Picturing Royal Charisma

Kings and Rulers in the Near East from 3000 BCE to 1700 CE

Edited by

Arlette David
Rachel Milstein
Tallay Ornan

Picturing Royal Charisma

Kings and Rulers in the Near East
from 3000 BCE to 1700 CE

Proceedings of an International Workshop

The Mandel Scholion Interdisciplinary Research Center
in the Humanities and Jewish Studies

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem,
January 2015, Jerusalem

Edited by

Arlette David, Rachel Milstein, Tallay Ornan

ARCHAEOPRESS ARCHAEOLOGY

Cover: A *laḥmu*-like figure holding a lion, façade n, Khorsabad, Musée du Louvre, AO 19862. Public domain. Drawing of an Old Akkadian cylinder seal. After Böhmer 1965, No. 387.

מנדל סכוליון
Mandel سخوليون Scholion

מרכז למחקר רב תחומי במדעי הרוח והיהדות

مركز للأبحاث المتعدّدة المجالات في العلوم الإنسانيّة والدّراسات اليهوديّة

Interdisciplinary Research Center in the Humanities and Jewish Studies

This book is available direct from Archaeopress or from our website www.archaeopress.com

Contents

The Contributors

Arlette David trained as a lawyer (*Université Libre de Bruxelles*) and as an Egyptologist at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She is a Professor of Egyptology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She has published studies on ancient Egyptian legal languages, scriptural categorization, art and material culture, and especially on the iconography of the Amarna Period (recently *Renewing Royal Imagery: Akhenaten and Family in the Amarna Tombs*, Brill, 2021).

Anna Gutgarts is lecturer in the Department of General History at the University of Haifa. Her research focuses on the urban development of Frankish Jerusalem and social cohesion in urban societies of the medieval Mediterranean.

David Kertai is curator of the ancient Near East collections at the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden. He earned his Ph.D. in Near Eastern Archaeology at Heidelberg University. He is the author of *The Architecture of Late Assyrian Royal Palaces* (Oxford University Press, 2015) and numerous articles on Assyrian archaeology, art, architecture, and history. He was a research associate at the Martin Buber Society of Fellows in the Humanities and Social Sciences at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He has taught and conducted research at institutions including University College London, the Freie Universität Berlin and the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University. Since 2005, he has participated in archaeological projects in Syria, Turkey, and Iraq.

Rachel Milstein studied Islamic art and culture at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Her doctoral dissertation is titled "Religious Painting of the Wailing Derwishes: 'Tarjome-i Thewaqib' Pierpont-Morgan Library, Ms. M466" (Jerusalem, 1979). Until her retirement, Prof. Milstein taught Islamic art at the Hebrew University. Her research focuses on illustrative painting, mainly in Persian manuscripts, and her principal publications concentrate on religious iconography (*Miniature Painting in Ottoman Baghdad*, Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 1990, and *La Bible dans l'art islamique*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2005).

Galit Noga-Banai is Professor of Late Antique and Early Medieval Art at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She has published studies on art and architecture in the Holy Land, in Italy and in Western Europe, including Merovingian and Carolingian art. Recently she has also been dealing with medievalism in 20th century German memorials associated with World War II.

Tallay Ornan is Professor *emerita* in the Departments of Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Civilizations and of Art History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She specializes in the art of the ancient Near East, focusing on the Bronze and Iron Ages, *c.* 3000–500 BCE. Her publications combine studies dealing with Mesopotamian, Syrian, and Levantine art for shedding light on the transference of ideas within the Near Eastern Bronze and Iron Ages and the processes of cultural borrowing and reception. One of the subjects she has dealt with is the ancient Near Eastern tendency to shun human-form divine representations from pictorial representations and its relation to the Israelite image ban.

Michael Sommer studied Ancient History, Classical Philology, Modern and Contemporary History, and Near Eastern Archeology (*Universities of Freiburg, Basel, Bremen,* and *Perugia*). He is Professor of Ancient History at the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg. His interests include the economic, social, and institutional history of the Roman Empire and the Levant.

Claudia E. Suter studied Classical and Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology, Art History, Ancient History, and Ancient Near Eastern Languages at the University of Basel and at the University of Pennsylvania. Her interests include visual and verbal communication, image-text relationships, ideologies of ruling classes, luxury goods, and cultural identities. Among her publications are *Gudea's Temple Building: The Representation of an Early Mesopotamian Ruler in Text and Image* (Groningen 2000); *Levantine Ivories of the Iron Age: New Perspectives* (*Altorientalische Forschungen* 42: 2015); and *A Companion to Ancient Near Eastern Art*, edited by Ann C. Gunter (Hoboken 2019: 385–410).

Irit Ziffer is curator *emerita* of the Ceramics and Nehushtan (metals) Pavilions at the Eretz Israel Museum, Tel Aviv. She trained in archaeology and ancient Near Eastern cultures at *Tel Aviv University*, where she received her Ph.D. and taught as an adjunct teacher in the Department of Archaeology. Her main interests are art, material culture, and ethno-archaeology of the ancient Middle East. Among her curatorial publications and major exhibitions are *At that Time the Canaanites Were in the Land* (1990), *Islamic Metalwork* (1996), *O My Dove that Art in the Clefts of the Rock: the Dove Allegory in Antiquity* (1998), *In the Field of the Philistines: Cult Furnishings from the Favissa of a Yavneh Temple* (2006), *It Is the Land of Honey: Discoveries from Tel Rehov* (2016).

Introduction

Picturing Royal Charisma:
The Image of Kings in the Eastern Mediterranean from the Late Fourth Millennium to the Islamic Period (*c.* 3250 BCE to 1600 CE)

Arlette David, Rachel Milstein, Tallay Ornan

From the earliest Near Eastern urban civilizations to modern times, rulers and their retinues have disseminated ideological information with regard to the legitimacy of their status, their obligations, and their rights. The visual expressions of these royal statements were the subject of our research group, under the auspices of the *Mandel Scholion Interdisciplinary Research Center in the Humanities of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem,* and of its international workshop, 'Picturing Royal Charisma in the Near East (Third Millennium BCE to 1700 CE)' that took place at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, January 12–14, 2015. We thank Scholion Interdisciplinary Research Center for supporting our project and providing us with a pleasant and welcoming home for developing our ideas concerning the various aspects of Middle Eastern sovereigns and their manifestation in the visual arts. Special thanks to Prof. Dani Schwartz, former Academic Head of Scholion, and Prof. Elisheva Baumgarten, its current Head, for their continuous support.

This volume comprises some of the papers delivered at our workshop that dealt with the visual presentation of rulers around the ancient and medieval Eastern Mediterranean region. These contributions reflect the endurance of some royal themes and pictorial formulae that were used over a period of more than 4000 years. Considering the Eastern Mediterranean basin, Mesopotamia, and Iran as a geographically connected unit, we aimed to explore their interrelations synchronically and diachronically, through the imagery of rulers and power, from the late fourth millennium BCE to the later Islamic period *c.* 1600 CE.

Two essential considerations served as a point of departure for our project:

1. Despite the enormous changes in the demographic, social, political, and religious entities of the area, concepts and imagery demonstrate remarkable continuity.
2. As main communication channels between rulers and subjects in the pre-modern world, visual and textual representations of power are central political and cultural issues.

In the long history of this region, waves of invasions, migrations, trade in merchandise and techniques, wars, and diplomatic exchanges generated a colorful range of socio-economic organizations and groups that included nomads, peasants, city dwellers—each with their own religious beliefs, from animism, polytheism, henotheism to monotheism, and political systems from absolute monarchy to tribal confederation. This central area of settlement and migration bears the endless marks of international clashes and exchanges. Against this background of contradictory interests and aspirations, what does the continuity of royal pictorial motifs and concepts teach us about Rulership in the *longue durée*?

In recent decades, Kingship as a central sociological and anthropological phenomenon in the history of mankind has been a recurrent topic of research and academic analysis. Following Max Weber's theories about the nature of charisma and its routinization (Weber 2013), Elias Norbert's influential study of Louis XIV's court society (Elias 1983), Clifford Geertz' challenging conclusions on the royal courts of Indonesia (Geertz 1980; Geertz 1983: 121–146), among many other studies, various conferences have covered a wide scope of sociological, cultural, and historical issues, often in a comparative approach. To mention only a few examples, *Concepts of Kingship in Antiquity* (Lanfranchi and Rollinger 2007) covers the Eastern Mediterranean and Near Eastern courts, with the comparative case of India (Lanfranchi and Rollinger 2010). In *Royal Courts and Dynastic States and Empires* (Duindam, Tülay, and Kunt 2005), the focus lies on the human structure of the court—household, ceremonies, and government (Duidan, Artan, and Kunt 2011). The geographical and historical scope of this volume goes from France to China, from Assyria to Early Modern Europe. In *Every Inch a King* (Mitchell and Melville 2008), on the other hand, the papers mainly deal with the manifestations of kingship in ancient and medieval Iran, although

some papers cover European courts all the way to Spain and the Safavid rule in Iran around the turn of the 17th century (Mitchell and Melville 2013). More limited in its geographic boundaries, our addition to this list stretches from Rome to Iran, its content mainly focused on the visual expressions of royal ideology.

First and foremost among the cornerstones of royal ideology is the source of the king's legitimacy. This issue is so crucial for justifying the hegemony of an individual or a dynasty that almost any regime refers directly or indirectly to the sources of its legitimacy, divine, inherited, personal or rather a combination of these sources, as demonstrated by Michael Sommer in Chapter 7 in the present volume. Building on Weber's insights, Sommer analyzes the Palmyrene crisis of the 3rd century, which eventually led Queen Zenobia to abandon her city in 272 CE, leaving it to the Roman emperor Aurelian. Asking, 'What was the rationale of authority in Rome? And how did Odaenathus and Zenobia substantiate their leadership in Palmyra and the Near East?' Sommer examines the patterns of authority in Palmyra and in imperial Rome and concludes that the conflict between Rome and Palmyra was rooted in antagonistic conceptions of authority and its legitimacy. Personal legitimacy, according to Weber's theory, is the individual charismatic personality of a leader (mostly a brave and successful military commander) generally characterizing the founders of dynasties. Their weaker descendants, lacking personal charisma, resort to their hereditary position, leaning on their forefathers' images, which over time become sanctified (Weber 2013: 1111–1157).

Second to the divine source of legitimacy the hereditary rights stand. Royal inscriptions and epithets of various kingdoms mention the name of the father and the grandfather of the ruling monarch, sometimes with reference to the eponymous founder of the dynasty. The ancient Egyptian royal lists, a phenomenon traceable to the first Dynasty, were inscribed on Ramesside monuments to insert visually and historically the kings of Dynasties 19–20 in a broad tradition of rulership through the cult of royal ancestors (Redford 1986). In order to build their own image on accepted norms, the Achaemenid rulers established visual contacts with the kings of lands conquered by them (de Jong 2015: 90–92). Inscriptions of the early Sasanid kings, for example, occasionally established their legitimacy by mentioning preceding rulers. Certain Islamic regimes connected themselves to much earlier historical or even mythological dynasties, hence the importance and the revival of the ancient Iranian epic, the *Shāhnāma* from the 10th century CE on.

The rulers' legitimacy relies mainly on their relationships with the gods, relationships of different types in the various political and cultural entities. In ancient Egypt, the first kings on the Turin King List (a Ramesside papyrus listing the kings of Egypt) are gods, the compilers asserting the divine origin of the institution. Following heated debates on the ontology of the Egyptian king, most modern scholars today agree that he was viewed as a man in a divine office, his divine or human characteristics highlighted depending on the period and the religious or more secular context of presentation (Silverman 1995). Examining Akhenaten's revolutionary visual presentation, Arlette David (Chapter 3) shows that during the Amarna Period (Dynasty 18, *c.* 1350 BCE), the royal image and its staging reflected the politico-religious reform brought about by Akhenaten, at the heart of which stood his belief in a solar creator god ('Aten') and the eviction of the traditional pantheon. The evolution of the visual animal-man hybridism of the king, a feature of the divine expressed through animalistic appendages and monstrous fusions, evinces that Akhenaten finally chose to express his own solar divinity in human form as the 'beautiful child of Aten,' personification of the divine light of the Creator.

In ancient Mesopotamia, according to Claudia E. Suter (Chapter 1), the *Sumerian King List* proclaimed that kingship descended from heaven, god-given; the early Mesopotamian kings cast themselves as representatives of the gods on earth. Suter's paper sums up the various images of the Mesopotamian kings as they appear in their sculpted portraits and in narrative scenes of metaphoric nature.

The most common royal depictions from Egypt, Mesopotamia, and all the way to post-Mongol Iran were scenes of investiture, apotheosis, enthronement, audience, cult, battle, hunt, banquet, and foundation of public monuments. Usually, the kings were accompanied by gods or their heavenly emissaries, family members, and the close court circle—body guards, personal servants, boon companions, advisers, ministers, clerics, army commanders, and entertainers. Among the members of the royal entourage male figures who fulfilled various functions appeared. Irit Ziffer's discussion (Chapter 5) focuses on the visual and textual evidence of beardless eunuchs in Assyria, their visual or written traces in ancient Mesopotamia, down to the Achaemenid, Sasanian, Byzantine, and Mamluk courts. She argues that the eunuch, a term that describes the physically different official, was already identifiable in the third millennium BCE Mesopotamian visual repertoires, the closest parallels appearing in the Islamic Mamluk blazons.

Mediating between their subjects and gods, the status of Mesopotamian kings reached its apogee during the reign of Naram-Sin, king of Akkad (2220–2184 BCE), who

uniquely presented himself with the Mesopotamian divine pictorial classifier—a horned crown (Moortgat 1969: 51–52, Plates 154–155). Although rejected by Mesopotamian art after Naram-Sin, the ambition to elevate kings to a divine sphere was still expressed through indirect measures (Ornan 2014). Tallay Ornan (Chapter 2) presents such a case by examining the defeat of the lion by the king by which the latter was elevated to the status of a lesser member of Ishtar's entourage. This pictorial formula of the ruler defeating a lion persisted in the stock of Middle-Eastern royal insignia/metaphors all the way to the Islamic civilization.

As in Mesopotamia, Achaemenid rulership was gifted to the kings by the god, and both god and king complemented each other to maintain cosmic order for the benefit of each and every individual (Kuhrt 2007: 92). The link between god-given rulership and cosmic order was enacted in connection with yearly festivals. The Sasanid kings in Iran were also believed to derive their legitimacy through the so-called 'divine grace' or god-granted royal charisma. Under Christian and Islamic monotheistic regimes, this relationship was further nuanced, but never given up. In the nascent Islamic society, which at first negated the very idea of monarchy, less than one century after the birth of the new religion, the Umayyad caliphs styled themselves as God's deputies, and the oft repeated maxim: 'the ruler is the shade of Allah upon the earth,' probably emerged at the end of their rule (Crone 2004: 162–163).[1]

In all the periods discussed here, the charismatic founders of dynasties, whose descendants appropriated their fame and authority by routinizing their legitimacy, were usually pictured as valiant fighters and hunters, unifiers of dismembered territories, protectors of their kingdom and just rulers, revealers of an essential doctrine or faith, or a special grace bestowed upon them from heaven. In Weber's words:

> The charismatic hero derives his authority not from an established order and enactments, as if it were an official competence, and not from custom or feudal fealty, as under patrimonialism. He gains and retains it solely by proving his powers in practice. He must work miracles, if he wants to be a prophet. He must perform heroic deeds, if he wants to be a warlord. Most of all, his divine mission must prove itself by *bringing well being* to his faithful followers; if they do not fare well, he obviously is not the god-sent master" (Weber 2013, 1114).

The king's mission of *bringing well being* was ideally achieved through his role as mediator between man and the gods, as provider and protector. As mediator with the divine, he was expected to see to the building of

temples and prayer houses, and to perform the rituals of the cult. As provider, his administration had to develop the economy (agriculture, industry, and trade), build towns, gardens, roads, granaries, and water supplies. As protector, he had to lead his armies to war or maintain peace through diplomacy, secure safety, and justice. To turn the desert into an earthly paradise, he exerted all three aspects of the king's mission, which were turned into literary and visual motifs in the Near East and beyond, with variants due to geo-political, economic, and cultural differences.

Maintaining power and securing the elite's loyalty to the crown require a support system, as the legitimacy of the individual kings or dynasties depends on the effective or imaginary fulfillment of their mission. Therefore, many royal actions, practical and symbolic alike, were taken to convince the king's subjects as well as his foes of his exceptional powers, good will, and rightful behavior. The ruler's might as a warrior was commemorated by triumphal gates and monumental depictions of battles, defeated enemies, and spoils. His glory was publicly celebrated in colorful and sonorous parades and well-orchestrated receptions of envoys and guests. His mediation with the divine was embodied in religious centers and performing or providing for rituals, the paraphernalia, gestures, and attitudes associating him with his god(s).

The king's justice was often witnessed by his appearance at a window or a balcony in the upper wall of the palace, and no less often by corpses of criminals and rebels exposed in public, and motifs showing him offering tokens of his equity and legitimate violence to the gods and the world. In series of communal activities, such as coronations, political marriages, audiences, receptions, hunting parties, banquets, and cultural pastimes, kings solidified their bonds with the elite of their kingdoms. Lower classes were in certain civilizations allowed to visit the king's palace, but in others caught a glimpse of the monarch himself at public festivals and processions, or contented themselves with the sight of his effigy on rock reliefs, steles, and coins. They could also be impressed by the size and the beauty of their kings' palaces and *mausolea*, many of which they took an active role in constructing.

Indirect images of the kings and their missions were carefully designed, orchestrated, and disseminated by the court circles through verbal and visual manifestations. The largest public portrayals of royal presence and power were functional and symbolic architectural achievements—city walls and gates, columned boulevards and theaters, water installations, temples, palaces, mausolea, pyramids, large wall-paintings, rock reliefs, steles, and rural monuments. In palaces, or the parts of them that could be visited, the movement of the selected visitors was carefully

---

[1] Compare Milstein in Chapter 9.

designed so as to create awe, to impart a sense of decorum, and to constantly remind the visitor of the legitimacy of his royal patron or host. Using architecture and reliefs, David Kertai's paper (Chapter 4) highlights the importance of the royal image that seems to govern the structure of Neo-Assyrian palaces as the dwelling of the *persona* at the head of the social order, the mediator between gods and human beings. Kertai shows how the king's image, set between niches in the throne room in the Northwest Palace of Kalhu, guided the visitors' movements into and through the room.

Throne rooms, and often the thrones themselves, constituted focal points in the mise-en-scène of the ruler's legitimacy. As such, their components, forms, and metaphoric value in the long Islamic period are the subject of Rachel Milstein's paper (Chapter 9). Her discussion follows the development and evolution of the sense of royalty in a civilization that was initially opposed to kingship, hostile to figurative images, but which could not stay blind to the rich ceremonial art of former and contemporary civilizations.

Since visits to the palaces were often limited to selected minorities, larger crowds were offered a glimpse of the monarch's presence or image through public religious and military ceremonies and, most importantly, in royal burial architecture. Visits paid to the dead are still highly popular and meaningful in the Near East and the entire Islamic world, and are strongly encouraged by certain governments even today. At the beginning of the 16th century CE, the Safavid Shah Ismaꜥil built his own burial tower next to that of the dynasty's eponymous founder in Ardabil, and at the end of this century, as shown by Milstein, Shah 'Abbas I connected the two towers by a new unit, which was inaugurated as his own seat or throne. In Istanbul, visits to the graves of the Ottoman sultans, which were declined throughout the 20th century, have been recently organized by the current regime. The unique importance of *mausolea* is expressed by their longevity, often due to the stone material used for their construction. Not only have these architectural constructions often survived where palaces have disappeared, but their very raison d'être is to give the dead eternal presence, if not to diffuse a message of his eternal existence. In general, architecture becomes a scene and backdrop for ceremonial presentations of the kings, as expressed by Canepa:

> Sovereigns created architectural and visual environment with the knowledge that they would provide focus for ritual activities. These ritual activities, in turn, commented on and shaped further additions. As the ritual and artistic elements of imperial ceremony were interwoven, it is not surprising that an alteration in the fabric of one

had implications for that of the other. A change in ritual practice could imply a new meaning for the structure, and new structures or images within a ritual environment could modify the performance and significance of the ritual (Canepa 2009: 8).

A case-study illustrating this point is the analysis discussed by Galit Noga-Banai (Chapter 6) of Titus' triumphal arch in Rome and its later reflection in the installment of holy Christian relics in the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople. The author concludes that the transition from Judean ritual implements to Christian holy relics, from Jerusalem to Rome, and eventually to Constantinople, enabled the construction of the New Jerusalem, thus conferring legitimacy upon Constantin and his new capital.

As sites of the royal presence, many capital cities can be seen as maps of kingly ceremonial and power; but the city map may also be a testimony of political and economic tensions between the king and his family, or the court, the aristocracy, and the bourgeoisie. In her study, Anna Gutgarts (Chapter 8) reveals the tension between the monarch and the aristocracy in Frankish Jerusalem and its manifestation in the transfer of the royal palace from its initial location in the Al-Aqsa Mosque to the Tower of David. By moving the royal residency to the Tower of David, the ties of Frankish ideology with the biblical past were certainly strengthened. The involvement of the rulers in complex politico-religious circumstances shaped the city's development in the 12th century and its transformation into a Latin Christian capital.

***

Every type of material support seems to have been used for picturing and propagating rulership and its doctrine. Since the topic of this volume is the depiction of royal charisma, a few words about the nature and the constraints of our field are in order. A study of the way in which a material object transmits a message necessarily involves two main aspects: the ideological message embedded in the visual form; and the media and the means of expression, i.e., the formal language and the artistic or 'poetic' devices used to express the ideological content. Taking for granted that the visual forms and compositions vary to a considerable degree from one civilization to another, one should ponder how much a variation in a visual motif reflects a change in meaning. Written evidence, of course, is our best guide to understanding ideological, socio-political, and religious phenomena, but visual testimonies may fill gaps in case of meager textual sources. Moreover, certain unique characteristics of the material and visual language, such as the use of surface and space, the choice of medium, and even the nature of design, besides the evident power of depiction, often disclose neglected or intentionally concealed realities. These

veiled aspects of the concepts and practice of kingship in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Persian world are briefly explored in the articles of this volume.

The power of the picture derives from its need to enunciate abstract concepts by means of visual forms, which necessarily relate to identifiable fragments of material (or historical) reality. Without this visual identification a totally abstract form cannot make sense. Since semiotics can help to unravel hidden layers in linguistic materials, the same approach is no less efficient in the case of the pictorial language (see David in Chapter 3 on Akhenaten's presentation). However, in many cases the visuals are fully descriptive, and their symbolism is so clear that the explicit message and additional layers of content are easily revealed through comparison with relevant texts and other works of art, even from remote periods.

The repertoire of Near Eastern motifs is vast and nuanced yet often repetitive. Texts and visuals build the royal image metaphorically in the likeness of the gods, and kingship in the likeness of the cosmos.

Arlette David, Rachel Milstein, Tallay Ornan

Jerusalem, 2022

References

Canepa, M.P. 2009. *The Two Eyes of the Earth.* Los Angeles.

Crone, P. 2004. *God's Rule: Government and Islam.* New York.

de Jong, A. 2015. Religion and Politics in Pre-Islamic Iran. In: Stausberg, M. and Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw, V., eds. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism.* Chichester: 85–101.

Duindam, J., Tülay, A. and Kunt, M., eds. 2011. *Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires: A Global Perspective.* Leiden.

Elias, N. 1983. *The Court Society.* Edmund Jepchott, trans. Oxford.

Geertz, C. 1980. *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali.* Princeton.

Geertz, C. 1983. Centers, Kings, and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolic of Power. In: *Local Knowledge. Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology.* New York.

Kuhrt, A. 2007. Achaemenid Images of Royalty and Empire. In: Lanfranchi, G.B. and Rollinger, R., eds. *Concepts of Kingship in Antiquity. Proceedings of the European Science Foundation Exploratory Workshop held in Padova, November 28th–December 1st, 2007.* Padova.

Mitchell, L. and Melville, C., eds. 2013. *Every Inch a King: Comparative Studies on Kings and Kingship in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds.* Leiden.

Moortgat, A. 1969. *The Art of Ancient Mesopotamia.* London.

Ornan, T. 2014. A Silent Message: Godlike Kings in Mesopotamian Art. In: Brown, B.A. and Feldman, M.H., eds. *Critical Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Art.* Berlin: 569–595.

Redford, D.B. 1986. Pharaonic King-Lists, Annals, and Day-Books: A Contribution to the Study of the Egyptian Sense of History (Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities Publication 4). Mississauga, Ont.

Silverman, D.P. 1995. The Nature of Egyptian Kingship. In: O'Connor, D.B. and Silverman, D.P., eds. *Ancient Egyptian Kingship* (Probleme der Ägyptologie 9). Leiden: 49–92.

Weber, M. 2013, 2nd ed. Roth, G. and Wittich, C., eds. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology,* Vol. 2. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London.

In the Beginning: The First 1200 Years in Mesopotamia

Claudia E. Suter

University of Bern

Abstract

The incipit of the Sumerian King List proclaims that kingship descended from heaven. Monarchic rule was presented as god-given: kings claim to have been installed in office by deities. Early Mesopotamian kings were perhaps the first to cast themselves as representatives of the gods on earth and thus as intermediaries between the mundane and the transcendent spheres, a dogma that became, in differing degrees, almost universal in monarchic societies. Regardless of whether the monument focused on the king as procreator, commemorated his temple building, celebrated his military victory or his promulgation of laws, its imagery recapitulated his close relationship with the gods, on which the people's security and prosperity depended. As a consequence, kings purported to be supra-human and godlike, constituting a class between mortals and immortals. How was this charismatic status conveyed in images over the first 1200 years of Mesopotamian history? To what degree did the king stand out among mortals and to what degree was he likened to immortals?

Introduction

In terms of space and time, we are looking at Sumer and Akkad, the southern part of Mesopotamia roughly between Baghdad and the Gulf, from the late fourth to the end of the third millennium BCE (c. 3200–2000). These c. 1200 years make up what is generally called early Mesopotamia. They can be divided into several periods (Table 1.1).

Whereas the Early Dynastic period encompasses more than half a millennium, of which the last 200 years are the best documented, the Late Uruk period covers c. 300 years and the dynasties of Akkad, Lagaš II and Ur III altogether comprise c. 350 years. Mesopotamia was ruled by competing city-states for most of the time under consideration here. The hegemony established by the kings of Akkad, and later revived by the Third Dynasty of Ur, lasted for only short periods of time (Michalowski 1987: 46–48). Although it is possible that Uruk controlled all of Mesopotamia in the Late Uruk period, the evidence is inconclusive (Algaze 2008: 109–117).

Royal charisma is devised in different media geared to different audiences and addresses different needs at different times. In the remote early Mesopotamian era the evidence is too scarce for a comprehensive picture. The best-documented period is the Ur III period—its last. Delineating Šulgi's organization of royal charisma, Michalowski (1987: 64–68) enlisted public festivals and travels of the king through his realm, targeting the populace at large; temples built to the new 'god' in the major cities to keep local elites at bay; the amplification of the scribal curriculum with royal praise songs and epic tales, which provided a projection surface for the king's divinity, toward the indoctrination of functionaries; and the inclusion of the king's name as a divine element in personal names of middle-to-lower-echelon bureaucrats. Michalowski sees these measures focusing on the king's deification, created by Naram-Sin of Akkad and refined by Šulgi of Ur, as an effort to propagate the king as the center of social values, which responded to the need for legitimizing central power over a unified Mesopotamia. In his words:

> By displacing the ideational core through a variety of symbols centered around the figure of the divine king, the larger states gained access to allegiance and domination which could not have been theirs through force and economic power alone (Michalowski 1987: 68).[1]

Different documentation from the ensuing Old Babylonian period provides an intimate impression of what created the charisma of the royal persona. Jack Sasson (2011) has perceptively distilled the Mari royal correspondence for intimations of the king's sacrality.[2] Although these kings did not deify themselves, many features evoked their supernatural status in parallel to gods. While the features Sasson discusses under the heading 'bounty' are also attested for third millennium BCE kings, those concerning the sensory spectrum of the king's body are more difficult to find in the third millennium documentation on royal ideology, which consists mainly of royal inscriptions, praise songs, and

---

[1] On the historical determinacy of divine kingship, see also Michalowski 2008.
[2] I am grateful to Jack Sasson for a stimulating exchange on royal charisma and for pointing me to this contribution.

Period and Kings	Time BCE*	Some Characteristics
Late Uruk (and Jamdat Nasr)	3200–2900	First full-blown urban society with a hierarchic structure, in which writing was invented, yet used almost exclusively for administrative purposes; an elaborate, fully developed visual imagery of power appears
Early Dynastic Ur-Nanše, Eanatum, Urukagina, Lugal-zagesi, a.o.	2900–2350	Competing city-states and first historical period in the sense that we start to know kings by name; texts are now also used for transmitting royal ideology in addition to images
Dynasty of Akkad Sargon, Rimuš, Maništušu, Naram-Sin, Šarkali-šarri	2350–2193	First hegemony over Mesopotamia and first self-deified kings, under whom court art reached a peak in naturalistic rendering, and an unparalleled mythological repertoire was created in glyptic
2nd Dynasty of Lagaš Ur-Baba, Gudea, Ur-Ningirsu, a.o.	2175–2075	Traditionalist city-state with covert hegemonic claims in the interim between the two hegemonies; largest sample of royal stone monuments for early Mesopotamia
3rd Dynasty of Ur Ur-Namma, Šulgi, Amar-Sin, Šu-Sin, Ibbi-Sin	2112–2004	Second hegemony over Mesopotamia and second phase of self-deified kings, under whom bureaucracy became excessive and many domains, including anthropomorphic figures in visual imagery, were standardized

* The dates, all approximate, follow the conventional Middle Chronology; for the new Low Middle Chronology, which applies only to historical periods, see Sallaberger and Schrakamp 2015: 135–136.

Table 1.1. Early Mesopotamian Periodization.

laconic administrative texts pertaining to cult festivals. They reveal that Mari kings were thought to have radiance; that their gaze and fragrance were thought to be beneficial; that kissing their feet, like those of divine statues, was thought to be not only a sign of reverence, but also attained their good will; and it was deemed advantageous to evoke their names.

When looking at the complex messages of early Mesopotamian royal images that have survived to our time, it is helpful to keep in mind the larger picture of how royal charisma was designed not only in extant texts, but also how it might have been designed in live media and ritual in its day, including sensuous aspects of the royal body. In order to provide an adequate context for the discussion, I shall address image carriers and narrative contexts before moving to the royal figure.

