgear of the Assyrian queens (figs. 8.15–17)



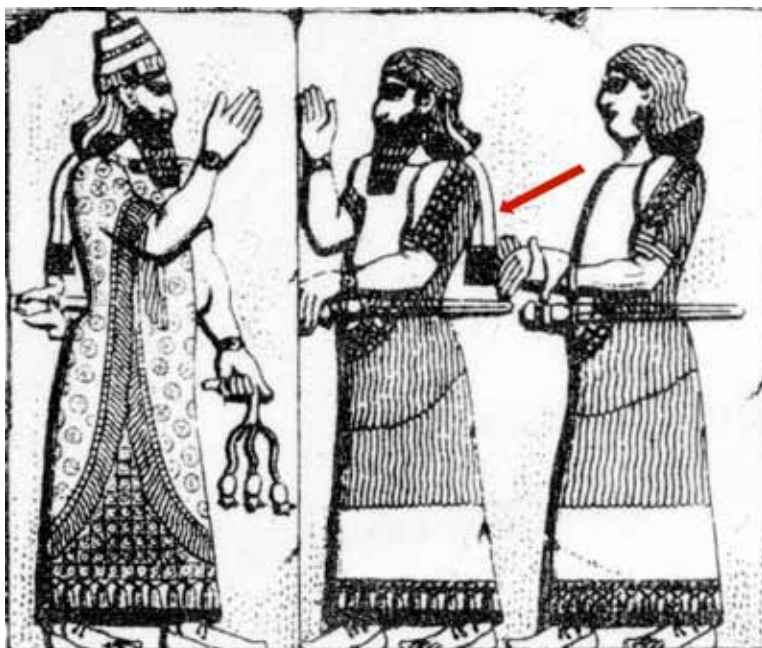
Figure 8.15. Golden headband of Yabâ, queen of Tiglath-Pileser III (744–727 B.C.E.) or Ataliyâ, queen of Sargon II (721?–705 B.C.E.), with one pendent tassel



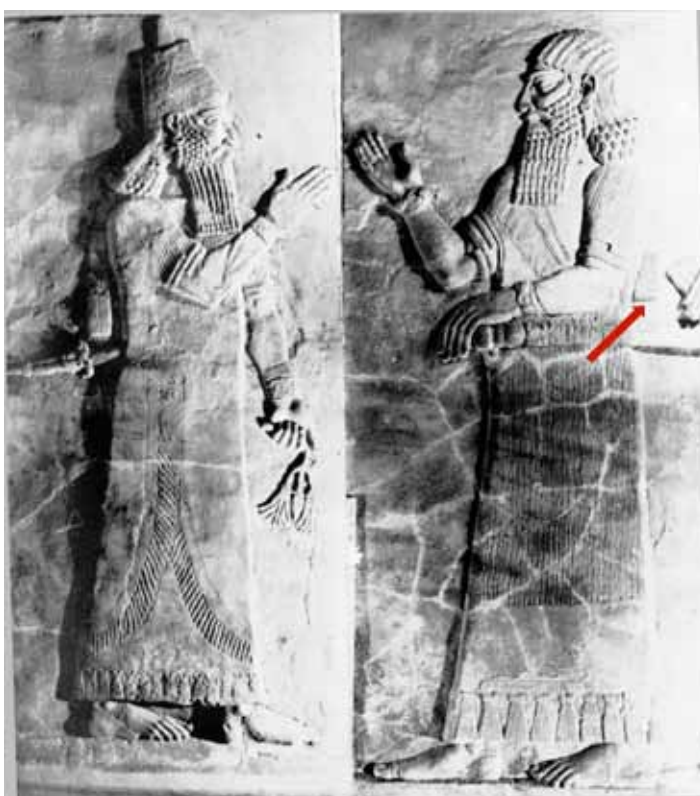
Figure 8.16. Seal of Ḥamâ, queen of Šalmaneser IV (782–773 B.C.E.), from queens' tomb III at Kalḫu. The queen wears a headband with a pendant



Figure 8.17. Naqi'a, queen of Sennacherib (704–681 B.C.E.), queen-mother of Esarhaddon (660–669 B.C.E.), represented on a bronze plaque. A pendent band is attached to her mural crown. AO 20185 .  
Photo credit Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY



a



b

Figure 8.18. A relief from Sargon II's palace at Dūr-Šarrukēn, room 6. (a) after Botta and Flandin 1849, pl. 135; (b) IM 60974/6-1. After Basmachi, no. 135. Courtesy of the Iraq Museum, Baghdad



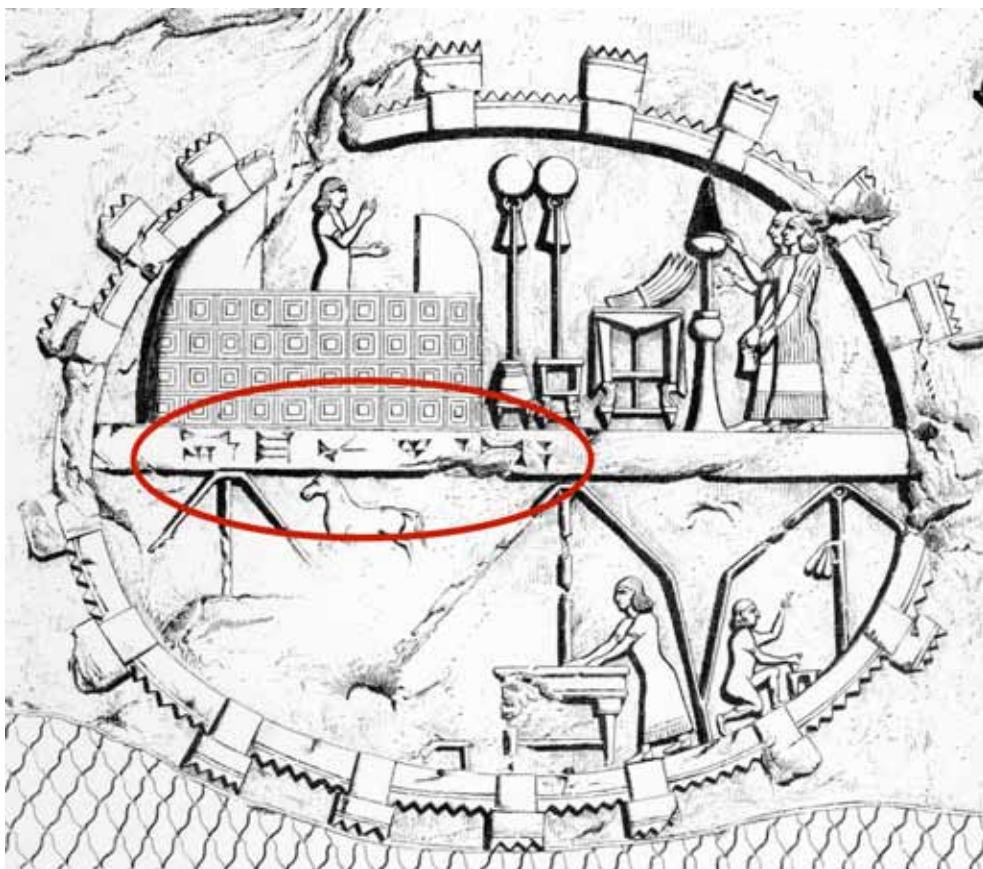


Figure 8.19. Palace of Sargon II, room 14. The epigraph says:  
 uš-ma-nu šá 𐎠Tak-[lak-a-na-EN] “camp of Taklāk-ana-Bēl”  
 (after Botta and Flandin 1849, pl. 146)

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## THE HYPERCOHERENT ICON: KNOWLEDGE, RATIONALIZATION, AND DISENCHANTMENT AT NINEVEH

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The most overt acts of icon destruction in Mesopotamian antiquity belong to the military campaigns of the Neo-Assyrian period. While these acts have rightly drawn attention for their ritual and political significance, I investigate them as conscious products of and stimuli to a changing intellectual milieu. Without discounting icon destruction as a universal problem of representation, and Assyrian representations of the acts as having venerable Mesopotamian precursors, I wish to focus on the ways in which first-millennium B.C.E. iconoclasm responded to and informed parallel intellectual currents such as the rationalization of knowledge, a growing antiquarianism, and a disenchantment with place that the age of empires ushered in. We should look at Neo-Assyrian icon destruction as reflective of very immediate concerns of imperial culture and productive of new beliefs and problems.

“Every epoch is a sphinx that plunges into the abyss as soon as its riddle has been solved.” — Heinrich Heine, *The Romantic School* (1833)

“The most merciful thing in the world ... is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents.” — H. P. Lovecraft, “The Call of Cthulhu” (1928)

### INTRODUCTION: COHERENCE OF CULTURE AND THE CLARITY OF IMAGES

#### PROBLEM AND APPROACH

Why — in 3,000 years of a Mesopotamian history rich with ritual symbolism — is there such a small record for either the destruction or creation of divine statues — and not until the very last centuries of the period? I will try in this paper to give some attention to the question posed of the third session — “how do images die, and why?” — though it presumes that they do. In a paper titled “Death and Dismemberment in Mesopotamia: Discorporation between the Body and the Body Politic,” delivered at a previous seminar, I examined the

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formation: on Babylonian Chronicles, [www.livius.org/babylonia.html](http://www.livius.org/babylonia.html); on Mesopotamian year-names, [cdli.ucla.edu/tools/yearnames/yn\\_index.html](http://cdli.ucla.edu/tools/yearnames/yn_index.html); for Sumerian literary references, [www.etcsl.orient.ox.ac.uk](http://www.etcsl.orient.ox.ac.uk).

issue of violence on bodies,<sup>1</sup> and have been asked to consider possible parallels between that issue and the mutilation and destruction of images. Fairly early in thinking about this possibility, there emerged some real problems in establishing parallels between the treatment of people and icons. The destruction of divine images was not widespread in the period of focus — the Neo-Assyrian period — and I did not see much of a likeness in method between ritualized physical violence against humans (who were mostly flayed, impaled, and beheaded<sup>2</sup>) and physicalized ritual violence against images (usually figurines, usually buried, bound, or burned<sup>3</sup>).

Still, taking a theoretical point from that “Death and Dismemberment” paper, let us suppose for a moment that the treatment of images is not primarily a problem of historically verifiable or unverifiable practices, but of ideational problems in the cultural sphere. Violations of bodies and burials, I argued earlier, were important because they operated on changing cultural anxieties about death, regardless of whether or not those violations were widely carried out. Let us extend this approach to our present subject — not so much to determine whether episodes of icon-text destruction were real or not real, nor merely to argue that claims of these kinds reinforced social or political ideologies, but to consider how expressions of concern about iconicity reflected changes in the semiotic order.<sup>4</sup> My approach examines gods’ bodies as mutable cultural products reflecting conflicting social and intellectual precepts rather than as essential theological givens.<sup>5</sup>

In historical terms, I also want to illustrate that the Assyro-Babylonian practices parodied in the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible were already moving targets in their home cultures.<sup>6</sup> Divinity and representation were deeply contested issues during the eighth through sixth centuries in Mesopotamia, and the textual precipitates falling out of these contests are mostly reliable witnesses to those contests, not to any immutable and unchanging *mentalité* about iconicity. More than anything, what this essay argues is that iconoclastic ideas in Assyria indeed grew to gain epistemological importance, but more as an unintended consequence of imperial projects to (over-)define and control the terms of knowledge, history, and theology — and not from any categorical imperative against icons (or even specific icons) as such.

I focus on statues of gods rather than images of all kinds partly because “iconoclasm” loses force as an analytic class when it embraces all types of representation. (Hereafter, I use “icons” to mean “divine images.”) In Mesopotamia, images of divinities were not treated in some of the important ways that other types of images were treated, just as texts protected by curses were theoretically inviolable in ways that other texts were not. In principle, it should have been problematic for any human — even a king — to kill or harm a god,<sup>7</sup> and equally impossible for anyone who believed in the efficacy of curses to violate any text

<sup>1</sup> Richardson 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. May 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the Neo-Assyrian curse that “(the enemy) will throw the statues of their gods into the fire” (CAD § s.v. *šalmu* s. 1-b’).

<sup>4</sup> I am in full sympathy with Josh Ellenbogen and Aaron Tugendhaft’s (2011b, p. 3) effort to not “artificially fix the character of idols” but to examine “which interactions appear threatening and which appear suitable [as they] correlate to a larger set of issues: the understandings of representation, likeness, being, and making that given cultures develop.

<sup>5</sup> Compare to Bahrani (2001) on “the metaphors of the body,” pp. 40–69.

<sup>6</sup> Levtow (2008) has already argued this important, corrective point; note also the juxtaposition of Israelite iconoclasm and Assyrian aggression in an independent Arabic tradition, for example, al-Mas’ūdī (tenth century C.E.); see Janssen 1995, pp. 45–46.

<sup>7</sup> See SAA 13, 128, on the theft of golden beams from the head of Ninurta; SAA 15, 157, on the theft of a golden statue of the god Erra. Note also the theft of a sun disk and dagger from the statue of Aššur in the temple of Aššur (CAD §/1 s.v. *šamšu* s. 4)



protected by one. Yet both types of acts are historically attested in Mesopotamian culture, calling into question the fixity of those principles. Though we may suggest that no “statue” was identical to a “god” — and thus no act of iconoclasm in technical or theological terms “killed” a god — that meaning was inevitably suggested nonetheless. Such problems remain no matter how finely we distinguish signifiers from signifieds because associations are not bounded at the level of single signs.

My argument presupposes that the period around 750–500 B.C.E. was a time of profound intellectual change when it came to the conception of embodied divinities. This idea has been discussed in at least three different ways, loosely speaking, all framing the ancient Near East with reference to the great traditions of Israelite monotheism and classical Greco-Roman antiquity: as the first stage of an expiring polytheism in the so-called “decline of paganism”;<sup>8</sup> in the renascent sense of new sensibilities proposed by Axialists;<sup>9</sup> in terms of Assyrian henotheistic experiments and speculative theology precursive to an incipient monotheism, in the mode of the Helsinki-Casco Bay school.<sup>10</sup> Though these approaches are complex and interesting in their own right — I do not intend to engage with them directly — they tend to narrativize the confused and conflicting impulses of the age as teleologically emergent toward some point of homeostasis.

My approach differs in seeing the theological problems related to iconicity as agonistic, representative of a developing crisis and confusion brought about by the experience of empire, but never resolving into any single, clear form. If anything, the push for coherence, as I will argue, was precisely the problem. The cultural arena normally permits issues of theology and politics to come into contact with each other in largely unregulated ways. Cultural forms and practices are uniquely able to resolve or soften social conflicts because the meanings of symbols are flexible, protean, and resilient.

## TWO THEORETICAL MODELS OF CHANGE

So I would like to pose this question of iconoclasm again, not of its moral or political capacities, but as a problem of a loss of cultural flexibility: I will bracket the problem in two theoretical senses, both dialectical and historically specific. Surely these are not the only ways to try to understand problems like this, but they begin to position them.

The first sense of the problem is one described by William Sewell (2005), who understands culture as a duality. For Sewell, culture is, on the one hand, “an institutional sphere devoted to the making of meaning,” where symbols are determinant of social behavior, a set of ideals and taboos. On the other hand, culture also exists in a processual sense, where the unsystematic agency of multiple social actors appropriates symbols from a broad toolkit in a constant building and re-building of meaning. Neither of these two senses of “culture” exists to the exclusion of the other, but structures the other dialectically.<sup>11</sup> What interests me

<sup>8</sup> For example, Frankfort 1958; cf. Lochhead 2001, who aptly observes, p. 5, that even “with the decline of paganism in the late Roman empire, the violence of Christian monotheism begins to be directed not toward the cults of ‘other gods’ of paganism, but to Christian heresy....”

<sup>9</sup> See discussions by Michalowski 2005; Pollock 2005.

<sup>10</sup> For example, Porter 2009; Parpola 1993b; cf. Frahm 2000/01.

<sup>11</sup> One might also compare the dialectical senses in which Giddens (1984) discusses dual “structures,” or Bourdieu’s (1977) “doxa” and “habitus”; cf. H. Berger (1973) on the problem of consciousness and culture change. Dialectics, of course, presuppose conscious engagement; on competing “pluralist” (i.e., diverse and unregulated) versus “elitist-hegemonic” readings of knowledge production, see Hamilton 1996, pp. 4–5.

is Sewell's notion of "*thin coherence*" — that political and social change comes about when the two spheres of cultural production lose traction with each other. "Coherence" becomes "thin" when institutional culture loses persuasiveness and daily cultural processes become so diffuse that culture loses "thingness." These spheres become mutually abrasive, degrading ideation on the levels of comprehension and subscription. Voiced differently, Peter Berger (1967) argued for the instability of ordered religious *nomoi* when pluralities of meaning replace general ones and begin to compete with them; in Bergerian terms, "precariousness" replaces "plausibility."

A different model of change was articulated by Roy Rappaport (1999) as "*hypercoherence*," a theory which has found its most common application in the study of political systems, but which I extend in this essay to cultural history. The approach may be summed up by saying that cultural change comes about through too *much* coherence, a hyper-articulation, exposure, and particularizing of objects and practices:

Causal discontinuities and the quasi-autonomy of the systems of which the world is composed are not only obvious aspects of nature; they are crucial .... [B]y establishing or protecting distinct and quasi-autonomous systems [of meaning], ritual helps to limit the world's coherence to tolerable levels. Put a little differently, ritual occurrence not only may first distinguish and then articulate quasi-autonomous and distinctive systems, it may also reduce the likelihood that they will disrupt each other.<sup>12</sup>

What Rappaport suggests for my purposes is that cultures work as much by their own inner logic as by their own outer limits. Iconicity, like the miraculous, derives its authenticity on the premise that it cannot be totally intellectually apprehended or defined. According to this line of thinking, therefore, attempts to rationalize cultural enigmas — or to mechanize and artifactualize the entirety of cultural activity — would degrade broad subscription by making the cultural sphere overly visible and intellectually inflexible, emptying it of its essentially mysterious powers of transformation. The capacity of culture to solve social conflicts by dispersing them, ambiguating them — partly firewalling them and partly solving them locally instead of globally — is lost in any rationalizing approach. "Hypercoherence" results when entities of power — in this case, an empire — rationalize, codify, and make explicit the functions of cultural practices, unintentionally reducing their resilience by objectifying them in so many ways.

To translate, then: Sewell's idea of cultural change is a kind of culture-wide shoulder-shrugging: "I just don't *understand* these symbols; they don't make sense to me anymore." Rappaport's model of culture is one in which people have seen too much of how the sausage is made — *they* say "I understand all too well — and I don't like what I see." Both are accounts of cultural or ideological change or crisis; the difference is essentially in degrees of subject consciousness. Below, I discuss a number of areas of evidence relating changing concepts of iconicity to these models of "thin coherence" and "hypercoherence."

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<sup>12</sup> Rappaport 1999, p. 102, building on his 1970 article, esp. pp. 53–56; see also Renfrew 1979, pp. 487–89, building on the work of others cited there. Limiting coher-

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ence, of course, occasions the Lovecraft quote at the top of this essay.

## ORDER OF DISCUSSION

I will try to assess these theories by discussing a wide variety of historical phenomena, organized under two major rubrics: first, the historical conditions under which changing Mesopotamian conceptions of iconicity took place. For one thing, although iconoclasm itself was rare, the mass abduction of cult statues produced a profound devastation to *iconicity* on a social-intellectual plane. This was an era of god-napping, not god-killing. Such abductions were symbolic of targeted political communities; they were not, primarily, theological statements. Nevertheless, the practice had its own serious effects on conceptions of materiality: the rarity of actual icon destructions (and actual claims of icon *creation*, too) only emphasizes how radical the introduction of the *topos* actually was in the late Neo-Assyrian period. There were, indeed, political advantages to icon abduction, but the practice, *mutatis mutandis*, produced its own new set of theological problems.

It is to these unintended consequences that my essay next turns its attention: a variety of Neo-Assyrian imperial projects related to the control of theology, knowledge, and history all contributed to a categorical degradation of iconicity. The scale of icon abduction most immediately produced a focus on their materiality and “mortality.” Icon destruction and abduction should also be contextualized within a larger program of transgressions — against cities, bodies, and temples — meant to underscore Assyria’s unique historical destiny as a world empire. These ideological claims and practices, I argue, unanticipatedly degraded the symbols they meant to control because they transgressed fundamental cultural norms.

Two Assyrian attempts to deal with the problems produced by their practices further contributed to the decomposition of iconicity. A newly fetishized attention to the ritual particulars of icon creation suggested the fragility of gods-as-statues, and conceptually inverted the power relations of gods and men. In a wider sense, the larger Neo-Assyrian project of knowledge acquisition and control exposed all ritual and religious forms to processes of rationalization; since these forms (including iconicity) operated on premises of ambiguity, disambiguation diminished their power to enchant in more or less direct proportion to scholars’ claims to understand them. Finally, it is worth considering, against these “top down” programs and problems, a broader problem of social subscription to iconicity, namely, that these centuries of icon abduction took place against a rising belief in the ubiquity and potency of noncorporeal supernatural forms. I will conclude with a brief consideration of these lines of evidence as favoring the hypercoherence hypothesis, positing that concepts of divinity and representation toward the end of cuneiform antiquity were ultimately, if inadvertently, diminished by efforts to capture, expose, and define the practices related to them.

### HISTORICAL CONDITIONS: THE LOW INCIDENCE OF ICON DESTRUCTION, THE HIGH INCIDENCE OF ICON ABDUCTION

Explicit claims in Middle and Neo-Assyrian sources about icon destruction or mutilation (and in earlier Mesopotamian history generally) are rare to a vanishing point — as was, in fact, much discussion of the creation of idols. Out of all the royal inscriptions of Middle and Neo-Assyrian kings and the Babylonian Chronicles, from the fourteenth through the seventh century, there are only two unambiguous episodes of cult statue destruction, with both cases coming only at the very end of that eight hundred-year period, in 689 and 646 B.C.E., both outcomes of the “total wars” against Babylon and Elam (see below). If anything, the abduction

and possession, not destruction, of icons was the preferred mode of control (see Goedegebuure, this volume, table 14.2, on the spectrum of variant forms of iconoclasm, with attention to reversibility and intention). We should weigh the two cases of genuine iconoclasm against at least sixty-eight known episodes of cult statue abduction (most of which included the abduction of multiple statues), a tactic likely borrowed from earlier Hittite practice.

Both the abduction and destruction of icons were tools of imperial dominance. But the imperial portfolio was hardly limited to these cultic options in responding to local conditions (see Berlejung, this volume). Assyrian kings, for instance, occasionally paid homage to foreign gods in captured Syrian and Babylonian cities<sup>13</sup> or appropriated cults by “accepting” their offerings as gifts to the Assyrian monarch.<sup>14</sup> Nor was it in any way inappropriate to worship or site cult centers for Assyrian deities in the imperial periphery.<sup>15</sup> This extended to the occasional installation of royal or divine images in some conquered places,<sup>16</sup> though this practice was so limited that we should not think of it as a policy to superimpose Assyrian religion. Conversely, Assyrian kings also sometimes repatriated captured foreign cult images to their home polities — though usually with the name of the Assyrian king inscribed on them.<sup>17</sup> Even when cult centers were destroyed, the Assyrians were careful not to claim responsibility

<sup>13</sup> RIMA 2, A.O.96.2001, Bēl-ēriš builds a temple for gods local to Šadikanni; RIMA 3, A.O.102.6, Shalmaneser III sacrifices before Adad of Aleppo; RIMA 3, A.O.102.25 and A.O.102.59, he presents sacrifices “to the gods of the towns of Akkad,” cf. 102.18, where he says he sacrifices before “my gods”; Tadmor 1994, p. 131, Summ. Inscr. 2, Tiglath-pileser III makes offerings to Marduk in Babylon; *ibid.*, p. 195, Summ. Inscr. 11, to six Babylonian gods. Sargon II restored statues of gods to seven Babylonian cities, and gave gifts to the gods in Babylon and “the gods who dwell in the cult centers of Sumer and Akkad” (Chavalas 2006, pp. 341–42); *BIWA* 242, Ashurbanipal restores Nanaya to Uruk from Elam after his campaign against Ummanaldasi; cf. *BIWA* 85, where the gods Ušur-amassu and Arkā’ītu are added to that list; remarkably, repair work for precisely these gods is discussed in *SAA* 10, 349. *BIWA* 70 and 243, Ashurbanipal restores captured gods and goddesses to the kings of Kedar and Arabia; Šamši-Adad V, according to *ABC* 21, captured any number of gods from Babylonian cities, yet carried out sacrifices at Cutha, Babylon, and Borsippa.

<sup>14</sup> RIMA 3, A.O.104.8, Adad-nārārī records that the “kings of Chaldaea ... delivered up the remnant offerings of the gods Bel, Nabu, and Nergal”; Tadmor 1994, p. 87, where Tiglath-pileser III takes the sacrificial remnants of Bel, Nabu, and Nergal.

<sup>15</sup> RIMA 2, A.O.101.1, Ashurnasirpal II sacrifices to “the gods” at the Upper Sea and “my gods” on Mount Amanus (iii 84b ff.); RIMA 3, A.O.102.2 ii 80, Shalmaneser III takes his gods into a conquered palace to celebrate a victory; RIMA 3, A.O.102.10, he makes sacrifices to “my gods” at the Mediterranean (i 25–26); *ibid.*, ii 40–42, sacrifices at Babylon, Borsippa, and Cutha (also RIMA 3, A.O.102.18, “my gods”; RIMA 3, A.O.102.14, line 70, sacrifices to “my gods” at the source of the Tigris [also RIMA 3, A.O.102.78]); RIMA 3, A.O.102.62, an epigraph on the

Balawat gates recording sacrifices to “the gods” by the “sea of the land of Nairi.”

<sup>16</sup> For example, RIMA 3, A.O.102.2, an image of Shalmaneser III is erected alongside that of Anum-hirbe (also RIMA 3, A.O.102.3, .5, .29, .34, etc.); RIMA 3, A.O.102.2 ii 80, he takes Assyrian gods into conquered palaces; RIMA 3, A.O.102.14, and .16, Daiiān-Aššur erects a statue of Shalmaneser III in the Kinalua temple; RIMA 3, A.O.102.16, a royal statue is installed in temple of Laruba. Directly acknowledging foreign gods, Sargon recounts of the people of Mannea that “before Aššur and the gods of their [own] land, they blessed my majesty” (Chavalas 2006, p. 338). A more problematic case relates to the purpose for which Tiglath-pileser III, Sargon, Sennacherib, and other Assyrian kings set up not only royal images but also “weapons of Aššur” in southeastern Anatolia, Ḥarḥar/Kār-Šarrukin, Cilicia, and other new provincial centers (Cogan 1993, pp. 405, 413; Parker 2003, pp. 543–44; cf. Holloway 2002, pp. 56, 57).

<sup>17</sup> The most famous example is the restoration of Babylon’s gods by Esarhaddon: Walker and Dick 1999; Chavalas 2006, pp. 354–55; *ABC* 1 iv 35–36; *ABC* 14 6–7; see below, nn. 22, 30, 34. Becking 2006, p. 55; Esarhaddon repaired six gods of Arabia, named by name, and repatriated them upon Hazael’s entreaty; he also inscribed the name of both Aššur and himself upon them. Luckenbill (1927, p. 254) produces Esarhaddon’s prayer that the “image of my name” be on the gods’ lips (elsewhere: that the constellations are “an image of my name,” Porter 1993b, p. 196) is emended by Borger (1967, p. 27) to *šá-lam zêri-lia*, the “wellbeing of my descendants.” The broken reference in *ABC* 21 A18 “[...] his craftsmen the gods” is unclear, but may refer to Adad-nārārī III. Compare with Nabopolassar’s claim to have repatriated some of the Elamite gods whom the Assyrians had abducted and kept in Uruk, *ABC* 2 16–17.

for the destruction of the statues themselves.<sup>18</sup> The diversity of responses was calibrated to immediate political needs rather than religious policy as such, but it is significant that all of these efforts steered clear of image destruction.

The practice of abduction and the reluctance to destroy gods implicitly acknowledged the bounded power of kings: killing gods was an inversion of the hierarchies of cosmic power and thus unacceptable. Indeed, the Ashur Charter makes the claim that the god Ashur did not even “permit the altering of sanctuaries.”<sup>19</sup> In general, the destruction of gods and temples was a trope used to vilify enemy or usurper kings — mostly in Babylonian sources<sup>20</sup> — not to bolster any king’s claims of his own military success.

Let us look at what few cases of icon destruction we know about. Two false cases we must reject are those of Gaza and Muṣaṣir. In the first case, a conjecture that Tiglath-pileser III “despoiled” (*ašlu*) the gods of Gaza has already been disposed of in this volume by Berlejung; “seized” (*ēkim*) is almost certainly to be restored in the break.<sup>21</sup> Another improbable case stems from the mural relief of Sargon II depicting the attack on Muṣaṣir, where a detail shows a statue being hacked apart by soldiers in view of the burning of the temple of Haldi. I am not aware of any claim in the secondary literature that this particular statue was of a god, but the image’s popular reproduction<sup>22</sup> as an example of Assyrian iconoclasm warrants a brief clarification: the statue is a royal statue; it bears no emblems, wears no horned crown, and the written accounts of this event state clearly that the god Haldi and his spouse were carried off as booty, not destroyed.<sup>23</sup>

Sennacherib’s account of his attack on Babylon in 689 B.C.E., however, includes direct claims to have destroyed divine statues — our first clear example of icon destruction. Sennacherib states that “the gods of Babylon” were smashed by “the hands of my people” — distancing himself from the act with a rare extension of “credit” to his troops — and that the (same?) gods were dumped into the Arahtu.<sup>24</sup> Although these claims are not to be discarded, there are two considerations that might affect the historicity of the account. First, Van De Mierop has argued that the account of Babylon’s destruction was meant to be a mirror image to the story of the building of Nineveh, and thus aimed for topical balance rather than factual

<sup>18</sup> For example, RIMA 1, A.0.77.1, lines 125–28, after a fire in the Aššur temple, the destroyed property was enumerated, but that list does not include any cult statues; see also ABC 2 4–6, the Assyrian destruction of the temple Šasanaku.

<sup>19</sup> Saggs 1975, p. 13.

<sup>20</sup> Probably Tukulti-Ninurta I is the most famous such example, vilified in ABC 22 iv 3’–6’; in the Walker Chronicle, an unnamed usurper desecrates “all the sanctuaries of the land”; ABC 24 8’–9’ vilifies an unnamed usurper king who desecrated multiple sanctuaries; ABC 19 26’, a reference to “hostile gods clad in dirty clothes” is oblique; ABC 20 15’–18’, where Agum, son of Kaštiliašu, is accused of destroying Enlil’s Egalgašešna temple. See also RIMB 2, B.2.4.8, Nebuchadnezzar’s accusation against the Elamites, 6.14.1, of having brought “the statue of Nanaya of Ezida” into the *bīt mummu*, apparently improperly; B.6.26.1, Bēl-ibni’s accusation against Marduk-apla-iddina II of removing the statues of multiple gods; and RIMB 2, S.0.1002.10, an accusation of the desecration of Anat and other gods by an unnamed Assyrian king.

<sup>21</sup> Tadmor 1994, pp. 139–43; even this author’s translations of parallel broken passages, however, venture only that the king “seized” (*ēkim*) rather than “despoiled” (*ašlu*) the gods of Gaza; *ekēmu* is also used in this king’s other claim to have seized divine objects from the queen of the Arabs (*ibid.*, *Summ. Inscr.* 4 22’, p. 143). Berlejung’s objection that the absence of the phrase “and carried them off to Assyria” calls a seizure into question, however, is not so valid; the phrase is not used consistently in the inscriptions of this or other kings (see, e.g., the Arabian example just cited).

<sup>22</sup> See, most recently, this relief detail used as the cover image for the 2011 book *Idol Anxiety* (Ellenbogen and Tugendhaft), though it is not discussed within.

<sup>23</sup> Fuchs 1994, pp. 320–22, 347; cf. pp. 291, 303, briefer accounts which do not mention these gods; Botta 1850, pl. 142, for Eugène Flandin’s illustration; Mayer 1979; Moorey (1999, p. 273) feels the image is shown being broken up for its metal content. See also Chavalas 2006, pp. 339–40; Luckenbill 1927, pp. 9–10, 30, 91, 99, 101, 110.

<sup>24</sup> Chavalas 2006, p. 349.

accuracy. In this instance, the destruction of Babylon's gods could be seen as contrapuntal to the erection of six divine images at the Jerwan aqueduct in the Nineveh account.<sup>25</sup>

The veracity of Sennacherib's claim is also complicated by Esarhaddon's later refashioning of the story, claiming in divergent accounts that he restored and/or repatriated images of various gods — at least thirty-four known by name<sup>26</sup> — who had either “taken themselves to Nineveh” (or otherwise “dwelled in Assyria and Elam”), “flown like birds to heaven,” “been carried off by floods,” or remained neglected in Babylon rather than — as Sennacherib had claimed — been deliberately destroyed. Esarhaddon's retrospective describes a post-689 divine diaspora, explained by natural forces and/or self-exile by the will of the gods, who had been angered by the neglect of the Babylonians.<sup>27</sup> Without further evidence, it is impossible to evaluate whose account is more trustworthy: Sennacherib's claims of destruction or Esarhaddon's claims of rescue and renovation. Though it seems likely that some divine images were, in fact, destroyed in the 689 attack, Esarhaddon's ambiguating language says something more significant about how quickly this was acknowledged as a political misstep, one that had caused more problems than it solved.

To my knowledge, the only other clear-cut case of icon destruction comes from Ashurbanipal's eighth campaign against Elam in 647/646 B.C.E. Of Bašimu, he claimed simply to have smashed “their gods” and turned them into phantoms — immediately following this up by saying that he carried off “his gods and goddesses” — “his” meaning the Elamite king, Ummanaldasi.<sup>28</sup> This distinction speaks to the selectivity of icon destruction/deportation as targeting different political constituencies (on which, see *Unintended Consequences*, below), and contradicting it as any kind of total program. In this case, Ashurbanipal sought the destruction of the city of Susa rather than the Elamite dynasty as such, whose gods he kept as hostages. Either way, the practice of god-breaking had now been tried twice and never repeated. Had these destructions been successful measures, decisive blows, we would have come to hear more about them in much more certain terms in succeeding centuries.

If these few cases of icon-breaking add up to anything, it is that the act was thinkable, but rarely performed — and deeply problematic. Indeed, the entire subject of image destruction is deeply subordinated by Assyrian curses, which rarely presupposed its possibility, compared to the ubiquity of protections against altering inscriptions.<sup>29</sup> None of this is to say that the Assyrians did not *practice* image defilement. K. Lawson Younger (pers. comm.) drew my attention to several cases of statue destruction documented from excavations, reminding me

<sup>25</sup> Van De Mieroop 2004.

<sup>26</sup> In addition to Marduk himself, these included, collating the several accounts: Bēletiya (Šarpanitu), Bēlet-Babili, (Ištar-of-Babylon), Ea, Madānu, Amurru, Abšūšu, Abtagigi, “Great Anu,” Šarrat-Der, Niraḥ, Bēlet-balāti (a manifestation of Gula), Kurunitu, Sakkud of Bubê, Mār-biti, Ušur-amassu, Šamaš of Larsa, Ḥumḥummu, Šuqamuna, and Šimalia; since a broken passage also mentions nine more gods in the context of “mouthwashing” (Asalluḫi, Bēlet-ilī [Ninmah], Kusu, Ninaḥakuddu, Ninkurra, Ninagal, Guškinbanda, Niniginangargid, and Ninzadim), this tally includes them as well (Borger 1967, pp. 83–84, 88–89; cf. Luckenbill 1927, p. 275: “200 (more) [gods]”); cf. Luckenbill (ibid., pp. 261–62, 280), who rendered rather different names. In addition to these, an official's letter documents five more statues slated for

return: Nergal, Lugalbanda, Mārat-Sîn of Nemed-Laguda, Mārat-Sîn of Eridu, and Mārat-Eridu (Cole and Machinist 1998, p. xii and letter 190).

<sup>27</sup> On the ambivalence of both the cause for destruction and method of restoration in these accounts, see Brinkman 1983; Porter 1993a, pp. 65, 123 n. 266, 126; Porter 1996; see also RIMB 2, B.6.31.11, .12, and .15.

<sup>28</sup> BIWA 52 239–40: A V 119: *ú-šab-bir dingir-meš-šú-un*; cf. A V 121–22: *dingir-meš-šú* <sup>4</sup>XV.meš-šú ... *áš-lu-la a-na kur an-šár*<sup>ki</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> For example, RIMA 3, A.0.105.2, an inscription on a stone stela whose curses focus entirely on protecting the inscription; curses of this period focus on inscriptions rather than images or monuments as the focus of future possible destructions; cf. third-millennium curses, for example, RIME 3/1, 1.7.StB vii 56f.

to compare archaeology to claims of practice: the recovery of a deposed statue of a storm god recovered near Til Barsip, a ritually “killed” governor’s statue from that same site, and perhaps destructions of one or more Luwian monuments at Ta’ayinat.<sup>30</sup> To this extent, the point is not that image defilement was never in practice in the Syro-Mesopotamian world, only that it was not generally something to boast about (in contrast to the self-referentiality of iconoclastic episodes discussed by Wandel, this volume). This is generally corroborated by earlier Mesopotamian history, where few claims of divine statuary destruction can be found except as damnations of enemy depredations, that is, as the very essence of *uncivilized* behavior.<sup>31</sup>

In fact, Assyrian kings rarely claimed the creation of cult statues of deities, either, revealing a traditional avoidance of royal power over gods’ bodies prior to the Sargonids (cf. the innovations discussed below).<sup>32</sup> In the seven centuries of Assyrian royal inscriptions prior to Sennacherib, only Ashurnasirpal II and his son are known to have made direct claims to have created statues of divinities (eight images total);<sup>33</sup> other such royal claims were coyly allusive, credited to the gods, or discussed in the passive voice.<sup>34</sup> Sennacherib indeed called himself “maker of the image of Ashur and the great gods” — though he may have been referring to engravings on a gate rather than icons as such — but was elsewhere careful to say that Ashur was “maker of himself.”<sup>35</sup> He also took partial credit for building images of the gods Zababa and Babu, but dutifully said that it had been done through the tutelage of Šamaš and Adad.<sup>36</sup> Sennacherib’s son, Esarhaddon, was tasked with rebuilding the icons of the Babylonian gods, but he was fraught with ambivalence, praying: “Whose right is it, O great gods, to create gods and goddesses in a place where man dare not trespass?”<sup>37</sup> In his highly self-conscious account, Esarhaddon was careful to say that he “restored” the statues or “caused [them] to rise

<sup>30</sup> Bunnens 2006; Roobaert 1996; Harrison 2001.

<sup>31</sup> This includes Urukagina’s assertion that the leader of Umma had destroyed the statuary of two temples among the nineteen he is accused of plundering (of the temple of Gatumdug and the Eanna of Inanna); RIME 1, 9.9.5. Several similar accusations against enemies are to be found in the Lament for Sumer and Ur.

<sup>32</sup> Note the unique claim by Šîn-balāssu-iqbi, governor of Ur, to have built a statue of Ningal (RIMB 2, B.32.2014).

<sup>33</sup> RIMA 2, A.O.101.01, statues of Ninurta, Ea-šarri, and Adad; A.O.101.32, an icon of Ištār; A.O.101.50, a statue of Mamu; see also CAD Š s.v. *šalmu* s. a–1’, citations for Ashurnasirpal II’s building claims for images Ninurta, Ea-šarri, Adad, and Ma-ŠAR (cf. A.O.101.30, where he does not mention them); oddly, in the first instance, the king says he “built” (*ibni*) Ninurta, but “founded” (*addi*) the other gods — that same verb used for his founding of temples. Shalmaneser III’s building of two gods are much more subdued affairs: RIMA 3, A.O.102.25, he builds anew (*iššūte*) the minor deity Kidudu; A.O.102.55, he makes (*ēpušu*) a gold statue of “the god Armada of the Aššur temple.”

<sup>34</sup> Compare to SAA 3, 13, where, quite the reverse, Nabu is said to have made the king’s (Ashurbanipal’s) “form” (*lānu*). Hurowitz (2003, pp. 151f.) discusses cases of god “birth” from Sargon’s time, but in each case the “begetting” is either discussed in the passive or credited to other gods, not to the king. Compare also the list of

gods repaired and restored by Esarhaddon (n. 22, above), including less prominent gods and not mentioning work on Marduk specifically. One could say that the idea of *improper* creation of images was considered more destructive of iconic power than physical destruction. For restoration inscriptions not mentioning icon creation, see, for example, Borger 1967, pp. 75–77.

<sup>35</sup> SAA 12, 20–21 “Sennacherib, maker of the statue of Aššur” (*epiš šalam* DN); at greater length, SAA 12, 86–87; in an inscription commemorating the restoration of the Aššur temple (Leichty 1995, p. 951; Frahm 1997, pp. 164–65, 220; Luckenbill 1927, pp. 183–90, of Aššur and other gods). Both the singular status of the noun referring to multiple gods (as Frahm argues) and the context make clear that at least some of these *šalmu* were engraved as narrative images on temple gates and walls, not statues as such. See Hurowitz 2003, pp. 153–55, on the “auto-genesis” of divine statues, including references to Aššur as “maker of himself”; Porter 2004, p. 43, Ashurbanipal addresses Aššur as “creator of the gods and begetter of Ištār”; see also Borger 1967, p. 82, where Esarhaddon addresses the gods as “creators of gods and goddesses.”

<sup>36</sup> Hurowitz 2003, p. 152.

<sup>37</sup> Walker and Dick 1999, pp. 64–65; Porter 1993a, 1996, 2000; Borger 1967, pp. 19–23, 45, 81–85, passim: here in a number of ways the king refers responsibility for image-building to the will of the gods, who delegate, call on, or otherwise give oracles to that effect.

up (in splendor)” rather than that he “built” them or “caused them to be born.”<sup>38</sup> Esarhaddon implied the cleaning, embellishment, and repair of divine statues rather than emphasizing their newness, focused largely on describing the rebuilding of temples, ornaments, and cult objects,<sup>39</sup> and when discussing newly constructed statues, mentioned mythological creatures — *laḥmū, nā’iri, kuribī* — and not gods.

This Neo-Assyrian reluctance to claim creative power over icons correlates to a much older Mesopotamian hesitancy to boast about the act. Early cases of god-building were relatively unusual. The Early Dynastic period boasts two cases of it: Ur-Nanše of Lagaš claimed in four inscriptions to have built a total of eleven statues (see Schaudig, this volume<sup>40</sup>) and Eanatum claimed to have built a statue of Nanše.<sup>41</sup> Following this, no cases of god-building were claimed by Akkadian kings,<sup>42</sup> by any member of Gudea’s dynasty (see Suter, this volume<sup>43</sup>), and only one Ur III inscription (in a Neo-Babylonian copy) records a claim by a king of that dynasty (Amar-Sîn) to have built divine statues, for Ningal and (perhaps) Sîn.<sup>44</sup> In the four hundred years of the Old Babylonian period, among the hundreds of inscriptions of 189 rulers, only two cases of god-building claims are known, one from a king of Lullubum.<sup>45</sup> The corpus of year-names used in roughly this same time, between the twenty-fourth and sixteenth centuries, bears out this general pattern. Out of these more than 2,000 year-names, there is no shortage of references to gods — somewhere around 568 entities are identified with the dingir-sign (excluding divinized royal names) — nor to images, Sumerian *alam*, numbering around 196. But out of these 764 year-names, only five refer to the creation (always /*dím*/, and never /*tud*/) of divine images, and only two of major gods,<sup>46</sup> corresponding to the low incidence of this particular claim in royal inscriptions. At most, images were “brought into” temples,<sup>47</sup> or “elevated,” and this only rarely<sup>48</sup> — though admittedly it can be

<sup>38</sup> That is, *ibni, ušālid*, or the like; CAD E *uddiš* > s.v. *edēšu* “to restore”; *ušarriḥā* > s.v. *šarāḥu* D “to make proud”; Borger 1967, pp. 83–84.

<sup>39</sup> Borger 1967: 82f.; Walker and Dick 1999, pp. 65–66. Compare these statements with the “god-repair” omens in *Šumma Ālu*, in which a man’s “repair” (*uddiš*) of an icon is restorative of its having been “defiled” (*šulputu*, “to defile,” > *lapātu* “to put hands on”); conceptually, what a “repair” fixed was not a physical breaking, but a violation of taboo (Freedman 1998, tablets 10 130–46 and 11 27’–29’).

<sup>40</sup> RIME 1, 9.1.6b: Ur-Nanše builds eight statues of divinities, lines vi 3–vii 6; 9.1.11 adds the names of three more; 9.1.17 adds perhaps one more, but *èš-ir* probably = <sup>d</sup>nin-RĒC 107-èš; see also 9.1.9.

<sup>41</sup> RIME 1, 9.3.11.

<sup>42</sup> The closest we come in this dynasty, perhaps, is an unattributed royal inscription (probably Naram-Sîn’s) characterizing a king’s statue as “eternal” (*dùl kù.gi ša dariati*, RIME 2, 1.4.1001).

<sup>43</sup> See also Walker and Dick 1999, p. 117.

<sup>44</sup> RIME 3/2, 1.3.11; cf. RIME 3/2, 1.4.3 v 5–13, in which Šū-Sîn’s description of metal items seized from looted foreign temples probably included cult statues — though he is careful not to say so.

<sup>45</sup> RIME 4, 2.9.15: Sîn-iddinam of Larsa claimed to have built a statue of Iškur (the verb *dím*, line 83, is reconstructed); Anu-banini wrote that he set up an image of himself and Ištar, RIME 4, 18.1.1.

<sup>46</sup> Yet in none of the five year-names is it fully clear that these kings claim statues built of the divinities rather than (images of other things) built for them: Sîn-iqišam Year 2b, images of Numušda, Namrat, and Lugal-Apiak (cf. his Year 4, in which he brings into temples divine statues “perfected in gold” [*kù-si<sub>22</sub> šu-du<sub>7</sub>-a*]); Sumula-El Years 24 and 26, images of Šarpanitum, Inanna, and Nanaya; Ibal-pi-El I Year F, an image of the divinized Diyala; Abi-ešuh Year P, a statue of Entena. The reading of Abdi-Erah of Tutub’s Year ab as referring to a fashioning of an image of Amurru is spurious (RN <sup>d</sup>mar.tu *i-lí re-ši<sup>21</sup>-šu i-pu-šu*); the correct reading (<sup>d</sup>mar.tu *i-lí ri-di-šu i-pu-šu*) refers to the designation of a successor named Amurru-ili. The year Hammurabi 41 about a statue of Tašmetum lacks a verb; we do not know what was done with or to it.

<sup>47</sup> Note, however, Walker and Dick 1999, p. 117, where they point out the occasional difficulty in distinguishing /*tu(d)*/ “to give birth,” from /*ku<sub>4</sub>*/ “to bring in.”

<sup>48</sup> A liver omen elaborates upon this distinction: “the king will make an image, (but) another (king) will bring it into (the temple),” CAD Š s.v. *šalmu* s. 1-b’.



difficult to distinguish these as literal or euphemistic terms. The great mass of images were protective<sup>49</sup> or votive statues of the kings as eternal supplicants.<sup>50</sup>

When Mesopotamian kings boasted of making things for the gods, they made: temples, gates, offering tables, boats, beds, chariots, couches, thrones, city walls, throne daises, stelae, sceptres, statues of royal ancestors,<sup>51</sup> weapons, kettledrums, vessels of copper or gold, golden baskets, crowns, garments, ziqqurats, harps, emblems, headdresses, platforms of mountains-and-streams, “presents,” branding irons, ovens, statues of lions, cedar timber, jewelry boxes, *gamlum*-staves, kitchens, axes, flashing lightning bolts, horns, doors, door lintels, coats, canals, and *tilimtu*-cups. But they did not, over these 750 years, generally boast of making the bodies of the gods themselves. Ideally, gods were either made by other gods or were autogenetic.<sup>52</sup>

To sum up: neither the destruction nor creation of divine images was an especially comfortable or useful topic for Mesopotamian kings to propagate in their literature, though we could easily make it appear that it was if we focus on the few cases in which they occur. Still, despite the rarity of references even in Assyrian records, icon destruction, previously absent, did arrive on the scene as a *topos*, if only as something thinkable or deniable, and thus even denials of the act took on new force. What we find then is not a widespread pogrom against images, but a widespread attention to the materiality — or to the mortality, if you will — of the *imago dei*.

The other prevailing historical condition to consider is the nature of the Neo-Assyrian practice that did predominate — icon abduction — in both its intentions and results. First of all, no Neo-Assyrian action taken against divine images was performed in isolation: every abduction or destruction was carried out together with the deportation of citizens and royal family members, the seizure of animals, loot, furniture, and/or palace goods. The inverse, however, was *not* true: many thoroughly looted places merited no mention of the abduction of gods.<sup>53</sup> For instance, in Tiglath-pileser III’s last Babylonian campaign, he took the gods of Bit-Shilani, Tarbazu, Yaballu, and Bit-Sha’alli among other spoil, but immediately moved on to loot two towns from which he took no gods.<sup>54</sup> Icon abduction must be looked at first in the context of conquest, and not as an isolated religious practice. We could also pay more attention to the neglected wealth of personal pronouns attached to the abducted gods: that the Assyrian king took “his gods” — meaning the household gods of the enemy monarch — or that he took “their gods” — meaning the city gods. Such policies were just as selective as when Assyrians chose to install puppet kings rather than deport entire cities.<sup>55</sup>

The abduction of a divine image by itself was in practical theological terms meaningless. The act had the city as its primary referent: god-napping was an act of civicide, not decide, and seemingly not even necessary for that.<sup>56</sup> Icon abductions spelled finality for targeted

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, the year name for Samsuiluna 22.

<sup>50</sup> An elaborated statement about this kind of supplication is outlined in, for example, Gudea’s Statue B vii 21–48 (RIME 3/1, 1.7.StB).

<sup>51</sup> Note the presence of royal statues in lists of precious objects belonging to gods; SAA 7, 62.

<sup>52</sup> Walker and Dick (1999, p. 64, n. 27, 95–97) point to the epithet of Ea as <sup>d</sup>nu-<sup>d</sup>ím-mud “image fashioner,” and to the denial clauses of the *mīs pî* for the craftsmen; that is, that the true makers of the image were a series of divine manifestations of that god.

<sup>53</sup> For instance, the display inscriptions of Ashurnasirpal II, which include many of these other details of

post-campaign spoilage, do not mention the abduction of icons.

<sup>54</sup> RIMA 3, p. 161; see also ABC 21 A3–10, accounting for the abduction of numerous gods from peripheral Babylonian cities by Adad-nārārī III, who in the same campaign offered sacrifices in Borsippa, Babylon, and Cutha.

<sup>55</sup> There are many examples to point to; perhaps the case of Sennacherib’s deportation of gods at Ashkelon is a prime example because it specifies the gods of the royal paternal household, the king, the king’s wife, his sons, his daughter, his brothers, but not, seemingly, the city gods (Frahm 1997, p. 59).

<sup>56</sup> Gods are never listed among the spoils taken from villages or tribes.

polities, connoting mortality because the images were symbolic of the political communities founded on the premise of their tutelage, rather than embodying the living gods themselves.<sup>57</sup> To attempt an analogy, were foreign agents to somehow abduct the Statue of Liberty, Americans would be anxious not because they imagined that “liberty” — the signified — had been lost forever, nor a physical, monumental statue — the signifier — but because the abduction suggested the fragility of the political community — the sign as a whole. English has no transitive use as Spanish and Chinese do for the verb “to disappear,” as in “to disappear” someone or something, but icon abduction had precisely that apparently paradoxical effect: the disappearance had to be a continuing and visible absence to remain effective as an index of community dissolution, whether that audience remained behind or took that knowledge with them into exile.

## UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES: THE DEGRADATION OF ICONICITY

These historical conditions understood, let us turn to some new problems for iconicity created by Assyrian treatments of icons — including an awareness of materiality, knowledge as a controlled commodity, empire as a form of persistent violation, and a rising tide of belief in non-iconic forms of power. To begin with, as we have seen, the possession and not the physical destruction of divine images was the predominant imperial mode of control over icons. Yet though individual losses of icons were important anti-symbols — negative presences — for dominated peripheries, the scale of acquisition created a very different kind of theological problem in the Assyrian center. Even mighty Nineveh had temples devoted to only a half-dozen gods or so. Where to put all these hundreds of foreign gods? What did it mean that they were there? The Assyrians listed looted statues of gods much as they listed any other kind of booty,<sup>58</sup> but these objects a) required cultic maintenance in ways that other captured objects did not, and b) had to be kept for possible political use in repatriation, just as foreign princes were kept at the ready for possible re-insertion into peripheral polities as puppet rulers. Statues of gods could not simply be warehoused; as Amanda Podany recently put it, they imposed the burden of “enormously powerful houseguests.”<sup>59</sup>

As early as Tiglath-pileser I, we have references to the donation of captured gods as doorkeepers in Assyrian temples,<sup>60</sup> or otherwise given as gifts “to Ashur.”<sup>61</sup> Esarhaddon specified in one case that two minor Babylonian gods had lived in the *é.kiri<sub>6</sub>.an.ki.a* of Ištar of Nineveh prior to their repatriation.<sup>62</sup> Yet there is hardly abundant evidence for the integration of foreign cult statues within Assyrian temples.<sup>63</sup> In Esarhaddon’s first regnal year, a

<sup>57</sup> Indeed, this reference presumably worked through the presumption that a temple with a tutelary deity in it provided the essential vitality of its city; empty or deserted, the political community would have lost the commonplace which provided its *raison d’être*.

<sup>58</sup> One of Ashurbanipal’s unusually detailed lists of seized icons can be found in *BIWA* 241, listing nineteen gods and goddesses by name, thirty-two unidentified royal statues, and four more royal statues identified by name.

<sup>59</sup> Podany 2010, p. 128; on the implied and specific obligations, see now Nissinen 2010.

<sup>60</sup> RIMA 2, A.0.87.1; see also Hurowitz 2003, pp. 156–57.

<sup>61</sup> For example, RIMA 2, A.0.98.1, A.0.99.1; in the case of Tiglath-pileser I, captured gods were given, together with sixty copper kettles, to Adad (RIMA 2, A.0.87.1), and to other gods (A.0.87.2). I am tempted to speculate in this respect about Sargon’s opaque phrase “the gods and goddesses who abide (*ašībuti*) in Assyria” (Fuchs 1994, p. 354) as possibly inclusive of such gods-in-exile.

<sup>62</sup> Borger 1967, p. 84.

<sup>63</sup> Huxley (2000) makes an exhaustive review, for instance, of the various divine guardians added to the temple of Aššur by Sennacherib; these include no discernibly foreign gods.

Babylonian Chronicle tells us, the gods of Der removed themselves to Dūr-Šarrukin,<sup>64</sup> but nothing more specific than that; letters also suggest that the Assyrians at some point began to store looted icons closer to their point of origin, with abducted gods being kept in Der, Elam, Uruk, and Babylon, apparently never making it to Assyria at all.<sup>65</sup> A letter from a royal official reports discovering six Babylonian gods stashed in a private house in the *rāb šaqê* province, 250 kilometers northwest of Assur.<sup>66</sup>

There is not an overwhelming amount of data on this subject as far as I am aware, but by late Neo-Assyrian times the divine guest population in Assyria proper and in diaspora must have numbered in the hundreds. For the metropolitan community, these foreign cult statues entailed ritual and cultic obligations, and the sheer number of hoarded statues must have suggested their physicality just as much as other masses of foreign booty did. The presence of hundreds of foreign gods en masse and over time in Assyria created a conceptual problem: the traditional political-theological rationale of gods-in-self-exile changed under the weight of their parallelism to other captured *stuff*, unintentionally emphasizing their materiality, subordination to human control, and, implicitly, the fragility of their being.<sup>67</sup>

A second area of the iconicity problem had to do with its contextualization within a broader program of imperial practices that were deliberately transgressive of cultural norms. The mass abduction of gods coincided with Assyrian transgressions against temples, cities, polities, and bodies. An exhaustive list of Assyrian atrocities is hardly necessary here — and I call them “atrocities” not because those practices were new or unique to the Assyrians, but because they designedly violated standards and beliefs; they meant to shock. Assyrian royal inscriptions are littered with the destruction of enemy temples; the utter annihilation of villages, towns, and even massive cities; the deportation of entire populations, as if pulled up by the roots; tortures visited on individual and massed enemy bodies; sieges resulting in cannibalism and corpse violations visited upon the dead.<sup>68</sup> The provocative and transgressive quality of Assyrian claims in warfare were meant to underscore an unparalleled national destiny being played out in the new form of empire, a form that needed to surpass the confines of tradition. Even the centrality of the dynastic principle itself fell victim to these revolutions, as the Sargonids — undoubted dynasts though they were — subordinated to the point of concealment their line of descent and the deep past of Assyrian kingship as justifications for rule — omitting genealogies, abandoning the production of the Assyrian King List, and eschewing *Distanzangaben*<sup>69</sup> and other historical references to early kings.

Whether or not Assyrian atrocities can be trusted as verifiable reportage, their propagation and reception required the transgression of a number of conceptual domains — ideal burial and cannibalism taboos; the sacrosanctity of cities as founded by gods, with temples as their dwelling places; the thousand and one *Volksgeschichten* that underlay every local polity — an inversion of their symbolic orders.<sup>70</sup> A whole architecture of fixed symbols was continuously exposed and degraded by these claims against the integrity of forms on a widespread,

<sup>64</sup> ABC 1 44–46.

<sup>65</sup> See SAA 15, 198; SAA 18, 77.

<sup>66</sup> Cole and Machinist 1998, p. xii.

<sup>67</sup> Nissinen 2010, p. 38: “Exile was not just a matter of power politics. It was a matter of heaven and earth, its dimensions were both material and spiritual.”

<sup>68</sup> See Richardson 2007, pp. 196–200. For episodes of cannibalism note, for example, Luckenbill 1927, pp. 303, 315, 318, 338, 356, 367.

<sup>69</sup> Esarhaddon’s statement about the Aššur temple is the exception to this rule: Pruzsinsky 2009, pp. 140–42.

<sup>70</sup> I do not use the phrase “symbolic orders” in a Lacanian sense.

even public, level.<sup>71</sup> Icon abduction was not only conceptually linked to these phenomena, but was in every single case visibly performed within these contexts specifically: it would be impossible to maintain that contemporary observers of god-napping would have been so blinkered as to ignore the transgressive violence surrounding the act of icon abduction. The irony of this transgressive principle is that, although it meant to suggest the superiority of Assyrian power against individual cities, gods, and rulers, it eroded the integrity of the categories themselves.

How did Assyrian policy propose to render legitimate its own destabilizing practices? One major initiative of the age was new attention to formalizing the process of icon creation. But this new articulation of ritual “birthing” for the gods also advanced a disenchantment with iconicity by drawing even more attention to the materiality problem. The death of a desired object by dissection and possession is what Thomas Mann called “*erotische Ironie*,”<sup>72</sup> the kind of demystification that results, ironically, from attention to formalism.

Let us look first at the best-known text related to this issue, the *mīs pî* ritual. Although the known recensions of the *mīs pî* have venerable precedent in practices at least as old as the twenty-first century B.C.E., it is not clear that a single entextualized ritual existed prior to the eighth century.<sup>73</sup> The Ur III references to procedures called “mouth-openings” and “mouth-washings” in fact point emphatically to regular rites, not occasional rites of constitution and animation. Ibbi-Sîn’s dedication of a vessel for “mouth-opening” (ka-duḥ-ḫu), for one, specified its use for the annual “Exalted Festival” rite, at which Nanna was bathed – not born. As Civil pointed out already more than forty years ago, the “mouth-opening” ritual in the Ur III period “was not a rite performed just once after making the statue but was repeated many times, periodically or perhaps only after cleaning or restoring the statues.”<sup>74</sup>

As far as the first-millennium recension is concerned, we can identify earlier, apparently independent source material that belonged to separate corpora, including portions of the “Incantation to Utu,” Uduḡ-ḫul, the *ḫišiḫti* uru<sub>4</sub>, and perhaps the Marduk-Ea dialogues found there.<sup>75</sup> Such materials could be seen as either fragments of an earlier, single ritual; forerunners anticipating a whole ritual; or individual rituals appropriated and redacted by a later tradition. Other portions of the *mīs pî*, meantime, appear to have been produced specifically for use in first-millennium times, such as the incantation *én u<sub>4</sub> dingir dím-ma*,<sup>76</sup> and variants between the Babylon and Nineveh recensions tell us of a ritual that was continually undergoing revision.

<sup>71</sup> See SAA 13, 180, mentioning the “gossip” of “the people” about the return of the Marduk image, which gives some sense of the public nature of these issues.

<sup>72</sup> The term is Mann’s, but was made most famous by Joseph Campbell, who in 1988 explained it as “the love for that which you are killing with your cruel, analytical word.”

<sup>73</sup> Walker and Dick 1999, pp. 58, 67: “Historical references to the ritual are regrettably few”; but see *ibid.*, pp. 27–28 and n. 96; cf. Hurowitz 2003.

<sup>74</sup> RIME 3/2, 1.5.2; Civil 1967, p. 211.

<sup>75</sup> Walker and Dick 1999, pp. 70–72; J. Cale Johnson (pers. comm.) drew my attention to the relevant material *mīs pî* appropriated from forerunner materials to Uduḡ-ḫul,

and from the “Incantation to Utu,” in turn incorporated from earlier ki-<sup>d</sup>utu incantations. Seth Sanders (pers. comm.) has offered that the Marduk-Ea dialogue in the *mīs pî* (i.e., incantation 6/8; Walker and Dick 1999, pp. 100–03) “shows clear signs of having been creatively and aggressively readapted in the Neo-Assyrian period.” The incantation type, he observes, “was used for over a thousand years in medical contexts in more or less the same way: the ‘crisis’ was a demonic attack on a victim and the goal was to heal a sick human. Here the ‘crisis’ is ... the fact that a statue is ritually incomplete .... It would be hard to find a more plausible instance of the recontextualization of an old theme for a new ritual purpose.”

<sup>76</sup> Walker and Dick 1999, pp. 70–72.

The question of whether the *mīs pî* had been newly redacted in the first millennium as one series from a miscellany of earlier material and practices, or in fact descended from a coherent manuscript tradition, cannot now be answered. It strikes me, however, that a composition project would harmonize with several other lines of evidence. For one thing, we find a great deal of anxiety newly voiced in the early seventh century as to both the propriety and proper construction of divine idols, most famously in Esarhaddon's prayer quoted above.<sup>77</sup> The letters from scholars to the Assyrian king betray specific concerns about the formal elements of icon construction — canonical proportions,<sup>78</sup> materials,<sup>79</sup> and personnel<sup>80</sup> — alongside brisk and businesslike accounts of god-building work.<sup>81</sup>

Expressions about the king as the “image” of the gods make it clear, further, that representational issues extended well beyond the bounds of icon-construction into philosophical concerns about form generally, as when a royal servant wrote the Assyrian king, saying:

The well-known proverb says: “Man is a shadow of the god.” [But] is man a shadow of man too? The king is the perfect likeness [*muššuli*] of the god.<sup>82</sup>

Many have pondered the meaning of this seemingly cryptic passage; I think that its gnomic quality — and our confusion about its meaning — points toward a seventh-century B.C.E. confusion about issues of form and substance, far from clearly expressing the orthodox thought of the age. The Neo-Assyrian period also had the first known “God Description Texts” and syncretic hymns such as those to Marduk and Ninurta, which made the physical description of the bodies of gods their primary concern.<sup>83</sup>

There were terminological developments, too. Older terms for images such as *šalmu*, *asumittu*, and *lānu* had no corresponding verbal forms — that is, they were primary nouns,

<sup>77</sup> Walker and Dick 1999, pp. 64–65, of the renovation of Babylonian cult images; see also Borger 1967, pp. 82–83; *BIWA* 207 C §9 I 109, where Ashurbanipal credits the arts of image-building to Ninagal, Kugsigbanda, and Ninkurra; SAA 3, 33, lines 21–22, the so-called Sin of Sargon text, though it is unfortunately unclear what act specifically was meant by “the grand scheme of mine which from times immemorial none of my royal predecessors had brought into realization,” though it clearly has something to do with building divine images.

<sup>78</sup> Ataç 2006, p. 69: “Such visual formulas in Assyrian reliefs have a distinct semantic capacity and their deployment is a conscious and well-calculated device on the part of the designers of relief programs to create a visual language of a ‘hieratic’ character [which] ... seems to pertain to fundamental philosophical and religious notions that permeated Assyrian kingship and theocracy....” See, for example, Ashurbanipal's references to the prescribed proportions for various cult statues and objects, Luckenbill 1927, pp. 388–89 and literature cited in *BIWA* 328 sub. K 2411.

<sup>79</sup> Letters about ornaments and accoutrement for deities are legion; I cite just a few by way of example: SAA 7, 62, 79, 81; SAA 10, 41; SAA 13, 127, 175; SAA 15, 184.

<sup>80</sup> SAA 10, 368 calls the artisans “masters” (*lū.ummāni*); SAA 10, 349 enumerates some of the supervisors necessary to complete work correctly; compare to, for exam-

ple, SAA 15, 34 on parallel concerns for the production of royal images. The realia of such technical concerns was not new — only the abundance of anxiety: compare to the eighteenth-century ARM 26, 132, the performance of an extispicy to discover whether the goddess Nin-Biri was “happy with her new face”; Feliu (2003, pp. 111–15) discusses some of the administrative letters related to the (re-)construction of the image of Dagan at Terqa.

<sup>81</sup> For example, SAA 10, 247: though it is not explicit that these are divine images, mouth-washing rites are mentioned, making this likely; SAA 10, 349, which discusses repair work, decoration, and overlays for several gods with different craftsmen specified; SAA 10, 252, a report mentioning that much work remains to be done on images of Adad and Šala; SAA 10, 368 reports a little nervously that the images of six gods are “begun,” “not finished,” or “in the hands of the masters [for finishing]”; only one image, that of Šarrahitu, “is completed.” Also SAA 13, 179, lines 10–11.

<sup>82</sup> *ša qabūni ammū mā GIŠ.MI DINGIR amēlu u GIŠ.MI LÚ.amēle amēlu* : LUGAL: *šū kal' muššuli ša DINGIR*. SAA 10, 207; *kal'* is perhaps *mā* (*ma-a*) per CAD M/2 s.v. *muššulu* s. 1. See also *ibid.*, pp. 196, 228; compare to Ashurbanipal's locutions that the gods “built” or “formed” him “with their hands” (*BIWA* 208 [by Aššur and Sîn], 240 [by Ištar]), or his characterization of Teumman as “the image of the devil” (*BIWA* 223; also K 3096).

<sup>83</sup> Livingstone 1986, pp. 92–93, 101–03.

not derived from verbs: one could not “do” the action constituent of the object (cf. the circumvention of this dilemma by the Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian *epiš šalmi*, “image maker”). But Neo-Assyrian usage now had these terms sharing space with nominalized forms from *banû* (“to build”) which had developed first in Standard Babylonian literature: *binûtu* “form,” *bunnannû* “figure, likeness,” and *nabnîtu* “appearance.”<sup>84</sup> New to the ninth century was a vocabulary explicitly linking formal and aesthetic values to representational quality: Aššur-dān II adopted as one of his epithets that the gods “altered my form (*nabnîte*) to lordly form (*nabnîti EN-ti*), they rightly made perfect my features (*bunnannîya*) and filled my lordly body (*zumur EN-tiya*) with wisdom”; Šarrat-nip̄hi, Ashurnasirpal II tells us, had “a form (*nabnîsa*) surpassing among the goddesses.”<sup>85</sup> This emphasis on constructedness with reference to divine statues emerges only in the first millennium. Yet, as Bryan (this volume) shows, “the same tools used to create the images could be turned against them.” Attention to buildedness inevitably suggested dismantling. Finally, I think about the ritual’s twin ethics of secrecy and denial as typically paradoxical in the sense that something secret had been documented, committed to writing, entextualized<sup>86</sup> — the disclaimers bespeaking a new fastidiousness and self-consciousness about the larger project.

Now, apparently older features in such texts could point either to their genuine antiquity or to later archaizing; newer features could just as easily identify reedition, redaction, or embellishment. But let us suppose for a moment that the *mīs pî* as we know it was a newly redacted ritual which had previously been comprised of individual incantations knit together by a larger unwritten, oral, and traditional knowledge of the rite<sup>87</sup> — what would it mean? Were we able to prove this the case, the crucial change was not so much in a set of beliefs and practices, but in their underlying justification — in a need for standardization and specification of beliefs and practices once perfectly convincing as traditional knowledge but now requiring entextualization. This need fits well within the larger strategies Assyrian kings used to deal with their theological-political problem — the maintenance of captured cult images — as well as their scholarly ambitions — to collect and control all forms of knowledge.

But bringing scientific clarity to the ritual process would also have produced unanticipated results: a devaluation of secrecy and the incursion of rational and professional premises into an essentially mysterious process.<sup>88</sup> An exposure of scholars and ritualists to a knowledge of all the elements required to “build a god” — an over-clarification — demystified it through visibility even as it hoped to improve or control these procedures.<sup>89</sup> Erotic irony is a much more subtle type of violence than smashing: it is the violence consequent to the

<sup>84</sup> *binûtu* and *nabnîtu* are known as early as Standard Babylonian literature — and *bunnannû* from Old Babylonian ugu-mu (MSL 9, 68, 1) — but their reference to images of gods specifically emerges in the Neo-Assyrian period; cf. CAD M/2 s.v. *muššulu* s. “likeness, mirror” and CAD T s.v. *taššilu* s. 1 “likeness, effigy,” both > *mašālu* “to be similar”; these terms had been in use since Old Akkadian times, but to my knowledge were never before used to refer to an image of a god. Conversely, *šalmu* by Neo-Assyrian times had taken on the transferred meaning of “likeness” (CAD Š s.v. *šalmu* s. f-1’-2’). On word-play with *nabnîtu*, see Borger 1967, p. 88, n. to line 13f.; see Nadali (2012) for the suggestion that *šalmu* came to refer, in different use, to either an immaterial image or a material picture.

<sup>85</sup> RIMA 2, A.0.99.2 (similarly, 100.1) and A.0.101.28; see also SAA 13, 178, a statue called *ša šalmi* “perfect”; SAA 10, 41 eye stones for a divine statue called *damqa* “beautiful.”

<sup>86</sup> Funkenstein (2003, p. 78) makes precisely this point about Gnostic and other hermetic works.

<sup>87</sup> Compare to Livingstone 1986, pp. 165–66.

<sup>88</sup> It is not necessary to think of this development as evidence for “secularism” as Fisher (1992) articulated it, though he looks at some other relevant and useful materials.

<sup>89</sup> On the conceptualization of “failed ritual theory,” see Chao 1999.

possession and analysis of the desired object. Group awareness of icon “birthing” (as it was styled) or building was quickly suggestive of its opposites, an awareness of the mortality and materiality of the image, with the gods implicitly turned from agents to subjects, even as disembodied forces grew in power (see below).<sup>90</sup> Such an awareness of the materiality of the image cannot have been entirely new; note the Sumerian riddle from Ur —

When I am a child, I am a son of a furrow.  
 When I am grown up, I am the body of a god.  
 When I am old, I am the physician of the country.  
 Answer: linen.<sup>91</sup>

This riddle, more than a millennium older than the Assyrian period under discussion, was probably composed for primarily didactic purposes, but it already reveals a slightly jaundiced view of the icon and its ornaments as ultimately disposable objects. Yet it is only with the later Assyrian time that icon metaphors of birth/death and building/breaking—processes previously subordinated as mysteries — were moved to the fore over the historical-theological dyad of the presence/absence of gods (i.e., gods-in-self-exile). These new sets of associations all brought unintended attention to the bodies of gods in addition to the “scale of possession” problem.

The formalization of icon creation, of course, fits into the larger context of Neo-Assyrian projects to rationalize knowledge generally. Scholarly work at Nineveh and throughout the empire produced competing and collaborating groups of scholars engaged in curation, redaction, and commentary.<sup>92</sup> While these scholars’ concepts of completion were far from our own, ditto their presumptive methodologies for the integration of corpora, there is no doubt that a secondary, interpretive scholarship developed in Assyria by the early seventh century. The parallel between the collection of knowledge texts and the abduction of icons is already clear, but Ashurbanipal’s scholars were not content with collection alone: their project required the control of meaning, the mastering of the texts’ contents and esoteric allusions.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, this was a social project that formed group identity internally; the imperial project did not stop at the promotion of canon-formation, but extended to the policing of boundaries through professionalism, cadre-formation, secrecy protocols — and a presumption of the corpus’ essential holism and apprehensibility. In short, rationalization was not only a matter of “pure scholarship,” but brought about changes in epistemology and the social location of knowledge.

Thus, even while we may pause to marvel at the scholarly triumphs of Balasi and his associates, the project of rationalization was problematic. If we know one thing of the composite

<sup>90</sup> Something like this was already anticipated by Hurowitz (2003, p. 155). Faure (1998, p. 789) discusses parallel paradoxes of Buddhist and Christian iconography which, in the latter case, “while an attempt to make ‘the invisible visible,’ [nevertheless] amounted to a destabilization of the visible.” When the boundaries of conceptual domains are crossed, questions are necessarily raised about their coherence.

<sup>91</sup> Civil 1987, p. 24: tur-ra-me-en dumu sar-ra-me-en/ būlug-me-en su dingir-ra-me-en/ šu-gi<sub>4</sub>-me-en a-zu kalam-me-en/ ki-būr-bu gada-àm. Perfectly unjaundiced expressions of image-building exist as well, of course, as in Lugalbanda and the Anzud

Bird, where the hero refers to wood-carved images of the divine bird as “breathtaking to look upon,” u<sub>6</sub>-e gub-ba-me-en; in the Debate between Copper and Silver, one of Silver’s failings is his inability to make “divine statues,” ki<sub>2</sub>-gi<sub>4</sub>-a dingir, while in the Palm-and-Tamarisk debate, it is one of Tamarisk’s virtues that his body makes the “bodies of the gods,” su dingir-re-e-ne-ke<sub>4</sub> (ETCSL 1.8.2.2, 5.3.6, 5.3.7).

<sup>92</sup> The secondary literature on this subject is too voluminous to cite exhaustively, but see Parpola 1993a; Pongratz-Leisten 1999; Frahm 2004, 2010.

<sup>93</sup> Livingstone 1986; Frahm 2011.

traditions, manuscript rescensions, idiosyncratic private libraries, and discoordinated practices reflected by the (largely Babylonian) texts caught up in the Ashurbanipal dragnet, it is that they drew on no single corpus meant to be harmonized in such a deliberate way. As one Babylonian scholar complained to the king about the supernumeracy of rites,

Only rites that are written down in scripture (*tupšarrūtu*) are our rites. They have been performed by our forefathers, and they meet the needs of the king. There are a hundred, nay, a thousand rites which, as far as I am concerned, would be suitable for the purification of the kings, my lords. But, because they are not our rites, they are not recorded in scripture.<sup>94</sup>

Another scholar detailed a ritual to be performed at the palace, but concluded abruptly:

This is not a ritual; this is nothing. It is not ancient — your father introduced it.<sup>95</sup>

Another complained of arbitrary changes to ancient rituals, as when priests of the Nabu temple undertook their own revisions:

No one can do anything; there is an order to remain silent. But they have changed the old rites!<sup>96</sup>

An awareness of errors in editing<sup>97</sup> and interpretation<sup>98</sup> permeate the Assyrian scholars' discussions. Whether these qualms ever attained to doubt about the Ninevite project as a whole is not in evidence, but the Assyrians ultimately reified a "Babylonian Knowledge" that never existed as such — another example of erotic irony. The creation of taxonomies and classifications; of manuscript etiologies; of the designation of esoteric and secret texts; of a critical, hermeneutic apparatus of commentaries (*mukallimēti*), explanations (*šātu*), distinction of variants (*šībī*), non-canonical lore (*aḥūti*), oral interpretations (*šūt pī*), excerpts (*nišḫāni*) — all of these, genuine tools of scholarship though they were, animated the kind of cultural golem that imperial knowledge projects so often produce, as well as an awareness of the subjectivity of knowledge. As one historian of ancient Greek and biblical scholarship wrote of these changes,

because knowledge increasingly came to mean systematic construction, theories of knowledge were bound to shift the focus of their attention from problems of truth and falsehood, of reality and illusion, to problems of *objectivity*: the foremost question to be asked now had to bear on the normative, law-like preconditions for constructing objects and their relations.<sup>99</sup>

The scholarly project was in no sense in open conflict with some other way of knowledge; there was no *Kulturkampf*; indeed the premise of Ninevite scholarship was just the opposite, that the scholars were reassembling a once-sensible whole. But the disambiguation of diffuse

<sup>94</sup> SAA 18, 204: *parši ša ina tupšarrūtu šaṭru paršini šunu abūni ipušu u ana šibūtu ša šarri šaknu 1-me 1-lim ša ašša attu ana kuparti ša šarrāni bēlēa lilliku u ašša la paršini šunu ina tupšarrūtu la šaṭru.*

<sup>95</sup> SAA 13, 135: *la dullu la memēni la labīru šū abūka usseli [x x].*

<sup>96</sup> SAA 13, 134: *memēni la ēpuš qāla šakin u parši labirūte ussašni.*

<sup>97</sup> For letters concerning the excision of material, see, for example, SAA 10, 103, 177, 373.

<sup>98</sup> For wrong reports, see, for example, SAA 10, 23, 29, 60, 72, 90, 109.

<sup>99</sup> Funkenstein (2003, p. 20) writing about knowledge and demystification in ancient Greek and Israelite contexts. On the self-conception of Assyrian scholars and their work, see especially Lenzi 2008.



knowledges as a single apprehensible entity destroyed the innate abilities of those *techné* to resolve cultural problems. Ambiguity — the blurring of conceptual domains — is precisely the strength of knowledge’s multiple forms, building in resilience and flexibility. The variety and discontinuity of cultural forms and practices permit them to limit or buffer social conflict because their heterarchical locations contain and diffuse those conflicts. Rendered unambiguous and rational, coherence is their undoing. Within this larger framework of disenchantment, the divine icon was but one casualty: we need not think of a crude smashing of icons as the only means of their destruction, but also a degradation and diminishment through the operations necessary to dissect and know them.

Finally, we should consider a quite different axis of influence: Neo-Assyrian aggression against icons took place alongside a rise in scholarly attention to disembodied forms as agents. The magical, ritual, and ominous literatures of this period were heavily populated by images of haunting ghosts, evil demons, shadowy sorcerers, severed hands and heads, disembodied shrieks, and flashes of color and light in the night — in a wide range of texts in which the gods show up only sporadically. Most of these literatures are best known from Neo-Assyrian editions, and these heterogeneous apparitions increasingly occupied the attention of scholarly and vernacular discourse in comparison to something we would recognize as pure theology. The effect of this heightened profile of noncorporeal forms, I argue, was not an impact on theology or religion per se, but on the notion of the potency of embodiedness.

Mesopotamian intellectual systems of course had always afforded space to non-divine yet supernatural forces. It would be methodologically fruitless to attempt to prove quantitatively that the first millennium saw this marked increase in belief in the potency and ubiquity of amorphic versus embodied entities. I can only suggest it as a qualitative issue through an illustrative example. In 1998, Sally Freedman published the first twenty-one tablets of the series *Šumma Ālu*;<sup>100</sup> the fully reconstructed lines of these tablets would have contained somewhere around 1,962 terrestrial omens. From these tablets, one can make the following rough count of supernatural forces appearing in the omens in some agentive capacity:<sup>101</sup>

Demons	72 occurrences
Ghosts	56 occurrences
Other disembodied agents	130 occurrences
	258 total
Gods named by name	53 occurrences
Gods mentioned generically	68 occurrences
	121 total

The first thing to point out about this list is the simple numerical preponderance of non-divine (n = 258) over divine (n = 121) supernatural agents. Beyond this, though, one is struck

<sup>100</sup> Freedman 1998; the next nineteen tablets of Freedman’s succeeding 2006 publication deal mostly with omens from animal behavior, where the incidence of agency attributed to supernatural forces of any kind is exceedingly low. In a personal communication, Ann Guinan has kindly brought to my attention a series of relevant omens from two tablets much later in the series. Tablet 87 “deals with faulty acts” (tripping, knocking over tables, etc.) in which the manner of the accident

can be said to indicate which god is responsible, often as “hand of DN”; Tablet 88 includes a few omens concerning the appearance of a statue-like image on the curtains of a temple.

<sup>101</sup> By “agentive,” I mean where some super-human force either acts (in the protasis) or reacts (in the apodosis) of an omen; thus these instances do not include omens in which, for example, a man does something to a god, a god’s image, or a god’s temple.

by the descriptive energy poured into the former category. The demons are named or characterized: river spirits, protective spirits, *mukil rēši*, *ardat lilī*, *rābišu*, gryllotalpa, etc. The ghosts are described in visible terms: they cry out, appear “as living persons,” manifest themselves as corpses moving of their own accord. The disembodied forces produced a riotous catalog of imagery: mysterious footprints, animate houses, walls, furniture, even the earth itself “crying out,” light-flashes (*biršu*), shining images of bronze or weapons, witchcraft spells, apparitions of death-bringing illnesses, will-o’-the-wisps “like fire” or “like lightning,” uproars, strange messengers, “some horror” (*mimma gilitti*) — all of these jockeyed for attention in the imaginative realm.

By contrast, the descriptions of most divine beings betray a poverty of specificity: most are named only generically (“the god,” “his goddess,” etc.) and even the references to named gods tend to distance the omen from the essential body of the divine being. More than half of named gods were observed as *qāt DN* (“hand of DN,” rather than just “DN”), a phrase which was euphemistic for disease or possession (at least  $n = 31$ ), six as a “manifestation (*manzāzu*) of DN,” and one reference to “something of Šamaš” (*mimma dUTU*). These qualifiers establish the actual presences of the identified gods at some remove from the ominous activity, and disembody them to some degree. Even more to the point, this and other ominous systems share a relative independence from either religious or demonological explanation of any kind: the great majority of omens in *Šumma Ālu*, as in other series, attribute no agent whatsoever, embodied or not, to the appearance or outcome of ominous signs. In effect, the larger field of causal agents is entirely hidden from view, not accomplished by anything so apprehensible as a deity.

It is probably safe to say that most accounts of Mesopotamian religion and magic adopt some position to the effect that the two spheres of action cannot and should not be artificially distinguished from each other. Such a position typically goes on to say that these were interlocking precepts: that something we call (temple) “religion” could be “done” with “magic,” and that “magic,” even when “magic” was seemingly unconcerned with anything “religious” (e.g., sex magic, medical rituals, apotropaisms against witches), was nevertheless categorically grounded in the power of the gods. Such commodious thinking sometimes extends not only synchronically, explaining how seemingly incongruous practices worked together, but diachronically, too, transposing evidence from different periods to present a relatively stable field of action domesticated under the rubrics I have just mentioned in quotation marks. How sure can we be of such harmonizing and potentially dehistoricizing principles? A more particularist analysis could just as reasonably posit that magical texts that involved no gods, temples, or priests — that is, the majority of them — had bases of power independent of those forces. As Marcel Sigrist has recently argued, magical rituals were “needed to make the powers in nature ... bend to the will of the magician ... [with] no direct connection with religion.”<sup>102</sup>

We could also argue — no less from silence — that temporally distributed concentrations and absences of sources were evidence of particular and changing concerns and interests in different historical moments — that changes in patterns of evidence speak to fairly radical changes in beliefs about the gods and their relationship to the world from period to period.

I will not belabor this line of thinking here. If the reader will forgive an abbreviated treatment of this enormous subject and also entertain my premise of an increasing subscription

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<sup>102</sup> Sigrist 2010, p. 413.

to the powers of unseen and unformed agents in the Neo-Assyrian period, I will make the further point that the new emphasis on disembodied powers degraded the conceptual domain of iconicity in Mesopotamia centuries before Judaeen polemicists gave voice to doubting it — not by attacking it, but by shifting attention away from it.<sup>103</sup> Assyria was undergoing a change in symbolic orders, out of which the suggestion emerged *that the integrity of forms was less relevant to power*.<sup>104</sup> Of course anyone familiar with Mesopotamian culture in the first millennium will recognize that statues of deities in temples remained central fixtures of official religion and high cult for centuries after Neo-Assyria fell; at no point was there any open conflict between temple religion and demonology, ghost magic, or anything like that.<sup>105</sup> But an undercurrent of ritual discourse and practice focusing on non-embodied forces had begun to erode the central place of iconicity in cultural thought, just as the empire encouraged a demystification and disenchantment with iconicity through practices and policies of formalism and control.

## CONCLUSION

The damage done to images in Neo-Assyrian antiquity has rightly drawn attention for its ritual, theological, and political significance. These actions pose universal problems of representation, boast venerable Mesopotamian precursors, and employed traditional grammars-of-action.<sup>106</sup> Yet they were also products of and stimuli to a changing intellectual milieu, not reflections of fixed practices and immutable beliefs which we can retroject endlessly into the Mesopotamian past. As one scholar has argued,

By limiting ... analys[is] of ritual to standardized or normative ... forms, analysts tend to create representations of society that primarily focus on consensus and homogeneity. These representations simultaneously overlook forms of contestation and conflict that are a regular feature of social arenas .... By categorizing [state] standardized and integrative ritual as somehow more authentic ... [we] are prone to reify hierarchical arrangements of power as “cultural essence.”<sup>107</sup>

Theology, politics, and knowledge were in revolutionary turmoil in the late Neo-Assyrian period, with rationalization and antiquarianism as points of debate about a disenchantment

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<sup>103</sup> Compare to Cole and Zorach 2009, which undertakes the iconicity problem “in the age of art”: simply because iconicity had been called into question hardly meant that the representational issue had suddenly died away; rather, it remained a problem well into the early modern period.

<sup>104</sup> Lincoln (2009) argued that conceptualizing the immateriality of demons itself posed its own intellectual problems, that demons “represent those aspects of non-being that can — and periodically do — reach aggressively into the realm of being with profoundly disruptive consequences” (pp. 54–55); cf. Rochberg’s 1996 analysis of personification of deities in metaphoric versus literal terms, and Nakamura’s 2004 discussion of apotropaic figurines and animacy.

<sup>105</sup> Compare with Ortner 1995, p. 384, however, studying the tensions between Nepalese Sherpa shamanism and

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(institutional, individualizing) Buddhist monasticism. She concludes that the opposition is a false one, and that the challenge for scholars “today is to do history or other forms of social science ... [by seeing] how people construct multiple histories including their own forms of modernity.” Taking the first millennium as a kind of unfolding intellectual crisis (see Michalowski 2005), this description seems apt of the Assyro-Babylonian formation of ambivalence, as a kind of adaptive mechanism more than a conflict.

<sup>106</sup> Researchers in cognition sometimes use the term “grammar of action” to refer to the structuration of patterns of activity that share the same generative neural bases as language; my implication is that sequences and structures of action were produced by and thus reinforced the same syntactic rules as language.

<sup>107</sup> Chao 1999, pp. 505–06, 527–28.

with the commonplace<sup>108</sup> that the age of empires ushered in.<sup>109</sup> The Mesopotamian cultural sphere was, like others, a moving target, bound up in its own changing concerns about the abstract and the particular, no different in this anxiety than neighboring Israel and Judah.

I have considered above a number of aspects of the iconicity problem in the Neo-Assyrian period: first, the historical rarity of icon destruction against the ubiquity of icon abduction, which was primarily a political statement, though with theological *sequelae*. Second, I have discussed the further consequences of these practices, which emphasized the materiality and mortality of icons: a larger program of transgressions which unintentionally degraded the norms they sought to control (hence the Heine quote at the onset of this essay); related projects to rationalize and control icon creation as well as knowledge arts more broadly; and a rising tide of belief in the potency of non-embodied supernatural forces. Perhaps only the last of these, the emergence of beliefs in noncorporeal supernatural agents, really fits Sewell's notion of cultural crisis by "thin coherence," when the sphere of ideals falls out of contact with the sphere of practice. A much broader possibility favoring "thin coherence," however, might be that the entire field of elite or state-sanctioned theology, characterized by an increasingly rarefied esotericism, fell out of touch with popular discourse as a whole; that the critical methodologies (rather than the conclusions) of institutional culture alienated civil society by complicating daily practice. For this conclusion, however, I see little evidence.

In most other respects, Rappaport's notion of "hypercoherence" is more applicable to the first-millennium B.C.E. iconicity problem: exposure, definition, possession, materiality, the inversion of symbolic orders. The hypercoherence hypothesis postulates an intellectual crisis rather than a zenith, a zeitgeist fraught with ambivalence and uncertainty, but productive of new beliefs nevertheless. The images of the gods were killed across the first millennium by something far more deadly than any open program of iconoclasm: they were subjected to an erotic irony of analytic knowledge and possession, a disenchantment produced through an aggressive, almost fetishistic exposure of cultural practices that worked better without explanation.<sup>110</sup> How and why did images die? They died by the gaze, by the view of the dissecting eye of theology.

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<sup>108</sup> "Commonplace," from Latin *locus communis*, links the concept of "ideas of general application" and "normal standards" to the (absent) topographic dimension of political communities destroyed by the Assyrians through deportation, the abduction of images, and other practices.

<sup>109</sup> Rubio 2009; Michalowski (2005, pp. 176–79) codes much of this antiquarian spirit as distinctly new: "What I am suggesting here is that these fundamentalist-like reactions of Babylonian intellectuals should be seen as a specific type of heterodox movement .... One may

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view this as a form of counter-axiality that was, ironically, both sociologically and structurally, homologous to the nascent axial movements in other societies." Compare with Woods (2004, p. 82), who writes of the Nabû-apla-iddina sun disk's restoration: "Both literally and visually, the facts are no more important than the way in which they are conveyed," arguing for no apparent contradiction along the authenticity/inauthenticity axis, thus "the archaizing of the image [still] serves to legitimate the cult by establishing its great antiquity ...."

<sup>110</sup> Funkenstein 2003.

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## WHAT CAN GO WRONG WITH AN IDOL?

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### INTRODUCTION

In the homogenized, monolithic view deriving from a superficial reading of the Hebrew Bible in its canonical form, two main tenets of ancient Israelite religion are: (1) the belief in, worship of, and existence of only one true God, YHWH, the God of Israel; (2) a prohibition on manufacturing and worshipping idols.<sup>1</sup> These two tenets are juxtaposed in the first and

<sup>1</sup> In this paper the terms idol, icon, image, cult statue, etc., are used indiscriminately, interchangeably, and without value judgment to designate anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, or abstract physical representations or embodiments of a deity. The Bible uses various terms to designate idols. Some terms relate to the process by which the idol is produced, others to what it represents. The terms relating to the production of the idol include פֶּסֶל “sculpted image” and מַסְכָּה “molten image” as well as עֲצָב (for meaning of root, cf. Job 10:8: וַיֵּצְבוּנִי וַיַּעֲשִׂנוּנִי עֲצָבוֹנִי, “your hands have formed me and made me”; see Gruber 1995). For מַסְכָּה as a mask that covered cultic statues or their upper parts, usually made of expensive gold or silver sheets by means of hammering and plating, see Kletter 2007, pp. 197–202. The term גְּלוּלִים, the favorite of Ezekiel (38x), is probably related to the word גָּלַל used to describe a type of stone in Aramaic (אֲבָן גָּלַל; Ezra 5:8; 6:4) and Akkadian (*galālu*). CAD G s.v. *galālu* mng. 2 remarks: “The meaning ‘smoothed (stone) polished (by a specific technique)’ may be suggested, although an etym. connection with the root GLL ... does not seem likely.” According to HALOT, p. 192b, the Aramaic גָּלַל should indicate a Hebrew cognate גָּלוּל, in which case the MT vocalization גְּלוּל is an intentional echo of שִׁקּוּץ “detestable thing,” making the term a pejorative (cf. מִלֵּךְ, and עֲשֵׂתֶרֶת vocalized in imitation of בִּשְׁת “shame”). The term has also been related to Hebrew גָּלַל, pl. גְּלָלִים “dung.” Bodi (1993) suggests that all terms derive from a single root indicating roundness, and that Ezekiel prefers the term גְּלוּלִים because it can mean “shitgods.” The words אֱלִיל, אֱלִל, and אֱלוֹתָה designate the god represented by the idol or the idol itself as a god. אֱלִיל is usually interpreted on the basis of etymology as meaning “weakling,” and taken as a pejorative. In Jeremiah 14:14 it appears in parallelism with שִׁקְרָה “falsehood.” However, it may be related to the Mes-

opotamian divine name Enlil, which was pronounced Ellil, in which case it has a polemical bent (see most recently Hallo 2009, p. 258). Whether this is the true etymology or not, it may well be an intentional pun on the divine name Enlil, and used in a polemical manner. The term צֶלֶם (Aramaic צֶלְמָא, best translated “image” and cognate of Akkadian *šalmu*, reflects the function of the idol, that is, a representation of something else. אָבֵן מִשְׁכִּית, derived from שָׁכַח, meaning “to look at,” may reflect the function. For parallels to אָבֵן מִשְׁכִּית as a “kneeling stone,” see Hurowitz 1999a, 1999b. סָמַל is known from several Phoenician inscriptions as well to designate a statue, and it may be a loan word. In a bilingual text (Donner and Röllig 1962, no. 41, line 1) it is rendered by Greek *a(n)dria(n)tan*, but has no clear etymology. Suggestions linking it with צֶלֶם, *lamassu*, or *šamallu*, are not convincing. Even more enigmatic is the word תְּרַפִּים, which has been derived on the one hand from תַּרְפָּה meaning “weak” (cf. אֱלִיל), as well as from Hittite *tarpis* “spirit, demon.” See the extensive discussion in HALOT, pp. 1794–96. The rare term מִפְּלִצֶת, designating something belonging to Asherah (1 Kgs 15:13, 13; 2 Chr 15:16) is derived from a root פִּלֵץ usually meaning “shudder, tremble” and has been regarded an obscure term. Rashi (1 Kgs 15:13), citing Babylonian Talmud *Avodah Zarah* 44a, explains it as a contraction מִפְּלִיא לְצִנּוּתָא (exceeds[?] in licentiousness) and explains: “she (Asa’s mother Maachah — V.A.H.) made for it (the Asherah) a phallus, and would fornicate with it every day.” It may be, however, a semantic equivalent of יִרְאָה “fear” used in Mishnaic Hebrew to indicate an idol which someone fears (Jastrow 1950, vol. 1, p. 593; and cf. Aramaic דְּחֵלְתָא, דְּחֵלְתָא with the same usage). The Hebrew term הֶבֶל meaning “wind” or “nothingness” may be related to Akkadian *zaqīqu* “wind,” used in the Verse Account of Nabonidus to designate an illicit divine

second of the Ten Commandments (לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ ... לֵא אֱנֹכִי and לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה לְךָ; “I ... you shall have no” and “You shall not make for yourself”) as well as in numerous other places where idolatry is considered a breach of the monotheistic imperative. Conversely, all other religions are polytheistic and idolatrous.<sup>3</sup>

Ironically, recent decades have witnessed this view being practically turned on its head. The Decalogue is no longer regarded by many as the foundation stone of biblical religion but, rather, its pinnacle; and archaeological discoveries, led by the sensational finds from Kuntilet Ajrud, and seconded by iconographic evidence promoted by the Fribourg School, suggest that Israelites were perhaps as polytheistic as the prophets accuse them of having been.<sup>4</sup> Nowadays Israelite religion is seen by many as originally polytheistic or henotheistic, with full monotheism prevailing, if at all, only at the end of the biblical period and perhaps not until the time of Maimonides.<sup>5</sup> Idols were routinely used in ancient Israel,<sup>6</sup> and some scholars claim that even the Jerusalem temple housed a cult statue.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, to old suggestions that Egyptian religion was monotheistic or went through monotheistic stages as under Pharaoh Akhneton, we can add Simo Parpola’s assertion that Assyrian religion was originally monotheistic (Parpola 1993a, 2000), and many other scholars recognize in it syncretistic trends pointing in the direction of monotheism. In addition, anthropomorphic cult statues have been shown to be latecomers to Mesopotamian cult and, according to Tallay Ornan, tended more and more to be replaced by symbols (Ornan 2005). Finally, modern

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statue (see below). Idols are sometimes referred to pejoratively as תּוֹעֲבָה (Deut 7:26; 27:15; Isa 44:19; Ezek 18:12; etc.) “abomination” or its synonym שִׁקּוּץ (Deut 29:16; Dan 11:31; etc.). These terms also designate the gods themselves and not just their physical representation. For the biblical vocabulary of idolatry, cf. North 1958. For the Greek terms *eidōlon* and *eikōn* and the Hebrew terms they translate, see Kennedy 1994.