The Image Carriers and Their Communicative Context

For understanding the message of any communication, knowledge of its source, channel of transmission, and receiver are vital. The source of royal images was the crown. Extant channels of transmission include statues, foundation figurines, stelae, door plaques, cult vessels and implements, rock reliefs, and cylinder seals. Starting in the later Early Dynastic period (2600-2350 BCE), these image carriers can bear inscriptions, which give us clues regarding their function and purpose. Most were dedicated to a deity and set up in a temple (Braun-Holzinger 1991). Dedicatory objects were ritually consecrated and could receive regular offerings beyond the dedicant's death (Winter 1992; Selz 1997). While some remained in place for centuries (Braun-Holzinger 2004), others were mutilated, destroyed, or carried off by conquering enemies (May

2012). Such treatment underscores their symbolic value as embodiments of power.

Michalowski (2013: 174—175) points out the difficulties in establishing a target audience for royal images set up in temples. Not only have they hardly ever been found in their original setting, but we also lack first-hand sources on who had access to temples: was it the population at large, the elite, or, aside from temple personnel, only a small circle of the elite who profited from temple prebends? Dedicatory inscriptions address only the gods and future generations, kings in particular. Can we trust Hammurabi's invitation to his subjects to come before his stelae to claim their right (Codex Hammurabi xlviii 3–17; see Roth 1995:134), or is this mere rhetoric? Whereas foundation figurines obviously targeted future generations,[3] and small dedicatory objects must have been set up in indoor spaces, I tend to assume that large royal statues and stelae that stood in outdoor spaces of temple compounds also targeted a contemporary audience.[4] The monumental character, combined with symbolic imagery and writing at a time of restricted literacy, all imparted royal authority. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to presume with Michalowski that the surviving images would have had less impact in the ancient propagation of power than other media, such as monumental architecture and performance arts. It should, however, be recalled that statues of deified kings were carried in

---

[3] In contrast to dedicatory objects, metal figurines with building inscriptions representing the royal builder as construction worker were buried in temples' foundations, together with stone tablets repeating the royal inscription (Rashid 1983). They would be found by future kings who restored or re-built the temple in question.
[4] Inscriptions on some royal monuments specifically mention their installation in courtyards (Braun-Holzinger 1991: 238). See also Suter 2019: 402–403.

procession on festivals at least in the Ur III period (Suter 2010: 331). These statues were most likely a composite of various perishable or reusable materials, like divine statues, and have therefore not come down to us.

Reliefs carved onto mountains at the periphery of Mesopotamia celebrate military victories (Börker-Klähn 1982: 44–47, nos. 29–34; Postgate and Roaf 1997). They may have been carved at sites where battles had taken place. Adelheid Otto (2017) has challenged the common view that such reliefs were intended to intimidate the local population. Because they are carved in remote locations, she instead sees the purpose of rock reliefs as being the king's intent to immortalize himself as heroic victor. While this was certainly an important incentive, it does not necessarily exclude the local population as a target. The carved rocks are situated at strategic passageways through the Zagros Mountains, and while the one that is attributable to a Mesopotamian king is facing the mountainous enemy land, local rulers' emulations of this image are directed toward the lowlands. Ironically, the Mesopotamian prototype, the relief at Darband-i-Gawr, lacks an inscription. Since it also lacks the typical frame of such reliefs, it may have never been completed (Strommenger 1963: 84).

Cylinder seals bear inscriptions from the Early Dynastic period on that identify the seal owner by name, often combined with filiation and/or profession and, sometimes, also specify his or her relation to the reigning king (Pittman 2012). They guaranteed identification and authentication in transactions of the state administration and expressed legitimacy and authority in social hierarchy. Cylinder seals were thus ideal vehicles for fostering loyalty to the crown. Conversely, they could—if only on a symbolic level—challenge the regime's claim to absolute power in times of weak rule (e.g., Waetzold 2008; Suter 2013).

How exclusive were these image carriers? While foundation figurines, stelae, and rock reliefs were reserved for royal deeds, statues and other dedicatory objects could also be donated by royal women and other members of the elite, and cylinder seals were available to a wider circle of people within the urban administration. Since inscriptions on dedicatory objects and seals become more frequent and detailed over time, only in the last quarter of the third millennium we are on more certain ground for identifying donors and owners. Although I cannot prove this, it is likely that the circle of patrons fluctuated over time. In view of their small number, high quality, and stylistic homogeneity, the anepigraphic Late Uruk dedicatory objects and seals that include the royal figure may all have been made under royal patronage. For the subsequent periods, inscribed dedicatory objects suggest that the circle of donors included a wider segment of the elite during the long Early Dynastic period of competing

city-states than under the ensuing hegemonies, when it appears to have been confined to the king and his immediate entourage (Braun-Holzinger 1991: 18–21). Also seal images that include a royal figure seem to have belonged to a wider circle of people during the Early Dynastic period than in later times, although this ratio also depended on changing seal imagery.

Royal monuments could stand out in size and material. Only statues of kings reached life-size and larger formats. The earliest example dates to the Late Uruk period (Braun-Holzinger 2007, Plate 4). A fragmentary statue from Qadisiyah, perhaps the capital of Akkad, must have been about 3m tall, surpassing even statues of late Assyrian emperors (Reade 2002: 262–269, no. 5). Over life-sized statues are also attested for Gudea of Lagaš (Suter 2012b: Table 3.2).[5] The stone par excellence for prestigious royal monuments from the late Early Dynastic period on was a hard black stone imported from either side of the Persian Gulf (Reade 2002). Gulf stone was used for statues of kings and a few royal women as well as for stelae and other dedicatory objects of the royal family. Royal inscriptions specifically mention its import, which was equivalent to saying that the king in question controlled important trade routes. The Sumerian poem Lugale, an account of the god Ninurta's 'domestication' of stones, characterizes Gulf stone in terms of strength, heroism, and its suitability for royal images that immortalize the king's name (Selz 2001).

Moreover, royal monuments could be made in series. Although our record is extremely spotty, there is evidence for sculptural programs that conveyed messages beyond single images. Maništušu of Akkad, for example, set up nearly identical images of himself in all major cities of the relatively newly united Mesopotamia as symbols of his authority (Eppihimer 2010). Also stelae were made in series and set up in different locations (Börker-Klähn 1982: 108–110), and the famous Uruk Vase illustrating the authority of a Late Uruk king already existed in several copies (Lindemeyer and Martin 1993: no. 227, Plate 22).

In sum, royal images, especially monumental ones, were symbols of power, yet probably less effective in ancient propaganda than monumental architecture or performance arts. A main incentive behind their creation, much as it also applied to that of monumental architecture, was the king's endeavor to escape oblivion. Upon returning from his journey to the end

---

[5] Differences in size, however, may also depend on other factors: for Gudea, for whom more statues have survived than for any other early Mesopotamian king, there are two distinct groups: those which he dedicated to major deities of the pantheon in the capital's temple district are life-sized or over life-sized, while those which he dedicated to his personal god in what seems to have been a palace chapel are much smaller (Suter 2012b, : Table 3.2 and Figure 3.7).

of the world in search of eternal life, which he did not attain, Gilgameš invites his audience to admire the monumental architecture of his city Uruk. 'To establish his name in remote days,' as the above-mentioned poem Lugale puts it, gave the king an avenue for outliving the inevitable termination of a common human life (Radner 2005). Thus, to some degree, we are included among the intended audience of ancient Mesopotamian royal images.

Narrative Contexts of Royal Images

Mesopotamian narrative images tend to be emblematic and often include several layers of meaning. Ann Perkins (1957) distinguished two types of scenes: more allusive 'culminating' scenes that depict the climax of a series of events, and more explicit 'episodic' scenes that juxtapose a selection of successive events of a story. Episodic scenes occur only in more extensive narratives, usually combined with a culminating scene. From the point of view of composition, culminating scenes then consist of a core that could be extended to include additional details, figures, or episodic scenes, as Hansen (1963: 161–162) showed for banquets.[6] Episodic scenes lend more credibility to the emblematic, ideological message of the culminating scene. Even if the inscription on a carved monument refers to a specific battle, temple construction, or law promulgation, the imagery seems to go beyond historicity, signifying generic royal ideals.

The contexts in which kings are depicted can be subsumed under three basic themes: the protector, the provider, and the patron. The protector theme comprises hunting and military expeditions, both of which offered an ideal arena for demonstrating masculine strength and power. One of the most frequent royal epithets designated the king as 'strong man' (Suter 2012a: 437). The royal hunt is attested in the Late Uruk period, both on a stela (Figure 1.1) and on cylinder seals (Braun-Holzinger 2007: nos. FS 4, 20–21?, 33). It evoked the king's role as protector of the civilized world as later exemplified, for example, in Šulgi Hymn B (ll. 71–76) where the king prides himself on putting the shepherds at ease by subduing lions (ETCSL 2.4.2.02). In contrast to the poetic tradition, the royal hunt disappeared from visual arts until Assyrian kings revived it in the first millennium BCE (Otto 2013). From the Early Dynastic period on, the combat against wild animals was relegated to the mythic sphere of supernatural heroes. Regardless of whether the protagonists were kings or heroes, the combat against wild animals represented the dichotomy between culture and nature, between the order of civilization and the forces of chaos. The heroic combat was one of the most popular subjects on seals throughout the third
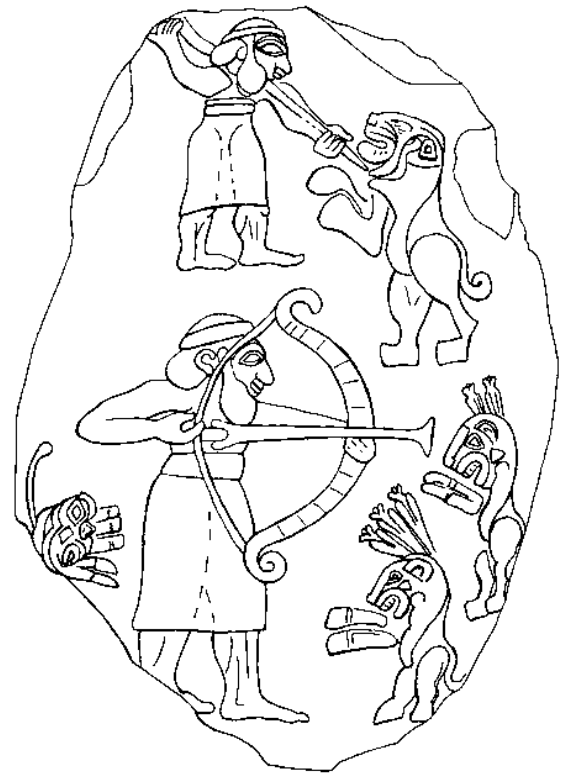

Figure 1.1. Lion Hunt Stela from Uruk, 80 cm high
(after Börker-Klähn 1982: Figure. 1a).

millennium, predominating Early Dynastic and Akkad glyptic. It was apt for royal seals and royal gift seals, since it encapsulated a royal ideal (Zettler 2007: 11).

Triumph over the defeated enemy can be considered the culmination of a successful military expedition. In line with the preference for culminating scenes, the early Mesopotamian king is more often shown triumphant after the battle than in the act of slaying his enemy. In the Late Uruk period, the royal warrior is extant only on cylinder seals (Braun-Holzinger 2007: nos. FS 17–18, 25). They depict the king confronting war captives kept at bay by armed men, thus evoking his control over life or death.[7] The war theme does not resurface until the last phase of the Early Dynastic period. From then on it becomes a preferred subject on monumental stelae and statue pedestals. Just prior to the first victory stela dates the luxuriously inlaid Standard of Ur, which, like Late Uruk seals, depicts the king confronting war captives, yet expands the scene to include the king's charioteers and infantrymen leaving the battlefield before the long

---

[6] See also Suter 2000: 211–225.

[7] While his domination is underlined by the spear that he holds in upright position, the fact that this spear is seen pointing to the ground may have implied that the captives were not condemned to death, as was suggested to me at the Jerusalem conference. Only one seal from Susa depicts him shooting at enemies in front of a structure that probably represented a temple as pars pro toto for the enemy city.
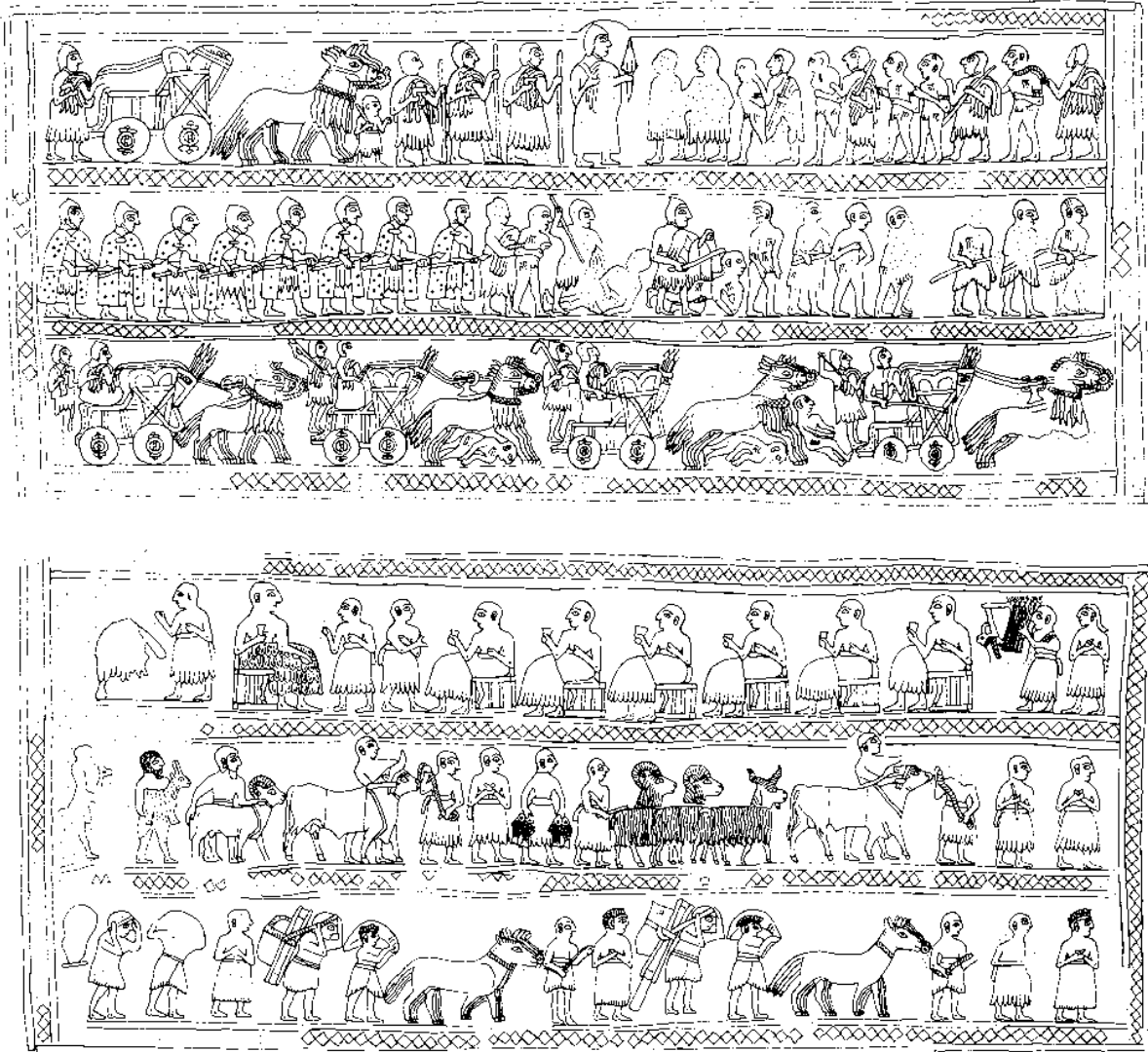
Figure 1.2. Standard of Ur, 20.3 cm high (drawing by author).

parade of captives, and the royal chariot, together with a group of generals and attendants, behind the king (Figure 1: 2) (Braun-Holzinger 2007: no. FD 30).

By the late Early Dynastic period, deities begin to be represented in anthropomorphic form in imagery. On Eanatum's victory stelae, the king is seen leading his men into battle, while the divine patron of Lagaš, Ningirsu, triumphs over the defeated enemies, holding them in a net, like captured animals, and hitting their leader on the head (Figure 1.3) (Braun-Holzinger 2007: no. FD 9). Sargon of Akkad (or his personal god) offers such a net of captives to his patron goddess Ištar (Braun-Holzinger 2007: nos. AKK 1–2). The inclusion of deities legitimized the king's war: it attributed his victory to his good standing with the state's divine patron and underscored his role as his/her representative.

Naram-Sin of Akkad introduced the powerful image of the king treading on his enemies (Figure 1.4) (Braun-Holzinger 2007: no. AKK 8).[8] Victory monuments of Ur III kings are known only through copies of texts that were inscribed on them (Suter 2010: 330). An exception is the anonymous rock relief at Darband-i-Gawr (Braun-Holzinger 2007: no. AB 14), which emulates the image of Naram-Sin's Susa Stela and probably represented Šulgi of Ur. It is hardly a coincidence that the first self-deified king and the one who revived self-deification a century later are shown victorious in the absence of anthropomorphic deities. There must, however, also have existed Ur III victory monuments that included a divine figure, since rock reliefs of Iranian kings, such as Anubanini and Iddi-Sîn, obviously emulated them (Figure 1.5) (Braun-Holzinger 2007: nos. AB 15–18).

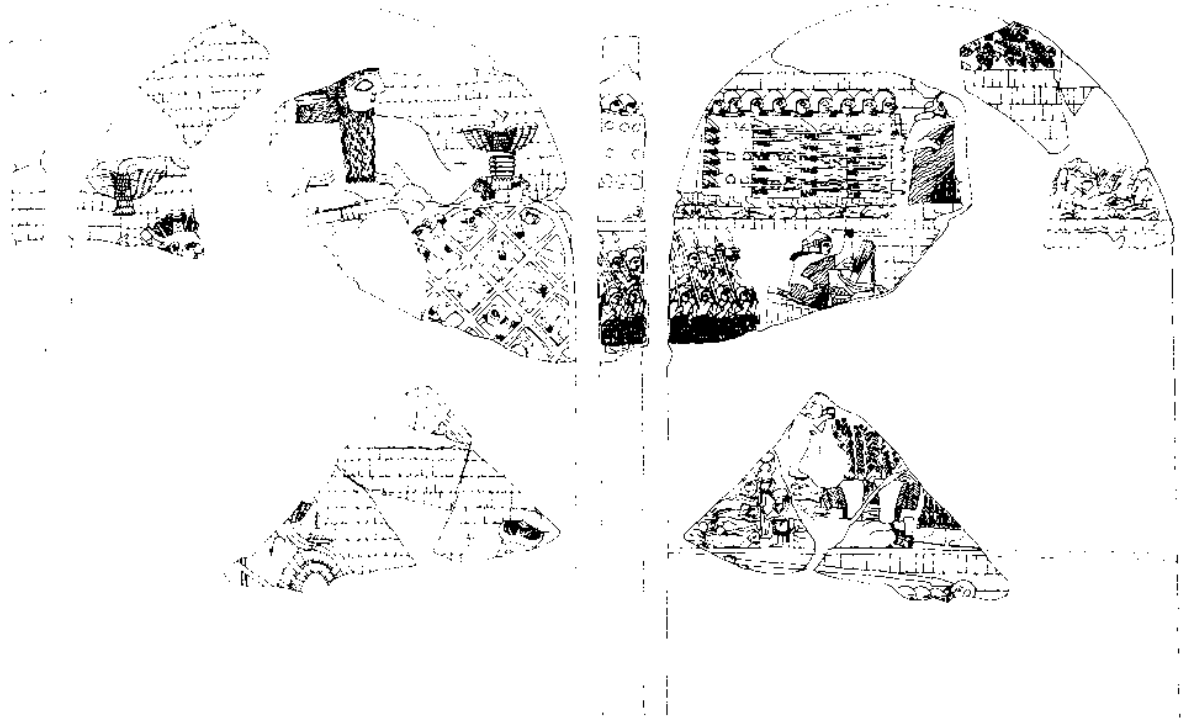[8] On this motif, see Bahrani 2008: 101–135.

Figure 1.3. Eannatum Stelae from Girsu, 180 cm high
(after Becker 1985: Figure. 1).

These rock reliefs depict the king treading on his defeated enemy in front of a goddess who offers insignia of kingship to him.

The provider theme revolved around the king's responsibility for economic wealth and justice in his realm. This, in turn, depended on his relationship with the gods, for whose care and feeding he also was responsible. The figure carrying a kid to a deity is the most concise embodiment of the king as provider: it evoked his role as shepherd of his people, feeder of the gods, and mediator between human and divine spheres, since sacrificial kids were used for divination (Suter 1991–93). The kid-carrier is attested in statuary, stone reliefs, and glyptic since the earlier Early Dynastic period and may go back to the Late Uruk period.[9] Descriptions of royal images suggest that this icon persisted into Old Babylonian times (Braun-Holzinger 2007: 117–119).[10]

In other images focusing on the provider theme, the first urban societies foregrounded agricultural productivity, while from the later Early Dynastic period on, the emphasis shifted to temple building and law promulgation. A fragmentary Late Uruk stela represented production activities, much like contemporary cylinder seals (Becker 1993: Plate 39, no. 785). The Uruk Vase depicts the culmination of agricultural production (Figure 1.6) (Braun-Holzinger 2007: no. FS 1). The king leads a procession of subordinates who bring the fruits of the harvest to the goddess Inana's temple/storehouse, where her female representative receives them; her emblem at the entrance of the structure signals the immanence of the goddess.[11] The Uruk Vase is a good example for the allusive nature and multi-layered meaning of Mesopotamian imagery. The composition, to be read from bottom to top, evoked the social hierarchy of the first urban society. The repetition of crops, livestock, and carriers of produce evoked abundance, the production of surplus, which was a trigger of the urban revolution. The cylindrical shape of the vase, around which the figures endlessly continue, evoked the cyclical recurrence of surplus production and its harvest. The encounter of the king with the goddess' representative evoked both their role as mediator between people and gods, the king's authority, perhaps

---

[9] The Late Uruk king is seen holding a horned quadruped on the Blau Obelisk and on a seal depicting him in Inana's temple/storehouse (Braun-Holzinger 2007: nos. FS 7, 29). On the seal, however, the horned quadruped represents a theriomorphic vessel rather than a live animal.

[10] Although we cannot prove that all anonymous kid-carriers represented rulers, this seems likely to me (contra Braun-Holzinger 2007: 119). A comprehensive study of this figure remains a desideratum.

[11] For a detailed discussion, see Suter 2014.
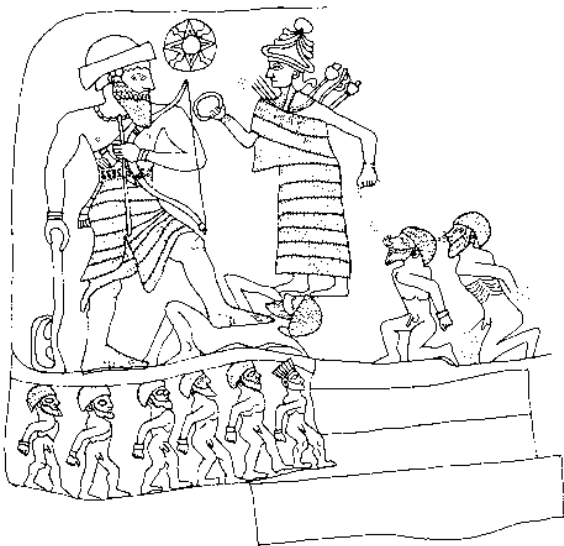
also a wedding procession and procreation. Size and spatial prominence of the royal figure evoked the king's superiority which, in turn, evoked his being in charge of the production and redistribution of surplus, and thus in control of the economy. In a nutshell, a superior man is depicted bringing about prosperity due to his relationship with the goddess and providing for his people, who depend on him. The procession probably had a counterpart in harvest celebrations that transmitted the new ideology to the populace at large.

The provider theme may also be reflected in some earlier Early Dynastic banquet scenes that I discuss under patronage below; they may represent a festival celebrating the renewal of the agricultural cycle.

From the Early Dynastic period on, kings pride themselves on building temples. Royal inscriptions and poems, such as Gudea's Cylinder Inscriptions (Edzard 1997), present temple building as a royal prerogative that required divine sanction and was rewarded with divine blessing, namely the bestowal of a long life on the king and prosperity on his people. Ideologically, temples were the gods' abodes; without them they would leave the city and withdraw their patronage. Economically, they constituted an important factor of revenue, since they owned land and manpower, running estates and manufactures. Visually, ziggurats signified the power of the establishment. Moreover, through the inscription of their name on foundation deposits, elements of the structure (bricks, clay nails, door sockets, etc.), and dedicatory objects set up in the temple, Mesopotamian kings hoped to escape oblivion.

A door plaque of Ur-Nanše encapsulates temple construction and inauguration in two superimposed images of the king: the basket carrier stands for construction work, the seated cup-holder for banquet (Braun-Holzinger 2007: no. FD 1). Each time the king is followed by his cupbearer and faces a group of people composed of his children and functionaries; 'there is thus every reason to assume that a majority of the most important functions of state were filled by members of the royal family and their relatives' (Kuhrt 1995: 36). As in the case of the door plaque, also the inscription on Ur-Nanše's stela from al-Hiba apparently commemorated temple building, together with the import of building materials, implying control over trade routes (Figure 1.7) (Braun-Holzinger 2007: no. FD 5). The main image depicts the king approaching, together with a male entourage, an enthroned goddess. This presentation scene can be understood as the climax of the narrative, namely the king receiving divine blessings for his temple building. At the same time, it recapitulated the ideological message that temple building was a royal prerogative that required divine sanction. Stelae of Gudea and Ur-Namma, all

Figure 1.4. Naramsin Stela from Susa, 200 cm high (after Winter 2004: Figure 2).

Figure 1.5. Anubanini Rock Relief, life-sized king (drawing by author).
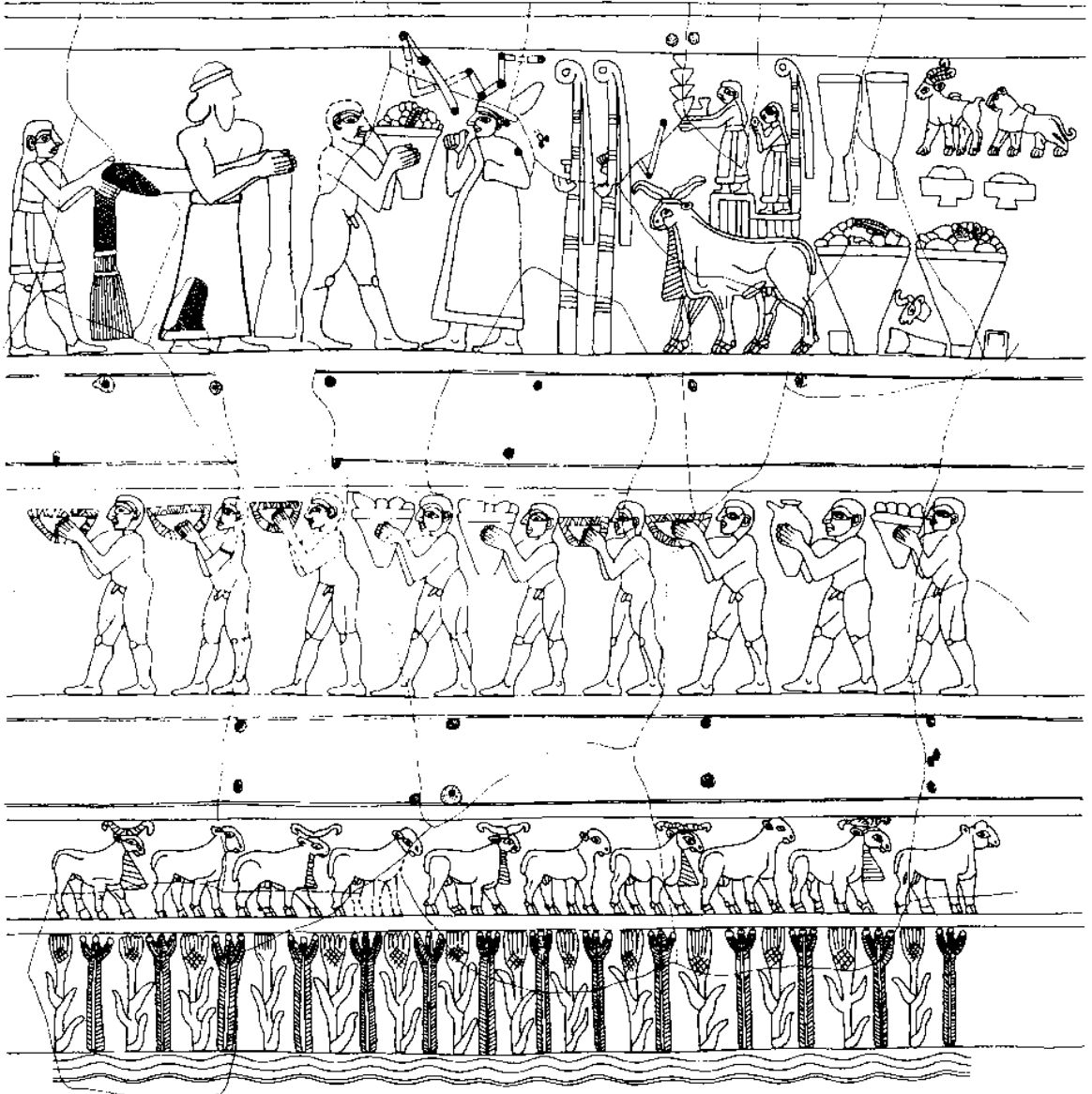
Figure 1.6. Uruk Vase, 105 cm high
(drawing by author based on Lindemeyer and Martin 1993: Plate. 19-25).

fragmentary, depicted extended versions of the subject with presentation scenes at the top and selective episodes of the construction and inauguration in lower registers (Suter 2000; Canby 2001). Some presentation scenes include a vessel overflowing with liquid to symbolize the prosperity that the gods bestowed on the king (Figure 1.8).

Although Early Dynastic kings began to set legal standards, the earliest law codes date to the Ur III Dynasty (Yang 1991). Textual sources inform us that they were inscribed on stelae set up in the major cities of the realm, like the Codex Hammurabi (Michalowski and Walker 1989). The top of an anonymous stela from Susa (Figure 1.9) (Börker-Klähn 1982: no. 100),

which depicts a scene similar to the Hammurabi Stela, probably belonged to a law stela of the late Ur III or ensuing Isin-Larsa period with the law code inscribed below the image. It shows an enthroned god bestowing royal insignia upon a king who pours a libation before him. This image conveyed at the same time that the king cared for the gods, that he was installed in office by them, and that his authority to dispense justice was, therefore, divinely sanctioned. Law stelae are good examples of the combined effect of writing, symbolic imagery, and the very medium itself that worked together to express royal power (Michalowski 1990: 64).