<sup>2</sup> For the first commandment as containing Exodus 20:2–3 = Deuteronomy 5:6–7, see Weinfeld 2001, pp. 41–46.

<sup>3</sup> The Bible recognizes, to be sure, non-Israelite monotheists such as Melchizedek, Balaam, and Job, who know/worship God by names such as אֱלֹהֵי עֵלְיוֹן, אֱלֹהֵי שָׁדַי and seem not to employ icons. Needless to say, Adam and Noah were also monotheistic Yahwists. Polytheism and idolatry are seen essentially as aberrations which crept in to human religion at some unspecified time and will come to an end at the End of Days. The first hint of idolatry in the Bible appears in the stories about Laban and his attempt to recover his תְּרָמִים which had been stolen by Rachel (Gen 31:19, 29, 30). This story provides the first reference to polytheism as well (31:53). The various Els mentioned in the Patriarchal stories are syncretized with YHWH, who is still worshipped in the form of trees and pillars (see also Gen 14:22). There is a Jewish exegetical tradition which places the beginning of polytheism at the time of Enosh on the basis of Genesis 4:26: יְהוָה אֱזָר הוֹחֵל, לְקָרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה “It was then that men began to invoke the Lord by name” (NJPS), to which Rashi comments “אֱזָר הוֹחֵל, a term for ‘profanity,’ calling people and idols by the name of the Holy One Blessed be He, making them into idols and calling them divinities.” Cf. Fraade 1998. The first recorded confrontation between YHWH,

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God of Israel, and other gods is in the Exodus narrative. In Exodus 5:2 Pharaoh denies knowledge of YHWH, and in 12:12 YHWH threatens to mete out punishments on all the gods of Egypt, וְבָכַל-אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרַיִם אֶעֱשֶׂה שִׁפְטִים, indicating Egyptian polytheism.

<sup>4</sup> Evidence to the contrary, indicating that YHWH was indeed the major if not exclusive deity worshipped in ancient Israel, may be provided by the onomastic in the epigraphic finds, as discussed by Tigay (1986).

<sup>5</sup> For a recent discussion, see the appendix on “Monotheism and Polytheism in Ancient Israel” in Sommer 2009, pp. 145–74. According to Sommer (p. 173), “Biblical religion does in fact distinguish itself from other religions of the ancient Near East in its perception of one God as the exclusive creator of a world over which that God has complete control.” This conclusion is based on a definition of monotheism as “the belief that there exists one supreme being in the universe, whose will is sovereign over all other beings” (p. 146). This definition allows for the existence of many gods.

<sup>6</sup> See Keel and Uehlinger 1998; Uehlinger 1997. For a critique of the commonly accepted identification of the ubiquitous Judean pillar figurines with the goddess Asherah, see Moorey 2003. See also Lewis 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Niehr 1997. See also Becking 1997. Curiously, these scholars do not adduce the explicit testimony of Judges 17–18 for the use of cult statues in the cult of YHWH. Against these trends, see Na’aman 1999. Note also Levine 2007, who sees the second commandment (Exod 20:3–6; Deut 5:7–10) as addressed not against representing YHWH in a cult statue, but placing statues of other deities in Israelite cultic sites within YHWH’s view and purview.

understanding of and attitudes to the once-reviled cult statue have improved immeasurably following the long-awaited publication of the Mesopotamian mouth-washing ritual (*mīs pi*), finally restoring to the maligned idolater his authentic voice in defense from his critics.<sup>8</sup> The ultimate “turning the tables” on Israelite religion in favor of idolatry is, however, Karel van der Toorn’s (1997) provocative suggestion that in Judaism the Torah, central to the synagogue ritual, has assumed roles of a cult image!

This paper does not address the development of monotheism or the history of the ban on idols and evolving trends in their study. What it does discuss is problems found with idols by both biblical and Mesopotamian texts. The methodology is what William Hallo has dubbed the “contextual approach,” by which we compare texts from contemporary and contiguous cultures with the attempt to identify similarities, parallels, and perhaps even links on the one hand, even while highlighting differences and diverging views on the other. This will permit us to learn about the common culture of the ancient Near East, at the same time preserving the individuality and distinctiveness of its diverse members. We will see on the one hand that the biblical diatribes against idols find more faults in idolatry than just the incompatibility between idol worship and YHWH worship, the fetishistic nature of image worship, or the foolishness of the idol maker. On the other hand, we will see that even in Mesopotamia not every idol was strictly “kosher.”

## BIBLICAL OPPOSITION TO IDOLS — AN OVERVIEW

I first look very briefly at biblical attitudes toward idolatry. Michael Dick, in a study of the biblical anti-idol polemics (Dick 1999, p. 2; following Dohmen 1987), lists five types of biblical sources dealing with images: (1) Narratives mentioning images which, however, do not play a major role in the stories; (2) texts in the Deuteronomistic History or Chronicles that deal with cult reform; (3) prophetic polemics against making and worshipping idols; (4) prophetic texts mentioning cult images but primarily interested in conflicts with non-Israelite religions and their gods; (5) legal commands prohibiting cult images. Not included in this enumeration are three stories and one additional report about manufacturing cult images in which the image is at the heart of the story,<sup>9</sup> and in particular: (1) the incident of the golden calf (Exod 32–33; Chung 2010; Kletter 2011); (2) the story of the ephod in Ophrah made by Gideon (Judg 8:22–27); (3) the story of the cult statue in Mount Ephraim and Dan made by Michayehu (Judg 17–18); (4) the report of the golden calves in Bethel and Dan made by Jeroboam (2 Kgs 12:25–33; Toews 1993, pp. 41–69).<sup>10</sup> These stories are at the center of the

<sup>8</sup> Walker and Dick 2001. See also Berlejung 1997 and 1998. Prior to these publications the *mīs pi* was known principally from S. Smith 1925 and the classic study of Jacobsen 1987.

<sup>9</sup> For the bronze serpent manufactured by Moses in the desert, see below in the discussion of the decision to make an idol. The worship of Baal Peor, an offence no less sinful than worshipping the golden calf, is described at length in Numbers 25 and referred to again in Deuteronomy 4:3–4. The term used to describe the cult is the N-stem of צמ"ד (Num 25:3, 5; Ps 106:28; but cf. Hos 9:10 which uses נִתְּנָוּ "they turned aside") which would mean, literally, “to yoke oneself” to the deity. The

cult involves sacred prostitution. The Talmudic Sages had fun with this story, imagining a scatological cult performed by spreading (פני"ר) the sphincter and defecating on the cult statue, and the more the merrier! (Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 64a, 106a; *Bekhorot* 5). The cult may have involved use of an idol, and the rabbinic depictions certainly assume this, but none is mentioned in the biblical account, nor is an idol of Baal Peor mentioned in the long list of Midianite booty in Numbers 31. See Levine 2000, pp. 279–303.

<sup>10</sup> For the use of the plural to designate the calf of Bethel, see M. S. Smith 2007.

biblical part of the second section of this study, both because of their prominence and literary peculiarities, and because they polemicize against idols of YHWH, thereby separating the ban on cult statues from the demand for monotheism.<sup>11</sup> But first I turn to a general survey of the various biblical claims against idolatry.

The Bible combats idol worship in various ways and for several reasons. The pentateuchal laws such as the second commandment in the Decalogue, **לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה לָךְ פֶּסֶל (וְ)כֹל תְּמוּנָה**, “You shall not make for yourself an idol of (or) any image etc.” (Exod 20:3–4; Deut 5:7–9), prohibit the manufacture and worship of iconic divine representations because this is considered an act of unfaithfulness to YHWH, who is Israel’s exclusive God.<sup>12</sup> In other cases, worship of idols is connected with foreign, aborigine practices which are to be avoided and destroyed (Exod 34:17; Num 33:52; Deut 7:5, 25; 12:3).<sup>13</sup> There is also a theological-historical rationale connected with the nature of YHWH himself. The God of Israel, even though often portrayed anthropomorphically, has no visible shape so it is impossible to properly represent Him, and one who worships an idol in any shape is ipso facto worshipping a god other than YHWH (Deut 4:11–20).<sup>14</sup>

To these objections, found in the laws of the Pentateuch, we may add those found in the prophecies of First Isaiah,<sup>15</sup> which apparently attack idols on socioeconomic grounds, viewing them as signs of opulence, conspicuous consumption, and hubris (see especially Isa 2:20; 31:7).<sup>16</sup> Ezekiel, building upon Deuteronomy’s idol terminology combined with Priestly conceptions of defilement, views the idols as sources of impurity (Ganzel 2010).

<sup>11</sup> Note that even in the golden calf incident, although both YHWH and the people identify the calf as **אֱלֹהֵיךָ** “your gods ... who have taken you out of Egypt” (Exod 32: 4), perhaps indicating a god other than YHWH, Aaron, after having fabricated the calf, says **מָחָר תִּהְיֶה מִחֹר** “tomorrow will be a holiday for YHWH” (Exod 31:5), thereby identifying the calf with YHWH. Cf. Propp 2006, pp. 580–83. According to Toews (1993, pp. 41–69) the calf represents El already syncretized with YHWH, or YHWH who has absorbed characteristics of El.

<sup>12</sup> This is also, perhaps, the rationale behind the insertion of an anti-idolatry injunction in Leviticus 26:1:

**לֹא-תַעֲשׂוּ לָכֶם אֱלֹהִים, וּפְסֵל וּמִצְבֵּה לֹא-תִקְמוּ לָכֶם, וְאֲבָן מִשְׁכִּית לֹא תִתְּנוּ בְּאַרְצְכֶם, לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת עֲלֵיהֶם: כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵיכֶם** “You shall not make idols for yourselves, or set up for yourselves carved images or pillars, or place figured stones in your land to worship upon, for I am the Lord your God.” This prohibition comes directly after God’s pronouncement that Israel are His, and only His slaves because he took them out of Egypt. They may therefore worship only Him and not idols. Rashi and Ibn-Ezra view this insertion as a warning for an Israelite slave who has been sold to a Gentile not to adopt the practices of his master.

<sup>13</sup> Note also Jeremiah 19:9, who calls idols **הַבְּלִי נֶכֶר** “foreign vanities/foolishness.”

<sup>14</sup> This passage may ultimately be a long expansion and interpretation of Exodus 20:19–20: **וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, כֹּה תֹאמַר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: אֲתֶם רִאיוֹתֶם--כִּי מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם, דִּבַּרְתִּי עִמָּכֶם. לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ, אֲתֵי: אֱלֹהֵי כֶסֶף וְאֱלֹהֵי זָהָב, לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ לָכֶם** “The Lord said to Moses: Thus shall you say

to the Israelites: You yourselves saw that I spoke to you from the very heavens: With Me, therefore, you shall not make any gods of silver, nor shall you make for yourselves any gods of gold,” which juxtaposes God’s appearance to the prohibition on images. Both passages seem to imply that the people’s experience of God’s revelation at Sinai/Horeb is the basis for the prohibition on making images. For the evolving interconnection between iconoclasm and aniconism, see Natalie May’s *Introduction* to this volume.

<sup>15</sup> See also Ezekiel 7:22.

<sup>16</sup> See Uffenheimer 1994. Aster (2007) views the entire passage in which these verses are contained as an anti-Assyrian polemic, and that the construction and worship of idols are acts of “haughtiness” because they prevent universal recognition of the exclusive sovereignty of YHWH. This would be a case, therefore, of “iconic politics,” which we discuss below. Aster rejects Goldstein 2005, who considers these verses later additions to the larger passage. The originality of the anti-idolatry passages in First Isaiah may be questioned. In 2:12–21 it seems possible to excise verses 18 and 20. Although there is reason to regard the anti-idolatry stance found in First Isaiah (whether original or not) as related to social issues, the same can hardly be said about Exodus 20:19 **לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ, אֲתֵי: אֱלֹהֵי כֶסֶף וְאֱלֹהֵי זָהָב, לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ לָכֶם.** “With me, therefore, you shall not make any gods of silver, nor shall you make for yourselves any gods of gold.” Some have regarded this law not as a prohibition on idols per se, but only on silver and gold images. This argument has no basis whatsoever, except supposed nomadic tendencies in ancient Israel, a difficult suppo-

However, already in Deuteronomy 4:28 there is criticism of the essence of the image. God threatens that if the Children of Israel will make idols and worship them, He will scatter them among the nations where they will worship gods who are *מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי אָדָם* “works of human-beings of wood and stone who do not see and do not hear and do not eat and do not smell.” In other words, the idols are powerless and therefore worthless as gods (cf. Deut 28:64).

The negation of the efficacy of idols develops among the prophets and Psalms.<sup>17</sup> Ultimately, the diatribe turns upon the idol maker himself, portraying him as a total imbecile who doesn't even realize that he worships and requests assistance from a lifeless object which only a short moment ago he created with his very own hands. The mockery of idol worship, which extends into such apocryphal and pseudepigraphic books as the Letter of Jeremiah, the additions to the book of Daniel, the Apocalypse of Abraham, and the Testament of Abraham, as well as into several famous rabbinic legends (Tohar 2010), reaches its pinnacle in the Hebrew Bible in the prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah and Jeremiah. In several extended parodies,<sup>18</sup> these prophets focus on the process of manufacturing the idol. This aspect of idolatry is especially vulnerable and subject to criticism, because at this point in particular the foolishness of the act is most acute, overstepping all bounds.<sup>19</sup> The idol maker is “caught red-handed” in an unrivaled act of stupidity, and he cannot deny it by fortuitous claims such as that the idol already existed and he is unaware of its true nature.<sup>20</sup>

The remedy for idolatry is refraining from it on the one hand, and iconoclasm on the other. A thorough discussion of the religious and political aspects of iconoclasm, the modes of iconoclasm, and the implications of the way in which idols are destroyed for what is wrong with them would be too large for the current context.<sup>21</sup>

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sition rejected even by those who support the interpretation. There is also no reason to regard this verse as the original anti-idol law, predating even the Decalogue.

<sup>17</sup> Isaiah 10:10, 11; Habakkuk 2:18; Psalms 96:5 and 97:7; 1 Chronicles 16:26. For the word *אֱלִיל* itself, see above, n. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Isaiah 40:17–20; 41:6–7; 44:9–20; 46:5–7. See also Jeremiah 10:1–16; Habakkuk 2:18–19. For these parodies, see the critical commentaries to Deutero-Isaiah (such as Paul 2008) and Jeremiah as well as detailed studies such as Dick 1999 and, most recently, Levtow 2008, pp. 40–85. Earlier studies include Roth 1975; Clifford 1980; Fitzgerald 1989; Holter 1995; and Rudman 1999. Similarities in content, style, and tone make it quite possible that Jeremiah and Deutero-Isaiah have adapted and integrated into their own works pieces of pre-existing, independent anti-idolatry diatribes. If this is the case, it should be possible to view all the passages together and attempt a reconstruction of one or more original polemics.

<sup>19</sup> For the sociopolitical rationale for these diatribes, see Levtow 2008. This book attempts to explain the biblical parodies on icon (= idol) making not as steps in the emergence of Israelite monotheism but as instruments of ancient Near Eastern “iconic politics,” that is, statecraft in which manipulation of icons by wielders of political power plays a central role in asserting the superiority of one nation and its god over another (see more below). For a very different attempt at contextualizing

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the diatribes in a political polemic, cf. Lipton 2009, who suggests that Isaiah's icon parodies are aimed against the Tabernacle of the Priestly source.

<sup>20</sup> Note Aaron's “defense” on having been caught making a golden calf, *וַיֵּצֵא הַעֵגֶל הַזֶּה*, “and this calf came out,” as if he had no part in its manufacture. The autogenesis of the cult statue is a current theme in the Mesopotamian mouth-washing ritual and the concept may stand behind Aaron's claim. See Hurowitz 2003a, 2004.

<sup>21</sup> The Bible contains numerous references to destruction of idols and other representations of divinity such as *מַצְבֹּת*, pillars and *אֲשֵׁרִים*, sacred trees. Commands incumbent on the entire people of Israel to destroy the idols of the indigenous inhabitants of the Land are found in Exodus 34:13 (Minor Book of the Covenant): *כִּי אֶת-מִזְבְּחֵיהֶם תִּתְּצוּ, וְאֶת-מַצְבֹּתָם תִּשְׁבְּרוּ; וְאֶת-אֲשֵׁרֵי, וְאֶת-תְּכֵרֵיהֶם* “You must tear down their altars, smash their pillars, and cut down their sacred trees/posts”; Numbers 33:52 (P), *אֶת כָּל-מַשְׁכְּלֵיהֶם; וְאֶת כָּל-צִלְמֵי מַסַּכְתָּם*, *וְאֶת-אֲבֹדֵיהֶם*, “you shall destroy all their figured objects; you shall destroy all their molten images”; Deuteronomy 7:25: *פְּסִילֵי אֱלֹהֵיהֶם, תִּשְׂרֹפוּן בָּאֵשׁ; לֹא-תַחַמְדוּ כִּסֵּף וְזָהָב עֲלֵיהֶם, וְלָקַחְתֶּם לָן--פֶּן יִתְנַקֵּשׁ בּוֹ, כִּי תֹעֲבֹת יִתְּנוּ אֱלֹהֵינָהּ הוּא. וְלֹא-תִבְיֵא תֹעֲבָה אֶל-בֵּיתְךָ, וְהָיִיתָ חֹרֵם כְּמֹהוּ; שִׁקֵּץ תִּשְׁקָצוּ וְלֹא-תִבְיֵא תֹעֲבָה אֶל-בֵּיתְךָ, וְתִעָבְבוּ, כִּי-חֹרֵם הוּא.* “You shall consign the images of their gods to the fire; you shall not covet the silver and gold on them and keep it for yourselves, lest you be ensnared thereby; for that is abhor-

In Mesopotamia there was never a blanket prohibition on making idols or an objection on principal to their use.<sup>22</sup> There are no known laws to this effect, and certainly no spoofs mocking idolatry per se.<sup>23</sup> Just the opposite! Mesopotamian kings take pride in manufacturing cult statues, and some of them present it as a product and sign of their great wisdom. Even so, not every idol was considered suitable, there were unwritten standards for what they should look like and from what they should be made, and one could not make an idol willy-nilly, on a whim, or in any way one wished. In fact, as we shall see below, there are a few texts which ridicule and mock certain particular kings who manufactured inappropriate idols. We also shall see several texts describing the manufacture of idols, from which we can learn of what was required of an idol, and by implication what, if absent or different, might disqualify it.

## BIBLICAL TEXTS IN DEBATE WITH MESOPOTAMIAN IDOLATRY

Yehezkel Kaufmann has famously claimed that “the Bible is utterly unaware of the nature and meaning of pagan religion,” and views pagan religions in general and image worship in particular as nothing but fetishism, worship of wood and stone (Kaufmann 1967, vol. 1, pp. 255–416; 1960, pp. 7–59). Not only this, but he holds the biblical authors totally ignorant of

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rent to the Lord your God. You must not bring an abhorrent thing into your house, or you will be proscribed like it; you must reject it as abominable and abhorrent, for it is proscribed”; Deuteronomy 12:3:

וְנִתְצַתְתֶּם אֶת-מִזְבְּחֵיהֶם, וְשִׁבְרֵתֶם, אֶת-מִצְבֹּתֵיהֶם, וְאִשְׂרֵיהֶם תִּשְׂרֹפוּ בָאֵשׁ, וְכִסְלֵי אֱלֹהֵיהֶם תִּגְדָּעוּ; וְאִבְדֵתֶם אֶת-שִׁמְמֵם, מִן-הַמִּקְוֹם הַהוּא. “Tear down their altars, smash their pillars, put their sacred trees/posts to the fire, and cut down the images of their gods, obliterating their name from that site.” The Book of the Covenant and the Holiness Code do not command iconoclasm. Descriptions of national leaders destroying idols and other illicit cult symbols made by Israelites include Jacob burying (וַיִּטְמֹן) the foreign gods owned by his household and the rings in the ears of the idols under the terebinth in Schechem (Gen 35:4; Hurowitz 2000); destruction of the golden calf by Moses (Exod 32:20; cf. Loewenstamm 1967, 1975); Gideon cutting down the Asherah and destroying the altar to Baal (Judg 6:25–32); Asa cutting down and burning the מַפְלְצוֹת (see above, n. 1) to Asherah made by his mother Ma’achah (1 Kgs 15:13); Jehu destroying the Baal pillar and his temple (2 Kgs 10:26–27); the people (כָּל עַם הָאָרֶץ), probably at the instigation of Yehoyadah, high priest under Queen Athaliah, smashing the זָלָמִים of Baal (2 Kgs 11:18); Hezekiah destroying pillars, cutting down the Asherah, and cutting up Nehushtan (2 Kgs 18:4); Josiah’s purification of the cult (2 Kgs 23 passim). Joshua (24:14, 23), at Shechem, in an action reminiscent of Jacob at Bethel, commands, “Put away the gods that your forefathers served beyond the Euphrates and in Egypt” וְהִסִּירוּ אֶת-אֱלֹהֵיהֶם, אֲשֶׁר עֲבָדוּ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם בְּעֵבֶר הַנָּהָר וּבְמִצְרַיִם, and, “put away the alien gods that you have among you (הִסִּירוּ אֶת-אֱלֹהֵי הַנֹּכַר אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבְּכֶם), the reference probably being to removal of idols (cf. David Qimhi on Josh

24:13; Boling and Wright (1982, p. 537) speak about “renunciation of old gods”). We may assume that the people actually did so, but the way this was done is not made explicit (Josh 24:14, 23; for similar acts, see also Judg 10:16 and 1 Sam 7:3). There are even cases where God himself engages in iconoclasm. God threatens to destroy Israel’s high places, and as a result other cultic paraphernalia including her גְּלוּלִים “smooth stones”/“shitgods” (see above, n. 1) will be broken (Ezek 6:3, 6). His threat to do judgment on the gods of Egypt may refer to God destroying their cult statues (Exod 12:12; Num 33:4; cf. Propp 1999, p. 400). God threatens to do this again in the future according to Ezekiel 30:13. Most specifically, YHWH, exiled with his ark in the Philistine cities, decapitates and amputates the hands of Dagon’s statue in Ashdod (1 Sam 5:4). Some prophecies foresee divine destruction of idols by act of God (Mic 1:7; Nah 1:14; Jer 51:45, 47, 52). Isaiah 21:10 may refer to the destruction of the idols of Babylon by an enemy, perhaps Elamites and Medes (cf. v. 2).

<sup>22</sup> Ornan (2005) has shown that in first-millennium Mesopotamia, and especially Babylonia, anthropomorphic representations of the gods tended to be limited to the sacred space of temples, while outside these confines the use of symbols prevailed. For the popularity of non-anthropomorphic, physical representations of deities and its effect on Israelite practice, see Mettinger 1995 and 1997.

<sup>23</sup> The Obliging Servant takes a swipe at divine worship in general and the nuisance of a god requesting a <sup>d</sup>Latarak (prophylactic) figurine (Lambert 1960, p. 148, line 61; cf. Samet 2008, p. 106 n. 33).



the true essence of idolatry and its mythological background, for if it were aware of them it certainly would have argued against them in other ways. Kaufmann may have properly estimated the “bottom line” in the Bible’s understanding of idolatry, but as all bottom lines, this one too is lacking subtlety and may be harmonistic.

Some of the biblical diatribes against the idols of foreigners may even be directed against specific Mesopotamian texts, revealing awareness of what the idolaters actually thought problematic in their own practices. The best example is Psalm 115:2–7 (cf. Ps 135:15–18; Deut 28:64):

ב למה, יאמרו הגוים: איה-נא, אלהיהם.  
 ג ואלהינו בשמים-- כל אשר-תפין עשה.  
 ד עצביהם, כסף וזהב; מעשה, ידי אדם.  
 ה פה-להם, ולא ידברו; עינים להם, ולא יראו.  
 ו אזנים להם, ולא ישמעו; אף להם, ולא יריחון.  
 ז ידיהם, ולא ימישון--רגליהם, ולא יהלכו; לא-יהגו, בגרונם.

Why do the nations say “Where, now, is their God?”  
 When our God is in heaven  
 And all that He wills He accomplishes.  
 Their idols are silver and gold,  
 The work of men’s hands.  
 Mouths they have, but they cannot speak,  
 Eyes they have, but they cannot see;  
 Ears they have, but they cannot hear,  
 Noses they have, but they cannot smell;  
 Their hands cannot touch,  
 Their feet cannot walk;  
 They can make no sound in their throats.

This passage can be compared with a passage in the *mīs pī* “mouth-washing” ritual incantation which refers to the *pīt pī* “opening of the mouth” (Walker and Dick 2001, pp. 136–41; *Mīs pī*, Incantation Tablet 3, lines 50ab–71ab [excerpts from the Akkadian version]):

- 50 *ilū uštapû ina naphar mātāti ...*  
 50 The god(s) appeared in all the lands ...  
 ...  
 53 *šarhiš ittanabiṭ šalmu ellu šūpû*  
 53 it appeared magnificently, the statue shone brilliant;  
 54 *ina šamê ibbanû ina eršetī ibbanû ...*  
 54 It was made in the heaven, it was made on earth ...  
 ...  
 58 *šalam [bun]nanê ša ilī u awīli [MS F = binût ilī epšet amēlūti]*  
 58 The statue is the image of gods and humans [MS F = construction of gods, work of mankind];  
 59 *[šalmu inī] ša Ninkurra ibnû*  
 59 the statue (has) eyes which Ninkurra has made;

- 60 [šalmu x]-x ša Ninagal ibnû  
60 The statue (has) ... which Ninagal has made;
- 61 šalmu bunnannê ša Ninzadim ibnû ...  
61 The statue (has) features which Ninzadim has made;
- 62 (Sumerian; Akkadian broken) [al]am kù.gi kù.babbar <sup>d</sup>kù.si<sub>22</sub>ban-da  
mu-un-dù  
62 the statue is of gold and silver which Kusibanda has made ...
- ...
- 69 šalmu annû ša Ninkurra Ninagal Kusibanda Ninildu [Ninzadim ibnû]  
69 the statue which Ninkurra, Ninagal, Kusibanda, Ninildu, Ninzadim have made,
- 70 šalam annû ina la pīt pī qutrinna ul iššin  
70 this statue, without the “Opening of the Mouth” ceremony, cannot smell incense
- 71 akala ul ikkal mē ul išatti  
71 it cannot eat food nor drink water

The parallels between these passages are striking and can be taken as a dialogue. In fact, viewing them as a dialogue can find justification in the psalmist’s question, “Why do the nations say where are their gods?” He is speaking to God and Israel, but addresses a challenge put forward by the Gentiles. The Mesopotamian says the statue was made in heaven and earth, to which the psalmist responds that his (“our”) God is in heaven and makes anything He wants. The Mesopotamian says his god was made (jointly) by gods and humans. The psalmist counters that it was made (only) by humans. The Mesopotamian points out that the idol is made of gold and silver by the god Kusibanda, a god of goldsmiths, to which the psalmist agrees that it is of silver and gold, but just that and not necessarily made by a god. Both passages refer to the eyes and other facial features of the statue. The author of the *mīs pī* incantation knows that without the mouth-opening ritual, his statue is essentially dead, unable to smell, eat, and drink; but properly performing the ritual will remedy this malady. The psalmist insists, however, that the statue is impotent, and cannot speak, see, hear, smell, feel, or walk, denying the efficacy of the ritual.

An example of a diatribe against a Mesopotamian idea, but not necessarily a particular text, may be in the frame to Deutero-Isaiah’s extended diatribe (Isa 44:9–20; trans. NJPS):

ט יצַר־פֶּסֶל כָּל־מַה וְחַמּוּדֵיהֶם בַּל־יִוְעִילוּ וְעַדֵּיהֶם הֵמָּה בַל־יִרְאוּ וּבַל־יִדְעוּ לַמַּעַן יִבְשׁוּ י  
מִי־צָר אֵל וּפֶסֶל נֶסֶךְ לְבַלְתִּי הוֹעִיל. יֵאָדָּם כָּל־חֲבֵרָיו יִבְשׁוּ וְחַרְשֵׁי הֵמָּה מֵאֲדָם יִתְקַבְּצוּ  
כָּל־מַה יַעֲמָדוּ וְיִפְחָדוּ וְיִבְשׁוּ יַחַד. יֵב חֲרַשׁ בְּרִזָּל מַעֲצָד וּפְעַל בְּפֶחֶם וּבְמַקְבּוֹת יִצְרָהוּ וְיַפְעֵלְהוּ  
בְּזָרוּעַ כַּחוֹ גַם־רַעַב וְאֵין כֹּחַ לֹא־שֹׁתֶה מִיָּם וְיִיעֵף. יֵג חֲרַשׁ עֲצִים נָטָה קוֹ וְתִאָּרְהוּ בְּשֹׁרֶךְ  
יַעֲשֶׂהוּ בְּמַקְצָעוֹת וּבְמַחּוּגָה יִתְאָרְהוּ וְיַעֲשֶׂהוּ כְּתַבְנִית אִישׁ כְּתַפְאֶרֶת אָדָם לְשִׁבְתָּ בְּיָת. יֵד  
לְכַרְתָּ לֹא־אֲרִיזִים וְיִשְׁחַח תְּרִזָּה וְאֵלֹהִים וְיִאֲמָצוּ לֹא־בְעֲצֵי־יָעַר נָטַע אֲרֹן וְגִשְׁם יִגְדֵל. טו וְהִנֵּה  
לְאָדָם לְבָעַר וְיִשְׁחַח מֵהֶם וְיִחַם אֶף־וְיִשִּׁיק וְאָפָה לְחֶם אֶף־יַפְעֵל־אֵל וְיִשְׁתַּחוּ עֲשֶׂהוּ פֶסֶל וְיִסְגְּדוּ־  
לָמוֹ. טז חֲצִיֹּ שֹׁרֶף בְּמוֹ־אֵשׁ עַל־חֲצִיֹּ בֶשֶׂר יֵאֲכַל יִצְלָה צְלִי וְיִשְׂבַּע אֶף־יָחֶם וְיֵאמַר הֲאֵחָ  
חַמּוּתִי רָאִיתִי אֹרֹר. יז וּשְׂאֲרִיתוֹ לֵאלֹהִים עֲשֶׂה לְפֶסְלוֹ יִסְגְּדוּ־ (יִסְגְּדוּ) לֹא־וְיִשְׁתַּחוּ וְיִתְפַּלֵּל אֵלָיו  
וְיֵאמַר הֲצִילֵנִי כִי אֵלִי אֶתָּה. יח לֹא יִדְעוּ וְלֹא יִבִּינוּ כִּי טוֹחַ מְרִאֲוֹת עֵינֵיהֶם מֵהַשְׁכִּיל  
לְבַתָּם. יט וְלֹא־יִשִּׁיב אֵל־לְבוֹ וְלֹא דַעַת וְלֹא־תְבוּנָה לֵאמֹר חֲצִיֹּ שֹׁרֶפְתִּי בְּמוֹ־אֵשׁ וְאֵף  
אִפְתִּי עַל־גִּחְלִיו לְחֶם אֲצַלֶּה בֶשֶׂר וְיֵאֲכַל וְיִתְרוּ לְתוֹעֵבָה אַעֲשֶׂה לְבוֹל עַץ אֶסְגְּדוּ. כ רַעַה  
אֶפְרַח לֵב הוֹתֵל הִטָּהוּ וְלֹא־יִצִּיל אֶת־נַפְשׁוֹ וְלֹא יֵאמַר הֲלוֹא שִׁקְרָ בִּימִינִי.

The makers of idols  
 All work to no purpose;  
 And the things they treasure  
 Can do no good,  
As they themselves can testify.  
They neither look nor think,  
And so they shall be shamed.  
 Who would fashion a god  
 Or cast a statue  
 That can do no good?  
 Lo, all its adherents shall be shamed;  
 They are craftsmen, are merely human.  
 Let them all assemble and stand up!  
 They shall be cowed, and they shall be shamed.  
 The craftsmen in iron, with his tools,  
 Works it over charcoal  
 And fashions it by hammering,  
 Working with the strength of his arm.  
 Should he go hungry, his strength would ebb;  
 Should he drink no water, he would grow faint.  
 The craftsman in wood measures with a line  
 And marks out a shape with a stylus;  
 He forms it with scraping tools,  
 Marking it out with a compass.  
 He gives it a human form,  
 The beauty of a man, to dwell in a shrine.  
 For his use he cuts down cedars;  
 He chooses plane trees and oaks.  
 He sets aside trees of the forest;  
 Or plants firs, and the rain makes them grow.

All this serves man for fuel:  
 He takes some to warm himself,  
 And he builds a fire and bakes bread.  
 He also makes a god of it and worships it,  
 Fashions an idol and bows down to it!  
 Part of it he burns in a fire;  
 On that part he roasts meat,  
 He eats the roast and is sated;  
 He also warms himself and cries, “Ah,  
 I am warm! I can feel the heat!”  
 Of the rest he makes a god — his own carving!  
 He bows down to it, worships it;  
 He prays to it and cries,  
 “Save me, for you are my god!”  
They have no wit or judgment:  
Their eyes are besmeared, and they see not;  
Their minds, and they cannot think.  
The do not give thought,  
They lack the wit and judgment to say:  
 “Part of it I burned in a fire;  
 I also baked bread on the coals,  
 I roasted meat and ate it —  
 Should I make the rest an abhorrence?  
 Should I bow to a block of wood?”  
 He purses ashes!  
A deluded mind has led him astray,  
And he cannot save himself;  
He never says to himself,  
“The thing in my hand is a fraud!”

The target of this diatribe is the craftsman (חָרָשׁ = Akkadian *eršu* “wise”!<sup>24</sup>), who is so stupid that he doesn’t realize what he is doing and worships an idol which he himself has just made. The stupidity seen here contrasts sharply with the Mesopotamian belief that the idol maker is the pinnacle of wisdom, a belief expressed in Esarhaddon’s prayer to the gods in which he seeks guidance in selecting the appropriate craftsman. The prayer is introduced with a passage in which the king emphasizes his own, divinely granted wisdom in deciding to restore the statues of the great gods (Borger 1967, pp. 81–82, §53 AsBbA, lines 9b–13 = RINAP 4, p. 107, lines 61b–65):<sup>25</sup>

*ina ūmēšuma anāku Aššur-aḫu-iddina šar kiššati šar māt Aššur  
 amru niš ēnē Aššur ḥešeḫti ilāni rabūti  
 ina uzni rapaštīm ḥasīsi palkē ša išruka apkal ilāni rubū Nudimmud  
 ina igigallūti ša Aššur u Marduk ana udduš ilāni rabūti iptū ḥasīsi  
 ina niš qātē utninimni u labān appi ša Aššur šar ilāni u bēlu rabū Marduk ušallā ilūssun*

<sup>24</sup> In verses 12 and 13 the noun is echoed in the verbal form חָרָשׁ.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Hurowitz 1998. For a recent discussion, see Baruchi-Unna 2009, pp. 167–75.

At that time, I, Esarhaddon, king of the universe, king of the Land of Assyria, the select, choice of the eyes of Aššur, desire of the great gods, by the broad mind, extensive wisdom which Prince Nudimmud, sage of the great gods, granted me, by the wisdom which Aššur and Marduk had put in my mind for the purpose renewing the great gods, in entreaty, supplication, and gestures of submission, I prayed to the divinity of Aššur, king of the gods, and the great lord Marduk.

In this passage Esarhaddon is given *uzni rapaštim ḥasīsi palkê* by Nudimmud (Ea), who himself is the sage of the gods, and his ears/mind is filled with *igigallūtu* by Aššur and Marduk, who is Ea's son and no slouch of a sage himself. This introduction is followed by the prayer proper (lines 14–20 = 66–72a):

*itti manni ilāni rabūti banū ilāni u ištār ašar la ʾāri šipru maršu taštanapparāni  
šipir tēdišti itti amēlūti la šemēti la naṭilti ša ramānša la tidū la parsata arkat umēša  
banū ili u ištār kummu qātukkun ina ramānikunu bināma aṭmān ilūtikunu širti  
mimmū ina šurrikun ibšū linnepuš ina la šunnāte zikir šaptikun  
mārē ummāni enqūti ša taqbā ana epēš šipri šuʾatu kīma Ea bānišun  
uznu širtu šurkāšunutima lēʾātušun karassun ina qibītikunu širti mimma liptat qātēšun  
lišamsikū ina šipir Niššiku*

With whom, O great gods, is the building of gods and goddesses? You have sent me to an unapproachable place, a difficult task, the task of restoration, with mankind who does not hear, does not see, does not know themselves, and whose length of days has not been determined. Building of gods and goddesses is yours, it is in your own hands. Build by yourselves the sanctuary of your exalted divinity! May whatever occurs in your minds be done without changing the command of your lips. The wise artisans whom you command to do that task, grant them exalted wisdom like Ea, their creator. And (grant) their skill in their innards according to your exalted command. May all their (the artisans') handiwork succeed(?)<sup>26</sup> through craft of Niššiku.

Esarhaddon first asks with whom is it possible to manufacture gods and goddesses, and goes on to ask a rhetorical question: is it possible to do such with deaf and blind mortals who don't know themselves? The answer is certainly negative — one cannot make a god with such people — so as a remedy he suggests that the gods grant the idol makers to be selected exalted wisdom like that of Ea who created them. So both the prophet and Esarhaddon view regular humans as intellectually impaired and unable to create a god. However, while the prophet sees this malady as incurable, Esarhaddon sees its remedy in divine assistance. We should note that whereas both passages speak about “wisdom,” the wisdom of Esarhaddon's craftsmen is that of technical skill, while the prophet claims that these supposedly “smart” people are totally lacking in common sense.

Esarhaddon's description of those who cannot make an idol as deaf and blind, *amēlūti la šemēti la naṭilti ša ramānša la tidū*, resonates with the description of the idol in Psalm 115:5b–6a, וְלֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ, וְלֹא יִרְאוּ. אֵינִים לָהֶם, וְלֹא יִבְטְחוּ בָהֶם “they have eyes but don't see, they have ears but don't hear.” In the continuation of the Psalm the supplicant requests (v. 8) יְהִיו עֲשִׂיהֶם כֹּל אֲשֶׁר-בִּטְחָן בָּהֶם “may their makers and all who trust them be like them.” In other words, the psalmists asks that the idol makers become deaf and blind, just like the people who, according to Esarhaddon, cannot make an idol in the first place. Putting the two

<sup>26</sup> CAD L s.v. *liptu* A mng. 1a2'

together we have the ironic situation in which the deaf and blind cannot make an idol, but one who makes an idol which is deaf and blind ends up deaf and blind himself.

Second Isaiah, prophesying in the post-exilic age, certainly would not have known Esarhaddon's prayer, although the idol diatribe itself may be based on an earlier source closer in time to Esarhaddon. In any case, the concerns the prayer expresses and the estimation in which it holds idol makers need not be limited to the time of Esarhaddon, and they may be behind the diatribe, if not the text itself.

In both these cases, the biblical polemicist has focused on aspects of making the idol which the idol maker also found problematic — the lifelessness of the idol on the one hand, and the wisdom of the idol maker on the other. The idol maker solves the problem by resort to ritual or invoking divine intervention, while the biblical polemicist rejects the idol outright, implying that the flaw is irreparable.

## POTENTIAL PROBLEMS IN ICONOPLASTY

I now examine various aspects of manufacturing a cult statue, asking what could go wrong with each aspect in each culture. First I discuss the Mesopotamian idols and then the biblical, concentrating on the four stories enumerated above.

### THE DECISION TO MAKE AN IDOL

There are several reasons why a person, especially a king or a local ruler, would choose to produce a divine image.<sup>27</sup> The cult statue was the central focus of Mesopotamian worship. It was manipulated in various ways, such as being fed and clothed in its own temple, being addressed in prayer and sacrifice, and being removed from the temple for public processions, boat rides, or visits to temples of other deities. Because of the dominant role played by the cult statues or other types of symbols (*kakku*, weapon; *šurinnu*, standard; *birqu*, lightning bolt for storm god, or a *nip̄hu*, rising sun for the sun god, etc.), they had to be produced when new temples were built,<sup>28</sup> or when, for some reason, previously existing cult statues were lost or damaged and had to be repaired or replaced. Certain rituals too required divine presence and often necessitated the use and the ad hoc manufacture of divine figurines. There were also divine figurines and statues of various types which performed permanent decorative or ritual functions in temples and palaces. Without the figurines, the ritual could not be properly performed. But, as shown below, mere necessity was not always sufficient reason

<sup>27</sup> Matsushima (1993) suggests that in Babylonia there was greater popular involvement in the decision to manufacture or repair a divine statue than there was in Assyria, where the king played a more dominant role in such decisions. This opinion is based on the prominent role played by the priesthood in Nabû-apla-iddina's sundisk inscription and the role of the people of Sippar in deciding to repair a crown of Šamaš in an inscription of Nabonidus (see below). In contrast to these two Babylonian sources, in the inscriptions of Esarhaddon, the king alone orders the repair of certain divine statues.

<sup>28</sup> It is worthy of note and consideration, however, that in the inscriptions of Tukulti-Ninurta I describing the

building of his new capital city Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta and the temples of various gods in that city there is no mention of new cult statues. This may, of course, be an intentional oversight. This is surprising nonetheless, since introduction of new sacrifices is mentioned (RIMA 1, A.0.78.22, lines 39–51 [temple of Aššur, Adad, Šamaš, Ninurta, Nusku, Nergal, Sebitti, Ištar]; A.0.78.24, lines 41–45; A.0.78.25, lines 9–30). Why should the seemingly less important detail be recalled rather than a more important one? It is possible, however, that no new statues were made and that the new temples were usually devoid of cult statues, and only visited by old cult statues when necessary.

for making a statue, and a temple could stand devoid of a divine statue for generations, even though some temporary substitute might have been found.

But beyond the practical need for images, their actual manufacture required some sort of divine permission. This could be provided in various ways.

### *Implicit Divine Sanction*

Some texts describing the making of an image do not mention explicitly that it received divine sanction. In fact, they make no reference at all to the reason the image was produced. Even so, the circumstances of the actions permit us to conjecture about such matters.

Bēl-Ḥarran-Bēl-Ušur, a high-ranking palace herald (*nāgir ekalli*) of Shalmaneser IV and Tiglath-pileser III, reports that he engraved images of gods (*šalam ilāni*) upon a monument (*narū*) which he erected in the temple of the new city he built and named after himself (RIMA 3, A.O.105.2, lines 15–16):

*narî ašturma šalam ilāni ina muḥḥi abni ina šubat ilūti ulzīz  
isqē niddaba qutrinni ana ilāni šunūti ukīn dāriš*

I inscribed my monumental inscription, and created upon (it) an image of gods; In a divine dwelling I erected (it); Income, food offerings, and incense I established for those gods for eternity.

This text does not speak of cult images in the round but, rather, of two-dimensional reliefs of divine images, also referred to as *šalmu* (Winter 1992). Yet these images were the objects of worship and represented the deities as indicated by the fact that the monument bearing them was set up in a divine dwelling (temple) and sacrifices were made before them. This inscription makes no specific mention of why the ruler created the divine symbols, although construction of the city itself is said to have been divinely ordained (lines 9–10). Divine sanction for building the city may have applied to all things necessary for the city to function in a normal manner. It is possible, of course, that manufacture of engraved symbols rather than statues in the round required no divine sanction whatsoever, as we find, for instance, in the sun-disk inscription of Nabû-apla-iddina (see below), where a *niphū*, a symbol representing a rising sun, is manufactured out of necessity but with no express divine sanction.

Tiglath-pileser III reports that he made gold images of unspecified Assyrian gods and placed them in the palace in Gaza (Tadmor 1994, pp. 138–41, Summary Inscription 4, lines 10'–11'; pp. 176–79, Summary Inscription 8, lines 16'–17'; pp. 188–89, Summary Inscription 9, lines 14–15):<sup>29</sup>

*šalam ilāni rabūti bēlēja <u> šalam šarrūtija ša ḥurāšī [ēpuš]  
ina qereb ekalli ša Ḥazzutu ulzīz ana ilāni mātišunu amnūma*

A statue/image of the great gods, my lords <and> my (own) royal image out of gold I fashioned. In the palace of Gaza I set (them) up (and) I counted them among the gods of their land.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Smelik 1997, p. 267. According to Tadmor (1994, p. 177 on 16'), "It would seem that in the case of Gaza not two revered objects — a stele and a statue — but only one was involved: a golden (or gold-plated) statue of the king, with symbols of gods upon his breast." In support

of his interpretation he cites an example of Assurnasirpal II from Assur. However, the conjunction *u* would indicate that there are in fact two objects described, a monument bearing the images of the gods, and a royal statue (see Berlejung in this volume about it in detail).

Although this king reports in other inscriptions that he set up divine weapons of various sorts, he refers here apparently to a more significant object of worship for he emphasizes that the images were counted among the gods of the conquered land and he established sacrifices for them. This probably means that the new images were then worshiped and given offerings by the Gazans in the same way the native deities were. According to Berlejung (this volume), what Tiglath-pileser made was not several statues in the round of the gods and the king but a single, royal stela depicting the king surrounded by or wearing the symbols of the great gods. In this case as well there is no specific mention of a divine command to make the image(s). However, since producing the cult image is a necessary by-product of Assyrian imperialism, which itself was divinely ordained, manufacturing the image which ensued from it ipso facto enjoyed divine sanction. But again, it is possible that symbols and stelae rather than cult statues required no specific permission. It is also possible that a symbol or stela placed in a palace rather than a temple required no divine sanction.

### *Express Divine Sanction*

More explicit information is forthcoming in a date formula of Samsuiluna, which records (year 6; *RIA* 2, p. 182):

mu sa-am-su-i-lu-na lugal-e <sup>d</sup>utu <sup>d</sup>marduk-e-ne-bi-da-ra ni<sub>3</sub>-dim<sub>2</sub>-dim<sub>2</sub>-  
ma-bi al-in-na-an-gu<sub>3</sub>-uš-am<sub>3</sub> alan šud<sub>3</sub>-šud<sub>3</sub>-de<sub>3</sub> dingir-lamma ku<sub>3</sub>-sig<sub>17</sub>  
didli-bi-ta ni<sub>2</sub> ... hub<sub>2</sub> ab-sa<sub>2</sub>-sa<sub>2</sub>-de<sub>3</sub> e<sub>2</sub>-babbar igi <sup>(d)</sup>utu-še<sub>3</sub> e<sub>2</sub>-sag-il<sub>2</sub> igi  
<sup>(d)</sup>marduk-še<sub>3</sub> i-ni-in-ku<sub>4</sub>-re ki-gub-ba-ne-ne mi-ni-in-gi-na

Year in which for both Šamaš and Marduk, Samsuiluna the king (made) sculpted likenesses of them which they had requested from him, and golden statues of each of them as *lama-genii* in prayer were brought into the Ebabbar before Šamaš and the Esagil before Marduk.

This text states explicitly that the gods requested the statues. We should note, however, that the images referred to here seem not to be the main cult statues in the temples of the respective deities.<sup>30</sup> Although they are divine representations they are not the objects of worship in their respective repositories, but rather instruments of worship (*lama-genii* in prayer).

Assurnasirpal II built new temples in his new capital city Kalḫu, and he naturally had to outfit them with divine cult statues. He mentions his idol-making activities in several inscriptions, providing only scanty explicit details as to his motivation. In one text he records very briefly that he created an icon (*lamassat*) of Ištar *ina ḫišiḫti ilāni rabūti ša irammūni* “according to the wish/desire of the great gods who love me” (*RIMA* 2, A.0.101.32, line 11). This locution may be an allusion to some sort of divine revelation such as a dream in which the king was commanded to make the cult statues (see below), but it is more likely a reference to having acquired permission by means of extispicy or other oracle to carry out his plan. Whatever

<sup>30</sup> Sigrist (<http://cdli.ucla.edu/tools/yearnames/HTML/T12K7.htm>) translates differently, regarding the statues as statues of the king himself: “Year in which Samsuiluna the king brought before Šamaš into (the temple) Ebabbar and before Marduk in (the temple) Esagil ...

statues (of the king) in the attitude of prayer and various protective deities in gold for Šamaš and Marduk who both had requested wrought objects and set them up at their place.”

the case may be, fabrication of the idols, even though a clear necessity, is not left solely to the volition of the king, but is given the authorization of the gods.

Explicit reference to oracular inquiry about idol making is found in a grant document of Sennacherib in which he reports assigning certain workmen to the estate of Zababa. In the introduction to the text he states (SAA 12, 87, lines 1'–3'):

*ina eli Zababa biri abrēma šamaš u Adad ašālma  
umma Zababa mār Anšar šū šamaš u Adad ina biri uddūni  
šalam Zababa u Babu kīma simatišu ēpušma*

[Concerning] Zababa I performed divination (oracular inquiry) and asked Šamaš and Adad saying: “Is Zababa the son of Anšar?” Šamaš and Adad informed me by means of the divination. I made the statue of Zababa and Babu as is appropriate for it.

Making a divine statue can also be initiated by the gods themselves, in which case they must first convey their wishes to the human charged with fulfilling them. Assurnasirpal I, in a prayer to Ištār, announces in a general fashion that certain unspecified “heaped up,” “stored away,” or “mothballed”<sup>31</sup> deities were restored by the goddess’s command (von Soden 1974–77, p. 39, line 31).

*Ina pīka uššā udduš ilāni nakmūti*

From your mouth issues the (command for) renewal of the (secretly) stored away gods.

He goes on to specify that these deities had been desecrated (*šulputūtu*). Interestingly, as in the case of the sun-disk inscription of Nabû-apla-iddina, the desecration of the statue and its being “heaped up” or “stored away” seems not to have been in and of itself sufficient warrant for renewing it, but divine command was needed. It is likely that the desecration of a divine statue was taken as a sign that the god embodied in the statue was angry with the worshipper. To restore such a statue without permission of the deity would be considered a sacrilege.

While Assurnasirpal I makes no reference to how the command “issued from the mouth of the god,” Assurbanipal relates that he had a repeated series of dreams in which he was commanded to perfect the “exalted divinity” and glorify rites of Šarrat-kidmuri. After

<sup>31</sup> Although in lexical lists *nakāmu* appears together with *šapāku*, indicating the aspect of piling up, in the texts themselves the word is sometimes associated with secretive storing away of objects and possessions, especially valuable ones. As a matter of fact, the derived term *bit nikimtu* (cf. Hebrew בֵּית נִכְיֹת; 2 Kgs 20:13) means a treasure house. Since the idols restored by Assurnasirpal are subsequently said to have been “desecrated” (*šulputūtu*), we may imagine that he is referring to idols which have been damaged, taken out of use, and placed in some type of *genizah* pending repair. Another example of storing away desecrated gods occurs in an inscription of Ninurta-kudurrī-ušur of Suḫi (RIMB 2, S.O.1002.10, lines 15–32), where we read:

*šābū Anatāja ašib āli Anat lapan māt Suḫi ibbalkitma qāssunu  
ana Aššurāja ittannū u Aššurāja ana āli Anat ultelāni āla Anat  
u ilīšu ušalpit lubulta damiqta Anat ḫurāši šāriri abnāt nisiqtim  
u mimma simat ilūtīšu ušalpit u ana šāši ušēšibšu ina puzru*

*anāku Ninurta-kudurrī-ušur šakan māt Suḫi u mā Mari ardu  
pāliḫ ilūtīšu rabiti Anat ultu puzru ušēšamma lublutu damiqtu  
ḫurāša šāriri u abnāt nisiqtim [x]-x-tu [xxxx u[šaklil ilūssu u  
ina [...] ušēšibšu gīma[nē (x)] x[xx(x)]-šu kī pī Ḥammurapu šar  
[Bābili] šarru mahrija ukīn*

The people of Anat who live in the city Anat (itself) revolted against the land of Suḫi. They joined hands with the Assyrian and brought the Assyrian up to the city Anat. (However) he desecrated the city of Anat and its gods. He desecrated (*ušalpitma*) the fine garment of (the goddess) Anat, the *šariru*-gold, the precious stones, and all the (other) things befitting her godhead. Then he cached her (statue) by itself in a hidden place (*ušēšibšu ina puzru*). I, Ninurta-kudurrī-ušur, ... brought Anat out from (that) hidden place (*puzru*) and [returned] (her) fine garment, [*šar*]iru gold, and ... precious stones. [I] made her godhead complete (again) and caused her to reside in [...]. I (re-) established the regular [offerings (...)] and her [...] according to the wording (of the commands) of Hammu-rapi — king of [Baby]lon, a king who preceded me.



reporting that the goddess became reconciled to her abandoned temple, we read (Borger 1996, pp. 140–41, Prism T ii 14–17; Prism C i 59–61):

*ana šuklul ilūtiša širti  
šurruḫu misēša šūquru  
ina šutti šipir mahḫê  
ištanappara kajjāna*

To perfect her exalted divinity and make luxurious her lofty rites in a dream, the work/message of ecstasies, she constantly sent to me time and time again.

The “exalted divinity” referred to is most likely a cult statue, for afterwards the king made luxurious everything pertinent to the goddess’s divinity and seated her, that is, the refurbished statue, eternally in her sanctuary.<sup>32</sup> Assurbanipal is not making a completely new statue in this case, but seems to be either repairing or adorning an existing one. His dreams recurred over and over again, as indicated by the use of the Gtn form of the verb *šapāru*. The repetition of the dreams is a first sign of their validity. Nonetheless, he had his visions confirmed formally by asking Šamaš and Adad, the patrons of extispicy, and receiving a firm “yes,” a clear allusion to performance of extispicy.

In the most complex of situations, a divine initiative and command is followed by confirmation of the command — a measure initiated by the king. Such a combination of divine initiative followed by confirmation of the divine plan by means of oracular inquiry occurs in an inscription of Esarhaddon telling of the renewal of the cult statues of several Babylonian deities (Borger 1967, p. 81, §53 AsBbA, lines 52–rev. 2 = RINAP 4, p. 106, lines 52–54):

*ina rēš šarrūtija ina mahḫê palija ša Aššur šar ilāni ina kussî abija ṭābiš ušēšibanni Anum  
agāšu Ellil kussāšu Ninurta kakkašu Nergal šalummassu ušatlimūnnima iššaknānimma ina  
šamāme u qaqqari idāt damiqtim ša udduš ilāni banū ešrēti*

At the beginning of my kingship, at the start of my period of reign, (for) which Aššur, king of the gods, had in goodness seated me on my father’s throne, and (for which) Anu had granted me his crown, Ellil (had granted me) his throne, Ninurta (had granted me) his weapon, and Nergal (had granted me) is awesome radiance, and (for which) in the heavens and the earth favorable portents had occurred for me concerning renewal of the gods and construction of the holy sites ...

This introductory passage, which mentions the appearance of omens ordaining the renewal of the gods,<sup>33</sup> is followed by a description of various other astral portents which seem to have confirmed the first ones (Borger 1967, p. 18, Episode 14, Fassung b):

*aššu liti šakānu gamirūtu epēši iskimma damiqtim ušaklima ša erēb Esaḡil kakkabāni šamê  
ina manzāzīšunu illikūma ḥarrān kitti išbatū umaššerū uruḫ la kitti arḫišamma Sîn u Šamaš*

<sup>32</sup> For a discussion of this passage, see now Nissinen 1998, pp. 35–37. Martti Nissinen suggests that prophecy is referred to here. In line 16, *ina MAŠ.MI šipir mahḫê*, which I take to mean “by way of dreams, the art of ecstatic,” he translates “through dreams and prophetic messages.” As for the object made, which is referred to as *simat ilūtiša* and I have taken to mean “all that is appropriate to her divinity,” Nissinen translates “the in-

signia of her great godhead,” indicating not a statue but some sort of abstract symbol. Assurnasirpal II claims to have made a *lamassat šarrat Kidmuri* (RIMA 2, A.O.101.38, lines 19–28), which would indicate a statue and not a symbol.

<sup>33</sup> The omens, of an astral as well as a meteorological nature, are reported in detail in Borger 1967, p. 17, Episode 13, lines 34–39.

*ina tāmartišunu ša udduš ilāni šuklul ešrēt māḥāzī kutunni palêja šuršudi kussî šangūtija annu kēnu etappalū aḥameš*

In order to establish renown and do perfect things, they revealed to me good portents, and concerning the entry into Esagil, the stars of the heavens went in their watches and took a proper path and abandoned the improper path. Monthly, Šîn and Šamaš, when they appeared, answered me together a reliable “yes” concerning renewal of the gods, completing the temples of the holy cities, establishing my reign and founding the throne of my priesthood.

That the second set of signs were somehow considered “invited” is indicated by the reference to “answering with a reliable ‘yes’” (*annu kēnu*), usually an indication of divination after oracular inquiry.

Certain ritual texts such as *namburbis*, ground-laying ceremonies for new temples, prophylactic rites, and the *akītu* festival, require the use of divine figurines, and they occasionally stipulate how the necessary objects are to be made (Borger 1977; Wiggermann 1992, pp. 7–12). To the extent that these rituals are thought to reflect ancient practices and divine secrets, we might consider the requirement to produce an idol for a magical ritual as somehow revealed. We should recall in this connection the role of Ea and Asarluḥi/Marduk as divine sorcerers and gods of rituals and incantations.<sup>34</sup> Incantations are often said to be the incantation of these deities.

We have adduced here numerous texts indicating that the fabrication of a divine statue or symbol was preceded by receiving some form of divine sanction, either an order or permission. The texts discussed below, such as the sun-disk inscription of Nabû-apla-iddina and the Sin of Sargon, also refer to divine authorization for making a cult statue. From this we may imply that it would be unacceptable to produce a divine statue without such permission, and a statue so produced would be considered illegitimate.

We turn now to the biblical narratives concerning making icons.

Although not in the four stories listed above, we should mention in this context Numbers 21:4–9, about the bronze serpent made by Moses to remedy snake bites (Hurowitz 2006). This object is probably the one referred to in 2 Kings 18:4 and given the name נְחֻשְׁטָן, *Neḥuštān*. Although not intentionally made as a god, at some time in its existence the Israelites started offering it incense as befits a divinity. For this reason it is chopped up (כַּתֹּת) by Hezekiah along with other objects representing divinity (מַצְבֹּת “pillars” and הָאֲשֵׁרָה a “sacred tree”). The fabrication of this bronze snake is indeed ordained by God in response to Moses’s prayer asking that God remove the snakes that were plaguing the people. God prescribes making a אֲשֵׁרָה “fiery serpent” and putting it on a pole so that anyone bitten by the snake will look upon it and be healed.

Of the four remaining accounts, the first is the golden calf incident (Exod 32–34; cf. Deut 9:8–21, 24–29; 10:1–5, 8–11). In this story the people, concerned that they had been abandoned by Moses, who had taken them out of Egypt, turn to Aaron and ask that he make for them a god who will go before them (Exod 32:1, 23). Aaron immediately sets to granting

<sup>34</sup> There is much evidence that the art of divination in its many manifestations was considered a divinely revealed skill (see the famous myth of Enmeduranki’s ascent to heaven during which he is taught various divinatory skills; Lambert 1998). Not only were the omens them-

selves divine revelations, but the manuals used to interpret them were also divinely revealed. See most recently Lawson 1997. It may be assumed that the same was true of all the magical arts practiced in Mesopotamia.

their request by asking them to provide gold (Exod 32:2, 24). In this event it is the people who initiate the project and there is no hint of acquiring divine approval, although Aaron might be regarded as YHWH's representative, having been appointed along with Hur by Moses to judge the people in his absence (cf. Exod 24:14; *וְהָיָה אֲתֶרְךָ וְחֹרֵר עִמָּכֶם, מִי-בַעַל דְּבָרִים יָגֵשׁ אֲלֵהֶם*; "Behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; anyone who has an argument shall go to them"). In any case, Aaron does not seek any specific divine approval and acts totally on his own. In fact, Moses then blames Aaron for the debacle (Exod 32:21).

The second account is of the ephod in Gideon's house (Judg 8:22–28). In this story, following the war against the Midianites waged by Gideon, the people approach him, requesting him to be their king. Gideon declines the invitation but initiates the fabrication of an ephod. This object, the manufacture of which follows immediately after Gideon's statement: *לֹא-אֶמְשַׁל אֲנִי בָכֶם, וְלֹא-יִמְשַׁל בְּנֵי בָכֶם: יְהוָה, יִמְשַׁל בָּכֶם* "I will not rule over you nor will my sons rule over you, for the Lord will rule over you" (Judg 8:23), is the means by which YHWH will rule the people, and can be considered therefore a divine representation. The ephod, in the form of a garment, may have been an empty divine garment or the gold covering of an idol,<sup>35</sup> and, to be sure, the people go astray after it and it is a snare (*וַיִּזְנוּ כָל-יִשְׂרָאֵל אַחֲרָיו, שָׁם*; "All Israel went astray after it there and it was a trap for Gideon and his household" [Judg 8:27]). Here too, the leader of the people initiates the construction of a divine symbol without any sign of requesting or acquiring divine approval.

The third incident is the account of Michayehu's cult statue (Judg 17–18). This image stood initially in a private temple, and making the idol was initiated by Michayehu's mother herself. However the decision to make the idol was an afterthought in an unsavory incident. The mother was robbed of a certain amount of silver, so she cursed the thief (probably as part of a vow aimed at recovering the stolen property). Unknown to the mother, the thief happened to be her own son, so when he returned the silver she voided the curse by blessing him, and then dedicated the returned silver to the purpose of making the statue. This course of events is somewhat reminiscent of the story of Jephtah, who makes a vow which unwittingly led to the sacrifice of his daughter, the difference being that Michayehu's mother figured out how to cancel the devastating results of her impetuosity. If so, the decision to make the statue is initiated by a woman, and no divine approval is sought (even though the statue is of YHWH). To the contrary, since the mother's *אָלָה* "curse" certainly involved invoking the divine name, making the statue was a way of propitiating divine wrath and actually forcing God to relent. In a way, the statue is imposed upon (an unwilling) YHWH.

The fourth case is the golden calves fabricated by Jeroboam and placed in Bethel and Dan. Here Jeroboam is said to have taken counsel (*וַיִּוָּעֵץ הַמֶּלֶךְ*; 1 Kgs 12:28) but it is not stated with whom.<sup>36</sup> It is clear, however, that he acts without divine sanction.

<sup>35</sup> For association of *אֲפֹד* with idols, see Isaiah 30:22: *וְטַמְאַתֶּם, אֶת-צִפּוּי פְּסִילֵי כֶסֶף, וְאֶת-אֲפֹדֹת, מִטְּכַת זָהָב* "you shall defile the plating of your silver idols and the *אֲפֹדָה* of your molten images of gold." In this passage, *אֲפֹדָה* parallels *צִפּוּי*, plating, as a designation of the metallic covering of an idol, perhaps made of wood. For *אֲפֹדָה* as a by-form of *אֲפֹד*, see Exodus 28:8; 39:5. It has been suggested that the golden calf too was made of wood and only covered with gold, because it could be ground up and burnt (Loewenstamm 1967, 1975). This is the case as well of the idols in Deuteronomy 7:25: *פְּסִילֵי אֱלֹהֵיהֶם, תִּשְׂרָפוּן בְּאֵשׁ; לֹא-תִחַמְדוּ בָסֵף וְזָהָב עֲלֵיהֶם*,

*וְלִקְחֹתֶן לָךְ* "the carved images of their gods you shall burn in fire; you shall not covet the silver and gold upon them and take for yourselves," which refers to a wooden idol overlain with silver and gold. See also Jeremiah 10:3–4.

<sup>36</sup> Yosef Kara cites the Jerusalem Talmud *Avodah Zarah* 1, 1: "He (Jeroboam) seated all of Israel, the righteous along with the wicked, and the wicked would ask the righteous: 'Which generation is beloved (to God)?' He (the righteous) said: 'The generation of the desert.' He (the wicked) said: 'Did they not worship an image?' He (the righteous) said: 'Because they were beloved they

Some of the Mesopotamian sources concerning the decision to make a cult statue show a need to receive or acquire divine sanction for fabricating the most important of all cult objects. In stark contrast, the biblical stories about idol fabrication seem to ignore this requirement, although in the case of the golden calf Aaron may have been considered the divinely sanctioned authority. Michayehu asks permission from no one. In the case of the ephod, it is the national leader, Gideon, who initiates the project but doesn't ask permission. Jeroboam takes counsel but it is unclear with whom, but now with YHWH (see, perhaps, Hos 8:4–6). The bronze serpent, which is the exception proving the rule, is the only one made by explicit divine command, but it is not an object meant to be a divinity and certainly not to represent YHWH. We must be wary of imposing on one culture the beliefs and values of another, and in a religious system that rejects idols in the first place asking divine permission to make one would be surprising at the least; but the striking contrast between the literatures of the two cultures on this particular point at least raises the possibility that the lack of divine sanction for the idols in the biblical tradition is to be regarded as silent criticism. It would not be inappropriate to contrast the lack of divine command for any of these idols with the command for building the Tabernacle, which is the only physical demonstration of divine presence ordained in the Bible. The command to make the Tabernacle is in fact the longest and most detailed command in the entire Bible, extending over eight chapters (Exod 25–32).

#### DETERMINING THE FORM OF THE STATUE

As pointed out above, the inability to replicate YHWH's form is one of the reasons given by the Deuteronomistic legislation for banning cult images in Israelite worship. The same problem is discerned in the use of images in non-Israelite worship. Deutero-Isaiah begins one of his polemics against idolatry by asking (Isa 40:18):

אַל-מי, תְּדַמֶּיּוּן אֵל; וּמַה-דְּמוּת, תַּעֲרֹכוּ לוֹ. הַפֶּסֶל זָסַךְ חָרָשׁ, ?

And to whom shall you liken God/a god, and what image will you prepare for Him/  
it? Will it be an idol a craftsman cast ...?

The gist of this rhetorical question is “can the idol to be made by a craftsman resemble in its form the deity it is to represent?” What is a rhetorical question for the prophet posed a real, practical difficulty for the idol makers living at the time and locality of the prophet in exile. Obviously, the idol maker must determine the shape of his creation before he can fashion it, but not all shapes will necessarily be appropriate.

The outstanding illustration of the need to know the proper form for a cult statue is found in the sun-disk inscription of Nabû-apla-iddina.<sup>37</sup> This work reports how during a Sutean invasion the statue of Šamaš in Sippar disappeared, and a new one could not be fabricated because the proper features were unknown. It was only after several generations that a diviner and priest of Ebabbar claims to have discovered a fired clay impression of the

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were not punished.' They (the wicked) said to him (the righteous): 'Hush! Hush! The king wishes to do the same thing'; This is what is written: 'The day they made our king sick [and] the traitors with the poison of wine, he gave his hand to traitors' (Hos 7:5): יוֹם מַלְכֵנוּ, הִתְהַלּוּ שָׂרִים: "According to this story

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the wicked manipulate the answers of the righteous to find warrant for Jeroboam's action.

<sup>37</sup> King 1912, pp. 120–27, no. 36; Slanski 2003, pp. 196–221; Hurowitz 2003; Woods 2004. For changes in the representation of Šamaš over the generations, see Seidl 2001.



[xxx] *agûšu itme šikinšu*  
 [xxx]-x-UD-šu *uttakkir zīmūšu*  
 [xxx uš] *tēlip gattuš*  
 [xxx]x GAL *zikiršu*  
 [xxx š] *apalšu*  
 [xxx]  
 [xxx]  
 [xxx *ina si-x- [xxx]*  
*la iptiqu Ea mummu*  
*ul idi zikiršu ummānu Adapa*

[...] the gods, he makes an unholy thing (*ippuš la mēsu*)  
 [...] He made a “wind” (*zaqīqi*)  
 [He made the image of a deity] which nobody had (ever) seen in (this) land  
 [He introduced it into the temple] and he placed (it) upon a pedestal;  
 [...] he called it by the name Nannar,  
 [...] with gold and lapis] lazuli, crowned with a tiara,  
 [...] its appearance is (that of) the eclipsed moon,  
 [...] it ex]tends (?) its hand like (the god) Lugal.šu.du,  
 its head of hair [rea]ches (?) to the pedestal,  
 [standing in fr]ont of it are the Storm (*abūbu*) Dragon and the Wild Bull (*rīmu*).  
 [...] his crown, its appearance was different,  
 [...] his x, he made his countenance strange  
 [...] he... his limbs  
 [...] GAL his name  
 [...] beneath him.  
 BREAK at bottom of column  
 BREAK at top of column  
 [xxxx] in [xxxx]  
 Ea the artisan did not make  
 The Sage Adapa did not know its name

This text contains a description of the heterodox cult statue.<sup>41</sup> Despite the broken state of the tablet, certain details of its form and appearance can be discerned, although we should be aware of the bias of the author describing what he considers an abomination. The author accuses Nabonidus of calling his statue Nannar, the moon god, implying that in the author’s opinion it is anyone but Nannar. The polemicist views this statue to have the appearance of the eclipsed moon god (line 25: *šikinšu Šin attalû*) whereas we could expect that a proper Šin statue should resemble more the full moon, not necessarily in roundness but in exceeding brightness. The most interesting features in the description are of the gesture of the hand and the length of the hair. The statue stretches out(?) its hand(?) like the god Lugal.šu.du (= Lugal.šùd.dú), a manifestation of Ninurta.<sup>42</sup> S. Smith remarks that the long hair on the statue may be mentioned in mockery. Even though Mesopotamians did not sport crew cuts, and even

<sup>41</sup> The description of the statue has an overall resemblance to the description of deities and other creatures in the so-called Göttertypentext. Both kinds of texts mention the headdress, the face, an object held in the hand, the animals at the feet of the figure, and the name. See Köcher 1953. Less similar are the “God

Description Texts” discussed by Livingstone (2007, pp. 92–112).

<sup>42</sup> The name may mean “King with the outstretched hand.” See Schaudig 2001, p. 566, no. 914, for discussion of this god.

though long hair was sported by some kings as well as gods and might have been considered attractive, hair sweeping the ground was not in fashion. Perhaps Nabonidus's god is being depicted, Enkidu-like, as a savage wild-man. The flood and the wild ox standing at the base of the statue are probably inappropriate symbols.<sup>43</sup> We should compare this particular feature to an inscription of Nabonidus himself (see below), which claims that a statue of Ištar made by Erība-Marduk was in fact of a different goddess because she was mounted on an incorrect number of lions. The features (*šikinšu*) and countenance (*zimušu*) of the statue are said to be different and strange. Something is said about the limbs (*gattuš*) as well, but the verb is not fully preserved. Lee, followed by Schaudig, restores *uš]-te-lip*, which he translates “he made its form luxuriant,” but this would be out of character with the rest of the accusations.

Nabonidus himself accuses his predecessors of having made inappropriate cult statues. In his stela from Babylon (Schaudig 2001, p. 517, 3.3<sup>a</sup> Babylon-Stele ii 11'–39') he reports:<sup>44</sup>

*Ištar Uruk rubāti širti āšibat atmānu ħurāši ša sandāti 7 labbū ša ina palê Erība-Marduk šarru Urukaja šuluḫḫišu ušpellu atmanšu idkūma iṭṭurū šimittuš ina uzzi ištu qereb Eanna tūšūma tūšību la šubassu lammasu la simat Eanna ušēšību ina simakkīšu Ištar ušallim atmānšu ukīnšu 7 labba simat ilūtišu iṣmissu Ištar la simātu ištu qereb Eanna ušēšīma Innina utīr ana Eanna kiššīšu*

Ištar of Uruk, the lofty princess, who lives in a golden cella leashed to seven lions, whose cult, during the reign of Erība-Marduk, the people of Uruk changed, whose cella they removed, and whose team they unleashed, (who) departed from Eanna in anger and took up her dwelling in a house not her own, and in whose shrine they installed a statue unsuitable for Eanna — I placated (the proper) Ištar. I erected her cella for her and leashed to her seven lions appropriate to her divinity. The unsuitable Ištar (*Ištar la simatim*) I brought forth from Eanna and returned (the true) Innina to Eanna, her sanctuary.

On first glance, this text might seem to imply that Erība-Marduk had replaced Ištar with a different goddess altogether. However, Nabonidus states specifically that he removed from the temple “the unsuitable Ištar,” implying that the new statue was intended to be the same goddess but that it was not made properly. It is likely that the new statue did not have the necessary seven lions. Perhaps a different number had been installed. Without the proper number of lions, the goddess is not really represented.

An additional case may be found perhaps in a polemical, pseudepigraphic document purporting to be a letter from the Old Babylonian monarch Samsuiluna (al-Rawi and George 1994). On page 138, lines 11–12, the priests are accused *isurru amat ilīšunu la iqbū ana muḫḫi ilīšunu šaknu*, translated by al-Rawi and George as “things that their gods did not command

<sup>43</sup> The *rīmu*, wild ox, is on only rare occasions associated with Sīn (cf. *AHW.*, p. 986b s.v. *rīmu* I 2b, for the Old Babylonian personal name Sīn-rīm-Urim). The *abūbu* “deluge” is probably a snake or dragon and is associated with gods such as Ellil, Ninurta, Adad, Nabū (son of Marduk) — all storm deities. I found no association with Sīn/Nannar. CAD A/1 s.v. *abūbu*, discussion section, remarks that the juxtaposition of *abūbu* and *rīmu* in the Verse Account replaces that of *mušhuššu* and *rīmu*, which is frequent in Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions.

All those texts are of Nebuchadrezzar II (cf. CAD M/2 s.v. *mušhuššu*) and refer to decorations adorning the gates of Babylon, which is Marduk's city. It seems, therefore, that Nabonidus is accused of having usurped for Sīn a symbol strongly associated with Marduk. The use of *abūbu* for the expected *mušhuššu* may be intended to thinly veil the polemic.

<sup>44</sup> For a recent discussion of this passage and parallels, see Cole 1984, pp. 242–43.

they establish for their gods.” The editors accept here Wilfred Lambert’s suggestion and take the sentence to mean that the priests stand accused of having altered the traditional regalia and cultic appurtenances of the gods they serve, an obvious sacrilege. If correct, such an offense is certainly very similar to those of which Nabonidus and his predecessor are accused in the previous documents.

These texts demonstrate the importance of making a statue according to the proper form and with the proper regalia and accoutrements. Not just anything will do. How then, is one to know the proper form of the statue? We have seen that tradition and precedence are important, and these can be revealed to the would-be idol maker by “miraculous” means. What has been done in the past is authoritative. What deviates from the past is illegitimate.

The biblical accounts of making idols offer little information as to how the form of the idols made was determined. Moses is told to make a  $\text{אֲרִיֶּסֶם}$ , a fiery serpent, and put it on a pole. Moses understands this to mean a bronze serpent, but the exact form of either is not stipulated (Num 21:8). Aaron tells Moses that the calf “came out” of the fire (Exod 32:24), as if he had done nothing to give it its form. Jeroboam may have produced his calves on the basis of a precedent but none is specified. But Gideon’s ephod and Michayehu’s idol are fabricated with no discernable guidance, neither revelation, command, nor precedent. These acts of making idols should be contrasted not only with the Mesopotamian sources in which it is important to make an idol according to a divine plan or divinely approved precedent, but also with the Priestly account of building the Tabernacle where Moses is told in painstaking detail what he is to make, and is also shown a  $\text{תְּבִיטָה}$ , a pattern (see Hurowitz 1992, pp. 168–70), to make sure he understands what he is to do. As in the case of fabricating idols without divine approval or command, so creating one with no divine guidance as to its form is irregular and unacceptable and may be considered an act of arbitrariness and capriciousness.

## THE MATERIALS FOR THE STATUE

### *Materials Used in Mesopotamian Idols*

A cult statue is an embodiment of a deity, so it stands to reason that the material from which it is made would be of considerable concern, for its body must be divine.

We start with an episode in the myth of Erra and Išum which indicates that the preferred material in Mesopotamia for cult statues was wood of the *mēsu*-tree.<sup>45</sup> The myth describes

<sup>45</sup> For the prominence of the *mēsu* tree in divine statues, see H. Schaudig’s contribution to this volume. The botanical identity of the *mēsu* tree remains in dispute and the word is often left untranslated, even in some recent works. No one has discussed why it is preferred as a tree for divine statues, if indeed there was such a preference. Zimmern (1917, p. 53) identified the *mēsu* with Aramaic *maiša*, the Zürgelbaum or *Celtis*. Thompson (1949, p. 248) provides no information about this tree or its wood. *AHW.*, p. 647a, follows Zimmern and translates “Zürgelbaum,” which is a sugarberry or nettle tree, *Celtis occidentalis*. This meaning is referred to by CAD  $\text{S}$  s.v. *šulmu*, discussion section. Sol Cohen (1973, p. 159 on line 27) points out that *Celtis australis* is white when young but when it grows old becomes black like ebony, therefore accounting for references to both black and white *mēsu*

trees. Cohen has kindly brought to my attention Krauss 1924, in which Krauss discusses the  $\text{שִׁיטָה}$ , which is cognate of *mēsu*, and concurs with its identification with the *Celtis*, or Service Tree. He points out that rabbinic halakhah prohibits burning  $\text{שִׁיטָה}$  wood on the temple altar because it is very hard and tough and could not burn with a blazing flame (p. 199). Löw (1924–34, vol. 1, p. 627, and vol. 3, pp. 416–17) mentions the appearance of Zürgelbaum in various places in the land of Israel and Lebanon and references to it in rabbinic literature. These discussions notwithstanding, CAD M/2 s.v. *mēsu* A, discussion section, still maintains that the *mēsu* is “an unidentified large tree that is never imported, whose wood is used frequently for furniture; it has no fruit or medically used product.” Stephanie Dalley (1989, p. 177) describes it as “a dark wood used in making di-



this tree as a special species. Marduk, in his refusal to undergo renovations and repairs, asks rhetorically (Cagni 1969, p. 74, Erra I, lines 150–153):

*ali mēsu šir ilī simat šar gimri  
iššu ellu eṭlu širu ša šūluku ana bēlūti<sup>46</sup>  
ša ina tām̄tim rapašt̄im mē 1 me bēru išissu ikšudu šupul arallī  
qimmassu ina elāti emdetu šamē ša [Anim]*

Where is the *mēsu* tree, flesh of the gods, suited to the king of the universe?  
The holy/pure tree, the princely young man, suitable for lordship, which in the  
broad sea its roots extend in the water to below the Netherworld to a distance of a  
hundred double-hours' walk, and whose branches above touch the heaven of Anu  
(the highest heaven)?

These lines describe no ordinary tree. The tree depicted is a cosmic tree, filling the universe. It is broad as the sea, tall as the highest heavens, and rooted in the earth deeper than even the Netherworld. Similar descriptions apply in Mesopotamian literature to temples, divine paraphernalia, and gods. For example, a bilingual hymn describes Ellil (Lambert 1960, p. 327):

kur.gal <sup>d</sup>en.líl.lá im.ḥur.sag gú.bi an.da ab.di.a zu.ab.kù.ga.bi suḥ.bi :  
uš.uš.e : úru.úru.e

*šadū rabū Ellil imḥursag ša rēšāšu šamāmi šannā apsū ellim šuršudū uššūšu*

The great mountain Ellil-Great-Mountain whose head is like the heavens and his foundations are established in the pure Deep.

According to Wilfred Lambert, such passages “show that the idea of greatness, whether applied to gods, temples, a god’s net, or a mythical tree, is expressed in terms of filling the whole universe: based on the underworld and reaching to heaven.”<sup>47</sup> Frederick Greenspahn

vine statues, probably a form of rosewood (Dalbergia).” However, she seems to be intentionally or inadvertently confusing the *mēsu* with the *musukkannu*. Interestingly, an inscription of Simbar-šipak describing the refurbishing of a throne for Ellil, gives the *mēsu* wood an appellation *išu darū* “enduring wood,” otherwise reserved for the *musukkannu*. Is it possible that the ancient scribes too confused or deliberately switched the two terms or occasionally used them synonymously. This would be easily understandable given the fact that the *musukkannu* is called in Sumerian *giš.mes.má.gan.na*, the *mes* of Magan, as if *mes* were a generic term designating several species while *mes.magan* were a specific. For properties of the *Celtis australis* L., see Townsend and Guest 1980, pp. 71–73. This species is quite common in the forest zone of Iraq at an altitude of 550–1300 m. It is a “small tree, 7–9 m., with smooth, grey bark.” For a discussion of the מִיִּי and picture of a 110-year-old מִיִּי tree from Jerusalem’s Valley of the Cross, see Feliks 1994, pp. 257–59.

Note, however, that according to an incantation in the first incantation tablet of the *mīs pī*, ritual gods are also made of šinig, tamarisk. The tree is described (Walker and Dick 2001, p. 97, Incantation Tablet 1/2, col. i lines 1–7):

én giš šinig giš-kù-ga	ki sikil-ta mú-a
ki-kù-ga ta	mu-un-è-a
pa <sub>5</sub> hé-nun-na	a mu-un-nag-nag
ša-bi-ta dingir-re-e-ne	mu-un-dím-e-ne
pa-bi-ta dingir-re-e-ne	mu-un-sikil-e-ne
<sup>d</sup> igi-sig <sub>7</sub> -sig <sub>7</sub>	nu-kiri <sub>6</sub> -gal-an-na-k[e <sub>4</sub> ]
pa-bi im-ma-an-kud	šu im-ma-an-ti

Tamarisk, pure tree, growing up from a clean place, coming from a pure place, drinking water in abundance from the irrigation channel; from its trunk gods are made, with its branches gods are cleansed. Igisigig, the chief gardener of Anu, cut off its branches (and) took them.

Marduk himself had several statues for display in various temples. Each was of a different material, some of wood, some of stone, although the main statue was probably the one of *mēsu* wood (George 1997).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Borger 1967, p. 88, §57 AsBbE, line 16, cited above, which describes the gold *ša ana bēlūtišun ma’diš šūlukat*.

<sup>47</sup> Lambert 1960, p. 327. See also Greenspahn 1994; Van Leeuwen 1997; Samet 2010. Cf. Ezekiel 31:3–4: הַגָּזַל הָאֲשֶׁר הָיָה בְּלִבְנוֹן, יָפָה עֵנָף וְחֹרֶשׁ מִצֵּל-וְגִבָּה קוֹמָה; וַיְגִיז עֲבֹתֶיהֶם, הֵיטָה צִמְרָתוֹ. מִיִּם גִּדְלוּהוּ, תְּהוֹם רִמְמָתָהּ; אֶת-הַיְהוּדִיָּה הֵלֵךְ סְבִיבוֹת מִטְעָה, וְאֶת-תְּעֵלְתֶיהָ שִׁלְחָה, אֶל כָּל-עֲצֵי הַשָּׂדֶה “Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon with beautiful branches and shady thickets of lofty stature, with its top among

(1994) suggests that encompassing the universe, from the heavens above to the waters below, is a divine trait. Raymond Van Leeuwen (1997) notes that the specific divine prerogatives entailed in encompassing the universe would be immortality, superhuman knowledge, wisdom, and power. I propose that this trait includes what we today call omnipresence, and it is expressed by ancient authors as a *merismus*.

But the tree is more than divinely omnipresent. It is also personified. It is not only pure or holy, but also a bilingual word play, taking *mēsu* as equivalent to Sumerian *mes*, which means *eṭlu šīru*, lets the tree itself be understood as “an exalted/princely young man, suited for lordship.” These titles suit a human or a divine king, but hardly a plank of lumber.<sup>48</sup> Interestingly, both *eṭlu* and *šīru* are common epithets of gods and kings, but the combination into a single title is very rare. CAD E s.v. *eṭlu 2b2'* lists but a single occurrence of *GURUŠ šīru*, in an inscription of Nebuchadrezzar II (Langdon 1912, p. 144, Nebukadnezar 7 i 32), where it is an epithet of Marduk!<sup>49</sup> It seems that the *mēsu* is no simple tree but is already a god. In fact, the tree already is Marduk! When made into a statue it does not change its essence in the least. The new statue is not a new entity but a transformation or metamorphosis of a previously existing divinity. The statue, which we might consider a new god, was in fact always a god and it remains one. At most, the statue is a concentrate of the god which fills the universe, packaged in a form that can be conveniently introduced and worshipped in a temple.

Marduk implies that without this particular wood his image cannot be refurbished.

Marduk also asks rhetorically, *ali ebbu zagindurû ša ušamsaqu i[l-x-x-]* “where is the pure lapis which I make choose [...]?” (Cagni 1969, p. 74, Erra I, line 154), and *ali abnû nasqûti binût tâmtim rapaštîm simat agê* “where are the select stones, creation of the broad sea, suited for a crown?” (Cagni 1969, p. 74, Erra I, line 161), implying the same thing about the stones to decorate the statue.

Illustrative of the importance of properly outfitting the god is a Neo-Assyrian letter from Marduk-šarru-ušur to Sargon II(?) (SAA 15, 184, lines obv. 4–rev. 9):

*ša šarru bēli išpuranni*  
*mā kakkussani annūti aiāka šakānu*  
*ina muḥḥi kipilī ša šidada šakānu panišunu ana qanni*  
*7 šūnu 5 manê 50 šiqil ḥurāsi šuqultūšunu*  
*1 manê 10 šiqil ḥurāsi ana irti ša ḥumḥum*  
*gimru 7 manê ḥurāsi ina libbi ūmū ša šarri bēlija epšu*  
*šaṭāru ina muḥḥišunu laššu*  
*ša šarri bēli išpuranni*

leafy trees. Waters nourished it, the deep made it grow tall, washing its streams the place where it was planted, making its channels well up to all the trees of the field” (NJPS). Thrice more in the same prophecy we find that the roots of the tree were in the מים רבים “mighty waters” (vv. 5, 7, 15). The prophet compares Pharaoh with the king of Assyria who is likened in turn to a cosmic tree. Given the association Assyrians made between the king and the sacred tree (Winter 1983; Parpola 1993a), Ezekiel may be alluding here to Mesopotamian beliefs.

<sup>48</sup> King Šulgi of Ur is compared to a mes-tree. In Šulgi F we read “On the day of his elevation to kingship, / He

radiated like a fertile mes-tree, watered by fresh water, / Extending (his) blossoming branches towards the pure water course; / Upon his blossoming branches Utu conferred the (following) blessing: / Being a fertile mes-tree, he has borne fruit, / Šulgi, the righteous shepherd of Sumer, will truly spread abundance!” Šulgi P a15 describes the king: “He is my mes-tree, with ‘shining’ branches, he *sprang up* from the soil for me.” For texts and translation, see J. Klein 1981, pp. 11, 24 n. 122.

<sup>49</sup> Note also that a writing for Marduk is <sup>d</sup>MES.

*mā mīnu ibašši udê Aššur-bēlu-taqin ēpuš ina libbi iškun  
mā šuṭuru šēbila  
irtu ana Šidada 1/2 manê šuqultuša ištēt qabūtu ša mē qātē  
1 manê ḥurāši šuqultuša  
annūti šūnu udê ša ēpušuni  
šaṭāru ša Aššur-bēlu-taqin ina muḥḥišunu*

Concerning what the king, my lord wrote to me: “Where are these *kakkussanu* ornaments placed?” — They are placed upon the *mole* (? *kipilu*) of the god Šidada *outwards* (their face toward the hem). There are seven of them and their weight is five minas and fifty sheqels of gold. One mina and ten sheqels of the gold is for the breast of the god Ḥumḥum. A total of seven minas of gold has been used in the time of the king, my lord, but there is no written record of it.

Concerning what the king my lord wrote to me: “What objects has Aššur-bēlu-taqin made and placed there? Write it down and send it to me” — a breast part for Šidada, its weight being half a mina of gold and one cup of “hand water,” its weight being one mina of gold. These are the objects that he has made, and there is a written document by Aššur-[bēlu-ta]qqin on them.

According to this passage the king has asked Marduk-šarru-ušur for certain expert information about certain cult statues, without which work could not progress. Redecoration of the images cannot be left to the whim of the artisans or even the discretion of the king. Not only does the king ask an expert, but the expert cites his reasons for doing something, in one case practice and in another written record. The question posed assumes that there was a proper way of decorating the two gods in question. We may assume that the expert asked is familiar with the original regalia of the images.

Another example of care for proper stones in a statue is found in a letter of Nabû-aḥḥē-erība and Balasī to the king (Esarhaddon or Assurbanipal) concerning the crown of Nabû (SAA 10, 41, lines obv. 6–rev. 8):

*ina muḥḥi aḡê ša šarru bēlni išpuranni  
ēnē ša ukallimūnašini damqā adanniš  
Nabû bēl mātāti ana šarri bēlni likrub  
ūmē ša šarri bēlni lurrik  
nēmulu ša mār-šarri ša aḥḥēšu Nabû ana šarri bēlni lukallim  
ša šarru bēlni išpurannašini  
mā šurru ētatra  
šumma ēnā muṭê ēnē ina libbi lēpušu  
šumma šanduppu muṭê šanduppu ina libbi lēpušu  
šumma atru šū lurammū*

Concerning the tiara [about which the king], our lord, wrote to us, the eye-stones which were shown to us are very beautiful. May Nabû, the lord of the world, bless the king, our lord, and lengthen the days of the king, our lord! May Nabû let the king, our lord, see the crown prince and his brothers prosper.

As to what the king, our lord, wrote to us: “There is more obsidian” — if “eyes” are lacking, eye-stones should be made of it, and [if] a *šanduppu* (ornament) is lacking, a *šanduppu*-gem should be made of it. If it is extra, they may leave it unused.

We may assume that if there were no “eyes” or *šanduppu* ornaments on the statue it might be considered invalid.

A letter of Mār-Issar to Esarhaddon tells of work on certain statues being incomplete, wanting certain metals (SAA 10, 349, lines 5–26):

*ša šarru bēli išpuranni mā Itti-Marduk-balātu Urukaja issapra mā hurāšu ibašši ina bīt ilāni iptuḥur u batqu ša šabāti ibašši ina panīti kī uddini šarru bēli ana Surmarrāte la illakanni ina Kalḫa šarru bēli issalanni mā mīnu ibašši dullu ša ilāni maṭṭi ana šarri bēlija usašme nuk šakuttu ša Nanaja maṭṭiat u pāni qātā ša Ušur-amassa hurāšu uḥḥuzu lānu u šēpā hurāši la uḥḥuzu lamaḥuššū labšat agū šaknat 2 šungalli ša hurāši gamrū imnu u šumēlu eli kigalliša izzāzu issi māt Aššur ana Uruk ušēbilašši u dullu ša Arkaitu Anunitum u Pāliš ša bīt-mummu dulli naggāru u kapšarru gammur u hurāšu la uḥḥuzu nuk kaspā nittidin hurāšu ilaqqūni nuk kīma dullu ša Ušur-amassa u ša bīt-mummu nigdammar bita issilim ḥarammāma šakuttu ša Nanaja neppaš*

As to what the king, my lord, wrote to me: “Itti-Marduk-balātu of Uruk has written to me: ‘Gold has accumulated in the temples, and there is repair work to be done’” — formerly, before the king, my lord, went to [S]urmarrāte, the k[ing, my lord, as]ked me in Calah: “What work [on the gods] is [i]ncomplete?” I (then) informed the king, my lord, as follows:

“[The decoration of N]anaya is incomplete. Furthermore, (while) the face and the hand[s of Ušur]-amatsa have been overlaid with gold, the figure and [the feet] have not. She is [dr]essed with a la[maḥuššū]-robe and equipped with a golden tiara. The two golden [drago]ns are ready and they stand right and left [upon] her [pedestal]. I have sent her from Assyria to Uruk. Furthermore, the work [on Arka]yitu, Anunitu, and Palil [of the temple of] Mummu: the carpenter’s and metalworker’s work is [fin]ished, (but) they have not been overlaid with gold. We have given them silver, (but) they are still to get gold from me. After we have finished the work on Ušur-amatsa and on the temple of Mummu, and the temple is complete, then we shall make the decoration of Nanaya.”

The artisans are certainly working according to a plan to produce proper representations of the gods, and without the required metals the statue will be invalid.

These incidents may be compared with an event closer in time to Deutero-Isaiah reported by Nabonidus. An inscription from the second year of this king tells about repairs done on Ebabarra, Šamaš’s temple in Sippar. Along with repairs to the architecture of the temple, Nabonidus also tended to the god’s crown, this measure occupying most of the inscription (Langdon 1912, pp. 264–70, Nabonid 7 i 41–ii 38 = Schaudig 2001, pp. 379–80, 2.8<sup>a</sup> Tiara-Zylinder i 41–ii 38):

- col. i 41 *inūšu ša Šamaš bēlu rabū dajjāni širi ša šamē u eršetī*  
 42 *āšib Ebabarra ša qereb Sippar bēlija*  
 43 *agū hurāši simat ilūtīšu ša apru rāšuššu*  
 44 *tiqnu tuqqunu bunnū zarinnu*  
 45 *šattišamma šuršudu la ibaššū tēnāšu*  
 46 *manama šarru ālik maḥrija tēnē agē šu’āti la ip[uš]u*  
 47 *ana epēš agī hurāši libbī palih rašāku na[kutti]*  
 48 *upaḥḥirma mārē Bābilī u B[arsippa]*
- col. ii 1 *enqūti rāš tēmi kīma labīrimma linnipuš iqbāni*  
 2 *ašrāti Šamaš u Adad bēlē bīri ašte’ema*  
 3 *ša epēš agī ša la zarinni Šamaš u Adad*  
 4 *ina tērtišunu ulli itappalu’inni*

- 5 *apqidma ulli ušališma širu lumnu iššakna in tērtija*  
 6 *ašnīma aššum epēš agî ša la zarinni ašrāti Šamaš*  
 7 *u Adad ašte'ema šumma ša eli ilūtīšunu t̄ābu*  
 8 *u eli Marduk āšib Esagila bēlīja*  
 9 *Šamaš u Adad annu kīnu ušaškinu in tērtija*

— 10 OMENS (see below) —

- 20 *dumqu tērti annīti ūmi maḥrā āmurma*  
 21 *aššum ša eli Marduk bēlīja t̄ābu ašne tērti apqid*  
 22 *širu damqu ša epēš agî šu'āti kīma labirimma*  
 23 *iššakna in tērtija*

— 9 OMENS (see below)—

- 32 *tērti šu'āti appalisma ana amat Šamaš*  
 33 *u Adad bēlē bīri atkalma*  
 34 *agâ ḥurāši kīma labirimma ša zarinni in gišnugalli*  
 35 *u agusīgu šūšubu in abnē nisiqtīm šuklulu*  
 36 *in šipir Guškin-banda u Ninzadīm eššiš abni*  
 37 *ūmiš unammirma*  
 38 *maḥar Šamaš bēlīja ukīn*

At that time, for the gold crown of Šamaš, the great lord, the exalted judge of the heavens and earth who dwells in Ebabbar in Sippar, my lord, befitting of his divinity, which covered his head, which was adorned with adornments and made beautiful with *zarinnu*, and which would be put on annually, there was no replacement. No king among those who go before me had made a replacement for the crown. My heart feared and I started to tremble about making the gold crown. I gathered together the wise men of Babylon and Borsippa who have understanding, and they said to me “let it be made like the old one!”

I visited the sanctuaries of Šamaš and Adad, lords of oracular visions, (and inquired about) making a crown without *zarinnu*. Šamaš and Adad answered me time and again “No” by means of their oracular instructions. I checked (again) and the “No” came three times, and negative entrails occurred in the oracular instructions.

But I repeated (the process), and concerning making a crown without *zarinnu*. I visited the shrines of Šamaš and Adad (to inquire) whether it is good to their great divinities and to Marduk who dwells in Esagila, my lord. Marduk and Adad placed a reliable “Yes” in my oracular instructions.

(10 OMENS — see below).

I saw the good of this omen on the first day (i.e., immediately). I checked (again) and repeated the omen whether it was pleasing to Marduk, my lord. Good entrails for making that crown like the old one occurred in my oracle.

(9 OMENS — see below).

I beheld that omen; I trusted in the word of Šamaš and Adad, lords of oracular visions. A gold crown like the old one, which is inlaid with *zarinnu*, alabaster, and turquoise, and is made perfect with select stones, I made anew by work of Guškin-banda and Ninzadim. I made it bright as day, and installed it before Šamaš, my lord.

Just as the king of Assyria consulted his scholars about the regalia of Šidada and Huḥum, so Nabonidus claims to have consulted the wise men of Babylon and Borsippa to

ask them whether he can make a substitute tiara for Šamaš decorated with *zarinnu*.<sup>50</sup> Their response was that he should make it like the old one (col. i line 47–col. ii line 1).

*Ana epēš aġî ħurāši libbī paliḫ rašāku nikitti  
upahḫirma mārē Bābilī u Barsipa enqūti rāš tēmi  
kīma labirīma linnipuš iqbūni*

To make the gold tiara my heart feared and I became worried  
I gathered the wise sons of Babylon and Borsippa who have understanding  
They said to me “let it be made as of old.”

However, Nabonidus did not hearken immediately to the advice of his experts, considering it necessary but insufficient. The decision to make a divine crown, or make changes in one, is to be made by the gods. Accordingly, he reports at some length how he confirmed their sage advice by means of extispicy. The process is described step by step, and is not at all simple.