Maintaining power requires a support system. Patronage was a means of fostering the elite's loyalty to
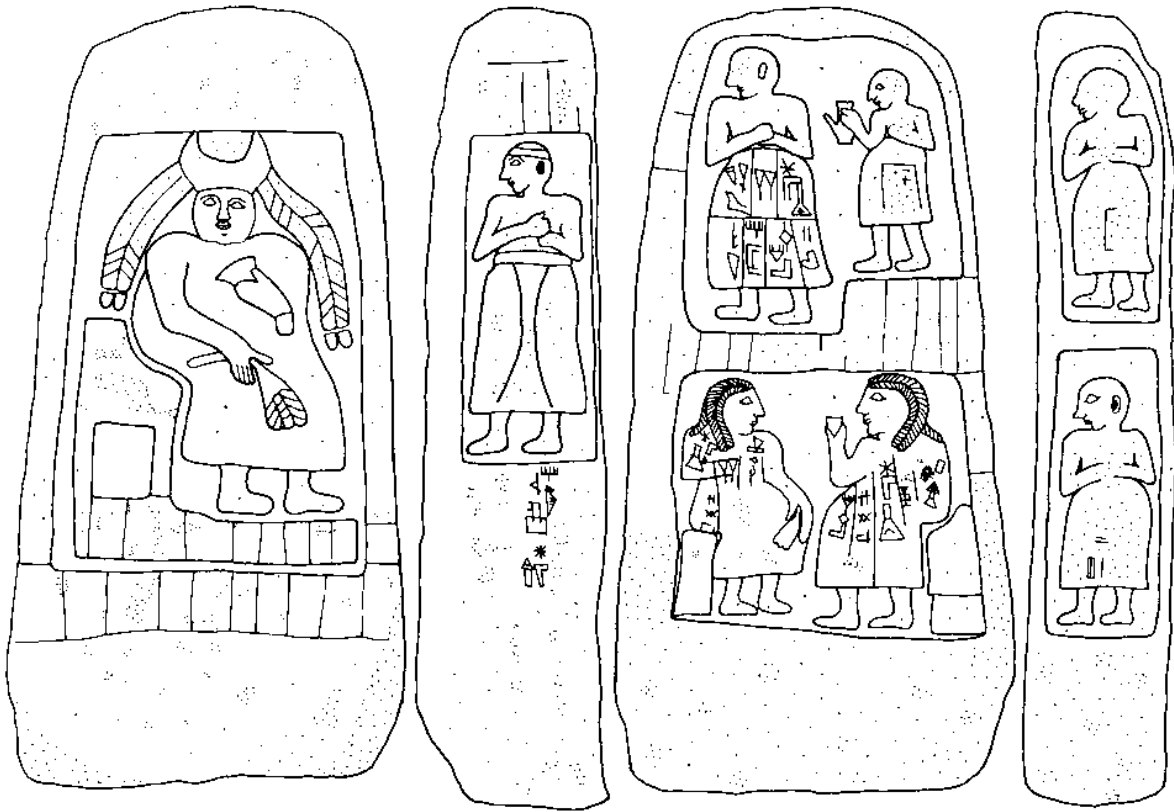
13

Figure 1.7. Ur-Nanše Stela from al-Hiba, 91 cm high
(drawing by author).

the crown. This concept found expression in two motifs: the banquet and the audience. While the banquet was prevalent on Early Dynastic door plaques and cylinder seals and lived on in Akkad glyptic, the audience scene arose in Akkad glyptic and became standard on seals of Ur III functionaries. Since the message of these motifs was primarily aimed at the royal entourage and state functionaries, it is not surprising that they predominate in glyptic.

Communal drinking formed part of a symbolic system of ceremonies that cemented the recognition of authority and hierarchy (Michalowski 1994). Early Dynastic door plaques depict banquets that were apparently held on regular cult festivals, more specifically the New Year festival, celebrating the renewal of the agricultural cycle (Figure 1.10).[12] If so, they reflected not only royal patronage, but also the king's role as provider. The protagonists are the king and his wife, often holding vegetal elements that symbolized procreation, hence the presence of the queen. The royal couple can be accompanied by additional banqueters, entertained by music and wrestling matches, and served drinks and food by attendants. Additional episodes include

servants bringing beer, food, and animals for slaughter, or depict boat or chariot scenes that may allude to processions preceding the banquet. The chariot may alternatively have evoked a preceding military victory.

Banquets were also celebrated on special occasions, such as a temple inauguration or military victory. The former applies, for example, to the banqueting king on the above-mentioned door plaque of Ur-Nanše. The banquet of Ur-Nanše's wife and daughter on the al-Hiba stela (Figure 1.7) may also have evoked a temple inauguration, since the stela apparently also recorded temple construction. In addition, this subsidiary scene must also have evoked procreation signaled by the same vegetal attribute as depicted in the just discussed royal banquets. Ur-Nanše's wife and daughter share both the symbol of procreation and the drinking cup with the enthroned goddess whom the king and his men approach.

One of the most extended banquet scenes is depicted on the Standard's reverse side (Figure 1.2). Whereas the parade of foreigners bearing tribute on the bottom register links this banquet to the military victory depicted on the obverse, the middle register depicts a procession of men taking livestock to the banquet,

---

[12] Suter 2017: 348—353. On New Year festivals, which also included the renewal of kingship, see Sallaberger 1998–2001.
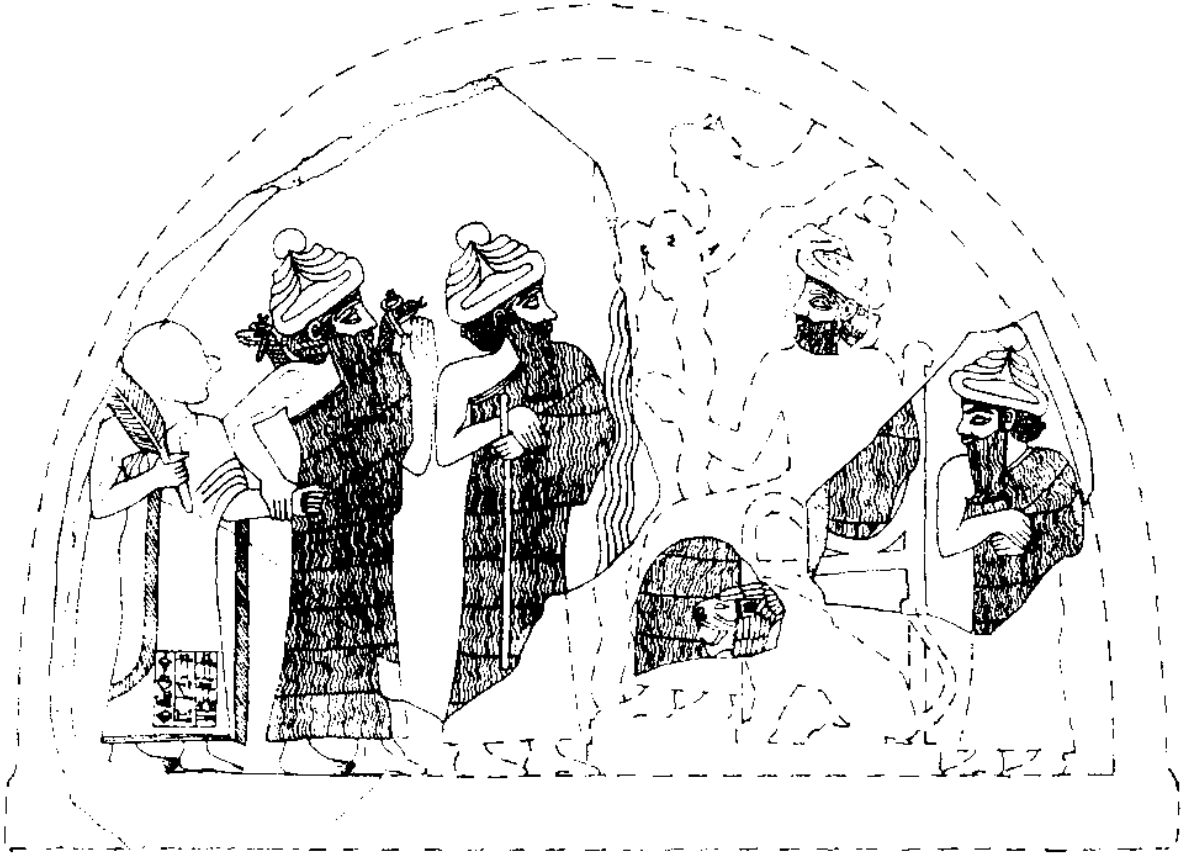
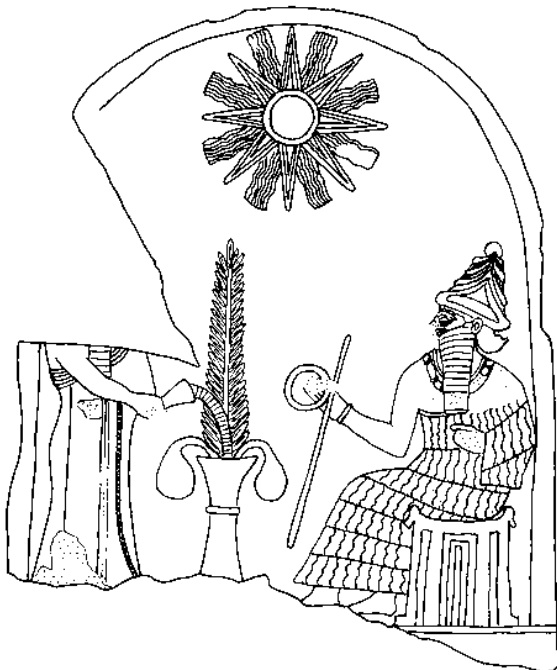Figure 1.8. Gudea Stela Top Berlin, 70 cm high (drawing by author).

Figure 1.9. Stela Top from Susa, 67 cm high
(drawing by author).

probably for both sacrifice and consumption,[13] and the top register depicts the banquet of the king and his entourage. The composition of this banquet scene manifests the king's authority and superiority: he stands out not only by confronting a long row of male banqueters, but also by being depicted larger and more elaborately dressed than his subordinates, by having his personal attendant, and by being accompanied by another important, now fragmentary, person, who also had a personal attendant and may have represented either his wife or his eldest son. In its entirety, the Standard thus conveyed the king's claims of command over military, economic, and ideological power networks (Michalowski 2013: 176). In view of this complex message, Michalowski wonders about the image carrier. Although we ignore its function, there can be no doubt about its luxurious nature, being inlaid in precious, imported materials. Before it was deposited in the royal tomb, this object may well have been on display in the palace, where it would have been seen precisely by the king's entourage.

---

[13] For obvious reasons there is hardly any information on what happened to food and drink offered to the gods; one exception is a ritual text from 13th century BCE Emar; see Sallaberger 2012: 168–169.
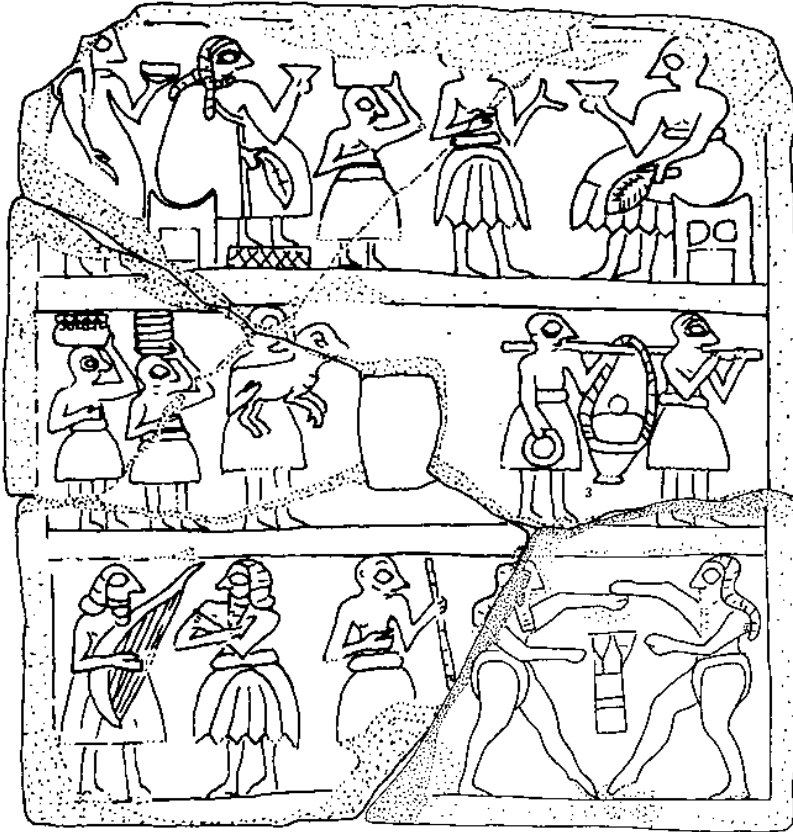
15

Figure 1.10. Door Plaque from Khafaje, 20 cm high (reconstructed after Boese 1971: Plate. IX no. CS 7 + Plate. XL no. K 7).

Royal audience scenes depict the seal owner standing before a usually enthroned royal (Figure 1.11).[14] The cup or small vessel that Ur III kings extend to their subordinates symbolized patronage (Michalowski 1994: 36–37). Seals depicting royal audience scenes belonged to the upper echelons of the establishment; many of them were royal gifts, i.e. gifted to the seal owner by the king or a close member of the royal family. In the latter case, their inscription mentions the royal superior before the seal owner and qualifies the latter as his servant or as recipient of the seal. Such seals expressed the recognition of authority and hierarchy both in text and image, as well as in the medium itself. The gradual replacement of the banquet by the audience scene, the transformation of which Zajdowski (2013) delineates, may have been related to increasing bureaucracy and hierarchy in centralized states and to the king's self-deification.

The Royal Figure

Eva Braun-Holzinger (2007: 195–199) concludes her survey of the early Mesopotamian royal image by suggesting that there was neither a clear royal iconography nor royal insignia. In her view there

existed only very few features that distinguished the king from other mortals. Did the early Mesopotamian king lack charisma in visual images? Despite her command of the material and many fine observations, I find her approach too rigid. She focuses on garments and hairstyles with little consideration to scale and composition, and she dismisses features that are not absolutely exclusive to the royal figure. It is true that there were no unchanging regalia that distinguished the king form his subordinates as, for example, the crowns of Egyptian pharaohs. But then Mesopotamia was never as static as Egypt.

In my view the elevation of the royal figure above other mortals was expressed by means of spatial exposure, scale, regalia, and label inscriptions that identified the king by name. When regalia and labels were occasionally extended to other members of the royal family, it was because the royal family was an extension of the king. In literary texts, regalia were a fluid group of items, including headgears, thrones, scepters, and sometimes also weapons and garments (Sallaberger 2002: 87–88). Since kingship originated in heaven, these regalia were associated with both divine royals and their earthly representatives. In images, their shapes varied with the identity of the holder and were subject to changes over time (Suter 2015: 513–514).

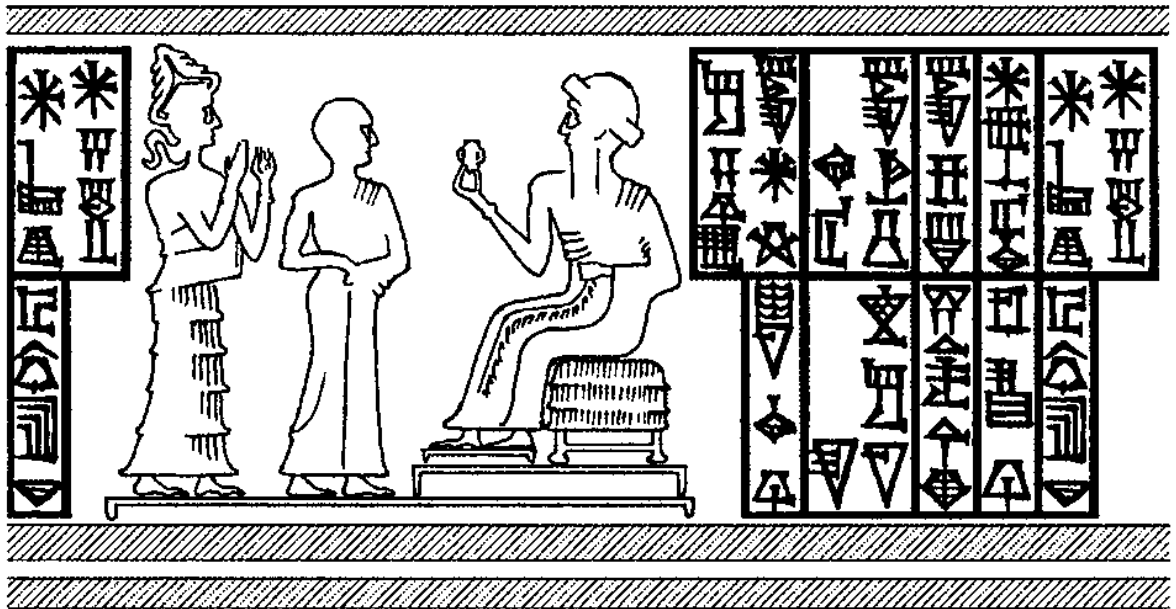[14] Mayr and Owen 2004, and Suter 2016: 42, both with further literature.

Figure 1.11. Seal that Ur-nigara received from Ibbi-Sin of Ur, 3.6 cm high
(after Mayr and Owen 2004: 168 no. 24).

Allusions to the king's godlikeness could develop only once divine figures were represented in anthropomorphic form, a process that began in late Early Dynastic times and thrived in the large mythological repertoire created in glyptic under the kings of Akkad. Godlikeness was evoked by an exposed, hero-like body, and by emulating typically divine hairstyle, beard style, regalia, stance, and/or place in the composition.[15] Such features were always combined with features typical of the mortal king so that god and king were always distinguishable. More subtle ways of evoking godlikeness assimilated a divine figure to the royal figure or divine regalia to royal regalia.

Not all above-listed features were present at all times. Rather, the degree of explicitness of the king's supra-human and godlike status visualized in images varied over the first 1200 years of Mesopotamian history, just as did the exclusivity of his nexus to heaven or the circle of patrons of the arts. In order to delineate the fluctuations, I will review idiosyncrasies and godlikeness of the royal figure in chronological order.

In addition to scale and prominent place in the composition, several exclusive features make the Late Uruk king visibly stand out from his subordinates: he is the only figure in Late Uruk visual arts—both in sculpture and glyptic—who wears a headband or circlet, long hair tugged up in a bulky bun, and an impressive beard (Figures 1.1, 1.6) (Braun-Holzinger 2007: Plates 1–15). Moreover, he wears a kilt that is either the longest

or the only patterned one in the respective image. At this time, only members of the elite are seen wearing garments. If the gift that the king takes to the goddess on the Uruk Vase was a gigantic sash, then the sharing of a patterned garment of king and goddess could have alluded to the king's godlikeness even before gods were represented in anthropomorphic form (Suter 2014: 559–560).

During the long, yet little-known earlier phase of the Early Dynastic period, kings were hardly distinguished from their entourage. In banquet scenes on door plaques and seals, they are seen wearing the same attire and hairstyle as other elite men, and sit on a par with their wives, with whom they share the vegetal attribute (Figure 1.10). Similarly, scale differences among Early Dynastic statues, which never reach life-size,[16] do not seem to depend much on gender or social rank at this time. Gudrun Selz (1983: 436–487, esp. 456–457) argued that the banqueting royal couple substituted for the gods, for whom they consumed drink and food at cult festivals. When gods began to be depicted in anthropomorphic form, they are usually seen enthroned, like banqueters, and occasionally hold a drinking cup and/or the vegetal attribute evoking procreation (Figure 1.7).[17] A two-registered, Akkad-period seal illustrates the mirroring of the earthly banquet in the divine sphere (Buchanan 1981: no. 463).

---

[15] On godlike features of ancient Near Eastern rulers in the visual record, see also Winter 2008.

[16] Braun-Holzinger (2007: 75) doubts the identification as kings and/or mortals of two possible exceptions, namely the about life-sized statue of Šumbeli (formerly read Tagge) from Mari, and the over life-sized statue form Jebelet el-Beyda (Marchetti and Marchesi 2011: nos. 11, 15).

[17] See also Braun-Holzinger 2013: nos. Relief 2, 4–9; 12; Siegel 6–8.

Thus, even if the royal couple on Early Dynastic door plaques stands out only by its place in the top register, it represented the gods on earth.

In the last phase of the Early Dynastic period, kings begin once more to stand out more clearly from other mortals. The king on the Standard (Figure 1.2) and Ur-Nanše on the above-mentioned door plaque are not only larger in size, but also wear tufted kilts in contrast to the plain ones of other men in the respective images, and the king of Ur's military attire, unfortunately damaged, reaches the floor unlike any other garment. Moreover, these kings dominate the scene by confronting rows of subordinates, and a circle of servants further emphasizes their superiority.

By the end of this period, the king's charisma becomes more pronounced and he emulates divine features. Braun-Holzinger (2007: 64) observes that in the transition from the Early Dynastic to the Akkad period, the kings' attire and hairstyle coincided with those of the gods.[18] Eanatum is distinguished from his men not only by spatial exposure and over-towering size, but also by the double chignon and a large, tufted scarf (Figure 1.3). The chignon occurs combined with an elaborately braided hairstyle on the gold helmet from the Royal Cemetery at Ur and the statue of Išqi-Mari of Mari (Braun-Holzinger 2007: no. FD 18). Išqi-Mari combines this hairstyle with a long beard and a tufted garment covering one shoulder. His hairstyle, beard, and attire thus coincided with those of gods so that only the absence of the horned crown distinguished him from them.[19] Although Sargon of Akkad looks similar on his victory stela (Braun-Holzinger 2007: no. AKK 1), he seems to wear a kilt combined with a light scarf of the same material over his chest, and a double chignon tightened by a headband. Attire, hairstyle, and beard were exclusive to him, and the latter two assimilated him to gods.

The extant images of Naram-Sin of Akkad show him in diverse attires and hairstyles, all of which are exclusive to him and assimilate him to both gods and heroes (Figure 1.4; Braun-Holzinger 2007: nos. AKK 8, 14, 15; Hansen 2002). While the flounced robe on the Pir Hüseyn Stela was a divine garment, the light dress on the Susa Stela, exposing his well-formed, masculine body recalls nude heroes in contemporary glyptic (Winter 1996). His attire on the Rosen Mould, the authenticity of which is controversial, also exposes his muscular chest, seat

of physical strength and signifier of masculinity (Suter 2012a). He invariably wears a long, elaborate beard, like heroes and gods, while his men on the Susa Stela sport short beards or are smooth faced. On the copper head from Nineveh, which can tentatively be attributed to him, and on the Pir Hüseyn Stela, his hair is tied up into the traditional double chignon, combined either with a headband, like Sargon, or with a beehive-shaped cap.[20] By contrast, the Susa Stela and the Rosen Mould show him wearing long hair down the shoulder, like Eanatum, under a helmet with a pair of horns that is reminiscent of, although not identical to, the horned crown of deities, principal marker of divinity.

To our knowledge, the first Mesopotamian king who deified himself is the only one who had himself depicted with divine horns. The Susa Stela, which an Elamite king carried off from Mesopotamia, presents the most charismatic image that has survived of an early Mesopotamian king. Naram-Sin is a lone figure above, rather than in front of his soldiers, and distinctly larger. His superior position is further emphasized by both his men's upward movement and their looking up at him, while defeated enemies fall down to their death on the other side. The empty space surrounding him emphasizes his spatial isolation: his victory 'was a solitary achievement' (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1987: 164). The king not only wears horns, but also rises like the sun-god and flaunts his body like a nude hero while triumphing over defeated foes. The closest parallel for such charismatic representation is the once orally performed story of Gilgameš and Aka, known to us only in a compressed written version. As Miquel Civil (1999–2000: 187) observed,

> The whole point of the tale is to show the supernatural powers of G(ilgameš). He alone, by its sole presence, appearing with his radiating aura at the top of the city wall, overwhelms the Kish army. All the previous episodes are there to make clear how no one can truly help him, he acts all alone, self-sufficient, like a true epic hero.

It is no coincidence then that Naram-Sin's apology for self-deification is inscribed on the statue of a hero. This six-locked nude hero appears in Akkad-period glyptic both as protector and provider: he fights wild animals that attack domesticated ones and guards Enki's sweet water, symbol of prosperity.[21]

After the fall of Akkad, Lagaš—although not in a vacuum as the inscriptions of its Second Dynasty make us believe—played an important role in the

---

[18] While I subscribe to her conclusion, I do not agree with all her arguments. See Suter 2012a: 440.

[19] Two more statues wear the same attire, hairstyle, and beard: an anonymous kid-carrier (Marchetti and Marchesi 2011a: Plate 41) and a statue dedicated for the life of Meskigala of Adab (Marchetti and Marchesi 2011a:Plate 53: 6–7). In contrast to Braun-Holzinger (2007: 59) and Marchetti and Marchesi (2011: 143), I would not exclude the possibility that this latter statue represented the king rather than the dedicant.

[20] This cap or helmet has been analogized to a number of imprecise comparisons; the closest parallels are, in fact, heroes in contest scenes on cylinder seals; see Braun-Holzinger 2007: 92–93.

[21] On this hero, see Wiggermann 1992: 164–66, and now also Costello 2010, although not all of her conclusions are convincing.

intermezzo between the two hegemonies over a united Mesopotamia.[22] Its kings, of whom Gudea is best-known, never outwardly claimed hegemony or divine status. While wearing a traditional garment of elite men, the fringed robe, Gudea introduced several new regalia: the brimmed cap, a new type of throne, and what may have been a scepter in the shape of a palm branch (Figure 1.8). In addition, he created new royal figures in statuary, namely the temple builder with plan and stylus and the king in possession of god-given prosperity symbolized by the overflowing vase.[23] Gudea eschewed the godlike beard, as well as exposing his body in the manner of a hero, and made a point of having his statues carved in stone rather than made of composite materials, like divine images. Instead, he devised implicit ways of evoking his godlikeness. A door plaque dedicated to his personal god Ningišzida assimilates a minor god to his own image by stripping him off his divine headgear and beard, and a stela fragment depicts temple furniture for Ningirsu in the shape of his own throne rather than a divine throne, thus likening Lagaš's divine patron to Lagaš's king, in parallel to his poetic inscriptions.

The kings of the Third Dynasty of Ur combined the Lagašite ceremonial gear—fringed robe and brimmed cap, although worn on short hair rather than a bald head—with the Akkadian beard, and introduced a new type of throne. Cap, throne, and beard distinguished them from other men. Their subordinates employed in state administration are shown bald-headed and beardless on their seals, while musicians, wrestlers, and possibly also construction workers on Ur-Namma's stelae wear short beards. Šulgi introduced a new version of the fringed robe that exposed part of his chest, and from then on, Ur III kings occasionally wear the flounced robe of deities or expose their body in a similar way as Naram-Sin. Although no victory monuments have survived, except for the above-mentioned rock relief at Darband-i-Gawr, there are abundant indications to suggest that with Šulgi's self-deification the visual representation of Ur III kings became similarly charismatic as that of Naram-Sin of Akkad.[24]

That the exposed body evoked heroes and the beard godlikeness is evident not only by comparison with visual representations of heroes and gods, especially in glyptic images, but also in songs praising Ur III kings and other literary compositions that associate a shining chest and lapis lazuli beard with virility and sexual allure of both kings and gods (Suter 2012a). The delivery of lapis lazuli for a statue of Ibbi-Sin indicates that lapis lazuli beards were not mere figurative language, but physically incorporated in now lost, composite statues of Ur III kings. Ibbi-Sin's occasional beardlessness in glyptic images may be a case of symbolical challenge to the regime's claim of absolute power (Suter 2013: 322–323). Further features that evoked the Ur III king's divinity, all attested in glyptic, include their adoption of the deity's place in the composition (compare Figure 1.11 with Figures 1.7–9), and occasionally also that of a divine weapon and/or the ascending stance of the sun-god, who is particularly linked to the lapis lazuli beard. The association with the sun-god, apparently going back to Naram-Sin, aimed at casting the king as conduit of the course of destiny for his people (Polonsky 2000).

Conclusions

Physical images of kings were only one element in a bigger picture of royal charisma as outlined at the outset. Except perhaps for the first urban society, which did not yet use written texts in the service of royal ideology, these images may have been more a reflection of charisma than intended to create it, since their main function was to keep alive the memory of individual kings in future generations. Nevertheless, royal images pictured royal charisma, and different carriers reached different segments of society. Composite statues of hegemonic kings that have not survived, and probably to some extent also monumental stone statues and stelae, reached the populace at home, rock reliefs neighboring foreigners at the fringes of the realm, smaller stone sculpture set up inside temples and luxury goods on display in palaces elite circles, and cylinder seals functionaries and bureaucrats of the government.

Early Mesopotamian royal images conveyed for the first time the ideology that the sovereign's authority was rooted in his role as mediator between heaven and earth. A repertoire of motifs that represented him as divinely sanctioned provider and protector materialized in the first urban society and was further developed in succeeding periods. The degree of explicitness of his supra-human and godlike status and the exclusivity of his nexus to heaven fluctuated over the first 1200 years of Mesopotamian history. They were most pronounced in images of the first urban society and again under the two hegemonies over Mesopotamia toward the end of the discussed era, while earlier Early Dynastic city-state rulers contented themselves in serving as proxies for deities before these were visualized in images, and Lagaš II kings alluded in a more subtle way to their extraordinary status. Godlike features were not restricted to deified kings, since kingship was always sacred. An obvious reason for the explicit charisma of

---

[22] For new assessments of the historical context, see now Michalowski 2013: 177–185, and Sallaberger and Schrakamp 2015: 113–130.

[23] The fringed robe and brimmed cap became standard for kings in ceremonial contexts for the next 200 years, whereas Gudea's throne and possible scepter remained unparalleled, as did—as far as we know—the new royal statue types. On Gudea's self-representation, see now Suter 2015.

[24] For a detailed study on extant and lost images of Ur III kings, see Suter 2010.

self-deified kings of Akkad and the Third Dynasty of Ur was the need in those particular periods for legitimizing central power, and the same may have applied to Late Uruk kings who, in addition, created royal ideology for the first time and in the absence of royal inscriptions.

Two archetypical royal figures lived on for several centuries beyond the third millennium: the worshipper carrying a sacrificial animal and the heroic warrior.[25] They correspond to the two main themes of royal images: the provider and the protector. Although the kid-carrier goes back to Early Dynastic or even Late Uruk times, and the heroic warrior to Naram-Sin, both figures appear in Ur III manifestations on Old Babylonian terracottas and cylinder seals. Terracottas were votives of common people, while seals had by then taken on an amuletic quality. Thus, in the aftermath of hegemonic kings who had cast themselves in the role of protective spirits of their subordinates, two archetypical early Mesopotamian royal figures assumed a new life as impersonal protective spirits of later generations. They bespeak the charisma that Old Babylonian people attributed to bygone early Mesopotamian kings.