He first asked Šamaš and Adad, the patrons of extispicy, whether he should make a crown without *zarinnu* (*aġâ ša la zarinni*). Thrice he was told “no” in a quite definite manner. However, these answers were considered “bad entrails” (*šīru lumnu*) and unreliable. Intent on getting a more reliable answer, he then asked what seems to be the same question of Marduk and Adad (but see below). This time he received a “firm yes” (*annu kīnu*) and the text actually lists the ten omens. After listing the omens he remarks that he immediately saw the good of these omens (*dumqu tērtī annīti*; II 20) and performs another round of divination to verify (II 21–33).

However, there seems to be a textual problem here resulting in a contradiction in the text or irrational behavior by the king. In the first round of divination Nabonidus asked whether he should make a crown without *zarinnu* (*ša la zarinnu*; II 3). The answer was negative (*ulli*), and since a double negative is positive this means that the gods desired a crown with *zarinnu*. This would have confirmed the advice of the advisors, and should have satisfied the king. But the omens are described as bad (*šīru lemnu*) so he couldn’t use them. He then repeats that same question and receives a reliable yes (*annu kīnu*; II 9). This should mean that the gods want a crown without *zarinnu*, contradicting the advice of the advisors, not what the king wants to do, and not what he does in the end! It is surprising then, that the king likes the answer, sees immediately that the entrails are good (*dumqu*), meaning reliable, and then confirms the answer with another round of divination. This time he asks whether he should

<sup>50</sup> The word *zarinnu* has puzzled Assyriologists. CAD Z s.v. *zarinnu* B and *AHw.*, followed also by Beaulieu 1989, p. 48, interpret it as a stand on which the crown would be placed (like a hat rack?), while Seidl (2001, pp. 131f.) suggests it is some type of ornament on the crown. We have chosen to follow here Schaudig (2001, pp. 381–82 n. 459), who takes it to be a type of material of which the crown was made, or of stones in the crown. The crown to be made is not a replacement for one which has been lost or damaged but a second. This is the force of the word *tēnū* in col. i lines 45, 46. When referring to a garment as in the Poor Man of Nippur (Gurney 1956, pp. 150 and 152, lines 10, 12, 14, 43) it would mean “a change of garment,” and when referring to a crown it would be rendered “a change of crown.” In an inscription of Assurbanipal, the *bit redūti* is called *tēnē ekalli*,

which is translated by Borger as *Ersatzpalast* (Prism A, col. x line 51). It is an alternate and not a replacement. This crown would be worn alternatively with the older, existing crown. The crown seems to have been changed annually. Changing the crown every year may have been necessary to permit refurbishing it periodically. A cult statue could not be left without a crown because this was the most explicit sign of its divinity. The dangers of a god being left unadorned are made explicit in the Erra Epic. Note that the sun-disk inscription of Nabû-apladdina provides for six garments of Šamaš for days in the months of Addaru, Nisannu, and Ajjaru in the spring and Ulūlu, Tašritu, and Araḫsamna in the fall. Interestingly, they consist of two types of garments — *šer'itu* garments and *qarbitu* garments.

make the crown *kīma labirrima* “as of old,” meaning with *zarinnu*. Here too he receives a positive answer and then proceeds to make the crown “as of old” and with *zarinnu*. Put briefly, in the text before us the second answer is contradicted by the third and by the result!

The way to get out of the contradiction is to delete the *la* in the second question (II 6). If we do so the course of events will be as follows: There are three negative answers to making the crown without *zarinnu*, meaning the gods wanted a crown with *zarinnu*. These answers were considered invalid for some reason or another. The king then changed the question and asked it in the positive way, whether the crown should be made with *zarinnu*. This question received a positive answer and the entrails were also good. The final question does not mention *zarinnu* at all, but just asks whether the crown should be as of old (i.e., with *zarinnu*), as the advisors had advised. This query too is answered positively.

This text actually conveys the omens. It is quite common for royal inscriptions to report the performance of extispicy, but this is the only case that enumerates in detail which omens were observed and what they forecast. Moreover, the text does not report what ominous features were observed in the entrails, but the pertinent entries in the omen catalogs, in this case the divinatory compendia. In each one is a protasis introduced by the conditional *šumma* describing what should be found in the liver, followed by the apodosis informing the diviner of the expected future event. There are even cases of omens with two possible interpretations. In other words, the mantic material is not narrativized — something which could be accomplished by deleting the *šumma* in each line — and remains not fully integrated. The first set of ten omens are:

*Šumma mazzāzu irik ūmū rubê irrikū*

If the stand has become long, the days of the prince will be long.

*Šumma šēpu šūbātīšu kašid kibis šēp awīli itti ili šūšur ilu ana awīli akla inaddin ūlū mē uššab*

If the foot reaches its seat, the step of the man’s foot with the god will be straightened, the god will give food to the man or will add water.

*Šumma zihḫu šakin šulum napišti*

If a *zihḫu*-mark is present, well being of the life.

*Šumma mārtu šuršu imnu kīn šumēlu nasiḫ išid ummānija kīn išid ummān nakir nasiḫ*

If the root of the gall bladder is firm to the right and ripped out on the left, the foundation of my army will be firm, the base of the enemy’s army will be ripped out.

*Šumma šumēl mārti šatiq nakru illassu išalliṣsu ummān rubê zitta ikkal*

If the left of the gall bladder is cracked, the enemy gang of evildoers will rule him, the army of the prince will eat a portion.

*Šumma ubānu šalim bēl nīqi išallim ūmāšu irrikū*

If the finger is well, the presenter of the sacrifice will be well, his days will be long.

*Šumma šibtu rapiš tūb libbi*

If the processus propillararis is broad, goodness of the heart.

*Šumma eliš illik šēp uššurti šumma awilu in dīni eli gārīšu izzāz*

If it has gone up, foot of release; if the person is at trial, he will stand over his opponent.

*Šumma ubān ḥašī qablu išissu uššur ummānī zitta ikkal*

If the middle finger of the lung, its base is freed, my army will eat a portion.

*Šumma tirānu 14 ina šālmūti kiššiti qātēja šummirat ummānija mātāt ummāni ina ḥarrāni illakū zitta ikkalū*

If the coils of the intestine are 14 on the good side, the conquests of my hand are the goals of my troops. The lands of the army will go on a campaign and will eat a portion.

The second set of nine omens are:

*Šumma mazzāzu irik ūmū rubē irrikū*

If the stand has become long, the days of the prince will be long.

*Šumma šēpu šinā ina imitti šaknā ilū ina idi illakū*

If a second foot is found on the right, the gods will go at the side.

*Šumma zihḥu uštešni šuršū kīnu šubat neḥti*

If the *zihḥu*-mark has been changed and its base is firm, peaceful dwelling.

*Šumma šēp imitti marta pašit martu šakin ummānka rēš eqlīšu ikaššad šalūmassu itarra*

If the right foot erases the gall bladder and the gall bladder is present, your army will reach the head of its field (destination), it will return safely.

*Šumma martu irik ūmū rubē irrikū*

If the gall bladder has become long, the days of the prince will be long.

*Šumma šumēl marti šamid šēp kasāt nakri*

If the left of the gall bladder is hitched, foot of binding the enemy.

*Šumma ina qabal šēri ubān qabli kakku šakimma šapal pān kakki Ištar rēšūti tīb nakri suḥḥur šaniš kak ṭīpi šumšu*

If in the middle of the upper side the middle finger lays like a “weapon-mark,” and it faces downward, it is the weapon-mark of Ištar my ally, the assault of the enemy is reversed. Variant: *ṭīpu* weapon-mark is its name.

*Šumma eli šēr ḥašī innu ībir u kaskasu ina qablīšu pališ musarrir ummān nakri ummān nakri ina nakbatīšu imaqqut*

If on the top of the lung the right passes and the ensiform cartilage is pierced in its middle, liar of the troops of the enemy. The troop of the enemy will fall in its weight.

*Šumma kubšu eli kiditu irkab šil ili eli awīli ibašši ilu zēnu itti awīli isallim*

If a hat rode on the exterior part of the liver, the shadow of the god will be with the man, an angry god will make peace with the man.

We are to assume that what is described in the protasis in a conditional phrase is actually what was seen in the entrails. The apodoses are all positive. On face value, they have nothing



to do with making the crown with or without *zarinnu*, but the positive apodoses are to be taken as a sign of agreement with the binary, “yes or no” question posed.

This incident indicates that divine regalia should confirm to tradition, but that this is not to be assumed a priori. Even a well-entrenched custom confirmed by sages is subject to repeated divine confirmation. Nonetheless, we should not lose sight of what seems to be a manipulative element in the event. The initial “bad omens” could have been construed as a negative response, but this does not deter the king and he does what is necessary to acquire confirmation for his initiative. In the end, the gods approve the design, but this approval is not forthcoming and is attained surreptitiously.

### Materials Used in Biblical Idols

The Mesopotamian texts praise the high quality and divine origin, ownership, and nature of the materials used in cult statues. This is to be expected. It comes as no surprise that biblical authors too report the idol makers’ positive attitudes toward the ingredients used. Isaiah 40:20 tells of selecting wood for the statue *הַמִּסְכָּן תְּרוּמָה*, עֵץ לֹא-יִרְקַב וְיִבְחַר “the *musukkanu* wood is separated out, a wood which will not rot he will choose.” However we understand the particular types of lumber,<sup>51</sup> it is clear that the prophet emphasizes the care in selection and may even reflect Mesopotamian terminology since the term *עֵץ לֹא-יִרְקַב* “wood which does not rot” is equivalent to Akkadian *iṣ(ṣ)u dāru*.<sup>52</sup> Ezekiel 7:20 relates that Israelite idols too were made from the finest jewelry — *וַיֵּצְאוּ מִן-עֵצֵיהֶם עֲשׂוּבוֹ* “for out of their beautiful adornments, in which they took pride, they made their images and their detestable abominations — therefore I will make them an unclean thing to them.” It is most interesting, in light of the Mesopotamian texts, that the material for some idols is said to have come from God (Ezek 16:17) — *וַתִּקְחִי כְּלֵי תַמְאֲרֹתַי, מִזֶּהָבִי וּמִכֶּסֶף אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לָךְ, וּתְעַשִׂי-לָךְ, צִלְמֵי זָכָר; וַתִּזְנֶי-בָם.* — “You took your beautiful things (i.e., jewelry) made of silver and gold that I had given you, and you made phallic images and fornicated with them.”

Despite the similarities, the attitude toward using materials of divine origin (or provided by God in the case of the Bible) for a cult statue is conditioned directly by the context. What the idol maker regards as a mark of honor and greatness for the idol, is portrayed by the

<sup>51</sup> See in particular Williamson 1986. Strangely, Watts (1987, p. 87) rejects Williamson’s suggestion. He prefers to translate “The expert in such offerings,” following Trudinger 1967. Korpel (1991) also rejects interpreting *הַמִּסְכָּן* as a tree and prefers to revocalize it as a D participle *hammesakkēn*. Holter (1995) sees *מִסְכָּן* as a word for “image,” parallel to *פֶּסֶל*. In my opinion, we should follow Williamson and others with the “tree-rendering,” especially in light of Israel Eph’al’s and Chaim Cohen’s conclusive suggestion (see below) that *עֵץ לֹא יִרְקַב* is wood that will not rot, as a traditional appellative of *מִסְכָּן* = *musukkannu* equivalent to Akkadian *iṣ(ṣ)u dāru*.

*תְּרוּמָה* too awaits satisfactory explanation. Fitzgerald (1989, p. 442) suggests that the idol the prophet portrays is fully of metal and only the base is of wood. Accordingly, he explains *תְּרוּמָה* as “platform.” Holter

(1995, p. 48) understands it as “offering” as in most other places in the Bible. We prefer to follow Rashi, who doesn’t regard it as a tree but to mean “separate” or “select.” There is parallelism between *יִבְחַר* “he will select” and *תְּרוּמָה* “gift/selection.” Combining these suggestions permits understanding *עֵץ לֹא יִרְקַב יִבְחַר* // *הַמִּסְכָּן תְּרוּמָה* as “the *musukkannu* tree is (his) selection, a tree which will not rot he chooses.” For the combination of *הָרִים* “contribute/select” and *יִבְחַר* “select,” see Psalm 89:20: *אֵי דַבַּרְתָּ בְּחַזוֹן, לַחֲסִידֶיךָ -- וַתֹּאמֶר, שׁוֹיֵתִי* “Then You spoke to Your faithful ones in a vision and said, ‘I have conferred power upon a warrior; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.’”

<sup>52</sup> Eph’al 1986–89; C. Cohen 1993. I thank Chaim Cohen for providing me a manuscript of his paper.

prophets with derision, as a sign of stupidity on the one hand and disgrace or ingratitude on the other. The biblical depictions, even when reflecting reality, are in fact caricatures.

Some biblical authors admit that idol makers carefully chose their ingredients, but others highlight the profane nature or dubious origin of the materials. As a case in point, the silver Michayehu's mother uses for the statue in her son's temple is tainted (Jud 17:1–13; Amit 1992, pp. 300–01). The farcical story starts abruptly, telling how the mother has lost eleven hundred shekels of silver which she tries to retrieve by using an אֶלֶה-imprecation. Unknown to her, it was her son who had “taken” (i.e., stolen)<sup>53</sup> the silver. When, upon hearing his mother's curse, Michayehu returns the loot she repeals her malediction by blessing her son, and dedicates the returned silver for use in making an idol. Nonetheless, she cuts costs, investing only two hundred sheqels in the actual work. We may assume that she has “kept the change.” Also, she transfers the silver to a smith.<sup>54</sup> This might be compared to Isaiah 46:6–7: הַזְּלִים זָהָב מִכִּיס, וְנָסַף בַּקֶּנֶה שֶׁקֶלוֹ; וַיִּשְׂכְּרוּ צוֹרֵף וַיַּעֲשֶׂהוּ אֵל, וַיִּסְגְּדוּ אֵף-וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ. וְשִׂאָהוּ עַל-כִּתְּפוֹ יִסְבְּלוּהוּ “Those who squander gold from the purse and weigh out silver on a balance, they hire a metal worker to make it into a god, to which they bow down and prostrate themselves” (NJPS) — where the precious metals go to both smith's wages and the materials for making the idol. The prophet may refer to a practice by which the idol maker withheld his own wages from the very materials to be made into a god. If this practice was known to the author of the Michayehu pericope, then the idol would not even contain the two hundred shekels, thus devaluing and debasing the idol even more before it was produced. All told, the silver is twice stolen, of diminished worth, and has been effected by a lightly conceived and easily abrogated imprecation, and that of a woman to boot.<sup>55</sup> This object of veneration, embodying a deity, has certainly not been concocted from the noblest of ingredients.

The golden calf story notes that gold for the calf was collected from earrings of the idolaters' wives, sons, and daughters. Curiously, the idolaters themselves seem not to contribute. The precious metal is simply “broken off” (הִתְפָּרַק) and gathered up (see below). The twice-used verb הִתְפָּרַק may bear negative connotations.<sup>56</sup>

Unlike true idolatrous practice the gold is not refined, prepared, or turned over to the god to render it suitable for sacred use. The base nature of the gold for the calf is highlighted clearly when contrasted with the gold used for the Tabernacle.<sup>57</sup> The gold for the Tabernacle is presented as a free-will offering by everyone (Exod 35:22), and refined, as indicated by

<sup>53</sup> Kaufmann (1962) idiosyncratically explains, “Micah does not speak about stealing but about taking, apparently to hint that he took the silver for needs of the household and with the intention of returning it. Micah is a well to do, respected person and scripture does not portray him as a crook.”

<sup>54</sup> David Qimhe (Judg 17:3) suggests that the mother gave two hundred shekels to the smith, used nine hundred for the idol, and kept none for herself.

<sup>55</sup> Eleven hundred shekels is the sum Delilah takes from each Philistine ruler (Judg 16:5) as a bribe to betray Samson. Rashi, on Judges 17:3, rejects a suggestion that the woman was actually Delilah. He remarks, nonetheless “the incidents were juxtaposed because of the wicked silver which was of an equal amount in both instances and both were silver of disaster.” See L. R. Klein 1988, p.

143, for additional moral and religious flaws inherent in the silver.

<sup>56</sup> In Psalm 7:3 the petitioner asks God to save him from a pursuer “lest he tear up my throat like a lion, breaking up (פָּרַק) with no one to save (me).” Zechariah 11:16 recalls a malicious shepherd who will eat up the fatlings and “break off their hooves” (וַיִּפְרֹסֵיהֶן וַיִּפְרַק). The verb's connotations of violently or suddenly breaking something off, apparent in these passages (see also Ezek 19:12) are also inherent in positive contexts such as breaking off a yoke to free a slave or captive (Gen 27:40; Lam 5:8; Ps 136:24) or crumbling a mountain (1 Kgs 19:11).

<sup>57</sup> For parallels between the calf fund and the Tabernacle fund, see Moberly 1983, p. 47, and in greater detail Hurowitz 1984, pp. 53–55.

the expression *הַעֲשֵׂי לְמַלְאכָה* “all the gold which was prepared for the work” (cf. Exod 38:24). It was then ritually presented as a *תְּנוּפָח* offering (Exod 35:22). The silver used for the Tabernacle, having derived from the half-shekel weight silver poll tax, must have been of specified weight and quality, indicating that it too was refined.

Certain similarities between making the golden calf and Gideon making an ephod in Ophrah (Judg 8:22–28) permit the two stories to be mutually illuminating (Loewenstamm 1975, pp. 336–37; Zimmerli 1981). The gold used by Gideon originates in booty from the Midianites, having undergone no process of purification or sanctification.<sup>58</sup> In both cases the material used for the illegitimate object is gold earrings (*נְזָמִים*). Aaron and Gideon acquire the earrings from the males of the community, even though they are not the original possessors of the objects. Most important, according to Judges 8:25, *וַיִּשְׁלִיכוּ שָׁמָּה, וַיִּצְרְפוּ שָׁלָלוֹ* “they (the Israelites) spread out a garment and each person cast into it an earring from his booty.” This passage elucidates a somewhat enigmatic statement in Exodus 32:4 *וַיִּצַר אוֹתוֹ בַּחֶרֶט*. This statement is often taken to refer to the way in which Aaron formed the image and is translated “He fashioned it with a graving tool” (KJV), taking *חֶרֶט* as a sharp instrument as it is assumed to be in Isaiah 8:1, where it is used for writing, or “he cast it into a mold” (NJPS with reference to Zech 11:13). It is more likely, however, that *חֶרֶט* designates some sort of garment and is identical with the woman’s garment *חֵרֵט* mentioned in Isaiah 3:22, which lists *הַמְחֻלְצוֹת, וְהַמְעֻטָּפוֹת, וְהַמְטָפְחוֹת, וְהַחֲרִיטִים. וְהַגְּלִינִים, וְהַסְּדִינִים, וְהַצְּנִיפּוֹת, וְהַרְדִּיזִים*. “the festive robes, the mantles, and the shawls; the *חֲרִטִים*, the lace gowns, and the linen vests; and the kerchiefs and the capes.”<sup>59</sup> Accordingly, *וַיִּצַר* is not derived from *יצר* “to fashion,” but from *צר* “to wrap up.” It is significant that in 2 Kings 5:23 Na’aman the Aramaean, when giving Gehazi his reward, *וַיִּצַר כְּכַרִּים כֶּסֶף בְּשָׁנֵי חֲרִטִים*, “bound up two talents of silver in two *חֲרִטִים*,” using an identical expression. Although binding up objects of various types in assorted garments is mentioned elsewhere in the Bible,<sup>60</sup> this particular expression is used only in these two accounts.<sup>61</sup> If so, not only Gideon but Aaron as well collects the gold for their illegitimate objects in a garment.

These descriptions of Gideon’s and Aaron’s fund raising may be more than innocent statements about how the “hat was passed around.” In fact, the deed seems to be portrayed pejoratively. Collecting valuables in a garment is what a thief does.<sup>62</sup> A person’s garment is a convenient container in which stolen goods can be concealed, as thieves do until this very day.<sup>63</sup> We should note that Gehazi’s acceptance of silver from Na’aman is clearly an illicit

<sup>58</sup> I favor interpreting Gideon’s ephod as a divine garment which clothed a divine statue or indicated the presence of an invisible deity. Even if we follow the majority and view this ephod as a priestly garment used for divination, our interpretation of the handling of the materials for its fabrication remains unaffected and instructive for the case of the golden calf. On Gideon’s ephod and the various opinions concerning its nature, see recently van Dam 1997, pp. 146–49.

<sup>59</sup> See Rashi, Rashbam, and most recently Gevirtz 1984.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Exodus 12:34 *מִשְׁאָרְתָם צָרְתָם בְּשִׁמְלָתָם* “their kneading bowls wrapped in their cloaks”; Hosea 4:19 *צָרַר רוּחַ אוֹתָהּ, בְּכַנְפֶיהָ מִי צָרַר-מַיִם בְּשִׁמְלָה* “has bound up the wind in the corners of its garments”; Proverbs 30:4 *בְּשִׁמְלָה בָּרַח מֵיָם* “who has wrapped the waters in a garment.”

<sup>61</sup> It is most surprising therefore that modern scholars of a literary bent have not commented on this relationship and attempted to exploit it for exegetical purposes.

<sup>62</sup> Noth (1959), who mistakenly took *חֶרֶט* to mean “bag” rather than a type of garment, tried to draw implications from Gehazi’s actions about Aaron’s and suggested that Aaron tried to remove the gold to a secret place where he could manufacture the calf secretly and protect the valuable metal from robbers. Gevirtz correctly observes that this explanation is fantasy, but he too fails to see the criminal overtones of the action of both Gehazi and Aaron.

<sup>63</sup> Note, for example, *Mishnah Sheqalim* 3:2 “The one appointed to empty the chamber does not enter it wearing a sleeved garment, etc.”

act. His criminal behavior continues as he stashes the ill-earned gifts in his house prior to appearing before Elisha (2 Kgs 5:24–25). This criminal behavior begins when he wraps up the silver in the garment — an act described exactly like the collection of gold for the calf. This element of thievery in the manufacture of cult images corresponds with the same motive in the story of Michayehu's idol. In all these instances, the narrators indicate that illegitimate cult images are made of tainted materials.<sup>64</sup>

## ICONIC POLITICS: COMPETING STATUES AND CULTS

### ICONIC POLITICS

In a recent study Nathaniel Levtow attempts to explain the biblical parodies on icon making not as steps in the emergence of Israelite monotheism but as instruments of ancient Near Eastern “iconic politics,” that is, statecraft in which manipulation of icons by wielders of political power plays a central role in asserting the superiority of one nation and its god over another (Levtow 2008).<sup>65</sup> In particular, Levtow suggests that the powerful, literary elite of exilic and post-exilic Judah, who were familiar with the idolatrous practices of their conquerors and new neighbors, used their parodies of Mesopotamian idolaters as tools for “social (re)formation” of a post-destruction, disheartened Judean community. Judean authors portrayed Babylonian cult images as dead (can't see, hear, speak, etc.) and powerless and thereby delegitimized in the minds of the target audience (Judeans), whatever mythic traditions, social relationships, and mastery those icons may have symbolized. Put simply, by demeaning and tearing down the Babylonian gods/icons Judah and its God/YHWH would be aggrandized and built up. Moreover, discourse trumps force, words speak louder than actions; and by taking a good literary swipe at the icons it is possible to claim a victory against them and their makers for a God and a people whom they seem to have vanquished militarily.

<sup>64</sup> The earrings and their ultimate source may come into play in one more place in the golden calf pericope. According to Exodus 33:4–6, the Israelites were punished for the debacle by being prohibited to wear jewelry from the time they were at Mount Horeb. As Cassuto (1967, ad loc) points out, they are punished measure for measure, being deprived of jewelry because they sinned with their earrings which they contributed to the calf construction fund. It is noteworthy that although the divine pronouncement of punishment says: *ועתה, הורד עדיך מעליך* “and now, remove your jewelry from upon you” (Exod 33:5), the execution of the punishment is described as *והיה ויתנצלו בני ישראל את עדיהם, מהר חורב* “and the Israelites stripped themselves of their jewelry from Mount Horeb” (33:6). Moberly (1983, p. 61) and others have already suggested that the peculiar word *ויתנצלו* echoes God's promise in Exodus 3:22: *משכנתה אשה וכלי כסף וכלי זהב ושמלתם; ועל בניכם ועל בנותיכם, ונצלתם, את מצריים* “Every woman shall borrow from her neighbor and the lodger in her house objects of silver and gold, and you shall put these on your sons and daughters, thus stripping the Egyptians,”

and its fulfillment in Exodus 12:36: *וישאלו, ממצרים, כלי-כסף וכלי זהב, ושמלתם. ויהיה נתון את-חן העם, בעיני מצרים-וישאלום; וינצלו, את-מצרים* “They borrowed from the Egyptians objects of silver and gold and clothing. And the Lord had disposed the Egyptians favorably toward the people, and they let them have their request; thus they stripped the Egyptians,” indicating that the jewelry which the Israelites possessed and from which they made the calf was the very jewelry plundered from the Egyptians with divine license and assistance. This coincidence can be explained best in light of Ezekiel 16:17, where the prophet accuses the people *ותקחי כלי תפארתך, מזהבי ומכספי אשר נתתי לך, ותעשי-לך, צלמי זכר; ותזני-בם* “You took your beautiful things (i.e., jewelry) made of silver and gold that I had given you, and you made phallic images and fornicated with them” (and cf. as well Hos 2:10–15). In all these cases the people of Israel have taken God-given gifts and misappropriated them for idolatrous use, indicating their brazenness, ingratitude, and infidelity.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. my review (2010).

The heart of Levtow's argument is analysis of the relevant exilic iconic texts, the most prominent ones being Jeremiah 10:1–6; Isaiah 44:9–20; 46:1–7; and Psalms 115 and 135. From here Levtow goes on to study “Mesopotamian iconic ritual,” especially the *mīs pī*. He points to the royal aspects of the *mīs pī* and suggests that by its agency the gods and the political structures supporting them were empowered. The biblical icon parodies reveal knowledge of this ritual, and by denigrating its efficacy the authors of the parodies (the intelligentsia and leaders of the exilic community) would strengthen themselves and their own political structures. The icons were manipulated after their manufacture as well, especially at times of war, and these manipulations were recorded in ideological, historical writings, especially the royal inscriptions. An additional act of “iconic politics” was the enthronement of the icon in his temple not only at the end of the *mīs pī* ritual but periodically at the *akitu* festival. All the Mesopotamian evidence for “iconic politics” suggests that ancient Israel's foray into this ideological battlefield is a “distinctive but by no means unique effort to dethrone the gods of Babylon, enthrone YHWH, and turn defeat into victory through the manipulation of iconic modes of social formation” (Levtow 2008, p. 125). The book concludes by investigating iconic politics in the Hebrew Bible as expressed especially in the ark narrative (1 Sam 4–6; 2 Sam 6), several Deuteronomistic passages (2 Kgs 19:15–19 [Hezekiah's prayer]; Deut 12:2–3 [core D]; 4:25–28 [exilic addition to D]); and Ezekiel's depiction of YHWH's departure from the Jerusalem temple (Ezek 8–11).

In addition to the texts Levtow studies, some of which we have already touched on above, there are several well-known biblical and Mesopotamian texts concerning icon making that are so blatantly and intentionally involved in “iconic politics” that their inclusion, at least by honorable mention, is expected. These include the accounts of making the golden calf (Exod 32–33; Deut 9:10–29; 1 Kgs 12:25–30), Gideon's ephod (Judg 8:22–28), Michayehu's icon in Dan (Judg 17–18), and Nebuchadnezzar's idol (Dan 3) from the Bible, and the sun-disk inscription of Nabû-apla-iddina (King 1912, pp. 120–27, no. 36; Woods 2004; Hurowitz 2003b). The golden calf accounts are clearly related to a major societal upheaval, the division of the Monarchy, whereas the Nebuchadnezzar II vignette relates obviously to the position of Jews in the Diaspora vis-à-vis royal control of religion. The sun-disk inscription, for its part, is one of the few historical inscriptions that explicitly mentions performance of the mouth-washing ceremony. It also records this rite in the context of a story of divine wrath, abandonment, reconciliation, and restoration, thereby containing in a single text all the major iconic rites discussed by Levtow. Being a monument of grant (Slanski 2003, pp. 196–221), it is also aimed directly at social formation, describing how a king supports a particular group (the priests of Sippar) because of their role in restoring an icon.

The concept of “iconic politics” is useful for understanding several additional Mesopotamian and biblical texts. There are cases where a cult statue is considered illegitimate because it competes with another cult statue to which it is compared unfavorably. This delegitimization is probably politically motivated. In one case (Dan 3), the worship of a statue is imposed on subject peoples as a way of enhancing royal rule.

## COMPETING CULT STATUES IN MESOPOTAMIA

A crucial document illuminating the importance of acquiring divine approval for image making, but relating as well to the problem of competing statues is the so-called Sin of Sargon text, re-edited and expounded upon extensively by Hayim Tadmor, Benno Landsberger, and

Simo Parpola (1989). In this difficult but highly propagandistic composition, Sennacherib reveals to his son Esarhaddon the mistakes leading to Sargon's death, and how he himself repeated the same errors. By informing Esarhaddon of the reasons for Sargon's untimely end, Sennacherib wishes to prevent him from doing the same. It seems that Sargon's sin was that he had made a new statue of Aššur, but had not simultaneously produced a new image of Marduk, thereby angering that deity and bringing about his own demise. His excuse for being neglectful of Marduk is that he was misled by the diviners of Aššur. He had in fact inquired of them whether he should make a statue of both gods, and was told that he need make one only for Aššur. In order to prevent repeating the same mistake, he describes as follows the recommended procedure for inquiring of the gods (Tadmor, Landsberger, and Parpola 1989, p. 14, lines 13'–20'):

[kī ša anāku šal]am Anšar bēli rabī u šalam [Marduk bēli rabī]  
 an[a] epēšija parši u simti ša māt Aššur u [māt Bābili]  
 ana šūtešurija biri ina bārēja mārī [bārī ana šalšišu]  
 ana erbišu azūzu atta kīma iāšimma mār[ī bārī]  
 Šumma ana šalšišu šumma ana erbišu purusma [ana bārī ša ina biri]  
 izzizū tamitka šūdīma bīri [librūma tērēti limurū]  
 reḥti bārī ša aḥennā purrus[u xxxxxxxx]  
 tērēti liḥitūma ṭēm šamaš u Adad [lilmadū liqbūnikka]

[Just as I], when I was to make [the statu]e of Aššur, the great lord, and the statue of [Marduk, the great lord], and to set aright the rites and ordinances of Assyria and [Babylonia], in performing the extispicy divided the ha[ruspices into sev]eral groups, so you too, like me, divide the har[uspices] into several groups, announce your query to [the haruspices] who stand [at the site], and have them [perform] the extispicy [and look at the features]. Let (then) the remaining haruspices who were divided as a separate group study the features, [find out] the will of šamaš and Adad, [and tell it to you].

By having two independent groups of diviners, objectivity in conveying the divine decision will be guaranteed. Although the procedure followed in this document may be considered exceptional, it becomes clear that diviners were consulted before undertaking the serious responsibility of producing a cult statue.

Not only this, but we learn from this text that a cult statue made in inappropriate circumstances would be considered invalid. In this case a statue of Aššur is illegitimate because there is no accompanying statue of Marduk.

Another Mesopotamian idol text of highly propagandistic nature, engaged fully in iconic politics, is the Verse Account of Nabonidus discussed above.<sup>66</sup> Although part of the composition deals specifically with Nabonidus's production of a malformed statue of Sîn, the composition as a whole reflects the rivalry between Esagila in Babylon and Eḫulḫul in Ḫarran (both temples mentioned in the inscription) implying competition between Sîn and Marduk, both gods vying for supremacy in the Mesopotamian pantheon. It may be assumed that the particular faults found in the newly made statue of Sîn are of no real concern to the author,

<sup>66</sup> For a recent discussion of the authorship of the composition, see Fried 2004, pp. 20–24. It is irrelevant for the bias of the composition whether it was written by

Babylonian priests from the time of Nabonidus, or, as Fried contends, by Babylonian priests under Cyrus.

but are meant to besmirch the statue, the cult it represents, and its lunatic, royal patron simply because they are not Marduk and Esagila. I have suggested elsewhere (Cohen and Hurowitz 1999) that Jeremiah 10:3 הַבָּלְהוּא הַקֹּדֶשׁ הַזֶּה כִּי-הוּא הַבָּלְהוּא הַקֹּדֶשׁ הַזֶּה הַזֶּה הַבָּלְהוּא הַקֹּדֶשׁ הַזֶּה הַבָּלְהוּא הַקֹּדֶשׁ הַזֶּה the “cult statues’ of the peoples are a wind” applies to Gentile idols in general a term הַבָּלְהוּא synonymous with *zaqīqu* used by the Verse Account to describe Nabonidus’s statue of Sîn. In this case Jeremiah may actually be involved in the same war of iconic politics represented by the Verse Account.

In the Verse Account itself, Nabonidus’s statue, called a *zaqīqu*, may actually have been destroyed by Cyrus, for according to column vi line 20’ (Schaudig 2001, p. 572): [xx *epše*]tīšu *ubbat zaqīqi* “[he ... his creat]ion, he destroyed the ‘nothing.’” This would be a rare Mesopotamian account of actually destroying a particular statue as the ultimate measure in iconic politics.

This action is taken after Cyrus has returned all the displaced statues to Babylon and placed them in their original sanctuaries. Restoring the statues to their homes also seems to involve reviving them (Schaudig 2001, p. 572, P1 Strophengedicht vi 12’–15’):

[*ilī māt Akkad*]ê *zikir u sinniš ana kiššišunu uttir*  
 [*ilī ša parak*]kišunu *izibū uttir ana atmanūšun*  
 [*libbašun up*]tašših *kabattašunu uṭṭib*  
 [xxx *t*]abikti *ubtallit*

The images of the gods of Babylon, male and female, he returned to their cellas,  
 the gods who had abandoned their chapels he returned to their mansions.  
 [Their wrath he ap]peased, their mind he put at rest,  
 [... pi]led up he brought back to life ([xxx *ta*]bikti *ubtallit*)

A final example of Mesopotamian iconic politics involving cult statues is a passage in the Esagila Chronicle discussed by Schaudig in his contribution to this volume. The passage refers to Marduk’s supremacy over the gods and the treatment of gods who rebelled against him. Marduk has the right and power to destroy enemy gods, and it may be assumed that the enemy god is in fact the god of an enemy of Babylon. In this text we read (Schaudig’s edition and translation, this volume):

36 *epšu pišu ikkammū ilānū nakrūtu labšū aršūti uktapparū kima mēsi*

At his (Marduk’s) command, the hostile gods are bound, and dressed in soiled garments, they are cut to pieces like (mere) *mēsu*-trees.

37a *ilu ša ana ili āli šāšu ugallalu*

The god who sins against the god of this city,

37b *kakkabšu ina šamē ul izzaz ana aširtišu liltammū rābišū*

his star will no longer stand in the skies, and demons shall beleaguer his shrine.

This passage clearly refers to the treatment of the rebellious gods’ cult statues in their respective temples. This text is important for our own discussion in that it shows how the statue of a rebellious god is considered unfit. This god sins against the god of this city, that is, against Babylon. It is accordingly captured, defiled, and destroyed and its now empty temple is occupied by demons.

## BIBLICAL IDOLS AS CONTRASTED TO LEGITIMATE CULT

In three of the four stories of making idols of YHWH, the idol and the temple in which it is housed are contrasted with some legitimate cult of YHWH. The Michayehu story ends with a concluding note (Judg 18:31) that the Danites used the statue made by Michayehu “all the days the House of God was in Shiloh,” Shiloh being considered the precedent of Jerusalem as the central sanctuary in various traditions. Jeroboam makes his golden calves in Bethel and Dan as a conscientious opposition to the temple in Jerusalem. Most interesting is the story of the golden calf. This story stands in the middle of the Priestly account of building the Tabernacle, between the divine instructions delivered to Moses to make the Tabernacle and the detailed account of how these instructions were meticulously carried out. Moreover, the description of making the golden calf has literary parallels with the Tabernacle account.

The Tabernacle account is written in the language and style typical of the Priestly source in the Pentateuch. The golden calf account, on the other hand, is nearly free of Priestly characteristics. However, some have already recognized that at the joint between the story of renewing the covenant and the account of carrying out the command to build the Tabernacle (Exod 34:29–35) there are Priestly elements. In addition, the expression לַחֹת הָעֵדוּת “tablets of the testimony” in Exodus 32:15 and 31:18 is a Priestly expression.

If so, it is clear that the Priestly editor did not pass over chapters 32–34 in complete silence. The multiple Priestly elements in the passage concluding the calf story raises the question of whether in the passage opening the story such signs can also be found. In my opinion, a careful reading of the description of making the calf (32:1–6) and comparing this passage with the two parts of the Tabernacle account will uncover striking similarities in both structure and diction.

The description of making the calf (32:1–6) resembles in thematic structure that of making the Tabernacle. It opens with the people’s command to Aaron to make them a God who will go before them (32:1). This demand ironically parallels God’s command to Moses to make a Tabernacle in which God will dwell among them (Exod 25–31). Afterwards, the selected builder makes preparations for the task assigned him. Aaron gathers gold from the people (32:2–4), while Moses gathers the people’s contribution (Exod 35:4–36:7). The desired objects are then fabricated (Exod 32:4//Exod 37–39) and inaugurated amid great ceremony (Exod 32:1//Lev 8–9; Num 7).

But the similarity between the stories is not confined to the structural parallel, a natural and expected structure which occurs in many biblical and ancient Near Eastern stories about building projects (cf. Hurowitz 1992). For in addition to similar structures there is striking similarity in language, although the language involved is not specifically “Priestly.”

The people’s command to Aaron and its carrying out contain the words עָשָׂה (“make,” imperative) and וַיַּעֲשֶׂהוּ (“he made it”; Exod 32:1, 4), reminding us of וַיַּעֲשֶׂהוּ, וַיַּעֲשֶׂהוּ, and עָשָׂה (“make,” imperative) which appear frequently in the Tabernacle command chapters and וַיַּעֲשֶׂהוּ וַיַּעֲשֶׂהוּ (“he/they made”) occurring in the Tabernacle fulfillment chapters.

In collecting the gold for making the calf Aaron commands אָלֵי וְהָבִיאוּ ... וְהָבִיאוּ אֵלַי “break off the gold earrings ... and bring to me” (Exod 32:2), and the people’s response is וַיָּבִיאוּ אֵלֶי אֶל־אֶהֱרֹן “they brought to Aaron” (v. 3). In the parallel component in the Tabernacle account Moses commands וְכָל־לֵבִיב לְבֹ, וְכָל־לֵבִיב לְבֹ, וְכָל־לֵבִיב לְבֹ “every one of a volunteering heart will bring it” (Exod 35:5) to which the congregation responds וְכָל־רוּחַ אֱשֶׁר נָדְבָה אֹתוֹ, הָבִיאוּ “everyone whose spirit caused him to give voluntarily will bring it” (Exod 35:21; and see also Exod 35:22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 59; 36:3, 3, 5, 6).



The contributions to making the calf are brought by כל העם “all the people” (Exod 32:3). Similarly, the contributors to the Tabernacle are כל נדיב לבו “everyone generous of heart” (Exod 35:5, 22), וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר נָדְבָה רוּחוֹ אִתּוֹ “everyone who excelled in ability and everyone whose heart moved him” (21), כָּל-אִישׁ “every person” (22, 23), כָּל מְרִים “everyone who made gifts” (24), וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר נִמְצָא אִתּוֹ “everyone who had in his possession” (24), and so on.

Aaron “takes” the gold from the people (וַיִּקַּח; Exod 32:4), while Bezalel and Oholiab take the gold from before Moses, (וַיִּקְחוּ; Exod 36:3).

Both stories mention gold earrings, זָהָב נְזָמִי (Exod 32:32, 35:22) among the materials for the object being fabricated.

After fabricating the calf Aaron sees it (וַיִּרְא; Exod 32:5), while Moses at the end of constructing the Tabernacle sees it, וַיִּרְא מֹשֶׁה אֶת-כָּל-הַמְּלָאכָה “and Moses saw all the work” (Exod 39:43).

The calf was inaugurated at a joyous and audible ceremony (Exod 32:6) and see also 17–18 and especially בָּרָעָה “in its shouting,” and so was the Tabernacle, וַיִּרְנוּ “they shouted joyously” (Lev 9:24). Note that the roots רוֹעַ “shout” and רָנַן “sing out” are a fixed word pair and common collocation found in Isaiah 16:10; 44:23; Zephaniah 3:14; Psalms 47:2; 81:2; 95:1.

The people declare the calf to be the God who took them up from Egypt (Exod 32:4), while the Tabernacle is meant to be a sign that God took them out of Egypt (Exod 29:46).

Finally, we should notice the words near the beginning of the calf story, וַיִּקְהַל הָעָם “All the people gathered to Aaron” (Exod 32:1). These words may be intended to echo the beginning of the account of making the Tabernacle, וַיִּקְהַל מֹשֶׁה, אֶת-כָּל-עֵדֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל “Moses gathered together all the congregation of the Sons of Israel” (Exod 35:1). But even if not directed specifically at these words, they are a sign of a Priestly origin. The expression וַיִּקְהַל אֶל “they gathered to” occurs in the book of Numbers in Priestly passages (Num 16:3; 20:2; וַיִּקְהַל עַל-מֹשֶׁה וְעַל-אַהֲרֹן; and in Ezekiel 38:7 (in a different connotation), and is considered in these contexts a Priestly sign.

One can claim that the common language identified above consists of common words and expression which are not indicative of any particular author or school. Apart from וַיִּקְהַל עַל “the gathered unto,” there is no expression which can be called “Priestly.” This claim is correct in itself. But we should give our attention to the fact that some of the words common to both stories appear in the Tabernacle pericope as *Leitwörter* (so עֲשֵׂה, הָבִיא, and כָּל). Moreover, the other words listed here appear in the Tabernacle pericope in places crucial to the progress of the narrative. וַיִּקְחוּ appears at the end of the description of bringing the contribution (Exod 36:3); וַיִּרְא is at the end of the description of the construction (Exod 39:43); and וַיִּרְנוּ occurs at the climax of the inauguration of the Tabernacle (Lev 9:24).

We have no intention of turning the non-Priestly golden calf story into a Priestly pericope. But the comparison makes clear that the author or editor who gave the calf story its present form inserted certain words which were prominent lead words in the Tabernacle narrative. By using a similar thematic structure and lacing it with similar language, this author/redactor has turned the fabrication of the golden calf into a miniature reflection or travesty of the Tabernacle account.

The similarities between the Tabernacle and the calf stories, and the significance of these similarities, becomes clearer if we compare the calf story with Gideon’s making of an ephod (Judg 8:24–27). Both stories relate the fabrication of a symbol of divine presence. In both stories the object involved is made by a national leader, and in both cases the object made

becomes a source of sin to Israel. Both objects are made of gold collected from the people, and in both cases it is contributed in the form of gold earrings. In both stories the people contribute enthusiastically (Judg 8:25: נָתַן וְנָתַן וַיֹּאמְרוּ, “they said we will surely give”), and in both stories the gold is gathered into a cloth garment (שִׁמְלָה,<sup>67</sup> חֲרָט). Yet despite these many points of similarity, the ephod story displays none of the structural or linguistic characteristics shared by the calf and the Tabernacle accounts.

By juxtaposing the Tabernacle and the calf stories and by phrasing the calf story in imitation of the Tabernacle pericope the author forms a contrast between the two events and the calf debacle becomes a mirror of the Tabernacle project. The calf cult is an illegitimate travesty of the Tabernacle cult; and since the cult of calves in Bethel and Dan made by Jeroboam are the background for the calf cult ascribed to Aaron, all are illegitimate travesties of the cult in the Jerusalem temple.

The first to relate to the juxtaposition of the Tabernacle and calf stories and explain the later as a travesty of the former was the author of Psalm 106:19–20, who writes:

יַעֲשׂוּ-עֵגֶל בְּחֹרֵב; וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ, לְמַסְכָּה.  
וַיִּמְרֹוּ אֶת-קְבוּדָם (קְבוּדִי); בְּתַבְנִית שׁוֹר, אֲכַל עֵשֶׂב.

They made a calf at Horeb and bowed down to a molten image.

They exchanged their (My) glory for the image of a bull that feeds on grass.

The words קְבוּדָם “their glory” (a *tiqqun soferim*, scribal correction, for קְבוּדִי “My glory/Majesty”) and תַּבְנִית “image” are two of the most crucial words in the Tabernacle account. Instead of making a Tabernacle for God’s כְּבוֹד “radiant Majesty” according to a תַּבְנִית revealed to Moses by God, the Children of Israel made a תַּבְנִית of a bull, that is, the golden calf as a substitute for God’s כְּבוֹד.

In both the calf story itself and its echo in Psalm 106 the calf is a travesty of the legitimate cult and the legitimate manifestation of God.

Another possible polemic contrasting the calf with a legitimate object, but working in an opposite manner, is the use of the root פָּסַל “fashion” to describe the fashioning of the second set of tablets in Exodus 34:1, 4 and Deuteronomy 10:1, 3. This root is used by Habakkuk 2:18 to describe fashioning an idol, כִּי פָסַלוּ יִצְרוּ, “What has the carved image availed, that he who has fashioned it has carved it.” Otherwise it is used only in 1 Kings 5:32 to describe dressing the stone and wood for the temple. By using this root, which is that of the common word for idol, פָּסַל, there may be an allusion to the calf, with the implication being that the only proper פָּסַל, hewn object, and physical sign of God’s presence is the two tablets bearing the Decalogue.<sup>68</sup> The stone tablets are, technically speaking, a פָּסַל because they are fashioned by an act of פָּסִילָה; and they might actually be taken to present themselves

<sup>67</sup> See Isaiah 3:23 in a list of female finery, and discussion above.

<sup>68</sup> This possibility can be strengthened, if not fully proven, by examination of the verbs used in the Bible for preparing stones or stone tablets which could have been used for making the second tablets. The best root would have been גָּרַר found in 1 Kings 7:9: כָּל-אֲלָהָה קָל-מְגִרָה מְגִרָה גְזִית, מְגִרָה גְזִית, מְגִרָה גְזִית, “All these were of choice stones, hewn according to measure, smooth

on all sides.” The root גָּרַר could also have been used, although it is attested otherwise only in the nominal form גָּרַר (Exod 20:25; 1 Kgs 5:31; 6:36; 7:9, 11, 12; Ezek 40:42; Amos 5:11; Isa 9:9; Lam 3:9; 1 Chr 22:2). גָּרַר could also have been used. Cf. 1 Chronicles 9:15, Aramaic אָגַל (Ezek 6:4) and Akkadian *galālu*. Other possible roots would be חָצַב or נָסַע (as in אָבָן מְסָע), although these roots refer to extraction of the stone from the quarry.

as a פֶּסֶל of YHWH because they are engraved with the sentence אֲנִכִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ...לֹא-יְהִי לְךָ “I, YHWH your God ... you shall have no other gods before me,” with God speaking out of the rock. But any other פֶּסֶל is illegitimate.

An example of iconic politics in the later books of the Bible is the tale in Daniel 3 of the יָצֵלֶם erected by Nebuchadnezzar II, its inauguration and the king’s command that it be universally worshipped. This story involves a non-Yahwistic object of uncertain form, the worship of which is imposed upon the populace by the temporal ruler. The word יָצֵלֶם, cognate of Akkadian *šalmu*, can designate a statue in the round or a two-dimensional depiction. It is unclear what this object represents. It may be a royal statue rather than a divine representation. Note that in this tale the word יָצֵלֶם indicates the object eleven times (vv. 1, 2, 3, 3, 5, 7, 10, 12, 14, 15, 18), while the twelfth, final time (v. 19) it refers to the face of the king. This may indicate that it is in fact a statue of Nebuchadnezzar himself.<sup>69</sup> Only in verse 28, in which the king interprets the act of Daniel’s three companions as not worshipping any god but their own, does it become clear that the יָצֵלֶם was indeed a divine statue. Even so it is not stated which god it is. It has been suggested that it was in fact an image of Nebuchadnezzar as a divine king (van Henten 2002). But the object is sixty cubits tall and six cubits wide, measurements suiting a rectangular pillar, obelisk, or phallic monolith engraved with an image rather than an anthropomorphic statue, although in *The History* 1.183 Herodotus speaks of a giant gold statue in the temple of Bēl and even today one can find giant statues of the Bud-dah. J. A. Montgomery (1927, pp. 193–94) adduces numerous examples of immense statues mentioned in Hellenistic sources. In any case the gargantuan size is somewhat grotesque. Also, the lengthy lists of foreign notables invited to worship the object (vv. 2, 3), the exotic musical instruments sounded at its dedication (vv. 5, 7, 10, 15), and the repeated names of the three protagonists given foreign names (vv. 12, 13, 14, 16, 19, 20, 22, 23, 26, 26 28, 29, 29) have their closest parallels in the book of Esther (Esth 1:6, 14; 9:7–9) and have been considered humoristic embellishments (Avalos 1991). These elements, which Montgomery characterizes rightly as “satirically exaggerated,” lend a farcical mood to the entire account. If so, the tale is engaged in iconic politics by way of political-religious satire.<sup>70</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

This survey has examined various aspects of idolatry as expressed in Mesopotamian and biblical writings, concentrating on texts relating to the process of manufacturing the idols. It has tried to identify and compare flaws found in idols by both Mesopotamian idol worshippers and biblical critics of idols.

We first studied two biblical anti-idol diatribes which can be seen as engaging in dialogue/debate with Mesopotamian idol texts. In this section, the texts related to what can be considered problems in the idol itself or the production process, namely the lifelessness of the idol on the one hand and the wisdom of the idol maker on the other. The difference between the biblical and the Mesopotamian sources is that while the Mesopotamian texts regarded the problems as solvable with the help of ritual or divine intervention, the biblical authors considered them insurmountable, fatal flaws rendering the idol worthless.

<sup>69</sup> For worship of royal statues, see Winter 1992.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. the comments of religion and politics in this chapter in van Henten 2002.

Afterward we investigated various stages of idol making — the decision to make an idol, determining the idol's form, and the materials from which the idol is made — concentrating this time on Mesopotamian sources as well as three or four biblical accounts of the production of a YHWH-idol. While divine guidance is necessary or assumed in the Mesopotamian texts for deciding to make an idol and determining its form, these two aspects are largely ignored in the biblical stories. This silence on the part of the biblical stories contrasts not only with the Mesopotamian texts but with the Priestly Tabernacle account, in which God meticulously lays out for Moses the form of the Tabernacle. It is possible to conclude from this that lack of divine authorization and design is considered a flaw in the idol, and silence on the matter voices disapproval. As for the materials used in the statue, the Mesopotamian texts demonstrate concern that only proper materials be used, for only such materials are suitable for being infused with or embodying divinity; while the biblical texts portray the materials as morally tainted, having been acquired by theft or violence. In both corpuses the end product, the resultant image, cannot be divorced from what went into it. So a statue must be made from a tree and other materials that already display divine features, while an idol made of stolen goods remains an embodiment of deceit.

In the last section we investigated texts engaged in “iconic politics,” in which an idol serves some role in a political or social struggle. In most cases the idol being produced is portrayed as illegitimate because it conflicts or competes with another idol which is legitimate, and some social-political conflict lies behind the claims for legitimacy and illegitimacy. The Mesopotamian texts are products of rivalries between Babylon and other cities, Assur and H̄arran in particular, while the biblical stories reflect rivalries between Jerusalem and other cult centers such as Dan and Bethel. The vignette of Nebuchadnezzar's idol takes aim at attempts by the imperial power to impose its royal cult on subject peoples.

We have seen, therefore, that the biblical prohibitions on idolatry involve more than just a blanket prohibition based on the non-Yahwist identity of cult statues or supposed impotence of idols. These statues are also produced without permission or design, are morally tainted, and represent illegitimate cults. We have also seen that in Mesopotamian religion where use of icons for divine representation and worship is seemingly taken for granted, not every idol is acceptable. Idols must be authorized and made in certain ways with certain materials and serve certain preferred cults. For the most part, fault finding in idols in the two literatures have developed independently and for opposite reasons. The Mesopotamian authors who basically favor idolatry find fault in particular idols which would be substandard either in design or material. The Bible, which opposes idols to begin with, enhances its arguments beyond the idols being fetishes of wood and stone, and adds claims of moral turpitude. There is convergence of views however, in the area of what we have called (following Levtow) “iconic politics.” In this area idols of the political opponent are illegitimate because of whom they represent, but to besmirch them, the other types of arguments are applied as well.

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# TEXT DESTRUCTION AND ICONOCLASM IN THE HEBREW BIBLE AND THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

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Medieval and modern religions of ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean origin inherited Israelite iconoclastic traditions inscribed in a holy book. Ancient Israel was not, however, the only Near Eastern culture to develop iconoclastic practices and literary traditions. Nor was it the first to sanctify texts. The production and destruction of divine images has been closely associated with the production and destruction of sacred texts since the beginnings of writing and inscribed iconography in third-millennium B.C.E. Mesopotamia. These correlations between iconism and textuality are reflected in the way the destruction of texts accompanied, and eventually outpaced, the destruction of images as a preferred mode of attack against representations of gods, kings, and social groups in the ancient world.

In the following pages, I examine an array of literary and archaeological evidence for deliberate, ideologically motivated acts of text destruction in Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Levantine sources from the third, second, and first millennia B.C.E. My discussion of this evidence highlights iconic aspects of textuality in the ancient Near East, where text production was a ritualized activity that embodied divine and human subjects in textual form, and where the violation of text-artifacts was identified with the violation of identities and relationships inscribed upon them. I provide an overview and selective catalog of this widespread phenomenon in order to identify its patterns, distribution, cultural significance, and relationship to corollary acts of iconoclasm. My more specific interest is to identify examples of ancient Near Eastern text-destruction traditions in the Hebrew Bible, and to re-describe these traditions as evidence for the iconic, physical nature of textuality in ancient Israel.

## ICONOCLASM AND ICONIC TEXTS

Literary traditions in the Hebrew Bible reflect a spectrum of iconic, aniconic, and iconoclastic tendencies that developed in ancient Israel and Judah during the first half of the

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first millennium B.C.E. Toward the end of this period, particularly in the kingdom of Judah during the late seventh century B.C.E., these tendencies converged with an increasingly vibrant Hebrew scribal culture. Following the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E., the traditional Israelite authority roles of king, priest, and prophet yielded to scribal representations of these roles textually embodied in the developing canon of Hebrew scriptures. During the Persian and Hellenistic periods, the ritual regime of the Jerusalem temple likewise yielded sacred space to this textual focus of the cult of YHWH. In spheres of religious belief and practice, older Israelite iconic, aniconic, and iconoclastic traditions merged with a new veneration of canonical texts. By the turn of the era the ground was laid for the text-centered religions of early Judaism and Christianity, with literary representations of deity and sacrificial cult at their core.

The Hebrew biblical canon blends East Semitic iconoclastic traditions with West Semitic aniconic tendencies to express a selective set of iconic concerns that, when taken as a whole, convey neither a sweeping rejection of all representational art nor a unique insistence on abstract monotheism.<sup>1</sup> Early biblical interpreters began, however, to isolate a stream of biblical tradition that rejects engraved figurative objects of worship and targets them for destruction. These early exegetes identified a thoroughgoing argument in Hebrew biblical law, narrative, and poetry against the worship of cultic statuary and viewed this argument, together with its associated insistence on monolatrous Yahwism, as a pivotal religious innovation of ancient Israel. This interpretive tradition envisioned the birth of abstract monotheism through a sharp distinction between iconism and textuality. The Israelite compositions that were thought to express this vision became foundation texts for two millennia of “idolatry” discourse and, at the same time, were elevated to the status of Holy Writ. This decoupling of divinity — from the power of images to the power of words — informs the identification of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as “religions of the book” to this day.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This article focuses on text destruction and on iconic aspects of textuality, and it represents one stage of a larger study on this phenomenon. On iconism and iconoclasm in the Hebrew Bible, see Victor A. Hurowitz's contribution to this volume. On ancient Near Eastern political contexts of Israelite iconoclasm, see Cohen and Hurowitz 1999, pp. 287–90, where Sol Cohen and Victor A. Hurowitz anticipate my “iconic politics” argument in Levtow 2008. The Hebrew Bible's iconoclastic traditions do not ban the production and ritual employment of all figurative imagery. Cherubim, for example, flank the ark of the covenant and the throne of YHWH, on which see Mettinger 1982; Haran 1959; 1978, pp. 246–59. On Jerusalem temple iconography, see 1 Kings 6:23–36; 7:15–50; Exodus 25; Isaiah 6:1–3; Ezekiel 1, 10. On East Semitic iconoclasm, see the papers collected in the present volume and Levtow 2008, pp. 86–129; on Northwest Semitic aniconism, see Mettinger 1995. Iconoclastic and aniconic literary traditions in the Hebrew Bible include: (a) the so-called second commandment and its repetitions and reformulations in other legal texts: Exodus 20:4/Deuteronomy 5:8; Exodus 20:23, 34:17; Leviticus 19:4, 26:1; Deuteronomy 4:15–25; 27:15; (b) narrated injunctions to destroy Canaanite sites of iconic cult: Exodus 34:13; Deuteronomy 12:3; (c) historiographic narratives of iconoclastic acts: Exodus 32 (golden calf episode);

Judges 6:28 (Gideon's destruction of a Baal sanctuary); 1 Samuel 5:1–4 (the mutilation of Dagon's image in the ark narrative); (d) historiographic accounts of the deeds of “reforming kings”: 2 Kings 10:26–27 (Jehu); 2 Kings 11:17–18 (Jehoiada); 2 Kings 18:4, 2 Chronicles 31:1 (Hezekiah); 2 Kings 23:4–14, 2 Chronicles 34:3–7 (Josiah); and (e) anti-iconic polemics preserved in prophetic poetry and psalms: Jeremiah 10:1–16; Isaiah 40:19–20; 41:6–7; 42:17; 44:9–20; 45:16–17, 20; 46:1–7; 48:5; Habakkuk 2:18–19; Psalms 115:3–8; 135:15–18. On different classifications of this biblical literature, see Hurowitz, this volume; Levtow 2008, p. 131 n. 1; Dick 1999, p. 2; Garfinkel 2009, p. 100. Garfinkel (2009) broadens his classification to include acts of violence against cult sites in general (e.g., Judg 2:2). For iconoclastic exegetical traditions in ancient Jewish literature, see Wisdom of Solomon 13–15; Bel and the Dragon; Epistle of Jeremiah; Philo, *On the Decalogue* 52–75.

<sup>2</sup> Textual representations of divine presence, speech, and writing figured prominently in Judean traditions composed during the so-called Second Temple period, at a time when the sacrificial cult of the Jerusalem temple complex coexisted with its literary representation in emerging Hebrew scriptures. Modern developmental models for Jewish and Christian beginnings often pivot between the destruction of the first (586 B.C.E.)



The possibility of an “iconic text,” however, emerged long before the full scripturalization of Israelite religion. By “iconic text,” I refer not to a text’s semantic dimensions but to its symbolic and performative dimensions that, in Near Eastern antiquity, mingled with its semantic content and imbued its material form with social agency.<sup>3</sup> Despite its anti-iconic tendencies, for example, anthropomorphic representations of YHWH are neutrally and richly depicted throughout the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Gen 1:27; 18; Exod 24:9–11; Num 12:8; 1 Kgs 22:19; Isa 6; Ezek 1:26–28). These literary representations of deity and cult prefigured the textualization of Israelite ritual — and the ritualization of Israelite texts — that developed in later biblical religions.<sup>4</sup> Iconic aspects of scripture are likewise rooted in early Israelite traditions of divine speech and writing, in the scribal preservation of prophetic oracles, and in “ark” traditions that placed tablets inscribed with divine legislation in the cella of the Jerusalem sanctuary.<sup>5</sup>

The deep divide between images and texts is an anachronism projected onto the biblical world by post-biblical “idolatry” traditions.<sup>6</sup> Inseparable links between iconism and textuality pre-date biblical traditions and are explicitly inscribed upon Sumerian statuary from the third millennium B.C.E. and upon second- and first-millennium B.C.E. Assyrian, Babylonian, and Levantine monumental iconography as well.<sup>7</sup> Throughout these periods, and across these cultures, the creation and destruction of images and texts may be described as overlapping, correlating modes of cultural production and opposition.<sup>8</sup> These observations may appear self-evident to Assyriologists, Egyptologists, and classicists familiar with the vast corpus of ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean inscribed iconography that so clearly attests to these continuities across scribal and iconographic practices. Only recently, however, has this perspective begun to challenge the anti-iconic, textual bias that informs modern biblical studies.<sup>9</sup> Due in part to the influence of these post-biblical “idolatry” traditions, the

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and second (70 C.E.) Jerusalem temples and focus on the flowering of scripturalization during the Persian and Greco-Roman periods. The underlying teleology of these modern models for Jewish and Christian origins replaces temple rituals and acts of sacrifice with biblical texts and acts of interpretation as the focus of Yahwistic worship. These models often portray an evolutionary progression from local, polytheistic, Near Eastern iconic temple cults to universal, monotheistic, textualized biblical religion, culminating first in Israelite exilic prophecy and then in post-70 C.E. Christianity. It must be noted, however, that the further this explanatory model seeks to separate texts from images, the closer it brings them together. As Karel van der Toorn (1997) has noted, when scripture-centered synagogues replaced sacrifice-centered temples as sites of communal worship, the cella housing divine statuary in ancient Near Eastern temples became the template for the “ark” housing Torah scrolls in Greco-Roman synagogues. As biblical texts came to occupy the social location of divine images, and as Jewish and Christian social groups dispersed throughout the Greco-Roman world, canon formation and acts of text destruction came to resemble cult-image construction and acts of iconoclasm as modes of social formation and sites of symbolic violence in the ancient Near East and Mediterranean. On scribal culture in ancient Israel, see van der Toorn 2007; Schniedewind 2004; Carr 2005; Rollston 2010.

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<sup>3</sup> On semantic, iconic, and performative dimensions of texts, see Watts 2006, 2010. On objects as agents in the ancient Near East, see Winter 2010d. See also Tremplin 2006, pp. 75–86. On the Bible as an iconic text, see van der Toorn 1997; Parmenter 2009.

<sup>4</sup> On the textualization of ritual and the ritualization of texts, see Bell 1988. See also Schaper 2009.

<sup>5</sup> On divine writing in the Hebrew Bible, see Schaper 2004; Schniedewind 2004, pp. 130–34; on written revelation and the textualization of prophetic oracles, see van der Toorn 2007, pp. 205–32.

<sup>6</sup> On “idolatry” discourse, see Levto 2008, pp. 5–9.

<sup>7</sup> See Bahrani 2003, p. 169.

<sup>8</sup> As argued by Bahrani (2003, 2008). In this respect, iconoclastic traditions in Israelite literature do not reject but in fact reflect the degree to which images and texts could represent and embody divine and human social presence and power. This was so even as ritual and political developments shifted Israelite practices toward textual modes of representation and opposition. On iconic opposition and its representation in Israelite literature, see Levto 2008.

<sup>9</sup> The “Fribourg school” has played a critical role in integrating iconographic evidence into modern biblical studies. See, for example, Keel and Uehlinger 1998; Mark S. Smith, oral communication.

phenomenon of text destruction has received less scholarly attention than has the closely related phenomenon of iconoclasm.

The field of biblical studies formed around the study of a “closed” canon of “long-duration” literary traditions redacted and transmitted by authoritative tradents over centuries.<sup>10</sup> As a result, modern biblical studies often promotes a distinction between, on the one hand, redacted canonical literary texts transmitted by Israelite, Jewish, and Christian scribes, and on the other hand, inscriptions and related archaeological artifacts from the ancient world. Any discussion of text-destruction practices in Near Eastern antiquity must, however, conflate this distinction by broadening its definition of “texts.” “Textual” evidence for text-destruction practices must include redacted, canonical literature and ancient inscriptions in the same category. In other words, it must account for the textuality of physical inscriptions and the physicality of Israelite literary traditions.<sup>11</sup> This broader definition of ancient texts and textual evidence — which regards texts not only as abstracted semantic representations but also as physical objects — can better access and engage a text’s contexts and meaning in antiquity, when no distinction was made between abstract semantic content and its physical representation.

A discussion of text destruction in the ancient Near East must also employ a broader definition of “destruction” to include any intentional alteration or violation of a text-artifact’s semantic content, social location, or social agency.<sup>12</sup> Evidence for practices of this sort is abundantly attested in two categories of ancient Near Eastern sources: (1) textual evidence, both literary and epigraphic, including historical narratives and curse formulae that depict deliberate, ideologically motivated violations of inscribed objects, and (2) archaeological evidence for the physical violation of texts, including text-artifacts that were deliberately and selectively damaged in ancient times.<sup>13</sup> Together this evidence attests to the variety of ways in which law codes, written oracles, loan documents, monumental stelae, inscribed statuary, treaty tablets, and other inscribed objects were burned, smashed, buried, immersed, consumed, hidden, erased, and rewritten.

Texts were of course frequently damaged in antiquity in many ways for a variety of reasons, and it was certainly not the case that these were all purposeful and ideologically motivated acts by literate agents.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, archaeological evidence for ancient text-destruction practices is by definition lacking and fragmentary, and arguments based upon this evidence are often speculative. The context and precise condition of excavated inscriptions can, however, suggest some intentional damage in antiquity. This evidence is further supported by the frequency with which text-destruction practices are depicted in the sources themselves.<sup>15</sup> The large corpus of ancient Near Eastern narrative texts and curse formulae that refer to strategic acts of text destruction reveals how common and widespread this

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<sup>10</sup> On long-duration scribal traditions, see Carr 2005.

<sup>11</sup> Note, for example, the formulations of the so-called Priestly Blessing (Num 6:24–26) inscribed on two silver plaques found at Ketef Hinnom (Saul M. Olyan, written correspondence). On these apotropaic amulets, see Barkay et al. 2004; Smoak 2011.

<sup>12</sup> On the social agency of objects, see Winter 2010d; Tremlin 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Garfinkel 2009; Woods, this volume; Westenholz, this volume.

<sup>14</sup> As noted by Woods (this volume). On ancient literacy, see Havelock 1982; Goody 2000; Carr 2005; Rollston 2010.

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<sup>15</sup> It is difficult to argue conclusively that inscriptions found broken or burned in situ were intentionally singled out for selective symbolic damage in antiquity. Exceptions include cases of text usurpation (erasure and re-inscription), text burial, visible damage by ancient artistry, and inscriptions found strategically displaced. As noted above, frequent references to text destruction in ancient sources themselves, together with evidence of corollary acts of iconoclasm, support arguments for strategic violations of inscribed artifacts in antiquity. See Garfinkel 2009.

practice was. These literary sources alone confirm that texts were purposefully and selectively destroyed in patterned ways for political and ideological reasons throughout the ancient Near East for millennia.

The Hebrew Bible, itself at times targeted for destruction, contains several narrative depictions of text destruction. It also contains other, more subtle reflections of ancient Near Eastern text-violation traditions. In order to locate these biblical texts within their wider contexts, I first provide an overview of the historical scope and variety of ancient Near Eastern text-destruction practices. The following catalog of evidence spans the Sumerian period to the Babylonian conquest of Judah and is not meant to be exhaustive. Its purpose is to identify literary traditions and patterns of practice associated with the violation and destruction of texts, and to thereby establish the framework for my subsequent re-evaluation of comparable themes in biblical literature.

## TEXT DESTRUCTION IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST: THE EVIDENCE

### TEXTUAL EVIDENCE: NARRATIVE INSCRIPTIONS AND CURSE FORMULAE

#### *Mesopotamian Evidence*

The earliest evidence for the purposeful destruction of texts appears in a corpus of narrative inscriptions and curse formulae from the first and second dynasties of Lagaš and from Sargonic Akkad. Chapters in this volume by Christopher Woods and Joan Goodnick Westenholz discuss this material and provide examples. Woods locates the oldest extant narrative accounts of text destruction in several Early Dynastic inscriptions that describe the installation and violation of inscribed boundary stelae during the Lagaš-Umma border conflict of the twenty-fifth and twenty-fourth centuries B.C.E.<sup>16</sup> As Woods notes, these narratives represent the removal and destruction of boundary monuments as a violation of the “divinely sanctioned” social contracts inscribed upon and embodied by them. In addition to these historiographic depictions, Early Dynastic sources (including narrative and dedicatory inscriptions) also contain curse formulae that proscribe acts of text erasure, rewriting, removal, and destruction. These curses are commonly inscribed upon royal iconography

<sup>16</sup> As Woods (this volume) writes, the deliberate, politically motivated destruction of texts therefore dates back to “the beginnings of recorded history and the first connected texts of substantial length” and “figures prominently in the earliest well-documented historical episode.” The fragmentary Stela of the Vultures, described by Irene Winter as “the first monument that could be identified as public, historical, and narrative,” contains an account of this episode (the Lagaš-Umma border conflict) from the perspective of Lagaš (Winter 2010a, pp. 5, 7 n. 15, 20; text: Cooper 1983, pp. 45–48; 1986, pp. 33–39 [La 3.1]; RIME 1, 9.3.1; see also Bahrani 2008, pp. 147–54). This stela recounts how E-anatum of Lagaš (ca. 2450 B.C.E.) installed an inscribed stone monument (na-rú-a), marking the boundary between Lagaš and Umma, and represents the removal, burning, and smashing of such inscribed boundary stelae as a ritual and political violation of the first order. In addition to this text,

Woods also identifies a related inscription associated with En-metana, the nephew of E-anatum, which recounts how the ruler of Umma subsequently burned and ripped out (or smashed) the inscribed boundary stela installed and restored by E-anatum. For texts, see RIME 1, 9.5.1 i 16–21, ii 4–10, 36–42; for discussion, see Woods, this volume; Winter 2010a, p. 25. The Sumerian na-rú-a (Akkadian *narû*) “(stone) monument, stela” is typically preceded by the determinative NA<sub>4</sub>, signifying stone. Winter writes that the term “occurs in Akkadian (*narû*) as a Sumerian loan word designating a stone monument inscribed with laws and regulations, a stone monument used as a boundary marker in situ, or a memorial monument set up by a king” (Winter 2010a, p. 25). See Slanski 2003, pp. 20–27; Westenholz, this volume; Winter 2010a, pp. 24–29; Woods, this volume; CAD N s.v. *narû*. I thank XiaoLi Ouyang and Seth Richardson for their assistance with Mesopotamian materials.

from Sargonic Akkad and Gudean Lagaš and, as Westenholz and Woods note, their Sargonic formulations increasingly focus on the power of inscribed names.<sup>17</sup> These mid- to late third-millennium B.C.E. royal statuary inscriptions specifically prohibit the erasure and usurpation (that is, replacement) of a ruler's name with that of another.<sup>18</sup>

By the end of the third millennium B.C.E., curses prohibiting acts of text erasure, usurpation, and destruction were inscribed upon southern Mesopotamian public monuments with such frequency and formulaic consistency that they may be described as the foundations of a long-lived, ritually patterned, and politically motivated ancient Near Eastern text-destruction tradition. This evidence attests to how divine and human identities and relationships were not simply represented but fully embodied by the names, images, and social relationships inscribed upon the stone monuments of Sumer and Akkad.<sup>19</sup> This complete, monistic identity between the material form of an iconographic or textual representation and its semantic content remained the operative principle and power behind the production, deployment, and destruction of publicly displayed iconography and inscriptions throughout the ancient Near East for millennia to come.<sup>20</sup>

Echoes of late third-millennium Sumerian text-destruction curse formulae resound across a broad spectrum of second- and first-millennium Mesopotamian and Levantine sources including Old Babylonian monumental law codes and entitlement *narûs* (*kudurrus*), Neo-Assyrian and Aramaic treaty inscriptions, and Phoenician and Aramaic memorial and dedicatory inscriptions. The Stela of Hammurabi, for example, is inscribed with the following curse:

Should that man not heed my words, which I have inscribed upon my stela, and should he slight my curses and not fear the curses of the gods, and thus overturn the judgments that I rendered, change my words, alter my engraved designs, erase my

<sup>17</sup> See also Bahrani 2003, pp. 165–71. Historiographic narratives of text destruction from the third millennium are, as Woods notes, relatively rare; more common from this period are curse formulae inscribed upon monumental iconography and ritual objects that proscribe acts of text destruction. Woods identifies the earliest attestation of such a curse inscribed upon a mortar bowl dedicated by E-anatum of Lagaš to Nanše. This inscription warns against removing, smashing, or burning the mortar (precisely the violations said to have been enacted against the boundary stelae of Lagaš by the ruler of Umma) and specifically proscribes the effacement of its inscription. See Woods, this volume; Cooper 1984, p. 90, pls. 4–5; Cooper 1986, p. 45 (La 3.11); RIME 1, 9.3.11. Woods also notes the only extant account of the Lagaš-Umma conflict from the perspective of Umma, which recounts how Ĝiša-kidu, a ruler of Umma, did not violate the boundary monuments he installed and restored and which concludes with a curse against any ruler who does (Woods, this volume; Cooper 1983, pp. 16–17, 52–53 [ex. 10]; RIME 1, 12.6.2, lines 77–93). Woods observes that this Ĝiša-kidu inscription “mirrors” the Stela of the Vultures, which recounts E-anatum’s installation of inscribed boundary stones from the opposing perspective of Lagaš. The inscription on the Stela of the Vultures is broadly structured around a series of six oaths in which the ruler of Umma swears not to violate the territory of Lagaš or “rip out its stelae.” Irene Winter has argued

that the fragmentary Stela of the Vultures concluded with a curse against the destruction of the named stela itself (Winter 2010a, p. 14 n. 38, p. 25 n. 60; supported by Cooper 1986, p. 39 n. 26). On Mesopotamian curse formulae, see Hurowitz 1997, p. 82 n. 99; on Sargonic and Gudean statuary, see also the contributions to this volume by Suter, Woods, and Westenholz; see also Winter 2010a, 2010b, 2010f.

<sup>18</sup> Sargonic and Gudean royal statuary and monumental inscriptions frequently contain concluding curses of this sort. Woods describes these curses as “the inscriptional counterpart to the ubiquitous curses prohibiting the destruction or removal of the ruler’s image,” and Woods and Westenholz discuss a number of examples (this volume); see additional examples in RIME 3/1 and RIME 2, e.g., Gudea (ca. 2100 B.C.E.) in RIME 3/1, 1.1.7StB viii 8–9 and cf. lines 21–23, 39–43, RIME 3/1, 1.7StC iv 8 and Sargon (2334–2279 B.C.E.) in RIME 2, 1.1.6, lines 30–40, RIME 2, 1.1.8, lines 8–19. See also Bahrani 2003, pp. 165–84.

<sup>19</sup> Bahrani 2003, pp. 170–71; 2008, pp. 59–74; Woods, this volume.

<sup>20</sup> Correlations between the destruction of images, texts, and inscribed names are discussed in Natalie N. May’s *Introduction* to this volume. On the relationship in the ancient Near East between sign and signified (symbol and referent), or, most broadly, between object and subject, see Bahrani 2003, 2008; Levtow 2008; Woods, this volume.

inscribed name and inscribe his own name (in its place) — or should he, because of fear of these curses, have someone else do so — (concerning) that man, whether he is a king, a lord, a governor, or any person at all ... may (the god Enlil) declare ... the obliteration of his city, the dispersion of his people, the supplanting of his dynasty, and the blotting out of his name and his memory from the land.<sup>21</sup>

Hammurabi's stela is protected through curses that anticipate violations not only of the laws inscribed upon it but also of the diorite monument's iconography and text itself. The longevity of the monument is thereby identified with the longevity not only of Hammurabi's laws but also of Hammurabi himself, embodied iconographically through his engraved image and textually through his inscribed name. Woods and Bahrani have noted the reciprocal logic of such curse formulae: threats against the ruler's image and name are met with reciprocal threats against the name, memory, and lineage of the potential violator.<sup>22</sup> These curses thereby equate a ruler's inscribed name with his male heir, as two potentially eternal yet vulnerable means through which a ruler might embody his identity beyond his own lifetime. Similar curses appear as one of the most characteristic components of Kassite and post-Kassite Babylonian entitlement *narû* inscriptions from the mid-second to mid-first millennium B.C.E.<sup>23</sup> A *narû* of Merodach-baladan (1171–1159 B.C.E.), for example, concludes with a series of imprecations against anyone who would

raise up the aforementioned (stone) *narû* and cast it into water or fire, who would bury (it) in the ground, (who) would set (it) in a place where it cannot be seen/read, (who) would destroy (it) with a rock, (who) would efface my inscribed name ...<sup>24</sup>

Continuities in Mesopotamian text-destruction traditions across the second and first millennia are evident in the similar catalogs of anticipated violations that precede the concluding curses of Neo-Assyrian treaties. The succession treaties of Esarhaddon, for example, curse those who break the treaty stipulations together with those who erase the

<sup>21</sup> *šum-ma a-wi-lum šu-ú a-na a-wa-ti-ia ša i-na NA.RÚ-ia aš-tú-ru la i-qúl-ma er-re-ti-ia i-me-eš-ma er-re-et l-lí la i-dur-ma di-in a-di-nu up-ta-as-sí-is a-wa-ti-ia uš-te-pe-el ú-šú-ra-ti-ia ut-ta-ak-ki-ir šu-mi ša-aṭ-ra-am ip-ši-iṭ-ma šum-šu iš-ta-tár aš-šum er-re-tim' ší-na-ti ša-ni-a-am-ma uš-ta-ḫi-iz a-wi-lum šu-ú lu LUGAL lu EN lu ENSÍ ú lu a-wi-lutum ša šu-ma-am na-bi-a-at ... ḫa-la-aq URU-šu na-ás-pu-úḫ ni-ši-šu šar-ru-sú šu-pé-lam šum-šu ú zi-kir-šu i-na ma-tim la šu-ub-ša-a-am i-na KA-šu kab-tim li-iq-bi* (text: Borger 1994, vol. 1, p. 47 [xlx 18–44, 73–80], cf. Slanski 2003, pp. 262–63). For additional examples of, and terminology for, Mesopotamian text-destruction practices, see CAD s.vv. *ḫalāqu* (3e); *ḫepû* (1b, 2a–f); *pasāsu* (2b); *pašātu* (1, 3a, 4); *qalû* (2a, e); *šarāpu* (1f2'). On the destruction of loan documents, see Woods, this volume; Garfinkle 2004, pp. 20–21.

<sup>22</sup> Bahrani 2003, pp. 165–71; Woods, this volume.

<sup>23</sup> On Babylonian entitlement *narûs* (*kudurrus*), see Slanski 2003; Hurowitz 1997; King 1912. With respect to their form and social role these objects defy any clear distinction between text and ritualized icon. On their curse formulae specifically, see Hinke 1907, pp. 48–50; Hurowitz 1997, p. 82 n. 99; and the following note. Cf. the stone tablet inscribed with a land title charter calling upon

“Nabû, the scribe” to shorten the life of anyone who destroys or abducts the object (King 1912, p. 116 [BBST 34, lines 9–20]).

<sup>24</sup> *NA<sup>4</sup>NA.RÚ.A šu-a-tu<sub>4</sub> ú-ša-aš-šu-ma a-na A ú IZI i-nam-du-ú i-na qa-q-q-ri i-te-em-me-rù a-na a-[ša]r la a-ma-ri i-šak-ka-nu i-na ab-ni ub-ba-tu' šu-mi ša-aṭ-ra i-pa-ás-ši-tú* (Scheil 1905, p. 36, iv 21–v 4; text and translation after Slanski 2003, p. 26). An eighth-century B.C.E. entitlement *narû* of Nabû-šuma-iškun (ca. 760–748 B.C.E.) similarly curses “one who would destroy this (stone) *narû* with a rock, would burn it with fire, would bury (it) in a foundation, would cast (it) into water, would enter (it) into a dark place where it cannot be seen/read, would conceal (it), or would efface the inscribed name and then inscribe his own name ...” (*šá* <sup>NA<sup>4</sup><NA></sup>.RÚ.A *an-na-a* NA<sub>4</sub> GUL *ina* IZI *i-qam-mu-ú ina* SUḪUŠ *i-tam-mir ana* A<sup>MEŠ</sup> ŠUB-u *ana È ekle-tú aš-ru* NU.IGI *ú-šer-re-bi lu-ú pu-uz-ru ú-šah-ḫa-zu ú MU šá-aṭ-ru i-pa-ši-tu-ma* MU-šú *i-šaṭ-ṭa-ru* [cf. Slanski 2003, pp. 24–25]). See also Hurowitz 1997, p. 88 for a similar catalog of proscribed acts (including burying, burning, sinking, and hiding) inscribed upon the Hinke Kudurru (see Hinke 1907, pp. 152–53 [iv 28–v 4]). For additional examples, see Slanski 2003, pp. 24–63.

treaty tablets.<sup>25</sup> The concluding curse section of Esarhaddon's succession treaties begins with the injunction, "If you should remove it, consign it to the fire, throw it into the water, [bury] it in the earth or destroy it by any cunning device, annihilate or deface it ...."<sup>26</sup> When anticipating these violations, moreover, Esarhaddon's succession treaties invoke the god Aššur as well as the statues of the Assyrian king Esarhaddon and his scion Assurbanipal and command, "You shall guard [this treaty tablet which] is sealed with the seal of Aššur, king of the gods, and set up in your presence, like your own god."<sup>27</sup> The iconic, ritualized, and textualized embodiment of social relations and royal and divine presence is explicit in this injunction to guard Esarhaddon's treaty tablet as if it were a living king and god.

### Levantine Evidence

Moving from East to West Semitic cultural and linguistic spheres, similar curses against inscription effacement, removal, and usurpation are invoked in early first-millennium B.C.E. Phoenician and Aramaic alphabetic treaty, mortuary, dedicatory, and memorial inscriptions.<sup>28</sup> Curses of this sort conclude, for example, Phoenician inscriptions from Byblos, Zincirli, and Karatepe-Aslantaş and Aramaic inscriptions from Tell Faḥariye, Tell Āfis, and Sefire.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *šá ma-mit tup-pi an-ni-i e-nu-u e-gu-u i-ḥa-tu-u i-pa-sa-su* "whoever changes, disregards, transgresses, or erases the oaths of this tablet" (text and translation, SAA 2, 6 397-98; cf. Wiseman 1958, pp. 57-58).

<sup>26</sup> *šum-ma at-tu-nu tu-na-kar-[a]-ni a-na dGIŠ.BAR ta-pa-qid-a-[ni] ina A<sup>MEŠ</sup> ta-na-da-a-ni ina ep-ri ta-[kar-ra-ra-a-ni] ina mim-ma ši-pir ni-kil-ti ta-bat-a-ni tu-ḥal-la-q[a-a-ni] ta-sa-pan-a-ni* (SAA 2, 6 410-13; cf. Wiseman 1958, pp. 59-60).

<sup>27</sup> *ina (ŠĀ-bi) NA<sup>4</sup>KIŠIB šá d<sup>a</sup>š-šur MAN DINGIR<sup>MEŠ</sup>-ni ka-ṛni<sup>k</sup>-u-ni ina IGI-ku-nu šá-kín-u-ni ki-i DINGIR-ku-n[u] la ta-na-šar-a-ni* (SAA 2, 6 407-09).

<sup>28</sup> See Veenhof 1963. On the classification of first-millennium B.C.E. Levantine memorial and dedicatory inscriptions, see Drinkard 1989.

<sup>29</sup> The ʿAḥirom sarcophagus inscription (a Byblian Phoenician mortuary text from the late eleventh or early tenth century B.C.E.) and the Tell Faḥariye Had-yiṭ'i statuary inscription (a bilingual Aramaic and Akkadian dedicatory text from the late ninth century B.C.E.) are discussed above and cited in the following two notes. The additional examples noted above read as follows:

Kilamuwa orthostat (Phoenician memorial inscription, Zincirli, late ninth century B.C.E.): *wmy bbny ʔš yšb thtn wyzq bspr z mškbm ʔl ykbd lbʿrrm wbʿrrm ʔl ykbd lmskbm wmy yšht hspr z yšht rʔš bʿl šmd ʔš lqbr wyšht rʔš bʿl ḥmn ʔš lbmh wrkbʿl bʿl bt* "Now whoever of my sons who reigns in my place and damages this inscription, may the *Muškabīm* not honor the *Baʿrīrīm* and may the *Baʿrīrīm* not honor the *Muškabīm*. And whoever smashes this inscription, may Baʿal-Šemed of Gabbār smash (his) head and may Baʿal-Hammān of Bamah and Rā kib-El, lord of the dynasty, smash his head" (KAI no. 24, lines 13-16); Tropper 1993, pp. 44-46; Gibson 1982, pp. 34-35; Younger, Jr., in Hallo 2003, p. 148 (*Muškabīm*, *Baʿrīrīm*:

uncertain but likely social groups of Samʿal; Dion 1997, pp. 253-54, 285-86). See also Garfinkel 2009, p. 102.

Zakur stela (Aramaic memorial/dedicatory inscription, Tell Āfis, early eighth century B.C.E.): *w]smt qdm ʔlwr nšbʔ znh wk[tbt b]h ʔyt ʔšr ydy [...]* [...m]n yhgʿ ʔyt ʔš[r] [ydy] zkr mlk ḥm[t w]lʿš mn nšbʔ znh wm[n y]hgʿ nšbʔ znh mn [qd]m ʔlwr wyhnsnh m[n ʔš]rh ʔw mn yšlh ... "I have set up this stela before [Ilwer] and w[ritten on] it my accomplishments [...] [...W]hoever removes the ac[complishments of] Zakur king of Ham[ath and Lu]ʿash from this stela and who[ever re]moves this stela from [befo]re Ilwer and takes it away fr[om its pla]ce, or who-ever sends ..." (KAI no. 202 B 13-21). The inscription concludes with the fragmentary [...] *šm zkr wšm* "[...] the name of Zakur and the name ..." (KAI no. 202 C 2). Translation after Millard, in Hallo 2003, p. 155; Gibson 1975, p. 11. "Removes": Gibson (1975, p. 16) reads *yhgʿ* as a peʿal of the root *hgʿ*, which he translates as "efface, remove"; he argues against a possible *hapʿel* from the roots *gwʿ* ("cause to perish") or *ngʿ* ("cause to strike, fall"). "My accomplishments": *ʔšr ydy* "work of my hands": on which see Gibson 1975, p. 16; Koehler and Baumgartner 2000, vol. 5, s.v. ʔtr.

Sefire stelae (Aramaic treaty inscriptions, mid-eighth century B.C.E.): *wmn lysr mly sprʔ zy bnsbʔ znh wyʔmr ʔhld mn mlwh ʔw ʔpk tbtʔ wšm [l]lhyt bywm zy yʔb[d] kn yhpkw ʔlhn ʔš[ʔ h]ʔ wbyth wkl zy [b]h wyswm thtyth [lʔ]lyth wʔl yrt šr[š]h ʔšm* "Whoever will not observe the words of the inscription on this stela or say, 'I shall efface some of its words,' or 'I shall upset the good treaty-relations and turn them [to] evil,' on any day on which he will [d]o so, may the gods overturn th[at m]an and his house and all that [is] in it. May they make its lower part its upper part! May his sci[on] inherit no name" (KAI no. 222 C 17-25); [mn y]ʔmr lhld spryʔ [ʔ]ln mn bty ʔlhyʔ ʔn zy y[r]ššmn w[y]ʔmr ʔhʔbd spr[y]ʔ wlm[g]n ʔhʔbd ʔyt ktb wʔt mlkh wyžl hʔ

The earliest extant connected Phoenician text, for example, which is inscribed upon the sarcophagus of ʿAḥirom (ca. 1000 B.C.E.), threatens its potential violators with dynastic cessation and a reciprocal act of sepulchral destruction and effacement:

If a king among kings or a governor among governors or a commander should come up against Byblos and uncover this sarcophagus, may the scepter of his rule be up-

*mn ld spr[y]ʿ mn bty ʿlhyʿ wyʿmr lzy lydʿ ʿnh ʿgr ʿgr w[y]ʿmr ld [sp]ryʿ ʿln mn bty [ʿ]lhyʿ wblḥṣ ʿlb y[mt hʿ] wbrh* “[whoever will] give orders to efface [th]ese inscriptions from the houses of the gods where they are [in]scribed, or [will] say, ‘I shall destroy the inscrip[tio]ns’ and with impunity I shall destroy KTK and its king,’ or should that (man) be frightened from effacing the inscript[ion]s from the houses of the gods and say to someone who does not understand, ‘I shall surely reward (you),’ and (then) order (him), ‘Efface these inscriptions from the houses of the gods,’ may [he] and his son die in oppressive torment” (KAI no. 223 C 1–11). Translation modified from Fitzmyer 1995, pp. 55, 125. *ld spr[y]ʿ mn bty ʿlhyʿ* “Efface these inscriptions from the houses of the gods”: Fitzmyer (1995, pp. 119, 131–32) notes two possibilities: this can refer either to “effacing” the treaty stelae (reading *bty ʿlhyʿ* as the treaty stelae themselves [“bethels”]), or to “removing” the treaty stelae from their possible temple setting (reading *bty ʿlhyʿ* as the sanctuaries in which the treaties are installed (following Greenfield 1968, p. 241). If the latter is the case, this would be another example of inscribed stelae installed in ritualized settings, on which see below. Note also how the Sefire inscriptions contain the formulaic warning found on earlier Mesopotamian monuments (including, e.g., Babylonian entitlement *narūs* and the stela of Hammurabi) that prohibit anyone from evading its curses by enlisting an unwitting third party to violate the text on their behalf.

ʿAzatiwada inscriptions (Bilingual Phoenician/Hieroglyphic Luwian memorial/dedicatory inscriptions, Karatepe-Aslantaş, late-eighth or early-seventh century B.C.E.): *wʿm mlk bmlkn vrzn brznm ʿm ʿdm ʿš ʿdm šm ʿš ymh šm ʿztwd bšʿr z wšt šm ʿm ʿp yhmd ʿyt hqrt z wysʿ hšʿr z ʿš pʿl ʿztwd wypʿl lšʿr zr wšt šm ʿly ... wmh bʿl šmm wʿl qn ʿrş wšmš ʿlm wkl dr bn ʿlm ʿyt hmmlkt hʿ wʿyt hmlk hʿ wʿyt ʿdm hʿ ʿš ʿdm šm ʿps šm ʿztwd ykn lʿlm km šm šmš wyrh* “If a king among kings, or a prince among princes, or a man who is a man of renown effaces the name of ʿAzatiwada from this gate and places (his own) name, or if indeed he covets this city and tears down this gate which ʿAzatiwada made and makes another gate and places his (own) name on it ... then may Baʿal-Šamēm and El-Creator-of-Earth and Sun-Eternal and the whole generation of the sons of the gods efface that kingdom and that king and that man of renown! Only the name ʿAzatiwada may be established forever like the name of the Sun and the Moon!” (Phu/A III 12–19 and Phu/A IV 1–3). For text, translation, and commentary, see Röllig 1999, pp. 52–55, 60–61; Çambel 1999, pp. 15–18, pls. 6–7, 12–13, 16–19; Hawkins 2000, pp. 56–58, 66–67; KAI no. 26, C iv 13–C v 7; see also Avishur 2000, pp. 177–80, 196–99 (A iii 12–A iv 3); Gibson 1982, p.

55; Hallo 2003, vol. 2, p. 150. This curse is inscribed on the North (lower) Gate of Karatepe-Aslantaş and concludes the longest extant Phoenician inscription. The curse extends across the third orthostat (Phu/A III 12–18), base (Phu/A III 19), and portal lion (Phu/A IV 1–3) on the left side of the North Gate’s entrance passage.

Variants of this ʿAzatiwada Phoenician inscription appear also on a portal lion and orthostat that had flanked the South (upper) Gate of Karatepe-Aslantaş (Pho/B) and on a colossal statue of the storm god (*baʿal-krnrš*) and its associated bull socle (PhSt/C) found within the city precincts about six meters from this South Gate. See Çambel 1999, pp. 18–23; Röllig 1999, pp. 54–72. Pho/B is very fragmentary and its concluding section is not preserved. PhSt/C, however, concludes with an interesting variant of the Phu/A text-destruction curse: *wʿ[m] mlk bmlkn vrzn br[z]nm ʿm ʿdm ʿš ʿdm šm ʿš yʿm[r] lmht šm ʿztwd bsml ʿ[ʿ]m z wšt šm ...* “If a king among kings, or a prince among princes, or a man who is a man of renown gives orders to efface the name of ʿAzatiwada from the statue of this god, and places (his own) name ...” (PhSt/C IV 13–16). This statuary variant of Phu/A includes a warning against third-party violations of the sort commonly attested in East and West Semitic text-destruction curse traditions including, for example, the stela of Hammurabi (xlx 36–38), the Sefire inscriptions (KAI no. 223 C 1), and the Merodach-baladan *narû* (Schiel 1905, p. 36, iv 21–29) discussed above. Concerning PhSt/C IV 13–16, Röllig writes: “This difference seems to be intentional: at the gate of the town someone might himself change the name, but on the statue of the god the curse is so strong that the evildoer will prefer not to act himself but to send someone else” (Röllig 1999, p. 67). A similar argument is suggested by Page (1968, pp. 139–40) with respect to the erasure of the Tell al-Rimah stela and its associated lion orthostats (see n. 57 below). (Röllig also attempts to reconstruct a catalog of prohibited text-violations for the fragmentary PhSt/C IV 20–21 based on Mesopotamian *narû* parallels [1999, pp. 67–68].) See also Veenhof 1963; Winter 1979, 131 n. 85.

The Hieroglyphic Luwian equivalents for these text-destruction curses that conclude the ʿAzatiwada Phoenician inscriptions extend across the bases, orthostat (header), and portal sphinx on the right side of the North (lower) Gate of Karatepe-Aslantaş (Hu. 10–12, ŠLIX 331–ŠLXXV 412), and also across a fragmentary portal lion near the right exit chamber of the South (upper) Gate (Ho. 7); see Çambel 1999, pp. 24–34, pls. 79–88, 102–05; Hawkins and Morpurgo Davies 1975, pp. 124–30; and Hawkins 2000, pp. 56–58, 66–67.

rooted, may the throne of his kingdom be overturned, and may peace depart from Byblos! And as for him, may his inscription be effaced ...<sup>30</sup>

This Phoenician mortuary inscription, which stands at the very beginnings of the Northwest Semitic alphabetic tradition, is structured around the reciprocal logic of earlier Mesopotamian text effacement curse formulae. Third- and second-millennium text-destruction curse traditions likewise echo in the earliest extant extended Aramaic text, specifically with respect to its focus on the practice of name erasure. The ninth-century B.C.E. bilingual Aramaic/Assyrian statuary inscription from Tell Faḥariye includes the following warning from Had-yitʿi regarding his name inscribed upon his “image” and “likeness”:

Whoever effaces my name from it and places his own name, may Hadad (the) hero be his accuser.<sup>31</sup>

This Tell Faḥariye statuary inscription contains a curse in both alphabetic Aramaic and cuneiform Assyrian against the erasure and usurpation of Had-yitʿi’s inscribed name (fig. 11.1). It thereby exhibits a convergence of East and West Semitic traditions of iconographic and textual representation, embodiment, and effacement of royal and divine presence.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE: VIOLATED TEXT-ARTIFACTS

The violation of inscribed monuments is well attested in the archaeological record of ancient Mesopotamia, North Africa, and the Levant. This archaeological data converges with the textual depictions of such practices preserved in ancient Near Eastern narrative accounts and curse formulae discussed above.

### *Babylonian and Elamite Evidence*

A number of Mesopotamian monuments excavated from Susa were abducted and violated by their Elamite captors in the late second millennium B.C.E., including, for example, the Victory Stela of Narām-Sîn.<sup>32</sup> The Elamite king Šutruk-Naḥḥunte returned with this Sargonic-era monument from his raids in southern Mesopotamia in 1158 B.C.E., transformed it into a memorial of his own victories, and dedicated it to his own patron deity. Narām-Sîn’s original memorial inscription is damaged, and the stela has been re-inscribed with the following Elamite text (fig. 11.2):

<sup>30</sup> wʿl mlk bmlkm wskn bscnm wtmʾ mḥnt ʿly gbl wygl ʾrn zn thtsp ḥtr mšpṯh thtpk ksʾ mlkh wnḥt tbrḥ ʿl gbl whʾ ymḥ sprh (KAI no. 1, line 2). Garfinkel 2009, p. 102. See Gibson 1982, p. 14; Hallo 2003, p. 181; Avishur 2000, pp. 103–110. “Sepulchral destruction”: Karen B. Stern, oral communication.