Acknowledgment

References

Algaze, G. 2008. *Ancient Mesopotamia at the Dawn of Civilization: The Evolution of an Urban Landscape.* Chicago.

Bahrani, Z. 2008. *Rituals of War: The Body and Violence in Mesopotamia.* New York.

Becker, A. 1985. 'Neusumerische Renaissance? Wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Philologie und Archäologie.' *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 16: 229–316.

Becker, A. 1993. *Uruk Kleinfunde 1: Stein* (Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka Endberichte 6) Mainz.

Börker-Klähn, J. 1982. *Altvorderasiatische Bildstelen und vergleichende Felsreliefs* (Baghdader Forschungen 4). Mainz.

Braun-Holzinger, E.A. 1991. *Mesopotamische Weihgaben der frühdynastischen bis altbabylonischen Zeit* (Heidelberger Studien zum alten Orient 3). Heidelberg.

Braun-Holzinger, E.A. 2004. Kultkontinuität an der Wende vom 3. zum 2. Jt.: Archäologie. In: Meyer J.-W. and Sommerfeld, W., eds. 2000 v. Chr.: *politische, wirtschaftliche und kulturelle Entwicklung im Zeichen einer Jahrtausendwende.* Saarbrücken: 119–132.

Braun-Holzinger, E.A. 2007. *Das Herrscherbild in Mesopotamien und Elam: spätes 4. bis frühes 2. Jt. V. Chr.* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 342). Münster.

Braun-Holzinger, E.A. 2013. *Frühe Götterdarstellungen in Mesopotamien* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 261). Fribourg.

Buchanan, B. 1981. *Early Near Eastern Seals in the Yale Babylonian Collection.* New Haven.

Canby, J.V. 2001. *The 'Ur-nammu' Stela* (University Museum Monograph 110). Philadelphia.

Civil, M. 1999–2000. Reading Gilgameš. *Aula Orientalis* 17–18: 179–189.

Costello, S.K. 2010. The Mesopotamian 'Nude Hero': Context and Interpretations. In: Counts, D.B. and Arnold, B., eds. *The Master of Animals in Old World Iconography.* Budapest: 25–35.

Edzard, D.O. 1997. *Gudea and His Dynasty* (The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Early Periods 3.1). Toronto.

Eppihimer, M. 2010. Assembling King and State: The Statues of Manishtushu and the Consolidation of Akkadian Kingship. *American Journal of Archaeology* 114: 365–380.

Frankfort, H.A. 1987 (2nd ed.). *Arrest and Movement: An Essay on Space and Time in the Representational Art of the Ancient Near East.* Cambridge, MA.

Hansen, D.P. 1963. New Votive Plaques from Nippur. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 22: 145–166.

Hansen, D.P. 2002. Through the Love of Ishtar. In: Al-Gailani Werr, L., ed. *Of Pots and Plans: Papers on the Archaeology and History of Mesopotamia and Syria Presented to David Oates in Honour of His 75th Birthday.* London: 91–112.

Kuhrt, A. 1995. *The Ancient Near East: c. 3000–330 BC.* London.

Lindemeyer, E. and Martin, L. 1993. *Kleinfunde im Vorderasiatischen Museum zu Berlin: Steingefässe und Asphalt, Farbreste, Fritte, Glas, Holz, Knochen/Elfenbein, Muschel/Perlmutt/Schnecke* (Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka, Endberichte 9). Mainz.

Marchesi, G. and Marchetti, N. 2011. *Royal Statuary of Early Dynastic Mesopotamia.* Winona Lake, IN.

May, N.N., ed. 2012. *Iconoclasm and Text Destruction in the Ancient Near East and Beyond* (Oriental Institute Seminars 8). Chicago.

Mayr, R.H. and Owen, D.I. 2004. The Royal Gift Seal in the Ur III Period. In: Waetzoldt, H., ed. *Von Sumer nach Ebla und zurück: Festschrift Giovanni Pettinato zum 27. September 1999 gewidmet von Freunden, Kollegen und Schülern.* Heidelberg: 146–174.

Michalowski, P. 1987. Charisma and Control: On Continuity and Change in Early Mesopotamian Bureaucratic Systems. In: McGuire, G. and Biggs, R.D., eds. *The Organization of Power: Aspects of Bureaucracy in the Ancient Near East*, Chicago: 54–68.

---

[25] On these images, see Braun-Holzinger 2007: 161–164; on the heroic warrior, also Suter 2010: 342–346.

Michalowski, P. 1990. Early Mesopotamian Communicative Systems: Art, Literature, and Writing. In: Gunter, A.C., ed. *Investigating Artistic Environments in the Ancient Near East.* Washington: 53–69.

Michalowski, P. 1994. The Drinking Gods: Alcohol in Mesopotamian Ritual and Mythology. In: Milano, L., ed. *Drinking in Ancient Societies: History and Culture of Drinks in the Ancient Near East.* Padova: 27–44.

Michalowski, P. 2004. The Ideological Foundations of the Ur III State. In: Meyer, J.-W. and Sommerfeld, W., eds. 2000 v. Chr. *Politische, wirtschaftliche und kulturelle Entwicklung im Zeichen einer Jahrtausendwende.* Berlin: 219–235.

Michalowski, P. 2008. The Mortal Kings of Ur: A Short Century of Divine Rule in Ancient Mesopotamia. In: Brisch, N., ed. *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond.* Chicago: 33–45.

Michalowski, P. 2013. Networks of Authority and Power in Ur III Times. In: Garfinkle, S. and Molina, M., eds. *From the 21st Century BC to the 21st Century AD: Proceedings of the International Conference on Neo-Sumerian Studies Held in Madrid, July 22–24, 2010.* Winona Lake, IN.: 169–205.

Michalowski, P, and Walker, C.B.F. 1989. A New Sumerian 'Law Code.' In: Behrens, H., Loding, D., and Roth, M.T., eds. *DUMU-E2-DUB-BA-A: Studies in Honor of Åke W. Sjöberg,* Philadelphia: 383–396.

Otto, A. 2017. Private and State in the Second Millennium B.C. from an Archaeological Perspective. In: Dercksen, J.G. and Boer, R., eds. *Private and State in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 58th RAI at Leiden, 16–20 July 2012.* Winona Lake, IN.: 21–42.

Otto, A. 2013. Königssiegel als Programm: Überlegungen zum Selbstverständnis altorientalischer Herrscher und zur Deutung der Tierkampfszene. *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie* 103: 45–68.

Perkins, A. 1957. Narration in Babylonian Art. *American Journal of Archaeology* 61: 54–62.

Pittman, H. 2012. Seals and Sealings in the Sumerian World. In: Crawford, H., ed. *The Sumerian World.* London: 319–341.

Polonsky, J. 2000. Ki-^{d}utu-è-a: Where Destiny Is Determined. In: Milano, L., de Martino, S., Fales, F.M., and Lanfranchi, G.B., eds. *Landscapes: Territories, Frontiers and Horizons in the Ancient Near East: Papers Presented to the XLIVe Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale in Venezia 1997.* Padova: 89–100.

Postgate, N.J. and Roaf, M.D. 1997. The Shaikan Relief. *AL-RAFIDAN* 18: 143–156.

Radner, K. 2005. *Die Macht des Namens: Altorientalische Strategien zur Selbsterhaltung* (SANTAG 8). Wiesbaden.

Rashid, S.A. 1983. *Gründungsfiguren im Iraq* (Prähistorische Bronzefunde 1.2). Munich.

Reade, J. 2002. Early Monuments in Gulf Stone from the British Museum, with Observations on some Gudea Statues and the Location of Agade. *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie* 92: 258–295.

Roth, M.T. 1995. *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor with a Contribution by Harry A. Hoffner* (Writings from the Ancient World 6). Atlanta.

Sallaberger, W. 1998–2001. Neujahr(sfest) A. nach sumerischen Quellen. *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie* 9: 291–294.

Sallaberger, W. 2002. Den Göttern nahe–und fern den Menschen? Formen der Sakralität des altmesopotamischen Herrschers. In: Erkens, F.-R., ed. *Die Sakralität von Herrschaft: Herrschaftslegitimierung im Wechsel der Zeiten und Räume.* Berlin: 85–98.

Sallaberger, W. 2012. Home-made Bread, Municipal Mutton, Royal Wine: Establishing Social Relations during the Preparation and Consumption of Food in Religious Festivals at Late Bronze Age Emar. In: Pollock, S., ed. *Between Feasts and Daily Meals: Toward an Archaeology of Commensal Spaces.* Berlin: 157–177.

Sallaberger, W. and Schrakamp, I., eds. 2015. *History and Philology* (Associated Regional Chronologies for the Ancient Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean 3). Turnhout.

Sasson, J.M. 2011. Mari Theomorphism: Intimation of Sacrality in the Royal Correspondence. In: Vacín, L., ed. U4 DU11-GA-NI SÁ MU-NI-IB-DU11: *Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Memory of Blahoslav Hruška.* Dresden: 195–212.

Selz, G.J. 1997. The Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp: Towards an Understanding of the Problems of Deification in Third Millennium Mesopotamia. In: Finkel, I.L. and Geller, M.J. *Sumerian Gods and Their Representations.* Groningen: 167–213.

Selz, G.J. 2001. Nur ein Stein. In: Richter, T., Prechel, D., and Klinger, J., eds. Kulturgeschichten: *Altorientalische Studien für Volkert Haas zum 65. Geburtstag.* Saarbrücken: 383–393.

Selz, G. 1983. *Die Bankettszene: Entwicklung eines 'überzeitlichen' Bildmotivs in Mesopotamien von der frühdynastischen bis zur Akkad-Zeit* (Freiburger altorientalische Studien 11). Wiesbaden.

Strommenger, E. 1963. Das Felsrelief von Darband-i-Gaur. *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 2: 83–88.

Suter, C.E. 1991–1993. A Šulgi Statuette from Tello. *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 43–45: 63–70.

Suter, C.E. 2000. *Gudea's Temple Building: The Representation of an Early Mesopotamian Ruler in Text and Image* (Cuneiform Monographs 17). Groningen.

Suter, C.E. 2010. Ur III Kings in Images: A Reappraisal. In: Baker, H.D., Robson, E., and Zólyomi, G., eds. *Your Praise Is Sweet: A Memorial Volume for Jeremy Black from Students, Colleagues, and Friends.* London: 319–349.

Suter, C.E. 2012a. The Royal Body and Masculinity in Early Mesopotamia. In: Berlejung, A., Dietrich, J., and Quack, J.F., eds. *Menschenbilder und Körperkonzepte: Kulturanthropologische Studien zum Alten Israel, in Ägypten und im Alten Orient.* Tübingen: 433–458.

Suter, C.E. 2012b. Gudea of Lagash: Iconoclasm or Tooth of Time? In: May, N.N., ed. *Iconoclasm and*

Text Destruction in the Ancient Near East and Beyond. Chicago: 57–87.

Suter, C.E. 2013. The Divine Gudea on Ur III Seal Images. In: Collins, B.J. and Michalowski, P., eds. *Beyond Hatti: A Tribute to Gary Beckman.* Atlanta: 309–324.

Suter, C.E. 2014. Human, Divine or Both? The Uruk Vase and the Problem of Ambiguity in Early Mesopotamian Visual Arts. In: Brown, B.A. and Feldman, M.H., eds. *Critical Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Art.* Boston: 545–568.

Suter, C.E. 2015. Gudea's Kingship and Divinity. In: Shamir, Y., Greenstein, E., Gruber, M.I., Machinist, P., and Paul, S., eds. Marbeh Hokma: *Essays in Loving Memory of Victor Avigdor Hurowitz.* Winona Lake, IN: 499–523.

Suter, C.E. 2016. Images of Queens, High Priestesses, and Other Elite Women in Third-Millennium Mesopotamia. In: Budin, S. and Turfa, J., eds. *Women in Antiquity: Real Women Across the Ancient World.* London and New York: 35–47.

Suter, C.E. 2017. On Images, Visibility, and Agency of Early Mesopotamian Royal Women. In: Rubio, G., Karahashi, F., and Feliu, L., eds. *The First 90 Years: A Sumerian Celebration in Honor of Miguel Civil* (Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records 12) Boston: 337–362.

Suter, C.E. 2019. Statuary and Reliefs. In: Gunter, A.C., ed. *A Companion to Ancient Near Eastern Art.* Hoboken, NJ.: 385–410.

Waetzoldt, H. 2008. Die Haltung der Schreiber von Umma zu König Šusuen. In: Michalowski, P., ed. *On the Third Dynasty of Ur: Studies in Honor of Marcel Sigrist*, Boston: 245–249.

Wiggermann, F.A.M. 1992. *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits: The Ritual Texts* (Cuneiform Monographs 1). Groningen.

Winter, I.J. 1992. Idols of the King: Royal Images as Recipients of Ritual Action in Ancient Mesopotamia. *Journal of Ritual Studies* 6: 13–42.

Winter, I.J. 1996. Sex, Rhetoric and the Public Monument: The Alluring Body of Naram-Sin of Agade. In: Kampen, N.B., ed. *Sexuality in Ancient Art: Near East, Egypt, Greece, and Italy.* Cambridge, UK. :11–26.

Winter, I.J. 2008. Touched by the Gods: Visual Evidence for the Divine Status of Rulers in the Ancient Near East. In: Brisch, N., ed. *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond.* Chicago: 75–101.

Yang, Z. 1991. King of Justice. In: Michalowski, P., Steinkeller, P., Stone, E.C., and. Zettler, R.L., eds. *Velles Paraules: Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Miguel Civil on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday.* Sabadell: Editorial AUSA: 243–249.

Zajdowski, K. 2013. Transformation of the Mesopotamian Banquet Scene into the Presentation Scene in the Early Dynastic, Akkadian and Ur III Periods. *Akkadica* 134: 1–16.

Zettler, R.L. 2007. Dynastic Change and Institutional Administration in Southern Mesopotamia in the Later Third Millennium BCE: Evidence from Seals and Sealing Practices. In: Crawford, H., ed. *Regime Change in the Ancient Near East and Egypt: From Sargon of Agade to Saddam Hussein.* Oxford: 9–35.

Chapter 2

The Defeat of the Lion:
A Visual Trope Promoting Ancient Near Eastern Kings

Tallay Ornan
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Abstract

This paper explores the defeat of the lion by the individual standing at the head of the social order in the art of the ancient Near East, from the late fifth to the middle of the first millennium BCE. Depictions of the sovereign subjugating the Big Cat present the former performing a cultic act for the sake of the goddess Ishtar, whose primeval adversary was probably the lion. On the one hand, combat with the lion presents the king as commonly accepted, defeating his human rivals signified by the beast. On the other hand, this combat presents the king fighting the goddess's primeval foe. The king in these visuals is, thus, elevated to a lesser divine-like member of her entourage. Since most of the visuals and relevant records showing the trope of the ruler subjugating the lion are from Upper Mesopotamia and Syria, the first-millennium Neo-Assyrian intensive and detailed compositions of the theme are considered elaborations of local North Mesopotamian and Syrian traditions.

וישב לימים, לקחתה, ויסר לראות, את מפלת האריה

שופטים יד: ח[1]

Introduction

The artifact that first aroused my interest in the ancient Near Eastern images that associate kings with lions was a statue commonly attributed to the Umayyad Caliph al-Walid II (born 709, in office 743–744 CE), which was found in his palace at Khirbat al-Mafjar, situated north of Jericho, in the Jordan Valley (Hamilton 1959: 99, Figures 52, 100: 228–231, Plates LV: 1, 5). Since 1946 the statue has been kept at the Palestine Archaeological Museum (the so-called Rockefeller Museum) in East Jerusalem. This statue, the largest three-dimensional art object retrieved at the site, represents Walid II standing on a podium whose façade is sculpted with a pair of seated lions (Figure 2.1). As a student of pre-classical art of the ancient Near East, I was fascinated by the lion-podium of the Caliph, since it reminded me of some monumental sculptures of kings of Luwian and Aramean polities in southeastern Turkey and northwestern Syria, dated

from the 12th to 7th centuries BCE[2] (e.g., Orthmann 1971: Plate 62: c–e from Zinjirli-Sam'al). The use over a span of almost 2000 years of similar representations of lions associated with sovereigns, sheds light on the continuity, often for several millennia, of visual themes, tropes, and metaphors in the Near East.

In ancient Near Eastern art and written sources, the metaphors employed for conveying the correspondence between kings and lions give the two protagonists a near-equal status, even though the human holds the higher rank (Matthiae 1989: 372; Winter 2000: 59; McMahon 2009: 118). This hierarchy contrasts with the direct and stronger relationship reflected by the common modern phrase, 'king of men and king of beasts' (e.g., Collon 2003: 11), which is not recorded in ancient Near Eastern sources where it was the king who, at times, was described as a lion (Watanabe 2000: 400– 404). This expression, equating the Big Cat with the human king, appears, in Hindu Sanskrit writings such as the *Panchatantra* (assigned to *c.* 300), the interrelated treaties that aim to instruct future young sovereigns by narrating the activities of the two jackal advisers in the royal court of a lion king. The 6th-century CE Middle Persian translation of the *Panchatantra* entitled *Kalilag-o Demnag*, its later Arabic version known as the tale(s) of *Kalīla wa Dimna*, and the various medieval and later Hebrew, Greek, and European derivatives are regarded as sources of the common modern trope paralleling the king of men with the 'king of beasts' (Olivelle 1997, x–xiv, xviii, xxiv; Nadwi 2013; Aktaş and Beldağ 2017: 46–47).[3]

---

[1] The biblical translations of the Aramaic Targum, LXX and the Vulgate, followed by later translations as English KJV, NIV; French Louis Segond, Strawn 2005: 329, 359, Cogan 2018, skip the Hebrew *mapelet haaryeh* in Judges 14:8. At times the phrase is modified to 'the remains of the lion' (e.g., Berlin and Brettler 2004). However, biblical mentions of *mapelet* (such as Isa 17:1; 23:13; 25; 25:2; Ezek 26:15, 18; 27:27; 31:13, 16; 32:10; Proverbs 29:16) relate this phrase to the defeat of humans, peoples, or human-related phenomena as towns, cities, ruins. *mapelet haaryeh* is, hence, a unique biblical attestation referring to an animal and is better translated as fall/collapse/overthrow/downfall/loss of the lion. The ancient Near Eastern metaphor of the subjugation of lion pertaining to a defeat of human foes discussed in this essay proposes that *mapelet haaryeh* in Judges 14:8 uses the same metaphor, hinting, in this case, to the Philistine enemies of Samson. See, however, מפלת *in HALOT* https://dictionaries-brillonline-com.eu1.proxy.openathens. net/search#dictionary=halothebrew&id=MEM.756.

[2] Hereafter, all dates are BCE unless otherwise noted.

[3] For the modern application of the trope, see for example Watanabe 2002: 42; Chapter 21 of L.F. Baum, *The Wizard of Oz* (http://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/158/the-wonderful-wizard-of-oz/2770/chapter-21-the-lion-becomes-the-king-of-beasts); or the 1928 American movie *Simba: The King of the Beasts* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simba:_King_of_the_Beasts).

Figure 2.1. Statue of Caliph al-Walid II (743–744 CE) standing on a pair of seated lions, Khirbat al-Mafjar, Jordan Valley. 'Rockefeller' Palestine Archaeological Museum, Jerusalem, 1947-5106. Photo Meidad Suchowolski. ©Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

Among the immense representational variety and multivalent meanings of the depictions of lions (Buchholz 2005; Strawn 2005), I will focus here on Mesopotamian and north Syrian visual renderings of lions as rivals of a heroic figure, a king or social leader of some other kind. It is argued here that representations of the sovereign fighting or subjugating a lion served, *inter alia,* as a means of upgrading the former to a god-like status. The interpretation of the lion's defeat as a metaphor linking kings and gods can be inferred from the beast's double role in pictorial representations: on the one hand, it is a rival of the king, and on the other hand, a defeated adversary of major deities, represented as their mounts. A very common version of the lion as divine mount is its representation as a podium on which the goddess Inanna/Ishtar is standing or enthroned, attested visually on glyptic finds from the Old Akkadian period (Böhmer 1965: Plate 32, 382, 384, 387). Its earliest three-dimensional representation—assigned to *c.* 2000—is the alabaster statue of the goddess from Susa (Figures 2.2a–c; Spycket 1968; Pittman 2002, 222; Desset *et al.* 2016: 80–81, n. 21; compare Weissert 1997: 349; for the lion as standing for Ningirsu, see Marchesi 2016: 88–89). Compare the above-mentioned podium of El-Walid.

The double role of the lion can be explained by a reconstructed process put forward by Wiggermann (1994: 226–227), who proposed that mounting major deities on fantastic hybrids represents a primordial triumph of a given deity over his/her mythical rival that transformed the latter into a 'servant' of the former. Such a conventionalized representation may be seen, indeed, as a selective paradigmatic feature of a now lost (unwritten or written) narrative, at times termed a 'culmination scene' (Perkins 1957: 55, 59, 61–62; compare Sonik 2014: 282). By implication, we may regard a lion serving as the podium of a major deity as standing for a former rival of a mounted god or a goddess. That mythical hybrids and animals of the real world such as the lion could have shared the same metaphysical meaning and protective role in ancient Near Eastern iconography is apparent, for example, from the repetitive depictions of a hybrid *mušḫuššu* (dragon of Marduk) alongside real-world bulls of the storm god Adad on Babylon's 'Ishtar Gate,' built by Nebuchadnezzar II at the very end of the 7th or beginning of the 6th century (Aruz, Graff, and Rakic 2014: 330–331; 344–345; Watanabe 2015; Pongratz-Leisten 2019).

This process is also manifested by the very common habit of placing hybrids or menacing beasts as warding-off figures at gates of temples or palaces (Battini 2009). Among the most frequent representations of such beasts, reflecting their physical strength and fearsome looks, is the display of a pair of lions as protective images flanking enthroned major deities or earthly rulers. The very

Figure 2.2a. Statue of the goddess Narundi (Inanna/Ishtar) enthroned on and surrounded by lions, Susa. Musée du Louvre, Sb54-Sb6617. Https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/deed.en. Photo Marie-Lan Nguyen.

Figure 2.2b. Detail: crouching lions below Narundi's feet.

Figure 2.2c. Drawing of an Old Akkadian cylinder seal. After Böhmer 1965, No. 387.

depiction of lions as protecting both gods and kings, an extremely common pictorial convention that extended to Solomon's throne (I Kings 10:19–20), the murals of the mid-2nd century CE Dura Europos Synagogue and beyond (Iafrate 2015, passim)—not dealt with here—highlights the role of the ancient Near Eastern individual standing at the top of the social order as a link between the divine and human spheres that may have colored the earthly sovereign with a divine hue.

I propose here that the visual trope of a contest scene[4] in which the king overcomes the lion served, *inter alia,* as a visual device for upgrading the ancient Near Eastern sovereign to an as-if-a quasi-divine status. Unambiguous representations of kings as gods are very rare in ancient Near Eastern art, and possible cases of royal divinization are generally expressed by inexplicit pictorial means (Ornan 2012: 14–15; 2014; see, however, Cornelius and Niehr 2004: 44; Morandi Bonacossi 2006: 57; Matthaie 2009: 299, 301–302, 304, 309, 311; 2015; 2019: 590). The various compositions of the defeat of the lion by the sovereign should be included among these indirect and inexplicit ways of visually manifesting the divine-like affinities of kings. In the following, I will present a succinct chronological survey of selected ancient Near Eastern visuals that exemplify violent struggles of social leaders with lions.

Shooting, stabbing, and caging: the lion's hunt in the Chalcolithic to Uruk periods (c. Late fifth to late fourth millennium)

The earliest representation of a confrontation between a man and a lion is found on the interior of a painted bowl of the Halaf Culture found in a grave at Arpachiyah on the outskirts of Mosul in northern Iraq (Figure 2.3). The bowl, assigned to the early Chalcolithic period in the fifth millennium, bears what is probably the earliest pictorial trope connecting the lion hunt with a prominent individual, who may have stood at the head of his agricultural community (Collon 2008: 94, Figure 1; see, however, McMahon 2009: 21, n. 10). Alongside two women flanking a loom and a bull, the painting shows a man in motion drawing a large bow aimed at a lion. The human male figure has been interpreted as a shepherd defending his herd from the wild beast, symbolizing the response to the threats of the uncivilized world surrounding the sedentary humans of the late fifth millennium Halaf Culture (Garfinkel 2018: 12–14, 22; compare Matthiae 2019: 583). This early visual trope of pastoral leadership that perceived the leader as a shepherd protecting his human 'flock' against the threatening beast continued later on in Mesopotamian history as reflected in the royal title of kings as shepherds manifested, in particular, in late Middle and Neo-Assyrian inscriptions reporting on the hunt of lion(s) accomplished by the king (Weissert 1997: 342–343 and n. 16; Anthonioz 2020: 18–19).

Later representations of lions relevant to our discussion appear on clay sealings dated to the fourth millennium, Late Chalcolithic III period (*c.* 3800–3600) found at Tell Majnuna, a small tell included in the ring of sub-mounds surrounding Tell Brak-Nagar, a major site in the upper Khabur region in northeastern Syria (McMahon 2009).

---

[4] Classifying the royal subjugation of the lion as a contest scene may shed light on the narrative background (Sonik 2014: 282–283) of this pictorial representation.

Figure 2.3. Man shooting a lion, detail from a painted bowl, Arpachiah, northern Iraq. Chalcolithic period, late fifth millennium. After Breniquet 1992, Figure 3.

early leader may be found in the huge bow revealed, alongside other high-quality personal belongings, with the skeleton of a male individual in a grave of the Late Chalcolithic–Early Bronze Age (first half of the fourth millennium) at Wadi el-Makkuh in the Judean Desert. This individual, whose bow had undergone a process of

Figure 2.4. Man spearing a Big Cat, probably a lioness, clay sealing from Tell Majnuna, northern Syria. Late Chalcolithic period, *c.* 3800–3600. After McMahon 2009, Figure 1.

Among the seal impressions from the site, all impressed by stamp seals, are images depicting a solitary lion (or lioness) at times with a man (convincingly identified as a social leader) spearing or stabbing the beast.[5] Particularly intriguing are sealings showing the beast within a grid pattern, compellingly interpreted by McMahon as a cage (Figures 2.4–5). The implication of this representation is that the beast was kept alive for a public display or for a cultic(?) event of some kind; such events, as we shall see in the following, are indeed recorded in later times.

The Majnuna sealings that show a man in combat with a lion may assist in understanding the archer on the earlier bowl from Arpachiyah. Although the two fighting men from Majnuna and Arpachiyah use different weapons (a bow for the man on the Arpachiyah bowl, a spear for the one from Majnuna), both are shown in motion while attacking the lion. This correspondence between the two men implies a continuous pictorial tradition, which may support the assumption that the Arpachiyah archer too represented a leader. The large bow held by the Arpachiyah shepherd-archer may further substantiate this proposal since, as discussed below, in later periods, when the chase of the lion was considered a leisure and/or cultic activity fit for kings, the bow itself served, *inter alia,* as a symbol of a high social status and was often used by kings in rituals (Westenholz 2000: 101–102, 104). Further support for interpreting the Arpachiyah archer as representing an
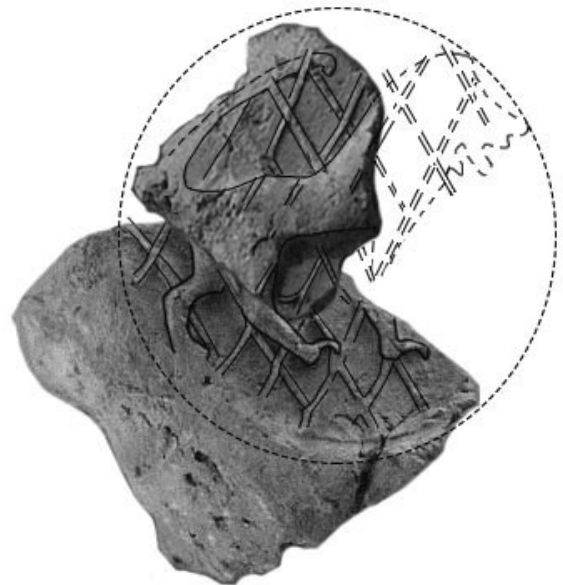

Figure 2.5. Caged lion, reconstructed drawing of clay sealings. Tell Majnuna, northern Syria. Late Chalcolithic period, *c.* 3800–3600. After McMahon 2009, Figures 3, 5.

---

[5] My thanks to zoologist Yoram Yom-Tov of Tel Aviv University, who thinks the beast is more likely a lioness.

Figure 2.6. En priest-king presenting a lion to a temple. Drawing of a non-provenanced cylinder seal.
Late Uruk-Jemdet Nasr period, c. 3000. Schroer 2005, No. 193.

ritual breakage, has been interpreted as a man of very high social status (Schick 1998: 126–130).

The Chalcolithic depictions from Arpachiyah and Majnuna–Tell Brak, assigned to the late fifth and first half of the fourth millennium respectively, represent social leaders shooting or stabbing lions can be supported by south Mesopotamian Late Uruk renderings of the ruler, termed in modern literature a king-priest. In particular, I will point to the figure sculpted on a Jemdet Nasr basalt stela from Uruk III (*c.* 3000), on which the king-priest draws his large bow and aims at lions depicted on the (surviving) part of the monument, and spears another one on the upper part of the stele, which manifests an early royal ideology tied to the defeat of the lion. This figure can be identified by his headband and dress as a social leader, the early Mesopotamian En (Lord) (Moortgat 1969: 14, Plate 14; Suter 2014: 547. See Suter in this volume, Figure 1.1).

Although the south Mesopotamian Uruk Stele is considered the earliest depiction on which the human vanquisher is securely identified, renderings of the king's struggle with the lion have been revealed up to now mostly in northern Mesopotamia and Syria. Hence, we may cautiously propose that the south Mesopotamian renderings of the theme, including the one depicted on the Uruk Stele, were inspired by a north Mesopotamian tradition possibly stemming from the thriving center of Tell Brak and its surroundings (Butterlin 2015), as can be deduced from the Majnuna sealings. If so, local features—such as the rounded headband of the En—were added in Uruk, as is the case in other cultural borrowings and receptions (Eco 1976: 71–72).

The theme is usually interpreted in modern scholarship as demonstrating the power of the ruler, glorifying the sovereign through his triumph over the wild uncivilized

world.[6] However, such interpretations neglect the role and presentation of the lion as a divine mount and as a stand-in for major ancient Near Eastern deities. Whereas in textual metaphors the lion may stand for the king (Watanabe 2000: 404–406; Anthonioz 2020: 16–18; Nadali 2020) in visuals, the lion does not symbolize the ruler: texts and images did not always concur in the ancient cultures of the Middle East. Moreover, reading an image of a lion as a stand-in or as a symbol of the king raises difficulties, in particular, since in the art of the ancient Near East, in contrast to Egypt, royal figures referring to a living king are not depicted through theriomorphic pictorial representations. Rather, in the ancient imagery of the Middle East the use of animals as pictorial metaphors seems to be restricted to supernatural entities such as gods and goddesses. This is not to say, however, that lion imagery was a most prominent visual tool for advancing, upgrading, and protecting ancient Near Eastern social leaders or kings, but in order to be able to fully comprehend the role of the beast in relation to the royal figure we should at the same time explore its role as a visual metaphor of

---

[6] See, among others, Cassin (1981: 381–382), who acknowledges the first-millennium religious meaning of the lion hunt in royal rhetoric, which emphasizes that the king's hunting exploits were a royal fulfilment of the will of the gods, 'who love his priesthood.' Cassin does not, however, deal with the king's status in relation to the divine realm (Magen 1986: 34; Buchanan and Moorey 1988: 40; Matthiae 1989: 372–373; Seidl 1989: 139; Finkel and Read 1996: 249; Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 269; Watanabe 2002: 70–71, 76–82 [with previous bibliography]; Collon 2003, 11*; Routledge 2004, 182; Strawn 2005: 104, 125, 152–155; Dick 2006: 244 [suggesting the Neo-Assyrian king symbolically identified himself with the lion, his victim]. Niederreiter (2008: 51–59) regards the lion motif in Neo-Assyrian palatial imagery, in particular under Sargon II at Khrsabad, as standing for the royal power alongside its comprehension as a divine emblem; McMahon 2009: 121; Battini 2009: 204; Sass and Marzahn 2010: 179–180; Collins 2016: 50. Watanabe 2000: 406–407 interprets the standing lion shown horizontally on Neo-Assyrian sealings as a (pictorial) metaphorical substitute of the king. Nadali (2020: 72–75), as part of a thorough discussion on metaphors and similes considers the beast defeated by the king on Neo-Assyrian Office Sealings as presenting the king: suggesting the former is the latter's 'double'—the king's *alter ego*.
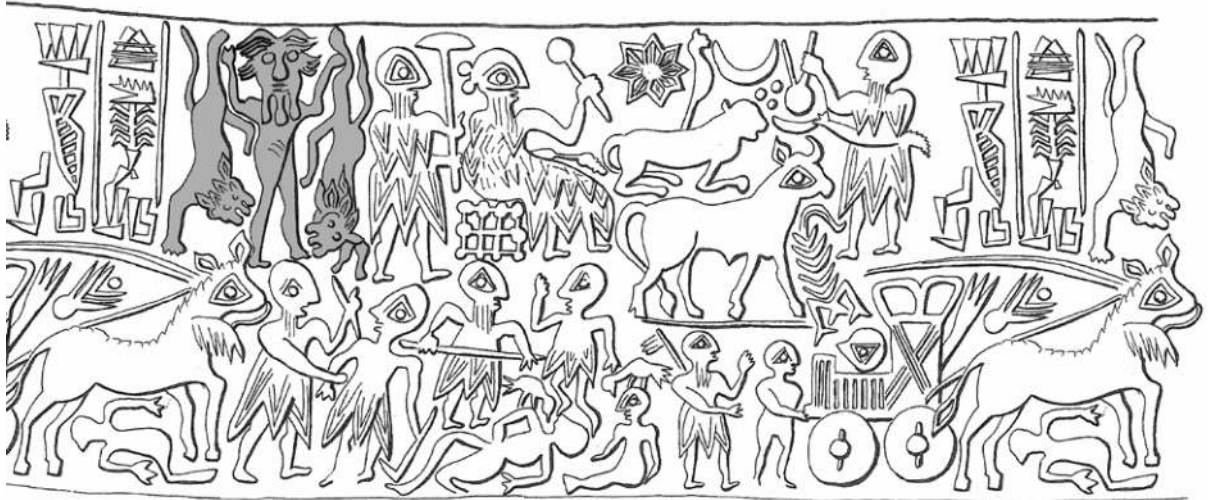
Figure 2.7. *Laḫmu* holding upside-down lions. Reconstruction of a cylinder seal impression of Ishqi-Mari, king of Mari. Late Early Dynastic–beginning of Old Akkadian period. After Beyer 2016, Figure 1.4.

the divine realm. The exposure of the aforementioned basalt stele in the sacred precinct of Uruk-Warka (Becker 1993: 57–58, No. 783, Plates 36–39), together with an exceptional contemporary cylinder seal featuring a lion offered by the En to a temple (Figure 2.6; Frankfort 1939: 19, Figure 2), suggests that, at least from the third quarter of the fourth millennium, the subjugation of the lion by the ruler also signaled the status of the lion-vanquishing king in relation to the divine sphere.

A Royal Metaphor: The Lion-vanquishing *laḫmu* in Late Early-Dynastic and Old Akkadian imagery

Although similar compositions of a heroic social leader defeating a lion seem to be absent from Mesopotamian Early Dynastic and Akkadian imagery (Matthiae 1989: 373; Wagner-Durand 2019: 241), some insights into the symbolic role of a lion defeated in a struggle led by a king can be gleaned from clay sealings found at Mari, located on the Middle Euphrates in eastern Syria. These seal impressions were reconstructed from two similar impressions made by two now-missing cylinder seals, whose inscriptions identify them as the seals of Ishqi-Mari, king of Mari at the end of the Early Dynastic and the beginning of the Akkad periods (Margueron 2004: 311, Figure 300; Beyer 2016 with previous bibliography). The composition of Ishqi-Mari's seals (e.g., Figure 2.7) presents two scenes arranged in two superimposed registers: the lower depicts a battle scene and the upper shows an enthroned king holding a mace, which is considered to be a ceremonial royal weapon (Sebbane 2016). Next to him is a figure holding a pitcher and a drinking bowl that identify the upper register as depicting a royal banquet ceremony.

Our interest here lies in the frontally shown naked hero holding two upside-down lions depicted behind

the enthroned king, marked in gray in Figure. 2.7. In this case, however, the subjugation of the lions differs in two aspects from the defeat of the lions discussed so far. First, the triumphant protagonist is not a human being but a supernatural figure identified as a *laḫmu*, a former (defeated) member of the entourage of Tiamat, who since the Early Dynastic period had become a benevolent, protective being termed in modern scholarship 'the six-curled hero' (Wiggermann 1983; Black and Green 1992: 65, 115, 177).[7] Second, on the sealings of Ishqi-Mari the defeat of the lions is only one motif within a larger narrative-like sequence depicting a battle in the lower register, and its victory feast—alongside the subjugation of the lions—in the upper one. This two-registered layout is a typical Mesopotamian mode of pictorial representation that habitually presents an action in the lower part of a given composition and its outcome in the upper part.[8]

---

[7] Compare an Early Dynastic I south Mesopotamian version of the same type of figure holding two lions on a stone vessel from the Shara Temple at Tell Agrab (Evans, Green, and Teeter 2019: 28–29). Similar compositions with the lion vanquisher *laḫmu* are found in Early Dynastic II–III glyptics from south Mesopotamia: e.g., a shell cylinder seal from Ur royal tomb PG 1236 showing a battle scene on its lower register and a *laḫmu* subduing a pair of lions on its upper register but with no royal figure (Amiet 1961: Plate 92, 1216, BM 122538; Collins 2015: 22, Figure 12, https://research.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?assetId=1532058001&objectId=1447142&partId=1).
For other third millennium representations of *laḫmu*-like lion vanquishers, see Amiet 1961: Plate 40, 615; Plate 67: 891; Plate 58: 903; Plate 104: 1370, 1374; Frankfort 1939: Plate 11m. It must be stressed, however, that a reversed composition, i.e.. a *laḫmu* attacked by lions is also found on clay sealings; see a specimen from Early Dynastic III Ur Cemetery, Grave 2610 (Orthmann 1975: 232–233, Figure 43f).

[8] During the first millennium, however, the order of events was sometimes modified, as in the reliefs of Ashurnasirpal II and Ashurbanipal (see below). For whether or not the martial composition on the sealings related to a real historical event, see Nadali 2019 with earlier bibliography.
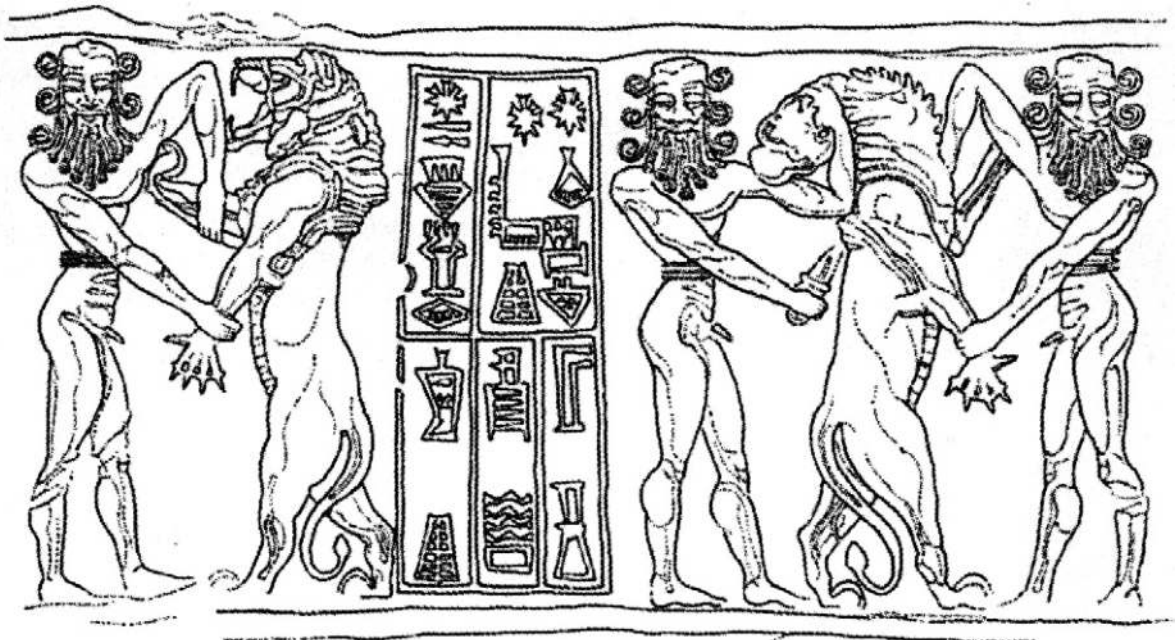
Figure 2.8a–b. Two *laḥmu*s defeating a lion. Old Akkadian seal impression on a clay envelope. Non-provenanced. Ornan 2014, Figure 1. ©Courtesy of Johnathan P. Rosen, New York.

The representation of the subdued lions beside the royal victory banquet in the upper register and the martial scene in the lower one suggests that the lions' defeat refers to the human victory, implying the beasts may have been viewed as stand-ins for the defeated human rivals. The depiction of the upside-down lions here seems, then, to befit a royal seal displaying a belligerent event and the triumphant ceremony in its aftermath. Yet, it is still puzzling that the image of the 'master of the lions' here is not the royal protagonist (Ishqi-Mari), in contrast to the above-mentioned Late Uruk period stele or the triumphant En on an ivory handle from Gebel Al-ʿArak in Egypt (Pittman 1996). I cannot provide an exact solution to this puzzle. However, considering the pictorial context of the Ishqi-Mari sealings that include the enthroned king and

Figure 2.9. A *laḫmu* about to strike a lion while Ishtar holds its tail. A lapis-lazuli cylinder seal assigned to the Ur III period. Non-provenanced. Vorderasiatiches Museum, Berlin, CS3605. Photo: Olaf M. Teßmer. ©Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Vorderasiatisches Museum.

subjugation of lions, it can be proposed that the *laḫmu* triumphantly holding two defeated lions is part and parcel of the royal propaganda, the imaginary image of the *laḫmu* conveying an indirect allusion to the celebrating victorious king.

That the king may have been alluded to, or represented by the *laḫmu,* gains some support from later Old Akkadian glyptic renderings assigned to Narām-Sîn, king of Akkad (2254–2218), which depict two *laḫmu*s flanking a defeated lion. These items sometimes bear legends in which the *dingir* (godly) classifier precedes the name of Narām-Sîn (e.g., Figure 2.8 a–b; Rohan 2011: 38–39, Nos. 356, 358, 373–378),[9] thus associating the lion's defeat with the royal message and permitting the combating *laḫmu*s, like those on the sealings of Ishqi-Mari, to be understood as hinting at the king.

These representations belong to a larger glyptic subset showing a three-figure contest of two heroes and a subdued rival in between that is often related to mythical or epic narratives, sometimes associated with (later) written accounts. The most notable narrative referred to by these glyptic compositions concerns the killing of Ḫumbaba and the Bull of Heaven by Gilgameš and Enkidu, a narrative that may have glorified the Akkadian king through these allusions to Gilgameš (Ornan 2010: 232, 237, 240–246, 252; Ornan 2014: 574–

575). The defeat of the lion in a three-figure contest in which the central figure is the subdued lion may have been conceived as one of the deeds of Gilgameš, the archetypal king whose legendary image served as a model for Mesopotamian rulers throughout the ages, and hence may have stood, *inter alia,* for the royal image in Akkadian iconography. The colossal Neo-Assyrian *laḫmu*s placed in Dūr Šarrukīn/Khorsabad by Sargon II, discussed below (Figures 2.18–19), may support this suggestion.

A possible link between the naked Old Akkadian *laḫmu*s and the royal image can be found in the Old Syrian tradition in the form of a wooden openwork carving from Royal Palace G at Ebla assigned to *c.* 2300, which depicts a naked figure piercing a lion with a sword in hand-to-hand combat. That the piece was part of a frieze that also included a warrior king wearing a royal headdress (Matthiae 1989: 373) suggests the naked combatant, indeed, represented the king. The representation of a human-like hero subduing a standing lion could have been a forerunner of the Middle Assyrian glyptics similarly representing the king, a pictorial trope that continued into Neo-Assyrian iconography, where this theme was, *inter alia*, rendered on the Office Seals of the Neo-Assyrian administration (Matthiae 1989: 373–74; see below).

Special associations between the king and the lion are apparent in Ur III texts like Šulgi Hymn B, in which the king boasts of his excellence and bravery in hunting, fighting the lion as 'man to man.' In Šulgi Hymn C, the

---

[9] Compare Klein and Brenner 2013: 613, 619 (Figure 3), 624–626, and a non-provenanced Old Akkadian bronze figurine (height 5.2cm; width 3.8cm) showing a *laḫmu* combatting a lion standing on its hind legs (Klengel-Brandt 1997: x, No. 11).
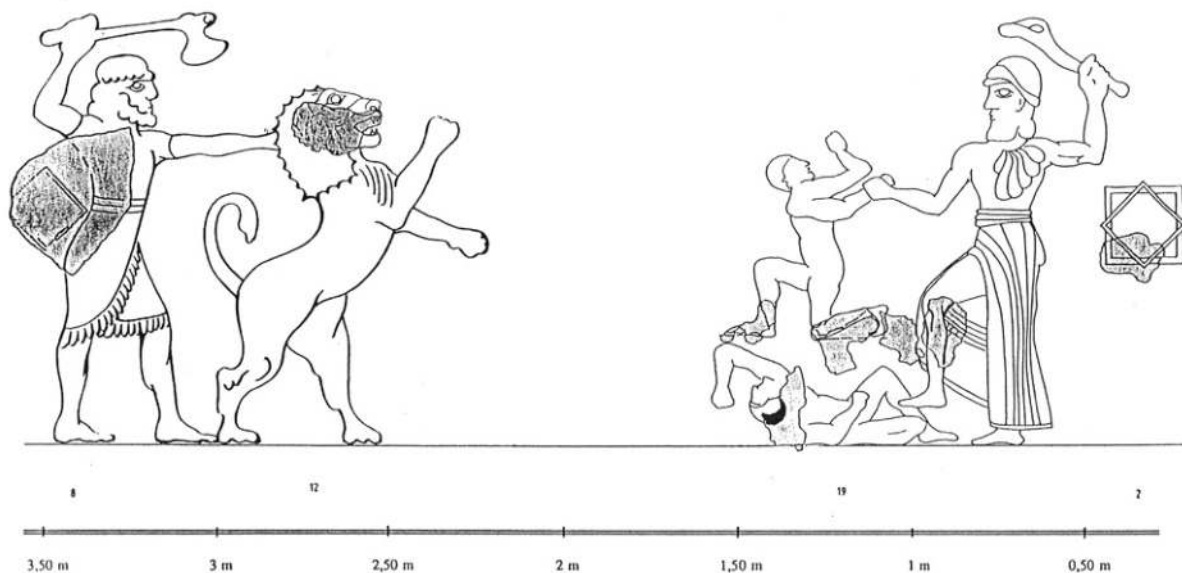
Figure 2.10. Lion standing on its hind legs attacked by a human hero-like figure facing a king subduing human rivals. Reconstruction of a wall painting, Mari, early 18th century. Pierre-Muller 1990, Plate XXV.

king reports that he has speared a lion that terrorized the land and carried its carcass to his city, to the admiration of the 'black-headed' people (Klein 1981: 16; Watanabe 2000: 404–406). These textual references do not match contemporary Ur III pictorial renderings, which do not seem to present visuals of the king as the lion-vanquisher. This notwithstanding, a noteworthy unprovenanced early Ur III lapis lazuli cylinder seal combines a lion, a *laḫmu*, and the goddess Ishtar in an exceptional layout (Figure 2.9; Moortgat 1940: 26, 105, Plate 33: 243; Böhmer 1965: 69, No. 274; Blocher 2013: 88, Figure 11.10). The beast—standing on its hind legs—is clearly the goddess's opponent here since she grabs its tail, while the *laḫmu* treats the beast as an enemy as he is about to hit it with his upraised axe. Uniquely, hence, the lion is portrayed in this composition as an 'active' rival of both Ishtar and the menacing *laḫmu*, who is about to defeat the beast for her sake. The seal's theme recalls the above-noted Old Akkadian royal sealing showing the lion's defeat by the *laḫmu*s (Figure 2.8) and reinforces the interchangeable role of the *laḫmu* and the king in the subjugation of the lion, the enemy of Ishtar.

The Royal subjugation of the lion: Mari and Ebla in the first half of the second millennium

The practice of keeping the lion alive in a cage after it was captured, as seen on the Majnuna sealings, resurfaces in northern Mesopotamia/eastern Syria in the form of implied references in two letters from Old Babylonian Mari (Watanabe 2002: 83–86), which shed light on the continuity of this practice from the Late Chalcolithic period in northern Mesopotamia. Alongside the caging

of the lion, the Mari letters hint that the lion hunt was considered a royal prerogative, mainly of the king but possibly also of the crown prince (Guichard 1997; Watanabe 2002: 83–86). This prerogative, indeed, fits into the scholarly consensus that as early as the Late Uruk period lion hunting was considered an exclusively royal practice, an assumption that can be confirmed by first-millennium Neo-Assyrian visuals and texts (Moortgat 1969: 9, 14, Plate 14; Cassin 1981: 374–375; Weissert 1997; Watanabe 2002: 83–86; Braun-Holzinger 2007: 11–12).

The allusions in the Mari texts to the role of the lion hunt and the caging of the beasts in rituals connected to royal ideology may have been reflected in a mural from Mari, originally part of the décor of the upper floor, assigned to the reign of Yahdun-Lim/Yasmaḫ-Addu that served as the private royal dwelling in the Old Babylonian palace (Margeron 2004: 511, Plates 61–63). Although the highly fragmentary state of the pieces of the mural that endured raises uncertainties, the careful reconstruction offered by Pierre-Muller (Figure 2.10; Pierre-Muller 1990: 526–527, Plate XXV) is most probable and may match the thematic correspondence between the king subjugating his human rivals and the human hero defeating the lion. On the left side is a right-facing figure holding a lion reconstructed as standing on its hind legs. On the far right, a royal figure and two defeated human rivals face left towards the lion subjugator. The juxtaposition of the two scenes fits, on the one hand, the correspondence between the human enemies of the king and the lion discussed here, and lends support to the meticulous reconstruction presented by Pierre-Muller, on the other hand.

Figure 2.11a-b. Lions flanking a royal figure sitting on top of a human figure trapped in a net. A stone podium, Ebla, Middle Bronze period. Matthiae 2013, Plate. 105a. B Matthiae 2000, Figure 1. Drawing by L. Scardala De Ninno. Courtesy of Paolo Matthiae, Rome. ©MAIS, Sapienza Rome University.

Whereas in the previous cases (let alone the above mentioned south Mesopotamian Uruk Stele) the royal combat was confined to miniature, mainly glyptic items, in Old Babylonian Mari the murals in question are part of a large-scale presentation integrated into the architectural program of the private royal apartment on the upper floor. Both the Mari scene and its architectural setting are to be taken as a harbinger display (Margueron 2004: 511) prefiguring a re-emergence more than a millennium later in the North Palace of Ashurbanipal.

A related north Syrian depiction contemporary with the Mari wall painting is the figure of a man piercing a lion shown twice on separate registers on a tall basalt stele from Ebla (reconstructed height 2m), dated to around 1800–1775 and considered a monument dedicated to Ishtar (Matthiae 1989). The stele was positioned at the entrance of Shrine G3, located near the large acropolis Temple D of Ishtar. Although the combating figures here are not clad in royal garments but only a short kilt, their very depiction on a royal stele portraying Ishtar, erected at the façade of her temple, can identify the two combatants as royal images, as proposed by Matthiae (1989: 373; 2013: 517–520, 537–538, 552–554,).

The connection between a defeated lion, Ishtar, and the king conveyed by the Ishtar Stele finds further support in Middle Bronze Age Ebla. Matthiae (1994) has identified Monument P3, located in the lower north town of Ebla, as a structure for confining captured lions. The nexus of Monument P3 to Building P2, another temple of Ishtar located in the lower town at Ebla, demonstrates that this structure, which we may call a lion's 'den,' was included in the sacred area of Ishtar, implying that the confined beast(s) had some role in a pre-arranged cultic ceremony of the goddess and hence

reinforcing the strong connection of the Big Cat to the goddess. Old Syrian cylinder seals of the Middle Bronze Age (18th to early 17th century) depicting grid-like patterns identified as enclosures or pens for confining live lions, and often accompanied by lions (Matthiae 1994; Collon 2007: 578–579), further support the notion that caging lions for cultic performances was a rather common custom in northern Syria—a custom that, as suggested by the Majnuna-Tell Brak sealings, can be traced back to the Late Chalcolithic period.

A severely damaged basalt podium, probably of a statue that has not survived, from the western Palace Q in Ebla's lower town, is another artifact displaying a combination of a king and lions that in this case also includes a fallen human rival (Figures 2.11 a–b; Matthiae 2000). The fragmentary sculpted carvings on the podium show an enthroned figure, identified by Matthiae as a king, flanked by a pair of lions whose heads pop out in the round. Below the seated figure is a fallen human image wrapped in a net, who represents a dead rival. Mounts for royal statues depicting a figure standing on a pair of lions, like those mentioned in the introductory remarks, are well known in the Luwian-Aramean sphere of northwestern Syria and southeastern Anatolia at sites such as Carchemish, Zinjirli, and Karatepe. They reflect the continuation into first-millennium royal iconography of Middle Bronze Age Syrian royal imagery combining lions and kings (Matthiae 2000: 394).

Assuming that the king's subjugation of the lion stands for his triumph over a human foe, the lions flanking a seated king above a dead enemy on the Ebla mount associate the defeated human rival with the king's protective lions. Following Wiggermann (1994: 226–227) in his view that opponent hybrids were transformed into protective creatures through their subjugation

Figure 2.12. King holding an upside-down lion.
Middle Assyrian cylinder seal impression.
Matthews 1990, No. 383.

Figure 2.13. King holding a lion standing on
its hind legs. Middle Assyrian cylinder seal
impression. After Feller 2006, Plate 4:5b.

The royal subjugation of the lion in Middle Assyrian glyptics

Although the king's combat with the lion is not a common motif in Middle Assyrian iconography, a combatant who can possibly be identified as a king subduing a lion with his bare hands is uniquely depicted on seal impressions on three tablets from the city of Ashur. These tablets are included among 1200 Middle Assyrian private and palace-related documents from Ashur and Kar Tukulti-Ninurta that cover some 350 years, spanning the reigns of Assur-nirari II (1424–1418) to Assur-bel-kala (l073–1056) (Feller 2010: 724). The first seal impression is dated to the 14th or 13th century (Figure 2.12). It shows a bearded man who, according to Beran, may represent a king holding the hind legs of an upside-down lion (Beran 1957: 166–167; Matthews 1990: 23, 93, 102, 104–105, No. 384, cf. No. 383; compare also Moortgat 1944: 25–26, Figure 4). The second impression is found on a tablet mentioning the eponym Marduk-aḫa-eriš dated to *c.* 1180, the 11th/12th regnal years of Ninurta-apil-Ekur (Figure 2.13; Magen 1986: Plate 19:10; Freydank and Feller 2006: 12, No. 71, 82, Plate 4: 5; Bloch 2012: 381, 410). This seal impression depicts a man holding a lion standing on its hind legs, with its body turned away from the human vanquisher.[10] It is the hem of the combatants' garments that can identify the two figures in question as royal images, since its design recalls 'tongues,' typical on Old Babylonian royal outfits on the 18th century wall paintings from Mari (Margueron 2004: 510, Figure 500), particularly clear on the second impression, shown in Figure 2.13. This correspondence supports Beran's proposal that the combatant here is a king subduing a lion. Moreover, the way in which the king holds the lion's tail in his left hand and the top of its mane in his right hand on the sealing found on the Marduk-aḫa-eriš tablet, recalls the reconstructed mural from the Mari palace discussed above. The similarity between this seal impression and the Mari wall painting discussed above (Figure 2.10) is reflected by the suggested similar distinctive body posture of the lion, whose body turns away from its subjugator, reflecting an iconographic continuity typical of the cultural spheres of northern Syria and Assyria (compare Matthiae 1989). Since on the impression shown in Figure 2.13 the combat with

by a deity, the Ebla stone podium may provide some background for the dynamics of how a pair of lions became a common protective motif for guarding gates and royal thrones. Moreover, the enthroned king flanked by lions resembles images of enthroned deities who at times are similarly guarded by a pair of lions (e.g., Figure 3.2; Spycket 1968; Suter 2000: 168, 184, 196–197, Figures 17, 21; Strawn 2005: Figures 4.265–4.270). The similar compositions of lions protecting both kings and gods are to be seen as indirect visual tools for promoting royal personages as divine-like beings.

---

[10] See also a Middle Assyrian seal impression (Moortgat 1942: 54–55, Figure 5) showing a figure holding a horned animal by one leg while raising his right arm toward a rampant lion. The human figure may represent a king, as implied by his tall headdress. For other contemporary human-lion vanquishers in glyptics, see Matthews 1990: Nos. 292, 293, 349, 351, 413, 443. Late Bronze Age representations of a lion standing on its hind legs while facing a heroic combatant or a hunting charioteer, are known in contemporary Levantine glyptics, e.g., from Ugarit, Emar, Alalakh, or from unknown origin (Porada 1948: No. 958; Collon 1975: No. 228; 1987: Nos. 302, 316; Amiet 1992: Nos. 302, 316; Beyer 2001: 380, 382, E56, E79, F3, G6). The motif also found on luxurious metal vessels, as on the outer, third embossed register of the rounded gold bowl from Ugarit (Strawn 2005: Figure 4.35 [line drawing]; Yon 2006: 164, No. 56).

Figure 2.14. Neo-Assyrian Office Sealing, clay, Nineveh, 715. The British Museum, SM.2276. Taylor 2018, 88, Figure 98*. ©Courtesy The Trustees of the British Museum.

the lion, and in particular the compositional relations between the king and the standing beast, do not match other Middle Assyrian glyptic items, we may conjecture that the cylinder seal rolled on the Marduk-aḫa-eriš tablet may have been a remnant of Old Babylonian Mari. A possible re-use of such an old artifact in Middle Assyrian times may exemplify the manner in which north Mesopotamian and north Syrian motifs were kept alive for several centuries to reach first-millennium Neo-Assyrian royal imagery.

The heyday of the royal subjugation of the lion: Neo-Assyrian imagery

The age-old theme of the king's triumph over the lion seen on Middle Assyrian glyptics can be considered a direct forerunner of this subject matter in Neo-Assyrian times, when it reached its peak. Undeniably, the heyday of the theme in Neo-Assyrian art is demonstrated by its widespread variety of compositions and diversity of layouts. The theme is found in several Neo-Assyrian visual media that can be divided into two main groups: the lion chased and hunted by the king, habitually riding in a chariot, and the subjugation of the beast by the monarch in hand-to-hand combat.

The central role of the subjugation of the lion by the king in Neo-Assyrian iconography is further demonstrated by its presentation in both miniature and monumental art: on the large sealings termed in modern scholarship Office, Bureau, or State Sealings,

whose actual seals have not reached us (e.g., Figure 2.14; Winter 2000; Watanabe 2000: 406; Radner 2008; Nadali 2009–2010), and in large compositions sculpted on complex palatial wall reliefs, positioned at focal points throughout Assyrian palaces, sometimes covering the walls of entire architectural units and sometimes including many participants. To these two major groups we should add wall paintings depicting a royal lion hunt from a chariot, best preserved in Til-Barsip/Tall-Aḫmar, the Assyrian stronghold Kar Shalmaneser on the Middle Euphrates in Syria (Thureau-Dangin and Dunand 1936: 60, Plate LIII; Parrot 1961: 345–346), and miniature renderings incised on the king's garments on wall reliefs of Aššur-nāṣir-apli II (hereafter Ashurnasirpal) in Nimrud's Northwest Palace, showing him defeating the beast with his bare hands—the same theme as that on the Office Sealings.

The Subjugation of the Lion in the Northwest Palace: hand-to-hand Encounters and Chariot Hunts of Lions and Bulls

The hunt of a lion by a figure drawing a bow is recorded on a few clay sealings possibly dated to the reign of Ashurnasirpal II (884–859), created by now-missing large stamp seals, their imagery inspired by western, north Syrian pictorial traditions (Herbordt 1996). The form of these sealings, and their very presentation showing an encounter between a human image and a lion, suggest they may have been close forerunners of the Neo-Assyrian Office Sealings. However, they differ from the latter in depicting a kneeling human archer rather than a standing figure stabbing the beast, and in the non-royal dress of the shooting figure (see also Radner 2008: 487 and n. 12; Nadali 2009–2010: 217). However, the earliest representation of a standing Neo-Assyrian monarch defeating a lion in a hand-to-hand combat can be assigned to Ashurnasirpal II, evident from a few incised linear renderings of embroidered patterns on the king's garments on wall reliefs in the Northwest Palace at Nimrud (Figure 2.15; Canby 1971: 34, Plates XIV: a, XVII: a; Magen 1986: 35–36, Plates 1: 1, 2). In these miniature representations, the lion is shown standing erect on its hind legs, its forelegs raised and extended to the sides. This is typical of how the beast is depicted on the Office Sealings that served the Empire's administration for some two centuries, from the reign of Shalmaneser III (858–824) to that of Aššur-eṭil-ilāni (631–627; Radner 2008; Nadali 2009–2010). Thus, the imagery of the Office Sealings was first introduced into the Empire's pictorial imagery during Ashurnasirpal's reign and was most probably the direct inspiration for the large Neo-Assyrian Office Seals.