<sup>31</sup> wzy yld šmy mnḥ wyšym šmh hdd gbr lhwy qblh (KAI no. 309, lines 11–12 and cf. 16–17). The Akkadian equivalent reads *ma-nu šá šu-mi ú-na-ka-ru u MU-šú i-šak-ka-nu* “Whoever changes my name and places his own name” (Akkadian lines 16–17, cf. 26–27); text and translation, Kaufman 1982, pp. 159–63; Abou-Assaf, Bordreuil, and Millard 1982, p. 63 (with Mesopotamian parallels noted

on pp. 75–79); see also Hallo 2003, p. 154. On “image” (*šlm*) and “likeness” (*dmwtʾ*) (Aramaic lines 1, 12, 15, 16; cf. Akkadian lines 19, 23, 26), see Garr 2000. Preceding this warning is a request to refurbish the statue when it becomes worn and to re-inscribe Had-yitʿi’s name anew upon it (Aramaic lines 10–11; Akkadian lines 15–16).

<sup>32</sup> On Elamite abduction and usurpation of Mesopotamian monuments at Susa, see Bahrani 2003, pp. 156–64; idem 2008; Van De Mieroop 2007, p. 184; Amiet 1966; 1976, p. 27; Amiet 1992; Knippschild 2005; Winter 2010b, pp. 95–96, n. 48; 2010c, p. 109 n. 1; Levto 2008, p. 105; Ben-Tor 2006, p. 9; Westenholz, this volume. I thank Annie Caubet for her assistance with Susa materials.



I am Šutruk-Nahhunte, son of Ḫalluduš-Inšušinak, beloved servant of (the god) Inšušinak, king of Anšan and Susa, who has enlarged my kingdom, who cares for Elam, the lord of Elam. When the god Inšušinak gave me the order, I defeated Sippar. I took the stela of Narām-Sîn and brought it to Elam. I set it before Inšušinak my god as an offering.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to the Narām-Sîn stela, approximately half of the roughly 160 extant Babylonian entitlement *narûs* were also abducted during Elamite raids in Babylonia and excavated from Susa.<sup>34</sup> These *narûs* were inscribed with prohibitions against their removal, as discussed above, and they appear to have suffered precisely this fate. In addition, several entitlement *narû* inscriptions exhibit evidence of intentional effacement in antiquity.<sup>35</sup> Slanski notes for example that the front surface of a *narû* of Meli-Šipak (1186–1172 B.C.E.) was entirely rubbed down, and no new text was inscribed upon it (fig. 11.3).<sup>36</sup> Concerning this effaced Meli-Šipak *narû* Slanski writes, “Given the presence of secondary Elamite dedicatory inscriptions on the statues and monuments removed from Babylonia to Susa, it seems likely that the Babylonian text was effaced in preparation for an Elamite votive text that was never inscribed.”<sup>37</sup> This hypothesis is further supported by the damaged iconography on the Meli-Šipak *narû*’s effaced surface, where the face of the king as well as the hands of the king, priest, and god appear to have been chiseled away. It is therefore possible that the effacement of this *narû*’s text was accompanied by a corollary act of selective iconoclasm which removed the king’s presence by literally effacing him. If this were the case, chipping away the raised and linked hands of the king, priest, and god would have likewise severed the relationship between divinity and royalty that this monument had formerly embodied and configured.<sup>38</sup>

The same Meli-Šipak *narû* is inscribed with characteristic concluding prohibitions against violations of its entitlement stipulations and of the diorite monument itself. Its extant text threatens anyone who “removes this (stone) *narû* from its station and places (it) where (it) cannot be seen, casts (it) into water or fire, covers it over with dust, or erases what is inscribed thereon, (or) alters the aforementioned acts and changes that information ....”<sup>39</sup> This

<sup>33</sup> ú<sup>1</sup>šū-ut-ru-uk-<sup>d</sup>Naḫ-ḫu-un-te ša-ak Ḫal-lu-du-uš-<sup>d</sup>In-šu-ši-na-ak-gi-ik li-ba-ak ha-ni-ik <sup>d</sup>In-šu-ši-na-ak-gi-ik su-un-ki-ik <sup>AS</sup>An-za-an <sup>AS</sup>Šu-šu-un-ka<sub>4</sub> li-ku-me ri-ša-ak-ka<sub>4</sub> ka<sub>4</sub>-at-ru Ḫa-tàm-ti-ik ḫal-me-ni-ik Ḫa-tàm-ti-ik | <sup>d</sup>In-šu-ši-na-ak na-pír-ú-ri ur-taḫ-ḫa-an-ra <sup>AS</sup>Si-ip-pír ḫal-pu-ḫ | zu-ḫ-mu-tú<sup>1</sup> Na-ra-am-<sup>d</sup>XXX-ir-ra ḫu-ma-ḫ | a-ak ku-tú-ḫi a-ak ḫal-Ḫa-tàm-ti te-en-gi-ḫ | <sup>d</sup>In-šu-ši-na-ak na-pír-ú-ri i-si-ma ta-ḫ (text: König 1965, p. 76 [no. 22]; translation after König [ibid.] and Van De Mieroop 2007, p. 186. See also Amiet 1976, p. 27. On the damaged original inscription of Narām-Sîn, see RIME 2, 1.4.31 iii 3–5); Winter 2010b, p. 96 n. 50; 2010c, p. 109 n. 1; Bahrani 2003, pp. 156–62; Westenholz (this volume) finds no clear evidence that this damage to the Narām-Sîn stela was intentional.

<sup>34</sup> Slanski 2003, pp. 7–8.

<sup>35</sup> Slanski (2003, p. 62 n. 3) cites four examples, three of which I discuss above. The fourth, Slanski notes, is an undated fragment on display in the Louvre (Sb 3226) and depicted in Hinke 1907, figs. 17–18. Note also the curious example of a *narû* that was prepared to hold an inscription but that was left blank (Hinke 1907, fig 16; Musée du Louvre 1936, pp. 266–67).

<sup>36</sup> Scheil 1908, pp. 87–94, pls. 11–12 (inscription), 13 (relief and erasure). Slanski 2003, pp. 42–48, fig. 4; Seidl 1989, p. 26, no. 23. Image of obverse: Musée du Louvre 1936, p. 264; Scheil 1908, pl. 13:1.

<sup>37</sup> Slanski (2003, pp. 42–44) supports the observations of Seidl (1989, p. 26, no. 23) and notes that “the face with the relief still shows traces of cuneiform signs on the surfaces where the inscription has been deliberately erased. Portions of the inscription on the other side exhibit similar treatment.” Slanski suggests that a similar fate was intended for the Hammurabi stela excavated from Susa (ibid., pp. 44, 259–66). A portion of the text of the Hammurabi stela found at Susa is damaged, although the content of that damaged section does not suggest intentionality, at least not by a literate agent (Marcel Sigrist, oral communication).

<sup>38</sup> Petra Goedegebuure, oral communication. On iconoclasm and the removal of heads and hands, see Levtoff 2008.

<sup>39</sup> lu<sup>NA4</sup>NA.RÚ.A an-ni-a-am in man-za-zi-šu ú-na-ak-ka-ru-[ma] a-šar la a-ma-ri i-šak-ka-nu a-na me-e ù [1zi] i-nam-du-ú i-na e-pe-ri i-kat<sub>4</sub>-ta-mu lu mim-ma ša-aṭ-ra ša UGU i-pa-áš-ši-iṭ ep-še-e-ti ši-na-ti uš-pe-el-[lu]-ma ṭe-ma šu-a-tu<sub>4</sub>

prohibition against text displacement and effacement is therefore inscribed on an object that suffered violations of this sort. The Meli-Šipak *narû* in this respect represents a convergence of literary and archaeological evidence for the abduction and effacement of inscribed iconographic monuments in the late second millennium B.C.E.

At least two other entitlement *narûs* exhibit a similar convergence of evidence. One face of a *narû* of Marduk-nādin-aḥḥē (1100–1082 B.C.E.) has, for example, been carved away and rubbed down, and an earlier inscription on this surface appears to have been effaced and replaced (fig. 11.4).<sup>40</sup> The concluding curses inscribed upon this same monument (BBSt 7) are immediately preceded by a warning against anyone who would remove the *narû* from its original setting, “cast it into a river, or put it in a well, or destroy it with a stone, or burn it in the fire, or hide it in the earth, or hide it in a place where it cannot be seen ...”<sup>41</sup> Similarly, a fourteenth-century B.C.E. *narû* of Kurigalzu preserves traces of an earlier inscription that has been rubbed down, while on another surface of this same *narû* a later text is inscribed that prohibits anyone from breaking the monument, throwing it into water, or effacing the king’s inscribed name and replacing it with their own.<sup>42</sup> This Kurigalzu *narû*, therefore, is another example of a text-artifact that exhibits traces of an effaced older inscription that has been replaced with a new inscription warning against any subsequent acts of text effacement, usurpation, and destruction.

### *Egyptian Evidence*<sup>43</sup>

Traditions associated with the violation of inscribed names are also well attested in Egypt during the New Kingdom period, where the turbulent ideological and succession battles of the Eighteenth (1539–1293 B.C.E.) and Nineteenth (1293–1185 B.C.E.) Dynasties resulted in numerous instances of cartouche erasure and usurpation.<sup>44</sup> In the fifth year of his reign, for example, Akhenaton (1353–1336 B.C.E.) erased the prenomen and nomen from the cartouches

*in-nu-ú* (Scheil 1908, p. 91, iii 23–31; text and translation, Slanski 2003, p. 46). This *narû* was originally placed in the sanctuary of the goddess Nanaya, on which see Slanski 2003, pp. 44–48.

<sup>40</sup> King (1912, p. 37 n. 1) writes that face A of BBSt 7 was etched away “so that it affords a flat surface for the royal figure.” Slanski (2003, p. 62 n. 3), however, notes the deep ridge above the surface of face A and “traces of cuneiform signs on the ridge just below the three ‘socles’” (see King 1912, pls. 54, 63–64). The lower part of this surface contains an image of the king and has been re-inscribed with the monument’s name: ša<sup>NA4</sup>NA.RÚ.A *an-ni-i mu-ki-in ku-dúr-ri da-ra-ti MU-šu* “Of this stone *narû*, ‘Protector of Enduring Kudurrus’ is its name” (King 1912, p. 38 [title 1–3]; text and translation, Slanski 2003, p. 33). The invocation of this *narû*’s name appears again at the end of the BBSt 7 inscription (King 1912, p. 42 [ii 40]). On *narû* names and naming traditions in Gudean statutory inscriptions, see Slanski 2003, p. 168.

<sup>41</sup> NA<sup>4</sup>NA.RÚ.A *an-na-a u-ša-aš-šu-ma a-na íd i-nam-du-u a-na PÚ i-na-as-su-ku i-na NA<sub>4</sub> ub-ba-tu i-na IZI i-qa-al-lu-ú i-na KI i-tam-mi-ru u a-šar la a-ma-ri i-tam-mi-ru* (text and translation, King 1912, p. 41 [BBSt 7 ii 10–12]).

<sup>42</sup> BBSt 2. Rubbed down surface: King 1912, pp. 4–7, see pl. 107 and pls. 2–5, face A. Inscription with text-effacement prohibition: BBSt 2, B18, 21–22; King 1912, pp. 6–7, see pls. 2–4, face B. Slanski identifies BBSt 2, which dates to either Kurigalzu II (1332–1308) or Kurigalzu I (who reigned roughly half a century earlier), as “the earliest inscription identifiable as a royal grant” (Slanski 2003, p. 70).

<sup>43</sup> See also Betsy M. Bryan, this volume.

<sup>44</sup> Annie Caubet, Donald B. Redford (oral communication). Further examples of cartouche usurpation are evident from the Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth Dynasties and the turbulent transition between the Kushite pharaohs and Psammetichus. Examples of usurpation are also attested in the Luxor Temple (e.g., Amenhotep III usurped by Seti II [Porter and Moss 1972 II, p. 318 (104)]). Note also the effaced Amenhotep III inscription in the first antechamber of the Luxor Temple (Porter and Moss 1972 II, p. 320 [118]). This text was plastered over in the Roman period; its concluding section may have been effaced by Akhenaton. On scribal culture in ancient Egypt, see Gardiner 1938; on cursing, see Helck and Otto 1975–92, vol. 2, pp. 275–76, s.v. “Fluch.” I thank Donald B. Redford for these observations and references.

of his father Amenhotep III (1386-1349 B.C.E.) in Karnak and throughout Egypt and replaced them with his own; the same was then done to Akhenaton's cartouches by Horemheb (1319-1292 B.C.E.).<sup>45</sup> Similar examples of cartouche usurpation are evident among the descendants of Ramesses II (1279-1212 B.C.E.) toward the end of the Nineteenth Dynasty. As Frank Yurco notes, "late Dynasty XIX monuments are replete with usurpation," in which the cartouches of Merenptah (1212-1202 B.C.E.) were usurped by Amenmesse's (1202-1199 B.C.E.), which were in turn usurped by Seti II (1199-1193 B.C.E.) (fig. 11.5).<sup>46</sup> Merenptah usurped the monuments of his predecessors as well, including a stela from the funerary temple of Amenhotep III that he repurposed to record his own military exploits in Canaan.<sup>47</sup>

### Assyrian Evidence

Turning to the Assyrian archaeological record, the Tell al-Rimah stela of Adad-nīrārī III (ca. 810-783 B.C.E.) and the succession treaties of Esarhaddon (681-669 B.C.E.) represent two classic cases in which literary and archaeological evidence for deliberate, ideologically motivated acts of text destruction converge.<sup>48</sup> The content and condition of these strategically damaged text-artifacts richly exhibit the political and ritual aspects of text-destruction practices in first-millennium B.C.E. Assyrian contexts.

The Tell al-Rimah stela was discovered installed beside the podium inside the cella of a Late Assyrian sanctuary (figs. 11.6-7).<sup>49</sup> Its inscription features Nergal-ēriš, an important figure in the imperial administration of Adad-nīrārī III.<sup>50</sup> The inscription begins with an invocation to Adad (lines 1-2) and then recounts the campaigns of Adad-nīrārī III in the West (lines 3-12).<sup>51</sup> Its latter half identifies the new settlements of Assyrian subject peoples

<sup>45</sup> These acts of usurpation were related to the religious innovations of Amenhotep IV (Akhenaton) and to associated succession conflicts of the Eighteenth Dynasty.

<sup>46</sup> Yurco 1986, pp. 196-97; 1990, p. 25; Cardon 1979. Yurco (1990, pp. 36, 38 n. 21) describes "all the usurpation of cartouches and titularies" as "symptomatic of the struggle for the throne between different branches of the descendants of Ramesses II."

<sup>47</sup> The Merenptah stela, well known for recording the earliest attestation of the term "Israel," is inscribed upon the verso of this Amenhotep III stela. Merenptah destroyed Amenhotep III's funerary temple in order to build his own in western Thebes (Yurco 1986, pp. 196-97; 1990, p. 27). At Karnak, similarly, Horemheb disassembled Akhenaton's temple and reassembled it into his own. Merenptah usurped other monuments of Amenhotep III as well, and Ramesses II cut deeply into the cartouches of his predecessors; Yurco 1980; Annie Caubet and Donald B. Redford, oral communication.

<sup>48</sup> As noted by Woods, this volume.

<sup>49</sup> Page 1968, p. 139. For text and translation, see Page 1968, pp. 141-47; RIMA 3, A.0.104.7; for discussion and background, see Page 1968; Oates 1968; Tadmor 1973a, pp. 141-44; Millard and Tadmor 1973; Postgate, Oates, and Oates 1997, pp. 15-20, 41-42, fig. 15, pls. 14b, 15, 26; Oates and Oates 2001, p. 19. Page notes that this

placement is "unparalleled among the find spots of other royal stelae" and refers to the findspots of other Neo-Assyrian stelae including a stela of Esarhaddon at Zincirli (which stood in the city gate), a monolith of Assurnasirpal II (found in a corridor in the Northwest palace at Nimrud), and another stela of Assurnasirpal II (found at the entrance to the Ninurta temple at Nimrud); Page 1968, p. 139 and n. 1. The "Great Monolith" of Assurnasirpal II (883-859 B.C.E.) that stood at the entrance to Ninurta's temple at Nimrud is inscribed with prohibitions and curses against violations of its text and iconography; for text and discussion, see Bahrani 2003, pp. 179-80; RIMA 2, A.0.101.17. Note also the seventh-century B.C.E. Philistine royal dedicatory inscription from Tel Mique-Ekron, which, as I discuss below, was found intact in the destruction layer of a monumental temple complex and which seems to have been installed as a "focal point" of the west wall of the sanctuary cella (Gitin, Dothan, and Naveh 1997, p. 7). Note as well the recent discovery of an Assyrian treaty tablet in a sanctuary context at Tell Ta'yinat, on which see Levinson 2010, p. 340; Harrison 2012; Lauinger 2012; and note 98 below.

<sup>50</sup> On Nergal-ēriš, see Page 1968, pp. 150-51; RIMA 3, p. 210.

<sup>51</sup> The stela refers on line 8 to <sup>m</sup>iu-ʾa-su of Samaria, whom Page identifies as Jehoash, king of Israel, ca. 802-786 B.C.E. (2 Kgs 13:10); Page 1968, pp. 148-49.

established by Nergal-ēriš on behalf of his lord Adad-nīrārī III (lines 13–20) and then concludes with the following curse (line 21):

Whoever erases a single name from these names, may the great gods angrily look with disfavor upon him.<sup>52</sup>

The first half of the Tell al-Rimah inscription, which invokes the power of Adad and recounts the conquests of Adad-nīrārī III, remains in an “excellent state of preservation.”<sup>53</sup> The second half of the inscription, which lists the resettlement towns for imperial subjects established by Nergal-ēriš and concludes with the prohibition against name erasure, has been selectively chipped away (fig. 11.6).<sup>54</sup>

The motives behind the delicate effacement of the Tell al-Rimah stela’s inscription are obscure. The significance of the monument’s content, condition, and archaeological context is, however, clear. It appears that someone had something specifically against Nergal-ēriš’s claims to power and acted against its inscribed representation.<sup>55</sup> This early eighth-century B.C.E. stela was selectively erased yet it remained installed in a sanctuary cella.<sup>56</sup> The Tell al-Rimah stela thereby exemplifies the ritualized deployment and effacement of inscribed iconographic monuments in the ancient Near East, in a way that challenges modern distinctions between images and texts, cultic statuary and monumental inscriptions, gods and kings, religion and politics, and symbols and their referents.<sup>57</sup>

The Neo-Assyrian succession treaties of Esarhaddon exhibit another convergence of literary and archaeological evidence for text-destruction practices in first-millennium B.C.E. Mesopotamia. Approximately 350 fragments of these treaty tablets were found in 1955 in a

<sup>52</sup> *šá ina MU<sup>MEŠ</sup> an-nu-ti 1-en MU i-pa-ši-ṭu-ma DINGIR<sup>MEŠ</sup> GAL<sup>MEŠ</sup> iz-zi-iš li-kil-mu-šú*; RIMA 3, A.O.104.7, line 21; Page 1968, p. 142.

<sup>53</sup> Page 1968, p. 139. In this first half of the inscription, which was not erased, Adad-nīrārī III claims that he erected an “image of my lordship” (*šalam bēlūtiya*) in Arvad (9) and cut cedars of Lebanon to build his palace and temples (11).

<sup>54</sup> Traces of the erased portion of the inscription are visible in high-resolution photographs reproduced in Page 1968, pls. 39–41.

<sup>55</sup> Page suggests several possibilities. She notes that Nergal-ēriš may have led some of Adad-nīrārī III’s western campaigns, and posits that his success may have made him a rival to the throne and thus a target for attack, ideological and otherwise (Page 1968, pp. 152–53). She also notes another stela from the time of Adad-nīrārī III, “found in pieces outside the temple of Ishtar at Nineveh,” which protects Nergal-ēriš from any challenge to his position as provincial governor or to the integrity of his provincial estate. “This looks,” Page writes, “like an attempt by the king to defend Nergal-ēriš from a faction that was trying to divest him of power, and is probably a part of the situation that led to the erasure of the Rimah stele” (ibid., p. 153). See also RIMA 3, p. 210.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. the “Great Monolith” of Assurnasirpal II inscribed with text-violation curses and installed at the gates of Ninurta’s temple at Nimrud, as noted above and discussed in Bahrani 2003, pp. 179–80; RIMA 2, A.O.101.17. Note also the sanctuary contexts of the Tell Ta’yinat

Assyrian treaty tablet (Levinson 2010, p. 340; Harrison 2012; Lauinger 2012) and the Philistine royal dedicatory inscription from Tel Miqne-Ekron (Gitin, Dothan, and Naveh 1997, p. 7).

<sup>57</sup> Also worth noting, with respect to the Tell al-Rimah stela, are two pairs of limestone lion’s head orthostats that were found in the same sanctuary that show traces of an inscription. One pair was found guarding the cella entrance; the other two were found out of context — one lay behind the stela and the other lay outside the cella (see fig. 11.7b). See Page 1968, p. 139, pls. 32, 37; Postgate, Oates, and Oates 1997, pp. 41–42, fig. 15, pls. 14b and 26b. According to Page, the inscription on the lion orthostats had been “very thoroughly erased” but its one decipherable phrase (*bu-kúr<sup>d</sup>a-nim* “first-born son of the god Anu”) appears also on the invocation to Adad that opens the Tell al-Rimah stela inscription (Page 1968, p. 139). Page notes that if the longer Tell al-Rimah inscription had also been erased from the orthostats — including the invocation to Adad and possibly the name and titles of Adad-nīrārī III — this would have been “a deed of sacrilege that was avoided in the selective obliteration on the stela” (ibid., pp. 139–40). The evidence is scant, but if this were so, the stela may have been spared complete erasure because it was imbued with the added power of divine and royal presence embodied in its iconographic representation of Adad-nīrārī III and in associated divine symbols. On the Tell al-Rimah stela’s iconography, see ibid., p. 141.

throne room in the northwest wing of the Nabû temple complex (Ezida) at Nimrud (ancient Kalḫu) (figs. 11.8–9).<sup>58</sup> Originally composed ca. 672 B.C.E., these treaties enforce oaths of loyalty to Esarhaddon's dynastic successors upon nine vassal princes on Assyria's eastern borders. Mallowan suggests that the tablets had originally been stored in one of the scribal chambers in the southeast corner of the Nabû temple complex, and that they were brought to their findspot and "deliberately mutilated" before the throne of the Assyrian king during the conquest of Kalḫu by Medes and Babylonians ca. 612 B.C.E.<sup>59</sup>

The consensus that the tablets inscribed with Esarhaddon's succession treaties were deliberately and selectively destroyed during the conquest of Kalḫu is supported by their archaeological and historical context.<sup>60</sup> These tablets were found burned, smashed, and scattered around the dais of a royal throne. The room in which they were found was a political center of gravity that lay just beside the Nabû temple archives. In this same throne room, ivory inlays depicting tribute bearers — perhaps Medes — were found broken in pieces among the treaty fragments (fig. 11.10).<sup>61</sup> These ivories may be described as iconographic counterparts to the succession treaty tablets and seem to have shared the same fate. Esarhaddon's succession treaties textually represented the former vassal status of the Medes who destroyed Kalḫu; presumably, these Medes no longer viewed themselves as bound by the treaty stipulations.<sup>62</sup> When this social order was overturned, so too were its iconographic and textual representations in the ivory inlays and treaty tablets.<sup>63</sup>

The succession treaties of Esarhaddon equate violations of the treaties' stipulations with violations of the treaty tablets. As discussed above, the succession treaties' curses specifically anticipate that the tablets upon which they are inscribed might be smashed and burned.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Nabû was a god of scribal arts and learning; Mallowan 1956, p. 7; Oates and Oates 2001, p. 115. On the Nabû temple complex (Ezida) at Nimrud, see Mallowan 1956, pp. 5–11; Oates and Reid 1956, pp. 28–38; Oates 1957; Oates and Oates 2001, pp. 111–29.

<sup>59</sup> For example, in NT 12, the "tablet room"; see Mallowan, in the foreword to Wiseman 1958, pp. i–ii; Wiseman (1958, p. 1) suggests NT 12 as the original site but does so with caution and writes, "It will probably never be known with certainty, whether the documents had once been housed in this room or thrown there when the building was sacked by the Medes in about 612 B.C.E." Oates (1957, p. 36) writes that the latest dated document from the Ezida temple archives was written in 614 B.C.E.

<sup>60</sup> See the previous note and Mallowan 1956; 1957; Nylander 1980, p. 332; cf. Liverani 1995, p. 62.

<sup>61</sup> Mallowan 1956, p. 14; see Mallowan 1966, pp. 250–51, no. 215 (ND4195 [c]); cf. *ibid.*, pp. 248–49, no. 209 (ND4193 [B]). Wiseman (1958, p. 5 and pl. 6:1) writes that some of these throne-room ivories depict "men from Iran, probably Medes, bringing tribute"; cf. Mallowan, in the foreword to Wiseman 1958, p. ii. Natalie N. May (written correspondence) notes that the tribute bearers depicted in these ivories wear "Phrygian" caps of a western type whereas Medes are typically depicted wearing fur animal skins; Wäfler (1975, pp. 200–15, pl. 18:2, and cf. pl. 18:1) associates the figures depicted in these ivories with the North Syrian "Bīt-Adini." I thank

Natalie N. May for this observation and reference. Cf. the relief in SAA 2, p. 29, fig. 10 (with the caption "Families from Iran, the men still bearing arms, received by Assyrian soldiers [reign of Sennacherib]"); Liverani 1995, p. 62 n. 32.

<sup>62</sup> Liverani (1995) identifies these tablets as loyalty oaths, not vassal treaties, for Medes serving in the palace as bodyguards to the Assyrian crown prince. Unlike distant vassals, he argues, such guards would have been familiar with the palace and its archives. "Perhaps," Liverani writes, "some kind of religious or magical concern did after all survive in the minds of these Medes since the oaths had been so patently transgressed by the very people who had been charged with protecting the dynasty that they, in the end, erased from the face of the earth" (*ibid.*, p. 62). Seth Richardson, written communication.

<sup>63</sup> The conquest of Kalḫu also implied a new divine order to match the new social order. Note in this respect the invocation of local, non-Assyrian deities as witnesses in Esarhaddon's succession treaties (see line 40b); Natalie N. May, written correspondence, citing Watanabe 1987, pp. 3–4.

<sup>64</sup> Note also seal impression A of Esarhaddon's succession treaties (a "dynastic seal" of Esarhaddon's father Sennacherib) cursing anyone who erases Sennacherib's name (lines 11–16) (Wiseman 1958, p. 15; see also Oates and Oates 2001, pp. 203–07; George 1986).

They were indeed found smashed, burned, and displaced around a royal throne in the temple complex of the scribal deity Nabû.<sup>65</sup> In these respects, the archaeological and historical contexts of Esarhaddon's succession treaties richly exhibit the intertwined ritual and political dimensions of iconoclasm and text destruction in first-millennium B.C.E. Mesopotamia.

### *Phoenician Evidence*

Moving from the East to the Northwest Semitic sphere, Malachi Martin's examination of early Byblian text-artifacts detected traces of earlier writing beneath their eleventh- and tenth-century B.C.E. Phoenician inscriptions.<sup>66</sup> While these are not necessarily cases of text effacement, these inscribed objects were repurposed in ways then prohibited in the curse formulae newly inscribed upon them. The archaeological context of the limestone Ḳāḫirom sarcophagus, for example, dates to the thirteenth century B.C.E., and beneath its late eleventh-/early tenth-century B.C.E. Phoenician mortuary inscription lie traces of an earlier "Pseudo-Hieroglyphic" text.<sup>67</sup> The sarcophagus appears to have been usurped from its former denizen by Ḳittoba'al of Byblos, who repurposed it several centuries later for his father Ḳāḫirom. Ḳittoba'al's Phoenician re-inscription prohibits any subsequent violations of the coffin; as noted above, it threatens any such offenders with an end to their kingship and a reciprocal act of inscription effacement (*ymh sprh* "may his inscription be effaced"). Martin ascribes a similar biography to other early Phoenician Byblian inscriptions, including, for example, the Ḳazarba'al spatula and the Yaḫimilk inscription, both of which exhibit early tenth-century B.C.E. Phoenician alphabetic repurposings of middle and late Bronze Age Pseudo-Hieroglyphic inscribed artifacts.<sup>68</sup>

### *Iron Age Southern Levantine Evidence*

Archaeological evidence for deliberate, selective acts of text destruction in antiquity is not entirely lacking from the more immediate cultural environment of ancient Israel and Judah. The limited number of monumental inscriptions from Iron Age southern Levantine contexts will be the last archaeological corpus I discuss. Although few and fragmentary, these artifacts merit some attention insofar as they may attest to text-destruction traditions in the local world of the biblical writers and may therefore shed light on biblical narratives of text destruction as well.

In a recent article on the destruction of cult objects and inscriptions in ancient Israel, Yosef Garfinkel has cataloged and discussed a corpus of Egyptian, Aramean, Assyrian, Israelite, Moabite, and Philistine royal inscriptions excavated from Iron Age strata in the southern Levant.<sup>69</sup> Garfinkel identifies thirteen inscribed royal stelae from these contexts, eight of which are fragmentary (found either as one isolated fragment or in several dispersed

<sup>65</sup> Note again BBSt 34, a stone tablet inscribed with a land title charter that calls upon "Nabû, the scribe" to shorten the life of anyone who destroys or abducts it (King 1912, p. 116 [BBSt 34, lines 9–20]).

<sup>66</sup> Martin 1961.

<sup>67</sup> Martin 1961, pp. 70–76, fig. 8; Gibson 1982, pp. 12–13.

<sup>68</sup> Martin 1961, pp. 47–67, figs. 1, 4, 6. See note 29 above. Also worth noting with respect to the social agency of Phoenician text-artifacts is the corpus of Phoenician

inscribed arrowheads, on which see Deutsch and Heltzer 1999, pp. 13–19. These objects are textually linked to their owners and, as Seth Sanders writes, can "kill with words" (Sanders 2009a); as such, they are not unlike other text-artifacts inscribed with deadly curse formulae.

<sup>69</sup> Garfinkel 2009. I thank Mark S. Smith for bringing Garfinkel's Hebrew article to my attention, translations of which below are my own.

fragments) and five of which are relatively intact (found either whole or broken in large pieces lying together in the same findspot).<sup>70</sup>

Garfinkel identifies a suggestive pattern in this evidence. He notes that the eight royal inscriptions found in small isolated or widely dispersed fragments are associated with sites that experienced transformative political events during the Iron Age, such as the departure of a foreign occupying force or a violent dynastic succession conflict. Three fragments of a ninth-century B.C.E. Aramean memorial stela from Tel Dan, for example, were found dispersed in eighth-century B.C.E. archaeological contexts around a gate area outside the city (fig. 11.11).<sup>71</sup> Avraham Biran has suggested that this Tel Dan inscription, which commemorates Aramean victories along Israel's northern border, was smashed by Israelites during the brief window between Hazael's mid-ninth century B.C.E. conquests in this area and those of Tiglath-pileser III in 733/732 B.C.E. Biran argues that the two Israelite kings who recovered and extended these northern territories (Jehoash and Jereboam II, ca. 800–745 B.C.E.; see 2 Kgs 13:25; 14:25–28) would have viewed this memorial as a “reminder of the former weakness of their kingdom” and would not have left it standing.<sup>72</sup>

Garfinkel ascribes a similar biography to a fragmentary Egyptian royal stela from Megiddo, which he suggests was smashed by Canaanites at Megiddo after the departure of Egyptian power from the southern Levant.<sup>73</sup> Garfinkel notes that Assyrian royal inscriptions in particular seem to have been broken into very small pieces and widely dispersed far from their original contexts; this, he argues, is a reflection of and response to the brutality and hatred of Neo-Assyrian rule in the West.<sup>74</sup> The fragment of a Hebrew stela from Samaria, he

<sup>70</sup> Garfinkel 2009, pp. 102–03. Garfinkel identifies (with citations) the following eight fragmentary royal inscriptions excavated from Iron Age Israelite, Canaanite, and Philistine contexts:

- Three fragments of the Tel Dan stela (Biran and Naveh 1993 and 1995; Biran 1994, pp. 274–78; Biran and Ben-Dov 2002, pp. 5–22).
- One fragment of a Shishak stela from Megiddo (Breasted 1929, pp. xi–xii).
- One fragment of a Hebrew stela from Samaria (Sukenik 1936, p. 156, pl. 3; Crowfoot, Crowfoot, and Kenyon 1957, p. 33, pl. 4:1).
- One fragment of an Assyrian stela from Samaria (Crowfoot, Crowfoot, and Kenyon 1957, p. 35, pl. 4:2–3; Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders 2006, p. 115).
- One fragment of an Assyrian memorial stela from Qaqun (Porat, Dar, and Applebaum 1985, pp. 212–19; Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders 2006, p. 111).
- Three Assyrian stela fragments from Ashdod (Dotan 1971, pp. 40, 150, pls. 96–97; Tadmor 1967, 1971; Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders 2006, pp. 40–41).
- One fragment of an Assyrian memorial stela from the Ben Shemen area (Tadmor 1973b, pp. 67–74; Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders 2006, p. 45; Cogan 2008).
- One fragmentary Egyptian stela from Beth Shean (Rowe 1930, p. 36, fig. 8, pl. 49:2; James 1966, pp. 34–35).

The five royal stelae identified by Garfinkel (2009, pp. 102–03 with citations) that were found in Iron Age Israelite, Canaanite, and Philistine contexts either whole or with all of their pieces together include:

- Three Egyptian royal stelae from Beth Shean (Rowe 1930, p. 36, fig. 8, pls. 45:3, 49:2; James 1966, pp. 34–38, pl. 81:1; Mazar 1993, p. 221).
- The Mesha inscription (Klein 1870; Dearman 1989).
- The Philistine royal inscription from Tel Miqne-Ekron (Gitin, Dothan, and Naveh 1997; Aḥituv 2008, pp. 335–42).

<sup>71</sup> Biran and Naveh 1995, pp. 1–9; 1993; Biran 1994, pp. 274–78; Garfinkel 2009, pp. 102–03. Fragment B2 of the Tel Dan inscription, for example, was found set in a flagstone pavement near the base of a wall near an outer gate of the Iron II city. Pottery below the pavement dates to the late ninth/early eighth century B.C.E.; debris above the pavement dates to the Assyrian conquests later in the eighth century B.C.E. (Biran and Naveh 1995, pp. 5–8, fig. 7). I thank Gila Cook, Jonathan S. Greer, and David Ilan for their assistance with Tel Dan archaeological data.

<sup>72</sup> Biran writes that “it is reasonable to assume that Jehoash, who fought the Arameans three times and defeated Ben Hadad, would have been responsible for smashing the stele” (Biran and Naveh 1995, p. 9).

<sup>73</sup> Garfinkel 2009, p. 103.

<sup>74</sup> Based on the evidence of these smashed royal inscriptions, Garfinkel writes that “when the Egyptian army pulled out of Megiddo, the Aramean army pulled out of Dan, and the Assyrian army pulled out of the land of Israel, the local inhabitants were quick to erase all remnants of the foreign occupation. Thus the enemy's inscriptions were removed, shattered into small frag-

suggests, is a remnant of an Israelite royal memorial that was smashed during one of the many dynastic coups that took place in the capital of the northern kingdom.<sup>75</sup>

As for the handful of royal inscriptions found intact in Iron Age southern Levantine contexts (found either whole or in several large pieces lying close together), Garfinkel notes that these were preserved in sites that experienced a degree of political stability and continuity during this period, followed in some cases by wholesale destruction. The royal dedicatory inscription from Ekron, for example, was found intact in its original setting in the sanctuary cella of a monumental Philistine temple complex (fig. 11.12).<sup>76</sup> Garfinkel argues that this stela was never singled out and smashed for ideological reasons because Ekron enjoyed a period of stability under the shadow of Assyrian and then Egyptian hegemony, during the window of time in the seventh century B.C.E. between when the stela was created and when the Philistine city was destroyed. According to this argument, this royal inscription was preserved first by the Philistine rulers of Ekron (with the support of their local subjects and imperial suzerains) and ultimately by the campaigns of Nebuchadnezzar II, when it was buried in destruction debris after the entire sanctuary in which it was installed collapsed during the Neo-Babylonian conquest of the city in 603 B.C.E.<sup>77</sup>

ments, scattered and thrown into dumps or outside the city walls" (Garfinkel 2009, p. 103).

<sup>75</sup> Garfinkel 2009, p. 103; Sukenik 1936, p. 156, pl. 3; Crowfoot, Crowfoot, and Kenyon 1957, p. 33, pl. 4:1.

<sup>76</sup> On the archaeological context of the royal dedicatory inscription from Tel Miqne-Ekron, see Gitin, Dothan, and Naveh 1997, pp. 3–8, figs. 1–3. The limestone inscription was found in one piece, "upside-down in the northwest corner of the cella" and may have been the "focal point" of the cella's western wall (*ibid.*, p. 7). A bronze spit as well as iron and ivory objects were found in the same cella; a number of other objects were found in the adjacent rooms of temple complex 650, including an ivory knob with a cartouche of Ramesses VIII, a large carved ivory statuette head, a 23 cm Egyptian gold cobra, and the burnt remains of an ivory tusk carved with a female figure and a Merenptah cartouche; see *ibid.*, pp. 7–8. Interestingly, the body of a cult figurine was also found beside the inscription, the head of which lay about 6 m away by the sanctuary entrance. This context resembles that of the Egyptian royal stelae at Beth Shean, which were found intact beside a decapitated statue of Ramesses III (on which, see below). The Ekron cella figurine (the only figurine thus far found inside a temple in the Iron Age southern Levant) seems to have been purposefully decapitated before the collapse of the sanctuary (archaeological contexts of the site were, however, disturbed by trench robbers); Seymour Gitin, oral communication. The Philistine royal dedicatory inscription, however, was definitely not singled out and smashed in any way. It appears to have fallen from the wall during the destruction of the temple complex and stratum IB city, which was "covered by a massive destruction debris which marked the end of the last city of Philistine Ekron" (*ibid.*, p. 8). I thank Seymour Gitin for his assistance with Tel Miqne-Ekron materials.

<sup>77</sup> Garfinkel 2009, p. 103; see Gitin, Dothan, and Naveh 1997, pp. 8–9. Garfinkel suggests a similar history for

the royal stelae found in Iron Age contexts at Beth Shean. Three of the Egyptian royal stelae excavated from Beth Shean lower stratum V (Iron Ib) were found intact (not smashed) and one is fragmentary. The archaeological and historical contexts of these four royal stelae are, however, quite complex, and any arguments about their fates in antiquity must be made with caution. For evidence and discussions, see Rowe 1930, p. 36, fig. 8, pls. 45:3, 49:2; James 1966, pp. 34–38, fig. 81:1; Garfinkel 2009, p. 102; Mazar 1993, p. 221. With respect to the three royal stelae found intact, two are of Seti I and the third is of Ramesses II (Garfinkel 2009, p. 102; Rowe 1930, pp. 23–38, pls. 41–44, 46; James 1966, pp. 34–38, fig. 81:1). One of these Seti I stelae was reused in the Byzantine period (stratum II) but seems to have originally stood upon a base found in lower stratum V (Rowe 1930, pp. 29, 36–37; James 1966, pp. 34–35). The other Seti I stela was found together with the Ramesses II stela, both of which lay broken but complete atop one another in lower stratum V (James 1966, p. 34, fig. 81:1; Rowe 1930, p. 36; Garfinkel 2009, p. 102).

- With respect to the one fragmentary royal Egyptian stela from Iron Age Beth Shean, Garfinkel notes that its archaeological context is unclear (2009, p. 102). Rowe (1930, pp. 29, 36) identifies two possible fragments of this stela: one found in an unreported spot in stratum V (*ibid.*, p. 34, fig. 8) and one found reused in a stratum II Byzantine reservoir (*ibid.*, p. 36, pl. 49:2; see James 1966, pp. 34–35). Like the more complete Seti I stela from lower stratum V noted above, this unidentified fragmentary stela seems also to have been reused in the Byzantine period and was not purposefully smashed for ideological reasons in the late Bronze or Iron Age.
- Concerning all of the Egyptian monuments found in Iron Ib (lower stratum V) contexts at Tel Beth Shean (including the four royal stelae noted above as well as a statue of Ramesses III and another Egypt-



Drawing upon a range of evidence for the destruction of statuary, inscriptions, ritual objects, and cult sites in Israelite archaeological and literary contexts, Garfinkel thus argues that eight of the thirteen royal monumental inscriptions found in Iron Age strata in the southern Levant were intentionally damaged in antiquity for ideological reasons.<sup>78</sup> More specifically, he argues that these fragmentary inscriptions attest to the purposeful destruction of royal memorials by local inhabitants after the departure of foreign powers or deposed dynasties.

Archaeological evidence for text-destruction practices in the southern Levant is scant and by definition fragmentary, and hypotheses based upon it are necessarily speculative.<sup>79</sup> These hypotheses, however, can be supported by the broader corpus of literary and archaeological evidence for text-destruction practices in the ancient Near East reviewed above. In light of this wider evidence, it is reasonable to expect such practices to be attested in Israelite archaeological contexts. It is also reasonable to expect textual depictions of these practices to be preserved in Israelite literature as well, in forms comparable to the Mesopotamian narrative inscriptions and curse formulae discussed above. The destruction of texts indeed figures prominently in pivotal biblical narratives, and I conclude my discussion of evidence for ancient Near Eastern text-destruction traditions by focusing on this biblical corpus.

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tian stela dedicated to Anat), Mazar writes the following: "These Egyptian monuments antedate stratum V by one hundred to two hundred years. Their location in the courtyard of the city's temples at a time when there no longer was any direct Egyptian presence in Beth-Shean is puzzling. It is possible that these monuments came to be venerated in local tradition and were preserved from stratum to stratum in a cultic context — this at a time when the local population included Canaanites as well as Sea Peoples, some of whom may have been descendants of the mercenaries and officials who had served in the Egyptian garrison at the site" (Mazar 1993, pp. 220–21). Garfinkel agrees that sociopolitical continuities in Egyptian and Canaanite Beth Shean across the late Bronze and Iron Ages explains the lack of deliberate, ideologically motivated acts of text destruction attested in the archaeological context of royal inscriptions excavated from this site (Garfinkel 2009, p. 103). Garfinkel adds: "One may assume that if the Canaanite rebellion described in the stela of Ramesses II would have been successful, the Canaanites would have broken the stela of Seti I and scattered the fragments outside of Tel Beth Shean."

- It must be noted that the statue of Ramesses III found in the same archaeological context as the intact royal stela at Beth Shean (locus 1024, lower stratum V) was decapitated (see Rowe 1930, pp. 36, 38, pl. 51; James 1966, p. 35, fig. 81:3). Concerning this statue James writes: "Its badly mutilated head lay ... exactly where it had been struck off some three millennia ago" (*ibid.*, p. 35). If so, this would challenge the arguments of Garfinkel and Mazar and raise the question of who might have done so

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and, more important, why the nearby Pharaonic inscribed iconography would have been spared a similar fate. Two further observations might support Garfinkel's argument against evidence for the selective, ideological destruction of royal monuments in Iron Age Beth Shean: (1) two cartouches of Ramesses III inscribed upon the statue's torso were not damaged, and (2) the head of this Ramesses III statue was found in situ just beside the torso (see James 1966, fig. 81:3), which suggests that the statue may not have been intentionally mutilated but simply fell down and broke, as did the royal stela from the same stratum. The statue's face is, however, badly damaged and its arms are broken off. Again, due to the complexities of Tel Beth Shean Stratum V, any historical arguments based upon the archaeological contexts of these artifacts must be made with caution.

<sup>78</sup> Garfinkel locates this evidence, and the text-destruction practices to which it may attest, within wider patterns of evidence associated with ideologically motivated violations of cult objects and cult sites. Garfinkel supports his argument with additional archaeological evidence including a horned altar found dismantled and displaced in secondary contexts in the walls of an Iron Age storage room at Tel Be'er Sheva, and a range of biblical texts that depict ideologically motivated violence against inscriptions, cult objects, and cult sites. See Garfinkel 2009, pp. 100–02.

<sup>79</sup> Although the Tel Dan inscription was found fragmented and dispersed, its extant text remains in an excellent state of preservation (Gila Cook, written correspondence). Compare also the intact Mesha inscription with the fragmentary royal Moabite stela discussed in Ahituv 2008, pp. 419–23.

## TEXT DESTRUCTION IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

Accounts of text destruction frame the biblical narrative of the rise and fall of ancient Israel and Judah. The first narrative account of text destruction in the Hebrew Bible is set at the dawn of Israel's social formation at Sinai, when Moses, Israel's founding prophetic intermediary, receives and then smashes two tablets inscribed with divine social legislation. The second is set on the eve of the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem, when Jehoiakim, one of Judah's last sovereign kings, receives and then burns a prophetic oracle scroll inscribed with divine social condemnation.

The best-known act of text destruction in antiquity is depicted in the Pentateuch, when Moses smashes two inscribed tablets at the foot of Mount Sinai (Exod 32:19). This dramatic moment in the Sinai narrative juxtaposes the production and destruction of theriomorphic cultic statuary (a calf formed of molten metal) with the production and destruction of divine "tablets of testimony" (*luḥōt hā'ēdut*; Exod 32:15).<sup>80</sup> The formation and worship of the iconic calf is represented as a violation of the legislation inscribed upon the tablets themselves. In response to this violation, which severs the covenantal relationship between YHWH and Israel, Moses smashes the tablets that represented this relationship in writing.

The golden calf narrative plays subtly and richly upon the iconic associations of text production and destruction in ancient Israel. For example, the production and destruction of a calf made by human hands (Exod 32:1–4) is directly opposed to the production and destruction of the divinely crafted and inscribed tablets. The biblical authors write that Aaron "took (the gold) from their hand and formed it with an engraving tool (*heret*) and made it into a molten calf" (Exod 32:4), whereas the tablets delivered by Moses "were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved (*ḥārūt*) upon the tablets" (Exod 32:16).<sup>81</sup> This opposition, which contrasts the mundane work of human hands with the creative powers of YHWH, structures several poems that also figure prominently in the biblical iconoclastic repertoire. The "idol parody" preserved in Jeremiah 10:1–16, for example, describes Mesopotamian cult images as false, powerless deities made on earth by "the work of skilled men," and YHWH as "a true god ... who makes the earth with his power and establishes the world with his skill" (Jer 10:9, 12).<sup>82</sup> These Israelite declarations of mundane and divine origin (of cult images and the Sinai tablets, respectively) likewise contrast with the divine origin of cult images invoked in Mesopotamian *mīs pī* ("mouth washing") ritual texts: "I did not make (the statue), I did not make (it) ... Kusibanda who is Ea god of the goldsmith [made it]."<sup>83</sup>

Victor Hurowitz identifies an additional, richly suggestive example of how the Sinai narrative juxtaposes the formation of Aaron's calf with the formation of Moses's tablets. Hurowitz observes that the unexpected Hebrew root *psl* is used to describe the formation of the second set of tablets (Exod 34:1, 4); he notes that this root is commonly employed with reference to cultic statuary, not inscribed tablets, and that the biblical authors may have used it here to signify YHWH's presence in the inscribed tablets themselves.<sup>84</sup> Hurowitz suggests

<sup>80</sup> On Israelite bull iconography, see Judges 17–18; 1 Kings 12:28–30; Hosea 8:4–6; 10:5–6; 13:2.

<sup>81</sup> *wayyiqqah miyyādām wayyāšar ʾōtō baḥeret wayyaʿāšēhū ʿegel massēkā* (Exod 32:4); *wēhallūḥōt maʿāšēh ʾēlōhīm hēmmā wēhammiktāb miktāb ʾēlōhīm hūʾ ḥārūt ʿal-hallūḥōt* (Exod 32:16; and cf. Propp 2006, pp. 549–50, 556).

<sup>82</sup> *maʿāšēh ḥākāmīm kullām wyhwh ʾēlōhīm ʾemet ... ʿōšēh ʾereš bēkōḥō mēkīn tēbēl bēḥokmātō* (Jer 10:9, 12).

<sup>83</sup> *ana-ku ul DÙ-uš ana-ku la e-pu-šu-ma ... ḏkù-si<sub>2</sub>-ban-da ḏē-a DINGIR šá KÙ.[DÍM...]* (Walker and Dick 2001, pp. 50, 66 [Nineveh ritual, lines 183–84], cf. 76, 80 [Babylonian ritual, line 52]).

<sup>84</sup> See Hurowitz, this volume. The nominal form of *psl* commonly signifies statuary; Hurowitz notes that its verbal form is used in the context of stone cutting only with reference to the Sinai tablets (Exod 34:1, 4; Deut

that because this root is used to depict the second act of tablet construction, these tablets are “technically speaking, a *pesel*” (that is, a statue) and “might actually be taken to present themselves as a *pesel* of YHWH because they are engraved with the sentence, ‘I (am) YHWH your God ...,’ with God speaking out of the rock.”<sup>85</sup>

Hurowitz’s insights into these iconic aspects of the Sinai tablets recall the embodiment of deity in ancient Near Eastern inscribed monuments which, as Woods and Westenholz note (this volume), were given names, assigned divine determinatives, and received sacrifices.<sup>86</sup> They likewise recall the ritualized social location of inscribed stelae in sanctuary cellas, including, for example, the placement of the Adad-nīrārī III stela in the cella of the Assyrian sanctuary at Tell al-Rimah.

The golden calf narrative therefore depicts the construction and destruction of an iconic text and a cult image together in one condensed episode. Through both its terminology and narrative structure it plays subtly, richly, and intentionally upon the full range of associations between iconism, iconoclasm, text production, and text destruction in biblical representations of social conflict and cult.<sup>87</sup> In this respect, the textualization of Israelite ritual — and the ritualization of Israelite texts — was firmly rooted in Sinai traditions associated with Mosaic legislation and Israelite priesthood.<sup>88</sup> The iconic, ritualized role of these tablets is elsewhere emphasized by their placement at the heart of Yahwistic sacrificial cult, set in the ark installed in the cella of the Jerusalem temple. The ark’s role as a manifestation of YHWH’s presence and power is similarly represented in the ark narrative, where it sits in the temple of Dagan at Ashdod and mutilates the cult image of the Philistine deity (1 Sam 5:1–4). The ark holding these tablets may in these respects be described as a textualized iconic embodiment of the Israelite deity. The iconic, ritualized representation of legislative tablets in these biblical traditions recalls the placement of Esarhaddon’s succession treaties within the temple complex of the scribal deity Nabû. In each of these cases — at Sinai, Ashdod, and Kalḥu — legislative texts were violated in ritualized political contexts through acts of text abduction (Ashdod) or destruction (Sinai, Kalḥu) accompanied by corollary acts of iconoclasm.

Acts of text production and destruction figure prominently not only in Pentateuchal narratives of Israel’s social formation at Sinai, but also in prophetic narratives of the Babylonian conquest of Judah. The book of Jeremiah includes a narrative account in which a prophetic oracle scroll is produced by Jeremiah and his scribe Baruch and then burned column by column as it is read to King Jehoiakim in his palace in Jerusalem.<sup>89</sup> The oracles inscribed upon Jeremiah’s scroll condemn the social and ritual violations committed by Jerusalem’s monarchy, and threaten the Davidic king with an end to his dynastic lineage and kingdom in a way that recalls the reciprocal threats to dynastic succession in ancient Near Eastern

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10:1, 3) and Solomon’s temple (1 Kgs 5:32); in Habakkuk 2:18, he notes, it refers more expectedly to cult-image construction. See *TDOT* s.v. *psl*; cf. Exodus 24:12.

<sup>85</sup> *ʾānōkī yhwḥ ʾēlōhēkā* (Exod 20:2); Hurowitz (this volume) translates, “I, YHWH your God ...”

<sup>86</sup> Note also 1 Kings 7:21, where two bronze pillars are installed flanking the entrance to the Jerusalem temple and given the names Yakin and Boaz (cf. Gen 28:18–22; 33:20), on which see Meyers 1983 and Hurowitz 1992, p. 257 n. 2.

<sup>87</sup> In other words, the biblical “image ban” received and delivered by Moses at Sinai is inscribed on tablets; these tablets are then broken in response to the casting of

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an image; this image is then destroyed and, as Hurowitz (this volume) notes, (iconically) replaced with new tablets.

<sup>88</sup> On the associations between the construction of the calf and the construction of the temple in the Sinai narrative, see Hurowitz, this volume. Note also how the destruction of the northern kingdom is linked above all to the “sin of Jeroboam,” that is, to his construction of the calves of Bethel and Dan (1 Kgs 12:25–29; cf. Exod 32:1–4; 2 Kgs 17:7–23).

<sup>89</sup> For further discussion of the text destruction narrative in Jeremiah 36, see Levtoḡ 2012.

text-destruction curse formulae.<sup>90</sup> Jehoiakim responds to these threats with a reciprocal violation of the scroll itself; as columns of the scroll are read aloud to the king, “he would cut them off with a penknife and throw them into the fire in the brazier, until the entire scroll was consumed ....”<sup>91</sup> Burning Jeremiah’s scroll then activates the curses written upon it, and Davidic rule is torn away from Jerusalem as the city burns like the oracles.<sup>92</sup>

The book of Jeremiah contains one additional account of text destruction at its very end. This concluding narrative links the destruction of a scroll to the destruction not of Jerusalem but of Babylon.<sup>93</sup> In Jeremiah 51:59–64, Jeremiah sends his scribe Seriah (the brother of Baruch) to Babylon with a scroll inscribed with oracles against that city. Jeremiah instructs Seriah to read these oracles aloud there and then bind the scroll to a stone and cast it into the middle of the river Euphrates. The symmetry of the narrative identifies Babylon’s fate with that of the scroll, both of which are to “sink and rise no more” (Jer 51:64). As in Jeremiah 36, the destruction of the city is inscribed on the scroll, and the fate of the city follows that of the text.

In Jeremiah 36 the king of Jerusalem burns Jeremiah’s scroll, whereas in Jeremiah 51 the prophet himself orders the sinking of his scroll. Yet in both narratives, the destruction of these scrolls activates their oracular content. The creation of these scrolls in this respect serves to embody divine will in textual form, much like the inscribed boundary stelae of Lagaš and Umma. And the destruction of Jeremiah’s scrolls — by fire and by water — serves to reify their content in the social world, much like the immolation or immersion rituals commonly performed in Israelite cult. These acts of text destruction thus become a kind of ritualizing activity that integrates a textual object with the meaning inscribed upon it. They are performances that imbue culturally crafted products with social agency, as iconic rituals do with respect to cult images.

Text production and destruction may therefore be described as a strategic interplay between the textualization and actualization of identities and relationships inscribed upon tablets, scrolls, and public monuments. Smashing a legislative inscription, for example, was equated with breaking its legal stipulations and also served to activate the curses inscribed upon it.<sup>94</sup> Similarly, Jehoiakim and Seriah activated the oracles of Jeremiah through tearing, burning, and sinking the scrolls upon which they were inscribed. These acts of text destruction identify the sign (the text) with the signified (its semantic content), and this identity between symbol and referent was invoked every time a name, image, law, treaty, or curse formula was engraved upon a public monument in the ancient Near East.

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<sup>90</sup> Jeremiah 36:3, 29–31. There is no indication in the narrative of Jeremiah 36 that Jeremiah’s oracle scroll was inscribed with prohibitions and curses against the destruction of the scroll itself. However, the oracles invoked curses against associated violations of ritual and social legislation in ways quite similar to the text destruction curse formulae inscribed upon so many ancient Near Eastern text-artifacts. Written oracles were divine words inscribed on stone, clay, or scroll and as such would reasonably contain such curses. On the writing and reuse of prophetic oracles, see van der Toorn 2007, pp. 205–32.

<sup>91</sup> *yiqrā’ehā bēta’ar hassōpēr wēhaslēk ’el-hā’ēs ’āšer ’el-hā’āh ’ad-tōm kol-hammēgillā* (Jer 36:23).

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<sup>92</sup> As in Exodus 34:1–4, a new text is then created (in this case, by Jeremiah’s scribe) to replace the first one that had been destroyed (Jer 36:32). As noted above, Hurowitz (this volume) discusses how the creation of the golden calf is linked to the construction of the Jerusalem temple in the Sinai narrative; this may be compared with Jeremiah 36, in which the destruction of the oracle scroll is linked to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple.

<sup>93</sup> For further discussion of text destruction in Jeremiah 51, see Levtow 2012; see also Sanders 2009b.

<sup>94</sup> These equations are invoked, for example, in the laws of Hammurabi (Epilogue xlix 18–80) as well as in the treaties of Esarhaddon (lines 397–413) and the Sefire stelae (*KAI* no. 222, C 17–25, *KAI* no. 223, C 1–17).

Biblical narratives of text destruction are therefore illuminated in helpful ways by the literary and archaeological evidence for text-destruction traditions in the ancient Near East. Patterns emerge, for example, among ancient Near Eastern text-destruction practices, as indicated by the curse formulae inscribed upon Babylonian entitlement *narûs* that identify typical abuses to which these objects were subjected. As Slanski notes, these abuses included “being removed from their place, smashed with a rock, burned in a fire, thrown into a canal or river or down a well, concealed, buried, or otherwise hidden away.”<sup>95</sup> The biblical examples of smashing (Exod 32), burning (Jer 36), and sinking (Jer 51) texts fit squarely within this commonly identified range of practices and likely signify a wider cultural pattern and resonance. They likewise illuminate other biblical texts as possible variations on these same traditions.

The Deuteronomic legislation is, for example, framed between preliminary injunctions that prohibit “adding to” or “taking away from” the “word” of Moses (Deut 13:1; cf. Deut 4:2) and concluding curses that prohibit violations of the code’s legal stipulations (Deut 27:11–26).<sup>96</sup> Israel is instructed, moreover, to invoke these curses from Mount Ebal, at a site where large stelae inscribed with “all the words of this torah” are to be installed beside a stone sacrificial altar to YHWH (Deut 27:2–8).<sup>97</sup> This literary framework and cultic location recalls not only the imprecations against text alteration, removal, and usurpation inscribed upon ancient Near Eastern law codes, treaty stelae, entitlement *narûs*, dedicatory monuments, and royal memorials, but also the ritual settings in which these inscribed objects were often placed.<sup>98</sup>

Noteworthy also are the iconic and textual associations in the golden calf narrative when Moses beseeches YHWH to forgive Israel for making “gods of gold” and, if not, to “blot me out from the document that you wrote.”<sup>99</sup> The root *mhh*, here translated as “blot

<sup>95</sup> Slanski (2003, p. 61) describes this as “a catalog ... of the kind of injuries that could damage an inscribed and sculpted stone stele or monument.” See also Hinkle 1907, pp. 48–49.

<sup>96</sup> *’et kol-haddābār ’āšer ’ānōkī mēšawweh ’etkem ’ōtō tišmērū la’āšōt lō-tōsēp ’ālāyw wēlō tigrā mimmennū* “The entire word that I command you shall you observe to do, you must neither add to it nor take away from it” (Deut 13:1; cf. Deut 4:2; see the discussion of this verse in Levinson 2010, p. 337 n. 1). Bernard Levinson has recently noted how Deuteronomy 13:1 recalls the injunction in Esarhaddon’s succession treaties not to “change or alter” (*tennāni tušannāni*) the “word” (*abutu*) of Esarhaddon (ibid., pp. 342–44, citing SAA 2, 6 57–60). Levinson locates this literary contact within “Deuteronomy’s larger project of creative literary reworking” of Neo-Assyrian political treaties (2010, p. 337). See also van der Toorn 2007, pp. 109, 125–26, 308 n. 5, on scribal prohibitions against additions to and subtractions from master texts.

<sup>97</sup> *wahāqēmōtā lēkā ’ābānīm gēdōlōt wēšadtā ’ōtām baššīd wēkātabtā ’ālēhen ’et-kol-dibrē hattōrā hazzōt ... tāqīmū ’et-hā’ābānīm hā’ēlleh ’āšer ’ānōkī mēšawweh ’etkem hayyōm bēhar ’ēbāl wēšadtā ’ōtām baššīd ūbānītā šām mizbēaḥ lyhwh ’ēlōhēkā* “set up large stones, coat them with plaster, and write upon them all the words of this torah ...set up these stones (concerning) which I am commanding you today at Mount Ebal, coat them with plaster, and build there an altar to YHWH your god” (Deut 27:2–5; cf. Deut 27:8; see also Josh 8:30–35 and cf. Deut 11:30).

<sup>98</sup> On the literary relationship between Deuteronomy and Esarhaddon’s succession treaties, see the discussion and literature cited in Levinson 2010. Regarding the ritual settings of these legal documents, Levinson calls attention to the recent discovery at Tell Ta’ayinat of “what seems to be a copy” of Esarhaddon’s succession treaties; Levinson (ibid., p. 340) writes, “The tablet is a formal display copy, drilled through vertically for mounting and rotation. It would originally have been elevated on a platform in the cella of the temple, opposite the altar, near where it was found during the excavation.” Levinson (ibid., p. 340 n. 16) cites Harrison 2012 and Lauinger 2012 on the archaeology of this find. Similarly, as discussed above, the Adad-nīrārī III stela from Tell al-Rimah was found installed near the altar of an Assyrian sanctuary (Page 1968, p. 139), and the Philistine royal inscription from Tel Miqne-Ekron was found in the destruction layer of a monumental temple complex by the west wall of the sanctuary cella (Gitin, Dothan, and Naveh 1997, p. 7). On the sanctuary settings of Babylonian entitlement *narûs*, see Slanski 2003.

<sup>99</sup> *wayya’āsū lāhem ’ēlōhē zāhāb wē’attā ’im-tiššā’ hattā’tām wē’im-’ayin mēhēnī nā’ missiprēkā ’āšer kātabtā* “they have made gods of gold; and so now, if you would bear their sin — but if not, then blot me out from the document that you wrote” (Exod 32:31–32). YHWH responds to Moses *mī ’āšer ḥāṭā’-lī ’emhennū missiprī* “Whoever sinned against me, him I will blot out from my document” (Exod 32:33).

out,” appears elsewhere in the West Semitic corpus in reference to inscription effacement, as, for example, in the reciprocal curse against text effacement in the ʿAḥirom sarcophagus (*ymḥ sprh* “may his inscription be effaced”).<sup>100</sup> These observations recall a wider range of biblical traditions concerning the “blotting out” of names and memories of people and places.<sup>101</sup> This same root *mḥh* also appears in Numbers 5:23 in the context of the ritual ordeal for the accused adultress, in which written curses are “blotted off” into water and then given to the suspected adultress to drink. Israel is put through a similar ordeal at Sinai (Exod 32:20), where Moses grinds the golden calf into powder, mixes it with water, and gives it to the people to drink. These examples of text and image consumption (cf. Ezek 3:1–3) further illuminate how ritualized acts of destruction can not only negate but also actuate the power of written words and the social agency of textual and iconic representations. This is similar in effect to the activation of Yahwistic oracles in Jeremiah 36, when Jehoiakim burns Jeremiah’s scroll in the palace brazier, and in Jeremiah 51, when Seriah sinks Jeremiah’s scroll in the Euphrates.

Pursuing these associations further, the biblical term for “name” (*šm*) often appears as the direct object of verbs of destruction (e.g., *mḥh*, *ʿbd*, *krt*, *šmd*), and so too does it appear as the direct object of verbs of building (e.g., *škn*, *bnh*, *šym*).<sup>102</sup> In some biblical contexts the term *šm* refers specifically to a memorial stela or inscription that is set up (e.g., 2 Sam 8:13; Isa 56:5).<sup>103</sup> More often the term *šm* refers to the emplacement of YHWH’s name, in descriptions of Jerusalem as “the site in which YHWH your god will choose to cause his name to dwell” (e.g., Deut 12:11; 14:23; 16:2,6,11; 26:2; Jer 7:12).<sup>104</sup> This Deuteronomistic idiom recalls the emplacement, erasure, and usurpation of names on New Kingdom cartouches and on Mesopotamian and Levantine inscribed monuments and statuary. These related practices

<sup>100</sup> ʿAḥirom 2: *ymḥ sprh* “may his inscription be effaced”; ʿAzatiwada Phu/A III 13: *ʿm ʿdm ʿš ʿdm šm ʿš ymḥ šm ʿztdw* “if a man who is a man of renown (lit., “a man of a name”) effaces the name of ʿAzatiwada” (cf. ʿAzatiwada Phu/A III 18 and PhSt/C IV 14–15); see TDOT s.v. *mḥh*; Labuschagne 1955, p. 312; (Gibson [1982, p. 16] reads *ymḥ* in ʿAḥirom line 2 as a Niph. jussive from *mḥy*). On the phrase *ʿdm ʿš ʿdm šm*, see the Yaḥdun-lim inscription from Mari (RIME 4, 6.8.2, lines 132–35) cited in Röllig 1999, p. 60, and Avishur 2000, pp. 196–97. The root *\*lwd* or *\*lwd* is employed in the Tell Faḥariye inscription (Aramaic, line 11) and the Sefire inscriptions (I C 17, ii B 7, ii C 2, 6–10); see Kaufman 1982, p. 166; Fitzmyer 1995, p. 119. The Kilamuwa inscription parallels the roots *nzq/šht*: *wyzq bspz z / yšht hspz z* “(whoever) damages this inscription” / “(whoever) smashes this inscription” (Kilamuwa 14 / 15); Tropper 1993, pp. 44–45; Avishur 2000, p. 168; Garfinkel 2009, p. 102. See CAD M s.v. *maʿû* (throw down, destroy, exterminate); TDOT 8, p. 228 n. 3 (s.v. *mḥh*) notes *kapāru*, *mašāšu* (wipe away); *pašātu* (extinguish, eradicate [something written]). See notes 21 and 29 above.

<sup>101</sup> For example, Exodus 17:14 and Deuteronomy 25:19 (the memory of Amalek); 2 Kings 14:27 (the name of Israel); 2 Kings 21:13 (the city of Jerusalem); Psalm 9:6 (the names of nations and the wicked); Deuteronomy 29:19 (*wērābēšā bō kol-hāʿālā hakkētūbā bassēper hazzeh ūmāhā yhwḥ ʿet-šēmō mittatḥat haššāmāyim* “every curse written

in this document would settle on him and YHWH would blot out his name from under heaven”); Deuteronomy 9:14 (the name of Israel, recalling the golden calf / divine tablets episode of Exod 32); Deuteronomy 25:6 (a patrilineal name); Judges 21:17 (the tribe of Benjamin); Psalm 109:13 (the name of the wicked in the second generation); Psalm 69:29 (enemies, from the book of life). On ineradicable writing and inscribed bodies, see Jeremiah 17:1 *ḥattaʿt yēhūdā kētūbā bēʿeṯ barēzel bēšipōren šāmîr ḥārūšā ʿal-lūaḥ libbām* “The sin of Judah is written with an iron pen; with a diamond point it is engraved on the tablet of their heart”; see also Jeremiah 31:33 (TDOT 8, pp. 229–30).

<sup>102</sup> TDOT 15, pp. 164–69 (s.v. *šm*).

<sup>103</sup> Weinfeld 1992, p. 193 n. 4; Kraus 1960, p. 128; the term *yād* (“hand”) can also refer to a stela and inscription (1 Sam 15:12; 2 Sam 8:3; 18:18; Isa 56:5). Note in this respect how *yād* signifies the power of YHWH in the ark narrative, in which the hands of the cult image of Dagan are cut off when the Philistine iconic deity is overcome by the ark holding covenant tablets (1 Sam 5:1–4); see Miller and Roberts 1977.

<sup>104</sup> *hammāqôm ʿāšer-yibḥar yhwḥ ʿēlōhēkem bō lēšakkēn šēmō šām* (Deut 12:11); for additional examples, see Weinfeld 1992, pp. 193–95, 325. Cf. the phrase *št šm* in the ʿAzatiwada inscriptions (Phu/A III 14, 16 // PhSt/C IV 16, 18), on which see note 29 above.

of text destruction, image destruction, and name usurpation — in contexts of political relations and social formation — likewise recall Esarhaddon's claim that he re-inscribed his own name, together with that of his god Aššur, upon the cult images he abducted and returned to Hazael.<sup>105</sup> Similar themes of iconoclasm and name usurpation resonate in the injunction that opens the Deuteronomic code:

These are the statutes and laws that you must observe to do .... You must completely destroy all of the places where the nations you are dispossessing worshiped their gods .... Break down their altars, smash their stelae, burn their Asherim in fire, hew down the statues of their gods, and destroy their name from that place. Do not worship YHWH your god in such ways. Instead, seek out the site YHWH your god will choose, from all your tribes, to set his name there for his dwelling.<sup>106</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Text destruction, like iconoclasm, was practiced in a variety of culturally recognized and ritually patterned ways in ancient Near Eastern societies. The literary and archaeological evidence for these practices reveals how texts, like images, were strategically smashed, burned, sunk, effaced, usurped, abducted, buried, displaced, and hidden from public view.<sup>107</sup> The formulaic consistency, iconoclastic associations, and political resonance of text-destruction practices persisted well into the medieval and modern periods.<sup>108</sup> Text destruction in antiquity, however, was unlike text destruction in the Middle Ages and modernity in fundamental ways. Images and texts played central, correlating social roles in the ancient Near East. These roles varied depending on the form, content, and context of a given iconographic or textual artifact across the stages of its creation, deployment, and destruction. These cultural products and practices may be described as ways in which ancient Near Eastern cultures represented divine and human subjects interrelating in ritualized social settings. The destruction of scrolls and inscriptions in the ancient Near East may thereby be described as a ritualized, strategic deployment of violence that targeted textual representations of social relations and the embodied presence of gods, kings, and social groups.

The violation of texts is richly attested and explicitly linked to iconoclasm in the earliest extant statuary inscriptions from third-millennium B.C.E. Mesopotamia and is likewise inscribed upon numerous second- and first-millennium B.C.E. syllabic, hieroglyphic, and

<sup>105</sup> This same Hazael was the likely protagonist of the Tel Dan inscription that may have been destroyed by Israelites; he is referred to in an inscription of Shalmaneser III as having no name at all (DUMU la mammāna "son of nobody"); RIMA 3, A.0.102.40 i 26; Biran and Naveh 1995, p. 17. On the Esarhaddon inscription, see Borger 1967: §27 Episode 14, Nin. A IV 1–14; Holloway 2002, pp. 279 n. 182, 140 and n. 203.

<sup>106</sup> ʿēleh hahuqām wēhammišpāʿīm ʿāšer tišmērūn laʿāšōt.... ʿabbēd tēʿabbēdūn ʿet-kol-hammēqōmōt ʿāšer ʿābēdū-šām haggōyīm ʿāšer ʿattem yōrēšīm ʿōtām .... wēnittaštem ʿet-mizbēhōtām wēšibbartem ʿet-maššēbōtām waʿāšērēhem tišrēpūn bāʿēš ūpēsilē ʿēlōhēhem tēgaddēʿūn wēʿibbadtem ʿet-šēmām min-hammāqōm hahūʿ lōʿ-taʿāsūn kēn lyhwh ʿēlōhēkem ki ʿim-ʿel-hammāqōm ʿāšer-yibhar yhwh ʿēlōhēkem

mikkol-šibṭēkem lāsūm ʿet-šēmō šām lēšiknō tidrēšū (Deut 12:1–5).

<sup>107</sup> See Slanski 2003, p. 61.

<sup>108</sup> Note, for example, the Abbasid usurpation of Umayyad inscriptions on the Dome of the Rock, including the substitution of al-Maʿmūn's name for that of ʿAbd al-Malik; see Grabar 1959, pp. 52, 57; van Berchem 1925–27, pp. 228–55. I thank Beatrice St. Laurent for this reference. Note also the burning of the Talmud in medieval Europe. Modern correlating examples of publically staged, politicized acts of iconoclasm and text destruction include the 2001 destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan and Qurʿan burnings in contemporary America.

alphabetic public monuments. The text violations depicted in these narrative accounts and curse formulae are visibly attested in the archaeological record of usurped, damaged, and demolished ancient Near Eastern text-artifacts. Biblical narratives of text destruction likewise converge with archaeological evidence of smashed royal inscriptions from Iron Age southern Levantine contexts. The observation that deliberate, ideologically motivated acts of text destruction were practiced in the kingdoms of ancient Israel and Judah and throughout the ancient Near East sheds light on a range of biblical texts that depict the emplacement, effacement, and replacement of names, identities, and social relationships.

The evidence discussed in this paper illuminates iconic aspects of textuality that influenced the scripturalization of Israelite religion in the mid-first millennium B.C.E. and beyond. In this respect, the shadow cast over biblical studies by interpretive traditions concerned with “idolatry” obscures what is otherwise clear from the cultural record of the ancient Near East and Mediterranean: the inscribed iconography of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Levant resists any sharp division between iconographic and textual modes of representation.<sup>109</sup> A focus on text destruction identifies these iconic aspects of textuality more clearly than does a focus on iconoclasm alone. A twin focus on text destruction and iconoclasm highlights the iconic, numinous nature of writing in the ancient world and helps bridge the gap between iconism and textuality that cleaves the Israelite religion of modern imagination.

In the ancient Near East, the identity between the referent of an image and the image itself, or the content of a text and the text itself, was achieved through the ritual integration of its material form, semantic content, and interactive social role.<sup>110</sup> Evidence of purposeful violence against images and texts attests to this identity between medium and message, and ideologically motivated acts of iconoclasm and “inscriptoclasm” were common, politically effective components of broader processes of social formation including state formation and imperial expansion.<sup>111</sup> These acts often accompanied the promotion of, and opposition to, political and religious change in ancient Near Eastern societies. In some cases, these changes entailed innovations associated with monolatrous, aniconic ideologies and ritual traditions, as was the case (to a degree) with New Kingdom Atonism and Deuteronomistic Yahwism.<sup>112</sup> More generally, however, acts of text destruction, abduction, and usurpation accompanied corollary violations of associated iconography, and both practices (text destruction and image destruction) engaged the social agency of texts and images as embodiments of divine and human presence and power.<sup>113</sup> These practices were enacted not only during times of

<sup>109</sup> Bahrani 2003, p. 169.

<sup>110</sup> See Watts 2006.

<sup>111</sup> “Inscriptoclasm”: lacking in the Oxford English Dictionary. Winter (2010a, pp. 28–29) notes Umberto Eco’s helpful term “iconogram.”

<sup>112</sup> On Deuteronomism as an innovation, see Olyan 1988, p. 74; see also Köckert 2008.

<sup>113</sup> See Winter 2010d; Tremplin 2006; Bahrani 2003. As Westenholz (this volume) writes with respect to the Old Akkadian evidence, “Living things have names, stelae have names, statues have names.” Winter writes of how inscriptions served to identify image, text, and referent on ancient Near Eastern inscribed public statuary and monumental narrative iconography. On narrative iconography and the relationship between narrative

and iconic representation, see Winter 2010a, pp. 18, 20; 2010f; see also the discussion of the Sun God Tablet of Nabû-apla-iddina in Woods 2004; see also Hurowitz 2003. With respect to Babylonian entitlement *narûs*, Slanski notes that “imprecations against harming the *narû* hold a position of compositional prominence — they are consistently placed last in any series of imprecations, immediately before the divine curses. This positional prominence underscores the self-referential character of statements referring to the *narû*” (Slanski 2003, p. 61). Note also the subjective, self-referential nature of Gudean statuary inscriptions (e.g., RIME 3/1, 1.7.StB vii 58–viii 8–10: alan igi-zu <sup>d</sup>nin-ĝîr-su-ka-kam alan-gù-dé-a énsi-lagaš<sup>ki</sup>-ka lú é-ninnu-<sup>d</sup>nin-ĝîr-su-ka in-dù-a lú é-ninnu-ta im-ta-ab-è-è-a



religious innovation but also during dynastic succession battles, civil wars, and imperial conflicts.<sup>114</sup>

The classification of text-destruction practices can aid in the explanation of their cultural significance. In some cases, for example, text-artifacts were entirely destroyed through acts intended to blot out forever the names, identities, and memories of the gods, humans, and social relationships inscribed upon them. In other cases, the destruction of texts was the very act that achieved the full manifestation of their semantic content. In most cases, the violation of texts did not entail their complete destruction but rather their transformation in ways that preserved, usurped, and amplified their power in greater perpetuity.

The class of practices discussed by Garfinkel, in which southern Levantine royal inscriptions were obliterated by political opponents and dispersed far from their original contexts, might in this respect be described as a “local succession or liberation” model for ideologically motivated text-destruction practices, the intention of which was to deny all political presence and power formerly represented by those inscribed monuments.<sup>115</sup> This may be distinguished from the type of text violations attested in southern Mesopotamian objects excavated from Susa or usurped cartouches from New Kingdom Egypt. These Mesopotamian and Egyptian text-artifacts exhibit what might be described as a “dynastic or imperial usurpation” model in which inscribed names, dedications, and memorials were not wholly destroyed and dispersed but rather preserved, transformed, and redeployed as magnified embodiments of a new power.<sup>116</sup>

When investigating the phenomenon of text destruction in antiquity, it is therefore important to distinguish between the types of objects that were subjected to abuse as well as the types of abuses to which they were subjected. It is equally important to take into account the social location and social roles of all agents engaged in these activities. The practice of text burial offers an instructive case in point. When public display is an essential component of an inscribed object’s social location, burial would suppress that text’s public agency. The burial of inscribed public monuments thus negates their power to configure social groups in ways represented by their content and actualized by their ritual and political deployment. In such cases, the act of text burial is intentionally harmful, as suggested by the catalog of imprecations inscribed upon Babylonian entitlement *narûs* that specifically prohibit their

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mus-sar-ra-bi šu íb-ta-ab-uru<sub>1,2</sub>-a lú íb-zi-re-a  
“Oh statue, your eye is that of Ningirsu: He who removes from the Eninnu the statue of Gudea, the ruler of Lagaš, who had built Ningirsu’s Eninnu, who rubs off the inscription thereon; who destroys [the statue]...”); see Woods, this volume. Note also the *ktmw* inscription from Zincirli that invokes a sacrifice to Kuttamuwa/Katimuwa’s presence embodied in his inscribed iconographic stela: *wybl lnbšy zy bnšb zn* (“a ram for my ‘soul’ which is in this stela”) (line 5); Pardee 2009, pp. 53–54, 58, 62.

<sup>114</sup> Garfinkel (2009, p. 103) writes: “The erection of sanctuaries, altars and inscriptions expresses and symbolizes the power and sovereignty of the regime that established them. When such a regime comes to its end, if hated by the local population, the monuments related to that regime are also intentionally destroyed. Religious revolutions, dynastic upheavals and occupations by foreign powers (events that are often interconnected) are

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therefore the main causes for the deliberate destruction of ritual objects, sanctuaries and inscriptions in the ancient world.”

<sup>115</sup> See Garfinkel 2009, p. 103. Note the parallel practice of exposing and scattering bones from an enemy’s tomb (Saul M. Olyan, oral communication). Note also the depiction in the Baal Cycle of Anat winnowing, burning, grinding, and sowing Mot in a field (*KTU* 1.6.ii 30–35 and 1.6.v 11–19, translated by Mark S. Smith in Parker 1997, pp. 156, 160–61); Garfinkel 2009, p. 101; Mark S. Smith, oral communication.

<sup>116</sup> Yet another class of practices is attested at Nahr el-Kelb, where the magnification and perpetuation of political presence and power was achieved through the competitive and comparative public display of successive royal memorial inscriptions. Annie Caubet, oral communication; see Weissbach 1922.

burial or displacement to a hidden spot.<sup>117</sup> In other cases, including, for example, palace and temple foundation texts or inscribed sarcophagi, the burial of these objects protected them from depredations and preserved their embodied content.<sup>118</sup> Both intentions are attested in the literary and archaeological record of the ancient Near East; the distinction between burial as harmful and burial as protective depended on an inscribed object's intended social location and public agency.<sup>119</sup>

It cannot be said that acts of text violation — even acts of total text destruction — always served to nullify a text's semantic content. On the contrary, the destruction or loss of a text was often the very act that actualized aspects of its content. This was the case, for example, with Yahwistic oracle scrolls that were burned (Jer 36:23), submerged (Jer 51:63), or ingested (Ezek 3:1–3), with Egyptian execration texts that were broken, and indeed with any text-artifact violated in ways prohibited by curses inscribed upon it.<sup>120</sup> Remarkably, therefore, the full semantic range and power of ancient Near Eastern texts was realized not only through their writing and reading but also through their violation and destruction. The “original context” of an ancient Near Eastern text — the identification of which is a primary goal of modern scholarship — may therefore involve numerous potential sites of social agency associated with a text's production, deployment, and reception. This may include the authors of a text, its fashioners, and the embodied identities inscribed upon it, as well as the audiences of a text, its violators, and the agents who engaged it in ritualized social locations.

It may be of some encouragement to text scholars and archaeologists alike that damaged inscriptions might embody, in their fragmentary state, clues to their meaning for the ancients who created and interacted with them. Reading ancient texts “in context” therefore requires attention to literary, historical, archaeological, and ritual contexts.<sup>121</sup> The gap between a

<sup>117</sup> In some cases, of course, burial with intention to harm in fact preserved a text or image for future generations. The destruction of palaces and temples could likewise preserve inscribed, iconic representations of defeated peoples under fallen debris, as was the case with the Philistine royal inscription from Ekron (Gitin, Dothan, and Naveh 1997). Note also how curses against text violation and removal include the threat of no burial for the violator. The Sun God Tablet of Nabû-apla-iddina (SGT), for example, concludes with a warning against anyone who “destroys this stela” (N<sup>A</sup>NA.RÚ.A šú-a-tu ú-ḫal-la-qu): “As for that man ... may his corpse fall to the ground, yet there be no one to bury it!” (LÚ šu-a-tu<sub>4</sub> ... lim-quit šal-mat-su-ma ṛqé<sup>7</sup>-bi-ra a-a ir-ši) (SGT vi 43–44, 54–55); text, translation, discussion in Woods 2004, pp. 88–89, 99–100, where Woods also notes similar curses in BBSt 9 ii 24–25; AOAT 2 (Hunger 1968, p. 40, no. 91, line 7) and MDP 6 (Scheil 1905, p. 38, line 21).

<sup>118</sup> Objects inscribed with public agency were at times buried for protection against abduction and depredation by opposing social groups. See Ben-Tor 2006, pp. 9–11; Garfinkel 1994; 2009, pp. 100–03; Ussishkin, 1970.

<sup>119</sup> For further discussion on the burial of texts and images, see Ben-Tor 2006, pp. 9–11; Garfinkel 1994, 2009; Ussishkin 1970; Moerman 2010; Broo 2010. Note also the related distinction between, on the one hand, inscribed palace reliefs, and, on the other hand, inscribed stones,

tablets, and moveable statuary. A palace by its very nature could not be removed or hidden. The public agency of palace reliefs and inscriptions was therefore protected yet also exposed to depredations during warfare and dynastic succession conflicts. See Russell 1991; 1999; Winter 2010e; Bahrani 2008, pp. 125–28. Russell notes that “Neo-Assyrian palace inscriptions conclude with an invocation to the gods and request that future kings preserve and restore the palace,” and that “in Sennacherib's palace the same extended texts that were carved on the colossi at the palace doors were also inscribed on cylinders and prisms of clay that were then baked and buried in the palace foundations” (Russell 1999, p. 10, fig. 6). Neo-Assyrian palace foundation texts were therefore copies of publically displayed documents kept purposefully hidden. Clay tablet copies (as well as original master copies) of entitlement *narûs*, loan documents, and other legal and economic text-artifacts were similarly made and stored in archives for preservation and verification, in contrast to their public manifestations in stone *narûs* and other inscribed monuments visibly installed before gods and humans in temple and palace settings. See Woods 2004, pp. 98–99 (SGT vi 31–32); Slanski 2003, pp. 121–22.

<sup>120</sup> On Egyptian execration texts, see Ritner 1993, pp. 136–90.

<sup>121</sup> See Bell 1988.

written sign and the meaning it signified (explicitly conflated and ritually intertwined by the ancients) might thereby be bridged when modern interpreters reconstruct (and reconnect) an ancient text's semantic content, social location, and material form.

The text-artifacts we recover from the past are in the end never fully emptied of their power as social agents. From Susa to Nineveh to Alexandria, successive empires of antiquity abducted and violated representations of the past. The scale of these violations led to the loss, as well as to the preservation, of the textual and iconographic embodiments of the gods, kings, and peoples of the ancient Near East. The power of these representations, and the practice of their abduction and usurpation, remains on display in the libraries, museums, and other public spaces of Europe, North America, and the Middle East today.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Many text-artifacts discussed in this paper are housed in museums where they display not only the cultural legacy of the ancient Near East but also the colonial legacy of the modern West. Other ancient Near Eastern inscribed artifacts, including, for example, the Siloam inscription, were brought to Istanbul by Hamdi Bey in the waning days of Ottoman power (Annie Caubet, oral communication). On colonialism and Near

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Eastern archaeology, see Bahrani 2003. Note also the 1860–1861 Napoleon III text written over the faded surface of a New Kingdom Egyptian inscribed iconographic monument at Nahr el-Kelb; this French-Egyptian monument was in turn destroyed by an Ottoman soldier during the First World War (fig. 11.13). See Weissbach 1922, pp. 18–19, pl. 5.



Figure 11.1. Tell Faḥariye bilingual statuary inscription, with curses against name usurpation (Millard and Bordreuil 1982, p. 135; © 1982 American Schools of Oriental Research. All rights reserved. Republished here by permission of the American Schools of Oriental Research. Photo by Jean Dufour, originally published in Abou-Assaf, Bourdreuil, and Millard 1982, pl. 1)

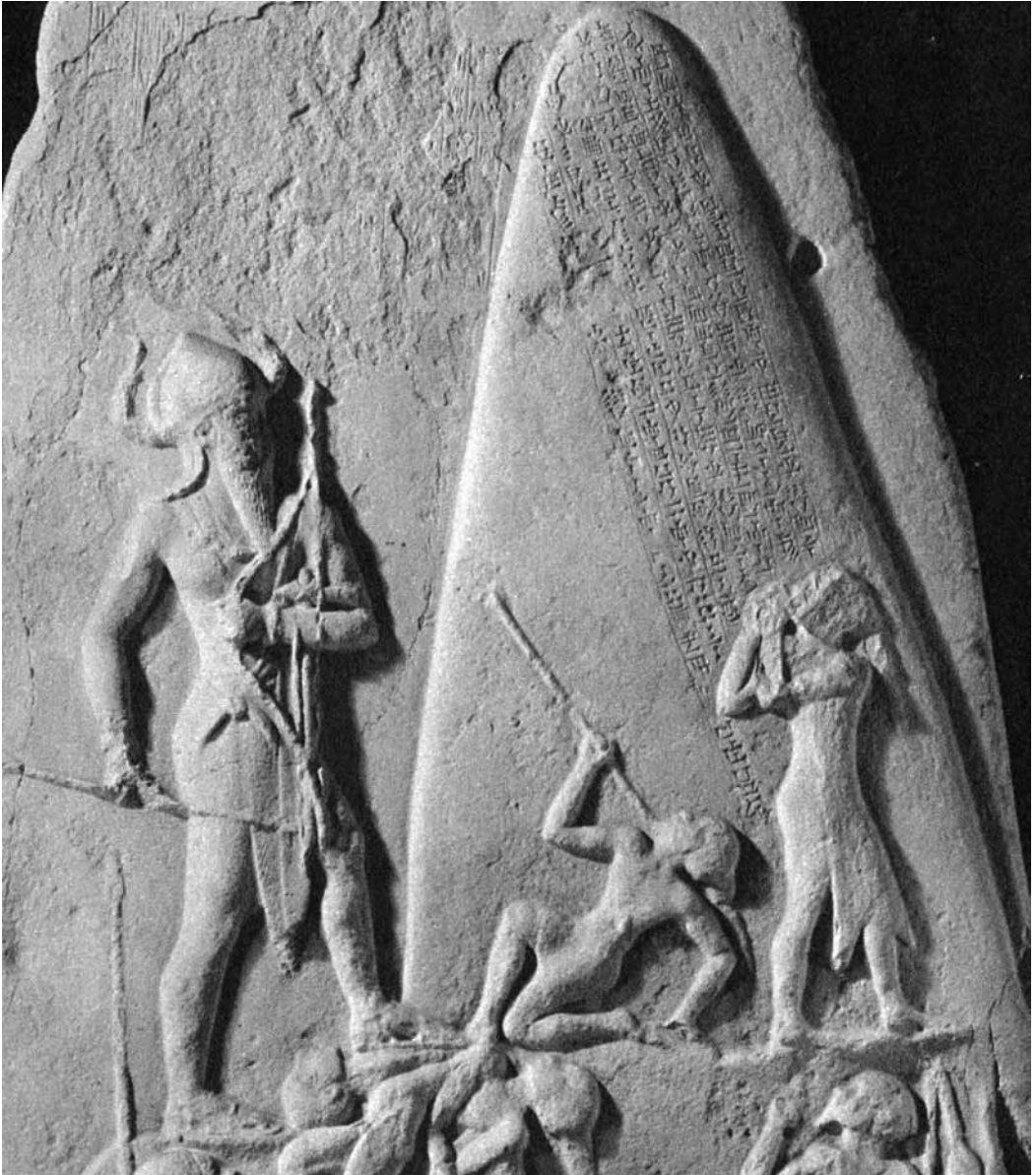


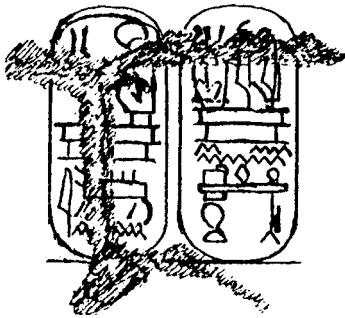
Figure 11.2. Victory Stela of Narām-Sîn (detail) with Elamite inscription  
(after Musée du Louvre 1936, p. 214)



Figure 11.3. Meli-šipak narû (*kudurru*), effaced surface  
(Musée du Louvre 1936, p. 264)



Figure 11.4. Marduk-nadin-abhe narü (kudurru) (BBSt 7), face A, lower part (King 1912, pl. 54)

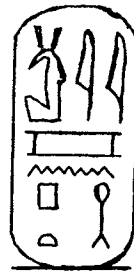
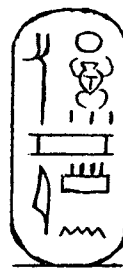
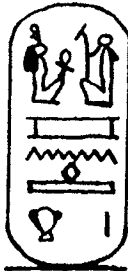


Superimposed cartouches

Original version

Second version

Final version



Prenominal

Nomen

Nomen

Prenominal

Nomen

Merenptah

Amenmesse

Seti II

Figure 11.5. Example of Nineteenth Dynasty cartouche usurpation. Relief detail, outer western wall, Cour de la Cachette, Karnak (after Yurco 1986, figs. 10–11; see also Yurco 1990, p. 25; republished by permission of the American Research Center in Egypt, Inc. [ARCE]. Photo by Frank Yurco)

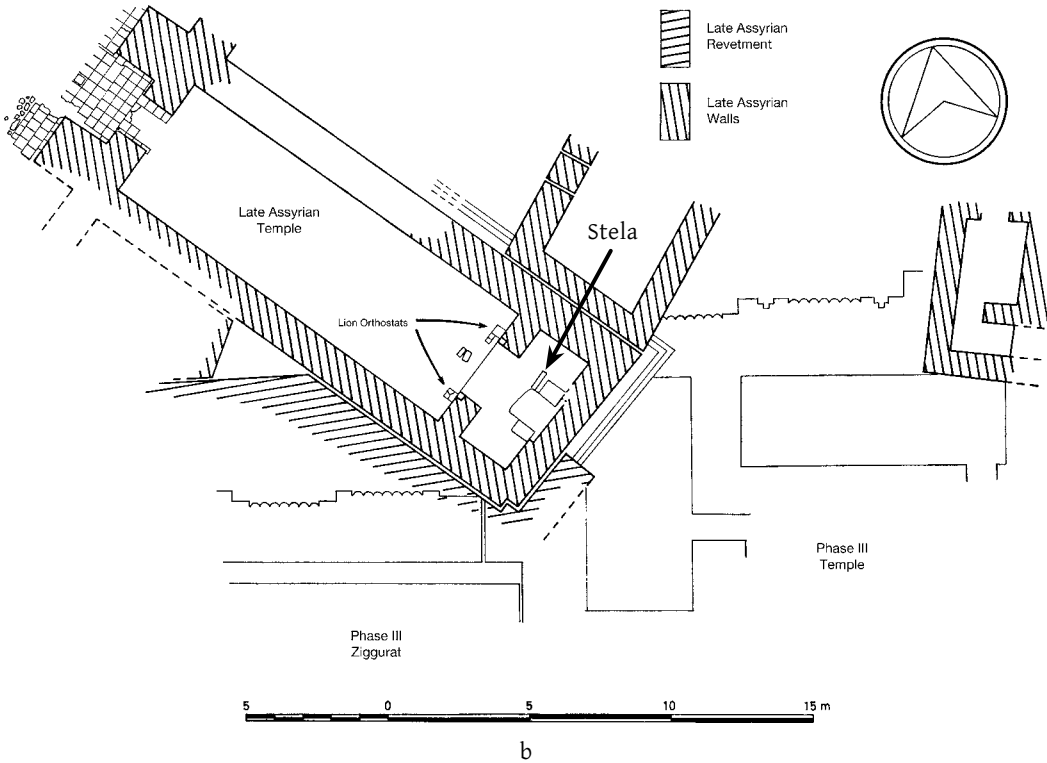




Figure 11.6. Adad-nirari III stela with erasure, Tell al-Rimah (Oates 1968, pl. 38; reproduced by permission of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq [on behalf of Joan Oates])



a



b

Figure 11.7. (a) Adad-nīrārī III stela in situ in the Late Assyrian temple, Tell al-Rimah (Oates 1968, pl. 32); (b) Plan of the Late Assyrian temple, Tell al-Rimah (after Oates 1968, pl. 33) (image and plan reproduced by permission of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq [on behalf of Joan Oates])



Figure 11.8. Esarhaddon's succession treaty with Ramataia (obverse), Nimrud (Wiseman 1958, pl. 1; reproduced by permission of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq)

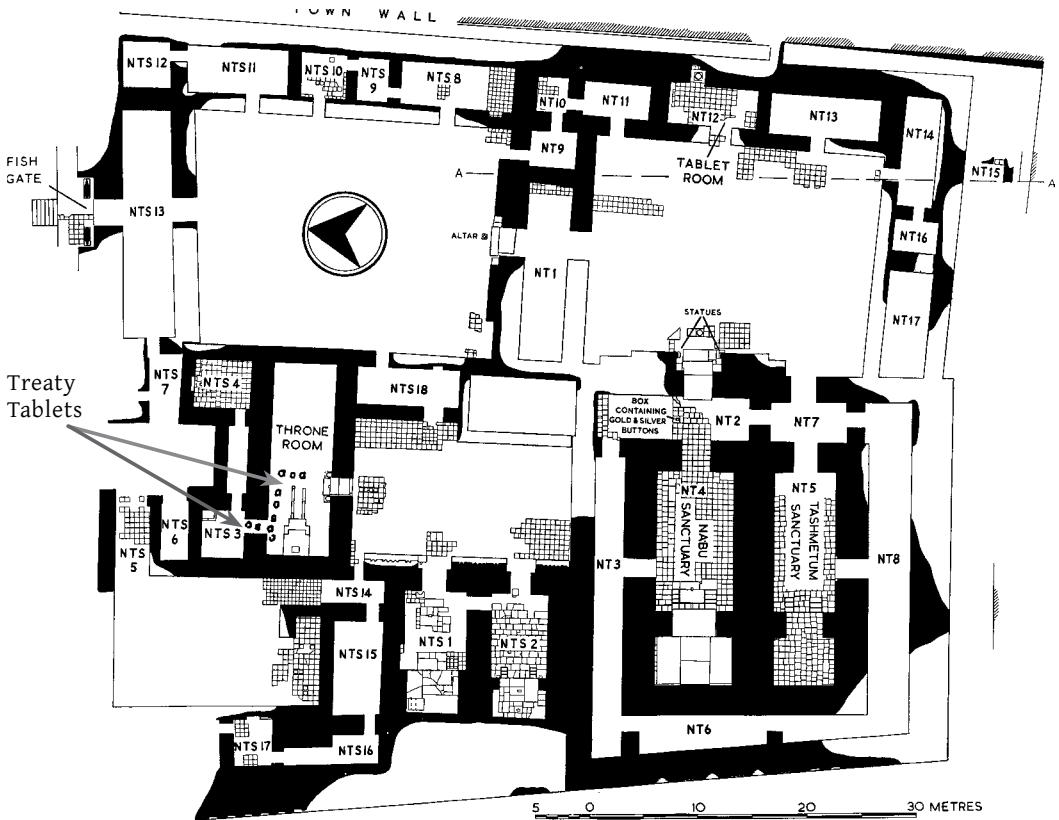


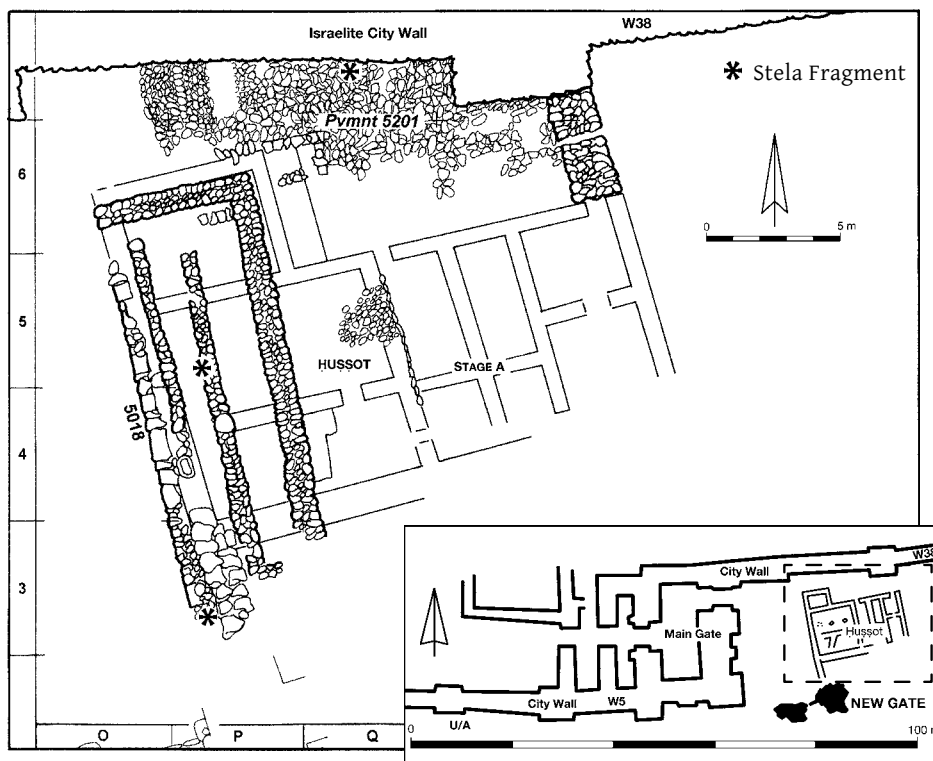
Figure 11.9. Plan of the Nabû temple complex, Nimrud, with findspot of treaty fragments in throne room (after Mallowan 1957, pl. 2, and Wiseman 1958, fig. 1) (plan reproduced by permission of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq)



Figure 11.10. Throne room ivories from the Nabû temple complex, Nimrud (Wiseman 1958, pl. 6:1) (image reproduced by permission of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq)



a

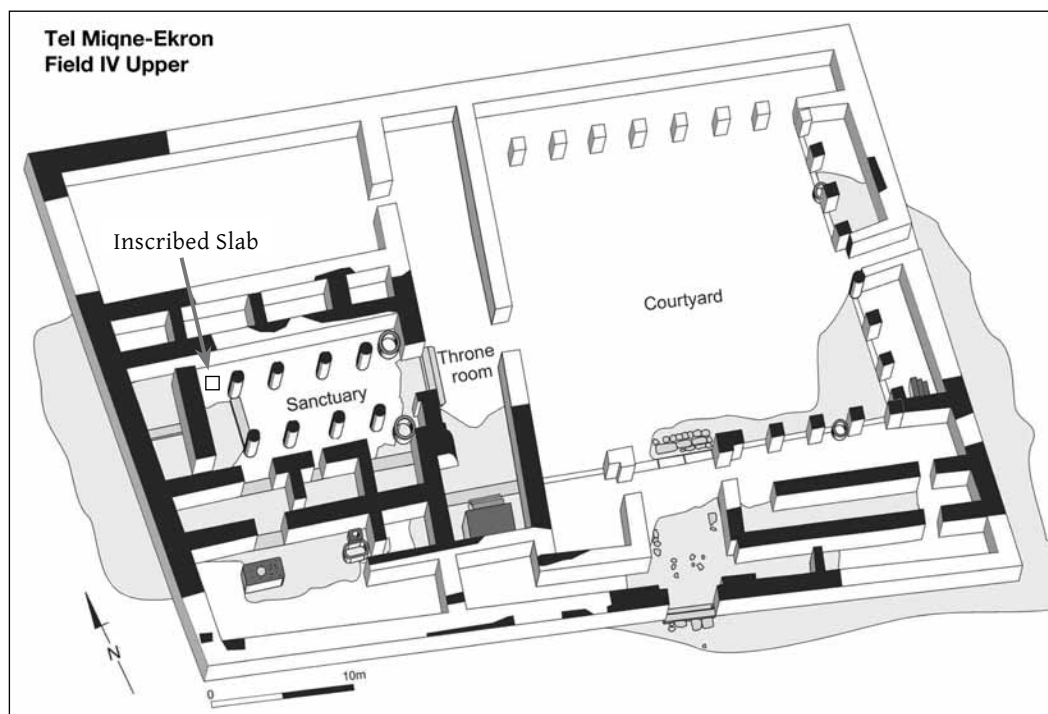


b

Figure 11.11. (a) Aramaic memorial stela (fragment A) near findspot, Tel Dan (Biran and Naveh 1993, fig. 6; reproduced by permission of the Israel Exploration Society. Photo by Avraham Biran); (b) Plan of Tel Dan, outer gate area (inset shows area of detail), with findspots of stela fragments (after Biran and Ben-Dov 2002, figs. 1.4 and 1.18; reproduced courtesy of the Hebrew Union College)



a



b

Figure 11.12. (a) Royal dedicatory inscription in situ, temple complex 650, Tel Miqne-Ekron (photo provided by Seymour Gitin, from Gitin, Dothan, and Naveh 1997, fig. 1); (b) isometric plan of stratum IB/C, temple complex 650, Tel Miqne-Ekron, with findspot of royal dedicatory inscription (plan provided by Seymour Gitin, Tel Miqne-Ekron Publications Project [pointer added])



Figure 11.13. Napoleon III inscription on New Kingdom Egyptian monument, Nahr el-Kelb (Weissbach 1922, pl. 5)

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## EPISODES OF ICONOCLASM IN THE EGYPTIAN NEW KINGDOM

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gp pt jhy sbꜣw nmm pdt sdꜣ ksw  
 3krw gr r.sn gnmw mꜣ.n.sn Wnꜣs hꜥ  
 bꜣ m nꜥr ꜥnhꜣ m jt.w.f wꜣb m mwwt.f  
 Wnꜣs pj nb sꜣbwt hm.n mwt.f rn.f  
 jw špsw Wnꜣs m pt jw wsr.f m ꜣht  
 mj Jtm jt.f ms.sw jw ms.n.f sw wsr.  
 sw r.f

Sky darkens; stars go out;  
 Vaults (of heaven) tremble; bones of earth shake.  
 The decans are stilled against them.  
 They have seen Unas, risen, empowered,  
 As a god living on his father, feeding on his mother.  
 The splendor of Unas is in the sky. His power is in the horizon  
 like his father Atum, who created him. He created him. (Now)  
 he is more powerful than he.  
 (Sethe 1908, pp. 205–06, PT 393–95; Eyre 2002, p. 7)

For the ancient Egyptians, as no doubt for other cultures, violence was a part of creation. In the “Cannibal Hymn” of the Old Kingdom the appearance of a newly deceased king amidst the pantheon of celestial eternity caused quakes in heaven and earth and stopped the movement of the stars themselves. The effect of the new primary god was “cataclysmic,” to use Christopher Eyre’s word, and resulted from the cosmic *sight* of Unas formed as a glorious and magically powerful god — even more powerful than the first mover himself. The ancient poem is not at all an inappropriate way to introduce the topic of iconoclasm in the much later New Kingdom, for the import of image creation in Egyptian cultural terms changed little in the intervening period. In a volume many of you may have seen, *The Making of the Cult Image in the Ancient Near East* (Lorton 1999), David Lorton describes the process of Egyptian art production as a violent and destructive one, and one could hardly debate this point. To create a statue the stone was hammered and chiseled from its earthly home, then cut and shaped into its new form. Gold was boiled and scalded in a cauldron, pigments were ground with pestle and mortar. Yet the result of such activity was to provide the new form with all the raw elements used therein so as to add to the *Ba*, the empowered personality, that would reside in the image. Thus the process, although violent, was not negative, but transformative. As the Pyramid Texts and the later funerary literature illustrate, however, what could be created could also be damaged, and enemies were thought to lurk everywhere. The Cannibal Hymn ended with a characteristically Egyptian exclamation: *jw Wnꜣs m nn hꜥ hꜥ j.mn j.mn nj šhm jr w jrwt m hꜣbs st-jb Wnꜣs m ꜥnhꜣ m tꜣ pn dt r nhꜣ* “Unas is that one who rises and rises, who endures and endures. The doers of misdeeds do not have the power to destroy. The *st-ib* (place of the heart) of Unas is among the living in this land for ever and ever” (Sethe 1908, p. 216, PT 414; Eyre 2002, p. 10). Yet despite the bravado, throughout the funerary texts the potential for attack is not only mentioned but also is cause for including spells to prevent it. The aim of mummification was to preserve the body as a vessel for the life force, and the aim of image

creation was similar. Because the power of the raw materials employed added to the effectiveness of the mummy, statue, relief, or painting, like “Unas risen” the image was more powerful than the living being. According to the Memphite Theology, which is preserved on a Twenty-fifth Dynasty monument whose text purports to reproduce an ancient text, Ptah created the gods by means of thought and utterance (Schlögl 1980; Assmann 1997). As Ta-Tennen, the chthonic deity, Ptah gave birth to the gods because everything came from the earth. *ms.n.f ntrw...stwt n.f dt.sn r htp jbw.sn st[t] k.ntrw m dt.sn m ht nb m ʿt nb m jm nb ht nb rd hr-ht.w.f hpr n.sn jm* “He gave birth to the gods ... He made their bodies according to their wishes. Thus the gods entered into their bodies, of every wood, every stone, every clay, every thing that grows upon him (i.e., Ta-Tennen) in which they came to be” (Lichtheim 1975, p. 55).<sup>1</sup>

Elements of the Egyptian belief system have been loosely compared to animistic and pantheistic religions that recognized divine vitality in all material. Its mature expressions from the Old Kingdom onward were largely monistic and linked the supposed spirits of the natural and supernatural worlds through an elaborate solar theology (Hornung 1982, pp. 127–28). This perceived dynamism undoubtedly underlies the representational impetuses seen already in the Neolithic period. The power of the hunters and their prey was depicted and thereby preserved on Predynastic pottery in Naqada I times, but even more significantly, the hunted hippos and elephants were captured and held and eventually buried as revered deities in the Hierakonpolis cemeteries (Friedman 2003; Van Neer and Linseele 2003; Oldfield and Jones 2003). Their powers were thus held by the community (later the ruler), and this practice was continued through Egyptian history in such cults as those of the Apis and Mnevis bulls (Kessler 1989).

Similarly divine powers within each person were thought to transcend this world and were contained in the body and other representative vessels, such as statues, mummy masks, and so on. In other words, death was not final, even for those who were identified as the damned and described as dead (*mwt*). The spirits of deceased people might be active in both worlds in a positive or negative manner after death, and necessarily the Egyptians both preserved the human body and its imaged embodiments and also attempted to destroy both when a threat was perceived (Borghouts 1982; Ritner 1993, pp. 111–83). Repelling, blocking, and damaging the vessels containing any hostile spirit was the Egyptian response.

In recent years Predynastic (ca. 4000 B.C.E.) bodies from Hierakonpolis were excavated showing evidence of early forms of mummification: linen wrapping on the heads and upper bodies and organ preservation with resins. Some eighteen bodies have been discovered with the heads severed from the bodies — cut through cleanly and deliberately — and a century ago William Flinders Petrie found dismembered and decapitated bodies at Gerzeh (fig. 12.1) (Dougherty and Friedman 2008; Petrie, Wainwright, and Mackay 1912, pp. 8–15; Maish 2003; Dougherty 2004; Picardo 2004). Gerald A. Wainwright described the bodies from Gerzeh and found that the most commonly removed body parts were feet, heads, and hands. He discussed these types of dismemberment as part of ritual efforts to impede the movements of the dead. It has not escaped notice that the funerary texts abound with spells for keeping one’s head on the body as a means of ensuring vitality in the next life (Petrie, Wainwright, and Mackay

<sup>1</sup> The Shabaka Stone, British Museum 498. The date of the original text is still debated. Schlögl argued for a date in the Nineteenth Dynasty, although more recent

analyses have analyzed the theological approaches as more typical of the first millennium B.C.E. One author has even suggested a Ptolemaic date (Krauss 1999).

1912, pp. 11–15; Picardo 2004). The bodies at Hierakonpolis and Gerzeh were disturbed post-deposit and, as the excavator noted, probably soon after burial, because only the head end of the graves was disordered. The dismemberment was done by someone who knew well the placement of the body in the ground. Perhaps the bodies were mistreated deliberately even before burial, a fact that would also indicate animus toward the deceased (Dougherty and Friedman 2008, pp. 330–32). Wainwright noted that a valuable necklace was left in grave 67 despite being around the broken neck (Petrie, Wainwright, and Mackay 1912, p. 8). Thus it is likely that there was real animus toward the deceased and perhaps, more significantly, a real fear of his or her action against the living. “[T]he mutilation or dismemberment probably took the form here set forth with the extra intention of laying the ghost, either by preventing it from walking, or by killing it by cutting off the head, or lastly by depriving it of power, if it should walk, by destroying its hands” (Petrie, Wainwright, and Mackay 1912, p. 10).

Turning to image destruction and mutilation *per se*, it is perhaps clear now how invested with imagined power were representations and how close to the surface unresolved disputes may have been for these ancient peoples. A thousand years after the decapitated incipient mummies of the Predynastic were disturbed in their graves, the so-called Fourth Dynasty reserve heads were placed in elite tombs at Giza (fig. 12.2). These heads have frequently shown damage to the ears and eyes and often appear to have been hacked. Roland Tefnin believed these heads were deliberately scarred in emulation of punishment (Tefnin 1991).<sup>2</sup> The heads were found in the tomb shafts and burial chambers rather than in cult chapels (Roehrig 1999, pp. 74–78). This has been explained as forming a barrier between the deceased and the world above (Picardo 2004). Here the heads would serve both as warnings to those intending violence to the deceased similar to that seen on the Predynastic bodies and as potential alternate heads in the event of destruction to the body and cult statues (Tefnin 1991). Such dual and seemingly opposite functions for the objects is not as strange as it might seem, for as Eyre has described with respect to the Cannibal Hymn, the king was both the spirit who ate and acquired the bodies and organs of the gods and also the metaphorical sacrificial bull whose dismemberment and consumption is described in the poem. Eyre continued in discussing decapitation in the bull slaughtering ritual: “Decapitation is primarily a symbol of the destruction of enemies who threaten the deceased, while the restoration of the head marks resurrection” (2002, p. 95). Thus to cover both cases with a single object — the reserve head — may have been distinctly Egyptian in intent and analogous to the mutilation of hieroglyphs in tomb and coffin inscriptions. This was a means of control over potentially harmful forces and the consequent turning of them to positive functions.

## EPISODE 1: THE PROSCRIPTION OF HATSHEPSUT

Looking now at some of the mutilated monuments of the Eighteenth Dynasty, we can survey several types of media and more than one time period. The royal art of Hatshepsut is quite distinctive in having been sweepingly attacked some twenty-five years after the ruler’s demise (Dorman 2005).<sup>3</sup> It has been pointed out numerous times that Thutmose III

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<sup>2</sup> Despite the variety of explanations for the purpose of reserve heads, most authors agree that the violence done to them was not accidental during excavation or grave robbery (Roehrig 1999, pp. 78–79).

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<sup>3</sup> See his note 1, with references to pertinent bibliography. In particular, see Dorman 1988, pp. 46–65.

tolerated his stepmother and aunt on monuments of the coregency for most of his sole reign, but, once begun, the attack on her was carried out with determination. The proscription of Hatshepsut's name and figure may only have been carried out to discourage any surviving member of the Ahmoside royal family whose blood the queen presumably carried through her mother Ahmose, along with that of her father Thutmose I. The Thutmose family descended through Thutmose I and his secondary wife Mutnofret, the parents of Hatshepsut's husband and half-brother Thutmose II, and this was the inheritance of Thutmose III and his son Amenhotep II. That there was some concern for the opposition of Amenhotep II's succession is circumstantially supported by the continued destruction of Hatshepsut's monuments into that king's reign, although it appears to have ceased after a short period (Bryan 1996, pp. 34–35; Roth 2005, pp. 280–81). Several scholars have noted that Thutmose III's long sole reign of thirty-three years documents his slow transformation from the coregent and junior partner of Hatshepsut into a powerful military victor, a pious and prolific monument builder on behalf of the gods, and a loyal offspring of his family line (Arnold 2005, p. 274). Dimitri Laboury has pointed out that his latest statuary recasts him to resemble more his grandfather and father, Thutmose I and II (Laboury 2006, pp. 263–67; Laboury 1998, pp. 457–82). Some of Thutmose III's revisions of Hatshepsut's relief during the proscription changed her name into one of the Thutmose predecessors (Roth 2005, p. 267).

Dorothea Arnold has discussed the destruction of the statues of Hatshepsut from her Deir el-Bahri temple, referring to their removal from the temple and consequent deposit in two large holes: the Hatshepsut Hole (Winlock's "Hattie's Hole") to the southeast of the lower colonnade; and the quarry to the northeast of the same (fig. 12.3) (Arnold 2005; Winlock 1928a, pp. 44–58; Winlock 1928b; Winlock 1923, pp. 32–39). Some statues had earlier been carefully altered to remove the *uraei* from the queen's head, an alteration that removed an emblem of royalty but also deprived the ruler of the deity's protection (Arnold 2005, p. 272 and n. 19).<sup>4</sup> When the wholesale mutilation began the statues were removed serially from the temple terraces — from top to bottom — and dumped near the holes (Arnold 2005, p. 273).<sup>5</sup> There they were broken up with stone hammers and then pushed into the holes. Arnold points out that the work was not always done thoroughly and that statues were sometimes destroyed on only one side. Yet the pattern of destruction shows that the figures were routinely attacked at the neck or shoulders, while only occasionally on the face (Winlock 1928b, p. 15). The lower limbs — hands and feet — were hacked on most statues, frequently separating the figures from their bases. In other words, the statue mutilation paralleled the violence done to the Predynastic bodies from Gerzeh and Hierakonpolis.

Contemporary Theban elite tombs containing the ritual of the opening of the mouth preserve the texts that relate to fears about statue (or anthropoid coffin) mutilation. There we find the *sem* priest speaking of a just-completed tomb statue still in the workshop with the sculptors (fig. 12.4) (Otto 1960, Scenes 12–13, vol. 1, pp. 31–35; vol. 2, pp. 60–65). The priest, enacting the role of the son and heir of the statue owner, refers to him as "father" and first

<sup>4</sup> In these early instances of hostility toward Hatshepsut, the goddess is probably to be identified as Maat rather than Wadjet or Nesret. On a kneeling figure of the queen the name of Maat was also removed from her prenomen, Maat-ka-re (Arnold 2005, p. 272).

<sup>5</sup> Arnold suggests that the photographs from Winlock's expedition demonstrate the sequence of statue destruction. Winlock's own descriptions of the finds were aimed at determining how many statues had existed and where in the temple precinct they had been located before removal and destruction (Winlock 1928b, pp. 17–22).

asserts the safety of the image; then, however, he poses questions about the vulnerability of the figure: Scene 12: “My father has been branded for me; my father was made for me; my father was perfectly imaged for me.” Scene 13: “Who are they who will confront my father? Who strikes my father? Who grabs his head? Who strikes your father?”<sup>6</sup> Thus, as with the actual mutilation of Hatshepsut’s statues, the specific concern for the head’s removal is preserved in the mouth-opening ritual. Eberhard Otto, who published the ritual texts, recognized that the same tools used to create the images could be turned against them — as they were against Hatshepsut’s images. Likewise this ritual concern for the statue’s mutilation was a protective response to the vulnerability of the tomb owner’s mummy (Otto 1960, vol. 2, pp. 64–65; Lorton 1999).

On the other hand, inscriptions and names of the queen were not necessarily attacked by those who hacked up the statuary, and this led Arnold to conclude that the destruction was carried out prior to the proscription that began after year 42 (Arnold 2005, pp. 272–73). If we turn to an examination of the temple relief decoration we may be able to further consider this suggestion by Arnold.

In the exhibition catalog that accompanied the Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh exhibition organized by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2005, Ann Roth discussed the erasures of Hatshepsut’s monuments (Roth 2005). She identified eight techniques used: (1) scratching with a pointed tool, (2) chipped silhouette with flat chisel, (3) rectangular roughening, (4) smoothing and plastering, (5) replacement of her figure with an inanimate object or replacement of her cartouches, (6) patching, (7) covering, and (8) dismantling. The last three of these are not attested at Deir el-Bahri, but covering (7) to entirely obscure a monument from view and dismantling (8) were carried out in Karnak Temple. At all locations male royal images of Hatshepsut were consistently damaged or attributed to another king. The names of the ruler were erased throughout, although elements of her prenomen Maat-ka-re were sometimes left intact, perhaps because of their divine elements. Images of the queen in a female form, best known from Karnak Temple, have been found from dismantled monuments of the reign of Thutmose II and the period of the transition to the coregency. Hatshepsut herself dismantled much of the shrine Netjery-Menu in year 7 as she openly asserted the coregency. Those that she left intact were modified to show her in a masculine form, and Thutmose III dismantled them in year 23 in association with building his Karnak Akhmenu (L. Gabolde 2005, p. 17). The feminine images were largely absent from the Deir el-Bahri relief, and since the queen herself was responsible for dismantling and modifying those from Karnak (and probably Nubia), Roth’s suggestion that representations of Hatshepsut as queen were deliberately left intact may be somewhat misleading (Roth 2005, p. 281). It is pertinent to note that the female royal statues of Hatshepsut from Deir el-Bahri were treated similarly to the male images.

It is probable that the degree of erasure of Hatshepsut’s name and figures beginning after year 42 was motivated partially by the intended future functioning of the monuments in question. Cathleen Keller commented on Senenmut’s statues from Armant where only the steward’s name was erased. She suggested that the cryptographic writing of Hatshepsut’s name was left undisturbed on three similar statues because it also could express a form of the

<sup>6</sup> From the tomb of Rekhmire, reign of Thutmose III: <sup>12b</sup> *ꜥb n.(i) it irw n.(i) it.i stwt n.(i)* <sup>13b</sup> *ꜥꜥ mdw m ꜥsf.t(y).snm it.i ꜥꜥ mdw m ꜥw it.i ꜥꜥ mdw m ndr tp.f ꜥꜥ mdw m ꜥw it.k.* The priest’s recitation may be answered by the other arti-

sans in the last response. Note the future participle in 13b; other participles are used substantively (Otto 1960, vol. 2, p. 64).

name of the goddess Renenutet of Armant and could render the statue sacred to her (Keller 2005; Dorman 1988, pp. 137–38). At Deir el-Bahri, however, this cryptograph of Maat-ka-re became the frieze decoration above much of the temple wall relief, and it was consistently but carefully changed. The arms of the *Ka* sign that surround the cobra of the goddess Maat crowned with the sun disk of Re were chiseled away leaving a solarized uraeus, still readable as Maat or another goddess (fig. 12.5) (Roth 2005, p. 280, fig. 101; Naville 1898, pl. 56). The temple's many rooms honoring Amun's and Hathor's cults as well as the family of Thutmose I, were to remain functional.

At Karnak Hatshepsut's monuments occupied the true heart of the temple, and Thutmose III would have had difficulty entirely removing all of them as he continued his own constructions. Thus in the narrow and crowded Wadjyt Hall which housed her two obelisks, perhaps even before the dishonoring commenced, he erected sheath walls up to the room's roof to hide the shafts (Carlotti and Gabolde 2003). Likewise after his workers had carefully chiseled away the queen's images from her limestone suite at the center of the temple, he then built a wall paralleling the central bark shrine, masking Hatshepsut's rooms altogether. There he had his famous Annals begun with reliefs of the dedication of his booty to the god Amun-re. Since the actual entrance to the rooms was to the west, the relief images and names of Hatshepsut were entirely erased, eliminating the queen's involvement with the rituals depicted (Laskowski 2006, pp. 200–01).

A similar approach was taken at Deir el-Bahri, where the temple was to continue functioning for Hathor and for Thutmose I and II (Roth 2005; Dorman 2005; O'Connor 2006, pp. 6–7). Hatshepsut was either carefully removed or her name was replaced by that of her husband, father, or, rarely, Thutmose III himself (fig. 12.6). The scenes of voyaging to Punt and the divine birth of the ruler were far less damaged than those of the lowest terrace. The figures of Hatshepsut were generally left intact with the name removed or replaced. The significance of the divine birth probably protected its integrity, and Ramesses II later renewed it for his own mythological engenderment by Amun. Scenes of the great Opet and Valley festivals, each celebrated annually in Thebes, remained on the walls of the Upper Terrace with the bark shrine for Amun-re's statue boat placed behind. Thutmose III constructed his own temple at a slightly higher elevation south of the upper terrace. It united the complexes of Mentuhotep and Hatshepsut but created a processional destination for the Valley feast above both (O'Connor 2006, p. 7; Laskowski 2006, pp. 208–09). There was, however, no central rock shrine at the rear of the court (Lipińska 2005, p. 286). It is possible that, having modified the reliefs of Hatshepsut's building to honor his own family line, the ruler intended to fuse the three buildings and infuse his memory with that of Mentuhotep II while also honoring his Thutmoside ancestors. Whether the removal of all the statue images of Hatshepsut from her temple was balanced by a program of sculpture for the new building is, however, dubious. A sphinx-lined processional way might have been expected, but it does not appear to have been achieved (Lipińska 2005; Arnold 2005, fig. 89).

It is significant that the treatment of Hatshepsut's statuary was entirely different from that of the queen's relief. The temple architecture was not dismantled — neither at Deir el-Bahri nor at the Hatshepsut suite at Karnak — and this meant that it was still visible to the gods and to visitors. The necessity for erasure or replacement was thus invoked in order to impede the magical power of Hatshepsut's spirit. On the other hand, the statuary was treated as were the Predynastic bodies: broken, disjointed, decapitated; the removal of their hands, feet, and heads left them functionless (fig. 12.7). Just as the images were attacked to



prevent threats, magical texts were utilized to incapacitate enemies. Ostrakon Armytage [2] 6–9 (Borghouts 1978, pp. 1–2; Shorter 1936):

ḥꜥ.k pꜣ nty jy jnk ꜥk m sḏr ꜣm pr sꜣ.tw nw ꜥt jrꜣ ḥꜣww ḥꜥ.k jw.k tnw rj jw.j ꜥk ḥt.k m ꜥmtw.j  
mꜣꜣ ḥt.k m ḥnw.fjw.j jr.j ḥr.k m nꜣ ḥꜣ tp.k ḥꜣtt rd.k m tbw sꜣ.k bn ꜣḥ mdwt.k bn sḏm.tw.fgꜣnn  
ḥꜥwt.k ḥsj pdw.k ḥꜥ.k jnk ḥr sꜣ ꜣst pry.[j] m rd.wyj

You will stand still, you who are coming! I am somebody who enters a sleeping mat (or sleep) that is covered (?), who leaves <through> the ground (?), a man who acts as a fighter. You will stand still! Where are you going with regard to me? I will enter your belly as a fly and then I will see your belly from its inside. I will turn your face into the back of your head, the front of your feet into your heels! Your speech is no use, it will not be heard. Your body becomes limp, your knee becomes feeble. You will stand still — I am Horus, the son of Isis, <I> will leave on my (own) feet!

This text threatens the spirit of the enemy with physical damage — twisted neck and feet and general immobility. The enemy was prevented from all action, just as Hatshepsut would have been (fig. 12.8).

Yet, in addition to their dismemberment, the Hatshepsut statue fragments were placed in the ground. They would have been enlivened by the opening of the mouth ritual. The animating role of the opening of the mouth ritual carried out on statues, mummies, tombs, and even whole temples has no known reversal ritual; compare the elaborate execration rituals (Ritner 1993, pp. 136–52). However, as Lorton has discussed, another ritual, that of the daily liturgy, treated the maintenance of cult statues (Lorton 1999, pp. 131–45; Otto 1960, vol. 2, Scenes 1–15). Once originally enlivened,<sup>7</sup> they required regular care, as well as cycles of sleeping and waking in synchronization with the rising and setting of the sun — a source of energy for divine activity (Meeks and Favard-Meeks 1997, pp. 124–29). The caching, or burial, of complete statues, as at Karnak Temple, thus took the divine images out of service as spiritual vessels (Goyon 2004). Without purification and a call to “awaken,” retired images simply slept. Hatshepsut’s destroyed and buried images were far more entirely decommissioned. Like the reserve heads of the Old Kingdom, Hatshepsut’s own mutilated images were buried before her former temple to incapacitate her spirit and thereby prevent its potentially hostile activity (Ritner 1993, pp. 168–71). As if to finalize his sealing up of the queen’s statue images, when Thutmose III built his own temple next to Hatshepsut’s, begun year 43 with the onset of the proscription, he placed the causeway over the Hatshepsut Hole (Arnold 2005). The need to remove Hatshepsut’s name from her broken statue images was therefore vitiated by the statue destruction. The date of the removal and destruction of these sculptures was thus probably the same as modifications to the temple itself.

## EPISODE 2: AKHENATEN AND THE AMARNA ICONOCLASM

Donald Redford’s discovery of an important inscription from the beginning of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten’s reign provided a limited view of how that king saw the divine world

<sup>7</sup> A process that essentially created a divine manifestation capable of containing a god’s (or deified deceased) essence (Lorton 1999, p. 149).

even before he began to espouse his one god Aten (Redford 1981). The king speaks (Redford 1981, pp. 92–95, 100; Murnane 1995, p. 31):

Look, I am speaking that I might inform [you concerning] the forms of the gods, I know [their(?)] temples [and I am versed in] the writings, (namely) the inventories of their primeval bodies [and I have beheld them] as they cease, one after the other, (whether) consisting of any sort of precious stone ..., [except for the god who begat] himself by himself, no one knowing the mysteries.

In order to unravel and interpret this laconic text Redford collected mentions of the “Great Inventories”; these were books in temple libraries that contained specific information about the divine images (Redford 1981, pp. 93–94). One example that he cited was from the Neferhotep Stela inscription, where the ruler stated: “I have wanted to see the writing of the primordial period of Atum; open the Great Inventory for me and make me familiar with god in his (proper) form, the Ennead in their (proper) shapes, (how) to make divine offerings (to) them and bread upon their altars” (Redford 1981, p. 93). Amenhotep IV’s claim to be thus versed would seem compatible with this and other cited passages regarding the temple inventories, and Redford’s translation that the king saw (or knew) that “they have ceased” is highly likely.<sup>8</sup> The king refers to their “bodies” of stone and other materials as the things that terminate — contrasting this situation with that of the god who begot himself, that is, the sun god. The sun god’s ability to appear in clear view of the world each day was already expressed here as the primary proof of his priority — immanent without the bodies necessarily produced to contain the other gods (Assmann 1992; Assmann 1995, pp. 74–85). Thus, just as the destruction of Hatshepsut’s statues was intended to damage and impede her eternal spirit, so Amenhotep IV foresaw that the termination of cult statues would impede the activity of other gods in the world; the gods — save one — needed their names and material forms to fashion and contain their manifestations. The seeds of the king’s later proscription of specific images and inscriptions are found in this very early text.




The ruler’s devotion to the sun god was hardly a new thing in this era, but the theology that he developed was most influenced by the period immediately preceding his reign (Baines 1998; Assmann 1995, pp. 67–70). This was a time in Egypt when the populace had begun to address the gods directly through prayers and stelae and devotional shrines in their homes. Examples of these addressed to the sun god or Hathor (as the Golden One) date to the middle and later Eighteenth Dynasty (Posener 1975). Whether Amenhotep IV’s observation about the demise of cult statues represented a common view in the period cannot be said with certainty, but his authoritarian approach to his new Aten cult may suggest a negative reaction to popular access to the divine (Baines 1998, pp. 286–88).

The Amenhotep IV text continued with an address to the king’s beloved Re-Horakhty: *jnd hr.k m stwt.[k]jw mj m ky hr hw.k ntk* “Hail to you, in [your ...] rays ... What would he be like, another one of your sort? It is you [who ...] to them, in your name of ...” (probably part of the didactic names of Aten; Redford 1981). The rejection of the deities appears to be attributed to the temporality of images in general and perhaps to the fact that divine cults could wax and wane. Thus, although Re-Horakhty was still depicted at this time as a falcon-headed

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<sup>8</sup> *3bb.sn w' m-ht sn.nw* “they cease, one after another” (Redford 1981, p. 95, n. K; Erman and Grapow 1982, vol. 1, p. 8, no. 4)

anthropomorphic deity who was described in the inscription as “seating himself,” the god was experienced through his rays (Redford 1981, p. 90). The king’s claim to direct knowledge of the temple writings further suggests his scholarly and instructional approach to revamping Egyptian religion (Baines 1998, pp. 276–88). The didactic names of the Aten were a first approach at encapsulating the totality of his god and voicing it as a mantra: *ṛnh R<sup>c</sup>-hršhty h’y m šht m rn.f m šw nty m Jtn* “living Re-Horakhty rejoicing in the horizon in his name of the daylight which is in the Aten” was the first form of the name and was placed in two cartouche rings symbolizing the circuit of the sun itself (Baines 1998, pp. 271–73). Already with this early form of the name, a non-theriomorphic sign was substituted for the owl hieroglyph *m* to write “in,” thus presaging the reduction of many iconographic elements (Baines 1998, pp. 306–07).

Accompanying the appearance of the didactic name in year 3 was the new Aten imagery in year 4 — that of the solar orb with pendant rays terminating in hands that could offer life to the ruler and his family<sup>9</sup> (fig. 12.9). The appearance of this new icon fulfilled the king’s vision of the proper form of his deity as implied in the Royal Speech inscription. The earlier representations of Aten at Karnak sometimes showed the hands of the deity grasping weapons or other regalia that were delivered to the king. Later, underlining the god’s remoteness, the hands of the disk’s rays were restricted to holding ankh signs to vivify the royal couple (Hornung 1999, p. 48; Assmann 1992). Aten, the sun disk, was disembodied by this image creation, but his new form more easily represented Akhenaten’s religious intentions (Assmann 1995, pp. 67–75). The orb and rays could take up the upper portions of walls while leaving room for double scenes of the royal couple offering. The disk’s residence in heaven could never be ignored with the new icon, and the fusion of the didactic names to the disk’s appearance frequently resulted in their hovering both beside the Aten and above the king, implying his earthly role on behalf of the heavenly sun. Orly Goldwasser (2002) has pointed out that the writing of the Aten’s name during the Amarna era most commonly omitted the divine determinative () although it had been used off and on since the Middle Kingdom. On the other hand, Akhenaten’s words referring to Aten as “father” or “majesty” did receive the divine classifier () (or ). The writings with a disk classifier would be consistent with Akhenaten’s unique treatment of the Aten.

Building a new religion was accompanied by the definition of its visual expression. Amenhotep IV’s temple and probable palace at Karnak provided a forum to work out the artistic expressions, and the so-called talatat reliefs from those buildings set the tone for the entire reign (Redford 1994). Open altars were depicted on walls and were produced to be placed in large open spaces to hold food offerings (M. Gabolde 1998, p. 25). Gateways were opened up with broken lintels, and decoration was accomplished in sunken relief to take advantage of

<sup>9</sup> For an excellent overview of the reign generally and of the early development of Aten religion, see portions of chapter 1 of M. Gabolde 1998, pp. 9–31.

the light and shadow in the open areas. The gods of Karnak were nowhere included, nor was the daily liturgy of temple ritual, aimed as it was to the maintenance of cult statues. In place of divine iconography or temple mysteries a new form of figural depiction was presented, and royal regalia was amplified so that statues of the ruler might resemble the gods Shu or Atum and images of Nefertiti might suggest the solar goddess Hathor (Hornung 1999, p. 57; Laboury 2008). Amenhotep IV's (now Akhenaten) new art created a new model for the human form, elongating the neck, head, and torso while shortening the lower leg (fig. 12.10). A recent description of Amarna art refers to its aesthetic of appearance rather than essence, and this view would be compatible with the observations made above concerning the king's early speech from Karnak (Laboury 2008, pp. 80–84). Akhenaten's rejection of efforts to contain the gods in ritually prescribed cult images led him to the depiction of the visible Aten disk; his rejection of the prescribed (i.e., essential) proportions for the human figure used in prior eras led him to adopt and develop artistic trends that focused on the apparent world, whether of people or things. The reign of Amenhotep III had already fostered artists working in this manner, but Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten exploited the possibilities (Bickel 2008; Bryan 1990). Small-scale scenes representing festival preparations were punctuated with the king depicted offering to the Aten, and large-scale scenes adorned the gateways showing only the royal family beneath the rays of the sun (fig. 12.11) (Chappaz 2008, pp. 42–45). The representations of architecture in the palace and temple and busy workers supplying the festival provisions, when coupled with the new and jarringly different figural style, may well have deflected notice of the iconoclastic imagery. Instead, the populace and workers producing these temples were reminded that the king was celebrating Sed festivals for the Aten, continually, and that meant free food for them!

The king was planning his move to Akhet-Aten at the same time as his Karnak monuments were built, and once there his penchant for the instructional and authoritative had free reign (Chappaz 2008, pp. 44–45). Although the degree to which Atenism was adopted by the Egyptian populations outside direct influence of Thebes or Amarna remains uncertain, most scholars believe that it was partial only (M. Gabolde 1998, pp. 21–23). In the midst of his boundary stela inscription dated in year 5, the king railed against things that he had heard in Akhet-Aten, saying that it was worse than he had heard in year 4, year 3, year 2, and year [1] and worse than his forefathers had heard. Then, in a broken section he stated that these types of reports heard in the mouths of anyone “against [my] fath[er] to [...], [they] were offensive. [I] did not abandon [... saying], ‘it was offensive,’ so that it would not be offensive. As for the offensive things [...] in every mouth, saying, ‘I will commit an offense’ [against the lord of Akhet]-Aten, my father, Hor-Aten [...] arisen (?) [...] any [...], I shall not hear the [...] from it either” (*r jt.j...r... j[w.sn] mr [b]w w3h [m]r r tm.s mr jr mrw mr nb jw jrj mr [r nb n 3ht-jtn jt.j hr-jtn...[h]y... nb m-twj sdm p3... m-<sup>c</sup>.s r-<sup>c</sup>*; Murnane 1995, p. 78; Helck 1958, pp. 1975–76). Despite the obscure context of these avowals, the king's vehemence is clear, and his lack of tolerance for variant opinion is suggested. Although it was still some three to five years before the king began his proscriptive campaign throughout the country, the composition of the Boundary Stela text was coincidental with his final time in Thebes, when he changed his own second cartouche name into Akhenaten and also changed that of his father from Amenhotep into Nebmaatre. Some scholars date much of the mutilation of the Theban divine names and images to this era rather than later, and this has an appeal given the thoroughness of the removals coupled with the king's avowals from the beginning of the Amarna sojourn (M. Gabolde 1998, p. 29 and n. 223). The later proscription that may have followed the second

change of Aten's names was also focused primarily on the Theban god Amun and sometimes his consort Mut and son Khonsu; monuments bearing their names were attacked throughout the Nile Valley in Egypt and Nubia. In most areas, however, the names of Heliopolitan, Memphite, and Abydene deities were left intact (Hari 1984). Although Akhenaten may have made some effort to eliminate all other gods it may have only been realized in the Theban area. As Marc Gabolde has argued, the removal of funding for the traditional gods' temples may have been the great Iconoclast's most powerful means of eliminating the deities (M. Gabolde 1998, pp. 32–37).

The absence of the ancient myths of creation, or that of the sun god's nightly victory over death, or of that of the Osirian resurrection undermined the promise of immortality for most Egyptians (Hornung 1999, pp. 87–104). Even names that had been in families for generations were affected due to the elimination of so many gods. At Sakkara we see a man named Mery-Neith, "beloved of the goddess Neith," change his name to Mery-Aten and later change it back again (Raven 2002). This must have been the case through the country, for Akhenaten's religion did not permit worshipers other than the royal family to interpret the Aten. Perhaps the greatest failure of Atenism was that it was in reality Akhenaten's personal and family cult — imposed upon an entire country. The iconoclasm may not have been what doomed the religion; rather the imposed separation of the people from the primary god at a time when personal piety had grown popular may have been the fault (Hornung 1999, pp. 123–25). The great Iconoclast Akhenaten not only suffered from the rejection of his Atenist religion by the people following his death, but the proscriber was himself destroyed and denied any chance of post-death interference. Akhet-Aten and the Karnak temples were reduced to rubble at the end of the dynasty, and like Hatshepsut's statuary the king's was chopped into pieces. The anger was intense in the destruction, often showing pointed chisel marks on the faces and eyes of the sculpture. The name of the king was particularly reviled and erased from his fragmented buildings. In the Inscription of Mes from the early Nineteenth Dynasty, quoting a legal document, Akhenaten was referred to as *p3 hrw n 3ht-Jtn* "that criminal of Akhet-Aten" (M. Gabolde 2008, p. 106). His name was removed from the king lists, and many might have addressed him like the opponent in the Armytage Ostrakon: "I will turn your face into the back of your head, the front of your feet into your heels! Your speech is no use, it will not be heard. Your body becomes limp, your knee becomes feeble. You will stand still" (Borghouts 1978, p. 2).

### EPISODE 3: DESTRUCTION IN NEW KINGDOM TOMBS

A visit to elite tombs in Thebes introduces the viewer to a large number of mutilations to painted and relief images, and their sources are multiple. One of the most common was the result of the action by the subject of the last episode, King Akhenaten, in removing the name of gods other than his favored Aten, and most particularly those of the Theban Amun and his divine family. A second type of destruction in the tombs was certainly the result of personal hostility toward the tomb owner and his family, and in these cases we see the energetic and near complete removal of figures and names. Other examples illustrate less than thorough removal of figures and/or names, and these constitute the most difficult group to interpret. Adding to the difficulty of analyzing these destructive episodes is our lack of information as to when the attacks were carried out. Several examples of these three types of mutilations is

presented with some suggestions for interpretation, but it must be admitted that information is often insufficient for even probability.

Examples in which Akhenaten's proscription can be identified are numerous, because the elites of Thebes were so enmeshed with the temple of Amun-re at Karnak or that of his wife Mut (M. Gabolde 1998, pp. 32–36). A scene of the tomb owner making brazier offerings to Amun was a common one in Eighteenth Dynasty tombs, and that of the royal butler Suemniwet, ca. 1425 B.C.E., is no exception (figs. 12.12–13). It may be used to represent the many examples. A translation of the whole text is useful here (copied, transliterated, and translated by the author):

(1) *Wdn ht nbt nfrt w<sup>c</sup>bt sntr ntyw n [Jmn-r<sup>c</sup> n]b nswt t<sup>3</sup>wy n R<sup>c</sup>-hr<sup>3</sup>hty n Wsjr hnty jmntyw*  
 (2) *[hwt-hr] nbt th hwt-[h]r hr-tp sm[t] n [ntrw] nb dw<sup>3</sup>t n ps[dt] J[mn-r<sup>c</sup>] Jpt-swt<sup>(3)</sup> hr-tp*  
*n<sup>h</sup> wd<sup>3</sup> snb nsw-bjty [////-r<sup>c</sup>] dj n<sup>h</sup> jn r-p<sup>c</sup>t h<sup>3</sup>ty-<sup>c</sup> jt-ntr mry w<sup>c</sup> [mnh]<sup>(4)</sup> n [n]tr nfr mh-jb*  
*mn<sup>h</sup> n<sup>(5)</sup> nb.f hsy n [ntr] nfr<sup>(6)</sup> jrty rd-.<sup>(7)</sup> [w]y n nb t<sup>3</sup>wy<sup>(8)</sup> tm t<sup>3</sup>grh mj [hrw]<sup>(9)</sup> jmy-jb ntr*  
*nfr wb<sup>3</sup><sup>(10)</sup> nsw w<sup>c</sup>b wy<sup>(11)</sup> hs.tj jmy h<sup>(12)</sup> sw m njwt m<sup>3</sup>c hrw*

Offering every good and pure thing, incense and myrrh to [Amun-re] lord of the thrones of the two lands, to Re-Horakhty, to Osiris foremost of the westerners, to [Hathor] mistress of drunkenness, to Hat[hor] lady of the desert, to all the [gods] of the underworld, to the [Ennead] of Amun-re of Karnak on behalf of the life, prosperity and health, of the dual king [Menkheperre], given life, b[y] the hereditary noble and mayor, god's father and god's beloved sole [effective one?] of the good g[od], confidant of his lord, favored one of the good [god], he-related-to the legs of the lord of the two lands, who does not stray by night or by day, one who is in the [heart] of the [good] god, the royal butler pure of hands, praised one<sup>10</sup> of the one who is in the palace, Suemniwet.

The brazier dedication text exhibits deliberate removal of signs in addition to other seemingly random damage: the first god invoked in the inscription was [Amun-re]; his ubiquitous epithet *nb nswt t<sup>3</sup>wy* “lord of the thrones of the two lands” still remains. The sun disk above the falcon in Re-Horakhty's name was avoided, as it was in the horizon sign (*3hty*). The name of Osiris, foremost of the westerners, was disturbed slightly on the throne sign. At the top of the next column, however, Hathor's distinctive house-and-falcon sign have been attacked, although her epithet as the *nbt th* “mistress of drunkenness” has not. A second Hathor has been mutilated only on the falcon within the house; nonetheless, that damage sufficiently destroyed the rebus. As has been noted by other scholars, the mutilation of Hathor's name is not consistent; that is likewise the case for the falcon god Horus, the king's tutelary deity (Hari 1984; M. Gabolde 1998, p. 33 n. 269). Beneath, the three god signs, here signifying *ntrw nbw dw<sup>3</sup>t* “all the gods of the underworld,” were destroyed and then again the “god” sign determining the word for Ennead, the nine gods of Amun-re's Karnak temple. The removal of these plural writings has been identified as Akhenaten's eschewal of gods other than Aten, but clearly his agents have left at least two deities by name in the first column (Hornung 1999, pp. 87–88). Goldwasser has signaled Akhenaten's desire to obliterate the concept of plural deities, and this could be the primary impetus (Goldwasser 2002, p. 124). This section of the column was altered but to insert the name of Amun after Ennead, reading awkwardly

<sup>10</sup> There is an error here. Written is *hs.ti* but probably *hsy* was intended.

as “the Ennead of Amun (of) Karnak” (*psdt Jmn-r<sup>c</sup> jpt-swt*). However, it was perhaps restored over the mutilated more common epithet of “the great Ennead residing within Karnak” (*psdt ʕt hry-jb ipt-swt*). The top of the next column states that this dedication was done on behalf of the king, and it is interesting to find here that the prenomen of the ruler has been entirely destroyed, although it did not contain elements of the name of Amun and *did* contain the sun disk of Re. Was this an attack on the prenomen of Amenhotep II, Aa-khepru-re? It is notable that the sign for the striding summoner in the word of agency “by” has also been damaged, and it would have introduced the tomb owner’s titles and name. These two last mutilations may well represent the second category of damage: personal animus, removing as they do the king’s connection to the deceased; this explanation can only be supposition. There are no other mutilations that would have been carried out in the Amarna era, but this brief survey illustrates that these attacks were inconsistent in their thoroughness. Amun was always a target, but the sun god Re-Horakhty was treated differentially. Osiris was left alone, as he generally was at Abydos, but Hathor, also a goddess of the cemetery and solar in aspect, has been destroyed (M. Gabolde 1998, pp. 32–36). Twice the sign for gods was eliminated, focusing on the plurality of deities. However, when the god sign was singular, as in the priestly title *jt ntr jt mr* “god’s father and god’s beloved” and the king’s title *ntr nfr* “good god,” it was usually left intact. The word for “effective,” *mnḥ*, was apparently attacked due to the presence of the game-board sign that occurs in Amun’s name, and this has been seen to be a frequent error on the part of the gangs carrying out the proscription (Manuelian 1985). It is likely that the results here reflect the length of the inscription to be scanned by the workers as well as the plurality of deities mentioned, perhaps challenging their knowledge of the pantheon. Two shorter inscriptions appear in the rear of this tomb chapel; on one side of the room Amun was the only deity named, and his name is damaged. On the opposite side Osiris was invoked, and his name has been attacked, but only by removing the throne sign, not the eye (fig. 12.14). Since the eye was a sign of the solar deity and may have been sanctioned within Akhenaten’s iconographic vocabulary, perhaps the name of Osiris was less a target than it might otherwise have been — even without accounting for the hesitation of workers to mutilate the name of the primary afterlife deity. For a pattern similar to that described here, see Dorman’s publication of the tombs of Senenmut (Dorman 1991, pp. 68–69, 163).

The result of Akhenaten’s attacks in the elite tombs of the Theban cemetery was not only to remove the hated gods from access by men but also to halt the magical distribution of revivifying offerings from the temples of those gods on behalf of the deceased tomb owner. This hostile act would have been seen as highly dangerous to the continued existence of the deceased, but nonetheless few of these tombs show restoration of the attacked texts, perhaps in hope that the representations served the purpose and may even have invoked specific deities. Amarna attacks on offerings in Luxor Temple particularly focused on those identified with the Theban triad, thus indicating that the images themselves carried the divine identity (Spieser 2010, pp. 11–12). In general, post-Amarna restorations were not common in the tombs.<sup>11</sup> In Suemniwet’s case he had been dead for nearly a hundred years when the Amarna episode occurred, and perhaps his family no longer felt the urgency for sustaining him. Yet it introduces another type of scene that is routinely desecrated in this

<sup>11</sup> Dorman notes that some restoration was done on the false door of Senenmut in Theban Tomb 71, but this

appears to be more an exception than a rule (Dorman 1991, p. 68).

cemetery — those showing the funerary ritual priests offering before the tomb owner. The *sem* priests are entirely cut out in this tomb and in a myriad of others, thereby eliminating the recitation of funerary liturgies both during and after burial (fig. 12.15). Since Akhenaten's funerary preparations did not include Osirian mythology or afterworld imagery, it has been thought that the destruction of the priests was carried out by his minions (Dorman 1988). Access to these tombs guarded by a large police force would have been required to carry out such sweeping removals of these scenes, so the attribution to Akhenaten seems a likely interpretation. However, it cannot be said to be certain. Dorman has noted that these tombs were frequently entered over the millennia, and these attacks could have taken place one by one hundreds of years after Akhenaten's proscription (Dorman 1991, pp. 67–68, 163).

Certainly those who knew the deceased and had reason to dislike him or her might have tried to attack the tombs, but the type of destruction that implies *damnatio memoriae* could have been the work of powerful elites through exercise of their state function or on behalf of the ruler. Such may have been the case with the royal steward of Thutmose IV, Tjenuna, whose unfinished tomb (Theban Tomb 76) was heavily mutilated, removing all images of him along with his name (fig. 12.16) (Bryan 1991; Säve-Söderbergh 1957, pl. 72; Wreszinski 1923, pp. 46, 244). The tomb was also attacked by the Atenists, but Tjenuna's figures were systematically cut out when the tomb next to it was treated only in the manner of Suemniwet's. This tomb is located high on the hill of Sheikh Abd-el Qurna and not easily reached, but there was obvious determination to remove this man from the monument.

The concern about hostile action by deceased spirits is famously preserved in the Letters to the Dead, including the Cairo Bowl, which contains a request from the widow Dedi to her dead husband Intef demanding that he stop the hostile action against her maidservant by *jr nb r.s ḥnꜥ jrt nbt r.s* “any man who is against her and any woman who is against her” (Gardiner and Sethe 1928, pp. 7–8; pls. 6, 6a; Parkinson 1991). Harco Willems has noted that the Coffin Texts themselves contain allusions to such hostile spirits and provide spells to thwart them (Willems 2008). Willems noted that spell 149 (de Buck 1938, pp. II 226b–II 253g) relates a judgment by tribunal and then violent vengeance resulting in triumph by the deceased against an enemy and his family. The participants appear to include both the dead man and his living family confronting the enemies. The result was the violent punishment of the opponent and the destruction of his house and family in a manner comparable to the requests in Letters to the Dead. Noting that the spell is largely devoid of mythological reference, Willems likened it to a Letter to the Dead (Willems 2008, pp. 191–213). We may thus not be rash in suggesting that the victorious tribunal was intended to subdue enemies among the surviving population, rather than allude solely to Osiris's attackers.

Willems's argument that the Coffin Texts reflected the ordering of the society as well as the erudite religious notions of the time may suggest that these spells asserted a “legal” structure on the ongoing problem of quarrels between the living and the deceased. For, as has been said earlier, accompanying these funerary spells are the magical ones that indicate how people fought their enemies, living and deceased. Spells to impede the movements of perceived enemy spirits were designed to invoke verbally what the image mutilation did: blinding and incapacitating the subject. Ostrakon Leipzig 9 [2] 4–7 (Borghouts 1978, p. 2):

*jgr sp sn mn ms n mswt-mnt ḥgg.k ḏw spty.k... nst.k nn.ḥw r.k ḥtmw jrwy.ky nn ptrj.sn [w]  
j psd.k nḥt ꜥwy.ky gꜣnn... ḥꜣ.k m fqꜣw n šmmw.k šnꜥ.k m pt bḥnw.k m t ꜣnn rḥ.k ḥtw... [dgꜣ]w  
jrwy m*



Keep silent, PN born of PN! Your gullet is sore, your lips [cleave to (?)] your tongue, your mouth does not stir, your eyes are closed; they do not see <m>e(?) Your backbone is stiff, your arms are limp [...] Backwards, do not leap up <against m>e(?) in your hot temper! You are kept off from heaven, you are punished in the earth. You do not know things [... that (?)] the eyes see (!) (Černý and Gardiner 1957, pls. XIV–XIVa)

The image destruction seen in tombs is also paralleled by various types of execration ceremonies described by Robert Ritner and others. Since these are better published they are not further described here (Ritner 1993, pp. 136–79; Borghouts 1978, pp. 11–12; Bochi 1999).

These three episodes of image and text destruction during the Eighteenth Dynasty hardly cover the topic for ancient Egypt. Yet they serve to demonstrate that the mutilation of images was premised not on the consequent death of the embodied spirits but on hindering their potential activity in the world. For most, including Thutmose III, or the contemporaries of the royal steward Tjenuna, the burial and images of perceived enemies were targets to be impeded. In the case of Akhenaten it was the gods themselves that he hoped to make powerless in the world. In all cases, however, the focus on iconoclasm reveals the potency of Egyptian belief in image power.



Figure 12.1. Gerzeh tomb 206. The leg bones have been inverted, the foot bones scattered. The head was set on the back of the skeleton, but the beads were still in place under the skull. Compare the magical spell to impede a hostile spirit wherein the feet, legs, and head are turned backward (Petrie, Wainwright, and Mackay 1912, plate 3:5)



Figure 12.2. Reserve head of Meritites, from Giza mastaba G 4140. Cairo JdE 46217 (courtesy of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo)



Figure 12.3. Temples at Deir el-Bahri from northeast, showing areas where Hatshepsut statue fragments were discovered in 1922–1928. The causeway of Thutmose III's temple ran over the Hatshepsut Hole (photo by Betsy Bryan)



Figure 12.4. Theban Tomb 92 of Suemniwet, ca. 1425 B.C.E. Opening of the mouth ritual showing a priest using a carpenter's adze, used to fashion the coffin, to open the mummy's mouth (photo by Betsy Bryan);

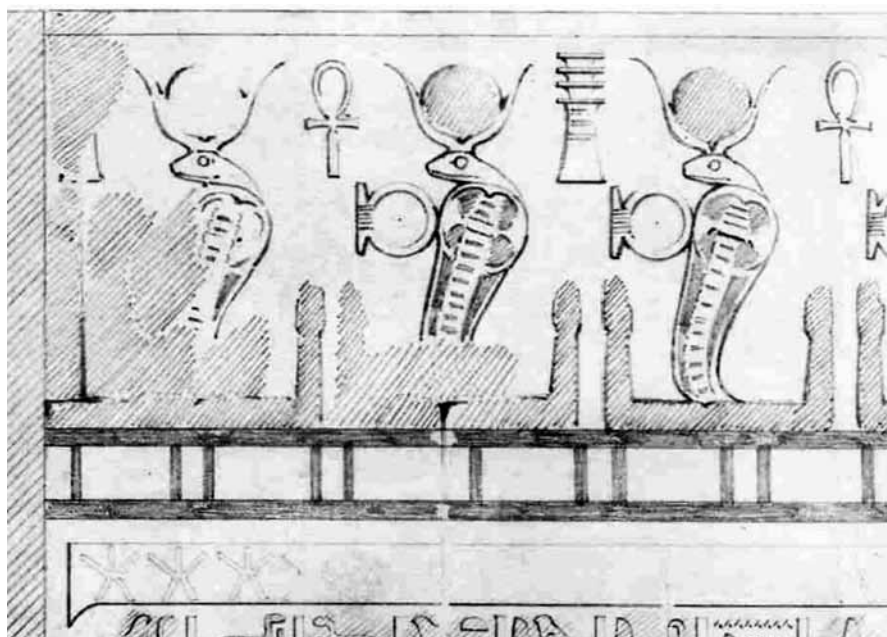


Figure 12.5. Deir el-Bahri frieze. Middle Colonnade, north wall (Neville 1898, pl. 56)



Figure 12.6. Deir el-Bahri, Middle Colonnade, north wall. Thutmose III (original) left untouched with door architrave below showing his name intact in hieroglyphs on right and Hatshepsut's entirely erased on the left (photo by Betsy Bryan)



Figure 12.7. Devotional statue of Hatshepsut showing damage to face, hands, and legs as part of iconoclastic attacks. Metropolitan Museum of Art 28.3.18 (Winlock 1928b, fig. 11)



Figure 12.8. Heads from Osiride statues from Deir el-Bahri indicating the decapitation of Hatshepsut's images (Winlock 1928b, fig. 23)

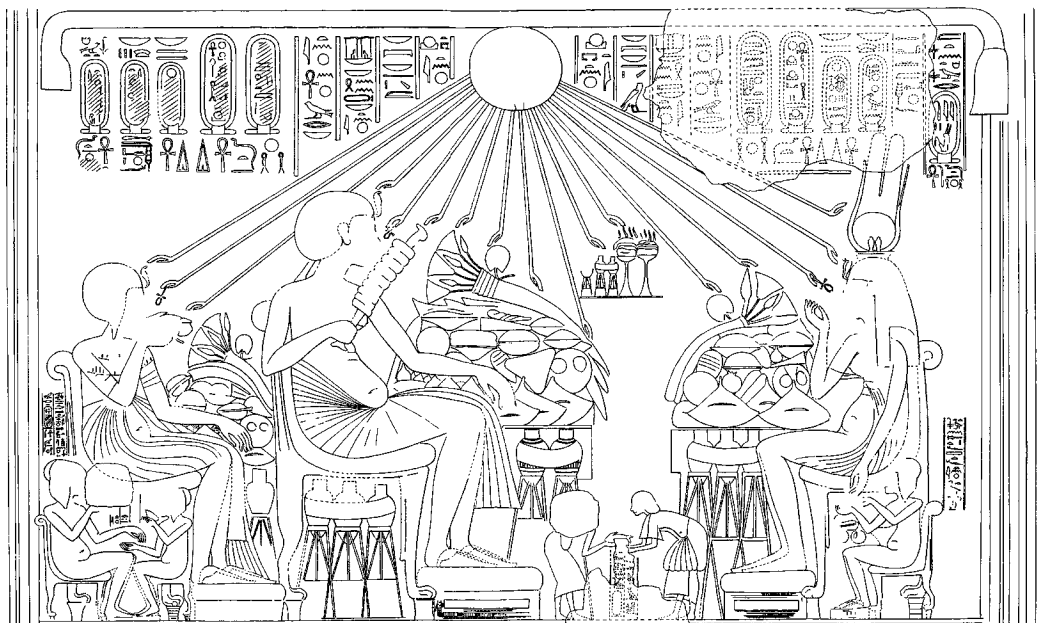


Figure 12.9. The Aten disk over Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and Queen Tiy. Tomb of Huy, Amarna (after Davies 1905, pl. 4)



Figure 12.10. Colossal sandstone statue of Amenhotep IV from Karnak Aten temple. Cairo JdE 49529 (courtesy of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo)



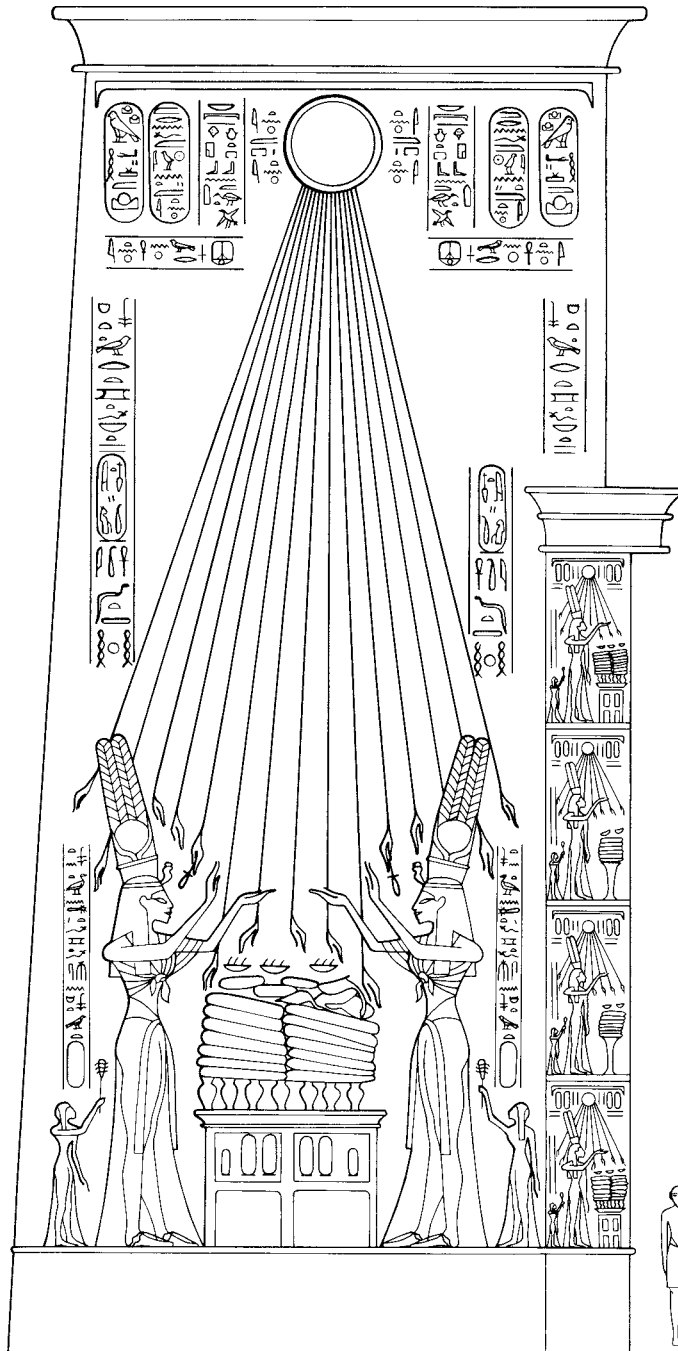


Figure 12.11. Reconstruction of large broken lintel gateway at Amenhotep IV's Karnak Aten temple (after Redford 1984, fig. 6)



Figure 12.12. Theban Tomb 92 of Suemniwet. Brazier scene with the royal butler Suemniwet making burnt offerings to various gods. Erasures of names and divine elements proscribed by Akhenaten appear in the inscription (photo by Betsy Bryan)

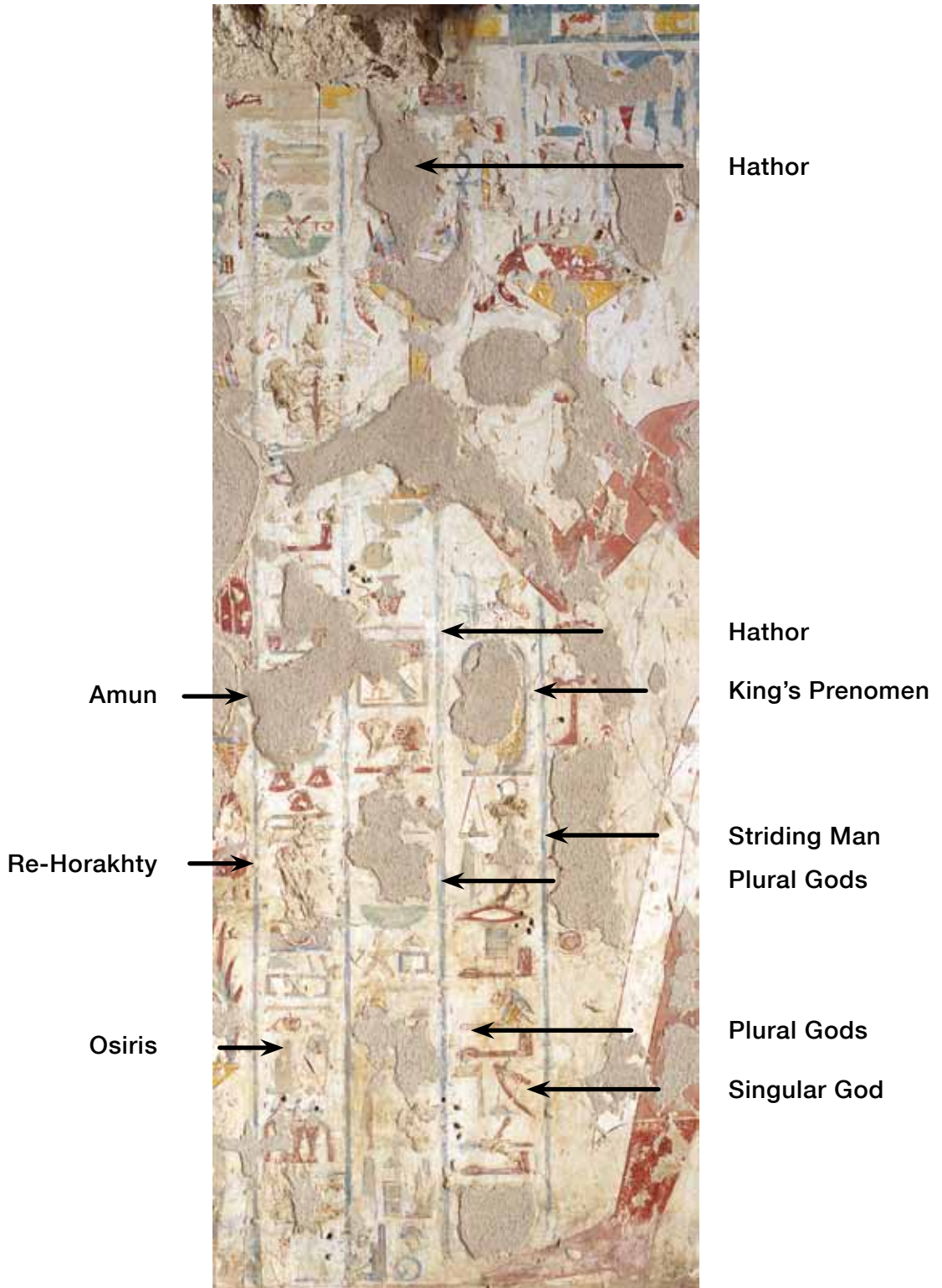


Figure 12.13. Theban Tomb 92 of Suemniwet. Detail of inscription with mutilated elements identified



a



b

Figure 12.14. Theban Tomb 92 of Suemniwet. Rear corridor north and south. Names of (a) Amun-re and (b) Osiris damaged in different manners (photos by Betsy Bryan)



Figure 12.15. Theban Tomb 92 of Suemniwet. Rear corridor north. Figure of *sem* (mortuary priest) entirely removed to eliminate recitation of liturgies and offering lists (photo by Betsy Bryan)

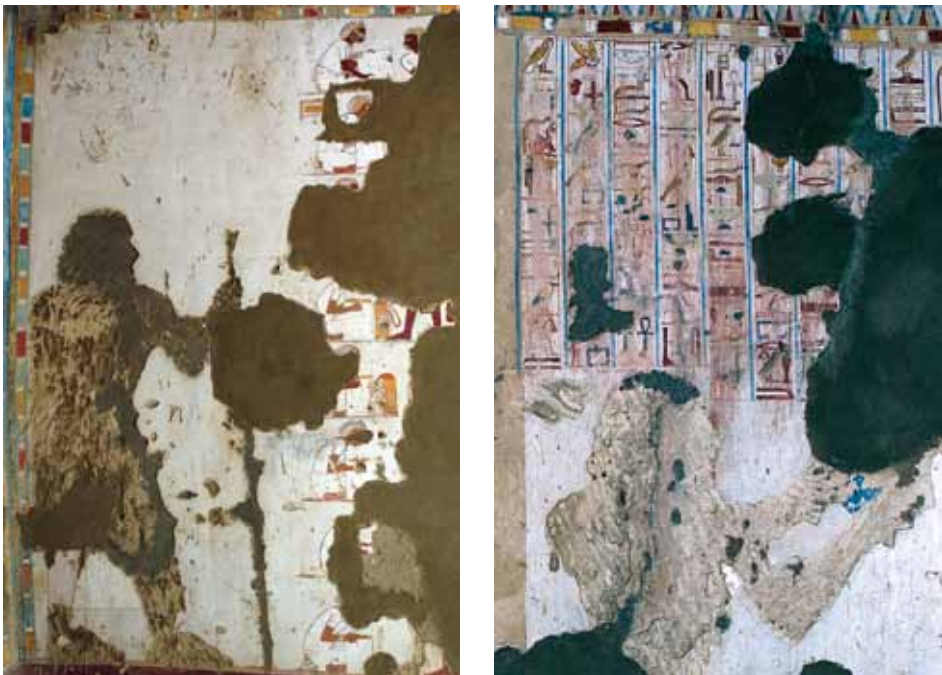


Figure 12.16. Theban Tomb 76 of Tjenuna. Images of Tjenuna entirely erased, perhaps by a personal enemy. His name and titles have been deliberately smeared but not cut out in one instance (photos by Betsy Bryan)

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## KILLING THE IMAGE, KILLING THE ESSENCE: THE DESTRUCTION OF TEXT AND FIGURES IN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN THOUGHT, RITUAL, AND “RITUALIZED HISTORY”

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It is with some reluctance that I return to the theme of the current seminar, as I have discussed these issues in great detail in *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice* (1993),<sup>1</sup> to which the interested reader is referred for broader cultural context and numerous examples of relevant texts, objects, rites, and bibliography. The present brief note serves merely to orient the non-specialist toward fundamental patterns in Egyptian expression and action that may reasonably — if anachronistically — be linked with the concept of “iconoclasm.” The Byzantine baggage of that term, with its implicit link to the destruction of religiously charged images, is particularly relevant for ancient Egypt, where the continued survival of a “thing represented” depended in great measure upon the survival of the image itself. In the imagistic theology of ancient Egypt,<sup>2</sup> kings and even men can act as “images” of the divine, as can charged statues, reliefs, animals, vessels, the mummy, etc. Correspondingly, the Egyptian language is particularly rich in terms for potent “images”: *ḥr*, *išš*, *ḥm*, *nn*, *ḥnty*, *sm*, *sš*, *sm*, *smn*, *sdd*, *šps*, *šsp*, *šsm.w*, *tī.t*, and *twt*.<sup>3</sup> As any of these images were felt to provide a point of contact with the represented entity, so the very existence of a representation ensured that entity’s perpetuation. By contrast, the destruction of a figure or text might entail far more than a simple erasure, but rather an ultimate death. Killing the image killed equally its referent.

The mistreatment or destruction of images in rituals of execration was both common and varied, employing not only mistreated figurines of clay, wax, wood, stone, or papyrus, but also statues, pottery, and even trampled fish.<sup>4</sup> The locus for such activities extended from the cemetery to the temple as well as to border fortresses, while the beneficiary might be the state, a cult, or even a private individual (in personal curses and love charms). Ritual abuse of figures in human form readily recalls the treatment of “voodoo dolls” questionably associated with Haitian culture in popular media, but long attested for Classical and later European magic by contact with Egypt. Deprived of their ancient theological basis, such

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<sup>1</sup> See especially chapter 4, “Images and Intermediaries,” pp. 111–90.

<sup>2</sup> See the author’s discussion of the “imagistic principle” of Egyptian theology in Ritner 1993, pp. 247–49.

<sup>3</sup> See the listing under “Bild” in *Wb*. VI, 1971, p. 27, cols. b–c, adding *ḥm* in *Wb* I, pp. 225–26. For the use of sev-

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eral of these terms in royal titularies equating king and god, see Ritner 1993, p. 248 n. 1140.

<sup>4</sup> See the list of temple execration rites enumerated in Ritner 1993, pp. 207–10.

concepts survive in modern “superstitions” regarding broken mirrors and torn photographs, and broken figures need little additional commentary to render the practice comprehensible at a most basic level to a modern audience.

A distinctly Egyptian aspect of this “iconoclasm” is its further extension to words and even to signs within words, since in a pictographic system the distinction between picture and text is necessarily minimal. The name and its components were particularly vulnerable to mutilation, as the name itself constituted for the Egyptians an image in which the spirit might reside. The instances of *damnatio memoriae*<sup>5</sup> noted in this volume’s paper by Betsy Bryan include examples of names erased in whole or in part. The phenomenon begins far earlier than the New Kingdom and is practically coterminous with literate Egyptian tradition. The destruction of names and figures in Old Kingdom tombs (for personal vengeance, defense against the occupying spirit by tomb robbers, or to facilitate tomb usurpation) was sufficiently problematic that an evolving genre of tomb curses was created for private tombs:

*msh ir=f m mw*  
*hf3w ir=f hr t3*  
*irty.fy h.t ir nw*  
*n zp ir=(i) h.t ir=f*  
*in ntr wd=f*

A crocodile be against him in the water,  
 A snake be against him on earth,  
 He who will do anything against this (tomb).  
 Never did I do anything against him.  
 It is the God who shall judge.

— Tomb of Meni, Dynasty Four

*irty.sn h.t nbq bin r twt.w=k nb 6b3.w=k nb hw.wt-k3=k nb ht.wt=k nb mnw.w=k nb nt(y).w m*  
*r3.w-pr.w nb hw.wt-ntr nb n rd.i.n hm=(i) mn h.wt=sn it.w=sn im=sn dmi=sn r 3h.w m hr.t-ntr*  
*wn=sn m-m 6nh.[w tp t3]*

As for anyone in this entire land who may do an injurious or evil thing to any statues, offering slabs, chapels, woodwork, or monuments of yours which are in any temple precincts or in any temples, my majesty does not permit that their property or that of their fathers remain with them, that they join the spirits in the necropolis, or that they remain among the living [upon earth].

— Coptos royal decree for a vizier, First Intermediate Period

*ir nty nb r th.t h3.t=i m hr.t-ntr nty r šd.t twt=i m is=i wnn=f m hbd n R6 nn šsp=f mw hr*  
*wdh(w) n Wsir nn sw3d=f h.wt=f n hrd.w=f r nhh*

As for anyone who will attack my corpse in the necropolis, who will remove my statue from my tomb, he is a hated one of Re. He shall have no water from upon the altar of Osiris; he shall not transmit his property to his children forever.

— Coptos statue of Wer-su and his wife, Dynasty Eighteen<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Like “iconoclasm,” this term is used in accordance with modern scholarly practice. Questions regarding ancient use of the phrase are here irrelevant.

<sup>6</sup> For texts and discussion, see Pritchard 1969, pp. 326–28; Sottas 1913; Griffith 1915, pp. 5–7; Helck 1984, p. 1491, and Helck 1977, “Fluch,” cols. 275–76.

Creativity in such protective curses against the erasure of figures, names or text peaked during the Third Intermediate Period, and in one of the most notorious of these curses, the author threatens the offender:

*nk=f 3 nk 3 [hm.t]=f nk hm.t=f [h]rd=[f hp]r=f m š'd (n) ny-sw.t hsq=w tp=f hḥ is=f ir=w  
h'c=f (m) tm wnw qrs.tw=f m wnmy.t b[n] i[mn] s3[=f] hr s.t=f iw=f hbd n pr ʿImn pr R' Pth  
pr n p3 hk3*

May he rape a donkey,<sup>7</sup> may a donkey rape his [wife], may his wife rape [his] child. May he be as one slaughtered for the king. May his head be cut off. May his tomb be searched for (in vain). May his lifetime be made non-existent, he being buried in the devouring flame. [His] son will not re[main] upon his position, he being hated in the house of Amon, the house(s) of Re and Ptah, and the house of the ruler.

— Cairo JdE 85647, Dynasty Twenty-two<sup>8</sup>

Ironically, the figure's insignia of authority, name, and all of the main text were deliberately hacked out, leaving only partial titles, divine figures — and the curse. The destruction is likely evidence of the political and social turmoil among local elites in the final years of Libyan-era Egypt. In simplified form, such curses continued into the Roman era:

*[rmt] nb n p3 t3 nty-iw=f fty n3y sh.w nty hry r n3 ntr.w [nty htp ty] fty rn=f irm rmt nb nty  
mtw=f dr=w*


Every [man] on earth who will erase these writings which are below, the gods [who rest here] will erase his name together with that of every man of his entirely.

— Demotic Graffito Medinet Habu 228, probably Ptolemaic

*[p3 hyt n n3] ntr.w n Dm' m-ir fty n3y sh.w p3 nty-iw=f r fty=w r ʿImn š'c rn=f*

[(By) the compulsion (hyt) of the] gods of Djeme! Do not erase these writings! He who will erase them, Amon will cut off his name.

— Demotic Graffito Medinet Habu 46, reign of Cleopatra VII<sup>9</sup>

Examples of image destruction with political import occur throughout Egyptian history, and only a few will be cited here as a pendant to Bryan's paper. The fall from grace of the Middle Kingdom vizier Intefiker included not only his expurgation (in figure and name) from a family tomb (Theban Tomb 60), but his inclusion among the formal execration list of the damned, whose names were ritually deformed not by subtraction, but by the addition of a sign for "fallen enemy" ().<sup>10</sup> A far later counterpart is found in the "harim conspiracy" under Ramesses III, where the names of prominent criminals were intentionally deformed for magical effect, converting P3-b3ki-ʿImn ("The servant of Amun") to P3-b3ki-k3mn ("The blind servant"), Pn-ḥwy ("The one of Huy") to Pn-ḥwy-bin ("The evil one of Huy"), and the obvious

<sup>7</sup> The text reverses the usual Ramesside "donkey curse"; see Ritner 2009, pp. 407 n. 7, and 440.

<sup>8</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 405–07, hieratic text ll. 6–8. Further examples of curses on donation stelae are found throughout the volume; see pp. 260, 408–11, 434, 439–41. See also Sottas 1913, pp. 145–65.

<sup>9</sup> For both Demotic graffiti and parallel texts, see Ritner 2011, and a revised text online at:

[http://oi.uchicago.edu/pdf/eternal\\_curse.pdf](http://oi.uchicago.edu/pdf/eternal_curse.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Ritner 1993, pp. 199–201. A more unusual Twelfth Dynasty erasure appears on a figural base in the Walters Art Museum (22.373), intended to be placed before a larger statue of a god or king. Once representing three prostrate nomarchs, the base was later reworked to remove all traces of the sculpture of the central nomarch as well as his name and title; see Schultz and Seidel 2009, pp. 42–43.

deformations *Msd-sw-R* ("Re hates him"), *P3-R-k3mnʹf* ("Re blinds him"), *Bin-m-W3s.t* ("Evil one in Thebes"), and *Š3d-msdr* ("Cut off ear").<sup>11</sup>

Following the precedent of the Eighteenth Dynasty, the purging of royal names continued in the later New Kingdom, with erasures of the names of Amenmesse, Siptah, and Twosret during the turbulent transition between the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties. At the end of the subsequent Third Intermediate Period, the names of all the Nubian rulers of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty were removed (throughout Egypt and up to Dangeil in Nubia) by the Saite victors of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty (fig. 13.1). Internal conflict and the fall of the Saite dynasty to the Persians occasioned in turn the destruction of the cartouches of Necho II, Apries, and Amasis (figs. 13.2–3).<sup>12</sup> Late suppression of the god Seth led to the removal of that element from the royal names of both kings Seti ("He of Seth") of the Nineteenth Dynasty.<sup>13</sup> Formal *damnatio memoriae* on monuments continued into the Roman era in Egypt. The removal of the name and large-scale figure of Caracalla's murdered brother Geta from an internal wall of the temple of Esna was undoubtedly influenced by Roman policy and fear of the emperor during his violent 215 visit to Egypt (fig. 13.4).<sup>14</sup> The final example of surcharged cartouches appears also at Esna, but in so obscure a position that it could only have been intended by the priests for the gods. High on an inner rear wall, the name of Philip the Arab has been supplanted by that of Trajanus Decius, a hieroglyphic revision no Roman could read or appreciate.<sup>15</sup> A different form of historical suppression concludes the literate tradition of Egyptian religion, with the wholesale replacement of the Christian emperors (beginning with Licinius) by an "Era of Diocletian," intentionally celebrating the emperor stigmatized in the Coptic Christian "Era of the Martyrs."<sup>16</sup>

If the destruction or deformation of personal names is still comprehensible to cultures outside of Egypt, the practice of "killing" or rendering individual hieroglyphs impotent, even in otherwise non-threatening words, is specifically tied to the Egyptian concept of empowered images and the pictographic nature of the hieroglyphic script. Representing a snake pierced with multiple small knives is but a variant of killing the whole name or figure when applied to a single logogram or non-phonetic determinative (fig. 13.5), but similar treatment on figures of snakes used within purely phonetic spellings represents a new level of imagistic complexity in the First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom. Deformations extend to figures of men, women, lions, birds, crocodiles, snakes, bees, and even water. Bodies may be removed or cut in half, feet, hands, and heads omitted, and knives inserted in snakes and crocodiles to evoke miniature execration figures. Bisected snakes may even have sand pebbles shown inserted between the halves to prevent their rejoining. Examples have been discussed and illustrated in studies of magic by Lexa and Ritner, and from a semiotic perspective by Goldwasser.<sup>17</sup> The First Intermediate Period coffin of Ibui, formerly in Boston and now in the Institute of Egyptian Art and Archaeology of The University of Memphis

<sup>11</sup> Ritner 1993, pp. 194, n. 894 and 198; Posener 1946, pp. 51–56, esp. p. 53.

<sup>12</sup> References to the *damnationes memoriae* of all three kings are discussed in Gozzoli 2000. The destruction of Necho's name is generally associated with his failed military campaign against Carchemish in 605 B.C.E., but Gozzoli is suspicious of a general proscription of Necho's memory.

<sup>13</sup> Seti I had already recognized the problematic nature of his name at his Abydos temple for Osiris, the mytho-

logical victim of Seth. There he replaced "Seti" with "Sai" ("Protected One").

<sup>14</sup> See Ritner 1998, pp. 19–20.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21, with bibliography.

<sup>16</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 25–26, with discussion and references.

<sup>17</sup> Lexa 1925, vol. 1, pp. 88–89, and vol. 3, pl. 71, fig. 162a–b; Ritner 1993, pp. 157, 164–67; and Goldwasser 1995, pp. 79–80.

(1981.1.9),<sup>18</sup> provides several excellent examples of such deformations on the single band of text on the coffin's sides. Seated human figures lack arms (fig. 13.6), water hieroglyphs, and tyw-birds and are bisected by empty bands that represent signs cut in half (or perhaps bound, since the delineated bands do not bisect the outline drawing) (fig. 13.7).<sup>19</sup> Serpents are clearly bisected through the outline and are thus certainly cut in half (fig. 13.8). While the Memphis coffin is a simple regional product, a pink granite sarcophagus of a Middle Kingdom princess in the Cairo Museum shows that these concerns were significant for royal elites as well (fig. 13.9). On this sarcophagus, it is the figures of critical birds (quail-chick in the term "praise" and goose in the title "royal daughter") that have been immobilized by removal of their lower bodies and feet. As usual, all these defensive modifications appear in a funerary context, where the close association of human and theriomorphic figures was considered potentially threatening to the corpse of the deceased. The mummy itself is the most critical human image that might be subject to desecration. Thus a standing mummy figure (𓆎) serves as the basic determinative for words meaning "image" (*iḥr*, *šps*, *šsp*, *twt*), and the physical destruction of the mummy by tomb robbers was motivated by more than the desire to retrieve amulets. Destroying the mummy harmed its owner's vitality and lessened the threat of ghostly reprisals

From the foregoing synopsis, it should be apparent that image destruction — whether as defaced statue, relief, written name, or even hieroglyphic text components — is not simply an observable practice within ancient Egypt, collected by modern scholarship into an arbitrary category for convenient discussion. Rather, the detailed actions are intrinsic to the Egyptian philosophical understanding of the universe and its potential manipulation, inherent in the society's idioms, rites, religious and political concerns, and even spelling conventions.

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<sup>18</sup> The painted wooden coffin derives from Mesheikh tomb 123 B. I thank Lorelei Corcoran and Patricia V. Podzorski for photographic images and information on the coffin.

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<sup>19</sup> Whether tied or sliced, the magical significance would be identical.



Figure 13.1. Piye stela with erased figure of the Nubian king. Cairo JdE 48862+47086–47089 (photo by Robert Ritner)



Figure 13.2. Stela with erased cartouches of Necho II. OIM 13943 (P. 18316)





Figure 13.3. Naos of Amasis with erased cartouches. Cairo CGC 7001 (photo by Robert Ritner)



Figure 13.4. Esna Temple: Visit by Septimius Severus, Empress Julia, and sons Caracalla and Geta (erased) (photo by Robert Ritner)



Figure 13.5. Snake determinative pierced by knives. Tomb of Kheruef (Eighteenth Dynasty)  
(photo by Robert Ritner)



Figure 13.6. Coffin of Ibi: Details of armless human figure and bisected or bound water hieroglyphs  
(courtesy of the Institute of Egyptian Art and Archaeology of the University of Memphis,  
Memphis, Tennessee, USA)





Figure 13.8. Coffin of Ibi: (a) Detail of armless man and bisected snake (on back cover in color)  
 (courtesy of the Institute of Egyptian Art and Archaeology of the University of Memphis,  
 Memphis, Tennessee, USA)



Figure 13.9. Deformed bird hieroglyphs on a sarcophagus of a Middle Kingdom princess (Cairo)  
 (photo by Robert Ritner)

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## HITTITE ICONOCLASM: DISCONNECTING THE ICON, DISEMPOWERING THE REFERENT

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### INTRODUCTION

Iconoclasm in Hittite society has not been studied before, with good reason: unlike elsewhere in the ancient Near East there is almost no evidence for this practice in second-millennium Anatolia (for map, see fig. 14.1). Although larger-scale statuary did not survive, the roughly thirty reliefs and inscriptions on living rock and architecture are to a large extent undamaged. Based on photographs, studies of imagery,<sup>1</sup> and textual evidence I could detect only one case of contemporary damage of an image and its inscription that can be attributed to Hittites, one case of changing an inscription, one case of text burial, a few cases of benevolent repurposing, and only one true case of *damnatio memoriae*. In Syria only the damage to an orthostat and a statue can be attributed to Hittites. Another notable difference with especially Mesopotamia is the almost complete lack of contingency curses against destruction of image and name. Given the relative lack of destruction and of curses against destruction, the questions for Hittite society are: why are there no curses, why was there so little damage, and if damage occurred, what was the purpose? I argue that Hittite iconoclasm and inscriptoclasm serve the removal of the agency of the image and therefore the disempowerment of the deity or ruler, and not the destruction of its referent as in Mesopotamia.

Large-scale iconoclasm and inscriptoclasm (for this term, see Levtow, this volume) regularly accompany colliding world views in the religious and political sphere. Byzantine iconoclasm, for example, is based on a combination of dissenting views within Christianity itself and the discourse with the rising military power and competing views of Muslim culture (Cormack, this volume). In the same vein the iconoclasm of the Egyptian Amarna period and the restorative iconoclasm of the following period was a ferocious fight between monotheism and polytheism (Bryan, this volume).

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<sup>1</sup> Only an on-site study of all imagery will show the true extent of iconoclasm and inscriptoclasm. Because es-

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pecially subtle damage is easily overlooked in photographs, the catalog of damage presented in the *Appendix* can only be considered preliminary. Especially the damage of the title of Kuruntiya in the Hatip inscription (Ehringhaus 2005, p. 105, with figs. 185–87) is difficult to see in the photographs. If the damage is not deliberate, then we have even less evidence of Hittite inscriptoclasm.

Otherwise, most iconoclastic acts of the non-monotheistic era seem to originate from clashes between city-states and states, with these polities invading each other's territory and retaliating against real or perceived atrocities against cult and royal images in the past (for an overview of three millennia of these acts and counter-acts in Mesopotamia, see Schaudig, this volume). Throughout Hittite history there are several episodes during which iconoclasm as part of politically motivated warfare could have happened. The Old Hittite Kingdom (seventeenth–fifteenth century B.C.E.), for example, witnessed regular incursions from Hurrians at the eastern border, but also Hittite raids on Syria and Babylon, often involving god-napping. In the Hittite Empire (as of the mid-fourteenth century B.C.E., under Suppiluliuma I) we mostly see incursions from Gasga pastoralists in the north followed by Hittite retaliation. The Hittite Empire also operated in other territories, with both politically motivated religious tolerance and destruction. During these periods of upheaval, but especially in the earliest period, we find god-napping or image theft as a non-destructive form of iconoclasm, but image destruction does not seem to have been common practice.

Besides iconoclasm as a religiously and politically motivated phenomenon orchestrated on a supra-individual scale, we also need to consider smaller-scale or individual instances of iconoclasm. Within this context we might think of contemporaneous internal strife or inter-generational image and text usurpation. Repurposing of royal images and inscriptions could occur out of animosity or simply because statues were made of valuable and rare materials (Woods, this volume), as well as resulting from the intercultural and cross-cultural deconstruction of the image (Schaudig, this volume, and Berlejung, this volume). In case of animosity the purpose of destruction of a person's name was intended as destruction of the ruler or official himself (Westenholz, this volume; Radner 2005, pp. 15f., 252). Of animosity between rulers the Hittites certainly had their fair share:

- Mursili I (1620–1590) was murdered by his brother-in-law Hantili and the son-in-law of the latter, Zidanta (kings)
- Zidanta (1560–?) was murdered by his son Ammuna (king)
- Huzziya I (?–1525) was removed from the throne by his brother-in-law Telipinu (king)
- Alluwamna (1500–?) was removed from the throne by Tahirwaili (king)
- Huzziya II (before 1400) was murdered by Muwatalli I (king)
- Muwatalli I (before 1400) was murdered by Kantuzzili (father of new king Tudhaliya I/II) and Himuili
- Tudhaliya the Younger, designated heir or perhaps even king (ca. 1350), was murdered by his brother Suppiluliuma I (king)
- Urhi-Tessub (1272–1267) was removed from the throne by his uncle Hattusili III (king)
- Tudhaliya IV (1237–1228) was temporarily removed (?) from the throne by his cousin Kuruntiya (king)
- Kuruntiya (1228–1227) was removed from the throne by his cousin Tudhaliya IV (king)

So how do we explain that more destructive forms of iconoclasm and inscriptoclasm are barely attested, even though several of the main conditioning factors are present? Part of the answer lies in the fact that reliefs and monumental inscriptions as expressions of political power are a rather late development in Hittite society.

Originally the representation of political power in Hittite Anatolia was aniconic.<sup>2</sup> The first reliefs and Hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions appear at Alalakh (see below) and southern



and western Anatolia during the reign of Mursili II (1321–1295 B.C.E.), initiated by local princes (Glatz and Plourde 2011, p. 35). The first Great King to follow with his own depiction is Muwatalli II (1295–1272 B.C.E.). Not surprisingly, he is also the first Great King with a strong Luwian focus, relocating the capital to the Luwian land of Tarhuntassa and promoting the cult of the Luwian Stormgod of Lightning. With some caution, we thus may attribute the iconicity of power to Hurro-Syrian, perhaps Luwian influence during the Empire period (Aro 2003, p. 288).

The late development of images of power explains why we may disregard the majority of internal conflicts in our search for iconoclasm, but it does not explain the almost complete lack of curses against inscriptoclasm throughout Hittite history and against iconoclasm in the Empire period. This lack of proscriptions is strikingly different from the situation in Mesopotamia. There we find already very early evidence of fear for erasure of image and name (Woods, this volume). As the contributions in this volume show, even though the material evidence is almost lacking for the earliest periods, this fear was certainly justified in the second and first millennia B.C.E.

If attested destruction of images and texts leads to curses against destruction in Mesopotamia, then perhaps the lack of curses is the logical consequence of lack of destruction in Anatolia. This correlation merely defers the problem. Why would the Hittites leave images and inscriptions intact, and what does it mean when they did damage them? Why is the treatment of images in Anatolia so different from the “killing” of statues in Mesopotamia?

Destruction of an image with the intent to kill the referent relies on two beliefs that are independent of each other and do not necessarily co-occur in a culture’s perception of the world, namely, the idea that the world is mantic and predicts the future, and the idea that divine and royal images are living beings and contain and are part of their real-world objects (see especially Bahrani 1995; 2003; 2004; 2008).

In Mesopotamian thought the damage inflicted upon an image or a name was inflicted on the organic body of the person (Bahrani 2004, p. 118). The close relationship between image and body, representation and reality, depends on the notion that the world is mantic. As discussed by Bahrani (1995, p. 380), this triangle of image, mantic, and body is best illustrated by the following Hellenistic omen, clearly illustrating why an enemy of a king would wish to topple and damage a royal statue:<sup>3</sup>

(An omen says:) if a statue of the king of that land or a statue of his father or a statue of his grandfather falls over and breaks, or if its features become indistinct, (then) the days of that king of that land will be short.<sup>4</sup> (Omen included in Hellenistic building ritual from Uruk)

<sup>2</sup> This is different for royal representations in religious settings. Already Hattusili I describes how he sets up images of himself in temples (see further below).

<sup>3</sup> Ideally the iconoclast should do this in secret. He knew very well that the damage to the organic body was not immediately effective, and that, if the damage was discovered in time, the party of the king would be able to perform the appropriate rituals to counter the prediction of death, such as substitution rituals. It would be very interesting to see whether the attested damage to statues in Mesopotamia was performed in secret or in a

more public setting. I hypothesize that secrecy points at the intent to physically destroy the ruler, whereas public iconoclasm is aimed at the public to show them the demise of power of that ruler. If anything, being able to topple the statue of a ruler without being bothered by guards is already evidence of the impotency of that ruler and his entourage. Modern examples abound.

<sup>4</sup> DIŠ ALAM LUGAL KUR.BI lu-u ALAM AD-šú lu-u ALAM AD AD-šú ŠUB-ut-ma ḪAŠ-ir lu-u bu-un-na-an-ni-šú uk<sup>1</sup>-kil (interlinear:) LUGAL KUR.BI UD.MEŠ-šú LÚGUD.DA.MEŠ (TU 45 rev. 14 [AO 6472], ed. Linssen 2004, pp. 285f.).

The Hittites also believed that the world consisted of mantic signs,<sup>5</sup> but their reading of these signs was very different from the Mesopotamian method. Instead of providing an interpretation based on casuistic “if ... then” omens, the Hittites used a binary method in which they tried to detect the meaning of a sign through series of oracle inquiries based on yes-no questions (Haas 2008, pp. 6f., 137).<sup>6</sup>

Even though Hittite scholars showed great interest in the Babylonian compendia of omens with their interpretations, they hardly ever practiced divination in the Babylonian way. If you do not believe that omens have an inherent specific meaning but are signs with hidden content that can only be further interpreted by series of oracle inquiries, then the “killing” of a statue does *not* immediately imply the death of the referent.<sup>7</sup> At most, the Hittite conception was that damage to an image could be meaningful, and that alleged meaning could only be discovered by means of further inquiries.

Hittite culture does not provide convincing evidence for the other belief on which the power of ancient Near Eastern iconoclasm rests, the idea that images are animated entities that do not merely represent their referents, but *are* their referents (May, *Introduction* to this volume, with further references).<sup>8</sup> In order to show that Hittites did not merge images with their referents, in this paper I develop a semiotics of analyzing speech about visual signs and combine this with texts that show that deities were decidedly distinct from their images. This is the background against which we will have to interpret the (lack of) iconoclasm and inscriptoclasm. In the next sections the few instances of damage are presented concisely, while the *Appendix* contains a more elaborate overview of image and text destruction and contingency curses.