That the erect, standing, threatened lion was a rather common motif during Ashurnasirpal's II time is also apparent from the patterns incised on the bronze bands fixed to the door-leaves of the gate of Ashurnasirpal's
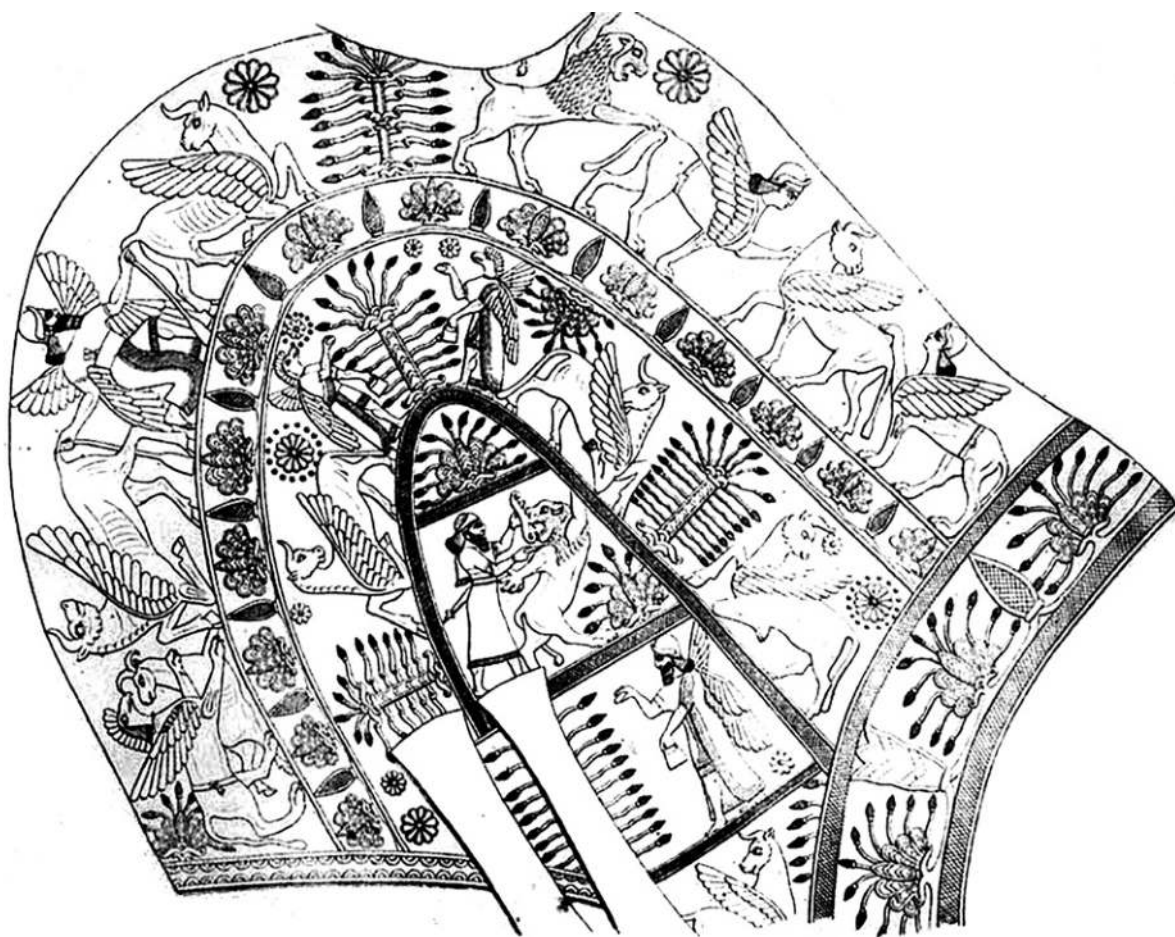
Figure 2.15. King Ashurnasirpal fighting a lion. A detail of embroidery of a royal garment. Wall Relief, room G, the Northwest Palace, Nimrud. Layard 1853, Plate. 8.

palace, built near the village of Balawat, southeast of Nineveh/Mosul, identified as Imgur-Enlil (Davies *et al.* 2008: 33–34). On these bronze bands the erect lion is not engaged in face-to-face combat with the king but is part of larger hunt scenes that involve more than two figures (Davies *et al.* 2008: Figures 5, 6, 16, 32). However, the similar portrayal of the erect lion on the Neo-Assyrian Office Sealings and on the chariot hunt of the bronze bands demonstrates a compositional association that hints at a similar role and meaning. The representation of the lion hunt on the bronze bands as part of triumphant battles waged against the rivals of Assyria corroborates the notion that the lions on both the Office Sealings and the bronze bands, indeed, stand for the human enemies of the Neo-Assyrian Empire.

This brings us to the Lion Hunt relief of Ashurnasirpal II in the Northwest Palace at Nimrud, sculpted around 860. The Lion Hunt is depicted on Slab 19 on the southern east end wall of Throne Room B (Figure 2.16; compare alabaster fragments from the surroundings of Ishtar Temple at Nineveh: Reade 2005: 378–379: Figure

19). It is the second wall panel to the left of the king's throne, or the second on the right from the viewpoint of the beholder, facing the king. Closer to the king is Slab 20 presenting the Bull Hunt, located first on the same wall (Figure 2.17; Meuszynski 1981: Plate 1: 3; Magen 1986: 32, Plates 3: 1, 2, 12: 6; Reade 2018: 56, Figures 63, 64). These are undoubtedly prime locations, since they are very close to the flesh-and-blood protagonist of the visual display, the king himself, symbolized by his throne when not present. The panels of the Bull and Lion Hunts share their subject matter, representing on the upper registers heroic royal feats against wild beasts (for the allusions of the royal ride to the Ninurta myth, see Watanabe 2002: 76–82; Dick 2006: 253–254),[11] while their cultic aftermath is expressed on the lower registers by royal libation over the carcasses of the beasts. They also share their iconic non-narrative layout, which differs from the succeeding reliefs along

---

[11] As opposed to Ishtar, however, Ninurta is not depicted mounting the lion in a victorious posture, and his non-anthropomorphic stand-in is a hybrid comprised of eagle and leonine features, while Ishtar's is a lion of the real world.

Figure 2.16. The Lion Hunt, slab 19, room B, the Northwest Palace, Nimrud The British Museum, ME 124534 and ME 124535. Collins 2008, 35. ©Courtesy The Trustees of the British Museum.

the eastern wall that narrate continuous specific ('historical') martial episodes performed by the Assyrian army, headed by the king (Winter 1981: 11). The hunt of the lions here can be compared to the 50 strong lion cubs killed by Ashurnasirpal II mentioned in one of his inscriptions in the Northwest Palace in Nimrud (Grayson 1991: 223–228: A.O.101.2). Of interest to us here is that Ashurnasirpal specifies in this inscription that he took the hunted lions to Nimrud where he kept them in cages and thus manifests the continuous feature of the Syrian–North Mesopotamian royal hunt of lions (Grayson 1991: 226, line 35) already recorded, as discussed above, in the first half of the fourth millennium.

The order of presentation of the Bull and Lion Hunts may signal an implied difference in their hierarchy. The Bull Hunt refers to the slaying of the Bull of Heaven by

Gilgameš, as hinted at by the manner in which the king stabs the bull between its horns, a posture echoing the encounter described in the Epic (Watanabe 2002: 75). This interpretation may imply that the Bull Hunt has a higher status than the Lion Hunt, corresponding to the central role of the Slaying of the Bull of Heaven in Tablet VI of the Standard Babylonian Epic of Gilgameš (George 2003: 470–478, 616–631). However, in the recurrent refrain that runs through the Epic, which serves Gilgameš as a self-introductory speech when he meets various figures during his journey after the death of Enkidu, the two feats are represented as equal (Ornan 2010: 237–239, 253). The order in which the Bull and the Lion Hunts were sculpted on the first two wall slabs on the southern east wall of Throne Room B echoes, then, the heroic exploits of Gilgameš much like the literary account in the Standard Babylonian Version. By selecting these two episodes
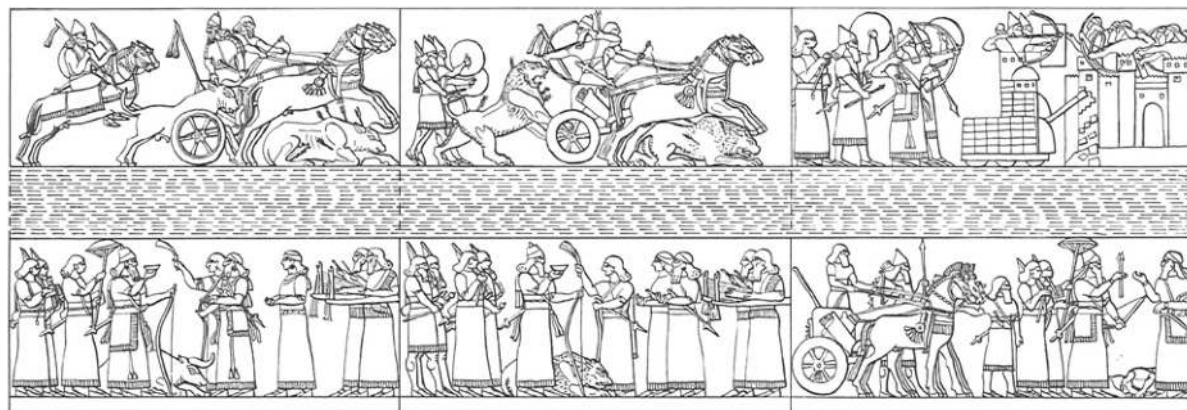
Figure 2.17. The Bull and the Lion Hunts preceding martial scenes, room B, the Northwest Palace.
After Meuszynski 1981, Plate 1.

as the launching introductory display of the long southeastern wall of the throne room with its narrated martial events of the real world, Ashurnasirpal II aimed to match his achievements with the heroic legendary feats of Gilgameš (Ataç 2010: 273–274), the archetypal legendary ruler of Uruk to whom Mesopotamian monarchs had been related or equated with since the Old Akkadian and Ur III periods (Winter 1996: 16–19; Michalovski 2008: 36–37).

However, the hunt and killing of the lions were more than heroic depictions aiming to boost the king for purposes of propaganda through the allusion to Gilgameš. This is evident from the lower scene on Slab 19, which shows a cultic ritual in which the king makes a libation over the carcass of a hunted lion (Figure 2.16 bottom). The libation, recalling in its cultic message the temple offering of a dead lion on the Uruk period cylinder seal noted above (Figure 2.6) marks the killed beast as fit to be offered to a divine entity and loads this action with a religious and cultic meaning (Magen 1986: 36; compare Dick 2006: 251). Since on the lower register of Slab 19 the king holds a bowl and a large bow as do Neo-Assyrian kings performing weapon purification ceremonies after the conclusion of earthly martial victories (Magen 1986: 81–84, Plate 16: 2, 3), we can identify the dead lion (obviously representing the losing side of the encounter with the king) as a fallen enemy of the king. This is corroborated by the combined non-narrative compositions of Slabs 19 and 20, which both close with libations over the dead enemy beasts: the slain Bull of Heaven is vanquished by the king alluding to Gilgameš[12] and the lion by the earthly king, who dwells in the Northwest Palace. In that, the hunted lion (and its deadly result) is likened to the king's human rivals, whose downfalls comprise the majority of the following narrative scenes on the eastern wall of the Northwest Palace. However, as we have seen above

in connection with the common contemporary visuals presenting major deities standing on lions (their former, now subdued rivals), we can also regard the beast as the rival of a divine image. A later, wine libation scene on a wall relief of Aššur-bāni-apli (hereafter Ashurbanipal) accompanied by an epigraph in the North Palace supports the above interpretation (see below).

A Royal Metaphor: The laḫmu Lion-Vanquisher in Sargon II's Palace

Before we move to the lion imagery in Ashurbanipal's North Palace at Nineveh, however, it is in order to discuss a theme relating to the lion's defeat that is almost unique in first-millennium art. It appears on a few Sargon II monuments (721/722–705) and on a rock relief of his son and heir, Sennacherib. The motif in question does not portray the king in hand-to-hand combat with the beast or chasing it while riding in a chariot. Rather, it represents huge images that can be identified as laḫmus, each holding a small but aggressive lion with their left hand in a display we may term an 'after-the-battle' motif.[13] These images were sculpted on three reliefs in the palace of Sargon II at Dūr Šarrukīn, located in the modern village of Khorsabad, 15 km northeast of Nineveh/Mosul. Considering the throne name Šarrukīn adopted by the king, meaning the 'true king' that harked back to an Old Assyrian king and possibly to Sargon the Great (Finkel and Reade 1996: 262–263. Matthaie 2015a: 1051–1052), the unique choice of the lion-holding laḫmus does not seem a coincidence in Sargon II's search for legitimacy, as the motif had much earlier third-millennium precedents discussed above.[14]

---

[12] Compare the lion-maned Achilles as a reference to Alexander the Great in Hellenistic art (Hanfmann 1957: 77).

[13] For a rare similar theme on an 8th century cylinder seal, although rendered in a different bodily posture of the heroic laḫmu, see Collon 1987: No. 966, BM 89140.

[14] In this regard, see Nadali 2019: 200, who considers Old Akkadian inspiration on Ishqi-Mari's sealings from Mari (above, Figure 3.7), and compare the two laḫmus on a sealing of Narām-Sîn, Figure 2.8, discussed above.

Figure 2.18. A *laḫmu*-like figure holding a lion, façade n, Khorsabad, Musée du Louvre, AO 19862. Https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hero_lion_Dur-Sharrukin_Louvre_AO19862.jpg.

The locations and immense measurements of the short-dressed colossus on façade M at the gate of the outer wall of the palace terrace (Louvre AO 19861, height 4.52m) and the two reliefs depicting long-dressed *laḫmu*s (e.g., Figure 2.18; AO 19862, height 5.50m) on

façade N leading to the Throne Room from court VIII, emphasize their centrality and special symbolism within the royal imagery of the palace (Albenda 1986: 43, 45, 52–53, Plates 16–17). Earlier Mesopotamian textual and iconographical allusions to the giant body of *laḫmu* (May 2019) fit their huge dimensions here, and shed light on the dependence of Sargon II on earlier Mesopotamian traditions, also manifested by the frontal heads and upper torsos of these immense gatekeepers (see Porada 1987).[15] Their exceptional features and the double set of winged human-headed bulls positioned at the sides of each *laḫmu* presented on façade N, indeed, seem to justify Albenda's designation of them as 'the Grand Royal Emblem' (1986: 101–102).

The unique visual features of the *laḫmu*s fit the innovative artistic program of the palace of Dūr Šarrukīn, as pointed out by Matthiae (2018). However, the very selection of the age-old fantastic figure of the *laḫmu* as the main emblem associated with the king (Albenda 1986: 102) contrasts with the deliberate ideological policy of eliminating mythical and symbolic representations from Sargon II's palace at Khorsabad, as suggested by Matthiae (Ibid. Albenda 1986: 102). The choice of the 'master of animals' scheme for the display of a fantastic lion-vanquisher stemmed from ancient Mesopotamian visuals, as already implied by Albenda (1986: 102 and n. 1). Based on the proposal raised above that the 'master of lions' *laḫmu* on the sealings of Ishqi-Mari and Narām-Sîn stood in for a triumphant king, a notion corroborated by the Ur III cylinder seal (Figures 2.7–9), we may comprehend the colossal *laḫmu*s of Sargon II in a similar fashion (compare Ulanowski 2015). The continuation of the visual trope and probably its meaning sheds light on the *longue durée* of the motif revived by Sargon II for his new and short-lived (716–705) palace at Dūr Šarrukīn. The symbolic theme of the superiority of the king is represented by the *laḫmu*s' triumph over the lion and their function as protective doorkeepers is evident from their location (Wiggermann 1983). Their enormous dimensions highlight their outstanding presentation and can support their association with Gilgameš, as first raised by George Smith (Ornan 2014: 82; Battini 2019; compare Finkel and Reade 1996: 263–264, n. 44) and their concurrent allusion to the king—the supreme figure who owned and dwelled in the building. Moreover, this twofold meaning of the *laḫmu*s as presented in the palace décor at Dūr Šarrukīn recalls the combined message conveyed by

---

15   The giant nature of the six-curled *laḫmu* was already acknowledged by Porada in her publication of the Pierpont Morgan Library collection of cylinder seals: '... a stock figure of Mesopotamian repertory .... The cyclopic version of this figure ...' (1948: 3– 4, No. 4) regarding a late Uruk period cylinder seal (Amiet 1961: Plate 40: 615) mentioned above in n. 6.

the Bull and Lion Hunts in the Northwest Palace of Assurnasirpal II, suggesting a thematic continuation, though differently visualized.

It must be borne in mind that by the end of the 8th century the image of the lion physically subdued by the king's hands had become a well-known motif through the continuous use of the Office Seals. Thus, the figures of the human-form *laḫmu*s holding a lion close to their bodies would have been recognized and associated with the king by (at least) the educated members of the Assyrian elite who entered the palace. In addition, as can be gleaned from an Assyrian Office Sealing found at Samaria, former capital of the Kingdom of Israel (Reisner, Fisher, and Gordon 1924: 378, Plate 56a), we may hypothesize that Office Sealings were disseminated in other parts of the Empire. Hence, we may propose that the Assyrian king's association with the lion-holding *laḫmu* would have been similarly understood by elite visitors to the palace from the Empire's provinces and vassal kingdoms (compare Reade 2018: 77).

A Royal Metaphor: The laḫmu Lion-Vanquisher on Sennacherib's Rock Relief at Khinis-Bavian

A similar *laḫmu* figure holding a small lion appears on one of the rock reliefs of Sennacherib (705/4–681) at Khinis/Bavian, located northeast of Nineveh/Mosul in the foothills of the Zagros. These rock reliefs were carved in 789 at the headwaters of the Khinis Canal overlooking the Gimil River (Su). The canal at Khinis was one of four major hydraulic networks that formed the 'Northern System' constructed northeast of Assyria by Sennacherib, which supplied water to the great city of Nineveh and its agricultural hinterland (Ur 2005).

The relief in question was originally carved high on the cliff above the river. It formed part of a monolith stone projection with three free-standing sculpted walls that served as a 'gate' carved out of the rock, through which one would enter a large garden stretching on the cliff's slope toward the river. At some point in its long history this carved projection was detached from the cliff and fell into the Gimil River; its sculpted walls are still half-covered by the water. In the middle of the lower register of one of the projection's walls a large *laḫmu*-like figure holding a small lion can be seen (Figure 2.19). In the center of the upper register of this wall the figure of Sennacherib is depicted, flanked by Aššur and Ninlil/Mulissu, the supreme divine couple of the Assyrian pantheon. The location of the lion-holding *laḫmu*-like figure in the center of the lower register below the royal figure seems intentional: it associates the king with the lion-holder and hints at their shared identity, as in the presentation of the *laḫmu* doorkeepers of Sargon II's palace at Khorsabad (Ornan 2007a: 167; 2014: 586–587).
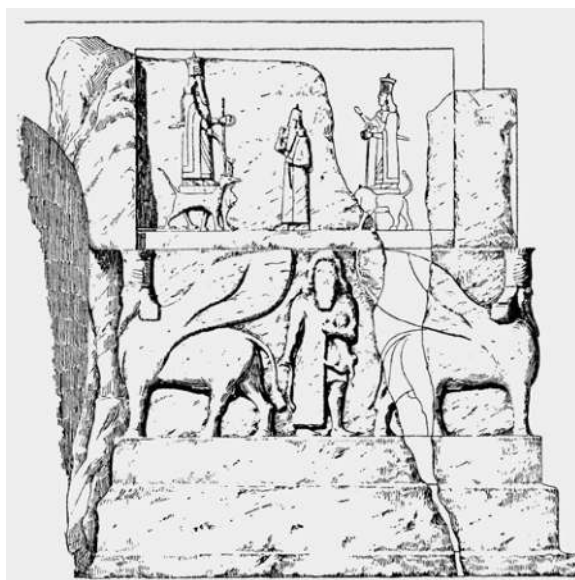

Figure 2.19. A *laḫmu*-like figure holding a lion. Sculpted rock relief, Khinis-Bavian, northeast of Assyria. Ornan 2007, Figure 3.

A Fascination with the Lion's Subjugation: Wall Reliefs in the North Palace of Ashurbanipal

This brings us to the final Neo-Assyrian palatial presentations of the subjugation of the lion. The series of five wall reliefs relating to the theme are sculpted on wall panels of Ashurbanipal (669–631) in the North Palace at Nineveh that, alongside relevant detailed royal inscriptions, manifest a peak (Weissert 1997: 339; Collins 2016: 50), almost an obsession with, the theme. Ashurbanipal's fascination with his subduing of the lion is demonstrated through its manifold and detailed variations, which show the king chasing, shooting, stabbing, clubbing, spearing, or killing the beast with a sword while standing, riding a chariot or a horse, or sailing in a boat (Reade 2018: 68). Moreover, the complex representations in question are shown within large and small compositions that cover major architectural units of the North Palace. While on the wall panels of Ashurnasirpal II's Northwest Palace in Nimrud the royal triumph over the lion is represented only once, in the North Palace the intricate and exhaustive renderings of the theme and its related depictions of lions are exhibited on many wall panels in five different architectural spaces that are interrelated both physically and thematically. They are displayed: 1) in the northeast private royal Room S, including the slabs that most probably had fallen from its upper floor S¹; 2) along Passage R leading to and from Room S-S¹; 3) in Passage A, which continued westward at a right angle to the former; 4) in 'Passage' E, leading southeast; and 5) in Room C, which continued straight on from Passage A and where the largest display of the royal
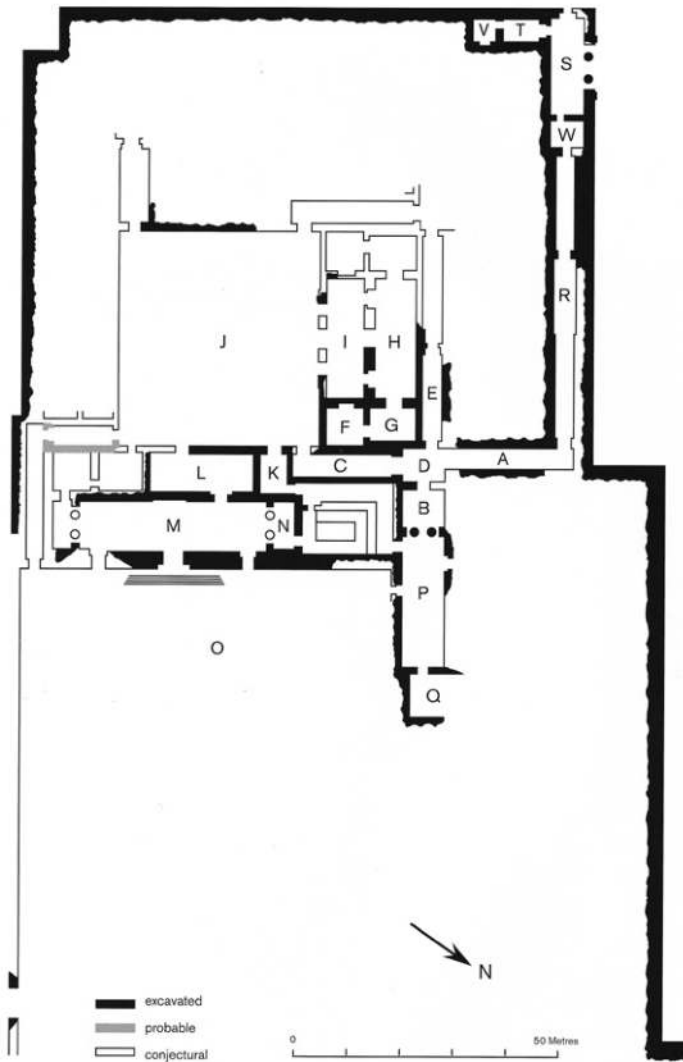
Figure 2.20. Ground plan of the North Palace of Ashurbanipal, Nineveh. After Reade 2018, Figure 16.

hunt is represented on three walls (Figure 2.20). In sum, then, the pictorial décor of the entire (surviving) southeastern part of the North Palace deals with, or is related to, Ashurbanipal's various violent royal encounters with lions and their outcome.

At the two extremities of this vast palatial area are two multifaceted panels dedicated to this subject matter: in Room C the Large Royal Lion Hunt, and in Room S and its upper floor S[1] the Small Royal Lion Hunt. These versatile narratives are located at two focal points of the North Palace: Room C, close to Rooms L and M, the palace's Throne Suite (although not directly connected to it) and the upper floor S[1], where the royal bedchamber was probably located (Figure 2.20). These locations, again, emphasize the extremely important role of the heroic royal subjugation of the lion in the North Palace.

The reliefs sculpted on the long northeastern and the short southeastern walls of Room C display a lion being released from its cage, followed by lions being attacked and killed by the king riding in a chariot, assisted only by a selected cohort and demonstrating an age-old Mesopotamian royal prerogative (Figure 2.21). Based on an analysis of the reliefs combined with a thorough reading of Ashurbanipal's written accounts, Weissert (1997: 351; compare Reade 1979: 30; Magen 1986: 35) has convincingly argued that the defeated lions symbolized the rivals of Assyria. The proposal is particularly compelling as Weissert (1997: 355) matches the 18 lions depicted on these two walls of Room C with Nineveh's 18 gates, through which enemies could have entered the Assyrian capital. The somewhat less well-preserved scenes on the southwestern long wall of Room C, facing the northeastern wall described above (Figure 2.21), depict two confronting chariots driven by the king, each facing a central large dead lion whose head is uniquely rendered from above (Nadali 2018; 216), and two groups of falling or dead lions at the sides of the chariots, probably originally comprising 18 lions altogether (Reade 2018;

41

NORTH-EAST WALL

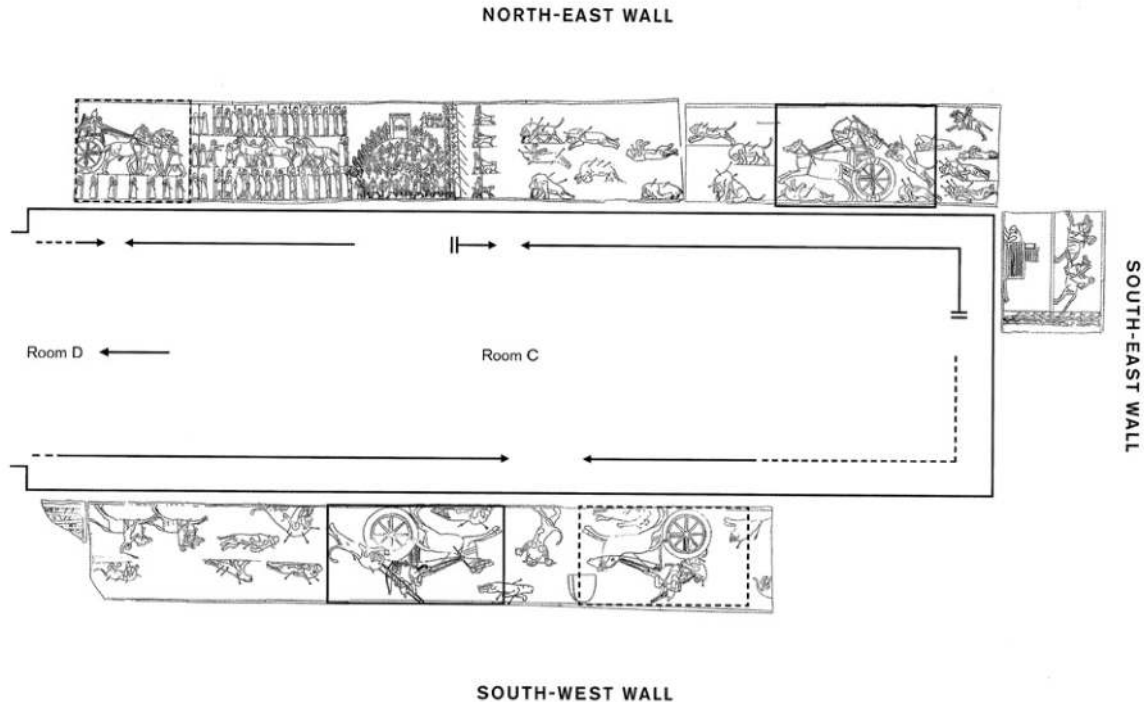SOUTH-EAST WALL

Room D

Room C

SOUTH-WEST WALL

Figure 2.21. Drawing of the Large Lion Hunts in room C. The North Palace, Nineveh.
After Watanabe 2018, v222, Figure. 238.

64). The matching numbers of lions depicted on the two long walls of Room C, each corresponding to the 18 gates of Nineveh, unified the message of the two large scenes of Room C and corroborate the proposal that the lions here, following older north Mesopotamian and north Syrian imagery, represent the enemies of Assyria (see, however, Nadali 2018: 213, n. 14). This interpretation inevitably implies a similar role for the chased and killed lions in the other compositions in the North Palace, particularly the three-register composition of the Small Royal Lion Hunt in Room S–S[1].

The sequence of Slab BM 124886, exposed on the floor of Room S which originally belonged to upper floor S[1], was concluded in its lower register by a libation scene performed by the king over four lions' carcasses (Figure 2.22; Weissert 1997: 350), recalling the terminating libation scene of Ashurnasirpal II's Lion Hunt in the Northwest Palace (Figure 2.16, discussed above). Here too the scene is part of martial narratives depicting the contemporary Assyrian victory over Elam (Weissert 1997: 349–350; Dick 2006: 247), a fact that re-establishes the role of the lion as representing the rivals of Assyria. The Louvre Slab AO 19914 showing a libation over the head of Teuman, the Elamite king (Reade 2018: 62–64, Figure 67), certainly adds weight to this proposal.

The libation scene of upper floor S[1] (Figure 2.22) is accompanied by an epigraph that, while not mentioning the divine addressee of the depicted cultic ceremony (Watanabe 1992), specifies that the king on this relief kills the lions with the bow of Ishtar (Gerardi 1988: 27–28; Reade 2018: 62). In this way, the special connections between Ishtar and the king's victory over the rivals of Assyria are underpinned, matching Ashurbanipal's written accounts (Weissert 1997: 346–48) and reinforcing the notion of the primeval triumph of the goddess over the lion. Ashurbanipal's close and intimate relationship with the goddess, Lady of Nineveh, whom we are told suckled the king with her four breasts (Livingstone 1989: 33–35), coupled with a dedication of a bow to Ishtar of Arbail and her offer to conduct the actual battle (of Till-Tuba) for the sake of the king (Goldstein and Weissert 2018: 246–247), augment that the king's subjugation of the lions, representing enemies of Assyria, concurrently conveys his triumph over the rivals of Ishtar. The king subdues the lion(s) for the sake of his goddess and as such is seemingly elevated to the status of a lesser member of her entourage (Maul 2000: 37; Ornan 2014: 589).