## POSSIBLE TARGETS FOR ICONOCLASM

Despite the absence of larger material remains, it is now well established that large-scale sculptures-in-the-round, whether divine or royal, were commonplace in Hittite cultic settings (Özyar 2006, p. 133). According to the Late Hittite cult inventories<sup>9</sup> and votive texts<sup>10</sup> statues were often made of precious metals, but we also have first-hand evidence already from the Annals of Hattusili I (1650–1620 B.C.E.): “I made this golden statue of myself and placed it before the Sun-goddess of Arinna, My Lady.”<sup>11</sup> Given such precious materials it should not surprise us that the only material evidence of large-scale statues comes in the form of the feet of a statue of, possibly, Tudhaliya IV, found in Yekbaz (fig. 14.2), the statue bases in the Great Temple of Hattusa (Stormgod of Hatti and Sungoddess of Arinna) (fig. 14.3), and part of a colossal royal statue near the Sphinx Gate of Alaca Höyük.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The Hittite word for “(mantic) sign” is *šagai-* (CHD Š s.v.; Haas 2008, p. 18), nominal derivation of *šak(k)-* “to know.”

<sup>6</sup> Regarding Mesopotamian hepatoscopy it seems that besides the casuistic method the binary method was in use until the Middle Babylonian period (Oppenheim 1964, pp. 213f., 217).

<sup>7</sup> This is not to deny that persons could be damaged through images, as in voodoo-rituals. It is, however, important to distinguish between creating an image with the intent to damage, and the mantic interpretation of damage to an image that probably had once received divine approval. The first type, damage to an illegal

image, was meaningful in Hittite culture, the second one not so much.

<sup>8</sup> The matter of animation of the image together with the connection between the physical body, the representation, and the name is discussed in May’s *Introduction*.

<sup>9</sup> For cult inventories, see most recently Hazenbos 2003.

<sup>10</sup> For votive texts, see most recently de Roos 2006.

<sup>11</sup> *nu-za ki-i ALAM-YA ŠA GUŠKIN i-ya-nu-un / na-at A-NA dUTU URUPÚ-na GAŠAN-YA ti-it-ta[(-nu-nu-un)]* (OH/NS, CTH 4, KBo 10.2 iii 21–22, with duplicate KUB 23.20: 5’–6’, ed. De Martino 2003, pp. 68f.; trans. Beckman 2006).

<sup>12</sup> Koşay and Akok 1973, pls. 40–41.

In a recent study on the fate of statues in Hazor, Ben-Tor (2006) discusses exile, burial, and mutilation/demolition as the three causes for the disappearance of statues. The Hittites themselves most likely simply kept or stored sacred statuary that had become obsolete (Collins 2005, p. 28, with n. 59), but the presence of silver, gold, and precious stones or gems on the statues must certainly have led to demolition and re-use of these materials in the millennia between the Hittite period and the present. Obviously, in contrast with the other ancient Near Eastern societies, a study of the form and meaning of iconoclasm in the Hittite world cannot be based on large-scale statuary.

Typical and well-attested forms of Hittite visual expression are the reliefs found on living rock, architectural building blocks, and stelae in urban settings and in the landscape outside the administrative centers. These reliefs,<sup>13</sup> about thirty in total, are usually an expression of power (Seeher 2009), sometimes in regions of territorial dispute (Glatz and Plourde 2011), or in several cases possibly mustering places for the military (Ullmann 2010, pp. 269f.). They depict both deities and Great Kings, princes, vassal kings, and officials and occur with or without inscription. Especially the Great Kings toward the end of the Empire commissioned large inscriptions to commemorate their achievements, as, for example, YALBURT (Tudhaliya IV) and SÜDBURG (Suppiluliuma II). The relatively good state of preservation of the relief images and inscriptions and the important role they play in Hittite society as the visual representation of power make the reliefs particularly fit for a study of political iconoclasm. First, however, I will briefly discuss religious iconoclasm.

## “ICONOCLASM” OF RELIGIOUS IMAGES

Hittite texts hardly ever refer to the destruction of religious imagery. The cult inventories describe whether divine statues are damaged or not, the nose could be chipped off, for example, but the cause of this damage is never mentioned. Besides the damage mentioned in the cult inventories I could find only one reference to deliberate destruction of divine imagery not committed by Hittites but by pillaging Gaseans, northern non-Hittite tribes that are well known for their looting campaigns on Hittite territory:

Which temples of yours were in these lands, the Gasga people knocked them over, and they smashed your images (ALAM.ḪI.A), o gods. (CTH 375, prayer of Arnuwanda I and Asmunial to Sungoddess of Arinna)<sup>14</sup>

In the Old Kingdom the Hittites themselves seem to have preferred abduction of divine statues. This is already attested for the first known Hittite Great King, Anitta, king of Nesa in the eighteenth century B.C.E.:

Previously Uhna, king of Zalpuwa had carried off our deity from Nesa to Zalpuwa, but later I, Anitta, Great King, carried our deity from Zalpuwa back to Nesa. (CTH 1, Anitta text)<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> For recent overviews and studies of Hittite reliefs, see Ehringhaus 2005; Emre 2002; Glatz and Plourde 2011; Özyar 2006; Seeher 2009; Ullmann 2010.

<sup>14</sup> *nu ke-e-ta-aš A-NA KUR.KUR.ḪI.A šu-me-en-za-an «ŠA» É.ḪI.A DINGIR.MEŠ-KU-NU ku-e e-eš-ta na-at LÚ.MEŠ URUGa-aš-ga ar-ḫa pí-ip-pí-ir / nu šu-me-en-za-an ŠA DINGIR.MEŠ ALAM.ḪI.A ar-ḫa ḫu-ul-li-ir* (MH/MS, KUB 31.124 ii 11–12, trans. Singer 2002, p. 42).

<sup>15</sup> *ka-ru-ú<sup>m</sup> U-uh-na-aš LUGAL URUZa-a-al-pu-wa dšī-ú-šum-m[i-in] / [UR]U<sup>U</sup>Ne-e-ša-az URUZa-a-al-pu-wa pé-e-d[a-aš] / [ap-pé-]ez-zi-ya-na<sup>m</sup> A-ni-it-ta-aš LUGAL.GAL dšī-ú-šu[m(-mi-in)] / [(U)RUZ]a-a-al-pu-wa-az a-ap-pa URUNe-e-ša<sup>r</sup> pé-e[-tah-hu-un]* (OS, KBo 3.22 obv. 39–42, with duplicate KUB 36.98a: 9–10, ed. Neu 1974, pp. 12f.).

Ongoing competition for hegemony in the Halys basin led to yet another looting of Zalpuwa a century later, by Hattusili I<sup>16</sup> (1650–1620 B.C.E.). Hattusili I's Annals, covering the first years of his reign, show that abduction of the deities of conquered cities was standard practice.<sup>17</sup> The most famous example of god-napping occurred one generation later: Mursili I's raid on Babylon and the abduction of the statue of Marduk,<sup>18</sup> reminisced in more general terms in a Middle Hittite prayer to the Sungoddess of Arinna:

In the past, the land of Hatti, [with the assistance of] the Sungoddess [of] Arinna, [...] cu[t up (?), dupl. has “mauled”] the surrounding lands in battle like a lion. Moreover, it destroyed Halpa and whoever was there and Babylon and whoever was there, and [it] to[ok] the possessions of all the lands — silver, gold, gods —, and deposited them before the Sungoddess of Arinna. (CTH 376, prayer to the Sungoddess of Arinna)<sup>19</sup>

After the Old Hittite period we hear very little of the abduction of foreign gods or destruction of temples. What this implies for the post-Old Hittite period is not particularly clear. The silence might imply that the practice of state-sanctified abduction of statues was mostly discarded, but more likely, with Schwemer (2008, p. 143), Hittite rulers simply felt great unease in reporting the looting and destruction of temples, statues, and other inventory.

According to Schwemer, preservation was probably so seldom that Mursili II made explicit mention of the favorable treatment of cultic sites after the fall of Carchemish, the last stronghold of the Hurrians. Mursili describes how his father Suppiluliuma I, probably one of the least pious kings in Hittite history, spared the temple area out of respect for the gods.<sup>20</sup> But given that the Empire usually displayed a politically motivated religious tolerance, it is more likely that Suppiluliuma spared the citadel and the city-gods for political reasons: he clearly had planned to make Carchemish the seat of his *Sekundogenitur*.

Domestic religious changes were never accompanied by iconoclastic acts. The first known major change occurred during and after the reign of Tudhaliya I/II. After the incorporation of Kizzuwadna, a region of mixed Luwian-Hurrian ethnicity, many elements of Kizzuwadnean culture were introduced at the court. This was not so much a revolution as it was a merger of traditions from different regions in the expanding Empire. Luwian-Hurrian influence again increased after the marriage of Hattusili III with Puduhepa, daughter of a priest from Kummanni in Kizzuwadna. The culmination of this merger of traditions is the rock sanctuary

<sup>16</sup> Described in KBo 10.2 i 9–10, ed. De Martino 2003, pp. 32f. The town of Zalpa mentioned in the Annals of Hattusili I is not necessarily the same as the one from the Anitta text. See Miller 2001, pp. 70ff., for a discussion of the different Zalpas mentioned in Hittite texts.

<sup>17</sup> See Schwemer 2008, pp. 143f., for a discussion of the function of god-napping in Hittite society.

<sup>18</sup> It is not clear whether the statues of Marduk and Zapanitu, his consort, ever made it to Hattusa. The Agum-Kakrime inscription (partial ed. Tavernier 2010, p. 181, trans. van Koppen 2006, pp. 135ff.) narrates how this Kassite king retrieved the statues from the kingdom of Hana (with capital Terqa, modern Tell Ashara), although according to the Marduk prophecy (partial ed. Tavernier

2010, p. 181, trans. Strawn 2006, pp. 168ff.) Marduk spent twenty-four years in the midst of Hatti.

<sup>19</sup> *nu ka-ru-ú KUR URUḪA-AT-TI URUA-ri-in-n[a-aš (dUTU-) az (?)] / [ca. four signs are missing za-a]ḫ-ḫa-it a-ra-aḫ-zé-na KUR-e UR.MAḪ ma-a-an a-ar[-ki-iš-ki-it (?)] § [(nu pa-ra-a URUḪal-pa-)]an ku-i-uš URUKÁ.DINGIR.RA ku-i-uš ḫar-ni-in-ki-iš-ki-i[(t)] / [(nu KUR-e-aš ḫ)]u-u-ma-an-da-a-aš a-aš-šu-<uš>-mi-it KÛ.BABBAR KÛ.GI DINGIR.MES da[-a-aš-ki-it] / [(na-at PA-NI)] dUTU URUA-RI-IN-NA zi-ik-ki-i-it (MH/MS, KUB 24.4 + KUB 30.12 rev. 2–6, with parallel KUB 24.3 ii 44–48, ed. García Trabazo 2002, pp. 300f.; trans. Singer 2002, p. 53).*

<sup>20</sup> Del Monte 2009, p. 177.

of Yazılıkaya near Hattusa, with its procession of Hittite deities with Hurrian divine names expressed in Hieroglyphic Luwian script.<sup>21</sup>

The only time we can speak of a true reform is the failed religious reform of Muwatalli II (Singer 2006). Muwatalli (1295–1272 B.C.E.) promoted his patron deity, the Luwian Stormgod of Lightning, at the expense of the other chief deities, and moved the capital from Hattusa to Tarhuntassa in the south, taking deities and ancestors with him. But after his death his son and heir Mursili III = Urhi-Tessub reversed it all. However, in contrast with the Akhenaten reform, this reform and the following restoration, as far as we can see, was not accompanied by iconoclasm of any kind.

The only deliberately damaged image of a deity is the defaced image of Istar/Sauska (fig. 14.4), originally from Yazılıkaya but found in secondary context in Yekbaz, a village to the north of Yazılıkaya. Since the remaining deities of Yazılıkaya (around ninety) did not suffer any man-made disfigurements, the only explanation is that the iconoclast was the one who dragged this slab to the village of Yekbaz. Since the buildings of Yekbaz are probably not 3,200 years old, the damage is post-Hittite.

To conclude, nothing points at mutilation of religious imagery in Hittite society, nor did the Hittites fear and anticipate it. If anything, they favored god-napping as one of several techniques to incapacitate a conquered local or foreign enemy and their gods.

## ICONOCLASM AND INSCRIPTOCLASM OF IMAGES OF POWER

Whereas religious iconoclasm is non-existent, there is evidence for political iconoclasm and inscriptoclasm in the archaeological record. It is, however, extremely rare. Curses against iconoclasm are non-existent, although we once in a while find a curse against inscriptoclasm.

If we present the few attestations of damage in table form, with damage as defined by Rambelli and Reinders (2007, p. 23) (discussed in the *Appendix*), an interesting pattern appears (table 14.1). The only cases where the face of an image is removed but the name is left intact are post-Hittite and even modern instances of iconoclasm. The iconoclasts were more concerned with damaging the anthropomorphic image than damaging the name: they probably could not read the symbols to begin with.

In the Old Hittite period there is only evidence for god-napping or theft as a form of iconoclasm, and one case of *damnatio memoriae*, wiping out a name from the memory record. The next evidence for iconoclasm and curses against inscriptoclasm comes from the early Empire period in northern Syria, in other words, an area under Hurrian cultural influence. Here we find for the first time curses against text destruction in the version of the Sattiwaza treaty intended for the Hurrians of Mitanni, and the toppling of the statue of Idrimi of Alalakh without further damage to face and inscription. In the same city the burial of an orthostat of a Tudhaliya is accompanied by removal of the nose, but again the name is left intact.

So even when the Hittites damaged an image, they left the inscription untouched. There is thus a clear correlation between the lack of curses against inscriptoclasm and the lack of iconoclasm. If the Hittites did not feel the need to add curses against erasure of their

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<sup>21</sup> Lebrun 2010, p. 132. For a general overview of Hurrian-Syrian influence on Hittite culture, see Hoffner 1992 and Mora 2010.

Table 14.1. Evidence of deliberate damage in Hittite Anatolia and Syria

<i>Date and Perpetrator</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Type of Damage</i>
<b>OLD HITTITE PERIOD</b>		
<b>HATTI</b>		
Hittite (Anitta, Hattusili I, Mursili I)	Hattusa	God-napping, mentioned in texts
Hittite (Hattusili I)	Hattusa	<i>Damnatio memoriae</i> , name obliteration without residue, mentioned in text
<b>EARLY EMPIRE</b>		
<b>NORTHERN SYRIA</b>		
Hittite (Suppiluliuma I)	Mittanni (text)	Sattiwaza treaty: curse formulae against damage to text
Hittite (Suppiluliuma I)	Alalakh (image + text)	Damage to image: Idrimi statue, toppling and thus breaking
Hittite or locals (Suppiluliuma I)	Alalakh (image + text)	Damage to image: Idrimi statue, humiliation or salvage burial?
Hittite (Mursili II)	Alalakh (image + text)	Damage to image: Tudhaliya orthostat, denosing, burial
<b>LATE EMPIRE</b>		
<b>HATTI</b>		
Hittite (Tudhaliya IV)	Hattusa (text)	Sahuruwuwa decree: curse formula against damage to text
Hittite (Kuruntiya)	Hattusa (text)	Damage to text: burial of Bronze Tablet
Hittite (Tudhaliya IV)	Hatip, west (image + text)	Damage to text: removal of symbols of power, redefinition
Hittite (Tudhaliya IV)	Emirgazi (text)	Luwian dedication: curse formula against damage to text
Hittite (Tudhaliya IV?)	Sirkeli 2 (image + text)	Damage to image + damage to text: Great King, defacement, removal of name
Hittite (Suppiluliuma II)	Hattusa (text)	Alasiya treaty: curse formulae against damage to text
Hittite (date unclear)	Hanyeri (image + text)	Damage to text: Annexation of relief of Prince Ku(wa)la(na)muwa by Prince Tarhuntapiyamma
<b>ARZAWA LANDS</b>		
Luwian/Hittite? (date unclear)	Akpınar (image + text)	Damage to text: Annexation of relief of Prince Ku(wa)la(na)muwa by a Zuwanza
<b>POST-HITTITE</b>		
<b>ANATOLIA</b>		
Post-Hittite	Yekbaz (image + text)	Damage to image: deity, face removed
Modern	Sirkeli 1 (image + text)	Damage to image: king, face removed

names and they indeed did not erase names to begin with, then perhaps their attitude toward name and fame was different from the rest of the ancient Near East. Perhaps in Hittite thought a name was an index for its bearer but did not represent “the very essence of its bearer,” as formulated by Woods (this volume):<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> One would like to know more about the Hittites’ views on script and writing in general. Were inscriptions considered sacrosanct to such an extent that the Hittites did not dare to damage them? Such an attitude would point

at writing as belonging to the realm of the divine, but does not show any correlation with a written name as an extension of the referent of the name.

A name was not simply an index, but represented the very essence of its bearer. Name and identity were inextricably intertwined. A name had substance; it had essence. In short, a name was, on a certain conceptual level, existence itself — to have a name was to exist; to be deprived of a name was non-existence and chaos.

If a name does not represent and ensure the existence of its referent, then removal of one's name is simply not as meaningful as in Mesopotamian society. Further study should shed light on the true power of names in Hittite society.

A major change took place during the reign of Tudhaliya IV. Suddenly, we find elaborate curses against text destruction and archaeological evidence for text change and name removal (Hatip and Sirkeli 2). Evidence for image destruction is still lacking, with one exception, the defacement of Sirkeli 2, which represents either Urhi-Tessub or Kuruntiya, and removal of its name glyph.

Whoever it was, if the removal of face and name was intended to destroy the person — as it might have been in Mesopotamian society — it completely failed to become effective. As discussed in the *Appendix*, Kuruntiya might simply have been returned to his proper position of king of Tarhuntassa (in reality or as a courtesy to the offspring of Muwatalli II) after his removal from Great Kingship, and Urhi-Tessub was a recurrent topic in the correspondence between Ramesses II and Hattusili III after his banishment to northern Syria.

I suggest we attribute the elaborate curse formulae in the two documents from Tudhaliya IV, the Sahurunuwa decree and the Emirgazi altars, to Assyrian cultural influence in the form of ongoing competition between Tudhaliya IV and Tukulti-Ninurta I.<sup>23</sup> Herbordt (2006, p. 89) observes that Tudhaliya is not just the only Hittite king who uses the Assyrian title *šar kiššati*, he is also attested with a highly unique cylinder seal showing the deified king in the *Umarmungsszene*, besides the regular Anatolian stamp seals. Herbordt sees this as part of the competition between Tudhaliya IV and Tukulti-Ninurta I, and I believe that the use of Assyrian-type curse formulae is another piece of evidence.

The use of Mesopotamian curse formulae in the Akkadian version of Suppiluliuma's treaty with Mitanni is best explained as Hittite awareness and adherence to the different conventions outside Anatolian territory. Assyrian control of parts of Anatolia during the late eighth century may explain the appearance of the curse formulae in Tabal mentioned in the *Appendix*, and certainly accounts for the elaborate curse formulae of KARATEPE in Cilicia. On the other hand, the earlier ÇINEKÖY inscription from the same province (how much earlier is unclear) celebrating the newly formed unity between Hiyawa and Assyria does not contain any prohibition: the peaceful contacts with Assyria at that point were of too recent a date to cause a change in a tradition that was already 1,000 years old.

To conclude, the change in attitude toward image and text at the end of the Empire is a result of Tudhaliya IV's general shift toward a more Assyrian ontology. In general, the apprehension of image and name on the Anatolian plateau seems to have differed in important ways from the Syro-Mesopotamian world view.

The following discussion will mainly focus on divine images simply because there are more lexemes to study. I hope it is reasonable to assume that conclusions regarding divine

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<sup>23</sup> Tudhaliya considered the young Assyrian king initially as a royal upstart, but this view changed after Tukulti-Ninurta dealt the Hittites a devastating blow

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during the battle of Nihriya, probably not long after his accession.

images also apply to human depictions. Especially if divine statues are not considered alive then certainly royal images are not alive.

### LET'S TALK ABOUT SIGNS

To understand the lack of damage, the effect of the rare intentional damage presented thus far and deliberate destruction in general, we need to understand how the Hittites understood their images. Were they considered alive? Was the divine image conceived as the living body of the deity, as in Mesopotamian and Egyptian perception? Was the deity or person identical with the image, in the image, transitory in the image, or was the image merely a representation? The intended effect of iconoclasm directly depends on how one views the agency of images. The general absence of both cultural reflection<sup>24</sup> and theorizing in Hittite educated circles prevents an insider view. As a result, Hittitological scholarship is divided regarding the nature<sup>25</sup> of divine images.<sup>26</sup>

Whereas Collins (2005, p. 34) opts for a conceptual distinction between deity and image after providing arguments both for and against such a distinction, *HW<sup>2</sup>* E 124a and Popko (2006), for example, more readily equate the deity with its statue. Popko argues for the equation of image and deity based on the fact that (a) DINGIR-*LIM-tar* (to be read as *šiu(niyatar)*, abstract derivation of *šiu(n)*- "deity") may designate both divinity and divine representation,<sup>27</sup> and that (b) one did not refer to the images of deities by means of Sumerian ALAM/Hittite *eš(ša)ri* and divine name = "image of DN" but by means of the deity's name itself (so also Collins 2005, p. 34):

Die Identität von Gott und Kultbild drückt sich bereits in der hethitischen Lexik aus, und zwar bedeutet DINGIR<sup>LIM</sup>-*tar* nicht nur "Göttlichkeit", sondern auch "Götterdarstellung", wobei das Wort meistens in dieser zweiten Bedeutung belegt ist. Vom Gefühl dieser Identität zeugt ebenfalls, ähnlich wie in Mesopotamien, die Tatsache, dass die Statue mit dem Namen des dargestellten Gottes bezeichnet wurde; im Götterbild wurde der Gott selbst angerufen. (Popko 2006, p. 80)

A similar view seems to be expressed in *HW<sup>2</sup>* (E 124a):

Im Gegensatz zu den profanen und kultischen Inventaren, den Orakeln und den Vota (13. Jh.) sprechen die Festrituale in der Regel nicht von *ešri*- = ALAN "(Götter-) Statuen", sondern diese werden wie handelnde Personen vorgeführt; sie sind für den Hethiter "wirklich."<sup>28</sup>

However, the way the Hittites, and anyone else for that matter, referred to images by means of a personal name instead of ALAM/*ešri* cannot be taken as evidence for an equation of image

<sup>24</sup> There are some exceptions, most notably the Plague Prayers of Mursili II.

<sup>25</sup> For a general discussion of the character of the gods, see Haas 1994, pp. 294ff.; de Roos 2007, pp. 13ff.

<sup>26</sup> The Hittite word for deity is *šiu(n)*-, in combined sumerographic and akkadographic writing DINGIR-LUM. This is the term used in addressing a deity and also the most common form for general reference to the divine. Representations of both deities and humans in the form

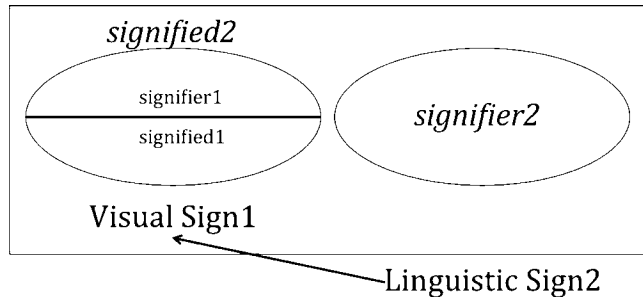
of sculptures-in-the-round are mostly referred to by means of Sumerian ALAM and Hittite *eš(ša)ri*. I am not aware of any term for relief depiction, so it is possible that these terms extend to this type of imagery as well. <sup>27</sup> *HW* 195a "Gottheit; Göttlichkeit; Götterbild."

<sup>28</sup> The purpose of the scare quotes is not clear to me. They might imply that *HW<sup>2</sup>* considers the option that the Hittites did not really believe that an image was the deity.



and deity, of sign and object. What lies at the heart of this misconception is a dichotomy that is easily overlooked: we must distinguish between the observer's viewing of the visual sign and the observer's *talking* about that visual sign.

When I talk about an image the visual sign becomes the input for a linguistic sign: in the terminology of Roland Barthes, this linguistic sign is in the second order of signification in which the visual sign, in the first order of signification, is the signified (note that in Barthes's framework signs that move to the second order of signification are *signifiers*, not signifieds):



The linguistic sign (#2) thus consists of a signifier (expression) and a signified (concept), but the signified (#2) itself is a visual sign (#1) that in turn also consists of a signifier (#1) and a signified (#1). The linguistic sign referring to an image is therefore a complex code that contains two levels of expression and two levels of conception, with the visual sign embedded in the linguistic sign:

$$\text{linguistic sign2} = \{ \text{expression2} + \{ \text{expression1} + \text{concept1} \}_{ \text{visual sign1} = \text{concept2} } \}$$

Because of this embedding, an observer can choose to have the linguistic sign either refer to the *expression* of the visual sign, which is the image, or to the *concept* (and hence the real-world object) of the visual sign, which is what the image represents. For example, in reference to the statue of a deity one may use the word “deity” or “statue of the deity” depending on the target of the expression. In the following breakdown of signified and signifier the target of the linguistic sign is underlined:

- a) sign *deity* referring to statue = {“deity”<sub>signifier</sub> + {**image**<sub>signifier</sub> + deity<sub>signified</sub>}<sub>signified</sub>}
- b) sign *statue* referring to statue = {“statue”<sub>signifier</sub> + {image<sub>signifier</sub> + **deity**<sub>signified</sub>}<sub>signified</sub>}

Important here is that while the signifiers are different the signifieds for both *deity* and *statue* are the same (marked bold face). The observer's choice of linguistic signifier establishes which part of the complex concept of the visual sign the observer wants to focus on (underlined). This choice is of course absent when there is no visual sign to refer to; now the concept **deity** can only be referred to with the signifier “deity”:

- c) sign *deity* referring to deity = {“deity”<sub>signifier</sub> + **deity**<sub>signified</sub>}

Which linguistic expression is chosen for reference to the divine image depends on the context in which the visual sign is addressed. In a ritual setting, which usually serves to honor a deity which is often visually represented, one can understand why we find divine names or simply the word “deity” instead of the phrase “image of DN,” and it is equally understandable that “image of DN” is mainly attested in inventories, oracles, and votive texts, texts where



“form, shape, stature, physical appearance”<sup>33</sup> (thus forming a better equivalent of Sumerian ALAM than of Akkadian *šalmu*, which seems to be restricted to statue, relief, effigy, and like-ness),<sup>34</sup> referring to the physique of deity and human (HED E 313f.; HW<sup>2</sup> E 124f.).

Although it is not always contextually possible to distinguish between “statue” and “stature,” there are clear instances which allow only one of these meanings. For *ešri* “stature” we have, for example,

The Old Woman says: “He (i.e., the king) is like the Sungod! § His stature (*ešri=ššet*) is rejuvenated, his chest is rejuvenated, his manhood is rejuvenated! His head is of iron, his teeth are of a lion, his eyes are of an eagle: he can see like an eagle! § His land is rejuvenated! (CTH 820, blessings for the Labarna-king)<sup>35</sup>

And for *ešri* as “statue”:

Let them knock down the wall(s) (and) the gate(s) of Purushanda separately. Make (sg.) their **statues** (*eššari=šmet*) and seat them at the gates. But let the **statue** (*eššari=šit*) of Nurdahi stand in front (of them) at your disposal, and let him hold your cup. (CTH 310, Hittite version of *šar tamhari* “king of the battle”)<sup>36</sup>

However, these distinctions are based on a modern Western ontological classification. If an *ešri* is created, we call it a statue, but if an *ešri* clearly describes living beings, we call it their physical form and not statue. This is not just a matter of translation based on our understanding of the context but on our notion that statues, being different from living beings, require a separate word. But since anthropomorphic statues have “form, shape, stature, physical appearance” just like their referents, one should ask why *ešri* would denote the whole statue instead of just its outer shape or form.

In other words, *ešri* does not unambiguously denote statue, and we might even want to abandon the meanings “statue” and “stature” and opt for “physical appearance (of a deity, human, and their anthropomorphic images)” to prevent imposing on the semantics of *ešri* our own idea that the concept of “statue” requires its own lexeme.

The only term that seemingly unambiguously refers to divine image is DINGIR-LIM-tar = *šuniyatar* “spirit holder,” abstract -atar formation of *šuni-* “deity” (Haas 1994, p. 298). This term covers anthropomorphic and theriomorphic images, and objects such as a *huwaši-* stela or a hunting bag (Güterbock 1983; Collins 2005, pp. 20ff.). It is worth quoting Collins in full when she describes how *šuniyatar* is not simply a divine image but a cult image, the fusion of the godhead (= godhood) or the divine essence with the image (2005, p. 21):

<sup>33</sup> Collins’s (2005, p. 34) translation of *ešri* in the Illuyanka myth (KBo 3.7 iii 20) as “statue” is therefore not necessarily correct. There is nothing against translating “stature,” and therefore *ešri* in this example cannot be used as an argument for the equation of statue and deity.

<sup>34</sup> CAD Š, 78ff. In the meaning of “body, shape, stature,” *šalmu* seems only to be attested in Gilgamesh (CAD Š, 85).

<sup>35</sup> [(U)]M-MA MUNUSŠU.G1 nu-wa-ra-aš G[(IM-an dUTU-uš)] § e-eš-ri-iš-še-et-wa ne-e-u-wa-an GAB-ŠU-wa ne-e[(-u-wa-an)] / pī-iš-na-tar-še-et-wa ne-e-u-wa-an SAG.DU-ŠU AN.BAR[(-aš)] / ZU<sub>9</sub>.HĪ.A-ŠU-wa ŠA UR.MAĪ<sub>9</sub> ša-ku-wa-še-

et-wa ħar-ra-na[-aš] / nu-wa ħa-a-ra-ni-li ša-a-ku-iš-ki-iz-zi [Ø] / ud-da-ni-iš-še-ta-wa ne-e-u-wa-an [Ø] (OH/NS, KUB 20.54 + KBo 13.122 vi 5–10, with duplicate KUB 55.2 obv. 5’-rev. 5).

<sup>36</sup> [(URUPu)]-ru-uš-ħa-an-da-aš BĀD-eš-šar KĀ.GAL ħa-an-ti pī-ip-pa-an-du / [eš-š]a-ri-iš-me-et i-ya ne KĀ.GAL-aš a-še-eš-ħu-ut mNu-úr-da-ħi-ma-ta / [eš-]ša-ri-ši-it pē-ra-an še[er] ar-ta-ru ne-et-ta GAL-in ħar-du (pre-NH/NS, KBo 22.6 iv 23’-25’, with duplicate KBo 12.1 iv 4–7. For a discussion of the incorrect use of *ne-et-ta* instead of *nu-ut-ta* and the archaizing tendencies in this text in general, see Rieken 2001, p. 582.

In these texts [the cult inventories, P.M.G.], the divinity is typically referred to by the term *šuniyatar*, an abstract of the word for deity (*šuni-*) that is usually translated “divine image.” In the town of Lapana, for example, for the goddess “Iyaya, the *šuniyatar* is one statue of wood, of a woman ... .” Where describing cult statues, as in the inventories, the reference is clearly to the statue as a receptacle for the deity’s essence, its godhead. The application of the word *šuniyatar* to a representation implies that, anthropomorphic or otherwise, the representation was imbued with the divine essence, i.e., that the deity was present. *šuniyatar*, then, is not simply the “divine image,” but applies to the fully fused statue plus godhead. In other words, it is the cult image — the extraphysical reference to whatever object hosted the divine presence.

The translation of *šuniyatar* as “spirit holder,” as “cult image” is however only valid for compositions from the Empire period. To my knowledge all instances of *šuniyatar* in older compositions are better translated as “divine manifestation,” the non-transcendent aspect of a deity, or perhaps “theophany.” The *šuniyatar* is the manifestation of a deity as perceived by the senses in the material world, dreams, or through oracle procedures.

A first indication that *šuniyatar* originally denotes a manifestation or property rather than a concrete noun is the formation of the word itself (also see Collins in the quote above). The *-atar* suffix forms neuter abstract/action nouns from verbs, adjectives, and nouns. In the case of nouns the *-atar* form denotes the status of the base noun, for example, *anniyatar* “status of being a mother > motherhood” (from *anna-* “mother”), *antuhšatar* “status of human being > humanity,” *pišnatar* “manliness, manhood” and *MUNUS-tar* “womenliness” (Hoffner and Melchert 2008, pp. 57f.).

As an abstraction or action noun *šuniyatar* is therefore the godhood, the divine nature of a deity, the set of properties and manifestations in the earthly realm that identifies a deity as a supernatural being instead of a human, the *numen*. In the Paskuwatti ritual against passive homosexuality,<sup>37</sup> for example, a deity is asked to manifest her divine power in a dream to the patient: “In the matter in which we are entreating you on earth, o goddess, show your godhood, and set it right! May he look up at your godhood [...]”<sup>38</sup> and “You, o goddess, show your godhood! \$ May he see your power!”<sup>39</sup>

It is not difficult to see how the notion of *šuniyatar* as the divinity or divine manifestation could develop into a concrete manifestation, hence spirit holder. The original abstract meaning of *šuniyatar* may not have been lost, and there are therefore cases where *šuniyatar* might be interpreted both as abstract and concrete divine manifestation. A text showing this ambiguity is the Ritual of Setting Up a Deity Separately,<sup>40</sup> the only known Hittite text that describes how a deity is invoked to occupy another statue in another cult center:

<sup>37</sup> For the latest interpretation of this ritual as a ritual against passive homosexual inclination, see Miller 2010b.

<sup>38</sup> *nu-ut-ta KI-i še-er / ku-e-da-ni ud-<sup>r</sup>da-a-ni<sup>r</sup>-i mu-ke-eš-ki-u<sup>r</sup>e-n<sup>r</sup>[i] / nu-za DINGIR-LUM DINGIR-LI[M-tar] te-ek-ku-uš-nu-u[t] / <sup>r</sup>na<sup>r</sup>-at SIG<sub>5</sub>-in [i-y]a nu-ud-du[-za ...] / [DINGIR-LI]M-tar ša-ra-a a-uš-du (MH/NS, KUB 7.8 ii 19–23, ed. Hoffner 1987, pp. 276, 278).*

<sup>39</sup> *nu-za zi-ik DINGIR-LUM DINGIR-LIM-tar te-ek-ku-uš-nu-ut \$ nu-wa-du-za na-ak-ki-ya-tar a-uš-du (MH/NS, KUB 7.8 iii 10’–11’, ed. Hoffner 1987, p. 276, 279).*

<sup>40</sup> Although this text describes the creation of a new cult image and the evocation rituals necessary to bring both the deity to the old statue and to the new one, the part that would animate the statue is absent. There is nothing in the Hittite archives that compares to the *mis pi* ritual in Mesopotamian society. Perhaps consecrating the statue and evoking the deity without further animating the statue was enough to transform the statue into a cult image.

Honored deity, preserve your body, but divide your divine manifestation (= divinity or statue). (Come to those new houses, too!). (CTH 481, the expansion of the cult of the Deity of the Night)<sup>41</sup>

The semantic ambiguity of *ešri* combined with the late development of *šiuiniyatar* from “manifestation of divinity” to “physical representation of a deity” as a generic term for spirit holder is very important. When the only known term for anthropomorphic statue also refers to the physical form or stature of humans and gods, and the only known term for spirit holder was originally a property of a deity and not a concrete object, we have to conclude that originally Hittite did not have a special term for “anthropomorphic statue.”

Linguistically we can therefore build a case for the equation of image and deity in the early Hittite period, but not prove it on the conceptual level. Also in the Empire period there does not exist a word that exclusively denotes the spirit holder, but this time there is enough non-linguistic evidence to support a conceptual distinction between deity and cult image. This distinction and the function of the image is the topic of the next section.

### THE IMAGE AS PORTAL

During the reign of Mursili II (1321–1295 B.C.E.), Mashuiluwa (literally, “little mouse”), king of Mira-Kuwaliya in western Anatolia, was found to utter a series of curses in front of the Zawalli-deity of the household of Mursili II.<sup>42</sup> Zawalli-deities are spirits dwelling in persons, places, or their representations.<sup>43</sup> In Mashuiluwa’s case the Zawalli-deity was a statue representing the household of the king. His continuous cursing resulted in the bewitchment of both statue and king, who therefore needed to be ritually cleansed, with assistance of the culprit and a member of his family, Zapartinana<sup>44</sup> (“brother of the rat”).<sup>45</sup> The same text<sup>46</sup> documents how deities from Ahhiyawa and Lazpa (the island of Lesbos) together with a few other deities had been delivered to Mursili II in order to cure him from an unspecified illness.

Clearly, then, images had derived agency. Images could act upon their surroundings, and the surroundings could act through images. But this leaves open the question whether the Hittites also believed that the image was identical to the deity or person (or its *zawalli*). In other words, did the Hittites merge the sign (signifier+signified) and its real-world referent or object, or was the sign an index, directly connected to its real-world referent with the power to “direct the attention to their objects by blind compulsion” (Peirce 1994, 2.306) yet separate from its referent?

<sup>41</sup> *na-ak-ki-iš-z[a]* DINGIR-LUM NÍ.TE-KA *pa-aḫ-ši* DINGIR-LIM-ni-ia-tar-ma-za-kán / *šar-ri* (NH, KUB 29.4 iii 26–27, with duplicate KUB 12.23 iii 7’–8’, ed. Miller 2004, pp. 289f.)

<sup>42</sup> KUB 5.6 iii 8ff., ed. Ünal 2005.

<sup>43</sup> Van den Hout 1998, p. 83: “A Zawalli-deity may thus be redefined as a kind of divine spirit or genius dwelling in people and places or institutions or somehow representing them. This spirit may have been considered embodying the essentials of an individual or place which could receive offerings and could be angry if neglected but through which that individual or place could be ‘bewitched’ as well.” Collins (2006, pp. 178f.) compares the

*zawalli* with Greek *elasteros*. For a different view, notably the equation of the Zawalli-deity with GIDIM, see Archi 1979.

<sup>44</sup> Written *Zaparti-ŠEŠ*. In my view *zaparti-* is the Luwian cognate of Hittite *kapart-/kapirt-* “mouse, rat, rodent,” with expected *i*-mutation and Luwian *z* ~ Hittite *k* < Proto-Anatolian \**k*. For *kapart-/kapirt-* in general, see HED K 58 and Kloekhorst 2008, pp. 438f.

<sup>45</sup> These royal rats did not last long. After his revolt against Mursili II, Mashuiluwa was removed from the throne and held hostage in Hattusa (Bryce 2005, pp. 212ff.).

<sup>46</sup> KUB 5.6 ii 57ff., ed. Ünal 2005.

It is evident that the destruction of a divine image did not imply the destruction of the deity it represented. As noted above, the royal couple Arnuwanda I and Asmunigal (between 1400 and 1350 B.C.E.) is able to address deities whose images were destroyed with “the temples of yours that were in these lands, the Gasga people knocked them down, and they smashed your images, o gods (ŠA DINGIR.MEŠ ALAM.ĪI.A).”

That Hittite deities were transcendent and not to be equated with their material images is also evidenced by the evocation rituals, rituals of attraction whose sole purpose it is to induce the gods to return from wherever they are and to occupy their cult images and temples. Given that most evocation rituals stem from Kizzuwadna and Arzawa, the following ritual is important because it not only deals with cultic activities in the core land, but also because it shows close correspondences with a Hattic prototype (Haas 1970, p. 183):

May he come, the Stormgod of Nerik, from the sky, from the earth: “Come, o Stormgod of Nerik from the East, from the West; come, Stormgod of Nerik, from the sky if you are with the Stormgod, your father; (from the earth) if you are in the dark earth with Ereškigal, your mother!” ... “Tomorrow to your celebration come! Come from your beloved Mount Hahruwa to the place where your body and your soul<sup>47</sup> are (i.e., the city of Nerik!)” (Evocation of the Stormgod of Nerik during the anointment of Tudhaliya IV as priest of the Stormgod of Nerik)<sup>48</sup>

Another clear example of the distinction between deity and image is the evocation of the deities of a conquered city.<sup>49</sup> After the consecration of a conquered city to the Stormgod, which means its complete annihilation, the city’s divinities were lured out of town by means of offerings and asked to aim their favors at the Hittite king. As a final act the formerly hostile deities could become incorporated in the Hittite pantheon as servants of the Hittite gods (Schwemer 2008, p. 144; see Westenholz, this volume, on a similar treatment of the Mesopotamian monuments by the Elamites, and May, *Introduction* to this volume, for the cross-cultural occurrences of such phenomena). Presumably the cult images were removed from the temple precinct before the destruction, but the importance of this text is that the hostile deities were assumed to linger in the devastation, even though their homes and images, either destroyed or removed, were gone.

Finally, some deities did not even have an image. Toward the end of the Empire, during the reign of Tudhaliya IV (1237–1209 B.C.E.), it was believed that this would impede proper ritual functioning, so those deities without image were provided with one:

From of old Mt. Malimaliya had no spirit holder. His Majesty Tudhaliya (donated) an iron statue of a man [...] with eyes of silver, standing on an iron lion.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> The statue of a deity could also be referred to as *tuukka* “body,” as in, for example, KUB 17.21 i 14–16. And just as a deity’s body could be represented by a statue, also its soul could be cast in material form (Kapeluš 2010).

<sup>48</sup> *ú-id-du-wa-aš* <sup>dU</sup> URU *Ne-ri-ik* / [n]e-pí-ša!-az da-ga-an-zi-pa-az / e-ḫu-wa <sup>dU</sup> URU *Ne-ri-ik* ŠE-E-ET <sup>dUTU</sup> a-š / ŠŪ.A <sup>dUTU</sup> a-š e-ḫu-wa <sup>dU</sup> URU *Ne-ri-ik* / ne-pí-ša-az ma-a-an-za <sup>dU</sup> ni A-NA A-BI-<sup>r</sup>KA <sup>r</sup> GAM-an<sup>r</sup> / ma-a-an-ma-za da-an-ku-i da-ga-an-zi-pí / A-NA <sup>dEREŠ</sup>.KI.GAL AMA-KA GAM-an ... nu lu-uk-kat-ti UD-ti / A-NA EZEN-KA e-ḫu e-ḫu IŠ-TU

<sup>HUR.SAG</sup> *Ḫa-aḫ-ru-wa* / tu-e-da-az a-aš-ši-ya-an-ta-za / tu-el NÍ.TE ZI-KA-ya ku-e-da-ni pí-di (NH, KUB 36.90 obv. 7–13, 18–21, ed. Haas 1970, pp. 176f., trans. Singer 2002, p. 106).

<sup>49</sup> CTH 423, most recently edited by Fuscagni (2011).

<sup>50</sup> <sup>HUR.SAG</sup> *Ma-li-ma-li-ya-aš an-na-la-za* DINGIR.MEŠ-tar Ū-UL e-eš-ta / <sup>dUTU</sup> ŠI-an <sup>m</sup>Tu-ud-ḫa-li-ya-aš ALAM LÚ AN.BAR ... / IGI.ĪI.A KŪ.GI A-NA UR.MAḪ AN.BAR-aš kán ar-ta-ri (NH, KUB 7.24 obv. 1–3, ed. Hazenbos 2003, pp. 26f.).

Last but not least, as Collins (2005, pp. 34f.) shows, there is also iconographic support for the distinction between deity and image. The frieze on the Schimmel stag rhyton, for example, presents both the heavenly and the earthly manifestations of the same deity (fig. 14.5). The adorant libates in front of the cult image, which is depicted as a deity standing on a stag, while the heavenly deity is seated to the left of the cult image. The location where adorant and deity meet each other is the cult statue: the adorant is not depicted as in direct contact with the deity.<sup>51</sup>

To summarize, the deity is not the image, although the image may be seen as an extension of the deity. As a consecrated image it is a trace of the deity, and also one of the meeting places with the deity, the locus of interaction between deity and human being. In front of the statue one could at least be sure that one's ritual acts and prayers were noted, and the ritual practitioner also stood the best chance of being observed, literally, by the deity.

Thus when Mashuiluwa uttered curses standing in front of the Zawalli-deity of the royal household, the curses were channeled through the image to the household. The image is therefore best described as a portal with two-way traffic: on the one hand the deity worked through the image, and on the other hand one could contact the deity through the image.

### THE IMAGE AS INDEX: DAMAGING THE PORTAL

Within the context of a discussion of the purpose and effect of iconoclasm it is highly relevant to distinguish between "sign = object/referent" and "sign = index of the object." An index points at the existence of a real-world object because of its causal relationship with its object and its contiguity with it. Smoke, for example, points directly and uniquely at fire even though you may not see the fire, the sound of a knock on a door necessarily indicates someone's presence, and a (non-Photoshopped) photograph necessarily indicates the existence of the depicted objects. Destroying an index does not destroy the object, wiping out the footprint does not kill the "footprinter," blowing away the smoke does not extinguish the fire. Destroying or damaging the index means disconnecting the viewer from the referent, which would be devastating enough in societies where connecting with the divine was of the utmost importance. But if the sign is the referent, then destroying the sign indeed leads to destruction of the real-world entity, as has been argued for Mesopotamian culture.

As discussed above, I assume that the cult image in Hittite society is not to be equated with its deity but serves as an indexical nexus, medium, or portal. How an image turned into a cult image is described by Collins (2005, pp. 29ff.). Within the present discussion we might say that after the image was consecrated and the deity had been transient in the image through invocation, the image had become the causal trace of the referent: the smoke, photograph, or footprint. Thus, the cultic image is compulsive evidence of the presence of the deity. It also had become a portal through which the deity could act and through which one could reach the deity (if s/he was looking).

God-napping thus makes sense. Besides the blow it delivered to the conquered population as an act of war policy, the Hittites also transported an active, though subordinate, portal to

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<sup>51</sup> In a similar way Dick (1999, p. 34) presents the depiction of both deity and cult statue on seals as one of the

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arguments for the differentiation between deity and cult image in Mesopotamian society.

their own temples.<sup>52</sup> This transfer of divine power and the ensuing empowerment of Hittite rule must have been the ultimate goal of god-napping, not punishment, I believe. The conquered population could always create a new image, but, assuming that the conquered gods voluntarily directed their power at the Hittites and had become incorporated in the Hittite divine world, these new images would by definition be less powerful than and subordinate to the Hittite gods.

The treatment of the cult image-portal possibly depended on its material context. It is rather easy to abduct a deity's statue from its temple to break the nexus between a local polity and its deity, but breaking the nexus between immobile imagery and the polity almost necessarily implied some form of destruction. I would therefore say that whereas statues were more likely to be abducted, reliefs were more likely to be destroyed to achieve the same: cutting the ties between the polity and the deity. By damaging the image, especially the face, the iconoclast aimed at closing the portal. On the one hand, the referent of the image would not be able to receive offerings, and on the other hand, the referent would not be able to act through the image anymore: the sign's performativity, its potential for agency to effect changes in the world was destroyed. We have no evidence for divine relief destruction in Hittite society, but it might be worthwhile to look at correlations between types of iconoclasm and the mobility of imagery in other societies.

It needs to be stressed here that if one takes the image as portal and not also as the man-tic anorganic body, damaging the image does not imply damaging the organic body. Instead, damage to the image under this reading should be compared with nullification of an image as described in *Avodah Zarah* 53:

How does an idol-worshipper nullify an idol? If he cut off the tip of its ear, the tip of its nose, or the tip of finger, or flattened its face — he has nullified it. But if he spit before it, or urinated before it, or dragged it through the mud, or threw excrement at it — the idol is not nullified. If he sold it or gave it as a pledge for a loan, Rabbi Yehudah the Prince says that his nullification is effective, but the Sages say that it is not.

I assume that the understanding of a visual image as a portal may be extended to royal images.<sup>53</sup> This explains the function of statues of kings in temples as representatives of the king. Without being present the king was still present through the statue. So when the troops of Suppiluliuma I entered the temple of Alalakh and discovered the statue of Idrimi, they toppled and destroyed the statue (without damage to the inscription), not out of vandalism but in order to break the nexus between a ruler from the dynasty of deposed kings of Alalakh and its gods.

The same happened a generation later with the image of Tudhaliya on the orthostat in the temple of Alalakh. Again we see how the image of a local(?) ruler honoring a deity is removed from its privileged location. In this case the image, being a relief on an orthostat, could not be broken, but it still needed to be nullified. This was done by damaging the nose. And again, the inscription was not damaged.

<sup>52</sup> Besides that, presumably quite a few divine statues were simply treated as booty (Schwemer 2008, p. 144). If we understand god-napping as an act that not only involves the signifier but also the signified, then the

looting of divine statues because of their material value should not be called god-napping.

<sup>53</sup> The image as portal is different from the image as substitute, as in Mesopotamian society.



Otherwise, since monumental visual representation of power was originally not part of Hittite culture, iconoclasm must not have been widespread. But we may see a development toward more images of power and therefore more power to images after the incorporation of northern Syria into the Empire. The first king to depict himself in the Hittite landscape was Muwatalli (Sirkeli), followed by Hattusili and Puduhepa (Fraktin), and then Kuruntiya of Tarhuntassa (Hatip) and the monumental inscriptions of Tudhaliya IV (Emirgazi, Yalbur).

As noted above, documentation from the reign of Tudhaliya IV shows that this king was under Assyrian cultural influence. Curse formulae of the Syrian-Mesopotamian type start appearing, and there are two more instances of damage to images and text, Hatip and Sirkeli 2. But despite the Assyrian influence, the damage was not aimed at destroying the referents.

The destruction of face and name glyph of Sirkeli 2 should be compared with the preservation of the name glyph of Kuruntiya on the Hatip relief. The Hatip relief represents the political power of Kuruntiya at the border between Tarhuntassa and Hatti, whereas Sirkeli had a cultic function as indicated by the two libation hollows<sup>54</sup> on the platform above the reliefs.

The change in the inscription of Hatip was meant to correct the inappropriate expression of power by Kuruntiya of Tarhuntassa, and as such the damage was not only an index of the lack of power of Kuruntiya, but perhaps more importantly an index of the presence of the power of the Great King. The defacing of the royal image and removal of the name at the cultic site of Sirkeli 2 had become necessary after either Urhi-Tessub or Kuruntiya was removed from Great Kingship. Neither Hattusili III in the case of Urhi-Tessub or Tudhaliya in case of Kuruntiya could allow the image of a deposed Great King to remain active as a portal to the gods.

Thus, the small scale and isolated mutilation of images such as attested in Hittite society served a purpose different from destruction of the referent: it tries to convince the addressee of the image that part of the message of the image has become de-activated. The mutilation of images intends to convey to the spectator the impotency of the referent. By taking away the senses of the image and by de-identifying it, it cannot see or hear and be known, and therefore serve as a medium between the spectator, the ruler, or the deity. If images are about “power in the sense of making the invisible visible” (Assmann 2001, p. xvii), then destruction of images is not about destruction of its referent but about *disempowerment*, about making the invisible invisible again.

The real destruction of one’s opponent, whether divine or human, must be achieved by other means than iconoclasm or inscriptoclasm.

## APPENDIX: EVIDENCE OF HITTITE ICONOCLASM AND INSCRIPTOCLASM


Textual evidence for destruction of royal images is non-existent. There is, however, some archeological evidence. Of the images that are not too eroded, only the relief of Sirkeli 2 (Anatolia) and an orthostat and statue found in Tell Açana (Syria) show signs of deliberate damage.

I follow Rambelli and Reinders (2007, p. 23, table 1.2) in categorizing iconoclasm according to the type of damage inflicted on the object and the intention of the iconoclast:

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<sup>54</sup> The hollows of Sirkeli were first described by Ussishkin (1975, pp. 86f.).

Table 14.2. Iconoclasm according to type and intention

	<i>With the Intention to Harm</i>	<i>With the Intention to Preserve</i>
Irreversible Loss of Physical Integrity of the Object 	Obliteration (e.g., burning wooden icons)	Sacrifice (e.g., burning paper money or images, self-immolation)
	Destruction with residue (e.g., melting down metal icons, materials used for other purposes)	Dismantling (e.g., periodic repairs, materials used for religious purposes)
	Disfiguring (e.g., gouging face, beheading, graffiti)	Remodelling, restoration as benevolent
	Humiliation (e.g., toppling onto ground, verbal abuse, profanity)	Humility (e.g., flogging an image to activate its power)
	Theft (to harm)	Theft (to enhance)
	Hiding (e.g., confiscating images, burying objects)	Hiding (e.g., burying sutras, production of <i>hibutsu</i> , hiding to preserve objects)
More Reversible, Physical Object Intact	Negative cultural redefinition (e.g., ideological polemics)	Positive cultural redefinition (e.g., in museums, tourism)

## ICONOCLASM OF ROYAL AND PRINCELY IMAGES

### *Sirkeli 2*

The Sirkeli 2 relief (fig. 14.6) accompanying Sirkeli 1 (fig. 14.7), which depicts Great King Muwatalli II (1295–1272 B.C.E.), clearly suffered deliberate damage. Both the name glyph and the face have been chiseled off. In Ehringhaus's words (2005, p. 101):

Die behutsame, die Gestalt als Ganzes nicht vernichtende, sondern deren Konturen eher sorgsam erhaltende Art, in der die Ausmeißelung vorgenommen wurde, erweckt intensiv den Eindruck, daß es dabei vor allem auf die Eradierung derjenigen Merkmale ankam, die eine Identifizierung der Person ermöglicht hatten, nicht aber um die völlige Vernichtung des (sakrosankten?) Bildes des dargestellten Königs.

Although the identity of the defaced king cannot be established with certainty, the only candidates are Mursili III = Urhi-Tessub (according to the excavators of Sirkeli Höyük<sup>55</sup>), who was a legitimate Great King<sup>56</sup> but was deposed by his uncle Hattusili III, and Kuruntiya,<sup>57</sup> illegitimate Great King and rightfully deposed by his cousin Tudhaliya IV.

Recently also the image of Muwatalli II has been damaged (Ehringhaus 2005, p. 97, with fig. 177; fig. 14.8). This modern occurrence of iconoclasm should warn us against concluding that all iconoclasm is contemporaneous. Nevertheless, in the case of Sirkeli 2 I would

<sup>55</sup> "Close to this relief another Hittite rock relief was found which was chiseled out in Antiquity. This second relief is commonly thought to be a depiction of Muwatalli's son Kurunta (= Ulmi-Teššup). But it is more likely to show his brother Muršili III (= Urhi-Teššup, ca. 1272–1265 B.C.E.) who was dethroned by Hattušili II."

([http://www.sirkeli-project.info/en/site\\_monuments.html](http://www.sirkeli-project.info/en/site_monuments.html)).

<sup>56</sup> De Martino 2010, p. 91; Ehringhaus 2005, p. 107.

<sup>57</sup> Opinions differ on the nature of Kuruntiya's Great Kingship. For more discussion, see below.

attribute the damage to Hittite times, otherwise the survival of the image of Muwatalli II on Sirkeli 1 would be difficult to explain. The iconoclasts knew exactly which relief to target.

It has been claimed that Sirkeli was a memorial site for the deceased Muwatalli II.<sup>58</sup> If this is correct, how should we explain the presence of either one of his children? It is inconceivable that either Hattusili or Tudhaliya would have commissioned the depiction of a deceased Urhi-Tessub or Kuruntiya in the garb of a Great King, in order to receive libations just like their father Muwatalli II. The only remaining option is that Sirkeli 2 was added during the life of the unidentified son, by the unidentified son. But would a living Great King depict himself in exactly the same way as a deceased king? Or would he add himself to the relief of a former *living* king, in other words, would he annex the visual language of the original image in order to emulate his predecessor and place himself in a venerated tradition?

As yet there is no clear evidence that Sirkeli served a funerary or memorial purpose.<sup>59</sup> If Olivier Casabonne is correct in identifying Sirkeli Höyük with Lawazantiya,<sup>60</sup> the important Kizzuwadnean cultic center of Sausga of Lawazantiya (and hometown of Puduhepa), then we are probably dealing with a depiction of the Hittite king in his priestly function by life, in the adoration pose also seen on other cultic reliefs such as Alaca Höyük.<sup>61</sup>

It then makes sense to interpret Sirkeli 2 as only another Great King of Hatti. If one rejects Kuruntiya as Great King of Hatti, Sirkeli 2 must represent Urhi-Tessub; Kuruntiya as king of Tarhuntassa would simply not have been able to depict himself in this way outside Tarhuntassa. The damage could have been commissioned by Hattusili III, but one should not be surprised to see here the hand of Puduhepa active in her home arena. Or, if one accepts Kuruntiya as Great King of Hatti and attributes Sirkeli 2 to him, Tudhaliya could be the one who ordered the damage. The difference with Hatip, described below, would be that the modified mention of Kuruntiya at the border between Tarhuntassa and Hatti would be unproblematic in his role as King of Tarhuntassa, but that Kuruntiya depicted in the attire of the Sungod — therefore as Great King — and next to his father Muwatalli would be unacceptable for Tudhaliya.

### *Alalakh Orthostat*

Another instance of iconoclasm was discovered in Alalakh (modern Tell Açana),<sup>62</sup> once capital of the Levantine kingdom of Mukish. It concerns a corner orthostat found in secondary context with, on the wide side, depictions of a male and a female figure, both with name glyphs (fig. 14.9), and a second, smaller male figure on the small side of the slab.<sup>63</sup> Together with other orthostats it was reused as a step in the stairs in the temple entrance of level 1B<sup>W</sup> = IIB<sup>F</sup> (for the new stratigraphy, see Fink 2010), but originally the slabs were probably part of the interior lining of the cella wall in temple level 1A<sup>W</sup> = IIA<sup>F</sup> (Helft 2010, p. 66 n. 119). The glyphs to the right of the male figure read as “Tudhaliya, Chief of the Charioteers, Prince,”<sup>64</sup>

<sup>58</sup> See references in van den Hout 2002, p. 89; Singer 2009, p. 174.

<sup>59</sup> Van den Hout 2002, p. 91.

<sup>60</sup> [http://www.sirkeli-project.info/en/research\\_site-name.html](http://www.sirkeli-project.info/en/research_site-name.html), accessed on September 19, 2011.

<sup>61</sup> For a close-up of the Alaca Höyük relief, see Ehringhaus 2005, p. 8, fig. 3.

<sup>62</sup> For the final archaeological report on Alalakh, see Woolley 1955; for a re-assessment, see Fink 2010.

<sup>63</sup> Woolley 1955, pl. 48.

<sup>64</sup> <sup>d</sup>MONS+tu MAGNUS.AURIGA<sub>2</sub> REX.FILIUS; see Niedorf 2002, p. 521; Fink 2010, p. 53. Perhaps read <sup>d</sup>MONS+tu MAGNUS (?) HATTI (?) REX.FILIUS “Tudhaliya, Great Prince of Hatti(?)” so with caution Hawkins *apud* Herbordt 2005, p. 304 no. 22.

whereas the glyphs to the right of the female figure are currently undecipherable, with the exception of “Princess.”

What has gone unmentioned is that a part of Tudhaliya’s nose is missing. Instead of the usual straight nose as depicted on the woman, Tudhaliya has a highly unusual snub nose (fig. 14.10). Given that the faces of woman to his left (fig. 14.11) and the male figure on the small side of the orthostat have been left untouched, in combination with the reuse of the orthostat face down as a stepping stone in the temple entrance, I follow De Martino’s suggestion (2010, p. 94) that we are dealing with an act of misapproval of the actions of this Tudhaliya.

In order to determine whether this act of political iconoclasm was committed by Hittites, locals governed by Hittites, or locals rejecting Hittite control, we need to establish which Tudhaliya is depicted. Güterbock *apud* Woolley (1955, p. 241) identified the main male figure as a Tudhaliya, but did not determine which one. Woolley, on the other hand, identified him as Tudhaliya IV (1955, p. 241). Bonatz (2007, pp. 131f.) rejects Woolley’s identification on the grounds that the person greets the name glyph of Tudhaliya IV. This argument is not valid for two reasons (also see Helft 2010, p. 67). The Fraktin relief and the Ini-Tessub seals, for example, show that the name of the adorant may be written between the adorant and the deity. That the name refers to the adorant, thus a Tudhaliya, is also the view of De Martino (2010, p. 94). Second, and this applies to both Woolley and Bonatz, the titles Chief of the Charioteers and Prince would never have been used for a Great King.

De Martino (2010, p. 94) and Fink (2010, pp. 53f.) suggest a rather early date for this relief by accepting the identification of Tudhaliya Chief of the Charioteers with the Tudhaliya mentioned in documents from the time of Mursili II. The main argument against such an early dating is the presence of the horn as a divine attribute on the skullcap (Helft 2010, p. 67, who nevertheless allows an early date). There is general agreement (van den Hout 1995a; De Martino 2010) that Mursili III (Urhi-Tessub), son of Muwatalli II, was the first to introduce symbols of divinity in royal iconography. This would indeed exclude the depiction of officials or princes wearing a horned headdress long before the ruling kings were depicted with horned crowns.

However, the protrusion on the skullcap is not necessarily a horn, but could also be a quiff or a knot on the headband (Herbordt 2005, p. 59). The fact that on seals and sealings not only *all* robed princes and officials, including the early(!) Empire scribe Mr. AVIS<sub>2</sub> (Herbordt 2005, p. 59, fig. 40a), but also the jesters on the reliefs of Alaca Höyük, are attested with a headdress with protrusion, argues against the protrusion as a divine attribute in every case.<sup>65</sup> From an iconographical perspective our Tudhaliya could therefore be dated to the whole period covering Mursili II until Tudhaliya IV.

The stratigraphy of the temples of levels IV–0 as reanalyzed by Fink turns out to be conclusive for an early dating of the Tudhaliya orthostat, in accordance with De Martino’s views:

<sup>65</sup> Alternatively, assuming that the protrusion is indeed a horn one could argue with Bonatz (2007, pp. 127, 132f.) that the depiction as a god was an expression of proxim-

ity to the supernatural, providing protection and legitimacy of power. That does not explain why the jesters of Alaca Höyük are wearing skullcaps with horns.

Table 14.3. Stratigraphy of temples at Alalakh (Tell Ačana)

Woolley	Fink	Proposed Date According to Fink (2010, p. 2, summary table 1)
Level II <sup>W</sup> Temple	III <sup>F</sup>	1341–1313, Suppiluliuma I–Mursili II. First temple built under Hittite control. Level ends with the end of the city and perhaps deportation of the population (Fink 2010, pp. 120f.)
Level IA <sup>W</sup> Temple	IIA <sup>F</sup>	1313–1280. Alalakh is a Hittite stronghold. Orthostat of Tudhaliya lines cella wall of temple. Destroyed by fire, but only after it was systematically wrecked (Woolley 1955, p. 85)
Level IB <sup>W</sup> Temple	IIB <sup>F</sup>	1280–1240. Temple rebuilt, orthostat reused as step in stairs
Paluwa Shrine	IA <sup>F</sup>	1240–1210. Paluwa was contemporaneous with Zu-Ba'la of Emar, who is of the generation of Mursili III and of Sahurunuwa and Ini-Tessub, kings of Karkamis (Fink 2010, p. 55)
Level 0 <sup>W</sup> Temple	IB <sup>F</sup>	1210–1190/1185. Destroyed around the fall of Hatti and Ugarit

The Tudhaliya orthostat belongs to temple level IIA<sup>F</sup>, which Fink dates to the period after the city had been turned into a Hittite stronghold. This occurred most probably during the reign of Mursili II (Fink 2010, p. 52), meaning that our Tudhaliya was active during the reign of Mursili II. It also means that the reuse of the slab cannot be attributed to locals celebrating the demise of Hittite overlordship, but only to the population of the Hittite stronghold.

According to Woolley (1955, p. 85), temple IA<sup>W</sup> = IIA<sup>F</sup> was destroyed by fire after it was systematically wrecked. What had happened before the fire was that the orthostats lining the northwest buttress of the cella were removed with exception of the middle one, whereas the three orthostats of the northeast buttress remained in situ. The two recesses in the wall at the back of the cella had also been lined with orthostats. With the exception of one in each recess, all these orthostats were removed as well (see Woolley 1955, p. 83, fig. 34a). Two of the slabs were reused to form a step in the entrance of the antechamber, one of them the Tudhaliya slab. Given the fact that the small left side of the Tudhaliya slab also contains a depiction, this slab must have been situated at the left of the northwest buttress. The other orthostat was removed from either the right side of this same buttress, or from the recesses.

To me it seems that this does not represent mindless wreckage but deliberate removal of the orthostat of Tudhaliya at the command of the Hittite overlords. Thus, I follow De Martino's view (2010, p. 94) that the reuse of the slab was a humiliation, a politically motivated act of disapproval.

### *Alalakh Statue*

The humiliating treatment of Tudhaliya should be compared to the treatment of the Idrimi statue of Alalakh two generations earlier. Originally believed to have been damaged around the time of the final destruction of Alalakh (Woolley 1955, p. 89), Fink's stratigraphic reanalysis leads to a different conclusion: "the statue of Idrimi was smashed and buried when the Level III<sup>W</sup> temple ceased to exist. This happened when the Hittites conquered Alalakh during the first Syrian war of Šuppiluliuma I" (2010, p. 57). Probably, the Hittites toppled

the statue of this venerated ruler as a political act to symbolize the demise of the city-state of Mukish.

The toppling and therefore breaking of the statue was followed by burial, but the question is whether this was a salvage burial by Alalakhians or an act of humiliation by the Hittites. There is some evidence that burial of an image containing the name of the depicted during an act of sympathetic magic was considered very harmful by the Hittites.<sup>66</sup> However, without further supportive evidence it is currently difficult to decide whether the Idrimi statue was buried by locals out of veneration and preservation, or by Hittites as a form of humiliation.

What is remarkable in the context of iconoclasm is that the Hittites left both the inscription and the face of Idrimi untouched<sup>67</sup> (fig. 14.12).

### TEXTUAL ICONOCLASM OR INSCRIPTOCLASM: NEARLY NON-EXISTENT

Throughout the ancient Near East, and to a lesser extent the Roman-Greek world,<sup>68</sup> texts were regularly subjected to iconoclasm. Destruction and *metagraphē* (i.e., repurposing or text usurpation) are already attested in Early Dynastic Mesopotamia, both in the archaeological record and in the proscriptions of royal inscriptions (Woods, this volume) and continue to be found in second- and first-millennium Babylon, Assyria, and the Levant (Levtow, this volume). The periods of Egyptian iconoclasm are well known (Bryan, this volume), and include *metagraphē* of cartouches by, for example, Akhenaton and Horemheb.

In stark contrast with the rest of the ancient Near East, only one of the second-millennium Anatolian inscriptions suffered deliberate damage (see the section *Hatip: Text Change* below for the only known example of partial effacement of a title). Aside from the burial of the Bronze Tablet, discussed below, and the peculiar smashing of a tablet against a wall reported in a fragmentary letter to a Hittite king:

Bentesina kept the tablet [of] the palace and gave it to Tattamaru (with the words):  
 “Hand it over to the king!” He, however, smac[ked] (*walhta*) it against the wall!<sup>69</sup>  
 (CTH 209, NH letter)

there is no further evidence of deliberate text damage, either in the textual or the archaeological record. This lack of destruction is accompanied by a general lack of curses against text destruction and name removal. The only exceptions on Anatolian territory are two texts from Tudhaliya IV (see *Curses Against Text or Name Destruction*, below), and one known case of *damnatio memoriae*, or removal of one’s name from the memory record. Benevolent annexation by adding one’s name to an existing inscription is more common (Glatz and Plourde 2011, p. 60).

<sup>66</sup> See KUB 40.83 obv. 14–17, ed. Werner 1967, p. 64. This text is a court testimony dealing with an alleged case of witchcraft involving the burial of voodoo dolls depicting three persons (Miller 2010a, pp. 181f.). For similar voodoo-type acts in Egypt, see the Egyptian Execration Texts describing the burial of clay figures of rulers (Ben-Tor 2006, p. 12).

<sup>67</sup> The Hittite toppling of the statue of Idrimi without further damage to the statue and the inscription is similar to the toppling of the Gudea statues by the Elamites.

Also in that case there is no evidence of erasing the inscriptions (Suter, this volume).

<sup>68</sup> For text-usurpation or *metagraphē* in the classical world, see especially Shear 2007 and Platt 2007.

<sup>69</sup>  $\overline{TUP-PU}$  É.GAL-LI[M-wa?] /  $\overline{mZAG.S\check{E}Š-aš}$  *har-ta nu-war[a-a]t A-NA mTa-at-ta-ma-ru pé-eš-ta A-NA dUTU-Š[I-wa] / pa-ra-a e-ep a-pa-a-aš-ma-w[a-r]a-at-kán* <sup>NA4</sup>*ku-ut-ta-aš-ša-ri an-da wa-al-a[h-ta]* (NH, KUB 26.92: 9’–11’, ed. van den Hout 1995b, pp. 122f.)

The attested forms of inscriptoclasm are presented in order of diminishing damage (following the pattern of table 14.2): *damnatio memoriae*, text change and curses against change, text burial, and annexation.

### *Damnatio Memoriae*

Ironically, the earliest attestation of *damnatio memoriae* directed toward royals comes to us through mention in a text. Hattusili I famously disinherited his chosen heir and nephew Labarna because he was so “cold-hearted” and inadvisable that he would never develop into the type of leader that Hittite royal ideology required. Blaming his sister Tawananna,<sup>70</sup> “that serpent,” in his own words, and the mother of the boy, Hattusili decides not to just banish<sup>71</sup> Tawananna and offspring from Hattusa to some remote estate, but to completely wipe them out from memory:

In the future let no one mention Tawananna’s name. Let no one mention the names of her children [and grandchildren]. If [someone] amongst [my] childr[en mentions their name, he shall not be my child anymore]. Let them puncture his throat and hang him in [his] gate. If someone amongst my servants mentions th[eir] name, he shall not (be) my servant (anymore). Let them puncture h[is] throat and hang him in his gate. (CTH 5, edict of Hattusili I)<sup>72</sup>

The slow and painful death that awaits those who mention the names of Tawananna and her offspring might seem at odds with the lesser punishment of banishment for the rebellious family members, but this discrepancy is better understood in the context of general disobedience of a royal ordinance. For Hattusili I the latter was a very serious offense:



But if you (pl.) do not observe the words of the king, you will not remain alive in [Hattus]a, you will perish! [Anyone who might] contest the words of the king, let him as of right now [no longer be] my [so]n<sup>2</sup>, that one; and let him not (be) a first-ranking servant! Let them puncture the [joi]nt(s)<sup>2</sup> (CTH 6, edict of Hattusili I)<sup>73</sup>

<sup>70</sup> For the possible equation of the Tawananna of the quoted edict (CTH 5) and the mother of Labarna, see Bryce 2005, pp. 93f.

<sup>71</sup> Banishment was the typical punishment for rebellious or otherwise unruly members of the royal family. The bilingual edict of Hattusili I only mentions the banishment of Labarna (CTH 6 § 6), but it may be assumed that he was accompanied by his mother.

<sup>72</sup> UR<sup>1</sup>-RA-AM ŠE-RA-AM <sup>f</sup>Ta-wa-na-an-na-aš [ŠUM-ŠU ... ] / le-e ku-iš-ki te-ez-zi ŠA DUMU.MEŠ-ŠU[ DUMU. DUMU.MEŠ-ŠU] / ŠUM-ŠU-NU le-e ku-iš-ki te-ez-zi ták-ku DUMU.M[EŠ-ma-an ŠUM-ŠU-NU ku-iš-ki te-ez-zi DUMU-mi-iš le-e (??)] / kap-ru-uš-š-e-et<sup>r</sup> ħa-at-ta-an-ta-ru na-an a-aš-k[i-iš-ši] / kán-kán-du ták<sup>r</sup>ku<sup>1</sup> ARAD.MEŠ-am-ma-an iš-tar-na ŠUM-ŠU[-NU] / <sup>r</sup>ku<sup>1</sup>-iš-ki te-ez-zi ARAD-mi-iš le-e kap-ru-u[š-š-e-et] / ħa-at-ta-an-ta-ru na-an a-aš-ki-iš-ši kán-kán[-du] (OH/NS, KBo 3.27: 6’-12’, ed. De Martino 1991, pp. 55f.).

<sup>73</sup> ma-a-an A-WA-AT LUGAL-ma Ú-UL pa-aḫ-ħa-aš-nu-ut-te-ni / [URUĤa-at-tu-š]i<sup>2</sup>-šā-an Ú-UL ħu-i-iš-te-ni nu ħar-ak-te-ni / [ku-i-šā-kán] LUGAL-aš ud-da-a-ar ħu-ur-ta-li-iz-zi na-aš ki-nu-na-pát / [le-e nam-ma DU]MU?-la?-

aš-mi-iš a-pa-a-aš ħa-an-te-ez-zi-ya-aš-ša-aš ARAD le-e / [UZU<sup>2</sup>Ú]R?-da-an ħa-at-ta-an-ta-ru (OH/NS, KUB 1.16 iii 36-40, *editio princeps* Sommer and Falkenstein 1938, pp. 12f., with commentary on pp. 159f.). The *editio princeps* restores lines 38-39 as na-aš ki-nu-na-pát<sup>39</sup> [a-ku (?) le-e M]AŠKIM<sup>21</sup>-aš-mi-iš a-pa-a-aš ħa-an-te-ez-zi-ya-aš-ša-aš ARAD le-e “der [soll] auch schon jetzt [Todes sterben! Nicht soll] so Einer mein Minister(?), nicht soll er einer meiner obersten Diener sein!” The restoration *aku* at the beginning of iii 39 is not very likely as one would expect such a clause to follow, not precede the other clauses in iii 39. I therefore replace [a-ku (?) le-e] with [le-e nam-ma], thus merging two clauses. Regarding the reading of [M]AŠKIM<sup>21</sup> in iii 39, the sign in the photo (hethiter .net/:PhotArch BoFN01713) does not look like MAŠKIM (= PA.KAŠ<sub>4</sub>, HZL 176 𐎠𐎫𐎠𐎢𐎪). The PA part only shows two horizontals, the KAŠ<sub>4</sub> part does not contain the wedges leaning against the vertical, and the broken vertical and broken horizontal also seem to be missing. The KAŠ<sub>4</sub> part  looks more like LA, with only the two middle horizontals of LA damaged, compare especially the second one of the two LA’s in iii 13: . The remaining PA part fits the second half of the sign DUMU.

Outside this one edict *damnatio memoriae* is not attested.<sup>74</sup> As Singer notes (2009, p. 177), at least in the Empire period the ignoring of public enemies of the past was not common practice. In fact, the opposite was true. The *mantalli* rituals,<sup>75</sup> rituals of purification in case of “rancorous words,” attest to the serious efforts undertaken to appease antagonists of the royal house or their spirits.<sup>76</sup>

### *Hatip: Text Change*

Probably not long after he usurped the throne from his nephew Urhi-Tessub in 1267 B.C.E., Hattusili III installed Kuruntiya, son of Muwatalli II and younger brother of Urhi-Tessub, as king of the appanage kingdom of Tarhuntassa. When Tudhaliya IV, son of Hattusili III, ascended the throne of Hatti in 1237 B.C.E., the ties with Kuruntiya were officially renewed and his official status as king of Tarhuntassa reconfirmed in the famous Bronze Tablet.

Clearly, Kuruntiya was not satisfied with this position that muffled his legitimate claim to the Hittite throne. Sometime during the reign of Tudhaliya IV he proclaimed himself Great King of Hatti, as evidenced by seal impressions on bullae<sup>77</sup> found in Hattusa and the rock relief of Hatip, at the border between Tarhuntassa and Hatti. The Hatip inscription, to the left of the depiction of the figure,<sup>78</sup> reads “Kurunti(ya), [Gre]at King, [Hero], son of Muwatalli, Great King, Hero.”<sup>79</sup>

Ehringhaus’s study (2005, pp. 101ff.) of the Hatip relief shows that whereas the rest of the relief is relatively well preserved compared to Sirkeli 2, the main symbols of Great Kingship are damaged (fig. 14.13). This is not an accident, as we will see. In order to understand the purpose of the damage we first need to re-examine the historical background, taking recent developments in our understanding of Hieroglyphic Luwian into account.

Singer (1996) has argued that Kuruntiya’s Great Kingship could point at the co-existence and mutual toleration of several Great Kings toward the end of the Hittite Empire.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, there is strong evidence that Kuruntiya indeed seized the throne of Hattusa. First, Tudhaliya IV had to ascend the throne a second time, as van den Hout (1998, p. 89) has argued. Most importantly, Yakubovich (2008) recently provided textual evidence for the struggle for power in the capital Hattusa and the following victory of Tudhaliya IV. His proposed reading and translation of the formerly enigmatic lexeme (VIR<sub>2</sub>) 416-*wa/i-ni-* as (VIR<sub>2</sub>) *ali-wa/i-ni-* “enemy” leads Yakubovich to a crucial reinterpretation of YALBURT 2 § 2 (Yakubovich 2008, p. 6) as “Afterwards my enemy came to Hattusa, to the city of the Labarna. The Storm-god [, my Lord, ran before/loved] me,”<sup>81</sup> an event which he then reasonably

<sup>74</sup> The offering lists for the royal dead (CTH 661) do not mention the four Old Hittite kings who are known to have murdered their predecessors (Hantili I, Zidanta I, Tahurwaili, and Muwatalli I). This is not *damnatio memoriae*, but simply exclusion from cultic activities given their odious behavior.

<sup>75</sup> “The *m.* ritual was performed to heal an estrangement or antagonism between two people, one of whom was usually deceased” CHD L-N 178b.

<sup>76</sup> Singer 2009, p. 177; van den Hout 1998, p. 5.

<sup>77</sup> Herbordt, Bawanypeck, and Hawkins 2010, p. 100.

<sup>78</sup> Recently Simon 2012 convincingly argued for a re-analysis of images with horned crowns, spears, and arrows as depictions of the Protective Deity.

<sup>79</sup> CERVUS-ti [MAGN]US.REX [HEROS] [m]u-tà-li MAGNUS.REX HEROS INFANS.

<sup>80</sup> Although I currently believe that such mutual toleration does not reflect the relationship between Tudhaliya IV and Kuruntiya, it may very well apply to Suppiluliuma II and Hartapu, and perhaps already Tudhaliya IV and Hartapu.

<sup>81</sup> (§ 2) \*a-wa/i-mu (VIR<sub>2</sub>) *ali-wa/i-ni-sa* LINGUA+CLAVUS-tu-sa(URBS) \*a-POST URBS+MI-a IUDEX+LA PES (§ 3) \*a-wa/i-mu (DEUS)TONITRUS (YALBURT 2 § 2-3).



connects with Kuruntiya. Technically, however, this sentence only proves that there was an enemy in Hattusa, not that it was Kuruntiya (Giorgieri and Mora 2010, p. 144).

As part of this discussion I offer a new translation of YALBURT 14 § 3, which, if correct, helps restrict the enemy to Kuruntiya: “I seated myself on the throne. (I) the Great King, marched to the throne as rightful(?) lord.”<sup>82</sup> The expression “rightful” only makes sense in the context of a less than rightful lord on the throne. Hawkins (1995, p. 82) comments on the surprising placement of the accession clause somewhere in the middle of the narrative, but this can now be explained as the second accession, as described by van den Hout.

Finally, the fact that the image of Kuruntiya faces Hatti instead of Tarhuntassa is relevant. Human and divine images on border reliefs always face their own territory (Ehringhaus 2005, p. 106). This can only mean that Kuruntiya considered Hatti his when he commissioned the relief.<sup>83</sup>

In case we would like to assume the existence of an unknown usurper during the reign of Tudhaliya IV, we would need to explain where Great King Kuruntiya would fit in chronologically, why he looks toward Hatti and not Tarhuntassa on the Hatip relief, why the Bronze Tablet was made void by burial,<sup>84</sup> but most telling of all, why the signs for *Great* and perhaps *Hero*,<sup>85</sup> both designations of only a Great King,<sup>86</sup> are deliberately chiseled out, thus reducing the inscription to “Kurunti(ya), King, son of Muwatalli, Great King, Hero” (Ehringhaus 2005, p. 105):

Auffällig ist die Eigenart der Beschädigung im Bereich dieser Zeichen, die sich von den natürlichen, durch Erosion oder Ausbruch verursachten Schäden in der übrigen Beischrift deutlich unterscheidet. Die Volute, das Zeichen des Logogramms MAGNUS, scheint wie durch frontales Prellen so gründlich ausgelöscht worden zu sein, daß von dieser nur noch wenig zu erkennen ist, während das Zeichen darunter, REX, sogar mit seiner Innenzeichnung noch gut erhalten ist. Diese differenzierte Eradierung von Kuruntas Titel «Großkönig» scheint hier ebenso gezielt erfolgt zu sein, wie vermutlich die Ausmeißelung der Beischrift im Felsrelief Sirkeli 2.

Obviously, someone was quite displeased with Kuruntiya’s status as Great King, but not enough with Kuruntiya himself to demolish the rest of his title.

The full implications of these deliberate erasures have not been recognized before. Of course Ehringhaus connects the damage with the tensions between the illegitimate royal

<sup>82</sup> (§ 2) *a-wa/i-mi-tá* THRONUS SOLIUM (§ 3) *a-wa/i* MAGNUS.REX DOMINUS *ara/i(?)* THRONUS PES<sub>2</sub>.PES<sub>2</sub> (YALBURT 14 § 2–3). The postposed position of the modifier *ara/i* points at contrastive Focus “the *rightful* lord (in contrast with other lords).”

<sup>83</sup> Under the assumption that Kuruntiya installed himself as Great King in Hattusa, this could imply that Tarhuntassa was not under his immediate command anymore, although as Great King he should still hold ultimate control. Unless Tarhuntassa was completely lost to Hatti at the time of Kuruntiya’s usurpation, which does not seem likely, the throne of Tarhuntassa might have passed on to either his own children or those of Urhi-Tessub. There is no convincing evidence that Kuruntiya had children, so perhaps it is possible that Har-tapu, son of Mursili III (= Urhi-Tessub), became (Great

King of Tarhuntassa when Kuruntiya proclaimed himself Great King of Hatti.

<sup>84</sup> An alternative explanation for the burial would be that when Kuruntiya peacefully transitioned to Great-Kingship of Tarhuntassa the Bronze Tablet treaty became void since it only dealt with kingship (assuming of course he never seized the throne of Hatti). On a state visit to Hattusa the new Great King would then have brought the void treaty with him for ceremonial burial.

<sup>85</sup> Ehringhaus (2005, p. 115) only mentions the lost sign *Hero* in connection with “Ausbruch,” not deliberate destruction.

<sup>86</sup> Only Ini-Tessub, viceroy of Karkamis and contemporary of Hattusili III and Tudhaliya IV, once in a while took the title “Hero” (Hawkins 1988, p. 104, with n. 28).

<sup>87</sup> See n. 83.

line of Hattusili III and the deposed royal line of Muwatalli II, but the fact that the rest of the image remains unharmed is as meaningful as the removal of the symbols of Great Kingship. It has always been assumed that Kuruntiya did not outlast his coup d'état, but the removal of the symbols of Great Kingship, while maintaining Kuruntiya's name and the symbols of Kingship, points at something else.

At the very least this redefinition simply illustrates a re-affirmation of Kuruntiya's original position within the Hittite Empire, which was legitimate after all, but we could go further. Although it would be unprecedented, Kuruntiya could have been restored to kingship in Tarhuntassa. Or, more likely, the kingship of Tarhuntassa either remained<sup>87</sup> or was placed in the hands of either Kuruntiya's or Urhi-Tessub's offspring, and as a "courtesy" the name of Kuruntiya was not wiped out.

The alteration of Kuruntiya's representation especially on the border of his own domain of authority, Tarhuntassa, was not merely to re-affirm Kuruntiya's old position, but also — more importantly, I believe — to display the return to full power of the true and only Great King of Hatti, Tudhaliya IV. Without having to depict or mention himself, the Great King shows the invisible and unconquerable power of Hattusa through the humiliation of the King of Tarhuntassa.

### *Curses against Text or Name Destruction*

Prophylactic curses against breaking an oath or the stipulations of an agreement are extremely common.<sup>88</sup> These "content" curses remained stable for centuries; compare, for example, the Anitta text (eighteenth century B.C.E.) with a decree of Hattusili III (1267–1237 B.C.E.):

[I ...] these words from [...] tablet(s) in my gate. Hereafter for all time let [no] one **contest** (*hullezzi*)<sup>89</sup> th[ese] wo[rds]. But whoever **conte[sts]** them shall be an enemy of [the Stor]mgod. (*CTH 1*, gate inscription of Anitta)<sup>90</sup>

Whoever **conte[sts]** (*hull[ezzi]*) these words of the tablet, may he be an opponent-at-law to these thousand gods. (May they destroy him and his progeny from the dark earth). (*CTH 88*, decree of Hattusili III)<sup>91</sup>

Curses covering the protection of text carriers and expressions themselves — "form" or "signifier" curses — are extremely rare: there are three, possibly four cases in the whole corpus of second-millennium tablets and inscriptions. The first one is the Akkadian treaty<sup>92</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Curses and cursing are discussed in especially Christiansen 2008; but see also Hagenbuchner-Dresel 2010, pp. 164ff. and Reichardt 1998 (esp. p. 76).

<sup>89</sup> See *HED* H 363f., "smash, quash, defeat"; cf. *CHD* s.v. *memiya(n)- 1 b 2' memian hullai-* "to oppose, repudiate, contravene a word."

<sup>90</sup> *ke-e* ʾud-da-a-arʾ [o-o-o (*tup-pi-ya-a*)]z I-NA KÁ.GAL-YA x[...] / UR-RA-AM ŠE-R[A-AM] ʾkeʾ[-e] ʾud-daʾ[-a-ar le-e] ʾkuʾ-iš-ki hu-ul[(-le-e-ez-zi)] / ku-i-ša-at hu-ul-le[-e-ez-z]i-ʾmaʾ [na-aš ʾIŠKUR-n]a-as ʾKÚR-ŠU e[-eš-tu] (KBo 3.22 obv. 33–35, collated against hethiter.net/:PhotArch BoFN01407, with duplicate KUB 36.98a obv. 4'–5'). For

a slightly different restoration *ku-i-ša-at hu-ul-li-ez-zim*[a ʾIŠKUR-un-n]a-aš, see Hoffner 1997, p. 183 n. 19. For the *editio princeps* with rather different restorations, see Neu 1974.

<sup>91</sup> [nu-z]a ku-iš ke-e tup-pi-ya-aš ud-da-a-ar EGIR-pa hu-ul-l[eʾ-ez-zi na-aš] ke-e-da-aš / A-NA LI-IM DINGIR.ME[Š E]N DI-NI-Š[U-NU e-e]š-du (KBo 6.28 rev. 40–41, collated against hethiter.net/:PhotArch BoFN01643).

<sup>92</sup> With the exception of the usual warning against changing the wording of the tablets, prohibitions are absent in the Akkadian language treaties of the Hittite Empire with Ugarit, Nuhasse, and Amurru.

between Suppiluliuma I and Sattiwaza of Mittanni after the dismantling of the Mittanni empire, with contingency curses that resemble the Mesopotamian tradition:<sup>93</sup>

Whoever, before the Storm-god, Lord of the *kurinnu* of Kahat, **removes** (dupl. **en-graves/destroys**) this tablet and **sets** it in a secret location, if he **breaks** it, if he **changes** the words of the text of the tablet — , ... (CTH 51, treaty of Suppiluliuma I with Sattiwaza of Mittanni, Akkadian version)<sup>94</sup>

A decree issued by Tudhaliya IV, great-grandchild of Suppiluliuma I, ends as follows:

This tablet must be placed before the Stormgod of Hatti, and [no one may] take it away from before (him). But anyone who **take[s]** this tablet **away** from before the Stormgod of Hatti, or **melts it down** (*arḥa laḥuwai*)<sup>95</sup> or **removes** (*wallanuzzi*)<sup>96</sup> the name[, or] **carries it forth**, [may] the Stormgod of Hatti, the Sungoddess of Arinna and all the gods completely destroy him together with his offspring! (CTH 225, land deed of Tudhaliya IV to Sahurunuwa)<sup>97</sup>

The third document with proscriptions against iconoclasm of text and text carrier is the EMIRGAZĪ text (in Luwian),<sup>98</sup> also from the reign of Tudhaliya IV:

(§ 7) Also, in the future let no one **damage** (*škadalai*)<sup>99</sup> this stela, (§ 8) (that is), let no one **smash(?)** (it) (CAPUT.SCALPRUM = *kusa-*, *kwasa-*),<sup>100</sup> (§ 9) let no one **(over)turn** (it) (*tarzanuwati*).<sup>101</sup> (§ 10) Also, let no one **chisel away** (*arḥa tubi-*) these words.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>93</sup> For Assyria, compare, for example, the curses in RIMA 1, A.0.76.2 (Adad-Narari I), A.0.78.5 (Tukulti-Ninurta I).

<sup>94</sup> ṛ̀ùṛ [ma-]an-nu-me-e a-na pa-ni ḏU EN ṛ̀ku-riṛ-in-ni URUḲa-ḥat ṭup-pa an-ni-ta **ú-na-ak-kar**-ma (dupl. [ú-na-a]q-qar-ma) / a-šar pu-uz-ri **i-ša-kán** šum-ma **i-ḥe-ep-pí** šu[m-m]a a-ṛ-ma-te<sup>MEŠ</sup> ša ṛINIM ṭup-pí ṛú-šaṛ-aš-na (KBo 1.1 rev. 37–38, ed. Weidner 1923, pp. 28f., with dupl. KBo 28.111 rev. 10′–12′ (+) KUB 3.1b rev. 3′–4′; KBo 1.2 rev. 15′–16′), trans. Beckman 1999, p. 46.

<sup>95</sup> For *arḥa laḥuwa-* as “to melt down,” see van den Hout 2003, p. 176, with further references. As van den Hout observes, melting down should refer to a metal tablet and not to the clay tablet on which this expression is found. This clay copy could therefore be a draft or a transcript. The lost metal version either was melted down or transferred out of the capital after the court abandoned Hattusa.

<sup>96</sup> The verb *wallanu-* is tentatively translated “to erase” (Kloekhorst 2008, p. 945). The base verb of the causative verb *wallanu-* must be *\*wala-*, but Kloekhorst rejects a connection with *walla/i-* “to praise” given the semantic differences between “erase” and “praise.” Nevertheless, the concrete meaning of *walla/i-* could very well have been “to elevate, lift” besides the metaphorical “elevate > praise”; compare cuneiform Luwian *walli(ya)-* “to raise, lift.” I see no issues to derive “to erase a name” from “to lift a name (from a tablet).” In fact, the Hieroglyphic Luwian phrase for “to remove a name” is *-ta alamanza arha wala-* (with *wala-* the reading behind ARHA MAL-LEUS-*la-*. For a phonetic reading of MALLEUS as *wa/i-*, see TOPADA § 26).

<sup>97</sup> *ki-i ṬUP-PU PA-NI ḏU URUḤA-AT-TI ki-ida-ru na-at pé-an ar-ḥa [le-e ku-iš-ki da-a-i] (36) ku-[i]š-ma ki-i ṬUP-PU A-NA ḏU URUḤA-AT-TI pé-ra-an ar-ḥa da-a-[i] (37) na-aš-ma-at ar-ḥa la-ḥu-u-wa-i na-aš-ma šUM-an wa-al-la-nu-u[z-zi na-aš-ma-at] (38) pa-ra-a pé-e-da-i na-an-kán ḏU URUḲÜ. BABBAR-TI ḏUTU URUA-RJ-IN-[NA] (39) Ü DINGIR.MEŠ ḥu-u-ma-an-te-eš QA-DU NUMUN-ŠU ar-ḥa ḥar-kán-nu[an-du] (NH, KUB 26.43 rev. 35–39, ed. Imparati 1974, pp. 38f.).*

<sup>98</sup> Unless noted otherwise, the edition of all Iron Age Hieroglyphic Luwian texts cited in this article can be found in Hawkins 2000. Differences between my transliterations and those in the *Corpus* are based on developments in Luwian studies of the past ten years.

<sup>99</sup> For *sà-ka-da-la-i(a)* [*škadalai*] “he damages” as cognate of German *schaden*, see Rieken 2010, p. 658.

<sup>100</sup> For CAPUT+SCALPRUM = *kusa-*, *kwasa-* as “to remove?,” see Hawkins 1995, p. 94; 2000, p. 155. I suggest that our *kusa-* is cognate with Hittite *kuwaskuwas-*, *ku(s)kus-* “to smash, pound.” The base *ku-sà-* is also present in the noun (CURRUS)*ku-sà-*, attested as ablative-instrumental in KARKAMIŠ A12 § 7 *á-wa/i-ia-na-wa/i-na-pa-wa/i* (URBS) “CASTRUM”-*sà* 100 CURRUS(-)*ku-sà-ti* [INFRA-tá “PUGNUS”-*sà-ha* (ed. Hawkins 2000, p. 113) with a new translation “I brought down the fortifications of the town of Awayana with 100 **battering rams.**”

<sup>101</sup> For *tarza/i-* as “to turn (oneself),” see Rieken 2004.

<sup>102</sup> § 7 *zi/a-la-tu-wa/i-ha-wa/i zi/a STELE sà-ka-da-la-i(a)* NEG-*sa* REL-*i(a)-sa-ha* § 8 ARHA NEG-*sa* REL-*i(a)-sa-ha* CAPUT+SCALPRUM § 9 *tara/i-zi/a-nú-wa/i-ti-wa/i-tá* NEG-*sa* REL-*i(a)-sa-ha* § 10 *zi/a-i(a)-ha-wa/i-tá* 461-tá ARHA NEG-*sa* REL-*i(a)-sa-ha tu-pi* (ed. Hawkins 1995, pp. 88f.).

At the beginning of his reign the same king concluded a treaty with his cousin Kuruntiya, King of Tarhuntassa in southern Anatolia. This treaty, the famous Bronze Tablet found buried near the Sphinx Gate at Yerkapı, does not contain any curse against its destruction or erasing of names. We find only the usual prohibition against changing the wording of a treaty or decree:

or (whoever will become king of Hatti) **changes** (*waḥnuzi*)<sup>103</sup> even one single word of this tablet, (may from him the Sungoddess of Arinna and the Stormgod of Hatti take away the kingship of Hatti). (CTH 106, treaty of Tudhaliya IV with Kuruntiya of Tarhuntassa)<sup>104</sup>

Finally, the treaty of the last Hittite emperor Suppiluliuma II with the vassal kingdom of Cyprus (Alasiya) contains the beginning of an extended contingency curse:

[Whoever **takes**] **away** (*arha dāi*) [this ta]blet from before Sausga [, or] place[s it] in a dark place [, .....,] or [does not read] it [aloud] year by year [...]. (CTH 141, treaty of Suppiluliuma II with Alasiya)<sup>105</sup>

Proscriptions against destruction, removal, or *metagraphē* are otherwise absent in the Hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions of Anatolia belonging to the reigns of Tudhaliya's<sup>106</sup> successor Suppiluliuma II (SÜDBURG) and Hartapu of Tarhuntassa (KIZILDAĞ-KARADAĞ group).<sup>107</sup> This lack of proscriptions continues into first-millennium Anatolia. Whereas the first-millennium Hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions of northern Syria and the Levant abound with curses against the removal of names or the destruction of text carriers, such as

He who takes them (i.e., the portal orthostats) for writing, **topples/hides** (*saniti*) these orthostats in deep places (?), or **topples/hides** this deity in deep places(?), or **removes** (*ahha walai*) my name from (them), may Tarhunza, Karhuha, and Kubaba litigate against him!<sup>108</sup>

there is not a single example of the phrase “removal of name” in first-millennium Tabal in southern Anatolia. Of the roughly twenty-five inscriptions from Tabal with preserved curse sections, only one warns against removal of the inscription (“He who **removes** (*ARHA*

<sup>103</sup> The expression *memiyan waḥnu-* is the equivalent to Akkadian *ša awāssu ušpaḥḥu* “he who changes his/its word” (cf. CHD L-N s.v. *memiya(n)* 1 b 16’).

<sup>104</sup> *na-aš-ma-kán ke-e-el / tup-pí-aš i-an-na me-mi-ya-an wa-aḥ-nu-zi* (NH, Bo 86/299 iii 74–75, ed. Otten 1988, p. 24).

<sup>105</sup> [*ku-iš-ma ki-i ṬU*]P-PU A-NA <sup>d</sup>IŠTAR *pí-ra-an ar-ḥa [da-a-i]* / [*na-aš-ma-at-kán na-]na-ku-uš-ši-ya-an-ti pí-di da-a-i*] / [*na-aš-ma-at-kán MU-TI MU-TI*] [*UL ḥal-zi-iš-ša-i*] (NH, KBo 12.39 rev. 19’–21’, ed. De Martino 2007, p. 488, following CHD L-N, 394b [both with slightly different restorations]).

<sup>106</sup> Tudhaliya IV’s YALBURT inscription does not seem to be complete. It is therefore possible that either the missing blocks or the badly eroded ones could have contained curses.