Conclusion

The hunt of a lion by an individual standing at the head of the social order is recorded in the art of the ancient Near East from the Early and Late Chalcolithic periods (late fifth to the first half of the fourth millennium respectively), as revealed by the early attestations of
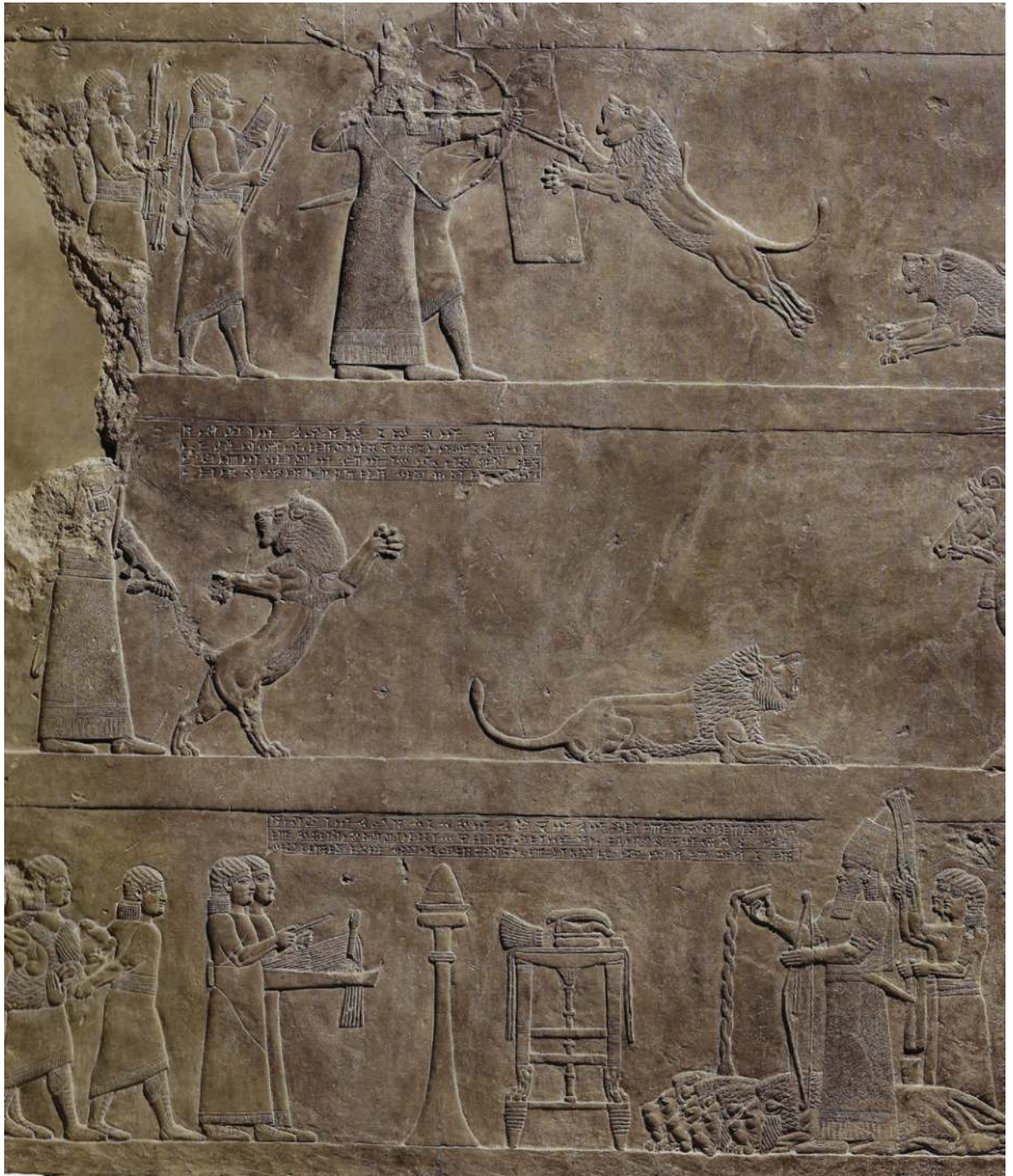
Figure 2.22. The Small Lion Hunt. Upper floor, room S^1, The British Museum. 124886. Reade 2018, 60, 62, Figures 65*, 66*. ©Courtesy The Trustees of the British Museum.

the theme on the Arpachiya bowl painting and on the Tall Majuna sealings.

Since almost all the earliest images depicting the ruler fighting the lion derive from Upper Mesopotamia, followed by finds dated to the Akkadian and Old Syrian/Old Babylonian periods from Ebla and Mari,

we may regard this subject matter as essentially typical of northern Mesopotamia and northern Syria. The first-millennium Assyrian intensive and detailed compositions of the theme are, hence, to be considered elaborations of local north Mesopotamian/ Syrian traditions—a proposal supported by the rare representations of the theme from south Mesopotamia.

In the late Early Dynastic-early Akkadian period the heroic image of a lion-vanquishing king was probably represented metaphorically by a *laḫmu*-like figure that may also have alluded to Gilgameš, the archetypal Mesopotamian king. This motif resurfaced in first-millennium Assyrian imagery during the reigns of Sargon II and Sennacherib, demonstrating the revival of a continuous iconographic tradition.

As well as obviously being a leisure and a sporting activity (Weissert 1997: 342; Strawn 2005: 39; Dick 2006; 248), the royal lion hunt was part of a choreographed cultic performance that at times included the keeping of live captured lions in cages, a practice reflecting the king's prerogative in defeating the beast. These staged events demonstrated royal power in connection with the worship of Ishtar, as suggested by Old Syrian archaeological remains from Ebla, clearly reflected in Ashurbanipal's textual and visual records. The Neo-Assyrian written sources, the choice in representing royal combat with the lion on the Office Seals, and the monumental pictorial renderings of the theme, especially the series of wall reliefs in the North Palace of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh, manifest the endurance of local north Syrian/north Mesopotamian traditions, which reached first millennium Assyria (compare Matthiae 2015a, 2015b).

The various depictions of the king struggling with the lion elevated the royal image to a status of as-if a lesser divinity, who vanquishes the Big Cat for the sake of Ishtar. This is transmitted by the common twofold representations of the lion in ancient Near Eastern art. On the one hand, major deities, particularly Ishtar, are represented astride a lion, signifying that the beast is her/their defeated primordial adversary. On the other hand, the king subduing the lion(s), symbolizes his human rivals. The images of the king hunting, spearing, or stabbing the Big Cat in hand-to-hand combat imply that such visuals were comprehended as stand-ins not only for victory over his human rival(s) but also for his triumph over the foes of his goddess: thus, the king, in these cases, could have been considered in the eyes of the ancient beholders as a lesser divinity in the service of Ishtar. The combat with the lion, then, combined the earthly role of the king in defeating his enemies with his position as a mediating figure between the divine and the worldly spheres.

The *longue durée* of the trope of the lion as a rival of human beings symbolizing the enemies of Assyria defeated by the king continued in both literary and pictorial imagery after the fall of Assyria, when the metaphorical use of the lion reached its apogee. Even though the Defeat of the Lion visual theme was not at home in Babylonia, there are a few rare cases that exhibit a Babylonian use of such tropes. The first is a cylinder seal of Marduk-apla-iddina II king of Babylonia in the last quarter of the 8th century, identified with Merodach-Baladan (2 Kings 20:12 and Isa 39). The seal shows an erect lion standing on its hind legs attacked by a divine figure in a composition which, no doubt, reflects the Neo-Assyrian Office Seal impressions. However, the Babylonian borrowing of the theme was modified here by replacing the (Assyrian) royal figure with an apotropaic supernatural figure (Collon 2003). The two additional cases are assigned to the period after the fall of Assyria: one is found in Babylonian iconography, the other in a Babylonian-related text. The former is a depiction of a royal figure combatting an erect lion carved on two Babylonian rock reliefs attributed to Nebuchadnezzar II, found outside of Babylonia in Wadi Brisa and in Wadi es-Sabaʿ in northern Lebanon (Da Riva 2010: 168, 178–179). The latter case echoes Babylonian-related vestiges of the Assyrian Lion's Defeat trope that found their way into the Book of Ezekiel, the 6th-century Judean prophet who lived in Babylonia. Four terms selected by Ezekiel 19:3–9[16] are well associated with north Mesopotamian and Assyrian tropes of the lion's hunt: the catching of the beast in a pit (*bšḥtm ntps*) or, in a net (*wyprsw ʿlyw rštm*), keeping it alive in a cage *swgr* or holding it with a lead-rope terminated with a nose-ring *ḥḥ* as was done with the rivals of Assyria (compare, for example, the Esarhaddon stele from Zinjirli, Ornan 2007b: 61–62, Figure 2). Moreover, since the prerogative of the king for killing the lion most probably continued in the Achaemenid court (Curtis 2017: 164, citing Ctesias, the 5th century Greek physician and historian) we may consider other features of the lion hunt as the caging alive of lions that survived in later phases of the Achaemenid period, as reflected in the account on the Lions' Den in Daniel 6 (8–29), whose origin stemmed from Mesopotamian traditions (Van der Torn 1998: 637–639), in particular Neo-Assyrian records. In effect, the adaptation of the Assyrian trope of the lion's den was preceded in the Book of Nahum (2:12–14]), dated in the 7th century, from post 663 to before the final collapse of the Assyrian Empire in 612 (Snyman 2020: 385).

As often revealed in processes of cultural borrowing and reception, however, these biblical accounts of Nahum 2, Ezekiel 19 and Daniel 6, transformed the message(s) of the earlier visual and written presentations of the Defeat of the Lion, discussed here, into another ideological framework that befitted their own specific aims. Indeed, the royal subjugation of the lion continued and was applied in later times in the art of the ancient Near East and beyond, as in the Sassanian period (e.g., Compareti 2019: 27–28, 31–32). Considering the ancient Near Eastern long-enduring tradition in which the lion, *inter alia,* stood

---

[16] For the common metaphorical interpretation of Ezekiel 19:3–9, see Strawn 2005: 40, 55–57 with earlier bibliography.

Figure 2.23. The Qajar ruler Fatḥ-Ali-Shah (1797–1834 CE) spearing a lion while
surrounded by his courtiers. Book cover. The British Museum, 1921 6–14-04.
©Courtesy The Trustees of the British Museum.

for a defeated rival, it is conceivable, for example—as was initially suggested by Bivar—that the two attacked lions facing Bahrām II (276–293 CE) on the Sar-Mashhad rock relief in Fars, represented his rivals: The Roman Emperor Carus and another rebellious figure, perhaps Hormizd (Bivar 1978: 280–281; see, however, Curtis 2017: 166). The image of another ancient Near Eastern king—David, king of Israel/Judah—as a lion vanquisher, resurfaced in 12th century CE Frankish Jerusalem, on the ivory cover of Queen Melisande's Psalter, alluding to the age-old Near Eastern trope mentioned above of the shepherd-king who kills the lion (1 Sam 34–35), which was woven into the visualized biblical biography of David. In continuation of the ancient imagery of the Middle East, the lion retains its role here as an imagined rival—the Antichrist (Kühnel 1991: 341, 344, 355, 356–357), recalling its role as a rival of the goddess Ishtar discussed here (see Gutgarts, Chapter 8 in this volume). Similar representations of a ruler defeating a lion were revived in the early 19th century by Fatḥ 'Ali Shah of Iran (1797–1834 CE), in an effort to identify himself with the splendor of the pre-Islamic past. Demonstrating the age-old prerogative of the king in the hunting and killing of the beast discussed here, Fatḥ 'Ali Shah, identified by his long black beard, is presented as the only figure among the courtiers and horsemen who surround him who spears a lion (Figure 2.23; Canby 2007: 118–119).

References

Aktaş, E. and Beldağ, A. 2017. Kalila and Dimna as One of the Traditional Antecedents of Modern Classifications of Values. *International Education Studies* 10(3): 46–53.

Albenda, P. 1986. *The Palace of Sargon, King of Assyria. Monumental Wall Reliefs at Dur-Sharrukin, from Drawings Made at the Time of Their Discovery in 1843–1844 by Botta and Flandin*. Paris.

Amiet, P. 1961. *La glyptique mésopotamienne archaïque*. Paris.

Amiet, P. 1992. *Sceaux-cylindres en hématite et pierres diverses. Ras Shamra-Ougarit 9*. Paris.

Amiet, P., Noblecourt, C.D., Pasquier, A., Baratte, F., and Metzger, C. 1981. *La grammaire des formes et des styles: Antiquité. Le monde iranien,* Mésopotamie, *pays du Levant, Egypte, Grèce, les Etrusques, Rome*. Paris.

Anthonioz, S. 2020. The Lion, the Shepherd, and the Master of Animals: Metaphorical Interactions and Governance Representations in Mesopotamian and Levantine Sources Researching Metaphor in the Ancient Near East. In: Pallavidini, M. and Portuese, L., eds. *Researching Metaphor in the Ancient Near East* (*Philippika, Contributions to the Study of Ancient World Cultures* 141). Wiesbaden: 15–26.

Aruz, J., Graff, S.B., and Rakic, Y., eds. 2014. *Assyria to Iberia at the Dawn of the Classical Age*. New York.

Ataç, M.-A. 2010. Representations and Resonances of Gilgamesh in Neo-Assyrian Art. In: Steymans, H.-U., ed. *Gilgamesch—Bilder eines Helden: Ikonographie und Überlieferung von Motiven im Gilgameš-Epos* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis Series Archaeologica 245). Fribourg: 261–286.

Barnett, R.D. 1976. *Sculptures from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh (668–631 B.C.)*. London.

Battini, L. 2009. Une inscription sur brique d'Enannatum I: un nouveau regard sur les lions gardiens des portes en Mésopotamie. *Anthropozoologia* 44(1): 188–209.

Battini, L. 2019. The Complexity of Understanding: from a Neo-Assyrian Cylinder Seal—BM WA 132257—to Sargon II's Throne Room, to Bavian Sculpture and to the 'God at the Entrance of His Temple.' *N.A.B.U.* Mars: 57–58.

Becker, A. 1993. *Uruk: Kleinfunde I: Stein*. Ausgrabungen Uruk-Warka Endberichte 6. Mainz am Rhein.

Beran, T. 1957. Assyrische Glyptik des 14. Jahrhunderts. *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie* 18: 141–215.

Berlin, A. and Brettler, M.Z., eds. 2004. *The Jewish Study Bible. Jewish Publication Society*. Tanakh Translation.

Beyer, D. 2001. *Emar IV Les sceaux: Mission archéologique de Meskéné-Emar. Recherches au pays d'Aštata* (Orbis biblicus et Orientalis Series Archaeologica 20). Fribourg.

Beyer, D. 2016. Some Observations on the War Scenes on the Seals from Mari City II. In: Battini, L., ed. *Making Pictures of War: Realia et Imaginaria in the Iconology of the Ancient Near East*. Oxford: 5–12.

Bivar, A.D.H. 1972. Cavalry Equipment and Tactics on the Euphrates Frontier. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 26: 271–291.

Black, J. and Green, A. 1992. *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia, An Illustrated Dictionary*. London.

Bloch, Y. 2012. *Studies in Middle Assyrian Chronology and Its Implications for the History of the Ancient Near East in the 13th Century B.C.E.* (Ph.D. dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem). Jerusalem.

Blocher, F. 2013. Die Ikonographie der Inanna/Ischtar im alten Orient. In: Crusemann, N., van Ess, M., Hilgert, M., and Salje, B., eds. *Uruk 5000 Jahre Megacity*. Berlin: 83–91.

Böhmer, R.M. 1965. *Die Entwicklung der Glyptik während der Akkad-Zeit*. Berlin.

Braun-Holzinger, E.-A. 2007. *Das Herrscherbild in Mesopotamien und Elam spätes 4. bis frühes 2. Jt. v. Chr.* Munster.

Breniquet, C. 1992. À propos du vase halafien de la Tombe G2 de Tell Arpachiyah. *Iraq* 54: 69–78.

Buchanan, B. and Moorey, R.P.S. 1988. *Catalogue of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in the Ashmolean Museum III: The Iron Age Stamp Seals*. Oxford.

Buchholz, H-G. 2005. Beobachtungen zur nahöstlichen, zyprischen und frühgriechischen Löwenikonographie. *Ugarit-Forschungen*: 37: 27–215.

Butterlin, P. 2015. Uruk Kultur. *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* 1(5/6): 487–495.

Canby, J.V. 1971. Decorated Garments in Ashurnasirpal's Sculpture. *Iraq* 33(1): 31–53.

Canby, S. 2007. The Royal Hunt in Islamic Art: A Symbol of Power or an Enduring Image? In: Crawford, H., ed. *Regime Change in the Ancient Near East and Egypt from Sargon of Agade to Saddam Hussein. Proceedings of the British Academy 136*. Oxford: 105–120.

Cassin, E. 1981. Le roi et le lion. In: *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 198(4): 353–401.

Cogan, M.D., ed. 2018. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version, An Ecumenical Study Bible* (revised 5th edition). Oxford.

Collins, P., with photographs by Baylis, L. and Marshall, S. 2008. *Assyrian Palace Sculptures*. London.

Collins, P. 2016. The Face of the Assyrian Empire: Mythology and the Heroic King. In: Aruz, J. and Seymour, M., eds. *Assyria to Iberia: Art and Culture in the Iron Age: The Metropolitan Museum of Art Symposia*. New York: 42–53.

Collins, S. 2017. *The Standard of Ur (Objects in Focus)*. London.

Collon, D. 1975. *The Seal Impressions from Tell Atchana/Alalakh* (AOAT 27). Neukirchen-Vluyn.

Collon, D. 1987. *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East*. London.

Collon, D. 2003. Seals of Merodach-Baladan. In: Eph'al, I., Ben-Tor, A., and Machinist, P., eds. *Eretz-Israel, Archaeological, Historical and Geographical Studies 27, Haim and Miriam Tadmor Volume*. Jerusalem: 10*–17*.

Collon, D. 2007. Chapter 7B: Two Middle Bronze Age Cylinder Seals. In: Mazar, A. and Mullins, R.A., eds. *Excavations at Tel Beth-Shean II, 1989–1996: The Middle and Late Bronze Age Strata in Area R*. Jerusalem: 578–581.

Collon, D. 2008. Le développement de l'arc en Mésopotamie. In: Abrahami, P. and Battini, L., eds. *Les armées du Proche-Orient ancien (IIIe-Ier mill. av. J.-C). Actes du colloque international organisé à Lyon les 1er et 2 décembre 2006, Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée* (BAR International Series 1855). Oxford: 93–112.

Compareti, M. 2019. Assimilation and Adaptation of Foreign Elements in Late Sasanian Rock Reliefs at Taq-i Bustan. In: Asutay-Effenberger, N. and Daim, F., eds. *Sasanian Elements in Byzantine, Caucasian and*

Islamic Art and Culture (Byzanz zwischen Orient und Okzident 15). Mainz: 19–36.

Cornelius, I. and Niehr, H. 2004. *Götter und Kulte in Ugarit: Kulturen und Religionennordsyrischen Königsstadt in der Spätbronzezeit.* Zaberns Bildbande zur Archaologie, Sonderbande der Antike Welt. Mainz am Rheim.

Curtis, J. 2017. Lions in Ancient Iran. In: Porter, V., Galloway, D., Hatam, B., Vesta, S, Curtis, J., and Babaie, S., eds. *Parvis Tanvoli and the Lions of Iran.* Teheran: 159–221.

Da Riva, R. 2010. A Lion in the Cedar Forest. International Politics and Pictorial Self-Representations of Nebuchadnezzar II (605–562 BC). In: Vidal. J., ed. *Studies on War in the Ancient Near East* (AOAT 372). Munster: 165–191.

Davies, L.G., Walker, C.B.F., Curtis J.E., and Tallis, N. 2008. Description of the Palace Gate. In: Barnett, R.D., Curtis, J.E., Davies, L.G.,Howard, M.M., and Walker, C.B.F. *The Balawat Gates of Ashurnasirpal II.* London.

Desset, F., Marchesi, G., Vidale, M., and Pignatti, J. 2016. A Sculpted Dish from Tello Made of a Rare Stone (Louvre–AO 153). *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 75(1): 71–84.

Dick, M.B. 2006. The Neo-Assyrian Royal Hunt and Yahweh's Answer to Job. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123(2): 243–270.

Eco, U. 1976. *A Theory of Semiotics.* Bloomington, Ind.

Evans, J.M., Green, J., and Teeter, E., eds. 2019. *100 Highlights of the Collection of the Oriental Institute.* Chicago.

Feller, B. 2010. Seal Images and Social Status: Sealings on Middle Assyrian Tablets from Ashur. In: Matthiae, P., Pinnock, F., Nigro, L., and Marchetti, N., eds. *Near Eastern Archaeology in the Past, Present and Future. Heritage and Identity Ethnoarchaeological and Interdisciplinary Approach, Results and Perspectives Visual Expression and Craft Production in the Definition of Social Relations and Status,* Vol. 1. *Proceedings of the 6th International Congress of the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East 5 May–10 May 2009, Sapienza«, Universiti di Roma.* Wiesbaden: 721–729.

Finkel, I. and Reade, J.E. 1996. Assyrian Hieroglyphs. *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie* 86: 244–268.

Frankfort, H. 1939 (reprinted 1965). *Cylinder Seals: A Documentary Essay on the Art and Religion of the Ancient Near East.* London.

Freydank, H. and Feller, B. 2006. *Mittelassyrische Rechtsurkunden und Verwaltungstexte VII.* Ausgrabungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft in Assur E, Inschriften VII: Keilschrifttexte aus mittelassyrischer Zeit 5. Wissen (WVDOG) 111. Saarwellingen.

Garfinkel, Y. 2018. Chasing Away Lions and Weaving: The *longue durée* of Talmudic Gender Icons. In: Piotrkowski, M.M., Herman, G., and Döniteds, S., eds. *Sources and Interpretation in Ancient Judaism Studies for Tal Ilan at Sixty.* Leiden: 11–31.

George, A.R. 2003. *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts I, II.* Oxford.

Gerardi, P. 1988. Epigraphs and Assyrian Palace Reliefs: The Development of the Epigraphic Text. *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 40(2): 1–35.

Goldstein, R. and Weissert, E. 2018. The Battle of Til-Tuba Cycle and the Documentary Evidence. In: Brereton, G., ed. *I Am Ashurbanipal: King of the World, King of Assyria.* London: 244–273.

Grayson, K.A. 1991. *The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Period 1 (1114–859 B.C.). The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia. Assyrian Periods 2.* Toronto.

Guichard, M. 1997. Présages fortuits à Mari. *Mari Annales de recherches interdisciplinaires* (M.A.R.I.) 8: 305–328.

Hamilton, R.W. 1959. *Khirbat al-Mafjar. An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley.* Oxford.

Hanfmann, G.M.A. 1957. Narration in Greek Art. Narration in Ancient Art, A Symposium, Archaeological Institute of America, Chicago, Illinois, December 29, 1955. *American Journal of Archaeology* 61(1): 71–78.

Herbordt, S. 1996. Ein Köngssiegel Assurnasirpals II.(?) aus Assur. *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 27: 411–417.

Iafrate, A. 2015. *The Wandering Throne of Solomon. Objects and Tales of Kingship in the Medieval Mediterranean.* Mediterranean Art Histories, Studies in Visual Cultures and Artistic Transfers from Late Antiquity to the Modern Period II. Leiden.

Keel, O. and Uehlinger, C. 1998. *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel.* Minneapolis and Edinburgh.

Klein, J. 1981. *The Royal Hymns of Shulgi King of Ur: Man's Quest for Immortal Fame* (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 71[7]). Philadelphia: 1–48.

Klein, J. and Brenner, O. 2013. Votive Inscriptions from a Private Collection. *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 70 (5–6 September–December): 609–632.

Klengel-Brandt, E., ed. 1997. *Mit Sieben Siegeln versehen. Das Siegel in Wirtschaft und Kunst des Alten Orient.* Mainz.

Kühnel, B. 1991. The Kingly Statement of the Bookcovers of Queen Melisande's Psalter. In: Dassmann, E. and Thraede, K., eds. *Tesserae: Festscrhift für Joseph Engemann, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, Ergänzungsband* 18. Munster: 340–357.

Layard, A.H. 1853. *The Monuments of Nineveh from Drawings Made on the Spot Illustrated in One Hundred Plates.* London.

Livingstone, A., ed. 1989. *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea: State Archives of Assyria III.* Helsinki.

Magen, U. 1986. *Assyrische Königsdarstellungen Aspekte der Herrschaft.* Baghdader Forschungen 9. Mainz am Rhein.

Marchesi, G. 2016. Gudea and the Master of Lions: Philological Notes on the Louvre Dish AO 153. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 75(1): 85–89.

Margueron, J.-C. 2004. *Mari. Métropole de l'Euphrate au IIIe et au début du IIe millénaire avant J.-C.* Paris.

Matthews, D.M. 1990. *Principles of Composition in Near Eastern Glyptic of the Later Second Millennium B.C.* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis Series Archaeologica 8). Göttingen.

Matthiae, P. 1989. Old Syrian Ancestors of Some Neo-Assyrian Figurative Symbols of Kingship. In: De Meyers, L. and Haerinck, E., eds. *Archaeologia Iranica et Orientalis. Miscellanea in Honorem Louis Vanden Berghe.* Gent: 367–391.

Matthiae, P. 1994. The Lions of the Great Goddess of Ebla: A Hypothesis about Some Archaic Old Syrian Cylinders. In: Gasche, H., Tanret, M., Janssen, C., and Degraeve, A., eds. *Cinquante-deux réflexions sur le Proche-Orient ancien offertes en hommage à Léon de Meyer* (Mesopotamian History and Environment, Occasional Publications II). Leuven: 329–338.

Matthiae, P. 2000. A Statue Base from the Western Palace. In: Dittmann, R., Hrouda, B., Low, U., Matthiae, P., Mayer-Opificius, R., and Thürwächter, S., eds. *Variatio delectat Iran und der Westen Gedenkschrift für Peter Calmeyer* (AOAT 272). Munster: 385–402.

Matthiae, P. 2009. The Standard of the *Maliktum* of Ebla in the Royal Archives Period. *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie* 99: 270–311.

Matthiae, P. 2013. An Archaic Old Syrian Stele from Ebla and the Figurative Culture of Syria around 1800. In: Matthiae, P., *Studies on the Archaeology of Ebla 1980–2010*, Pinnock, F., ed. Wiesbaden: 517–555.

Matthiae, P. 2015a. Les nobles dans l'art de Khorsabad: Images et conception politique de Sargon d'Assyrie. *Compte rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres 2* (avril-juin): 1047–1074.

Matthiae, P. 2015b. On the Origin of the Middle Assyrian Obelisks. In: Ciafardoni, P. and Giannessi, D., eds. *From the Treasures of Syria: Essays on Art and Archaeology in Honour of Stefania Mazzoni* (PIHANS 126). Leiden: 131–152.

Matthiae, P. 2018. Le rapport entre texte et image dans les reliefs: Tradition et innovation un siècle et demi après Assurnaṣirpal II. In: Attinger, P., Cavigneaux, A., Mittermayer, C., and Novák, M., eds. *Texts and Image. Proceedings of the 61ᵉ Recontre Assyriologique Internationale, Geneva and Bern, 22–26 June, 2015.* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis Series Archaeologica 40). Leuven: 245–254.

Matthiae, P. 2019. A Problem of Iconology: A Note on the Banquets of the Old Syrian Basins of Ebla. In: D'Andrea, M., Micale, M.G., Nadali, D., Pizzimenti, S., and Vacca, A., eds. *Pearls of the Past, Studies on Near Eastern Art and Archaeology in Honour of Frances Pinnock.* Munster: 571–600.

Maul, S.M. 2000. Der Sieg über die Mächte des Bösen. Götterkampf, Triumphrituale und Torarchitektur in Assyrien. In: Hölscher, T., ed. *Gegenwelten zu den Kulturen Griechenlands und Roms in der Antike.* Munich: 19–46.

May, N.N. 2019. Early Monumental Representations of Constellations in Mari: The Moon between the Giant and the Bull of Heaven. *N.A.B.U.* 108–112.

McMahon, A. 2009. The Lion, the King and the Cage: Late Chalcolithic Iconography and Ideology in Northern Mesopotamia. *Iraq* 71:115–124.

Meuszynski, J. 1981. *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen und ihrer Anordnung im Nordwestpalast von Kalhu (Nimrud).* Mainz am Rhein.

Michalowski, P. 2008. The Mortal Kings of Ur: A Short Century of Divine Rule in Ancient Mesopotamia. In: Brisch, N., ed. *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond* (Oriental Institute Seminars 4). Chicago 33–45.

Morandi Bonacossi, D. 2006. A New Royal Statue from Tell Mishrifeh/Qatna. In: Czerny, E., Hein, I., Hunger, H., Melman, D., and Schwab, A., eds. *Timelines: Studies in Honour of Manfred Bietak*, Vol. 3 (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 149). Leuven: 53–62.

Moortgat, A. 1940. *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Steinschneidekunst.* Berlin.

Moortgat, A. 1942. Assyrische Glyptik des 13. Jahrhunderts. *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie* 13: 50–88.

Moortgat, A. 1944. Assyrische Glyptik des 12. Jahrhunderts. *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie* 14: 23–44.

Moortgat, A. 1969. *The Art of Ancient Mesopotamia: The Classical Art of the Near East.* London.

Nadali, D. 2009–2010. Neo-Assyrian State Seals: An Allegory of Power. *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin* XVIII: 215–44.

Nadali, D. 2018. Timing Space/Spacing Time: Narrative Principles in Assurbanipal Hunt Reliefs of Room C in the North Palace of Nineveh. In: Pedde, F. and Shelley, N., eds. *Assyromania and More: In Memory of Samuel M. Paley.* Munster: 211–225.

Nadali, D. 2019. The Seal of Ishqi-Mari: Does It Represent the Defeat of Ebla? *Studia Eblaitica, Studies on the Archaeology, History, and Philology of Ancient Syria* 5: 194–200.

Nadali, D. 2020. Aššur Is King! The Metaphorical Implications of Embodiment, Personification, and Transference in Ancient Assyria. In: Pallavidini, M. and Portuese, L., eds. *Researching Metaphor in the Ancient Near East.* Philippika, Contributions to the Study of Ancient World Cultures 141. Wiesbaden: 69–83.

Nadwi, A.M. 2013. Panchatantra: Its Impact on Perso-Arabic Literature. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 12(3): 33–35.

Niederreiter, Z. 2008. Le rôle des symboles figurés attribués aux membres de la cour de Sargon II. Des emblèmes créés par les lettrés du palais au service de l'idéologie royale. *Iraq* 70: 51–86.