<sup>107</sup> BURUNKAYA, from the same king and located 150 km to the northeast of the KIZILDAĞ-KARADAĞ group,

ends with [...t]u-pi-ra/i. I take this form as the medio-passive of *tupi-* “smite, strike” (pace Hawkins 1995, p. 107). Although the protasis of “[he] will be smitten” is not preserved, it is possible that it contained a contingency curse against damage to the inscription.

<sup>108</sup> (§ 22) \*a-wa/i-da |SCRIBA+RA/I da-i REL-i-sa (§ 23) |za-zi-pa-wa/i-tá (SCALPRUM)ku-ta-sa<sub>3</sub>+ra/i-zi LOCUS-za-a (SA<sub>4</sub>)sá-ni-ti (§ 24) NEG<sub>2</sub>-pa-wa/i-tá |za-na DEUS-ni-na LOCUS-za-a (SA<sub>4</sub>)sá-ni-ti (§ 25) |NEG<sub>2</sub>-pa-wa/i-tá á-ma-za á-lá/i-ma-za ARHA MALLEUS-i (§ 26) \*a-wa/i-tú-ta (DEUS)TONITRUS-sa (DEUS)kar-hu-ha-sa (DEUS)ku+AVIS-pa-sa-ha LIS-la/i/u-za-tú (KARKAMIŠ A11a § 22–26). The grammatical analysis and exact meaning of LOCUS-za-a is not clear. For now I analyze this form as a dative-locative plural, and read it as *alanza* “deeps” based on BOYBEYPINARI 2 § 12 *ni-pa-wa/i-tá á-lá/i-za* (SA<sub>4</sub>)sa-ni-ti.

MALLEUS-*ia* = *ahha*<sup>109</sup> *walai*) these engravings”<sup>110</sup> KARABURUN § 11 [late eighth century B.C.E.], two mention toppling/hiding a memorial (“He who **topples/conceals** me (i.e., a memorial),”<sup>111</sup> KULULU 2 § 5 (mid-eighth century B.C.E.); “Let no one **topple/conceal** this (stela)” ERKİLET 1 § 3,<sup>112</sup> similarly ERKİLET 2 § 2 (both late eighth century B.C.E.), and one prohibits the destruction of a stela (“He who **smashes** this stela,”<sup>113</sup> KULULU 3 § 7 [mid-eighth century B.C.E.]).

This clear distribution of presence of prohibitions against text destruction in northern Syria and the Levant and their almost complete absence in Anatolia in the second and first millennia is not a coincidence. Unlike the areas south of the Taurus mountains, Anatolia was never under long-term political or cultural influence of northern Mesopotamia (Hurrians, Assyrians), with the exception of the very end when Sargon II established firm Assyrian control over parts of Tabal and Cilicia.

### Burial

Another type of inscriptoclasm is text burial. Kuruntiya’s usurpation of the throne in Hattusa during the reign of Tudhaliya IV made the Bronze Tablet treaty void, but instead of melting the treaty tablet down it was buried in a pit ca. 30 cm under the level of the surviving neighboring pavement, at the inner side of the city wall near the Sphinx Gate (Neve 1987, p. 405). It seems quite safe to conclude that the motivation for this burial was to physically nullify the treaty. Technically both Tudhaliya IV after the removal of Kuruntiya and Kuruntiya after he had proclaimed himself Great King had reasons to do this, but given that the Bronze Tablet probably belonged to Kuruntiya (Otten 1988, p. 55)<sup>114</sup> we may assume that Kuruntiya buried the tablet and not that Tudhaliya marched all the way to Tarhuntassa, to Kuruntiya’s palace, to collect the tablet and bury it back in Hattusa.

The Bronze Tablet was under the seal of the main deities of the Hittite Empire, the Sungoddess of Arinna and the Stormgod of Hatti, so perhaps destruction or nullification by means of melting was not an option. Whether its alternative, burial, was intended as a form

<sup>109</sup> For the reading of Luwian ARHA as *ahha*, see Yakubovich 2011.

<sup>110</sup> (§ 11) *za-ia-pa-wa/i-ta REL-za-ma-ia REL-sa ARHA “MALLEUS”-ia*.

<sup>111</sup> | (“SA<sub>4</sub>”) *sa-ni-ti-pa-wa/i-mu-u |HWI-sà-’*.

<sup>112</sup> | *za-pa-wa/i-ta |ni |REL-i-sa-ha |sa-ni-ti*.

<sup>113</sup> | *za-pa-wa/i “STELE”-ni-za |REL-sa |ARHA “LONGUS”(-)REL-sà-i*.

<sup>114</sup> To Otten’s arguments for attributing the Bronze Tablet to Kuruntiya I would like to add the following. When referring to the land of Tarhuntassa the proximal demonstrative *ka-* “this” is used (Bronze Tablet iv 16: “whoever causes dismay for Kuruntiya in **this country** [and takes it away from him]”). More importantly, iii 40 contains the directional ablative noun phrase *ke-e-ez-za IŠ-TU KUR URUŠAP-LI-TI* “on this side of the lower land” (pace Otten 1988, p. 23, “vom dortigen Unteren Lande aus”). Only when the king goes to campaign on “this side of the Lower Land” does Kuruntiya need to provide more troops than otherwise. The Lower Land is located between Hatti and Tarhuntassa. It would be senseless

to assume that Kuruntiya would have to provide more troops when the king was campaigning farther away from him than when the king would be much closer to him, on the southern side of the Lower Land. “This side” therefore refers to the side of the Lower Land toward Tarhuntassa, and that can only mean the deictic center of the tablet was located in Tarhuntassa, and therefore that the tablet was deposited somewhere in the land of Tarhuntassa. Had this version of the treaty tablet been kept in Hattusa, “this country” and “this side” could only have referred to Hattusa and the northern side of the Lower Land, which, as we have seen, makes no sense. Compare, for example, the versions of the treaties with west Anatolia that were found in Hattusa. In those treaties place deictic *ka-* always refers to the domain of the Great King of Hatti, whereas place deictic *apa-* (as opposed to emphatic *apa-*) is used to denote everything that falls outside that domain, and usually inside the domain of the vassal king. In short, the choice of place deictic expressions depends on the final location of the tablet containing these expressions.

of humiliation or a respectful form of annulling the treaty cannot be decided without further evidence of similar text burials.

### *Annexation*

As noted by Glatz and Plourde (2011, p. 60), several reliefs in the periphery of the Hittite Empire contain multiple inscriptions and sometimes multiple reliefs belonging to successive local rulers. An example of the latter are Karabel A, B, and C2, located in the Karabel pass in west Anatolia. The most well-known of the triad is Karabel A, a relief of a male warrior figure accompanied by the name of Tarkasnawa, king of Mira and contemporary of Tudhaliya IV. The other, barely preserved reliefs probably belong to previous generations (Glatz and Plourde 2011, p. 53, with further references).<sup>115</sup>

In other instances only names were added to the inscription, as in Hanyeri, where we find the name of a prince Tarhuntapiyammi added to that of prince Ku(wa)la(na)muwa (Glatz and Plourde 2011, p. 51), or in Akpınar, where the herald Zuwanza added his name to again prince Ku(wa)la(na)muwa (Glatz and Plourde 2011, p. 52).<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Also compare the two reliefs Taşçı A and B, both presenting officials.

<sup>116</sup> Uncertain instances of annexation are Suratkaya, which contains six groups of hieroglyphs, five of which

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are heavily weathered, and Malkaya, with the inscriptions damaged by modern treasure hunters.

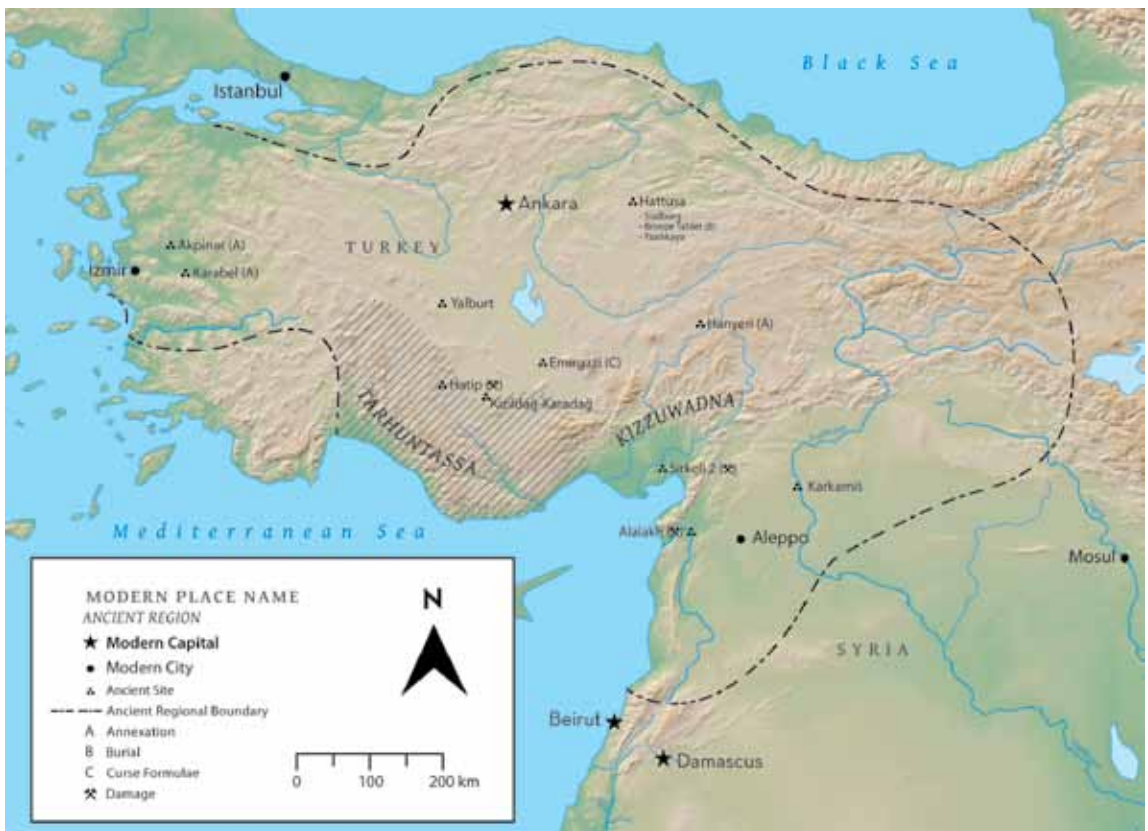


Figure 14.1. Map of the Hittite kingdom



Figure 14.2. The feet of a statue, probably of Tudhaliya IV, found in Yekbaz  
(photo courtesy of Billie Jean Collins)



Figure 14.3. Statue base in the Great Temple of Hattusa  
(photo courtesy of Billie Jean Collins)





Figure 14.4. Defaced image of Istar/Sauska from Yekbaz

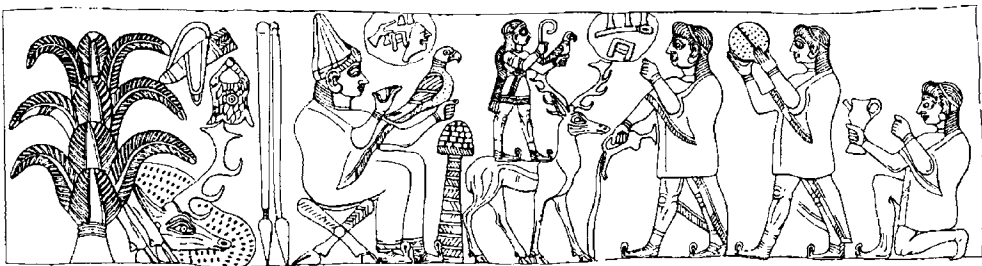


Figure 14.5. Frieze on Stag rhyton, Schimmel Collection of Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York  
(after Güterbock 1989, pl. 16b)



Figure 14.6. Sirkeli 2, damaged face (right arrow) and name (left arrow) of a royal figure.  
After Ehringhaus 2005, Abb. 180, and <http://www.hittitemonuments.com/sirkeli/>



Figure 14.7. Sirkeli 1, Great King Muwatalli II.  
After Ehringhaus 2005, Abb. 175, and  
<http://www.hittitemonuments.com/sirkeli/>



Figure 14.8. Modern damage at Sirkeli 1.  
After Ehringhaus 2005, Abb. 177, and  
<http://www.hittitemonuments.com/sirkeli/>



Figure 14.9. Orthostat from the temple in Alalakh, depicting a Tudhaliya and his wife or relative (photo courtesy of Robert Ritner)



Figure 14.10. Detail of the face of Tudhaliya, Alalakh orthostat (photo courtesy of Robert Ritner)



Figure 14.11. Detail of the face of the woman to the left of Tudhaliya (photo courtesy of Robert Ritner)



Figure 14.12. The head of Idrimi of Alalakh  
(photo courtesy of Klaus Wagensohnner)

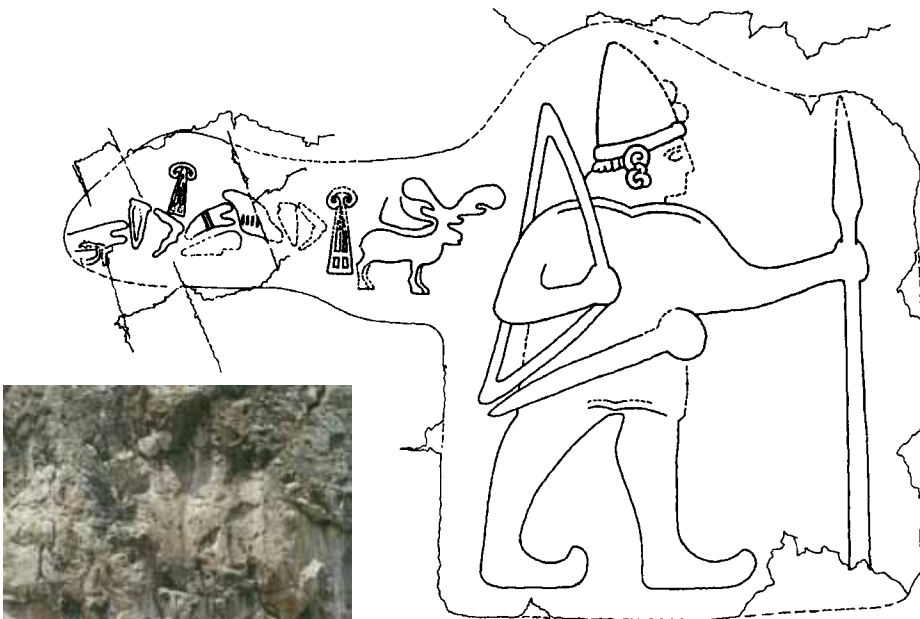


Figure 14.13. Photo and drawing of the Hatip relief, representing Kuruntiya, Great King.  
After Ehringhaus 2005, Abb. 185–86, and <http://www.hittitemonuments.com/hatip/>

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# PERFORMING THE FRONTIER: THE ABDUCTION AND DESTRUCTION OF RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL SIGNIFIERS IN GRAECO-PERSIAN CONFLICTS

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## INTRODUCTION

Christopher Woods presents in this volume the first known instances of the destruction of images and texts, which occur in border disputes. In fights over a fertile strip of land between the two states of Umma and Lagash, each annihilated the other's demarcation stelae. More importantly for my purpose, shrines close to the frontier were also raided and destroyed, which presumably included the destruction of the cult images they housed. Both stelae and shrines were considered to be sacrosanct. In my understanding of Woods's argument, violating the frontier meant violating the border markers and sanctuaries located in border territory. When the frontier changed back, the vanquisher would replace the stelae and presumably rebuild the shrines, replacing the cult images, without which the cult could not take place in an appropriate fashion.<sup>1</sup>

In this paper I look at a comparable phenomenon about two millennia later: the treatment that Greek temples and cult images received at the hands of the Persians in conflicts at the empire's frontiers. In the clashes between Persians and Greeks, two historic episodes take center stage when it comes to abducting or destroying political and religious identifiers and constitute prime examples of our subject matter. The first is the rebellion of the Greek cities in Persian Asia Minor, the so-called Ionian Revolt, which was quashed in the reign of Darius (494 B.C.E.). I discuss the destruction of a major sanctuary connected to the instigator of the revolt and the abduction of its cult image. Further key points are the (mis-)attribution of the events to Xerxes, the fate of the priests, the eventual rebuilding of the temple, and the return of the cult image. I also focus on some of the implications these events had for the identity of the populations associated with the sanctuary.

The second episode is Xerxes's punitive strike against Greece in 480 B.C.E, in retaliation for the above-mentioned revolt, with the plundering and destruction inflicted during the campaign. Here I am focussing on Athens's public and sacred spaces, namely the Agora and the Acropolis, which are particularly well documented and especially interesting, because

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<sup>1</sup> For the destruction and restoration of monuments as tools of territorial control and imperial politics in the

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ancient Near East, see also Berlejung, Schaudig, Westenhof, and May, *Introduction*, this volume.

the Persian policy produced very different reactions to the ones we have encountered in Western Asia.

## THE IONIAN REVOLT

Let us look first at the Ionian Revolt. The Greek cities in Ionia had been vassals of the Persians since 546/5 B.C.E. when Cyrus conquered the Lydian Empire, which had controlled the area.<sup>2</sup> In 499 B.C.E. the ambitious individual Aristagoras, ruler of Miletus by the grace of Darius, had reason to fear that he had lost favor with the Great King because of a misguided and failed adventure, which I discuss below. He laid down the *tyrannis*,<sup>3</sup> proclaimed *isonomia*,<sup>4</sup> and incited the Milesians to revolt and overthrow the Persian yoke.<sup>5</sup> He succeeded in getting aid from Greece proper, namely from Athens and Eretria, which will become important later on.<sup>6</sup> The citizens of Athens considered themselves next of kin to the Ionians and sent twenty ships. Eretria owed a moral debt to the Milesians, because they had helped her in her own war against Chalcis, and sent five ships. Several other Greek cities in Asia Minor joined the rebellion because of restrictions on trade, rising taxes, and the duty to participate in Persian warfare.

In 498 B.C.E. the allies attacked the satrap's seat Sardis and destroyed it, burning the sanctuary of Cybele in the process. In his account Herodotus emphasizes that the temple went up in flames accidentally. He explains that a single unspecified soldier put fire to a single house and that the flames spread so fast over the thatched roofs of the city that it could not even be looted.<sup>7</sup> Thus, he attempts to exculpate the Greeks.

According to Herodotus, the Persians used the incineration of the temple as the reason for torching the sanctuaries of the Greeks.<sup>8</sup> To the best of my knowledge, this form of retribution for the destruction of a temple does not appear in Near Eastern sources as a motive for counter-destruction. Retribution for attacks on persons, their statues, or graves was quite commonplace. In the case of the exceptionally severe and systematic demolition of the textual and figurative monuments of the Old Akkadian and Assyrian empires, retribution for the oppression experienced by their former subjects was one of the main causes of the attacks.<sup>9</sup> However, coming back to my original point, the destruction of sanctuaries as such does not appear to have provoked such a response. This may be related to the reading of the abduction of cult images: the deities themselves were thought to have abandoned their people in anger and to have accompanied their new protégées (the victorious abductors) willingly. It is thinkable that the destruction of sanctuaries was considered to be only possible if the deity had abandoned his or her home, which would in fact be a parallel between ancient Near Eastern and Greek beliefs. The description of the destruction of the Athenian Acropolis (below) in

<sup>2</sup> Cf., e.g., Wiesehöfer 1994, pp. 83–84.

<sup>3</sup> It is important to keep in mind that at this time the term “tyrant” denotes an absolute ruler, not to be confused with a despotic ruler (whom we might call a tyrant). Herodotus, our main source for the events, often uses the terms “tyrant” and “king” interchangeably. The negative connotations only appear with Thucydides in the later fifth century B.C.E.; LS s.v. *tyrannos*.

<sup>4</sup> Equality of political rights; LS s.v. *isonomia*.

<sup>5</sup> Our main source for the Ionian Revolt is Herodotus 5.26–38, 5.97–126, 6.1–22. See also DNP s.v. Ionischer Aufstand and DNP s.v. Aristagoras 2.

<sup>6</sup> Herodotus 5.97 (Athens), 5.99 (Eretria).

<sup>7</sup> Herodotus 5.101.2.

<sup>8</sup> Herodotus 5.102.1.

<sup>9</sup> See Westenholz and May, *Introduction*, this volume.

Herodotus is such a case: the Athenians abandoned the city all the more willingly, because the sacred snake, an attribute animal of Athena which allegedly lived on the Acropolis and received a monthly offering of a honey cake, had not eaten its treat.<sup>10</sup> According to Herodotus, this meant that the deity herself had abandoned the sanctuary. However, the Greeks did not consider that Athena had gone away with the enemy, which led to a rather different reaction to the destruction (below). Coming back to Herodotus's argument regarding the burning of the temple of Cybele as reason for the destruction of Greek sanctuaries, I believe that he is projecting onto the Persians a motive based on the Greek concept of sacrilege.

In 497 B.C.E. the empire struck back. In order to clarify the Persian procedure regarding iconoclasm, their treatment of their rebelling vassals in Asia Minor works well as a test case. According to Herodotus, the Persian generals charged with subduing the uprising of the provinces called upon the deposed tyrants of the Ionian cities, who had joined the Persian campaign. The tyrants were to go to their cities and offer amnesty from all punishments, if the cities returned to the Persian fold. For the recipients this meant no loss of property, no destruction of cities or temples, and a return to the status quo. If the cities continued to fight and lost, so the Persians' threat in Herodotus, their temples would be destroyed, the populace killed or deported, and the cities resettled by people from a distant part of the empire. While we need to ask how Herodotus could have known this, the description fits with what we know of ancient Near Eastern practices of dealing with rebellion.<sup>11</sup>

Herodotus's account is somewhat problematic. He states that the Persians were afraid of the strength of the Ionian fleet and therefore tried to settle the dispute by diplomacy.<sup>12</sup> First, fear as a motive for attempting to settle the dispute is rather unlikely. The Persian fleet was in effect the Phoenician fleet and on open sea easily equal to anything Ionia and her allies had to offer.<sup>13</sup> In addition, the Persians generally tried settling disputes peacefully rather than destroy what was essentially their own property (people, land, cities).<sup>14</sup> Secondly, the depiction of the eastern barbarians as cowardly, trying to win staunch Greeks over by treachery and the offer of riches, is no more than a typecasting of the people who had at the time of writing become the stereotypical enemy of the Greeks.<sup>15</sup> It is worth mentioning that those Greeks who did indeed take the Persians up on their offer, the Samians, received the full benefits as promised: their persons, their temples, and their property remained untouched.<sup>16</sup> This "Samian defection" continued to be a sore spot for the rest of the Greeks.

After three years of warfare, the Persian army destroyed the Greek fleet in a battle at sea, proceeded to besiege Miletus, razed it to the ground, and enslaved or killed its citizens.<sup>17</sup> After the destruction of Miletus, the Persians annihilated the nearby sanctuary of Apollo at Didyma. The destruction of the city that instigated the revolt, and of the major sanctuary located in her territory, was in essence a performance of power and a ritual re-establishing of the empire's frontier. In addition, it was a direct attack on political and religious identifiers, which had constituted a part of the identity of the vanquished.

<sup>10</sup> Herodotus 8.41.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., Berlejung, this volume.

<sup>12</sup> Herodotus 6.9.

<sup>13</sup> On the quality of the Phoenician fleet, see Briant 2002, p. 489.

<sup>14</sup> Knippschild, forthcoming.

<sup>15</sup> On Persia as stereotypical enemy, cf. Tuplin 1996, p. 164.

<sup>16</sup> Herodotus 6.13 and 6.25. Samos was originally conquered by Persia in 520–519 B.C.E.; Briant 2002, p. 491.

<sup>17</sup> Herodotus 6.19.

At this point we need to take a short excursion to address a viewpoint to be found in modern scholarship that recurs throughout this paper. Later sources attribute the destruction of the temple to Xerxes upon his return to Asia in 479 B.C.E.<sup>18</sup> I suspect that the reasoning underlying this argument is that Xerxes, withdrawing after an unsuccessful attempt at conquering Greece, took it out on his Greek subjects in Asia Minor instead. However, this goes against the evidence of those sources closest in time to the events and is in addition extremely unlikely, since it would mean that Darius had neglected to punish the instigator of a rebellion appropriately. Behind this motive is a Greek tradition, which characterizes Darius as pious and Xerxes as an evil perpetrator of sacrileges. While Darius is portrayed as particularly friendly to the Greeks, his piety extended not only to Greek deities and cults, but, according to the classical sources, equally to other subjects of the king, such as the Egyptians.<sup>19</sup> As a result, later sources absolve Darius in his role as alleged Philhellene and pious king of all guilt.<sup>20</sup> This historical shift is further aided by the depersonalization of Persian kings we find in Greek sources since the second half of the fifth century B.C.E.<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, actions of Darius appear to be attributed to Xerxes in Lysias's *Epitaphius* 27. Aischines's *Contra Ctesiphon* 123 even goes so far as to conflate Darius I (550–487 B.C.E.) and Darius III (380–330 B.C.E.). Given this background, it became easy enough to reinforce the fictional typecasting of good King Darius and evil King Xerxes by the misattribution. Oddly enough, some modern sources still adhere to the highly unlikely scenario of Darius sparing the sanctuary, while declaring that Xerxes had no such compunctions and destroyed it on a pretext. As mentioned above, we will come back to this issue shortly.

In his account, Herodotus describes the destruction of cities and sanctuaries in Asia Minor quite briefly, while expanding on the mutilation of the most beautiful boys and the abduction of the most beautiful girls. He ignores the deportation of the other survivors, thus putting emphasis on the maltreatment of innocent children, again characterizing the Persians, the stereotypical enemies of the Greeks, as depraved barbarians.<sup>22</sup>

As discussed above, the destruction of the temple of Apollo in Didyma was an integral part of the punishments visited upon the rebels.<sup>23</sup> This sanctuary contained a cult image of Apollo, the so-called Apollo Philesius, made by the sculptor Canachus.<sup>24</sup> While the image itself is not extant, we can reconstruct its appearance through representations on coins and reliefs as well as through descriptions by Pausanias and Pliny. The coins (fig. 15.1) depict a muscular, archaic male statue in the nude, facing right, with its left leg forward in front and the hair in a bun.<sup>25</sup> Its right hand hangs down, holding a bow; the left is outstretched with a little stag on the palm of the hand. This stag is quite remarkable, since it supposedly had movable

<sup>18</sup> E.g., Strabo 14.1.5.

<sup>19</sup> Briant 2002, p. 479.

<sup>20</sup> See Scheer 2003, *passim*.

<sup>21</sup> Tuplin 1996, p. 154

<sup>22</sup> Herodotus 6.32. Boys castrated, girls taken to the Great King.

<sup>23</sup> Herodotus 6.18–19. Unfortunately, the archaeological record does not show a burned layer substantiating Herodotus's description; *DNP* s.v. Didyma. Contra Parke 1986, p. 123.

<sup>24</sup> Pliny, *Natural history* 34.19. Cf. also Pausanias 2.10. Canachus of Sicyon was active in the Late Archaic period; *DNP* s.v. Kanachos, although a dating to some

point in the sixth century B.C.E. is the closest possible approximation for the *floruit* of the artist; Tuchelt 1970, pp. 200–03.

<sup>25</sup> Deppert-Lippitz 1984, p. 118. The lower field contains a monogram of Miletus, the reverse a lion couchant, facing back with an eight-pointed star over his back. The lion is a traditional symbol of the city and appears on Milesian coins at least since the fourth century B.C.E., although prior to this issue the coins depicted a lion passant. The animal could be a reference to the two lion statues flanking the entrance to the Milesian harbor or to the lions along the processional road from Miletus to Didyma. Below the lion is the name of a magistrate.



hoofs. We are aware of only one other statue with a similar iconography, an archaic image of Apollo from Delos, in which the god is depicted equally with the right hand hanging down, holding a bow, and the left outstretched, holding the three Graces.<sup>26</sup> The sculptors Tectaeus and Angelion, whose time of activity dates around 550 B.C.E. and therefore coincides in all likelihood with Canachus's *floruit*, created the Delian cult image. That is to say, the creators of the two images could have been inspired or influenced by one another.

We now turn to the fate of Apollo Philesius. Looking at modern interpretations, we need to return again to the Darius versus Xerxes discussion, because we find the view that the image was in Didyma until Xerxes returned from Greece, when he abducted it. While Xerxes as perpetrator of the abduction is an unlikely candidate, as discussed above, the carrying off of an important cult image is in keeping with ancient Near Eastern practice. If we look to Darius, the abduction of the cult image at the time its home was destroyed becomes more than probable. Apollo Philesius was allegedly taken to Ecbatana, which is a likely destination: abducted cult images were generally taken to capitals or key places of worship of the vanquishers.

The destruction of an oracle is quite remarkable, because ancient Near Eastern powers controlling the area appeared to have high respect for this Greek form of divination, which was not practiced in Mesopotamia and Iran. The Lydian kings, the rulers with closest contact to the Greeks before the arrival of the Persians, are reported to have regarded the oracle at Delphi highly, which is borne out by their dedications.<sup>27</sup> According to Herodotus, Didyma also boasted rich gifts received from the pharaoh Necho and the Lydian king Croesus.<sup>28</sup> A curious inconsistency in Herodotus is his story of Croesus's testing the Greek oracles including the one at Didyma.<sup>29</sup> All answers except the one from Delphi displeased him, whereupon he honored that oracle with rich gifts. At this point, we may simply have to accept the apparent contradiction within the *Histories*. The archaic temple destroyed by the Persians postdates both Necho and Croesus, confirming that Didyma continued to play an important role in the religious landscape of Asia Minor and still received substantial benefactions, which allowed the construction of a larger, more durable temple, replacing its mudbrick predecessor. In addition, Herodotus reports that Mardonius, Xerxes's commander, had consulted several Greek oracles.<sup>30</sup> Considering this potential appreciation and use of Greek-style oracles, the destruction of Didyma, the Persians' own port of call for this form of divination, is a remarkable statement of power and demonstrates how strictly the custom of destroying a rebel's temples was observed. We have to assume that keeping order in the land and making an example out of the instigators of a revolt outranked all other considerations.

We now need to turn to the fate of Didyma during the following century. If we believe the description of the end of the Diaspora in Kings, Ezra, and Berossus's *Babyloniaka*, destroyed temples could not be rebuilt without the consent of the Persian king.<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, when

<sup>26</sup> Tuchelt 1970, p. 202.

<sup>27</sup> Rosenberger 2003, p. 32; Gyges (Herodotus 1.13), Alyattes (1.19), and especially Croesus (1.46, 1.53, 1.85, 1.90).

<sup>28</sup> Herodotus 2.159 (Necho II, 610–595 B.C.E., *DNP* s.v. Necho); Herodotus 1.92 and 5.36.3 (Croesus, 560–47, *DNP* s.v. Croesus). The beginning of the building of the Archaic temple at Didyma (so-called temple II), replacing a *sekos* with a mudbrick superstructure, dates to ca.

550 B.C.E. This dating is consistent with a *floruit* of the sculptor Canachus in the sixth century B.C.E.

<sup>29</sup> Herodotus 1.47.2–1.48.

<sup>30</sup> Herodotus 8.133–35. 480 B.C.E., Rosenberger 2003, p. 48.

<sup>31</sup> 2 Kings 25:8 and Ezra 5–6. Berossus according to Theophilus, *Ad Autolyicum* 3.22. Theophilus was bishop of Antioch around 180 C.E. He probably employed epitomes of Berossus produced by Alexander Polyhistor (around 65 B.C.E.) and by Juba of Mauretania (50 B.C.E.–ca. 20 C.E.). See Verbrugge and Wickersham 1999, pp. 28–29.

a Persian governor on an inspection tour in Jerusalem during Darius's reign found the Jews rebuilding the Temple, he was referred to an edict by Cyrus authorizing the rebuilding. Only after that edict was found in the archives of Ecbatana and the Jewish claim was confirmed could the building work continue.<sup>32</sup> The Persians controlling the reconstruction of destroyed sanctuaries can be further substantiated by Herodotus's report of an offer of rebuilding the temples, which the Persian general Mardonius extended to the Athenians on behalf of the Great King.<sup>33</sup> Such a rebuilding of the sanctuary by the Persians would have been a palpable performance of power, comparable to similar and well-established practices of earlier Near Eastern powers like the Assyrians destroying and rebuilding the temples of Babylon.<sup>34</sup> One significant difference is that local architects and workmen would most likely have undertaken the construction, which means that the temple would have had a Greek rather than a Persian look.<sup>35</sup>

However, such an offer was apparently not extended to the Ionians, leaving the temple in ruins and the oracle silent. It thus served as a reminder of the consequences of rebelling against the Persians in this far-flung border territory. The ruins would continue to impact on the identity of the vanquished and the continued absence of the cult image, held hostage in Ecbatana, would serve to further demoralize them. At the same time, the ability to destroy their rebelling vassals' foremost sanctuaries and to abduct their gods as represented by their cult images must have served to strengthen the self-perception and identity of the Persians. Didyma remained in ruins until Alexander's invasion of the Persian Empire had successfully progressed through Asia Minor and along the Levantine coast to Egypt. Alexander's court historian Callisthenes reports that the sacred spring, which had allegedly dried up after the sack of the sanctuary and which supposedly inspired the prophets, sprang to life again upon Alexander's approach.<sup>36</sup> This is doubtless a suitably wondrous story for the glorification of the conqueror by his court historian. He goes on to describe favorable oracles issued at Didyma, which a Milesian embassy relayed to Alexander after his coronation at Memphis, when all of Asia Minor and the Levant were firmly in his hand and retaliation by the beleaguered Persians extremely unlikely. These oracles supposedly prophesied his future conquest of Persia in some detail. The re-awakening of the spring and the following prophecies were recorded by Callisthenes between 330 B.C.E. (the death of the Persian king Darius III) and 327/6 B.C.E., when Alexander had his historian killed.<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, they date to a time well after the events, making them hard to verify and conveniently self-fulfilling. Regardless of the lack of veracity in the report, the point here is not the fact, but the use made of the stories by the Milesians.

The fact that the Milesians acted on behalf of Didyma is in itself interesting. The destruction by the Persians not only changed the topography of the sanctuary, but also the practice of the oracle. Before the sack, male priests of the family of the Branchidae gave the oracles. After Miletus commissioned the construction of a new sanctuary in the last third of the fourth century B.C.E., this role fell to a woman, whose prophecies were imparted to the recipient by a *prophetes*, an annual elected office.<sup>38</sup> This change of practice may be explained

<sup>32</sup> Briant 2002, p. 488.

<sup>33</sup> Herodotus 8.140A–144.

<sup>34</sup> See, e.g., Schaudig, this volume.

<sup>35</sup> Unlike the cult image of Marduk, which Assyria returned to Babylon after the above-mentioned rebuilding

of the temple. On Assyrians "embellishing" cult images, see Schaudig, this volume.

<sup>36</sup> *FgrH* 124 F14 (Strabo 14.1.43).

<sup>37</sup> Parke 1985, p. 63.

<sup>38</sup> *DNP* s.v. Didyma.

by the deportation of the Branchidae, the family of priests of the Archaic Age, to Bactria, where Alexander encountered them in his campaign (the captured Milesians were resettled in Ampe on the Tigris).<sup>39</sup> There he supposedly sacked their town and killed its citizens to avenge an alleged treason of the Branchidae. The family of priests had supposedly colluded with Xerxes, delivering the treasures of the temple to him and following him willingly into his empire.<sup>40</sup>

The treason of the Branchidae is patently an invention by Alexander's court historian Callisthenes to justify the razing of their town, published in about 327/6 B.C.E. and accordingly well after the actual events.<sup>41</sup> To start with, the Branchidae were no longer in Didyma when Xerxes arrived, nor was any great amount of treasure to be found in the looted and destroyed ruins of the temple: this story is simply another variation on the popular Greek theme "Xerxes the evil perpetrator of sacrileges" as discussed above.<sup>42</sup> If they had been deported, which is of course quite likely, it would have been under the reign of Darius in the aftermath of the Ionian Revolt. Further, the elimination of all surviving remnants of the priestly family needs to be taken with a grain of salt. The point we need to keep in mind is not that all Branchidae were probably deported, but rather that some members of the family were likely to have slipped through the Persian nets, as did many Milesians. The reason for centering the control in Miletus is accordingly not the fact that no member of the family could have survived, but rather the desire to control the prestigious oracle and its expected future wealth on the part of Miletus. By the time of the massacre the Milesians had been in control of the sanctuary and dispensing oracles for roughly two years.<sup>43</sup> In addition, the use of elected priests would reinforce the tie of the oracle to Miletus and shift the power from an aristocratic family to the city. The Milesians' position as masters of Didyma was made permanent by the publication of the apologetic story of the treason of the original priests and their delayed punishment by the massacre of their descendants in 329 B.C.E.

Alternatively, taking into account the fact that the oracle fell into disuse after the destruction by Darius (although cult at the site appears to have continued<sup>44</sup>) and was not re-animated before Alexander's conquest of Asia (331 B.C.E.), the elapsed time (163 years) might have led the Milesians to take control of the oracle and make a fresh start. It seems likely that for the revival the Milesians modelled the practices on Delphi and the Pythia as one of the most famous and successful oracles of the ancient world.<sup>45</sup>

Here we already find a reclaiming of the lost status by the people of Miletus now running the sanctuary. At the same time, the revival and control of the sanctuary would strengthen their identity. While Didyma, to which our sources also refer as "Branchidae," always had some ties to Miletus, because of its closeness to the major port and city, it now belonged to and was run directly by Miletus. In other words, the Persian destruction and deportations impacted not only negatively on the social identity of the populace of this part of Asia Minor. In the long term, the changing control of the border allowed an unprecedented strengthening of the identities of the Milesians, the people who had instigated the revolt, which had caused all the trouble in the first place. We might speculate as to the effect these circumstances may

<sup>39</sup> Herodotus 6.20. Cf. Pliny, *Natural history* 6.32.57.

<sup>40</sup> Callisthenes, *FgrH* 124 F 14; cf. Strabo 17.1.43. For the whole episode and its sources, also see Parke 1985, pp. 64–68, and Hammond 1998.

<sup>41</sup> Jacoby 1930 on *FgrH* 124 F 14.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Scheer 2003, *passim*.

<sup>43</sup> Since 331 B.C.E.

<sup>44</sup> Tuchelt 1973, pp. 100–02.

<sup>45</sup> Parke 1986, pp. 124–25.

have had on the Persians, although I imagine they would have been somewhat limited: the Persians had other problems at the time.

The eventual rebuilding of the temple after Alexander's conquest would have taken the reaffirmation of Didyma's status a step further. The breach of the Persian sanctions against rebuilding would have worked as a highly visible ceremony, highlighting the change of power and underlining the loss of Persian control on the Ionian border. The new sanctuary and its grand scale would strengthen Ionian identity and self-perception. The oracle would further create a considerable influx of money and dedications, always a possible source of funding in times of need, which would certainly have increased the political clout of the city. Here, the Ionians are performing the frontier — but in reverse.

The shiny new temple obviously still lacked a cult image to house in its inner sanctum. Pausanias tells us that Seleucus I Nicator, who ruled Mesopotamia after the partitioning of the late Alexander's empire, came upon the image and returned it.<sup>46</sup> We have no way of knowing whether the returned statue was the actual image the Persians carried off — no person who had seen the original in situ could have been alive at the time of the restitution. Nevertheless, one could argue that such an unusual feature as the little movable stag on the outstretched hand, as we have seen an extremely rare posture for archaic statues, might well have been remembered, making the image easily identifiable and a return of the original statue likely.<sup>47</sup> Alternatively, it is possible to hypothesize that a different Archaic Apollo statue from the Persian treasuries was returned to the temple, which was presented as the original, regardless of its origin.<sup>48</sup> In our case the validity of the image's claim is of little importance. What counts is that it was considered to be the Apollo of Didyma. The timing of the return is also critical: Seleucus restored it shortly after his conquest of the area. Accordingly, he affirmed his position as ruler of the area by returning the cult image, avenging the god-napping, underlining the importance of the sanctuary and thus currying favor with the local populace. He further represented himself as a good and righteous king taking care of his people, their belongings, and their future. On Seleucus's part, this is again an act of securing and performing the frontier. For the Milesians, the restitution of the cult image to its original abode would further strengthen religious legitimacy and identity, although it would not signify a return of the angered god's favor, as it would in Mesopotamian perceptions.<sup>49</sup> For the Greeks, images of gods could be stolen without impacting on the deity and his or her conduct toward the people from whom the image was taken.

Not only did the Seleucids return the cult image, they also offered lavish dedications at Didyma as the most important oracle in their domain. In other words, Didyma took on a function as a religious identifier for the Seleucid Empire (or at least the Greek part thereof), its revival a reminder of the fall of Persia. It also continued to offer the Seleucids a platform for performing the role of pious kings, ostensibly rebuilding and honoring sanctuaries, which had suffered under a previous, vanquished regime — in itself a Mesopotamian ritual of war.<sup>50</sup> In this case, the ritual rebuilding must have been a particularly powerful statement, because the sanctuary had in fact been destroyed, which was not always the case, nor was it a prerequisite for the performing of the propaganda act of rebuilding. At the same time, the

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<sup>46</sup> Pausanias 1.16.3.

<sup>47</sup> Tuchelt 1970, p. 202.

<sup>48</sup> Scheer 2000, p. 254.

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<sup>49</sup> See, e.g., Woods, this volume.

<sup>50</sup> Cf., e.g., Wiesehöfer 1994, pp. 65–66.

Seleucids strengthened the frontier of their realm in a frequently disputed area by performing such acts of piety and generosity, ensuring a favorable reception in one of the key ports and cities on the Mediterranean coast of their empire.

Accordingly, the sanctuary of Didyma and its cult image acted as symbols for the shifting power in Asia Minor since the Ionian Revolt in 494 B.C.E. The Persians, the Milesians, and the Seleucids employed their destruction or rebuilding as a ritual for performing their current frontiers. During the late Roman Republic a brief revival of this function of the oracle occurs. In this period, we encounter depictions of Apollo Philesius on Milesian coins and on reliefs in Didyma and Miletus, which highlights how closely the episode was tied into the social fabric of the city long after the actual events. The evidence of the coinage (fig. 15.1) is particularly striking: Miletus had minted coins depicting the head of Apollo *en face* and the lion passant on the reverse since the fourth century B.C.E. The new coins with the image of the cult statue and the lion couchant on the reverse date to the time span between 39/8 and 17/6 B.C.E.<sup>51</sup> This is the time after Miletus regained the autonomy it lost to the Romans after 86/5 B.C.E. and before the *de facto* ruler of the Roman Empire, Augustus, held the city's most important magistracy, the *stephanephorate*. After this point in time autonomous coinage is highly unlikely. With the depictions of Apollo Philesius the Ionians highlighted their civic identity and their autonomy, while also emphasizing their social and religious status. The image probably symbolized for them their survival of suppression and adversity.

## THE GRAECO-PERSIAN WARS

Now we need to backtrack in time to where we left the Persians and their rebelling vassals. The revolt was quashed, the unrelenting cities in Asia Minor punished. When the Persians took the war to Greece in order to discipline the cities that had supported the rebels, they took over some islands of the Cyclades en route. This is often taken as an obvious course of action for a conquering army, but is in fact more complex.

Herodotus offers us the context and details of the relationship of the Persians with Naxos.<sup>52</sup> According to the *Histories*, exiled leading Naxian aristocrats had negotiated Persian intervention on their behalf with the help of the duplicitous Aristagoras, whom we have met above as leader of the Ionian rebels. This would have made Naxos a Persian vassal. In the event, the Naxians learned of the plan in time and evacuated the city. They held the Persians and their Ionian allies off until the funds allocated to the enterprise were depleted and they had to withdraw. Nevertheless, because of the actions of their former leaders, Naxos had become part of the map for the Persian Empire. In addition, his Naxian debacle and the expectation of the danger he would face because of it in Sardis were important factors in Aristagoras's decision to instigate revolt: Naxos was behind all the trouble. Further, Naxos had supported the Ionians during the revolt, emphasizing their status as troublemakers on the border. While the validity of Persia's claim on Naxos could be disputed, we need to look at it here through Persian eyes.

Herodotus also offers details of the conquest of Naxos en route to Greece: while many of the inhabitants had taken refuge in the hinterland and therefore escaped death or

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<sup>51</sup> Deppert-Lippitz 1984, p. 119.

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<sup>52</sup> Herodotus 5.28–37.

deportation, they had to watch their sanctuaries burn.<sup>53</sup> Again, the Persians followed protocol and meted out the expected punishment for misbehavior.

The treatment of Delos, a small and rather barren island in the Cyclades, which was the location of an important sanctuary of Apollo, is quite different. Herodotus reports that the inhabitants had deserted the island to save themselves.<sup>54</sup> Their whereabouts at the time must have been fairly obvious, since the Persian commander Datis sent a messenger to ask them to return and continue business as usual. According to Herodotus, the Great King (and his commander) had the highest respect for the birthplace of the two gods Apollo and Artemis and the Persians proceeded to offer rich sacrifices.<sup>55</sup> If we believe this part of the story, the respect is not rooted in a particular appreciation of Apollo: the Persians showed no hesitation to annihilate Didyma or the temple of Apollo Daphnephoros in Eretria. It cannot be its role as oracle either, because this service did not save Didyma. The reason for the different treatment of Delos was quite simply that Darius had no quarrel with the island. To put it bluntly: Darius's Persians were not marauding savages intent on committing sacrileges, they merely set out to punish rebels in the usual way. The message to Delos was a similar one to the message sent to the rebelling Ionians: do not interfere with the empire and you and your temples will be safe. The lavish sacrifice of costly incense the Persians offered on the occasion must also have reinforced the citizens and priests of Delos. At the same time, it is possible that a certain caution on the side of the Persians lay behind the type of sacrifice. While ostentatious, costly, and lavish, the holocaust would not leave material wealth behind that might at a later time be used for military purposes, such as financing armies in an attack on Persian territories. The Persians emphasized in their treatment of Delos how reasonable they were when not meddled with.<sup>56</sup> We could quite possibly read this as a message to the Greeks on the mainland, driving home the benefits of submitting quietly.

In light of this, an alternative interpretation of the story can be rejected, namely, that the Delians invented the sacrifice and special attention of Datis in order to disguise a different reason for their salvation, namely, their fraternizing with the Persians.<sup>57</sup> If this were the case, the story of a costly holocaust would doubtless be a cunning invention, since it explained the absence of Persian dedications, which might be expected in a sanctuary with close relations to that people. While this concept is somewhat tempting, we have no sources to indicate such collaboration (such as in the case of Naxos) and should therefore perhaps keep to interpretations that our evidence does support. In short, the Persians performed a ritual at Delos, stating that while the island remained outside their frontiers and did not meddle in their affairs they respected and honored its people and its sanctuary. However, they took no chances of strengthening a potential future enemy financially.

One effect of the revolt in the far west of the empire was the realization that beyond the sea, the traditional end of the world in ancient Near Eastern perception, lived a people who aided rebellious vassals in revolting. To add insult to injury, one of the culprits had asked for alliance with Persia and accepted the status of vassal: In 513 B.C.E. Athens had sent ambassadors to Sardis to solicit Persian help against Cleomenes of Sparta.<sup>58</sup> The Persians offered

<sup>53</sup> Herodotus 6.96. Sack and destruction 490 B.C.E. (*DNP* s.v. Naxos).

<sup>54</sup> Herodotus 6.97.

<sup>55</sup> Herodotus 6.97. Sacrifice 300 talents of incense.

<sup>56</sup> Again, the Persians stand in a long Near Eastern tradition; cf., e.g., Assyrian imperial policy (Berlejung, this volume).

<sup>57</sup> Scheer 2000, p. 206.

<sup>58</sup> Herodotus 5.73.

help in exchange for earth and water, symbols of vassalship. While the Athenians claim they never took them up on the offer, in Persian eyes they had offered and accepted vassal status. The Persians' professed claim to world-dominion meant that they could not allow such behavior to go unpunished.

We now turn to the second of the two central episodes in Graeco-Persian relations. After bringing the Thracians and Macedonians back into line in 492 B.C.E., the Persians turned their attention to Greece proper.<sup>59</sup> In 490 B.C.E. they crossed the Aegean and vanquished the Euboean city Carystus. Then they attacked neighboring Eretria and conquered it by treason. The polis was looted and destroyed, its inhabitants killed or enslaved, and the sanctuary of Apollo burnt. Landing in Marathon, the Persians meant to march on Athens. However, although they severely outnumbered the hoplites from Athens and Plataeae they encountered, the Greeks won the battle and the Persian army had to withdraw. This unexpected victory founded the later Athenian claim of being the defender of Greek liberty.

Because of the death of Darius and subsequent revolts, the Persians were otherwise occupied until King Xerxes I was ready to settle his account with the Greeks. After elaborate preparations, his army crossed into Greece in 480 B.C.E. and won an initial victory on land at the Thermopylae. The fleets engaged at Cape Artemisium. The Greek navy had to withdraw to Salamis on the third day, evacuating the Athenian populace in the process in order to avoid another disaster like Eretria. In 480 B.C.E. the Persians sacked Athens, looting and torching the city and the sanctuaries on the Acropolis. As a result, they enabled us to date classical sculpture by way of the Persian Debris — that is, by using the iconography of the destroyed statuary buried on the Acropolis after the sack as a fixed point in time. At Salamis, the Greek fleet defeated the Persians, who had to withdraw once again. After another unsuccessful endeavor to vanquish the Greeks in 479 B.C.E., the Persians called off the attempt to subdue Greece for the time being.

## THE SACK OF ATHENS

Let us go back to Athens for a closer look. Finding the city evacuated, the Persians ransacked it thoroughly, plundering public spaces and sanctuaries alike. A prominent example of this is the removal of the statues of the so-called Tyrannicides, Harmodius and Aristogiton, from the Athenian Agora.<sup>60</sup> The two lovers had killed Hipparchus, brother of the tyrant Hippias, in 514 B.C.E., over a love quarrel.<sup>61</sup> Harmodius had turned down Hipparchus's amorous advances, for which both he and his sister were subjected to humiliations by the rejected would-be lover. The couple plotted revenge and conspired with a few others to kill Hippias and Hipparchus. Seeing one of their fellow conspirators chatting amiably to the tyrant on the appointed day, Harmodius and Aristogiton thought their plan was revealed and rushed to take revenge upon Hipparchus before their supposedly imminent arrest. They managed to stab him to death before his bodyguards killed Harmodius and took Aristogiton prisoner, who was later executed. After the expulsion of the tyrants the two were idealized as freedom

<sup>59</sup> *DNP* s.v. Perserkriege, esp. col. 606.

<sup>60</sup> Fehr 1984, *passim*. Pausanias 1.8.5 situates the statue groups of the Tyrannicides, both the one fashioned by Antenor and the replacement group by Critius and

Nesiotes, close to the sanctuary of Ares in the Athenian Agora. On the statues, see also Boardman 1987, pp. 37–40 and figs. 3–9.

<sup>61</sup> Thucydides 6.54–59.

fighters, regardless of the fact that the background of the killing was well known.<sup>62</sup> Statues by the sculptor Antenor were set up in the Athenian marketplace to commemorate them. They were accordingly placed in a central and significant space of the polis, where the people would meet and mingle and generally spend a lot of their time.

Carrying this symbol of Athenian liberty off to the treasuries of the new (would-be) ruler is certainly a powerful statement. The loss of this symbol of Athenian liberty was so keenly felt that the Athenians immediately ordered a new statue-group of the two by the sculptors Critios and Nesiotes and put it up in place of the old group in 477/6 B.C.E. It is this substitute version, which is behind the Roman copy of the monument, today in the Naples National Archaeological Museum (fig. 15.2).<sup>63</sup> We see two naked male figures striding forward. Young Harmodius is depicted right leg forward, raising his right arm to strike the victim, sword in hand. Aristogiton, left leg forward, holds his left arm out protectively, draped with a cloak; his sword-hand is drawn back at hip level to strike. The basis of the statue group has been recovered in the Agora, although it was no longer in situ, but turned up in a Turkish deposit. While we do know that the two statues shared the basis, we have no indication of exactly how they were arranged. The presentation in Naples has the lovers side by side and is antithetical. Viewing the images, the onlooker facing the monument takes up the position of the victim, creating a striking impact.

The motif of Harmodius and Aristogiton slaying the tyrant remained prominent in art, appearing in fourth-century vase painting as an emblem on the shield of Athena, on coins, and in a relief.<sup>64</sup> Thus, Xerxes ended up strengthening the power of the symbol he meant to destroy. Nevertheless, Alexander of Macedon made a point of returning the original statues to Athens after encountering them in the treasuries of Susa, where they would stand side by side with their replacements on the Agora.<sup>65</sup> According to Pausanias, Xerxes looted the Antenorian sculptures, although he claims that Antiochus restored them.<sup>66</sup> Valerius Maximus attributes the return of the group to Seleucus.<sup>67</sup> The difference in the reports may reflect varying claims to that act in antiquity, possibly circulated by parties with vested interests, such as successors to Antiochus and Seleucus. The self-representation as good kings avenging misdeeds of an evil vanquished regime certainly explains such actions and such claims, regardless which of the three kings actually returned the statues. Whoever sent back the images could not present the action as act of piety, as in the case of the return of cult images like Apollo Philesius (above). However, the Athenians identified strongly with this particular statue group and its ideological message. Symbolically replacing that emblem of freedom and, by extension, acknowledging the city's history was surely an equally influential act to replacing a cult image and a clear boost to the king's image. For the Athenians, it must have been a reinforcement of their civic identity as defenders of Greek liberty, which was doubtless particularly welcome at a time when Athens was politically fairly powerless and Greece was actually controlled by Macedon, a foreign power.

<sup>62</sup> Thucydides 6.53–59. Herodotus 5.55 reports the historical end of the *tyrannis* four years after the Tyrannicides' death, but does not mention the background to their assassination of Hipparchos, by the omission helping to hold up the legend of the freedom fighters.

<sup>63</sup> Boardman 1987, pp. 37–40.

<sup>64</sup> Cf., e.g., Boardman 1977, p. 182 and fig. 304.1. Panathenaic amphora, Athena striding with shield in left hand,

emblem on shield Tyrannicides, vase dated to the second half of the fifth century B.C.E. See also Boardman 1987, figs. 7–9.

<sup>65</sup> Pliny, *Natural history* 34.70 and Arrian, *Anabasis* 3.16.7, cf. also 7.19.2.

<sup>66</sup> Pausanias 1.8.5.

<sup>67</sup> Valerius Maximus 2.10 ext. 1 (Halm 1865, p. 109).



According to their custom the Persians also looted and burned the Acropolis: the by-the-book treatment for rebellion. The violation of the sacrosanct space was shocking in the extreme to Greeks and Athenians alike. Although some statues survived the sack, most votives of the sanctuary were destroyed, and the temple of Athena was burned.

Interestingly, the destruction of cult images on the Acropolis does apparently not deserve mentioning. Similarly, we hear nothing of the destruction or deportation of the cult images of Naxos and Eretria, although one of these two options must have befallen them. This is in keeping with the practice of abducting cult images performed both by Greeks and by Persians.<sup>68</sup> While it did cause friction, if Greeks carried off each other's cult images, these appear to have been considered fair game. Temples, however, were another matter entirely. The response to the burning of the temple was quite different from the reaction to the abduction of the Tyrannicides just discussed.

Whereas that symbol of freedom was replaced quickly, the ruins on the Acropolis were allowed to stand: in 1885, Dörpfeld identified the architectural remains of a structure in the center of the terrace of the Athenian Acropolis as the archaic temple of Athena Polias, which had stood there at the time of the Persian invasion and was the temple that had been burned.<sup>69</sup> Although the so-called Persian Debris was buried gradually and new votives and small buildings started to appear, the burnt ruins of the temple were not cleared away.<sup>70</sup> Left on display, they kept the psychological wound of the desecration open and raw, an incitement to further action against the Persians. The rejection of the Persians' above-mentioned offer, allowing the rebuilding of the temples if the Athenians joined an alliance, itself a highly visible performance of power, equally highlighted the Athenians' position as lovers of liberty and independence.

Pericles took this a step further in his building program.<sup>71</sup> Instead of wiping the slate clean and building a nice new sanctuary, he incorporated past structures, as Ferrari demonstrates.<sup>72</sup> Plans were adjusted to fit in the Cyclopean walls left from Mycenaean times. The ensemble of Parthenon, Erechtheum, Propylaea, and Athena-Nike temple was constructed around the destroyed temple. The ruins were in fact repaired after a fire in 406 B.C.E.<sup>73</sup> The vast space on which the remains stood was left open until the Roman period. While Pericles's creation of the sanctuary was certainly a statement of changing power in itself, it went beyond a "simple" building program like the one in Didyma. By not removing all signs of the desecration, the Acropolis was turned into a positive reversal of the effect intended: the Persians would be remembered, but it was not the kind of memory they had wanted. Literally embracing the past, including and showing off the ruins, the Athenians built a sanctuary with a powerful propagandistic message. Incorporating the havoc wreaked by the Persians, they emphasized Athens's role as defender of Greece. This monument to freedom remained the core of the signature sanctuary of the city throughout periods of suppression by foreign

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<sup>68</sup> E.g., Herodotus 5.82–86; cf. also Scheer 2000, pp. 186–94 (anecdote about an attempted god-napping by the Athenians: cult images of Damia and Auxesia from Aegina, originally carried off by the Aeginetans from Epidaurus). Pausanias 8.46.3 and 3.16.7; cf. also Scheer 2003, *passim* (cult image of Artemis Brauronia, allegedly abducted by Xerxes).

<sup>69</sup> Ferrari 2002, p. 11. Ferrari analyzes the archaeology behind the discovery and its implications for the recon-

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struction of the building ensembles of the Acropolis pre- and post-Xerxes in detail.

<sup>70</sup> Ferrari 2002, *passim*.

<sup>71</sup> Hurwit 2004, pp. 87–191, *passim*.

<sup>72</sup> Ferrari 2002, pp. 11–35.

<sup>73</sup> Ferrari 2002, p. 11.

powers such as Macedon. Like the Tyrannicides, it continued to symbolize Athens's love of freedom, her role in defending it, and acted as a constant and visible reminder of a glorious and free past.

Thus, the Athenians built a positive social identity by emphasizing past attempts at destroying it. As in the case of the Tyrannicides, the Persian plans had backfired terribly. As a result of the destruction they had wreaked, the key sacred and secular spaces of Athens, Acropolis and Agora, now held symbols of liberty and resistance, reinforcing the self-perception and identities of her citizens.

## CONCLUSION

Looting and breaking images of political or religious significance was employed in the ancient Near East in order to weaken and demoralize an enemy in war. Identifiers that had in part created a people's group structure were undone, affecting the social cohesion of the victims. At the same time, they created a positive identity for the in-group of the victors.

The looting of sanctuaries was part of the procedure in the ancient Near East. While the destruction of shrines in border territory seems to have occurred also because of their very location in the earliest extant examples,<sup>74</sup> by the time of the Neo-Assyrian Empire (at the latest) the annihilation of an enemy's sanctuaries and abduction of cult images appear to have become a standard element of warfare.<sup>75</sup> Firmly rooted in this tradition, the Persians employed it as a performance of power when quashing rebellions. We have looked here at the practice in connection with the affirmation of the Ionian frontier, where the sanctuaries of rebelling vassals were destroyed and their cult images abducted when all Persian attempts at re-establishing order in their realm by diplomacy had proved futile. In addition, the Persians did not permit their vassals to rebuild the temples. Accordingly, the ruins of the sanctuaries served as a reminder of the consequences of rebelling and continued to impact on the social identities of the inhabitants of the areas in question across generations. In the case of the Ionian Revolt, this performance of power served to reinforce the empire's frontiers. Conversely, when the empire lost control of the frontier territory, the re-establishing of the former role of the sanctuary and eventual rebuilding served to highlight the change of power and acted as symbol of autonomy and perseverance.

Looking at the Greek side, the annihilation of temples, which was an established practice for the Persians when quashing rebellions, clearly touched a nerve. This is not only obvious in the strong feelings the destruction of their own temples by others caused them. It also becomes clear when they were the ones responsible for the obliteration of a sanctuary. We have seen that Herodotus performed an act of whitewashing in attributing this to chance and misfortune. This discomfort may be behind the relatively short treatment the destruction of temples in Asia Minor received in Herodotus's *Histories*. However, when it comes to Athens, the situation looks quite different. The Greek lack of practice in destroying sacred spaces also meant that they had no age-old experience in dealing with the effects: they had to actively develop strategies to handle the implications. While the Athenians replaced abducted monuments from public spaces like the Tyrannicides as soon as possible, the destroyed temples of the Acropolis were treated differently. Here, the ruins were allowed to stand even though

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<sup>74</sup> Woods, this volume.

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<sup>75</sup> See, e.g., May, *Introduction*, this volume.

the Persians had failed to conquer the city and therefore had no means of stopping such a re-building project. The Athenians took this even further when Pericles's building project centered the new ensemble of Parthenon, Erechtheum, and Propylaea around the ruins, showcasing them as the symbolic core of Athenian self-perception and social identity. In Athens, the results of the destruction and abduction formed the basis of a powerful positive identity.

One side effect of this construction of a new identity was the stereotyping of the perpetrators of the temple burnings, the Persians, especially King Xerxes, under whose aegis the Athenian Acropolis was destroyed. The Persians became the generic barbarian violators of all things sacred and Xerxes the personified evil king, a bad reputation that lasts until today. This stereotype became the basis of a historical tradition and in turn a stereotyping of "Oriental" violence and excess, which lies at the root of Said's Orientalism.<sup>76</sup>



Figure 15.1. Miletian coin, obverse Apollo Philesius, reverse lion. Vienna, Bundessammlung für Münzen, Medaillen und Geldzeichen, inv. no. 17491. Scale 2:1 (Deppert-Lippitz 1984, pl. 31:946)

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<sup>76</sup> Said 1978.



Figure 15.2. “Tyrannicides,” sculpted by Critios and Nesiotes. Naples National Archaeological Museum G 103-4 (image courtesy of Marco Prins/Livius.org)

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# LOOKING FOR ICONOPHOBIA AND ICONOCLASM IN LATE ANTIQUITY AND BYZANTIUM

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## BYZANTIUM AND ICONOCLASM — FIRST A METHODOLOGICAL WARNING

Byzantium by all accounts should be the ideal location from which to derive and understand the grammar and rules of “iconoclasm.”<sup>1</sup> There is a temptation for art historians to divide the whole cultural history of Byzantium into two parts — before and after iconoclasm. The Byzantine resolution in the ninth century of the “image theory” is often taken to be the major event in the decisive development and presentation of Orthodox Christianity.<sup>2</sup>

It must also be true that more is written about Byzantine “iconoclasm” than any other subject that has been studied in the history of the empire over the period from 330 to 1453. Indeed Peter Brown famously wrote as long ago as 1973 that “altogether, the Iconoclast controversy is in the grip of a crisis of over-explanation.”<sup>3</sup> But paradoxically the number (and size) of books touching on Byzantine iconoclasm since Brown wrote his comment has multiplied beyond all expectations, and, paradoxically again, the concept has as a consequence become less rather than more transparent. At this moment in time we have to contend with a whole raft of new and important “revisionist” accounts in the books of Marie-France Auzépy, Gilbert Dagron, Thomas Noble, Beat Brenk, and Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon.<sup>4</sup> The common element in these treatments of iconoclasm is a general consensus that (1) the extent of opposition to images in Byzantium has been over-exaggerated in previous modern histories; that (2) the debate on the legitimacy of Christian figurative art was once in fact limited to a small circle of thinkers, mostly in Constantinople; and that (3) a distinct historical periodization of “iconoclasm” between 726 and 843 (with a pause between 787 and 815) is unwarranted.

The consequence of this recent literature is that we have entered a period of reassessment of the historical evidence for iconoclasm and its interpretation.<sup>5</sup> The assumption that

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Freedberg (1977), who sets out a profile of the stages of Christian iconoclasm in Byzantium and the later Reformation. This conference volume documents the state of the subject in 1975. Bynum (2011, esp. pp. 45ff.) likewise treats Byzantine iconoclasm as paradigmatic for later European attitudes to images.

<sup>2</sup> All the dates in this article are C.E., unless the opposite is indicated.

<sup>3</sup> Brown 1973, esp. p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Auzépy 2006 and 2007; Dagron 2007; Noble 2009; Brenk 2010; Brubaker and Haldon 2001 and 2011. Previously the best compilation of art historical materials was that

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of Grabar 1957, and it remains an important deductive analysis.

<sup>5</sup> One observer has reviewed the methodology of Leslie Brubaker on iconoclasm adversely; see Treadgold 2011: “Leslie Brubaker’s chapter on Iconoclasm is hard to evaluate, because it depends heavily on a book she co-authored with John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era* (Cambridge, 2011), which I have yet to see; to judge from this chapter, the book’s method is to arrive at revisionist conclusions by throwing out most of the evidence.”

Byzantium faced a century-long polarization into two hostile camps which profoundly affected the *mores* of the whole of society throughout the empire is unlikely to survive this reconsideration, but the nature of iconoclasm might then emerge clearer and more refined. Until that time, one point seems crucial: there are available to us archaeological as well as textual witnesses to specific acts of the destruction of religious imagery in the Byzantine world in the eighth and the ninth centuries, and that thereafter there are no further acts of hostility to figural images in the Orthodox church. In other words something happened in the so-called period of iconoclasm which profoundly influenced attitudes in that period, after which society moved on. That is not to say that not one single attack on icons is recorded after 843, but where these occur they are not the consequence of state iconoclasm, but of individual actions, which may reflect personal prejudices or religious rivalries. These cases are important indicators too of the grammar of iconophobia, but are not the subject of this paper.<sup>6</sup>

### THE PROBLEM OF CHRISTIAN ART

The Greco-Roman world in which Christianity emerged was no stranger to the political manipulation of visual imagery, or to the looting of the sacred relics of foreign religions. Christianity not only absorbed these traditions of image smashing and the suppression of subversive religious objects; it also inherited through its reading of the Old Testament the Judaic tradition of iconophobia, and with it religious opposition to the idolatrous use of images. The problem today in fully understanding the Christian usage of images is that early Christian writers did not seek to define any coherent “image theory.” Instead attitudes to images are usually reflected tangentially and piecemeal in the discussion of other issues (such as in literary dialogues between Jews and Christians). John of Damascus (ca. 676–749) wrote *Three Apologies against Those Who Attack the Divine Images* and has been seen as the key iconophile theologian during Byzantine iconoclasm. But since he was born in Damascus and writing in Arab-dominated lands outside Byzantium, his perspective was maybe more to establish a Christian identity in response to the rise of Islam than to engage with central Byzantine attitudes. John of Damascus was, however, celebrated as an iconophile champion in the ninth century in Constantinople and remains a major Orthodox saint.

So the evocative materials for thinking about iconoclasm and idolatry in early Byzantium come indirectly from asides in texts — hence the lack of precision in any modern account of early Christian thinking on images. When it comes to the period which has traditionally been labeled “Byzantine iconoclasm,” between 726 and 843 with a break and restoration of images between 787 and 815, the nature of texts is even more opaque. We have iconophile writings which attack (and distort) the opposition as heretical; whereas we have to deduce the iconoclast position from its presentation in these iconophile writings, and work out how

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<sup>6</sup> See Freedberg 1985; for a conspicuous case of an attack on a Byzantine icon, see Cormack 1997, fig. 8, and pp. 169ff. for the fifteenth-century *Panagia Hodigitria* icon in the church of Méronas, Crete, where the face and eyes are scratched, perhaps by a Muslim iconoclast. Such attacks on the eyes of saints are found widely in the post-Byzantine period. A more puzzling case is on a

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thirteenth-century double-sided panel at the monastery of St. Catherine’s at Sinai, where the eyes of a number of figures in the *Anastasis* are gouged out. Since this icon may have been made for catholic worship, it is perhaps possible that this is sectarian attack (for this icon, see Evans 2004, cat. no. 223, pp. 366–67).



to derive their actual views from such reflections. All historians handle these texts in the light of their own baggage and hindsight, and this is a further complication. In my view there is also an “invisible discourse” in the period. Since iconoclasm was official state and church policy, and Byzantium was a dictatorship, opposition to imperial policies would surely have gone unexpressed in public, and only might exist as smouldering resentment, finally bursting out when the policy of iconoclasm was ended. So texts written after 843 may well express a position suppressed during iconoclasm, but actually widespread and significant. Absence of evidence from writings in the eighth and ninth centuries is not evidence of absence of opposition to the established state position. In this respect it is perhaps only after iconoclasm with the triumphant rejection of iconophobia that the extent and seriousness of the debate can be deduced. A key aim after iconoclasm was to define the identity of the Byzantine Orthodox church as an “icon-venerating,” but not “icon-worshipping” community, thus indicating that the dangers of idolatry were understood and resisted. Haldon and Brubaker (2011) argue the opposite: there was no serious opposition to the official position on images during the eighth century, and so the interpretation of this as a violent period of iconoclasm is wrong. My position is to accept recent proposals that the strength of iconoclasm has been exaggerated, but I do not think that either iconoclasts or iconophiles can be seen as a fairly insignificant group. However, iconophobia was not limited to the long eighth century only; nor was concern about icons merely a doctrinal issue. The use of Christian icons was surely put into question by the rise of Islam. That seems chronologically significant for the timing of the eighth-century debate. But no single factor looks likely to account for the Byzantine impulse to clarify the value and function of icons in worship and everyday life.

I want therefore to set a context for the history of Christian iconophobia with an unusually direct quotation from Late Antiquity: the Hymn (*Crowns of Martyrdom III*, lines 72–80) written in celebration of the early third-century martyr St. Eulalia by the late fourth-century Latin poet Prudentius. The following words are put into the saint’s mouth:<sup>7</sup>

Here am I, a foe to the worship of evil spirits, I trample idols under my feet, and with my heart and lips, I confess God. Isis, Apollo, and Venus are nothing. Maximian (*the emperor*) is nothing; they because they are the works of human hands, he because he worships the works of human hands, both worthless, both nothing.

Her words combine traditional Roman forms with the sentiments of Judaic prophets.<sup>8</sup>

By the time of Prudentius, or quite soon after, we can see as an example of Christian practices of image destruction in the case of a cult statue of Venus or Aphrodite in her temple at Aphrodisias in Caria, Asia Minor.<sup>9</sup> The temple was converted into a cathedral and the cult statue had been literally trampled into the earth and hidden by the Christians of the city. Eulalia’s attitudes were put literally into practice. But by the sixth century, things have changed, and saints like St. Eulalia join a procession of saints and martyrs portrayed as icons on the walls of the church of St. Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna — she herself has become an image for veneration.

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<sup>7</sup> ..... en ego sum  
daemonicis inimical sacris  
idola protero sub pedibus,  
pectore et ore Deum fateor.

Isis, Apollo, Venus nihil est,  
Maximianus et ipse nihil:

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illa nihil, quia facta manu,  
hic manuum quia facta colit,  
frivola utraque et utraque nihil.

<sup>8</sup> Especially Isaiah (44–46).

<sup>9</sup> Erim 1986, p. 59.

Art historians generally argue that there was no overtly Christian art before around 200, and so in the world inhabited by Christians like Eulalia, all religious imagery was pagan imagery. In the third century, even before Constantine the Great declared Christianity a legal religion in the Roman Empire in 313, however, Christian image making had started, for example, in the catacombs at Rome, in the house church at Dura Europos in Syria, and with the sculptures of Jonah from Asia Minor, now at Cleveland, and on sarcophagi at Rome, not to mention on seal rings and other art forms. By the time of Prudentius, Christianity was declared to be the state religion of Rome (by the emperor Theodosius in 392), and churches were richly decorated with figural images. Such figural decoration remained the norm until the outbreak of iconoclasm in Byzantium in 726 — but we are going ahead in time too fast, and need to look at a moment in more detail at the nature of image use and abuse in Late Antiquity and early Byzantium.

### ICONOCLASM IN ACTION

The Arch of Titus in the Roman Forum (around 82 and commemorating the siege of Jerusalem in 70) represented the deceased emperor in triumph, and paraded his booty, including the menorah and other objects from the Temple. It documents that removal of enemy possessions was a normal procedure in the Roman triumph. In upper Egypt in the second century, the dedicatory inscription of the Hadrianic chapel of Sarapis at Luxor was subsequently treated to selective despoliation — the name of the presumably hated local governor has been cut out. We may today be tempted to call this *damnatio memoriae* but that is a modern phrase and not a Roman legal term. Among much research on this practice, the most informative is by Harriet Flower, who points out that such deletions have the effect of retaining the unpopular names in the memory rather than the opposite.<sup>10</sup> In like manner, the image of the co-emperor Commodus was removed from the triumphal monument of Marcus Aurelius in Rome — this probably happened between his death in 192 and his rehabilitation in 195. This kind of political iconoclasm is familiar enough to us still — for example, see the recent smashing of the icons of President Mubarak in Cairo or Colonel Gadhafi in Tripoli.

As for religious iconoclasm, this is a feature frequently to be seen in the figural reliefs of the Ptolemaic temples of Upper Egypt, as, for example, in the temple of Horus at Edfu, begun by Ptolemy III in 327 B.C.E. and finished in 57 B.C.E. The issue here is who was responsible and when did the systematic hacking of the images take place. It is often attributed to Coptic Christians, but the fact that the living parts of the figures are attacked, and not their costumes, may point the finger at Muslims.

I have already mentioned a case of the burial of the cult statues of the pagans by the Christians of Aphrodisias. Not all cult statues were destroyed; some of the most famous, for example, were moved to Constantinople in the fourth and fifth centuries — notorious cases are the statue of Zeus by Phidias from Olympia and the Aphrodite by Praxiteles from Cnidus to be displayed in museum settings (at the Baths of Zeuxippus and Palace of Lausus). The motivation for collecting of statues in the new urban center of Constantinople has been much

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<sup>10</sup> Stewart (2008, pp. 127–30) illustrates the Severan woman from the Acropolis of Sparta as a case of Roman

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iconoclasm and not Christian. Also Varner 2000; especially Flower 2000; Flower 2006.

debated. Was it for aesthetic admiration or to mock and degrade pagan statues?<sup>11</sup> Even the Parthenon at Athens, converted into the church and cathedral of the Mother of God during the Middle Ages, was subject to severe iconoclasm apparently at the time of its conversion, perhaps in the sixth century. This can be seen in the hacking of many of the metopes, and the anomaly that the northwest metope with Hebe and Hera was left with their bodies untouched (though they have now lost their heads) does fit with the suggestion that the iconoclasts involved were Christians who (mistakenly) thought the scene was that of the Annunciation (showing the archangel Gabriel and the seated Virgin Mary). This seems the best explanation for its preservation among the other damaged panels.

Another method by which early Christians handled ancient pagan statues, and the demons they were thought to contain, was to exorcize them with the sign of the cross, usually on the forehead or head. The Roman portrait head of a Roman imperial official from the “Baths of Hadrian” at Aphrodisias, now in the collection of “Jubilee Museum” of the *Musées Royaux d’Art et d’Histoire* in Brussels (gift of P. Gaudin in 1908), has an invocation to Christ and Mary Mother of God incised in the hair on the top of the head. As for the sixth-floor mosaic with a map of the Holy Land in a church at Madaba (Jordan), this has at some date suffered the removal of several figures — either by Muslims or even perhaps by Christians as a pre-emptive move to stop its wholesale destruction by Muslims.

### BYZANTINE ICONOCLASM

This brief overview takes us to the traditional date for the start of Byzantine iconoclasm itself, either 726 or 730, and initiated by the emperor Leo III. As evidence of the reality of the destruction of images in Constantinople there is a set of ten bust sculptures with images of Christ, the Virgin and Child, and eight Apostles from the sixth-century church of St. Polyeuctos at Constantinople.<sup>12</sup> These panels, probably the decoration of the original sanctuary of this extremely grand church, have all been systematically hacked and were then stacked away and hidden in the building. This seems to bring us into the traditional period of iconoclasm in Constantinople between 726 and 843. It is much less clear whether iconoclasm is responsible for the concealment and scraping of the mosaic panel of the Presentation of Christ, probably part of a lost series in the archaeologically explored church in the city, the so-called *Kalenderhane Camii*.<sup>13</sup> It dates, however, from the late sixth century.

Other cases of the destruction of Christian images by Christians are unambiguous, and so give an insight into the reality and pattern of Byzantine iconoclasm. The actions of iconoclasts are certainly archaeologically visible: Constantine V decorated the church of St. Eirene in Constantinople with a cross in the apse after the earthquake of 740 (fig. 16.1). In St. Sophia the sixth-century mosaics of Christ, the Virgin, and Apostles in the southwest rooms off the gallery were cut out and replaced with crosses by the iconoclast patriarch Niketas in 768/9, and this is documented archaeologically as well as in texts. The apse mosaics of the church of the *Koimesis* at Nicaea had three phases: the Virgin Mary and Child before iconoclasm, a cross during iconoclasm, and a replacement of the Mary imagery after iconoclasm. The church of Hosios David in Thessaloniki suffered from an iconoclast cover over its apse mosaic.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Mango 1963.

<sup>12</sup> Harrison 1986, pp. 156–57.

<sup>13</sup> Striker and Kuban 1997, pp. 121ff.

This evidence (and a full survey would give more) points to the conclusion that violent actual attacks on images did occur but they were spasmodic and not continuously spaced out over the period, and that sometimes icons were concealed rather than destroyed — some iconophiles may have waited in hope that at some later date the icons could once again be revealed when circumstances changed (and they were right). The climate of fear, however, is a feature of the period, as iconophile texts like the *Life of St. Stephen the Younger* communicate, however false they might be in precise historical detail.<sup>14</sup> This text written between 807 and 809 conveys the atmosphere of a mid-eighth-century society in crisis, and that can hardly be a complete fabrication.

The logic of iconoclasm was discussed in major church councils set up with imperial initiative and church compliance in 754, 787, and 842, of which II Nicaea of 787 was designated the last Ecumenical Council by the Orthodox church. The debate was polarized (as documented by the Council of Constantinople of 754, which banned images, and the Council of Nicaea II of 787, which anathematized those who banned images) in terms of idolatry, and rested on the interpretation of the Ten Commandments. The problem was the second commandment — “not to make a graven image or likeness and not to bow down or serve them.” Early Christian theologians argued this was a later addition to the text given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Following St. Augustine the western church subsumed this into the first and made it less of an issue (they renumbered the other ten commandments).<sup>15</sup> The Orthodox view was to keep it as the second commandment, while arguing that it was directed at the Jews alone and not the Christians of the New Testament. The iconoclasts did not agree. They attacked the simple interpretation that icons were legitimated by the incarnation of Christ. The question that worried them was how the materiality of an icon related to the nature of Christ, and what was the right way to represent God and the sacred. A further question is how far the iconoclasts (and the proponents of the Reformation) were in a state of emotional and intellectual reaction to Christian practices which had developed in ways they saw as extreme and unacceptable. The seventh century appears to be marked by escalating “superstitious” practices in the use of icons (such as scraping paint from figures of saints and ingesting it as holy medicine) in the same way as the pre-Reformation period was marked by the “excessive” granting of indulgences.<sup>16</sup> Such an “explanation” for the acute crisis in the use of figurative icons in the eighth century reposes in the domain of Christian faith and doctrine and is without doubt too narrow by ignoring political and international factors.

The traditional view of the use of art during iconoclasm is that the Byzantine emperors in this period banned icons and favored the representation of the cross.<sup>17</sup> They sought to end a growing cult of icons and relics in Byzantine society, both at home and in churches and monasteries, and the council discussions of 754 quoted a fourth-century text of St. Nilus of Ancyra which recommended a single cross in the apse as the ideal church decoration. The same author and text was used by the iconophiles too, but they claimed it was originally longer and recommended that the ideal decoration of a church was a series of Old Testament and New Testament as well as a cross in the apse. Tampering with texts was the rule of the game at this time and the iconoclasts supposedly cut out the undesired words — unless it was the iconophiles who added them.

<sup>14</sup> See the analysis of the rhetoric of this text by Auzépy (1997).

<sup>15</sup> MacCulloch 2009, pp. 443–44.

<sup>16</sup> The classic collection of this evidence was made by Kitzinger (1954). See also Brubaker and Haldon 2001.

<sup>17</sup> Millett 1910.

André Grabar used coins as an index of the development of iconophile and iconoclast attitudes, stimulated by the decrees of the Quinisext church council of 680–81 and the development of new gold coin types in this period.<sup>18</sup> In the late seventh century Justinian II made a major innovation — he put the face of Christ on the obverse of Byzantine gold coins. His iconophile successors and all the iconoclast emperors stopped this and replaced Christ with the cross. Not until after 843 was Christ replaced on the coins, and then by copying the coins of Justinian II (which had somehow been kept safe for over a century). So coins (as do seals) do document changing artistic practices of the Byzantine state and its officials about correct representation of Christ.

The debate about the cross during the period of Byzantine iconoclasm did not originate at that time, but had been running for some centuries. But in the immediately preceding period, we have an important set of writings about the legendary Christian saint, Sergius Bahira, and his meeting with Muhammad.<sup>19</sup> We read that the saint favors the decoration of churches with one cross and not many. The context of these writings is the Muslim-Christian confrontation, and importance of the cross for Christians in establishing the importance of the crucifixion — something of course denied by the Muslims. Islam denied both the fact of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, and they denied that God had a son. Mary and Christ were respected, but not given the status conferred on them by Christian belief. Jesus was in a long line of messengers of God, and no more, and this is forcefully stated in the mosaic inscriptions of the Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem in 691, well before iconoclasm was declared in Byzantium.

Indeed a prickly moment for Byzantium in its relations with Islam was in the late seventh-century when the caliph Abd al Malik rejected the currency of the new Byzantine coins with the face of Christ on them, and developed new Islamic coins in Damascus, first perhaps with relics of Muhammad (his lance) and then with texts from the Koran.<sup>20</sup> In these changes we see the direct character of the Byzantine-Muslim exchanges which Grabar called “la guerre par les images at les symbols.” Within Byzantium itself, we find other evidence of the importance of art in theological controversy, offering a visual means of stating positions. As part of the theological debate on the nature of Christ we find the first examples of a Crucifix — the cross with the dead Christ on it. This iconography was not only unacceptable to the Muslims, but it also caused serious disagreements among churchmen — did Christ suffer on the cross? According to Anastasius of Sinai, and we have an icon at Sinai displaying his position, the human nature of Christ died but not the divine. This crucifixion icon shows the two natures of Christ combined, blood for the human and water for the divine gush out of his dead body. It was not until the tenth century that the dead Christ became a normal Byzantine image — up to the tenth century the issue is evaded by showing Christ with his eyes open.<sup>21</sup> This is a key example to show how art was at the center of theological debate and the definition of faith in Byzantium.

It is clear that the importance of the symbol of the cross was not an issue only during the eighth and ninth centuries' debates on iconoclasm. The promotion of the representation of the cross and the crucifix transcends questions of idolatry and was implicated in long-running arguments about the nature of Christ (Miaphysites on one side, Orthodox

<sup>18</sup> Grabar's numismatic analysis in *L'iconoclasm byzantin* was corrected and refined by Breckenridge (1959).

<sup>19</sup> Roggema 2009; see also Griffith 1997.

<sup>20</sup> The most recent discussion of these coins is Foss 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Kartsonis 1994.

Chalcedonians on the other). Yet the representation of the cross was certainly a feature of the iconoclast period. It was identified as such in St. Sophia after iconoclasm. When in 867 a mosaic composition of the Virgin Mary and Child between archangels was set up in the apse, the inauguration homily of the Patriarch Photios as well as the new inscription around it publicly asserted it replaced an iconoclast cross. The more likely case is that the new iconophile figurative mosaic did indeed replace a cross there, but one belonging to the original sixth-century decoration of Justinian, and not one set up by the iconoclasts.<sup>22</sup>

Another episode which is known through texts helps to put the use of the cross in this period in context. On the Bronze Gate of the imperial palace at Constantinople the iconoclasts Leo V and his son Constantine Symbatios around 815 set up a cross together with an epigram (recorded by Theodore the Studite) which said:<sup>23</sup>

The Lord not allowing Christ to be portrayed in voiceless form devoid of breath,  
by means of earthly matter which the scriptures reject, Leo and his son, the new  
Constantine, trace the thrice blessed sign of the cross, the glory of the faithful, at  
the palace gates.<sup>24</sup>

Since the evidence is that this cross replaced an icon of Christ on the gate, this certainly appears to be a case of the cross acting as a declaration of iconoclasm, and the banning of figurative art. But it is perhaps ambiguous, as the cross ever since the reported vision of Constantine the Great at the Milvian Gate was equally a sign of imperial triumph, as it was also a symbol of Christ's death and resurrection, and a symbol of the loss of churches in the east to Islam and to the loss of Jerusalem — all of these things!

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper has been to maintain that the term “Byzantine Iconoclasm” remains a reasonable historical label, albeit a more problematic one than appreciated in much of the literature. It makes sense in terms of theological history to see this episode as a genuine period of the definition of Christian orthodoxy (as “correct belief”) in the face of deviancy within the church and challenge from a rival religion outside. It probably makes less sense as a political label for the long eighth century, although it is generally understood that politics and religion are inextricably mixed in Byzantium. It is true that the Greek word “iconoclasm” has some, but very little, currency within the period, but that is hardly the issue. My position is that this was indeed a crisis period for Christian faith and doctrine, that iconoclasm was real movement, but that the supposed periodization between 726 and 843 has been usefully challenged. Iconoclasm was just one of several traumas in this time, which were linked, and it was not just one simple cause for changes in Byzantium. Above all, the fact that Byzantium challenged its Christian traditions at the time when Islam arose and militarily challenged

<sup>22</sup> Mango and Hawkins 1965.

<sup>23</sup> Mango 1959, pp. 122–25.

<sup>24</sup> Εἰς τὴν πύλην τῆς Χαλκῆς ὑποκάτω τοῦ σταυροῦ.  
Ἄφωνον εἶδος καὶ πνοῆς ἐξηρμένον  
Χριστὸν γράφεσθαι μὴ φέρων ὁ δεσπότης,  
ἄλλη γεηρὰ ταῖς γραφαῖς πατουμένη,

Λέων σὺν υἱῷ τῷ νέῳ Κωνσταντίνῳ  
σταυροῦ χαράττει τὸν τρισόλβιον τύπον,  
καύχημα πιστῶν, ἐν πύλαις ἀνακτόρων

Theodore the Studite, *Refutatio poematum iconomachorum*,  
Migne PG 99, 437c.

the Christian Empire is hardly to be seen as mere coincidence. Islam produced a competing religion and society in this period, and Byzantium had to adapt to new global circumstances.

So what I have tried to set out briefly in this paper is that this “acute” period of Byzantine iconoclasm exposed the simmering iconophobia that some adherents of Christianity had felt since the beginning. The pendulum of opinion changed in the eighth century and for a time iconoclasts were in the majority. However the major crisis of the long eighth century was the challenge of Islam and the growth of the Umayyad Empire. The Christian promotion of the cross and its questioning about the use and abuse of devotional icons had surfaced well before iconoclasm proper. As to be seen in the text of Prudentius about St. Eulalia (quoted above), Christianity at the beginning distanced itself from the pagan use of cult images. But art as communication was so much part of the Greco-Roman world that figural imagery gradually emerged as a way of expressing and promoting Christian faith and worship. This did not happen in the Islamic world, as this faith from the beginning emphasized its differences from Christianity and not its similarities. Art was used in a different way to create a sacred space in the mosque.

The early Christians took some time before using art, and only from the third century apparently did they accept that Christ could be represented in human form. There was then a further phase of experiment to address the question of the correct imaging of Christ, since the Gospels gave no description of his physical appearance. This question was satisfactorily solved in the course of the sixth century with the help of the “miraculous” appearance of images “not-made-by-human-hand,” such as the Mandylion of Edessa or the Camuliana image of Christ.<sup>25</sup> These images fixed the future stereotype of the bearded, long-haired Christ, and it is likely that the coins of Justinian II with the face of Christ on the obverse represent one (or more) of these miraculously produced objects. The next stage after the consensus on the representation of Christ and other saints was an expansion of artistic production, so that by the seventh century icons acted as prominent instruments of public and private faith and for intercession with God. The portable image regarded as holy could act as a personal talisman for the safety and protection of the individual believer. This was the stage of the “cult” of icons when iconoclasm was declared in the eighth century. What is distinctive about the period of Byzantine iconoclasm is that this was no longer an individual and disjointed debate about Christian art. Since the church councils were convened by Constantine V, Eirene, and Theodora with the cooperation of the established church, this merits the name of state iconoclasm. The perennial issue for the individual, for the state, and for the institutions of the church was what makes the church into holy space, and how far this was constituted by the rite of the Eucharist and how far by the spatial environment — a decorated or plain interior. The same problem was revisited at the time of the European Reformation.

Once the iconophile view became predominant in Constantinople in 843 and afterwards, a whole structure of argument was agreed which emphasized the incarnation of Christ as a theological justification for the veneration of icons and for imaging the sacred in human form. Another strand of argument that emerged during iconoclasm was that icons were in any case legitimated by tradition and in particular the accepted notion that St. Luke painted the Virgin and Child from life, with their assent. This “fact” (confirmed by a number of icons which were attributed to the hand of the evangelist) remained a key argument even in the Reformation. Perhaps the use of art to argue for the use of art is shown in its greatest

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<sup>25</sup> See Kitzinger 1954, pp. 112ff.

complexity in a painting of around 1520 in Vienna by Jan Gossaert of St. Luke drawing the Virgin and Child.<sup>26</sup> In this panel for Catholic patrons St. Luke is portrayed as copying a “vision” of the holy figures, his hand is guided by an angel, and the scene takes place under the compliant guard of Moses holding the Ten Commandments.

It has been suggested by Auzépy that “the Council of Nicaea in 787 did not *re-establish* the icons after a period of iconoclasm; it *established* them.”<sup>27</sup> She further argues that Church creatively re-wrote the history of the period of iconoclasm and re-affirmed its doctored version of history through the annual recitation of the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy* in the Orthodox church on the first Sunday in Lent, starting in 843. This is the festival known as the Triumph of Orthodoxy which is commemorated in an icon in the British Museum, which represents the iconophile champions of Orthodoxy.<sup>28</sup> These saints, mostly monks but also the emperor and empress and the patriarch, are shown as identified witnesses to the truth of the legitimacy of icons. The icon was painted in the fourteenth century, most probably in Constantinople, and is therefore a remarkable testimony to the memory of the “sanctified” events of the iconoclast century in the hearts and minds of the Byzantines. However, the radical suggestion of Auzépy and the other recent revisionist literature does not satisfactorily equate with the historical materials, however opaque they may seem.

It may be reasonable to postulate that the Orthodox church after 843 exploited the concept of iconoclasm to justify its identity, both against rival religions and rival churches, especially the church of the Latin West (which anathematised Orthodoxy in 1054). But the intensity and anger of the iconophiles as represented in a number of illustrated manuscripts of the ninth century does not seem fictitious. The most violent polemic against the iconoclasts is found in a number of the illuminations of the Khludov Psalter, painted probably in the patriarchate of St Sophia at Constantinople and now in Moscow.<sup>29</sup> The manuscript dates to the period soon after 843, but conceivably some of its pictures originated during the period of iconoclasm, especially as one historical figure who is pilloried was the patriarch John Grammarian, in office from 837(?) to 843, who is represented on folio 67r (fig. 16.2). He is shown in the act of whitewashing an icon of Christ, and the action of he and his companion (who are labeled as *eikonomachoi*) is, by setting this scene side-by-side with a representation of the Crucifixion, equated with those men of evil who killed Christ.

This manuscript in my opinion is evidence of the smouldering resentment of iconophiles which could only be expressed so openly after the official state policy to ban images had been overcome. Art is used to justify art. It offers evidence that this debate on the legitimacy of Christian icons had been one of great concern and argument for over a hundred years in the face of the official, but now heretical, ban. Only now after 843 could the true faith be safely proclaimed. This polemical imagery is too strong to be mere created fiction.

What can other fields of study learn from the Byzantine experience of iconophobia and iconoclasm? Perhaps it is the influence in the development of Christianity of Judaism. The Old Testament always lies behind the issue of images and idols. In Byzantium we can study the Christian response to this ever-present challenge.

<sup>26</sup> See Evans 2004, cat. no. 348, pp. 581–82.

<sup>27</sup> See the discussion in Noble 2009, pp. 108–10.

<sup>28</sup> Cormack 2007, pp. 13ff.

<sup>29</sup> See Evans 2004, cat. no. 52, pp. 97–98.





Figure 16.1. Mosaic apse with cross, Church of Saint Eirene at Constantinople, soon after 740 (photo by Robin Cormack)



Figure 16.2. Two iconoclasts whitewashing an icon of Christ and the Crucifixion of Christ, illustration to Psalm 68 (69), verse 22 (21), “They gave me gall and vinegar.” Painted in the ninth century, after 843, in Constantinople. Folio 67r, Khludov Psalter, State Historical Museum, Moscow, Khlud. 129-d. 19.5 x 15.0 cm (photo by Robin Cormack after Scepkina)

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## IDOLATRY AND ICONOCLASM: ALIEN RELIGIONS AND REFORMATION

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In 1520, Uli Anders from Kennelbach, a village in the canton of Zurich, in an inn in another village, Utnach, struck, broke apart, and threw out a window a small carved crucifixion scene. As he did so, he said, “the idols are no use and they can help nothing.”<sup>1</sup> We know very little of Anders: prior to his arrest for this, as it emerged at his trial, he had ridiculed a cardinal’s servant, threatened to chop the cardinal himself up “like a butcher carves up meat,” and told a group, who then testified against him at his trial, that they should hold God in heaven more dear than “God’s flesh,” and that God’s five wounds did nothing for him. Anders left but the merest trace in the historical record — at least that we have found thus far. We do not know if he listened to sermons. We do not know if he owned or read a Bible, though his words echo Isaiah.<sup>2</sup> We do not even know if he could read. We have the account of his act and words both spoken before the Zurich City Council and recounted by those who sought his conviction. And we have the city council’s reading of that act and those words: they convicted Anders of the crime of blasphemy, “an attack against God’s power, His suffering, His five wounds, or His flesh,” for which he was then executed.<sup>3</sup>

Sparse as it is, Anders’s story confounds not only the traditional narrative of Reformation iconoclasm, but the narrative of “Reformation” itself. His smashing of that small wooden sculpture predated any attacks in Wittenberg, considered the wellspring of the Reformation. It seems likely — though we know so little of him — that he never heard Martin Luther preach. There is no evidence he heard Huldrych Zwingli preach, though Zwingli had been preaching in the Great Minster in Zurich for a little more than a year. His case offers tantalizing but ultimately inconclusive evidence that biblicism, as Peter Blicke (1981) called it, was to be found in villages, physically distant from the urban centers of preaching. In predating Wittenberg, Anders’s act challenged as well the very model of causality, which, since the Reformation itself, had located in the charismatic preacher and brilliant pamphleteer, Luther, primary causality, the origins of profound change — Leopold von Ranke’s construction of Luther (1852), as the historical agent, abides to this day. It was not simply that Anders probably did not hear or read Luther — and therefore was not impelled by Luther’s ideas — but that the violence he directed against that object could not be traced to any theologian

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<sup>1</sup> “Die götzen nützent nüdt da vnnd sy möchtind nüdt gehelffen,” *Liber Baptistalis* 1520, B VI 248, fol. 31, Staatsarchiv Zurich.

<sup>2</sup> On the uselessness of “idols,” see especially Isaiah 44–46; 57:13.

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<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the changing nature of the crime, see Wandel 1995, chapter 2.

at all.<sup>4</sup> His words echo Scripture, which he may have read or he may have heard. We do not know. But no theologian had called, at that point in time, for the removal of the things of late medieval Christianity; Karlstadt did in 1522; Zwingli and Haetzer, in 1523; but Luther never did.<sup>5</sup> Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt in Wittenberg and Martin Bucer in Strasbourg would both call for the removal of things of late medieval Christianity — images for Karlstadt, relics for Bucer — and Bucer seems to have participated in the physical removal, but Anders's act precedes in time Karlstadt's and Bucer's preaching, let alone the violence in Wittenberg or Strasbourg. Indeed, causality may lie in the opposite direction: the acts of violence may well have provoked the preachers to take a stand.

In other ways, Anders's case is typical of so many incidents of iconoclasm in the sixteenth century. Like dozens of others, he was prosecuted, his words shaped by the authorities posing the questions, his act described and defined by those who had reported him to the authorities. The words he spoke when he attacked the small sculpted object were reported in the longer account of the incident.<sup>6</sup> A major source for what we know of violence against things in the sixteenth century is court documents: testimonies of accusers and accused; judgments of ecclesiastical or civil authorities. Chronicles, often critical of the violence if not the results, narrate destruction, removals, absences, and speak of "the Mob," "the rabble," bodies of persons without individual faces or voices. If we have any words from those who attacked things, most often those words occur within the context of the attackers' trial. As they knew, the words they chose had repercussions for the outcome of their trial.

Throughout the sixteenth century, chroniclers and city government accounts recorded the aftermath of acts of violence: the shattered retable, the missing panel, the smashed tabernacle. In the majority of narratives of destruction or loss — the widespread destruction in Basel, Antwerp, some four hundred Netherlandish churches, England — we have no words from those who did the violence. For much of the violence, we do not even have their names: in this Uli Anders is unusual, albeit not singular. Often a chronicler or a city council noted in passing the absence of an ancient and familiar thing.

Historians, as David Sabeau (2006) suggested recently, have remained deeply uncomfortable with the nexus of physical violence — against persons as well as things — and religion. While his particular focus was the Wars of Religion in France, that same unease can be seen in the ways first chroniclers, then historians approached the violence against things that occurred in France, the British Isles, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, the Holy Roman Empire, and to a lesser extent in the Italian peninsula.<sup>7</sup> Some contemporaries and the majority of modern historians have gathered it under a single name: iconoclasm, iconoclasme,

<sup>4</sup> Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt's first iconoclastic pamphlet, *Von abtuhung der Bylder*, appeared in 1522; Ludwig Haetzer's, *Ein urteil gottes vnsers ee gemahels wie man sich mit allen goetzen vnd bildnussen halte sol*, in 1523.

<sup>5</sup> Luther held all things "adiaphora," unimportant — a position that was an even greater break with medieval Christianity, denying as it did any import to bells as well as altar cloths, images, or even candlesticks. On Zwingli's and Luther's positions on images, see foremost Stirn 1977. On Zwingli, see Garside 1966. Feld 1990 provides a general overview of the discussion of iconoclasm among western theologians, beginning with Gregory the Great. See also von Campenhausen 1959, Michalski (1993) at

once broadens the geographic scope and affirms the traditional conceptualization of iconoclasm as popular violence catalyzed by theologians.

<sup>6</sup> Some thirty years ago, scholars turned the broader interest in "popular" history and culture to the study of specific cases of iconoclasm: court prosecutions of individual iconoclasts and chronicle accounts of iconoclasm. An early marker of that turn was Scribner 1990.

<sup>7</sup> For studies that attend specifically to the violence itself, see Christin 1991; Schnitzler 1996; Dupeux, Jezler, and Wirth 2001. For a more general study of violence and its meaning in the sixteenth century, see Crouzet 1990.

Bildersturm, Beeldenstorm.<sup>8</sup> The words gather all the targets under one label — icon, Bild, Beeld — and all the violence under another word: clasm, Sturm, storm. In the construction of narratives it is a most useful term. In each case the gathering subsumes under a homogenizing name hundreds of individual human actors, their choices, and the specific choice of objects. It accords motives to acts to which the actors themselves gave no words. It also locates violence, situates it within an arc of history, connecting to the past, and so making both predictable and familiar, the smashing, striking, pushing, denigrations, humiliations, defacing, the severing of hands and noses. The name accords the acts rationality, ascribing reasons for those acts and attributing to the persons who did the violence thought, more than the intent to destroy, a reason for destroying. It obscures the violence itself, its intimacy, and the causes of its very real horror for contemporaries.

It is hard, in the shadow of the Enlightenment, to recover the quality of the violence that contemporaries found in the smashing of a carved scene in an inn, let alone the quality of the violence of the words. But for contemporaries, for the Zurich City Council, Anders's act and words were "blasphemy." They were an assault against God. We, who are heirs to the Enlightenment, no longer hold the world to be connected in the ways late medieval Christians did: we no longer share the same conceptualization of person, mind, vision, or matter. We must work to discern wherein lay the violence.

When we turn to sixteenth-century violence against things, two shifts in thinking are of particular importance in helping us to understand the quality of the violence: in theories of vision and of physics. Neither Arab science nor Aristotelian scholasticism had found an answer to the question: how does the eye see?<sup>9</sup> There was, significantly, no consensus as to the mechanics of vision, though most theorists assumed only two components — the seen object and the eye. Not until Kepler did a theory accord light, a third element, the key function. Thus, theories of vision divided broadly between those that accorded the object a kind of mobility — moving through space via means of "species," images of itself, that then entered the mind; and those that accorded the eye a kind of agency, an ability to reach across distance. The former accorded objects visual agency — they actively entered the mind. Both theories held the mind vulnerable to the seen world: it entered the mind through the open eye.

Not only might objects have visual agency, but sixteenth-century Europeans also had not arrived at a consensus about physics. In an age which had not yet decided whether the universe was sun- or earth-centered, there was no shared model of the nature of matter or of the cause of change in matter. For Christian theorists in the sixteenth century, matter could not be separated from God's ordering of the world; for the majority of natural philosophers, God's design encompassed matter, governed it, and matter therefore was itself a site that revealed divine purpose, divine will. Relics, miracles, holy persons — each in a distinctive way took up the interplay of divine intent and matter. Each, moreover, engaged obliquely with the great mystery of Incarnation. No matter was inert, a concept that postdates the sixteenth century.

The things of late medieval Christianity, in other words, were not mere "things" for anyone. For some, they moved, as species, through the distance separating them from the human eye, through the eye and into the mind. They were neither physically nor cognitively inert. Even as some attackers called attention to the wood, the stone, the metal of which a thing

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<sup>8</sup> For a recent effort to explore the interplay of destruction and production of art, see Raguin 2010.

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<sup>9</sup> See Lindberg 1976.

was made, even for its attackers, that matter existed in a different relationship to the human viewer. Narratives of the Reformation have emphasized words, primarily Luther's, and ideas, again, primarily Luther's. The acts of violence, however, point toward a medieval Christianity not of doctrine, but of things, and things of their own visual and cognitive agency.

And if we follow the track of violence, we glimpse a very different sense of Christianity, not only a Christianity of things, but a Christianity in which things participated and participated diversely and complexly in collective thinking about Incarnation. The targets of peasants', shoemakers', weavers', and minor clergy's violence, moreover, in many places, those in authority held their destruction warranted the loss of human life. The violence points toward sites not only of meaning, but of effect.

Let me begin with Anders. His single case offers this evidence: a crucifixion scene in a place of eating and, more strikingly, drinking — a place of sociability and, as other kinds of testimonies document, excesses, gluttony in the medieval panoply of sins. Did he choose his target because it was so public — not only not hidden in a home, but not isolated on a road or an intersection, situated in a place where people gathered? In destroying that scene, Anders left us a record of its location, an inn — not a church, not a chapel.

We cannot know all the objects destroyed: they are absent. But from the accounts, it seems likely that crucifixes were the most pervasive, widespread, and frequent target of violence. We have accounts of their destruction in the Swiss cantons, the Netherlands, the Empire, the borderlands between the Empire and France.<sup>10</sup> Another incident from the canton of Zurich suggests their pervasiveness: a weaver from another village helped a carpenter bring down a large, perhaps as much as eight feet tall, crucifix that stood at a crossroads in yet another village just outside the town walls.<sup>11</sup> And the accounts of the Wonderyear, 1566, in the Netherlands, record in the clearing of more than 400 churches, crucifixes — life-size ones hanging in apses, the ones of intimate scale hanging on chains, ones standing on high and side altars, as well as attacks against ones enshrined along roads or standing at crossroads.<sup>12</sup>

Bringing together individual acts of violence reveals that crucifixes served to link visually and cognitively what had been disparate places: intersections of roads and altars. They were not simply images of God Incarnate upon a cross. They made visible, active voice — in many instances, tactile — a God who died: either in the moment he was dying or, with eyes closed, immediately after he had died. They offered to Christians who had been taught, the materialization of the moment of death, which served as the beginning in the narrative of the Apostles' Creed, familiar from every Mass: "was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended into hell. On the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty."<sup>13</sup>

Had they been simply materializations of the moment of Christ's death, might crucifixes still have been attacked? Crosses did not provoke as widespread or consistent violence. But crucifixes had become implicated in another doctrine that the medieval church had come to teach: Christ's "sacrifice" upon the cross. Crucifixes made visible the suffering — the blood,

<sup>10</sup> Studies of English iconoclasm have concentrated on other questions. See Aston 1988; Collinson 1986; Duffy 1992, esp. part 2; Phillips 1973.

<sup>11</sup> For a fuller account, see Wandel 1995, pp. 72–80.

<sup>12</sup> On iconoclasm in the Netherlands, see Arnade 2008; Crew 1978; Deyon and Lottin 1986; van Nierop 1978; Scheerder 1974.

<sup>13</sup> "*crucifixus, mortuus, et sepultus, descendit ad inferna, tertia die resurrexit a mortuis, ascendit ad coelos, sedet ad dexteram dei Patris Omnipotentis,*" Pelikan and Hotchkiss 2003, p. 669.



the gash where the lance had pierced his flesh, the crown of thorns, the sinews torqued in pain, the tissue swollen around the nails — of a God who died “for our sins.” Giving material articulation to the doctrine of sacrifice, crucifixes were inseparable from the Mass. Thus, even when sited in a village marketplace or along a mountain pass, Christ’s body formed to a cross linked that place to the one where a priest spread his arms, the gesture explicitly forming a cross and invoking a crucified God. Crucifixes provided the visual gloss for the priest’s gestures during the Mass. And with the proliferation of altarpieces rendering the Mass of Pope Gregory, crucifixes were also implicated in the doctrine of transubstantiation.

Many, many things provoked violence. In 1523 in Zurich, the city council summoned a weaver and two companions, for pulling down oil lamps that hung before the pulpit.<sup>14</sup> When first questioned by a witness at the scene, the weaver announced, they would tolerate such idolatry, “Abgötterei,” no more. In their record, the magistrates captured the divergent conceptualizations of the lamps: if, for their attackers, they were idols, for those who prosecuted, they were “eternal lights” — at once a mechanical device that, through expensive oil, burned incessantly, and an image of divine illumination.<sup>15</sup> What made them “idols?” There is no evidence that any kind of devotion was directed toward them. But lamps were expensive, requiring a constant supply of oil to remain “eternal.” Weavers and other artisans were always economically at risk, numbering among the poorest in urban life. In any event, “Abgötterei” seems to have saved their lives: they were imprisoned and fined, but neither condemned nor executed for the crime of blasphemy.

We know of some things because they mattered to the chroniclers who recorded that they had disappeared, been broken up, been pulled down: a life-size and lifelike, according to the chronicler, sculpture of the Mount of Olives in the Strasbourg cathedral; a Marian image; a monumental mural of Saint Christopher. Other things — missals, breviaries, candlesticks, patens, chalices, pyxes, bells — tended to be grouped in the accounts. Few of those were familiar individually, and most may well have been purchased through a church’s funds, rather than donated by a family or corporation.

In some ways, altar retables are the least surprising target of violence. They are “images” in that narrower sense, rendering in tempera, oil, and wood moments from the life of Christ, Mary, the lives of saints, the apostles. And yet, few iconoclasts, witnesses, or magistrates specified their content — to the abiding frustration of art historians. It was, rather, their site, not simply the placement within the space of a church — though that, too, made them vulnerable. The very first retables attacked, in Zurich, Wittenberg, and Strasbourg, were situated upon altars, often the main altar for the parishioners. The target of widespread violence that usually culminated in the “shattering” of the retable — the reduction to the materials of wood and paint — retables seem to have provoked because of their implication in the Mass itself. Carved with singular skill and painted in lapis and gold, retables rested upon the site of the Eucharist, of transubstantiation and Christ’s living presence. Like the altar upon which they rested, retables contributed dimensions of meaning to the mystery of Incarnation: through their images; through the annual cycles of opening and closing anchored to the liturgical year, to the cycle of Christ’s birth, epiphany, removal to the desert, passion, crucifixion, death, resurrection, and reappearance to his disciples.

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<sup>14</sup> For a fuller account of this incident, see Wandel 1995, pp. 67–72.

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<sup>15</sup> On the spiritual sense of oil, see Ohly 2005, p. 23.

The form of violence directed against retables transformed them utterly: while fragments of color or line might remain in the pieces, the “image” was no more. Retables were pushed, hacked with axes, smashed. The move, from the Swiss cantons to Scotland, was to shatter the form. Given the paucity of words, we cannot know if the retables were shattered because their fragile form or their tentative balance lent this particular thing to this particular violence, but other forms received other kinds of violence. In England, for instance, stone sculptures were defaced: some had the faces whacked away, others, noses knocked off.<sup>16</sup> Some, but not all, of those defaced might also have their hands severed, whether because the hands, even more than the face, identified a particular saint, or because the hands were formed, in perhaps blessing or prayer, in a practice the attacker was repudiating.

The violence was not uniform, not homogenous. Not all things were destroyed. Some were maimed. Some, as John Phillips argued, seem to have received the same violence as a human being might, the residue of the violence pointing toward the crime the attackers may have wished others to attach to the object. But some things were consistently “destroyed,” not simply chipped or scored, not left standing with one part hacked away, not whitewashed, not simply humiliated through defecation or other forms of ridicule.

Altars numbered among those that were, when attacked, consistently destroyed. At one level, altars are perhaps the most surprising of targets. They were among the oldest things in churches: while many places may have improved their original altars, made them more elaborate, more beautiful, more expensive, the carving, the marble, the craft covered the original consecrated site.<sup>17</sup> Altars in Provence, for instance, could date to the sixth century; those in Switzerland and Germany, perhaps the eighth or ninth.

It is singularly paradoxical that altars were called “idols” — not simply the site for “idolatry,” but themselves “idols.” The very notion of an altar is to be found in the Pentateuch, confounding any simple correlation between Old Testament notions of graven images and sixteenth-century notions of “idols.” Indeed, some altars had carved into their fronts or sides images of Abraham preparing to sacrifice his son, linking that site to the one of the most dramatic stories of faith in the entire Bible — to the story of an aborted sacrifice of a human being, done in absolute obedience to a “jealous” God — and prefiguring, as many Christians held, “the sacrifice of the cross,” Christ’s crucifixion.

By the sixteenth century, altars had acquired layers of connotations. Some were wood, some, stone, some, marble, each with own associations — marble, for instance, connected the site explicitly to sarcophagi; stone, by the late Middle Ages, had acquired dense scriptural resonance.<sup>18</sup> All altars had acquired complex valences of sacrifice. While some may have carried images of Abraham (again, absences make any estimate impossible), a number of different forms contained relics, the material remains of holy persons — a physical reminder of the martyrdom, the sacrifice in the name of faith. Most explicitly, the church had come to promulgate “the sacrifice of the Mass,” which the celebrant explicitly enacted again and again and again before the altar, and which the Council of Trent affirmed as formal doctrine in 1562.<sup>19</sup>

Altars in their form and frequently in the images that were carved into their sides actively participated in visualizing the complex meaning of the Mass. Those sarcophagal in

<sup>16</sup> Phillips (1973) has documented specific forms of violence against sculpture in English churches.

<sup>17</sup> On altars, see Braun’s magisterial study (1924). More recent work has challenged some of his typology.

<sup>18</sup> On the connotations of “stone,” see Ohly 2005, p. 23.

<sup>19</sup> Tanner 1990, pp. 732–37.

shape invoked death and, for Christians, resurrection, its shape captured in images of the crucified Christ rising from the tomb.<sup>20</sup> Crucifixes and images of crucifixion upon the altar invoked connotations of death, resurrection, and sacrifice as well, but the altar itself participated: its flat surface invoking the slab upon which Abraham prepared to sacrifice Isaac, its rectangular shape invoking sarcophagi, its altar cloth invoking a shroud, its surface the site where Host and wine became body and blood. Even the most rudimentary of medieval altars was no simple table, but, no matter how poor, signified in its form something of the import of the site.

Altars required the greatest violence to be destroyed. Retables, constructed of wood, or crucifixes, in their very form, vulnerable, were more quickly, quietly, and readily reduced to rubble. And yet, in each place that became formally, legally, Reformed — looked to Geneva and Calvin for leadership — altars were removed, violently or peaceably, in order to prepare the space for true worship. Heavy, intentionally immovable, they were, nonetheless, not simply attacked, but erased: broken down, their fragments carried out, in some places to serve as cobblestones.

In Strasbourg, residents of Martin Bucer's parish smashed stone altars and scattered the material remains of saints.<sup>21</sup> Beginning perhaps as early as the fourth century, if not earlier, Christians placed within altars relics:<sup>22</sup> fragments of the true cross, a thorn from the crown of thorns, pieces of bone or nail or hair or clothing of a person that was held, locally or across Christendom, to be holy.<sup>23</sup> By the sixteenth century, the material remains of holy persons were implicated in a range of devotional practices, from prayers directed to the sites where those remains were beautifully and expensively housed, to processions that moved those remains, in their reliquaries, through spaces consecrated and secular. The interplay of human devout and material remains differed from place to place. In the sixteenth century, so, too, across Europe — from Scotland in the north to France in the west to the Swiss cantons in the south, to Bohemia in the east — the violence directed against the physical remains of holy persons differentiated: ridiculed, moved, smashed, or, as in Strasbourg, thrown into charnel houses, ossuaries, where they became indistinguishable from the bleached bones of any other human being.

The Government of *Antwerp* ... caused the Image of the Virgin *Mary* ... to be removed from the body of the church into the Choir, that it might give no offence. But their good intentions produced bad effects ... for the Mob observing the fears of the Government, began to grow insolent; and some of them, in a sarcastical way, asked the Image, whether her fright had driven her so far from her post? and whether she would join in crying, *Vive les Gueux*, etc.? ...

The Virgin's image, that had been carried about in procession but two days before, was the first sacrifice to their fury. The Chapel in which it stood was entered by force, and the Idol thrown down and dashed to pieces, all the people roaring, *Vive les Gueux*, and demolishing all the Crosses and Images that were in their way (Brandt 1720, vol. 1, book 7, pp. 192–93).

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<sup>20</sup> As Braun (1924) notes, we can no longer know what so many altars looked like: not only Reformation and revolutionary violence, but also the gentler replacement of medieval altars with baroque and rococo altars erased all traces of those in place in 1500.

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<sup>21</sup> For a wonderfully rich collection of considerations of relics, their devotional place, theological import, and material resonances, see Boutry, Fabre, and Julia 2009.

<sup>22</sup> MacCulloch 2010, pp. 198–99.

<sup>23</sup> Brown 1981.

If different relics were targets of a range of different kinds of violence, Marian images, following Brandt's account, were singled out for an extraordinary range of violence: a single image might be verbally ridiculed, desecrated physically, and then physically assaulted, resulting in its shattering, so that it was no longer recognizable as an "image" of Mary. Both court documents and chronicles offer evidence of attackers speaking directly to images of saints as well as Mary, and in much the same way, addressing the person the thing had sought to render in stone or wood and challenging the thing to act — to move, to save itself. But Marian images seem to have provoked more intense, differentiated violence.

In the sixteenth century, Luther and other evangelicals descried the cults of Mary and the saints. Of the two, the cult of Mary proved the more difficult to uproot: Mary had become beloved. Beginning centuries earlier, theologians such as the widely influential Bernard of Clairvaux had accorded Mary a singular role: she alone could speak to her son on behalf of the faithful, who, in contemporary tympana, could see Christ sitting in judgment of human souls. Over time, sermons as well as images attached to her person the quality of mercy, her gentleness itself an attribute that then suggested accessibility.<sup>24</sup> Sixteenth-century critics argued that images of Mary, like those of the saints, were not simply, as Luther argued, false foci for prayers, but themselves cognitively confused with the person herself — though no testimony of persons doing the praying confirms that equation.<sup>25</sup>

Brandt's account captures something of the particular intimacy of the violence against Marian images: the direct address, the implication of the presence of a counterpart, the challenge to demonstrate agency that preceded physical assault. This was no abstract repudiation of the cult of Mary, no simple desire to remove the focus of a false cult — that was done, for instance, with crucifixes. "The Mob" did not give voice to a fear of false practice. They expressed something more emotionally and cognitively complex, what medieval Christians and the majority of their contemporaries called an "image."

For Western Christians, "image" had come to be one of the most complex, densely layered of concepts by the end of the fifteenth century. It was the word Jerome had chosen for Genesis 1:27:

*et creavit Deus hominem ad imaginem suam  
ad imaginem Dei creavit illum*<sup>26</sup>

And God created the human in his image,  
In the image of God he created him.<sup>27</sup>

The word connected God and humankind, according to Jerome's translation, from the moment God created human beings, and that connection itself inspired rich thinking in the fifteenth century.<sup>28</sup>

So, too, "image" was the word that church fathers and theologians had taken up to consider the relationship of Christ to God, a way of making sense of that "substance," homoousios, in the Nicene formulation, "the Only-Begotten begotten from the Father, that is from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten

<sup>24</sup> For a succinct study, see Pelikan 1998. For a more detailed study, which also explores the links between the cult and antisemitism, see Rubin 2010.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, testimonies before the Consistory in Geneva; Lambert and Watt 1996.

<sup>26</sup> See Fisher and Weber 1983, p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> See Alter 2004, p. 19.

<sup>28</sup> Trinkaus 1970.

not made, consubstantial with the Father.”<sup>29</sup> The word linked God, Christ, and humankind. In so doing, it blurred any simple division of “flesh” and “spirit.”<sup>30</sup>

For medieval Christians, God’s choice to become human was a choice not simply to make himself visible to those alive in the first century of the Common Era. Following John of Damascus and Thomas Aquinas, who was so deeply influenced by the Damascene, God offered to human beings a form that they might then seek to render, and, in so doing, lead the mind to God.<sup>31</sup> For them, the Incarnation had authorized not our modern, rather flat sense of “representation,” but a means of presence. For them, Incarnation engendered a sustained consideration of the relationship between the worlds of matter — the matter of wood and stone that might then be shaped by human hands — and divinity.

By the sixteenth century, “image” had come to encompass a variety of forms: oil lamps, altars, retables, chalices, patens, missals, crucifixes, crosses, vestments, altar cloths, croziers, pyxes, tabernacles, freestanding sculpture, and carved altarpieces. There is the pervasiveness of many different kinds of “images”: on street corners, at crossroads, in inns and taverns, on the exteriors and in the interiors of homes, above the hearth, in rooms for sleeping, eating, working, for children and for adults, for men and for women. And the sheer numbers: thousands carried crucifixes, crosses, delicately carved rosary beads on their persons. Towns were spatially organized around the places, churches, where images were the densest: above their doors; on their exterior and interior columns, walls; in their windows. And images, in turn, linked the worlds of church interiors to crossroads, visually forming chains of association, chains of meaning. As some sixteenth-century critics said, there was no place to look that was without “images” (or, for those who were hostile, “idols”), especially if one takes into account the ways in which human gesture and painting or sculpture “imaged” one another.

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, there was as well a multitude of relationships between persons and “images.” Laity, for example, could not have the same haptic connection to patens, chalices, pyxes, or tabernacles as clergy. Laity probably had little haptic connection to any liturgical objects other than the Host they might receive in their mouths. But laity could touch sculpted images of Mary or any saint, crucifixes, rosary beads, and any image they commissioned for their own homes (little is known about violence toward those images, which could be removed quietly and legally). It is worth noting that both the haptically accessible and inaccessible were targets of violence, though the violence, insofar as it was given words, differed in its reasons. The medieval church had regulated sensory access: laity might look upon, but could not touch the chalice, tabernacle, pyx. Each object existed in a distinctive relationship to those who might look upon it, to those who might touch it, to those who might carry it. Each object existed in a specific relationship to the human being before it: the relationship between a chalice and a lay or clerical viewer differed from the relationship a retable might have with the same person — the chalice’s relationship overlapped in some

<sup>29</sup> See Pelikan and Hotchkiss 2003, p. 159. On the specific question of image and christology, see especially Finney 1994; Pelikan 1985; and Schönborn 1994.

<sup>30</sup> Caroline W. Bynum explores this in *Christian Materiality* (2011). In the sixteenth century, European Christians took up the flesh/spirit question most fully and agonizingly in their debates on the Eucharist. On this, see Wandel 2006.

<sup>31</sup> See Anderson 1980. Thomas Aquinas took up the question of images in a number of contexts. See foremost his *Commentary on the Sententiae of Peter Lombard*, Lib. 3, dist. 9, qu. 1, art. 2, reproduced in Ladner 1983, vol. 1, p. 29. Aquinas also took up the question of images and their relationship to divinity in the *Summa Theologica*. I discuss both Damascus and Aquinas more fully in Wandel 1995, chapter 1. For a brilliant and succinct overview of the problem, see Hamburger 2006.

ways with the crucifix, implicated as it was in the blood of Christ, but it also was the vessel of the miraculous transformation of wine into God's blood.

And "image" encompassed all of these relationships. Late medieval "images" did not all function — devotionally, ritually, theologically, or cognitively — the same. They fulfilled a number of discrete, distinctive functions within the densely layered devotional life of medieval Christians. Those functions differed in the coarse — the difference, for instance, between an oil lamp and a chalice — and in the carefully articulated, complex materialities of Christianity, in the minutely precise: a retable revealed, in its ability to be opened and closed, as panel paintings could not. Each object participated, active voice, in its own way.

What exactly did "images" participate in? Medieval linguistic theory and devotional praxes had interwoven the world of things and God complexly.<sup>32</sup> In those same years, Christians sought multiple enactments, mimesis, of the person of Christ. They performed plays in which a lay man, enacting Christ, walked among lay men and women enacting the disciples and the women of the Gospels. Franciscans sought to embody Christ's poverty, and, along with the Dominicans, his itinerant preaching. Theologians grappled with Christ's dual nature, that essential instability of a transcendent omnipotent and eternal God who chose to, in the words of the Nicene Creed, be "begotten, not made" — and who chose, following Fourth Lateran, to be present "really" on the altar in the moment of consecration.

Late medieval Christianity had been physically as well as theologically protean. Theologians explored the implications of Incarnation for ethics, liturgy, and performance, even as artisans crafted thousands of forms, each of which engaged with the mystery of Incarnation in a distinctive way. "Eternal lights" invited consideration of the many ways God continued to illumine the world, from sunlight to his Son's living presence on the altar. Crucifixes reminded Christians on the road — and therefore at greater risk of robbery or murder — of the resurrection that followed Christ's gruesome death, even as they linked that place to the site at which Christ was present again and again. Altars collected connotations not simply of sacrifice, but of the intertwining of sacrifice and life. Not simply the churches — though they were sites of expressly dense meaning — but the landscape itself was marked with images that both sought to call Christ and God to mind and linked place and place, reflection on Incarnation to reflection on Incarnation.

"Image" engaged diversely with "Incarnation." Retables might play upon the notion of revelation, even as they also offered those vulnerable eyes efforts to render a moment in the life of Christ, Mary, a saint. Altars offered a consecrated surface upon which rested the true body or the true blood of Christ. Panel paintings of saints offered visual meditations on the relationship of the human body to divine agency — the ways in which God worked in a life, grace transforming frail nature to a model of holiness. The word, "image," did not name just one thing, but so many different kinds of interplay between matter and God's revelation — the very multitude of relations between cognition and materiality itself an implication of the Incarnation.

In the wake of Reformation, we see absences. In Strasbourg cathedral, one can no longer see the great gilded crucifix or the life-size Mount of Olives, the one having "disappeared" in the sixteenth century, the other, having been chopped up and carried away. No artistic rendition could recapture the density of haptic and visible Christianity. And we can only

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<sup>32</sup> On medieval linguistic theory, see foremost Ohly 2005. On devotional praxes, see Bynum 2007.

imagine what such a densely visual world might have been like phenomenologically, given how fundamentally different is our understanding of the mechanics of sight and of cognition.<sup>33</sup> If, by act of imagination, we restore even those images for which we have a record of their destruction, we begin to glimpse not simply a world visually dense, but a world of complexly intertwined engagements with the central mystery of Christianity, the Incarnation, a world materially knit together in ways lost to all of us in the wake of Reformation.

In labeling the things of late medieval Christianity “idol,” their attackers were not simply substituting one name for another. At the simplest level, the word very quickly came to have legal consequences: although naming the crucifixion scene “idol,” or “götz,” did not save Uli Anders’s life, the name seems to have worked differently only three years later, when others were brought before the Zurich City Council on similar charges. The weaver and his companions were condemned not for blasphemy, but for disturbing the peace, which carried a fine and brief imprisonment as its punishment. They had explained their violence as the removal of “Abgötterei,” idolatry. While the city council did not accept their evaluation of the lamps, asserting in their own record their name, “eternal lights,” they did not execute the weaver, even when, shortly after being released for this crime, he brought down a larger version of the same kind of image, a crucifix.

“Idol” has an ancient history. Its roots are in the Torah, the Pentateuch, in the Commandments that Moses carried down from Mount Sinai:

And God spoke these words, saying : “I am the LORD your God Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slaves. You shall have no other gods beside Me. You shall make you no carved likeness and no image of what is in the heavens above or what is on the earth below or what is in the waters beneath the earth. You shall not bow to them and you shall not worship them, for I am the LORD your God, a jealous god, reckoning the crime of the fathers with sons, with the third generation and with the fourth, for My foes, and doing kindness to the thousandth generation for My friends and for those who keep My commands (Exodus 20:1–6).<sup>34</sup>

Alter’s translation captures wonderfully the fluidity of the text that sixteenth-century evangelicals, who argued for the absolute authority of Scripture, invoked in their consideration of images. For Luther, as for those who would come to be called Catholics, the first commandment encompassed all of this text. For Calvin and for the Reformed tradition, the text broke, as it did for Jews, between “You shall have no other gods beside Me,” which belonged to the first commandment, and “You shall make you no carved likeness and no image,” which constituted a discrete commandment. For Reformed Christians, worshipping false gods and making false gods were two, distinct, transgressions.

In naming the carved scene an idol, Anders linked it most immediately to Old Testament prohibitions. Again, we have so few words, we do not know even if he read the Old Testament, let alone how he might have glossed the Commandments. But beginning in 1521 — after Anders’s attack — Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt published pamphlets calling for the removal of images, “Bilder,” which listed the biblical injunctions, including those of Exodus and Deuteronomy.<sup>35</sup> For Karlstadt, one of the most egregious transgressions of late medieval

<sup>33</sup> On the medieval use of images for memory, see Caruthers 1990.

<sup>34</sup> Alter 2004, pp. 428–30. Cf. Deuteronomy 5:7–10.

<sup>35</sup> One of Karlstadt’s pamphlets, “On the Removal of Images,” has been translated and published, with notes and commentary, by Mangrum and Scavizzi (1991).

Christian practice was idolatry, and for Karlstadt, simple Christians were worshipping the images themselves. And yet, Karlstadt did not target all the things of late medieval Christianity. His concern was images of Christ, Mary, the saints — things that sought to render in color, line, stone, and wood the figures of God Incarnate, his mother, and holy men and women. Perhaps Anders shared Karlstadt's understanding of idol, but the weaver and his companions did not. For them, the worship of idols, false gods, encompassed far more than simple representation.

Karlstadt's biblicism was one stream of thinking about idols and idolatry. Beginning in 1520, "idol" came to acquire utterly new resonances. In 1520, Hernán Cortés sent his Second Letter from the Western Hemisphere.<sup>36</sup> In it, he did not merely name objects he found in New Spain "idols."<sup>37</sup> He named objects he found in spaces he took to be temples — places of worship — and connected those objects directly to practices he and Bernal Díaz both described in some detail: the Aztec sacrifice of young men — not women — and the eating of their flesh. We know that Cortés's accounts circulated and circulated widely. We have yet to trace the interplay of what he claimed to have seen with the invocation of "idols" on the soil of Europe, but Cortés's account reframed "idols": here were not the meticulously crafted sculptures and paintings of Mary, the saints, Christ, but, for Cortés, illegible objects of an alien world, in which priests sacrificed young men, removed the beating heart from the living flesh, and then themselves ate parts of those young men's bodies. While the resonances were lost on Cortés, they were not lost on later observers, foremost Jean de Léry, who explicitly linked the eating of human flesh and the Mass in his *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil*.<sup>38</sup>

In the sixteenth century, ordinary Christians such as Uli Anders attacked the things of late medieval Christianity. It was not the violence itself — the fear of "idolatry" was older than Christianity itself, and Christians, both eastern and western, had attacked various things throughout the histories of both churches.<sup>39</sup> But by the end of the fifteenth century, Christian materiality had taken a plethora of forms, and those many different forms imaged a complex and multi-layered understanding of Incarnation. The scope, scale, and intimacy of the violence points toward something more than a traditional fear of "idolatry."

The relationship between the violence in Europe and Cortés's march into the Aztec empire has not been studied. At present, we can only mark synchronicity, and speculate how the words "idol" and "idolatry" acquired new connotations as Cortés's accounts circulated more and more widely. Cortés did not simply name certain things "idols." He situated those things within a "religion," his name for what he witnessed, in which priests sacrificed young men. In the years immediately following Cortés's letter, Luther was linking sacrifice, idolatry, and the Mass.<sup>40</sup>

The idols bring nothing and they can help nothing. When they spoke, more often than not, those who attacked the things called them "idols." The word has become so commonplace, in our age of movie idols and *American Idol*. But for Uli Anders, the word was followed by an act of violence, an act his lords, the city council of Zurich, took to be a capital crime. We shall never know if Anders consciously chose to put his life at risk for that carved object in the inn. But to accord him inchoate rage, to encompass the choice to speak and to act,

<sup>36</sup> Pagden 1986, esp. pp. 105–07.

<sup>37</sup> Volume 67/4 (2006) of the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, edited by Jonathan Sheehan, explored some of the resonances of the "idolatry" in the early modern world. Of particular interest, with regard to Cortés, is

MacCormack's "Gods, Demons, and Idols in the Andes," pp. 623–48.

<sup>38</sup> de Léry 1990, esp. at pp. 40–41, and chapter 15.

<sup>39</sup> Davidson and Nichols 1988.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, Wentz 1959, pp. 176–77.



under a notion of a mass movement, is to diffuse and contain the violence that so horrified his contemporaries, to reduce the victim to mere matter — and to miss the complex interplay of the worlds of matter and divinity for many sixteenth-century Christians. Anders's choice of word suggests that he did not see God in that small carved object, but that others did. Had he seen God there, he would have known, he was risking not simply his life, but his soul.

The shifting place of the things of late medieval Christianity is caught in the brief glimpse we have of Uli Anders before the Zurich City Council, between a peasant who invoked Isaiah and the Old Testament opposition to idols, and merchants and guild masters who saw an image of the crucified Christ, an image that put within the world of drink and talk one means for the mind to conceive of death and resurrection, the ultimate mystery of the Incarnation. In naming things “idols,” peasants, weavers, artisans, and clergy encompassed far more than the graven images, representations of “what is in the heavens above or what is on the earth below or what is in the waters beneath the earth.” They targeted, in word and act, specific dimensions of a “religion” that itself was far more than words, in which priests reenacted the sacrifice of the son on the altar, in which blood and body were present, in which the son's body had bound the worlds not simply of God and humankind, but of flesh and spirit.

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## IDOLATRY: NIETZSCHE, BLAKE, AND POUSSIN

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Idolatry and its evil twin, iconoclasm, are much in the news these days. Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to say that the current Holy War on Terror is just the latest engagement in a religious conflict that dates back beyond the Middle Ages and the Christian Crusades in the Middle East, and one that centrally concerned itself with the idols worshipped by one's enemies, and with the imperative to smash those idols once and for all. While one should be skeptical about reductive ideological scenarios like Samuel Huntington's notorious "clash of civilizations" thesis (1996), it seems undeniable that this thesis has manifested itself in the actual foreign policies of great powers like the United States and its allies, and in the rhetoric of Islamic fundamentalism in its calls to jihad against the West. The fact that an idea is grounded in paranoid fantasy, prejudice, and ignorance has never been a compelling objection to its implementation in practice. The Taliban did not hesitate to carry out the destruction of the harmless Bamiyan Buddhas,<sup>1</sup> and al Qaeda's attack on the World Trade Center was clearly aimed at an iconic monument that they regarded as a symbol of Western idolatry. The War on Terror, on the other hand, was at first called a "crusade" by the president who declared it, and it has been explained by some of his minions in the military as a war against the idolatrous religion of Islam.<sup>2</sup> Among the most striking features of the hatred of idols, then, is the fact that it is shared as a fundamental doctrine by all three great "religions of the book," Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, where it is encoded in the second commandment, prohibiting the making of all graven images of any living thing. This commandment launches the age-old *paragone* between words and images, the law of the symbolic and the lawless imaginary that persists in numerous cultural forms to this day.

Among those cultural forms is, of course, art history, the discipline that would seem, by professional necessity, to have an account of idols and idolatry, and that is centrally concerned with the relation of words and images. Whether regarded as a history of artistic objects, or of images more generally, art history is the field that might be expected to have a powerful account of idolatry. But the topic is generally regarded as more properly the

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<sup>1</sup> Denounced, of course, as idols by the Taliban. It is important to note, however, that a Taliban spokesman who toured the United States prior to the destruction of the Buddhas claimed that the statues would be destroyed, not because there was any danger of their being used as religious idols, but (on the contrary) because they had become secular idols for the West, which was expressing interest in pouring millions of dollars into Afghanistan

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for their preservation. The Taliban blew up the "idols," in other words, precisely because the West cared so much about them.

<sup>2</sup> See the remarks by General William Boykin, undersecretary of defense during Donald Rumsfeld's tenure as secretary of defense. For a discussion of the response to Bush's declaration of a "crusade" of "good against evil," see (among numerous commentaries) Ford 2001.

business of religion, theology, anthropology, and perhaps philosophy. By the time idols get to art history, they have become art, which is to say, aestheticized, denatured, deracinated, neutered. Of course, many art historians know this, and I could invoke the work of David Freedberg and Hans Belting on the nature of “images before the era of art,” and the more specific work by scholars such as Michael Camille (*The Gothic Idol*), Tom Cummins (studies of the Inca idol known as the “Waca”), as well as many others, who have attempted to work backward, as it were, from the history of art toward something more comprehensive: let’s call it an iconology. And let’s understand iconology as the study of (among other things) the clash between the logos and the icon, the law and the image, which is inscribed in the heart of art history.

We will return to these disciplinary issues presently, in a discussion of Nicolas Poussin’s paintings of two scenes of idolatry, and the ways that art history has danced around the question of word and image in these paintings. As Richard Neer has noted, these discussions have been paradigmatic for the entire discipline, and its ambivalence about the actual material objects that are so central to it (Neer 2006/07). But before we take up these matters, I want to approach the topic through a fundamental reconsideration of the very concept of idolatry. What better place to begin than by reading the second commandment word for word:

You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I The Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My Commandments.

The condemnation of idolatry as the ultimate evil is encoded in this statute with such ferocious militancy that it is fair to say that it is clearly the most important commandment of them all, occupying the central place in defining sins against God, as opposed to sins against other human beings such as lying, stealing, or adultery. It is difficult to overlook the fact that it supersedes, for instance, the commandment against murder, which, as Walter Benjamin wryly puts it, is merely a “guideline,” not an absolute prohibition (1978, p. 298).

Since idolatry is such a central concept for all the adversaries in the current global conflict, it seems worthwhile to attempt a critical and historical analysis of its main features. What is an idol? What is idolatry? And what underlies the iconoclastic practices that seem invariably to accompany it? The simplest definition of an idol is that it is an image of a god. But that definition leaves open a host of other questions: is the god represented by the image a supreme deity who governs the whole world? Or a local “genius of the place,” or the tribe, or nation? Is the god immanent in the image, and its material support? Or is the god merely represented by the image, while the god dwells elsewhere? What is the relation of this god to other gods? Is it tolerant toward other gods, or is it jealous and determined to exterminate its rivals? Above all, what motivates the vehement language of the second commandment? Why is its condemnation so emphatic, its judgments so absolute? Does it not seem that there is some kind of surplus in the very concept of idolatry, a moral panic that seems completely in excess of legitimate concerns about something called “graven images” and their possible abuse? Another way to say this would be to note that “idolatry” is a word that mainly appears in the discourse of iconoclasm, a militant monotheism obsessed with its own claims to universality.

When we move to the moral questions surrounding idolatry, the concept seems to spin completely out of control. Idolatry is associated with everything from adultery to superstition to metaphysical error. It is linked with materialism, hedonism, fornication, black magic and sorcery, demonology, bestiality, fascist Führer cults, Roman emperors, and divination. This bewildering array of evils resolves itself ultimately into two basic varieties, which frequently intermix: the first is the condemnation of idolatry as error, as stupidity, as false, deluded belief; the second is the darker judgment that the idolater actually *knows* that the idol is a vain, empty thing, but he continues to cynically exploit it for the purposes of power or pleasure. This is the perverse, sinful crime of idolatry. Thus, there are two kinds of idolaters — fools and knaves — and obviously considerable overlap and cooperation between the two kinds.

Much of the theological discussion of idolatry focuses on fine points of doctrine and subtle distinctions between idolatry as the worship of the wrong god, or of the right god in the wrong way.<sup>3</sup> The difference between heretics or apostates within the non-idolatrous community, on the one hand, and, on the other, unbelievers who live outside that community altogether, is obviously a critical distinction. But there is a more straightforward approach to the problem of idolatry, what might be called an “operational” or functional point of view. The key, then, is not to focus on what idolaters believe, or what iconoclasts believe that they believe, but on what idolaters do, and what is done to them by iconoclasts, who, by definition, must disapprove of the wicked, stupid idolaters. Sometimes the question of belief converges with that of actions and practices. For instance, iconoclasts tend to believe that, in addition to their wrong-headed beliefs, idolaters commit unspeakable acts such as cannibalism and human sacrifice. This “secondary belief” (i.e., a belief about the beliefs of other people) then justifies equally unspeakable acts of violence against the idolaters.<sup>4</sup> Not only can and must they be killed, but their women and children may be massacred as an expression of the just vengeance of the one true god. There is thus a kind of fearful symmetry between the terrible things idolaters are supposed to do, and what may be done to them in the name of divine justice.

Another key to thinking pragmatically about idolatry is to ask, not just *how* they live (which is presumed to be sinful) but *where* they live. Idolatry is deeply connected to the question of place and landscape, territorial imperatives dictated by local deities who declare that certain tracts of land are not only sacred, but uniquely promised to them. Indeed, one could write the history of biblical idolatry and iconoclasm as a set of territorial war stories — wars fought over places and possession of land. As Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit put it in *Idolatry*, “the ban on idolatry is an attempt to dictate exclusivity, to map the unique territory of the one God” (1992, p. 5). This becomes clearest when one considers the practical enforcement of the ban on images, which involves destroying the sacred sites of the native inhabitants, “leveling their high places and destroying their graven images and idols.”<sup>5</sup> The link between territoriality and idolatry becomes even more explicit when it is invoked as an insuperable objection to any negotiations or treaties. To make a deal with an idolater,

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<sup>3</sup> The best study of this sort is Halbertal and Margalit 1992, which surveys the major themes of idolatry and iconoclasm from the rabbinical commentators through the history of Western philosophy.

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<sup>4</sup> For a fuller discussion of the concept of “secondary belief,” see “The Surplus Value of Images,” chapter 4 of Mitchell 2005.

<sup>5</sup> See “Holy Landscape,” chapter 9 in Mitchell 2002.

especially about land, is to fall into idolatry oneself. The only politics possible between the iconoclast and the idolater is total war.<sup>6</sup>

Idols, then, might be described as condensations of radical evil in images that must be destroyed, along with those who believe in them, by any means necessary. There is no idolatry without an iconoclasm to label it as such, since idolaters almost never call themselves by that name. They may worship Baal or Dagon or Caesar or money, but they do not consider it idolatry to do so; it is rather a normal form of piety within the idolatrous community. On the side of the iconoclasts, the idolater is generally perceived as beyond redemption. Either the idolater is a traitor to the true God (thus the metaphor of adultery and “whoring after strange gods”), or he has been brought up in a false, heathen faith from which he will have to be “liberated” — one way or another.

Iconoclasm betrays a kind of fearful symmetry, then, mirroring its own stereotype of idolatry in its emphasis on human sacrifice and terrorism, the latter understood as violence against the innocent, and the staging of spectacular acts of symbolic violence and cruelty. The iconoclastic stereotype of the idolater, of course, is that he is already sacrificing his children and other innocent victims to his idol. This is a crime so deep that the iconoclast feels compelled to exterminate the idolaters — not just to kill their priests and kings, but all their followers and offspring as well.<sup>7</sup> The Amalekites, for instance, are enemies of Israel so vicious and unredeemable that they must be wiped out. And the emphasis on the cursing of idolaters for numerous generations is, implicitly, a program for genocide. It is not enough to kill the idolater; the children must go as well, either as potential idolaters, or as “collateral damage.”

All these barbaric practices might be thought of as merely the past of idolatry, relics of ancient, primitive times when magic and superstition reigned. A moment’s reflection reveals that this discourse has persisted throughout the modern era, from the Renaissance and Bacon’s “four idols” of the marketplace, the theater, the cave, and the tribe, to the evolution of a Marxist critique of ideology and fetishism that builds on the rhetoric of iconoclasm. This latter critique is of course focused on commodity fetishism and what I have elsewhere called the “idolatry” of market capitalism.<sup>8</sup> One of the strangest features of iconoclasm is its gradual sublimation into more subtle strategies of critique, skepticism, and negative dialectics: Clement Greenberg’s kitsch and Adorno’s culture industry are producers of idols for the new philistines of mass culture. The end point of this process is probably Jean Baudrillard’s “evil demon of images,” where the Marxian rhetoric re-joins with religion and veers off toward nihilism. But Marx had made fun of the “critical critics” who free us from images, phantoms, and false ideas already in his diatribes against the Young Hegelians.

The greatest break, and the most profound critique of idolatry and iconoclasm, is Nietzsche’s late work *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Nietzsche turns iconoclasm upside down and against its own roots of authority in the law. The only thing the iconoclastic Zarathustra smashes are the tablets of the law: “break, break, you lovers of knowledge, the old tablets ... Break the old tablets of the never gay,” inscribed with prohibitions against sensuous pleasure

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<sup>6</sup> As Halbertal and Margalit note, “the prophets speak of protective treaties with Egypt and Assyria as the worship of other gods” (1992, p. 5).

<sup>7</sup> The second commandment makes the mandate of collective punishment explicit: “you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I The Lord your God am a

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jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation ....”

<sup>8</sup> See “The Rhetoric of Iconoclasm: Marxism, Ideology, and Fetishism,” chapter 6 in Mitchell 1986. For a survey of the sublimated, immaterialist concepts of idolatry, see Halbertal and Margalit 1992.



by the pious killjoys who “slander the world” and tell men “thou must not desire” (Kaufmann 1954, p. 317). The only law Nietzsche will tolerate is a positive “thou shalt”: he enjoins us “to write anew upon new tablets the word ‘noble’” (ibid., p. 315). He criticizes the Manichean moralism of the priestly law-givers who divide the world into good and evil:

O my brothers, who represents the greatest danger for all of man’s future? Is it not the good and the just? Inasmuch as they say and feel in their hearts, “We already know what is good and just, and we have it too; woe unto those who still seek here!” And whatever harm the evil may do, the harm done by the good is the most harmful harm. ... The good *must* be pharisees — they have no choice. The good *must* crucify him who invents his own virtue. ... The *creator* they hate most: he breaks tablets and old values. ... They crucify him who writes new values on new tablets (ibid., pp. 324–25).

Zarathustra also seems to intuit the connection between the old law of good and evil and the imperative to territorial conquest and “promised lands.” He equates the breaking of “the tablets of the good” with the renunciation of “fatherlands,” urging his followers to be “seafarers” in search of “man’s future ... our *children’s land!*” (ibid., p. 325).

So far as I know, Nietzsche never explicitly mentions the second commandment, but it becomes the unspoken center of his great text of 1888, *Twilight of the Idols*. This text can easily be mistaken for a rather conventional iconoclastic critique. It’s promise to “philosophise with a hammer,” and its opening “declaration of war” against “not just idols of the age, but eternal idols,” may sound like a continuation of the traditional iconoclastic treatment of idolatrous “ideas,” like Bacon’s critique of “idols of the mind” or the Young Hegelians’ war against “phantoms of the brain.” But Nietzsche turns the tables on *both* the ancient and modern iconoclasts and the second commandment by renouncing the very idea of image destruction at the outset. The eternal idols are not to be smashed, but to be “touched with a hammer as with a tuning fork.” They are not to be destroyed, but “sounded” with a delicate, precise touch that reveals their hollowness (one recalls the biblical phrase “sounding brass”) and perhaps even re-tunes or plays a tune upon them. Nietzsche’s war against the eternal idols is a strangely non-violent practice, a giddy form of “recreation, a spot of sunshine, a leap sideways into the idleness of the psychologist” (Kaufmann 1954, p. 466).

The idolatry-iconoclasm complex has always presented a dilemma for visual artists who, by professional necessity, seem inevitably to be involved in violating the second commandment. Vasari opens his *Lives of the Artists* with an elaborate set of apologies for the visual arts, noting that God himself is a creator of images, architect of the universe and a sculptor who breathes life into his fabricated creatures. He dismisses the inconvenient case of the golden calf and the massacre of “thousands of the false Israelites who had committed this idolatry” by arguing that “the sin consisted in adoring idols and not in making them,” a rather stark evasion of the plain language of the second commandment, which says “thou shalt not *make*” any graven images of any thing.<sup>9</sup>

The artist who comes closest to carrying out Nietzsche’s inversion and transvaluation of the idolatry-iconoclasm complex is William Blake, who anticipates by almost a century the reversal of values contemplated in *Twilight of the Idols*. Blake famously inverts the moral valences of pious, passive Angels and energetic Devils in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1793),

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<sup>9</sup> Preface to *The Lives of the Artists*.

and he consistently links the figure of the Old Testament lawgiver with his rationalist Enlightenment offspring in the figure of “Urizen,” depicted as a patriarchal figure dividing and measuring the universe, or as a reclusive hermit, hiding in his cave behind the twin tablets of the law.

Like Nietzsche, however, Blake is not engaged in a simple reversal of a Manichean opposition of good and evil, but a more subtle strategy, rather like Nietzsche’s notion of “touching” the idols with a “hammer” or “tuning fork.” Blake’s most compelling image of this process is a plate from his illuminated epic poem, *Milton*, which shows Los the artist-as-sculptor engaged in a radically ambiguous act of creation and destruction (fig. 18.1). We can, on the one hand, read this as an image of Los molding the figure of Jehovah out of the mud on a riverbank, as if we were witnessing Adam creating God out of clay. Or, on the other hand, we can read this as an iconoclastic act, with the artist pulling down the idolatrous statue of the father-god. The image condenses the making and breaking of idols into one perfectly equivocal synthesis of creative activity, a visual counterpart to Nietzsche’s acoustical tactic of hammering the idols without breaking them. Blake’s portrayal of a musical chorus on the horizon above this scene suggests that he too is “sounding” the idol, not with a tuning fork, but with the bare hands of the sculptor. As a child of the Enlightenment himself, Blake understood very well that all the idols, totems, and fetishes of pre-modern, primitive polytheistic societies were the alienated product of human hands and human minds:

The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, and nations, and whatever their enlarged & numerous senses could perceive. ... Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of & enslav’d the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects: thus began Priesthood (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 11; Erdman 1970, p. 37).

In the light of this genealogy of religion, which could very well have been written by Giambattista Vico, the development of monotheism is not so much a radical break with pagan idolatry, as a logical development of its tendency to underwrite the consolidation of political power with absolute religious mandates. It is important to remember that Jahweh begins as a mountain god, probably volcanic since he is “hidden in clouds” and speaks “in thunder and in fire.” The figure of the invisible, transcendent law-giver whose most important law is a ban on image-making of any kind is the perfect allegory for an imperial, colonizing project that aims to eradicate all the images, idols, and material markers of the territorial claims of indigenous inhabitants. The fearsome figure of Baal, we should remember, is simply a Semitic version of what the Romans called the “genius loci” or genius of the place — the god of the oasis that indicates the proprietary claims of the nomadic tribe that returns to it every year.<sup>10</sup> Dagon, the god of the Philistines, is characteristically portrayed as an agricultural god, associated with the harvest of grain. The veiling or hiding of the god in a temple or cave is simply the first step toward rendering him (and he is almost always male) metaphysically invisible and unrepresentable. As Edmund Burke noted in his 1757 *Enquiry into ... the Sublime and the Beautiful*,

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<sup>10</sup> See Smith 1972, p. 93: “In Semitic religion the relation of the gods to particular places ... is usually expressed by the title Baal.”

Despotic governments ... keep their chief as much as may be from the public eye. The policy has been the same in many cases of religion. Almost all heathen temples were dark. Even in the barbarous temples of the Americans at this day, they keep their idol in a dark part of the hut, which is consecrated to his worship.<sup>11</sup>

Kant simply carries Burke's observation to its logical conclusion when he argues that "there is no sublimer passage in the Jewish law than the command, 'Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything which is in heaven or in the earth or under the earth.'" For Kant, the secret to the "enthusiasm" of both Judaism and "Mohammedanism" is their "abstraction" and refusal of imagery, together with their claim to absolute moral superiority over heathens and idolaters (Kant 1951, p. 115).

I want to conclude with two scenes of idolatry and iconoclasm by an artist who would seem to be radically antithetical to the antinomian tendencies of Blake and Nietzsche. The work of Nicolas Poussin, as Richard Neer has argued in his recent article on the painter (2006/07), is deeply concerned with issues of idolatry and iconoclasm. But the depth of this concern would seem to be expressed, if I follow Neer's argument, by Poussin's determination to remain firmly committed to an orthodox moral condemnation of idolatry in all its forms, at the same time remaining loyal to the most powerful claims of the visual arts as expressed in classical sculpture. One could put this as a paradox: how does a painter endorse iconoclasm and condemn idolatry at the same time deploying all the visual, graphic resources of a thoroughly pagan, idolatrous culture?

Neer takes Poussin's problem, not merely as the case of an individual artist, but as the central problem of art history as a discipline. As he notes, Poussin scholarship has made him "the most literary of painters," assuming that "to know a picture's literary source is to know the essential thing about it. ... One gets the impression that he is studied more in the library than the museum" (Neer 2006/07, p. 297). When scholars have broken away from this textually dominated mode of interpretation to identify "visual sources," the usual conclusion is that Poussin's numerous citations of classical imagery are "strictly meaningless." This "bifurcation" of Poussin into the camps of word and image "is in fact exemplary." According to Neer, "It is, in germ, what separates 'the two art histories,' the museum and the academy; the study of Poussin is the grain of sand in which to see a whole disciplinary world" (ibid., p. 298). It is as if the *paragone* of word and image that was launched by the second commandment has penetrated into the very heart of the discipline that is supposed to devote itself to the visual arts, confronting it with a version of Poussin's own dilemma: how does one attend to the meaning of an image without reducing it to the mere shadow of a textual source? How does one remain faithful to the claim of the image without becoming an idolater and descending into the abyss of meaninglessness?

Ultimately, I want to propose a third alternative to Neer's division of the resources of art history into the "library" and the "museum." The alternative, unsurprisingly, is the *world* and the larger sphere of verbal and visual culture within which paintings, like all other works of art, inevitably function, and perhaps not merely as what Neer calls "useful evidence in ... a cultural history," but *events and interventions* in that history (Neer 2006/07, p. 299). But this is to get slightly ahead of myself. Let's turn to the paintings.

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<sup>11</sup> Burke is of course speaking here of the idols of *Native Americans* in this passage (Burke 1968, p. 59). See my discussion in Mitchell 1986, p. 130.

Two of Poussin's most famous treatments of the theme of idolatry are *The Adoration of the Golden Calf* (1633–36), now in the National Gallery in London (fig. 18.2a), and *The Plague at Ashdod* (1630–31) now in the Louvre (fig. 18.2b). Together, the paintings provide a panorama of the fundamental themes of idolatry and iconoclasm. The *Calf* shows the moment of idolatrous ritual and celebration, as the Israelites dance around the calf with the artist, Aaron, gesturing toward it to urge his countrymen (and beholders of the painting) to contemplate his creation. In the darkness of the background on the left, we see Moses descending from Mount Sinai, preparing to smash the stone tablets of the law in fury over the terrible sin of the Israelites. In *Ashdod*, by contrast, we see the terrible punishment for idolatry as the panicked Philistines realize that they have been stricken by the plague. In the darkness of the left background we see the fallen idol of Dagon with its severed head and hands, and behind it the ark of the covenant (which the Philistines have seized as a trophy after defeating the Israelites in battle). In the story of the plague (1 Sam 5:1–7), the Philistines bring the ark into the temple of Dagon, and during the night it magically overturns the statue of the Philistines' god and mutilates it.

Neer makes a convincing argument that, from Poussin's point of view, and thus from the dominant disciplinary perspective of art history, the principle subject matter of *Ashdod* is not the foreground tableau of the plague, but the background vignette of the ark destroying the idol. The evidence: the contemporary testimony of Joachim Sandrart and Poussin's own title for the painting, *The Miracle of the Ark in the Temple of Dagon*. This argument, depending on verbal evidence, goes directly against what Neer calls the "visual prominence" of the plague narrative, which would seem to undermine his insistence elsewhere in the essay that visual and pictorial elements should be primary (ibid., p. 312). But for Neer, Poussin is a painter whose work is governed by signs and citations that point toward an invisible and unrepresentable foundation. Like the motif of the ark itself, which hides the tablets of the law, like the hidden God on Mount Sinai, Poussin's painting encrypts a meaning that is not evident to the eye, but only to the connoisseur who is able to reverse the significance of "visual prominence," and see that the primary subject of the painting is "the hiddenness of the divine": "The miracle in the temple is the Second Commandment in action: a battle between statue and sign, ending in the literal destruction of the former" with the plague as merely its outward manifestation (ibid., p. 312). The failure of a beholder to see the plague as a merely secondary consequence or allegorical shadow of the real event in the painting is thus made equivalent to the error of the idolatrous Philistines who also mistake the outward image for the true meaning: "The failure of the literal-minded Philistines to 'read' the plague correctly ... thus amounts to seeing only the Aspect of the plague," rather than the true "Perspective" in which the events and their depiction are to be understood (ibid., p. 312).

Neer shows convincingly that Poussin intended his painting to be an allegorical "machine" that generates a series of "rigidly antithetical" oppositions (which turn out to be reversible as well): ark versus idol, imitation versus copy; signification over depiction; Poussin versus the "bestial" Caravaggio. Poussin is doing everything possible to avoid falling into mere copying, mere naturalism, or realism. He had an "abhorrence of reproduction, verging on mimetophobia" (Neer 2006/07, p. 309). He must constantly remind us that his scenes are staged, and are based in a kind of citational parade of classical figures. The dead mother with her babies starving at her breast is probably a citation of Saint Matthew that ironically undercuts the realism of its source in Caravaggio. The hidden truth of the painting, however, is *literal*. It is a straightforward *istoria*, showing a mutilated idol and an impassive ark.

Like most of Poussin's painting, it is dominated by textualizing practices if not by textual sources, planting subtle clues and citations of previous pictures that will be recognized by the learned viewer. To take the "foreground group" literally, then, and not see it as a "citational structure" but for "the story it happens to tell," is to miss the point of the painting (ibid., p. 313). This foreground group is "the *allegory of the symbol of the narrative*," a phrasing, as Neer concedes, that is "otiose in a way the picture is not" (ibid., p. 318).

I think Neer has given us the most comprehensive professional reading of this painting we could ask for. As art history, his interpretation is unimpeachable, and as iconology, it is incredibly subtle and deft. My trouble begins with his moving of Poussin's theory into the sphere of ethics, where a certain way of reading the painting is reinforced as the morally responsible, and even the "pious" way of relating to the picture as a sign or symptom of Poussin's intentions. There is something subtly coercive about this move, and I want to resist it in the name of the painting itself, and perhaps in the name of that "meaninglessness" that scholars like Louis Marin have proposed. In other words, I want to ask *The Plague* (or is it *The Miracle?*) of Ashdod what it wants from the beholder, rather than what Poussin wants.<sup>12</sup> Since the painting outlives Poussin, and participates in what Neer calls a kind of "natural history" (as opposed to its iconological meaning), this means an unleashing of the painting from its own historical "horizon" of possible meanings, and allowing it to become anachronistic.

And this might be the place to admit that my whole response to this painting is radically anachronistic. I cannot take my eyes off the foreground group. I cannot help sharing in the Philistine gaze that believes this scene is portraying a human reality, an appalling catastrophe that is being reproduced in a kind of stately, static tableau, which is the only thing that makes it bearable to behold. Like William Kentridge's drawings of the atrocities of apartheid, or Art Spiegelman's translation of the Holocaust into an animal fable, Poussin shows us a highly mediated scene of disaster, of a wrathful judgment that is striking down a city and a people in an act of terror that does not discriminate between the guilty and the innocent. The center of this perception is, of course, the most prominent image in the painting, the dead mother with her starving infants at her breast. Neer sees her as a citation to the martyred Saint Matthew; I cannot see her without being reminded of a contemporary image that dawned on the world at the same moment of the writing of this text. This is the image that emerged from Gaza during the Israeli invasion of January 2009 of "four small children huddling next to their dead mothers, too weak to stand up."<sup>13</sup>

The image of the dead mother with her infants, living or dead, has been an icon of total war, genocide, and ethnic cleansing at least since Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, where he describes a painting by Aristide of Thebes, the first Greek painter to show "ethe," soul and the emotions. Pliny describes a painting representing "the capture of a town, showing an infant creeping to the breast of its mother who is dying of a wound" (*Natural History* 35.36.98; Rackham 1984, p. 335). This motif, later employed by Raphael in the *Morbetto* ("Plague"), where Poussin doubtless saw it, is echoed today in scenes such as the massacre of Italian villagers by the Nazis in Spike Lee's film *The Miracle at Saint Anna*, and in a news photograph by

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<sup>12</sup> This shift of the question from the meaning of the painting to "what it wants" is of course the procedure I have advocated in Mitchell 2005.

<sup>13</sup> It is hard to ignore the fact that Ashdod is located in the short space of land (about 20 miles) between Tel

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Aviv and Gaza. During the invasion of Gaza in January 2009, it suffered rocket attacks from the Palestinians in Gaza.

Ahmad Hams taken during a previous Israeli incursion into Gaza. The unbearable pathos of this scene is rendered visible by Poussin in the reaction of the prominent figure in blue at the left of the picture's center, who recoils in horror and refuses to look. In some sense we may see this figure as an allegory of the art historian who refuses to see this central tableau as the primary subject, and insists on turning away, his attention directed first toward the rat (the immediate material cause of the plague) at the base of the temple of Dagon, and ultimately toward the ark of the covenant (the "final cause," as it were) in the background. It is as if the sight of the image, like the plague itself, might have an infectious character, a point that is reinforced by the gesture of the man reaching down to touch the still-living infant while he covers his face to block the smell of the dead mother (Barker 2004).

Of course there is a point of view from which this scene is, like Poussin's, merely an allegory of Divine Justice in action. The Palestinians, as we have learned recently from a leading Israeli rabbi, are "Amalekites" who deserve the disasters that are being visited on them by an overwhelmingly superior military power that has god on its side (Shragai 2009). The Hamas movement in Gaza is a terrorist organization that seeks the destruction of Israel. If terrible things like civilian casualties occur, it is the fault of Hamas, which unscrupulously uses civilians as "human shields." (The fact that the fighters of Hamas actually live among and are related by blood and marriage to many of the people of Gaza does not excuse them from the responsibility to stand up and fight courageously in the open where they can be mowed down by the vastly superior firepower of the Israeli army. Instead, they are understood to be hiding away like cowards in their homes, schools, mosques, government buildings, and community centers while their women and children are massacred around them.) And if there have been injustices on the Israeli side, they will be "investigated properly, once such a complaint is received formally, within the constraints of current military operations" (Cowell 2009). Justice and the law are being and will be served, if only we have the ability to put this shocking picture in perspective.

Nothing I have said invalidates Neer's interpretation of Poussin's painting. I think that it probably reflects, for better or worse, what Poussin thought about his subject, what he thought was expected of him, and what his audience would have understood.<sup>14</sup> My argument is that there is another, quite contrary, perspective on the painting, one in which an "aspect" is not merely an appearance, but as Wittgenstein would have put it, the "dawning" of a new way of thinking about its subject matter and its handling. This is the anachronism that disrupts the doctrine or doxa of the painting, and calls into question the ethical discipline and piety that it encourages. I would argue further that this sort of anachronistic seeing is inevitable with images, which are open to the world and to history in a way that deconstructs

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<sup>14</sup> In a fuller exposition, I would explore the relation between the dogmatic historicism of art history, its assumption of a proper "horizon of meaning," and the closely related problems of anachronism and intentionalism. Richard Wollheim is among the most prominent supporters of a strict historical psychologizing of pictorial meaning, which in his view "always rests upon a state of mind of the artist, and the way this leads him to work, and the experience that the product of this work brings about in the mind of a suitably informed and sensitive spectator" (1987, p. 188). See my forthcoming essay, "The Future of the Image," for a discussion of the

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inevitability of anachronism and unintentional meaning in pictures; also Didi-Huberman 2005, pp. 12–52, esp. p. 41, "anachronism is not, in history, something that must be absolutely banished — in the end, this is no more than a fantasy or an ideal of equivalence — but rather something that must be negotiated, debated, and perhaps even turned to advantage." We should note as well that when Wollheim asks himself, "Where have I seen this face before?" in Poussin's *Rinaldo and Armida*, his answer is — of all things — Courbet! See Wollheim 1987, p. 195.

their legibility and certainty. In short, I am on the side of Derrida's abyss and Louis Marin's "meaninglessness" in Neer's argument, not Montaigne's well-grounded faith in the invisible law-giver. I am also on the side of Foucault's insistence, in his famous reading of *Las Meninas*, that we must "pretend not to know" who the figures are in the painting. We must forego the comfort of the "proper name" and the learned citation, and confine ourselves to the "visible fact," described with "a gray, anonymous language" that will help the painting "little by little" to "release its illuminations."<sup>15</sup>

What happens if we follow this procedure with the *Golden Calf*? What would it mean to see this painting through the eyes of Blake and Nietzsche? Does the painting not threaten to be a transvaluation of the idol it is supposed to be condemning? Could Poussin's painting, without his quite knowing it, be sounding the idol with a hammer, tuning fork, or (more precisely) a paintbrush? The calf is gloriously painted and sculpted; it is a wonder, and the festive dance around it is a celebration of pagan pleasure.<sup>16</sup> But up in the dark clouds is the angry patriarch, breaking the tablets of the law. Nietzsche's pious killjoy and Blake's Nobodaddy converge in Poussin's Moses.

Of course this is all wrong as art history. As iconology or anthropology, however, it may have some traction. The great French sociologist Emile Durkheim would have recognized the calf instantly as a totem animal and would have rejected the category of the idol for the ideological fiction that it is.<sup>17</sup> It's important to note that totemism and fetishism play a distinguished role in disciplines like anthropology and psychoanalysis; idolatry, as a still potent polemical notion, has rarely been put to technical use by a human science.

So let's consider Poussin's *Calf* as a totemic image, a figure of the self-conscious projection of a community on a common symbol (totems were generally plant or animal images). Let's look at it through the eyes of Durkheim, Nietzsche, and Blake, as Poussin's attempt to "sound" the idol with his paintbrush, rather than destroying it. It is important that (in the story) the Israelites have *asked* for this calf. They have demanded that Aaron, the artist in residence, make an idol "to go before them" as a symbol of their tribal identity. "God is Society" is Durkheim's famous formulation of the concept.<sup>18</sup> One could actually think of this as a kind of democratic emblem, at least partly because it seems to have been a random, chance image, flung out from the fire. As Aaron tells Moses: "I cast the gold into the fire and this calf came out" (Exod 32:24).

What if that was Zarathustra up on the mountain, smashing the law and joining in the fun? What if the dark clouds are Blake's Nobodaddy "farting and belching and coughing" in his cave on the mountaintop? Could it be that Poussin was (like Blake's Milton) a true poet/painter, and of the devil's party without knowing it?

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<sup>15</sup> See Foucault 1994, p. 10, and my discussion in Mitchell 1994.

<sup>16</sup> The Israelites dancing around the golden calf, like the Palestinians in terror at the plague, are both depicted as classical figures — as Greeks, in other words. As it happens, contemporary archaeology research suggests that the Philistines were, in fact, Mycenaean who migrated from Greece down to Palestine. This fact gives the historical dimension of Poussin's painting an uncanny accuracy in relation to modern historical knowledge that

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he could not have known. Thanks to Richard Neer for this factoid.

<sup>17</sup> See my discussion of Durkheim and the relations of totemism, fetishism, and idolatry in Mitchell 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Durkheim 1995, p. 208: the totem "expresses and symbolizes two different kinds of things. From one point of view, it is the outward and visible form of what I have called the totemic principle or god; and from another, it is also the symbol of a particular society that is called the clan.... God and society are one and the same."

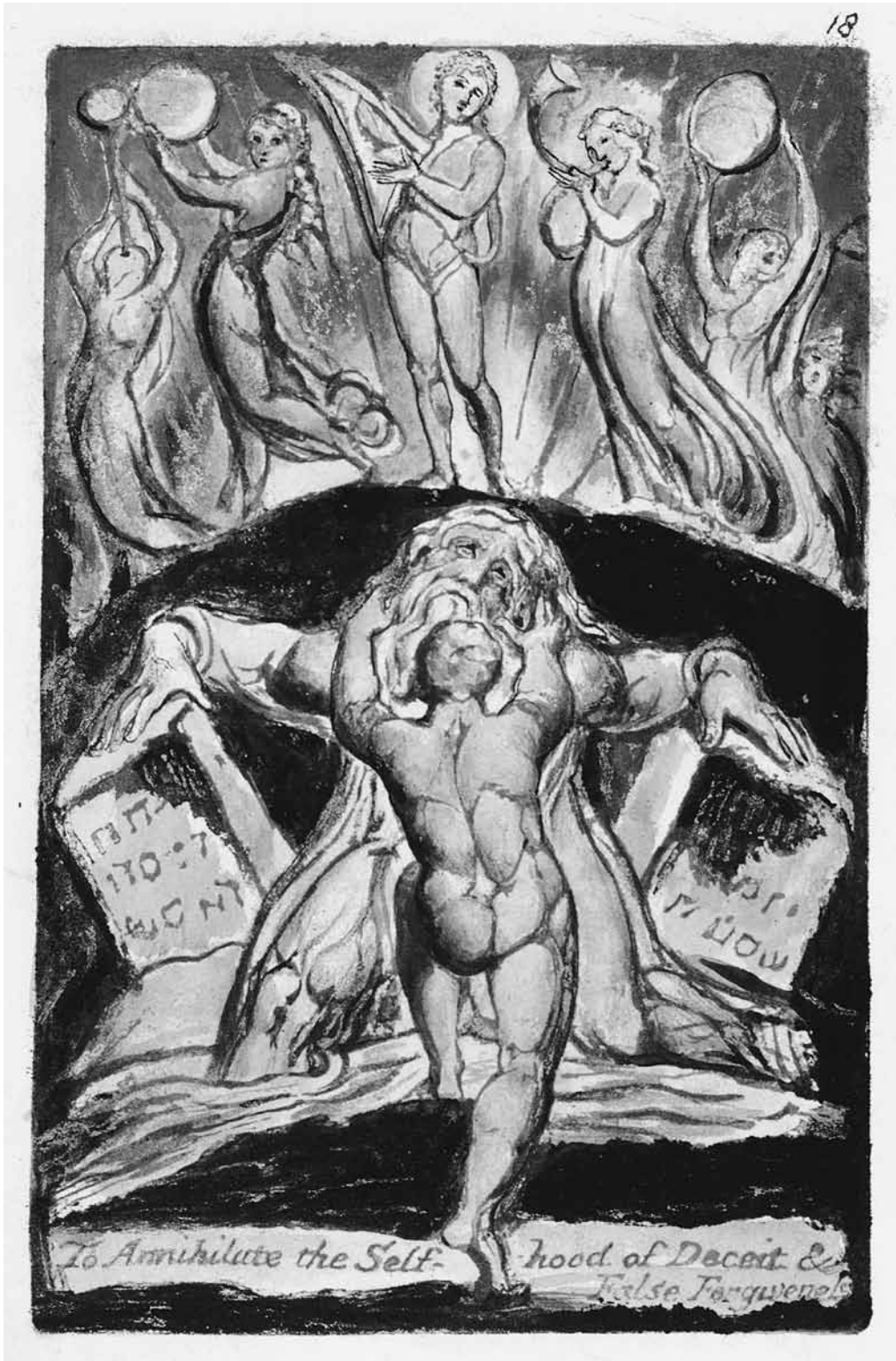


Figure 18.1. Blake's *Milton*, plate 15: Los creating/destroying Jehovah





a



b

Figure 18.2. Nicolas Poussin's paintings (a) *The Adoration of the Golden Calf* (1633-36) and (b) *The Plague at Ashdod* (1630-31)

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## A PARTIALLY RE-CUT RELIEF FROM KHORSABAD

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A partially recut image on a slab in a prominent position of the throne-room facade at the palace of Sargon II (721–705 B.C.E.) at Dur Sharrukin, modern-day Khorsabad, is the subject of this paper. An identity for the recut image will be proposed. Initially an art-historical analysis will provide significant information. Evidence will be considered from the published drawings by Eugène Flandin recording the entire sculptural program of the palace at the time of its initial excavation (Botta 1849–50, vols. 1–2; Albenda 1987). Archaeological evidence from the Oriental Institute excavations at Khorsabad is critical. The most prominent residence at the site is identified with a member of the royal family, Sargon’s brother, Sinahusur, by three major stone carpet inscriptions. Sinahusur is not attested elsewhere. In the absence of a specific inscriptional record to offer precise information, all discussion of the possible reasons for recutting the image will be speculative.

The sculptured slab with the recut image is monumental in size, nearly three meters in height. It is currently on view in the Oriental Institute Museum (OIM A7368; fig. 19.2). This slab was originally the first slab of a series carved with a procession approaching King Sargon II on Facade n of court VIII at the right of an entrance to the throne room at Khorsabad (fig. 19.1).<sup>1</sup> Carved in relief are two male figures, facing to the viewer’s left, one standing behind the other. The figure at the right side is the subject of the discussion. He is now a beardless courtier (fig. 19.3), superficially similar to the other courtiers in the procession following him at the right side of the narrative scene. Oddly, this figure was originally depicted as bearded, wearing a headband decorated with complex rosettes, with a dangling ribbon falling down his back almost to the level of his waist. Outline traces of a long beard extend down over part of his chest. A vertical incised line indicates the area of the neck once covered by the beard. The cheek is rough where the beard was removed. The remains of a headband survive. It is possible to discern traces of its former large rosette decoration. Deeply incised lines remain to convey the slightly curved outline of a dangling ribbon. It has been reshaped and now has a curved margin. Untouched, however, are bracelets having a large multipetaled rosette with button center adorning his wrists, and armllets with gazelle-head terminals. It may be noted that the other figure of this slab, at the left, is bearded and wears a headband with a long decorated and fringed ribbon (fig. 19.4). This headband is decorated with three complex rosettes, one of which is positioned above his forehead. The question of why the second figure on panel OIM A7368 was recut — from bearded to beardless — is of particular

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<sup>1</sup> Botta 1849–50, vol. 1, pl. 7, slab 36; Albenda 1987, pl. 16, slab 36; Loud 1936, fig. 45.



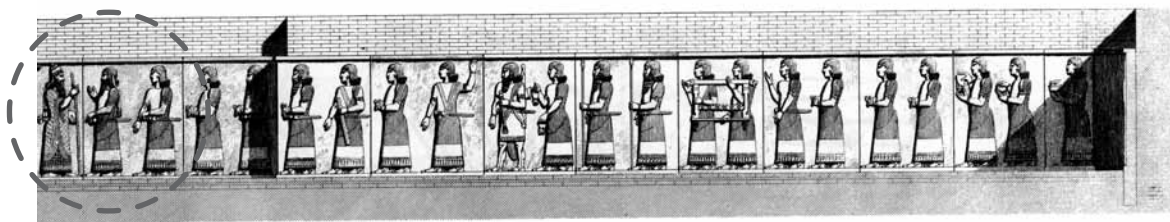
Figure 19.1. Khorsabad, throne-room facade with procession led by the crown prince to Sargon II with two attendants to his left (Sargon and the figures on OIM A7368 are circled; after Botta 1849–50, vol. 1, pl. 30)

interest. Was it a willful or deliberate act, or simply the correction of an artisan's error? A second question that begs to be answered is why some status symbols were left untouched as others were removed.

The two court officials on slab OIM A7368 display a few additional distinguishing features. Both have garment hem borders that consist of two rows with concentric squares alternating with squares enclosing simple rosettes. Both have neckline borders that also incorporate simple rosettes and concentric squares. Both have decorative sleeve borders. Both wear decorated headbands and dangling ribbons. Both wear identical bracelets. In these ways the figures continue to share distinguishing characteristics not shared by the other figures in the procession. The bearded figure on the left has additional rosette decorations on his sleeve and shawl borders. His basket-weave armlets have lion-head terminals. Examination of the three slabs from the procession presently displayed in the Oriental Institute Museum suggests that a hierarchy of importance was symbolized through the increasing complexity of the decorative garment borders. Garments of officials at the head of the procession include rosettes. Those next in line, on OIM A7367, have shawl hem borders with three bands of concentric squares (Loud 1936, fig. 39), while those more distant in the procession, on OIM A7366, have borders with two rows of concentric squares (Loud 1936, fig. 40). On both OIM A7367 and A7366 all bracelets and armlets are simple, modestly decorated. On both of these slabs the court attendants are lacking neckline and sleeve borders.

The slab under discussion was in situ when first exposed by Paul-Émile Botta (1843–1845) and Victor Place (1852–1855). Place moved this slab and several others from the procession away from the wall into the courtyard to be crated for shipping. This was never done, however, and the slabs were abandoned in their new location, where at a much later date (1930) they were excavated by Oriental Institute excavators. None of these slabs are monoliths. All had been broken cleanly at some time since antiquity. The large fragments of OIM A7368 fit perfectly together with only minor superficial lacunae restored. For instance, there is a break and some missing fragments at the hem borders. Several loose fragments of hem border in the Oriental Institute collection were inadvertently not used in the restoration. Much of the original hem borders remain on the figures, serving as models for restoration. The remaining original borders and the separate fragments confirm the observations made above describing the border decorations.

Eugène Flandin's original small-scale drawing of our focal slab indicates that it is the slab with the leaders of the procession of courtiers walking to the left to be greeted by Sargon II (fig. 19.1). The drawing shows entrances to the throne room framed by lamassu



and protective genies. To their right, two attendants stand behind King Sargon as he faces the approaching procession. The slab with the recut figure is to the right of the slab with Sargon. It is carved with two processional figures walking toward the left. The man on the left is bearded. His headdress and ribbons are shown. The drawing records the man on the right in his final, beardless state. The scale of the drawing is so small that one would not expect it to show the surviving scars. The evidence from the Flandin drawings suggests that before reworking the original composition from the throne-room facade, the reliefs showed a unique example of Sargon facing two men with beards, headbands decorated with complex rosettes, dangling, bordered, fringed ribbons, and bracelets with plastic rosettes.

The king's image is always identifiable on Neo-Assyrian bas-reliefs. He has distinctive garments, elaborate fabric decorations, a crown with pendant ribbon, and a scabbard decorated with rampant lions. One or two attendants follow the king, and he faces a bearded figure with rosette paraphernalia who invariably leads the processions on the wall reliefs at Khorsabad. This grouping of three or four figures is repeated at least nineteen times at Khorsabad.<sup>2</sup>

While the Flandin drawings are often extremely accurate, there are at least two unequivocal examples where his drawings are in error. The figures on the slabs in the throne-room facade were drawn as conventionally dressed courtiers in procession. Several slabs from this facade excavated by the Oriental Institute illustrate courtiers carrying furniture toward the throne-room entrance (Loud 1936, figs. 41–44). The Iraqis excavated room 6 in the 1930s, and the well-preserved slabs from this room are in the Iraq Museum, Baghdad (IM 18629–31 and IM 1196). They incorporate a unique procession of men in tie-belted dresses, without draped shawls, completely unlike the published Flandin drawing (Botta 1849–50, vol. 2, pl. 103; Albenda 1987, pl. 66). The drawing shows a conventionally dressed procession of courtiers with shawls over their dresses, along with some foreigners in turbans. These known errors in the drawn record suggest that it is possible that the unusual composition of the southeast wall of room 11 may be incorrect. In any case, the original composition of the

<sup>2</sup> Only once do Flandin's drawings show Sargon facing two bearded officials. This arrangement survives only on the small-scale Flandin reconstruction drawings of the southeast wall of room 11 (Botta 1849–50, vol. 2, pl. 137, slab 11; Albenda 1987, pl. 71). It is impossible to know if this reconstruction is in error, or if the ar-

rangement originally was as it is shown. There is nothing known regarding the current location of this slab. In the drawing the man facing Sargon has a headband and dangling ribbon. The bearded man behind him has neither headband nor ribbon.

throne-room facade is unique. The subsequent modifications on slab OIM A7368 transformed it to a superficially normal arrangement.

The identity of the bearded figure facing Sargon has been of interest to many scholars. Always, he has been considered a person of importance. Early French excavators identified him as the grand vizier (an Ottoman terminology). More recently he has been identified as the prime minister (Loud 1936, fig. 38). Others identify him as the crown prince (Barnett, Bleibtreu, and Turner 1998, vol. 1, pp. 136–37; vol. 2, pl. 496; Reade 1972, p. 93; idem 1967, pp. 45–48, pl. 13). Both Barnett et al. and Reade have discussed the relief with a bearded figure, probably from the South-West Palace at Nineveh. The representation of that figure is comparable in most of its features to the bearded figure from Khorsabad. This discussion implies that the bearded figure leading the procession at Khorsabad should be understood as a representation of Sennacherib, crown prince, son of King Sargon II. Since none of the figures carry nametags, it is conjectural that they represent actual individuals. Our recut figure retains a number of features in common with the leader he stands beside. It is reasonable to consider whether this figure might also have a specific, possibly royal identity. To evaluate this, it is necessary to review the range of symbols that are associated with royalty in Neo-Assyrian times.

At least four relief representations of Sargon survive, along with four published detailed large-scale drawings by Flandin (Botta 1849–50, vols. 1–2, pls. 12, 14, 101, 105; Albenda 1987, pls. 44–45, 70). The Sargon relief in the Louvre is the best preserved and still has substantial remains of red pigment decorating his garments, crown, and ribbon (Guralnick 2010, pp. 782–83, fig. 2; Musée du Louvre 1936, p. 311). The Sargon relief in the British Museum is very well preserved, but without remains of pigment. The Oriental Institute Sargon relief (Loud 1936, fig. 28) is weathered but retains most of the distinctive features of the king. A well-preserved relief head of Sargon is in the Museo delle Antichità Egizie (Dietrich 2003, fig. 1). Sargon is always shown wearing a fez-like crown with a slender pointed shape above its flat top. The crown is decorated with three rows of complex rosettes. A wide-bordered and fringed ribbon dangles from his crown to his waist. He always wears an elaborate bracelet on each wrist. His garments are distinctive and highly decorated, totally unlike those of the courtiers. His dress, cloak, crown, and bracelets are always decorated with a variety of elaborate rosette types. In Neo-Assyrian art there are several types of rosettes and other decorative motifs that are seen almost exclusively in association with the king (Guralnick 2004, pp. 226–27, figs. 7–8; idem 2008, pp. 93–96, 99–101). The complex rosette, composed of a circular button surrounded by two rows of multiple petals, all within a circle, creating the illusion of three concentric circles, is seen almost exclusively in relation to the king or mythological figures. At Khorsabad, the so-called Gilgamesh figures, a four-winged genie, and a wingless genie also wear this complex rosette. Another wingless genie wears a bracelet with a simpler version of this rosette with only one circle of petals about the button center. The simpler version decorates the crown of a lamassu at Khorsabad (Musée du Louvre 1936, pp. 302, 304–08, and 311). On the rare instances where a human wears it, he is always in the immediate presence of the king and he should probably be understood as a person of royal rank. Both complex and simple rosettes are also painted on palace walls (Albenda 2005, pls. 13, 17–18) and carved into stone thresholds (Albenda 2005, pl. 26; Loud and Altman 1938, pl. 66). Flandin published detailed drawings of complex rosettes (Botta 1849–50, vol. 2, pls. 159, 161, and 163; Albenda 1987, pl. 140).



Our focal slab depicts the two figures at the head of the procession, advancing to the left toward Sargon. Both of these figures wear complex rosette paraphernalia. The bearded man leading the procession has complex rosettes in his headband and simple ones on his dangling ribbon and garment borders. He has elaborate, rosette-decorated bracelets, just as Sargon does. The re-cut figure on the right originally had this same array of decorative rosettes. Generally, the man behind the bearded man has been recut to appear as an ordinary unbearded courtier of lower rank. Only here on the throne-room facade were there originally two bearded men with rosette paraphernalia. Surely both were originally intended to represent individuals of consequence. The bearded man at the left should most likely be understood as the crown prince, Sennacherib. That leaves us with the question of the original identity of the second bearded figure before his high status was reduced by the removal of his beard to something more ordinary. Does the retention of some of the accoutrements of royalty imply that he retains a special status or identity?

Three archaeological finds may be considered as relevant for the identification of our recut figure. At Khorsabad, just inside the entrance to the lower citadel below the palace terrace are two massive buildings. The large Nabu Temple is on the left. Balancing its impressive size is the huge Residence L on the right of the entrance. Three very large carved carpet stones were discovered in Residence L (Loud and Altman 1938, p. 104, pl. 66). They have identical inscriptions. The one in the entranceway leading from room 116 to the Central Court, now in the Oriental Institute, is 3.5 m long by 2.5 m wide (OIM A17597; fig. 19.5). A second was found in the entrance connecting the forecourt with room 119. The third is from the threshold between rooms 116 and 119. The Oriental Institute carpet stone is carved with a flat grid of squares, each containing a rosette with sixteen petals about a round button center. Across the middle of the stone a broad band is carved with an inscription identifying the owner of the residence as Sinahusur, “grand vizier and full brother of Sargon” (Loud and Altman 1938, pp. 103–04, pl. 66; Albenda 1978, pl. 4; idem 2005, pl. 26). The published translation in Loud and Altman refers to “Sinahusur, grand vizier and full brother of Sargon ... this house from its foundation to its parapet constructed and completed.” A color photograph along with the original translation was recently published by the Oriental Institute (Emberling 2009, pp. 22–23). A very recent unpublished translation shared by its author privately begins “Sinahusur, the chief minister, beloved brother of Sargon ... completely constructed this house from its foundations to its parapets.” It closes with the words “they (the gods) have continually blessed Sargon and ordained good fortune for Sinahusur, his beloved brother” (John Brinkman 2008, pers. comm.). Still another partial translation exists describing Sinahusur as the “favorite brother” of Sargon (Baker 2002, p. 1128). This carpet has a notable feature. It shows some signs of wear from both foot traffic along its sides and from heavy doors opening and closing over its ends. In fact, the stone carpets of this residence have the only indications of the wear and tear of occupation and use seen at either citadel or in the palace. On this lower citadel several tablets were found relating to ongoing business. These have not yet been read or published. So we know almost nothing about ongoing activities at Khorsabad except from what is known from the annals and published written sources found elsewhere (Parpola 1995, pp. 47–68). These carpets are the only inscribed published references to Sinahusur that are known. This is suggestive that the owner of Residence L may have had a significant role, possibly entirely local. The stone carpet inscriptions do refer to him as “chief minister” or “grand vizier.” Either translation suggests that he played a major role at Khorsabad, if not in

the Assyrian empire. While no other contemporary inscribed materials refer to him (Parpola 1995, pp. 47–68), it is possible to infer a few things about him.

The following discussion is speculative, based exclusively on the excavated evidence from Khorsabad. Sinahusur is identified by three very large inscriptions with a member of the royal family, Sargon's brother, someone not attested elsewhere. There is no known inscriptional information on Sinahusur's responsibilities, if any. However, as a member of the royal family resident in Khorsabad with the title of "chief minister" it is reasonable to speculate that he had responsibilities. The size and prominent position of Residence L, the house of Sinahusur, suggests that he may have had major local responsibilities. Certainly his home has evidence of sufficient traffic to have served as an administrative center, possibly while the palace was being built. His title suggests that his responsibilities could have included broad general oversight of the tens of thousands of workers building the city of Dur Sharrukin, its wall with seven gates, the baked-brick citadels, the palace, seven temples, and a ziggurat. The published written records regarding the building of Khorsabad identify others as being responsible for the acquisition of materials and manpower (Parpola 1995, pp. 47–68). In his annals, Sargon says that he placed, "Assyrians, fully competent to teach them how to fear god and the king I dispatched to them as scribes and superintendents" (Luckenbill 1926, §§6, 108, and 122). It is possible, although not certain, that Sinahusur, the brother of Sargon, oversaw these Assyrians as a trusted official representative of the king and his authority at Dur Sharrukin.

It is easy to see how a man who saw himself as "beloved," "favorite," or "full brother" of the king with the title of "chief minister" could develop an exaggerated sense of his own importance. This could have led to his independent decision to place his own image in a single prominent place within the palace sculptural program. It is also reasonable to speculate that Sargon, learning of this, would object and order the image changed so that only he and his heir apparent, the crown prince, would be clearly distinguished from all others. It is not beyond possibility that Sinahusur himself ordered the change when it came to his attention that workmen had independently displayed him as co-equal to Sennacherib. To have himself shown as a co-equal to crown prince was not tactful.

Many other scenarios can be imagined for the reduction of the bearded image to something closer to that of ordinary courtier. But, a believable scenario must also explain why some of the paraphernalia of royalty remain: the rosette bracelets, the rosette borders, the dangling ribbon, and an only partially erased headband. Of course, the simplest explanation for the modifications removing beard and headband decorations and to reduce the dangling ribbon to an incised, undecorated ribbon may be the correction of a simple error on the part of the stone carvers. If this were simply a correction of a craftsman's error, why retain so many of the status symbols? All of the identifying symbols could have been erased. Documentary evidence is lacking for an absolutely certain historical reason for the transformation of this figure from the representation as an obvious member of the royal family to a more conventional, but enigmatic figure retaining a few indications of special royal status. These remaining status symbols suggest that there is reason to believe that this figure was originally intended to be a representation of a royal person. Sinahusur, the brother of Sargon, is a reasonable person to associate with the original presentation of this image. It must be emphasized that the beardless courtiers are simply men without beards. Their nineteenth-century identification as eunuchs was by comparison with the contemporary Ottoman Court. There is no reason to believe that all the beardless men of Sargon's court are to be seen that

way. Certainly there is no inscriptional evidence for this identification. In room 7 Sargon's retinue has an almost equal number of bearded and unbearded soldiers (Botta 1849–50, vol. 2, pls. 108–14; Albenda 1987, pls. 85–89). What may be more likely is that bearded men may be seen as older men, important men, men of high status, officers, soldiers, or simply men who chose to wear beards. Unbearded men should be understood as men, courtiers of ordinary status. Two major facades with monumental processions of courtiers, Facade n and Facade L, have bearded men sprinkled among the unbearded (Botta 1849–50, vol. 1, pls. 10–11, and 29–30; Albenda 1987, pls. 16, 18–19, and 76). This would explain the recut image as demoting Sinahusur from special status to ordinary. By not eliminating all his symbols of royalty we may continue to see this image as special, a beardless member of the royal family. No longer can the image be mistaken as someone standing in line for the throne.

The identification of the recut figure as Sargon's brother Sinahusur is speculative, as are the several suggestions for why the image was recut. In several other Neo-Assyrian cases there is evidence for deliberate erasures or mutilations. Among these are the following. The name of a high official, Nergal-ereš has been deliberately erased from a stela of Adad Nirari III found at Tell al-Rimah (Page 1968; see fig. 11.6 in this volume). A fragmentary slab now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art is carved with the image of a "crown prince." This relief image has been deliberately mutilated in several places (Reade 1967, pp. 45–48, pl. 13; idem 1972, p. 93). These examples provide evidence that some erasures/damages were deliberate. While it may be that our recut figure is simply the correction of an error, this is not necessarily the case. Willful and deliberate changes were in some instances carried out. Any explanation for the changes must explain why some important clues to a royal identity remain untouched. There is no direct evidence for specific causes leading to the changes in Sinahusur image. While it is reasonable to speculate about the reasons for recutting this image (see May, this volume), we may never know with absolute certainty why this was done.



Figure 19.2. The crown prince (left) and re-carved figure (right). OIM A7368  
(photo by Anna Ressman)



Figure 19.3. Detail of right-hand figure on OIM A7368. Note the outline of the removed beard, headband with bare remains of complex rosettes, incised curved dangling ribbon, bracelet with complex rosette, armbands with animal-head finials, and garment borders at sleeve, neckline, and hem with rosettes alternating with concentric squares (photo by Anna Ressman)



Figure 19.4. Detail of the crown prince on OIM A7368, showing headband and bracelets with complex rosettes, dangling ribbon with rosette borders, garment borders with rosettes alternating with concentric squares, and elaborately decorated armbands (photo by Anna Ressman)

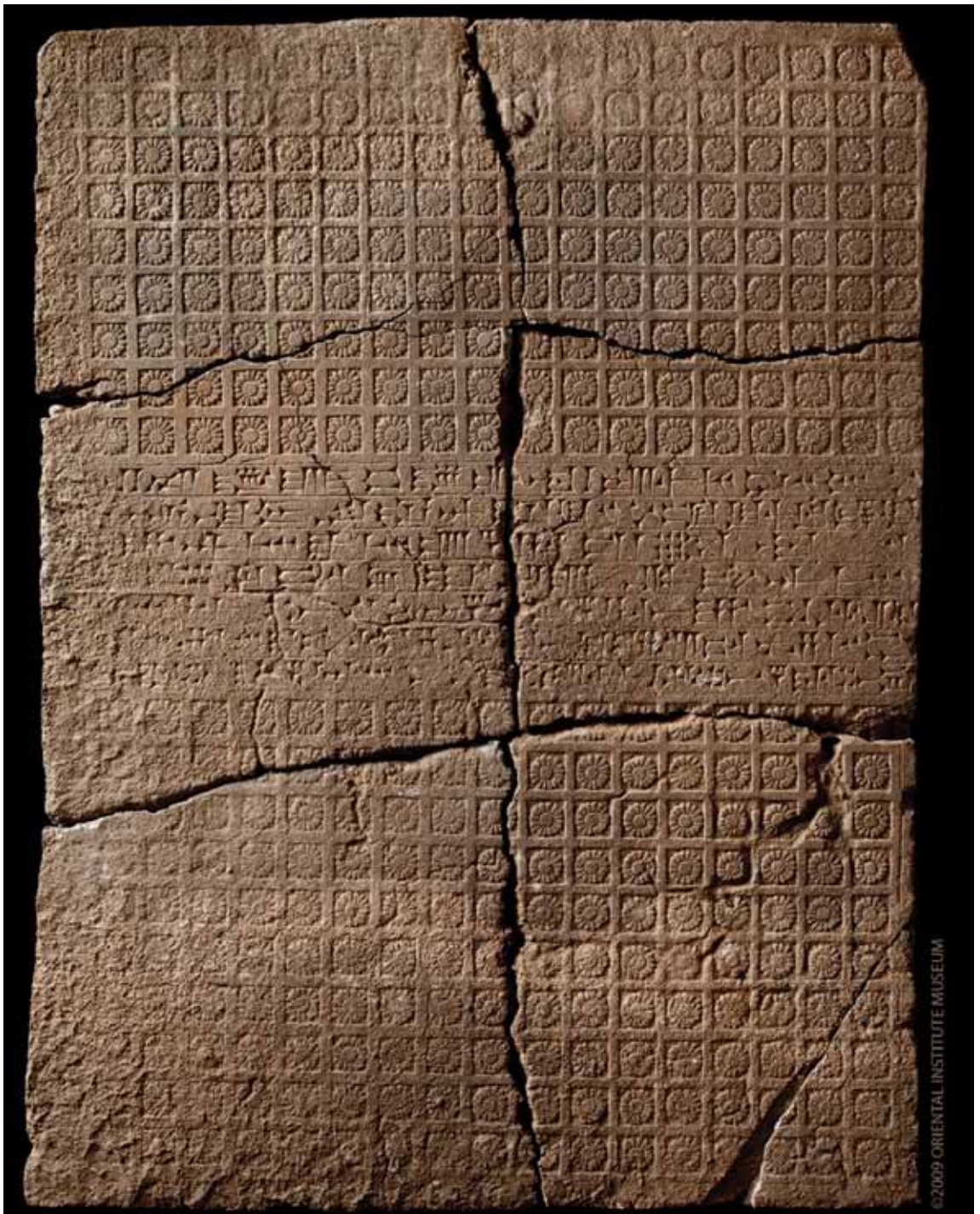


Figure 19.5. Assyrian stone carpet from Khorsabad, 3.5 x 2.5 m. OIM A17597 (photo by Anna Ressman)

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