Olivelle, P. 1997. *The Pañcatantra: The Book of India's Folk Wisdom, A New Translation.* Oxford.

Ornan, T. 2007a. The Godlike Semblance of a King: The Case of Sennacherib's Rock Reliefs. In: Cheng, J. and Feldman, M.H., eds. *Ancient Near Eastern Art in Context: Studies in Honor of Irene J. Winter by Her Students.* Leiden: 161–178.

Ornan, T. 2007b. Who Is Holding the Lead Rope? The Relief of the Broken Obelisk. *Iraq* 69: 59–72.

Ornan, T. 2010. Humbaba, the Bull of Heaven and the Contribution of Images to the Reconstruction of the Gilgameš Epic. In: Steymans, H.-U., ed. *Gilgamesch— Bilder eines Helden: Ikonographie und Überlieferung von Motiven im Gilgameš-Epos* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 245). Fribourg and Göttingen: 229–260.

Ornan, T. 2012. The Long Life of a Dead King: A Bronze Statue from Hazor in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 366: 1–23.

Ornan, T. 2014. A Silent Message: Godlike Kings in Mesopotamian Art. In: Brown, B.A. and Feldman, M.H., eds. *Critical Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Art.* Berlin: 569–595.

Orthmann, W. 1971. *Untersuchungen zur späthethitischen Kunst.* Saarbrücker Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 8. Bonn.

Orthmann, W., ed. 1975. *Der Alte Orient.* Propyläen Kunstgeschichte 14. Berlin.

Parrot, A. 1961. *Nineveh and Babylon.* London.

Perkins, A. 1957. Narration in Babylonian Art. In: *Narration in Ancient Art: A Symposium.* 57th General Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America Chicago, Illinois, December 29, 1955. *American Journal of Archaeology* 61(1): 54–62.

Pierre Muller, B. 1990. Une grande peinture des appartements royaux du palais de Mari (salles 219– 220). *Mari Annales de Recherches interdisciplinaires* 6. Paris: 463–558.

Pittman, H. 1996. Constructing Context: The Gebel el-Arak Knife. In: Cooper, J.S, and Schwartz, G.M., eds. *The Study of the Ancient Near East in the Twenty-First Century.* Winona Lake, IN: 9–32.

Pittman, H. 2002. The Jeweler's Seal from Susa and Art of Awan. In: Ehrenberg, E., ed. *Leaving No Stones Unturned: Essays on the Ancient Near East and Egypt in Honor of Donald P. Hansen.* Winona Lake, IN: 211–235.

Pongratz-Leisten, B. 2019. Ishtar Overthrows Its Assailnts: The Protective Forces of Babylon's Ishtar Gate. In: Amrhein, A. and Knott, E., eds. *A Wonder to Behold: Craftsmanship and the Creation of Babylon's Ishtar Gate.* New York: 135–143.

Porada, E. 1948. *The Collection of the Pierpont Morgan Library: Corpus of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in North American Collections* (Bollingen Series 14). New York.

Porada, E. 1987. On the Origins of Aquarius. In: Rochberg-Halton, F., ed. *Language, Literature and History: Philological and Historical Studies Presented to Erica Reiner* (American Oriental Series 67). New Haven: 279–291.

Radner, K. 2008. The Delegation of Power: Neo-Assyrian Bureau Seals. In: Briant, P., Wouter F., Henkelman, M., and Stolper, M.W., eds. *L'archive des fortifications de Persépolis: État des questions et perspectives de recherches, actes du colloque organisé au Collège de France par la "Chaire d'histoire et civilisation du monde achéménide et de l'empire d'Alexandre" et le "Réseau international d'études et de recherches achéménides"* (GDR 2538 CNRS), 3–4 novembre 2006, Paris: 480–515.

Reade, J. E. 1979. Assyrian Architectural Decoration: Techniques and Subject-Matter. *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 10: 17–49.

Reade, J.E. 2005. The Ishtar Temple at Nineveh. *Nineveh: Papers of the 49th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Part Two. Iraq* 67(1): 347–390.

Reade, J.E. 2018. The Assyrian Royal Hunt. In: Brereton, G., ed. *I Am Ashurbanipal: King of the World, King of Assyria.* London: 52–79.

Reisner, G.A., Fisher, C.S., and Gordon. D.L.1924. *Harvard Excavations in Samaria, 1908-1910, III.* Cambridge, MA.

Rohn, K. 2011. *Beschriftete mesopotamische Siegel der Frühdynastischen und der Akkad-Zeit* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis Series Archaeologica 32). Fribourg and Göttingen.

Routledge, B. 2004. *Moab in the Iron Age: Hegemony, Polity, Archaeology.* Philadelphia.

Sass, B. and Marzahn, J. 2010. *Aramaic and Figural Stamp Impressions on Bricks of the Sixth Century B.C. from Babylon.* Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft 127. Ausgrabungen in Babylon 10. Wiesbaden.

Schick, T. 1998. *The Cave of the Warrior: A Fourth Millennium Burial in the Judean Desert* (Israel Antiquities Authority Reports 5). Jerusalem.

Schroer, S. 2005. *Die Ikonographie Palästinas/Israels und der Alte Orient, Eine Religionsgeschichte in Bildern* I, *Vom ausgehenden Mesolithikum bis zur Frühbronzezeit.* Fribourg.

Schroer, S. 2018. *Die Ikonographie Palästinas/Israels und der Alte Orient, Eine Religionsgeschichte in Bildern* 4, *Die Eisenzeit bis zum Beginn der achämenidischen Herrschaft.* Göttingen.

Sebbane, M. 2016. Ceremonial and Ritual Maces in the Temples of the Ancient Near East and the Nature of the Hoard from Nahal Mishmar. In: Finkelstein, I., Robin, C., and Römer, T., eds. *Alphabets, Texts and Artefacts in the Ancient Near East, Studies Presented to Benjamin Sass.* Paris: 421–473.

Seidl, U. 1989. *Die babylonischen Kudurru-Reliefs* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 87). Fribourg and Göttingen.

Sonik, K. 2014. Pictorial Mythology and Narrative in the Ancient Near East. In: Brown, B.A. and Feldman, M.H., eds. *Critical Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Art.* 265–293. Berlin.

Snyman, F.S.D. 2020. The Lion-King in Nahum 2:11–13 (Hebrew 2:12–14). *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 6.2: 379–393.

Spycket, A. 1968, Une grande déesse élamite retrouve son visage. *Syria* 45: 67–73.

Suter, C.E. 2000. *Gudea's Temple Buildings: The Representations of an Early Mesopotamian Ruler in Text and Image.* Groningen.

Suter, C.E. 2014. Human, Divine or Both? The Uruk Vase and the Problem of Ambiguity in Early Mesopotamian Visual Arts. In: Brown, B.A. and Feldman, M.H., eds. *Critical Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Art.* 545–568. Berlin.

Strawn, B.A. 2005. *What Is Stronger Than a Lion? Leonine Image and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 212). Fribourg and Göttingen.

Thureau-Dangin, F. and Dunand, M. 1936. *Til Barsib.* Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 23. Paris.

Ulanowski, K. The Rituals of Power: The Akkadian Tradition in Neo-Assyrian Policy. In: Archi, A., ed. *Tradition and Innovation in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 57th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale at Rome 4–8 July 2011.* Winona Lake, IN.: 237–250.

Ur, J. 2005. Sennacherib's Northern Assyrian Canals: New Insights from Satellite Imagery and Aerial Photography. In: Collon, D. and George, A.R., eds. *Papers of the XLIXe Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, London, 7–11 July 2003, I, Iraq* 64: 317–345.

Van der Toorn, K. 1998. In the Lions' Den: The Babylonian Background of a Biblical Motif. *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 60: 626–640.

Wagner-Durand, E. 2019. Narration. Description. Reality: The Royal Lion Hunt in Assyria. In: Wagner-Durand, E., Fath, B., and Heinemann, A., eds. *Image – Narration – Context: Visual Narration in Cultures and Societies of the Old World*, Freiburger Studien zur Archäologie und Visuellen Kultur 1. Heidelberg: 235–272.

Watanabe, C.E. 1992. A Problem in the Libation Scene of Ashurbanipal. In: H.I.H. Prince Takahito Mikasa, ed. *Cult and Ritual in the Ancient Near East. Bulletin of the Middle Eastern Culture Center in Japan, 6*, Wiesbaden: 91–104.

Watanabe, C.E. 2000. The Lion Metaphor in the Mesopotamian Royal Context. In: Parayre, D., ed. *Les animaux et les hommes dans le monde syro-mésopotamien aux époques historiques* (*Topoi Orient-Occident*, supplement 2). Lyon: 399–409.

Watanabe, C.E. 2002. *Animal Symbolism in Mesopotamia. A Contextual Approach.* Wiener Offene Orientalistik 1. Wien.

Watanabe, C.E. 2015. The Symbolic Role of Animals in Babylon: A Contextual Approach to the Lion, the Bull and the Muššḫuššu. *Iraq* 77: 215–224.

Watanabe, C.E. 2018. Reading Ashurbanipal's Palace Reliefs: Methods of Presenting Visual Narratives. In: Brereton, G., ed. *I Am Ashurbanipal: King of the World, King of Assyria.* London: 222–233.

Weissert, E. 1997. Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph in a Prism Fragment of Ashurbanipal (82-5-22, 2). In: Parpola, S. and Whiting, R.M., eds. *Assyria 1995: Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project. Helsinki, September 7–11, 1995.* Helsinki: 339–358.

Westenholz, J. 2000. The King, the Emperor, and the Empire: Continuity and Discontinuity of Royal Representation in Text and Image. In: Aro, S. and Whiting, R.M., eds. *The Heirs of Assyria: Proceedings of the Opening Symposium of the Assyrian and Babylonian Intellectual Heritage Project. Held in Tvärminne, Finland, October 8–11, 1998*, Melammu Symposia 1. Helsinki: 99–125.

Wiggermann, F.A.M. 1983. Exit *Talim*! Studies in Babylonian Demonology. *Jaarbericht Ex Oriente Lux* 27: 90–105.

Wiggermann, F.A.M. 1994. Mischwesen A. *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* 8: 222–244.

Winter, I.J. 1981. Royal Rhetoric and the Development of Historical Narrative in Neo-Assyrian Reliefs. *Studies in Visual Communication* 7(2): 2–38.

Winter, I.J. 1996. Sex, Rhetoric, and the Public Monument. In: Boymel Kampen, N. and Bergmann, B., eds. *Sexuality in Ancient Art, Near East, Egypt, Greece, and Italy*, Cambridge: 11–26.

Winter, I.J. . 2000. Le Palais imaginaire: Scale and Meaning in the Iconography of Neo-Assyrian Cylinder Seals. In: Uehlinger, C., ed. *Images as Media, Sources for the Cultural History of the Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean (1st millennium BCE)* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 175). Fribourg and Göttingen: 51–87.

Yon, Marguerite. 2006. *The City of Ugarit at Tell Ras Shamra.* Winona Lake, IN.

Chapter 3

Hybridism as a Visual Mark of Divinity: The Case of Akhenaten

Arlette David

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Abstract

At the heart of the image reflected by the politico-religious reform brought about by Pharaoh Akhenaten (Amarna period, 18th Dynasty, c. 1350 BCE) was his belief in Aten and his repudiation of the traditional pantheon. The evolution of the visual therianthropic (animal-man) hybridism of the king, a feature of the divine, can be traced through the course of Akhenaten's reign, with compelling implications for our comprehension of his views on the nature of divinity and kingship.

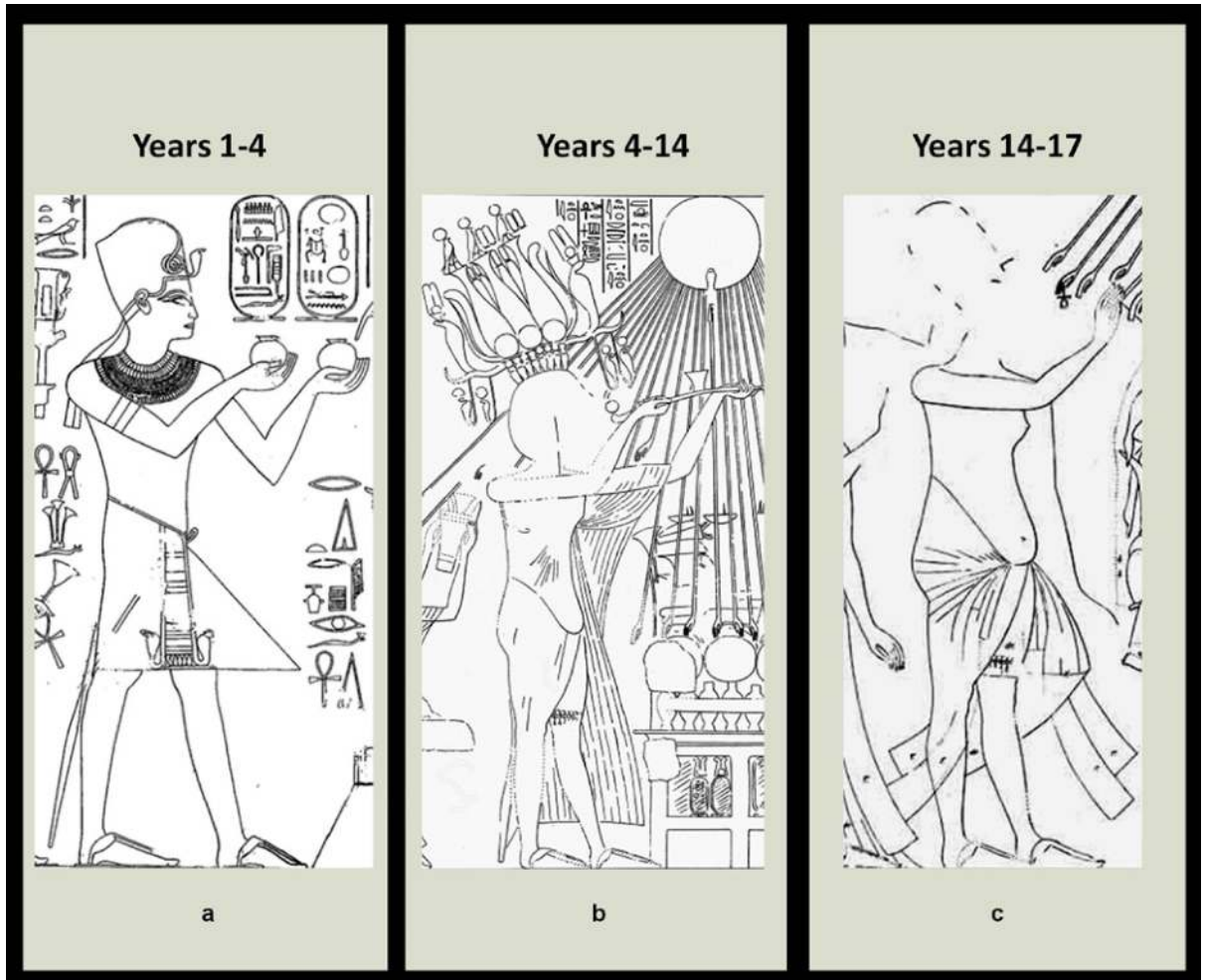Figure 3.1a Relief from the Theban tomb of Kheruef (TT 192) after Nims (1980: Plate. 9). Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

Figure 3.1b Relief from the Amarna tomb of *Pȝnḥsy* (TA 6) after Davies (1905: Plate. 8). © The Egypt Exploration Society.

Figure 3.1c Relief from the Amarna tomb of *Mrirꜥ* (TA 4) after Davies (1903: Plate 22). © The Egypt Exploration Society.

During the reign of Akhenaten (18th Dynasty, *c.* 1350 BCE), the royal image and its staging reflected the politico-religious reform he brought about. At the heart of this reform stood his belief in a solar creator god ('Aten') and his repudiation of the traditional Egyptian pantheon—what we refer to today as *Atenism*. The ubiquitous icon of the king in the new capital he built, the domain of Aten named *Akhetaten* (today Tell el-Amarna), followed the particular visual code he implemented to suit his reformative program. The striking royal image initiated by Akhenaten and the stylistic innovations it entailed were meant to revisit the traditional and depleted formula of royal presentation, using a 'semiotic shock tactic'[1] to reactivate the royal icon and to imbue it with fresh conceptual avenues.[2] The innovative presentation appeared early in his reign (Arnold 1996: 17–22), probably by regnal year 4, before he transferred his capital to Akhetaten, as demonstrated by the Theban material. Representations of the royal body became typically pear-shaped, hypomuscular, with elongated neck, marked forward slope of the nape, clavicles, and muscles of the neck, gynaecomastia and prominent nipples, elongated high waist, low-placed crescent-shaped navel, and backward knees. Much has been said about this peculiar body-image, the gender and, the conceptual issues it involves. My interest, however, is in a less investigated traditional mark of the royal icon: its visual animal-man hybridism. The evolution of this feature can be traced through the course of Akhenaten's reign, with, I believe, interesting implications for our comprehension of the development of Akhenaten's Atenism. (Figure 3.1 a b c)

The Beast Within

Iconic animal-man hybridism in ancient Egypt is a feature of the divine, 'that which transcended traditional categories and human limitations.'[3] I treat the divine-supernatural category as a broad spectrum of liminal beings and phenomena, including what we envision as 'gods,' objects of a cult, at the heart of the category (of which they are the prototypical members) and an extended gamut of supernatural entities of obscure status ranging from the category's core to its blurred edges. The Egyptian concept of *ntr* that we translate as 'god, divine,' never defined by the Egyptians, indeed covers a wide range of entities, corresponding 'to more than just gods, and may include personifications in some contexts' (Baines 1985: 30). Visual, formal therianthropic and animal-composites[4]

are complex, supernatural agents with a very long iconographic history:[5] (Table 3.1.)

Hybrids were apparently not considered real creatures in the Egyptian culture; their categorization in the script implies some hesitation as to their nature and they are often 'categorized' by their own image because they clearly belong to a category of their own as separate ontologies. Thus, the word *sfr*, 'griffin,' is not categorized in the script with the pelt ⳡ or bird ⳤ classifiers, as mammals or birds would be, but with its own image.[6]

Ancient Egyptian hybridism is fundamentally an expression of what Siegfried Morenz called 'the concept of 'Both... And' (...), an intellectual harmony between apparent incompatibilities' (Morenz 1992: 20). Supernatural powers emerge from the fusion of animal and human polarities, resulting in new forms of unlimited abilities, not necessarily demonic. Since in the Egyptian mind formal features imply behavioral traits and attributes, hybrids represent typical animal behavioral profiles that blend with human purposes, translated as distinct aspects of the divine. Hybrid forms offer a visual metaphor of the divine essence (*divine is part human part animal*), to be read as signs, not as literal figurations of a divine concept, whose form and nature remain concealed to human psyche,[7] all representations being ultimately signs in a pictorial system. Of course, representations of divinities entirely anthropomorphic or theriomorphic exist; hybridism is one of the possible choices at the artist's disposal to express divinity, and some divinities possess several distinct forms exploiting various animal-human combinations. Hybridism as a divine marker represents the clearest option: since divinity transcends human and animal categories alike, it can be apprehended as a fusion of naturally incompatible life forms, abnormality signaling supernatural status while reducing an elusive abstract concept to existing life categories.

The divine hybrid metaphor has an important corollary: *royalty is part human part animal*, in the sense that the king's *body politic*, actor in a divine office and represented as a composite creature, also reflects the close bond between the fundamental species, the divine unity of differences, and the ultimate parallel nature of Divinity and Kingship. Similarly, literary animal metaphors are well known to express the powerful skills of the king.[8]

---

[1] Wood (2000: 27) on visual representations of slavery; Stafford (2007: 30 and 45) on brain activity.

[2] On semiotic depletion and shift, see Even-Zohar 1990.

[3] Gilhus 2006: 95; for Meeks (1986: 180–183), the animal part reveals a divine aspect in the composites.

[4] For descriptions of composite entities, see, e.g., *PT* 1118, 1564–1566, and 1749; Merz 1978: 66–67.

[5] See, e.g., the Oxford palette E 3924 in Davis 1992: Figure 26; Merz 1978: 26–28.

[6] David 2014: n. 138. See Gombrich 1984: 256 on the unclassifiable hybrid.

[7] Merz 1978: 64–69 with critiques; Smelik and Hemelrijk 1984: 1861; Hornung 1992: 98, 103, 111–113; 2013: 56.

[8] See, e.g., Karnak stela Cairo CG 34010 of Thutmose III (*Urk.* IV: 615–617).

	Iconography/Script	Categorization in Script[1]
'Great gods'	e.g., 𓀭𓀯𓀮𓀯𓀮 …	Divine anthropomorphic 𓀭 𓀯
		Human female 𓀙
		Divine zoomorphic 𓅆 , 𓆗
		Cultic object 𓊖
'Semi-gods, minor deities, genii, manifestations of "great gods,"[2] monsters, demons'[3]	e.g., *Bs* 𓁱 'runt'[4]	Divine anthropomorphic 𓀭
	⁽*m(mit)* 𓃩 'swallower'[5]	Own image 𓃩 , 𓃬
	Griffins[6] 𓃺 𓃻 (*sfr/srf* 'fiery one,'[7] *tštš* 'crusher,'[8] *ḥḥ* 'flying one,'[9] generic *sšm* 'supernatural creature'[10])	Pelt-animal 𓄜
		Divine zoomorphic 𓅆
	Serpopards (*sḏ3*)[11]	No classifier
	Divinized *b3*[12] 𓅧 or 𓅨 [13]	
King	As sphinx (statue *m3i* 'lion', *šsp* 'image'),[14] hybrid falcon, cobra,[15] or griffin (rare in the script)	Own image 𓃟
		Pelt-animal 𓄜

[1] Signs (*classifiers*) appended to a lexeme and classifying it into one or more semantic category.

[2] Hornung 1992: 59.

[3] Limited sphere of action, subordinated to gods (but sometimes termed *ntr*), lack of a cult (but sometimes worshiped, see Lucarelli 2010), embodiments of powers/functions, emissaries/mediators. Certain borderline cases of hybridism have been interpreted as emblematic personifications of hieroglyphs, such as *rḥyt* 'subjects' when in anthropomorphic form but with wings and the lapwing's plume on the head, their divine status being demonstrated by the bull tail and the divine wig, beard, and kilt in spite of the intrinsic low status of the designated crowd; see *MH* 8, Plate 599 in Baines (1985: 48, Figure 21) who explains the divine attributes as a rule of decorum.

[4] Meeks 1992: 423. The name *Bs* is known since the Third Intermediate Period, but only clearly attached to the icon by Ptolemaic times.

[5] *PT* 522 (1229a, *Mrnr⁽*); *BD* 30 in pBM EA 10470.3 of *3ny*, 19th Dynasty, see the British Museum collection, accessed August 6, 2021, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA10470-3; *BD* 125 in Naville (1971, Plate 136 Pe).

[6] Barta 1973–74; Hsu 2011.

[7] Newberry 1893a, Plates. 4, 13, 16; 1893b, Plate 11; *LD* Text II, 103 with legend *s3w nst* 'protector of the seat/throne'; CT Spell 1006 in *CT* VII, 222 l and CT Spell 393 in *CT* V, 67e; Morenz and Schorch 1997, 372–381; *CT* VII, 222 l 7* = p*Gardiner* II. In *BH* II, Plate 4.

[8] Newberry 1893b, Plate 16.

[9] Sauneron 1964: 16–17.

[10] p*Leiden* I 384 in De Cenival 1988, col. 14.23; 15.1; 15.11; p*Tebtunis Tait* 8 in Tait (1976, 42m); Sauneron 1964: 16–17.

[11] Newberry 1893a, Plates 4, 13; Sauneron 1964:16.

[12] Mediating between 'worldly and otherworldly states of being' after death (Riggs 2010: 2), can become *ntr* (Žabkar 1968: 153–156; Meeks 1986: 182).

[13] Probably falconide (Meeks 2012: 520).

[14] *Urk*. I, 185 Line 2 (5th Dynasty); *Urk*. IV, 600, Line 6 (Thutmose III).

[15] Boston MFA 1979: 209 http://educators.mfa.org/ancient/frieze-uraeus-serpents-raised-heads-68776; Cairo JE 42906 (Fischer 1977, Figure 3).

Table 3.1. Supernatural Beings in Iconography and Script.

Metaphor and Simile, Essence and Performance

A taxonomy of royal hybridism in Egyptian plastic arts offers two major visual forms. I propose calling the first an *organic form* of hybridism (though fictional, it is *apparently* organic), exemplified by the sphinx, the falcon-king, the cobra-king, or the royal griffin, in which human elements may be canceled in favor of a wholly animal composite. Frankfort (2011: 12) and Fischer considered this form of hybridism 'hieroglyphic composites,' the head being the essential element that defines the ontology of the whole (Fischer 1977: 157–158;

1986: 848–849; 1987: 13–14, 26; Baines 1985: 66). Fischer even added that the sphinx offers an image of the king as a 'link between mankind and the gods' (Fischer 1986: 849). As we shall see, divine and royal bodies may also be subtly altered to allude to such a composite nature. Organic hybridism signals an inherent quality of the king that reflects his divine essence, whether dead or alive. Sphinxes, falcon-kings, cobra-kings, and griffin-kings are true pictorial metaphors since their body merges species in a unique gestalt, the human morphing into the animal seamlessly and without explicit linkage. They are conceptual images offering a glimpse into the

profound nature of kingship, assimilated to its divine prototype, the falcon god Horus, an institution coined by Lorton as *Horus-ship* (1979: 461).

The second type of hybridism is an *artificial form* represented by an animal appendage, such as the bull tail affixed to the royal sash,[9] the horned and plumed crowns, or, since the 18th Dynasty, the ram's horns curling around the Egyptian king's ears (Wildung 1977: 3–11). In wearing these accessories, clearly presented as loan-items and metonyms for the entire animal, the king associates with the attributes manifested in the animal as a whole and to the god(s) of which the animal is a manifestation. These are second-grade divinity markers, conferred at coronation as temporary loans for the time of his office. This form of hybridism is a kind of simile since it exhibits an explicit comparative link obtained by the juxtaposition, not the fusion, of two forms,[10] often exposed by the way the appendage is artificially affixed to the royal body. It does not interfere with the basic human nature of the king. Like props used on stage, these accessories belong to the royal show, worn to identify the protagonist and elevate him above other human actors. The result is in fact not visually perceived as hybridism; the anthropomorphism of the king remains intact while his animal accessories, in their blatant artificialness, offer him an 'as if divine' quality articulated explicitly as a comparison between the king and the animal world. When the king wears his animal accessories for cultic and official ceremonies artificial hybridism is linked to the public exercise of office, hence to life; their use, however, may be extended after death in representations of the dead king in action. This type of hybridism represents real-life solutions to manifest the divinity of a human king; so here hybridism is not confined to iconographic presentation but is a form of 'live performance.'

The animal-man royal body is endowed with a combination of corporal and spiritual powers that belong to a transcendental ontology; the choice between artificial and organic hybridism in royal iconography indicates a different level of divinity of the king exposed on a different plane, conceptual or representational and performative. The hierarchy of the divine category around the great gods as prototypes includes the king in his divine office as a lesser member.[11] Though both

function as divine markers, artificial forms of hybridism are of a lesser status, restricted to the theatralization of kingship, whereas organic forms conceptualize the essence of divine kingship.

Akhenaten's Divinity

Both forms of hybridism are present in Amarna since Akhenaten's image is constructed on the basis of a long pictorial tradition of royal presentation, modified to better serve the ideas he chose to promote. An evolution in the use of these marks of divinity is clearly perceptible during Akhenaten's reign.

Artificial hybridism of the royal image is conceived in Amarna with the help of traditional regal accessories: bull tail and horns/feathers on a limited number of crowns. The bull tail affixed to the back of the midriff sash is a traditional accessory (Jéquier 1918; Hendrickx, De Meyer, and Eyckerman 2014) used in Amarna only between years 5 and 14[12] of his reign (he must have ruled about 17 years). The presence of the bull tail on reliefs of the king is a good chronological indicator, which can be used to attribute a relative date to otherwise undated tableaus.[13] The bull tail is represented in this limited time frame in ritual scenes of offering and salutation to Aten, but not in every one of them.[14] Though usually appraised as a mark of kingship, the bull tail is essentially a mark of divinity (Quaegebeur 1975: 148) worn by the king and by certain anthropomorphic or therianthropic male gods. Thus, before changing his name to Akhenaten, Amenhotep IV depicted his falcon-headed god wearing a bull tail on the large blocks of his temple in Karnak (Chappaz 1983: 18, 24 XO 10). The semantics of the bull tail is variously approached in the Egyptological literature: associated with male potency, strength, and dominion over nature or chaotic powers (Wilkinson 1999: 161–162) it manifests the king's 'Stierqualität' (Staehelin 1952: 615; LeBlanc 2015); it may be related to the royal jubilee, the 'festival of the tail';[15] or perhaps imply rebirth and inheritance of kingship;[16] or even allude to the king as victorious bull, best breeder and champion of the herd (Galán 1994). Another possible connotation of the bull tail might be the king as hunter, slayer of the powerful beast, who has cut the tail off his victim and absorbed its power by wearing the tail on his belt as an amulet (Andrews 1994: 61) of sympathetic magic, having exposed his supernatural nature by claiming victory over his formidable opponent.

---

9   For depictions of kilts with attached tail, see MK sarcophagi in Lacau (1903: Plate 49, Figures 395, 400–401, 404–405) with the mentions *bs3w* and *db3* 'jeweled apron (on kilt).'

10 On pictorial metaphors and similes, see Forceville 2000: 33; Goldwasser 1999; van Mulken and Le Pair 2012: 179–180.

11 The order of presentation of the gods, kings, blessed dead, men, etc. in the Egyptian onomastica and formulaic lists may not denote a hierarchical arrangement but different planes of existence (Fischer 1973: 9; Meeks 2012: 518–519 for living beings and gods); see, e.g., *ntr(t)–3h(t) –ni-swt–nsyt* in the *Onomasticon of Imnmipt*: 6–68 (Gardiner 1947: Plate VIIA). Meeks (2012: 539) remarks that these lists, except the Demotic onomasticon of Tebtunis, do not include fantastic hybrids.

12 See Gabolde (1998: 105–106, 115–118) on the chronology of the reign.

13 See, e.g., Davies 1906: Plate 35; 1908b: Plate 16.

14 See, e.g., the tableaus on both sides of the first corridor of the tomb of *P3nhsy* (Davies 1905a: Plates. 7–8) facing each other in the same locus, and both relating to a phase of the morning ritual; also compare with a scene in *Iy*'s tomb (Davies 1908: Plate 26).

15 Jéquier 1918: 168; Morris 2010: 212; 2013: 43. *Contra*: Lange 2008: 3–4.

16 Baqué 2002: 47–50: *PT* ritual of grasping the bull's tail.
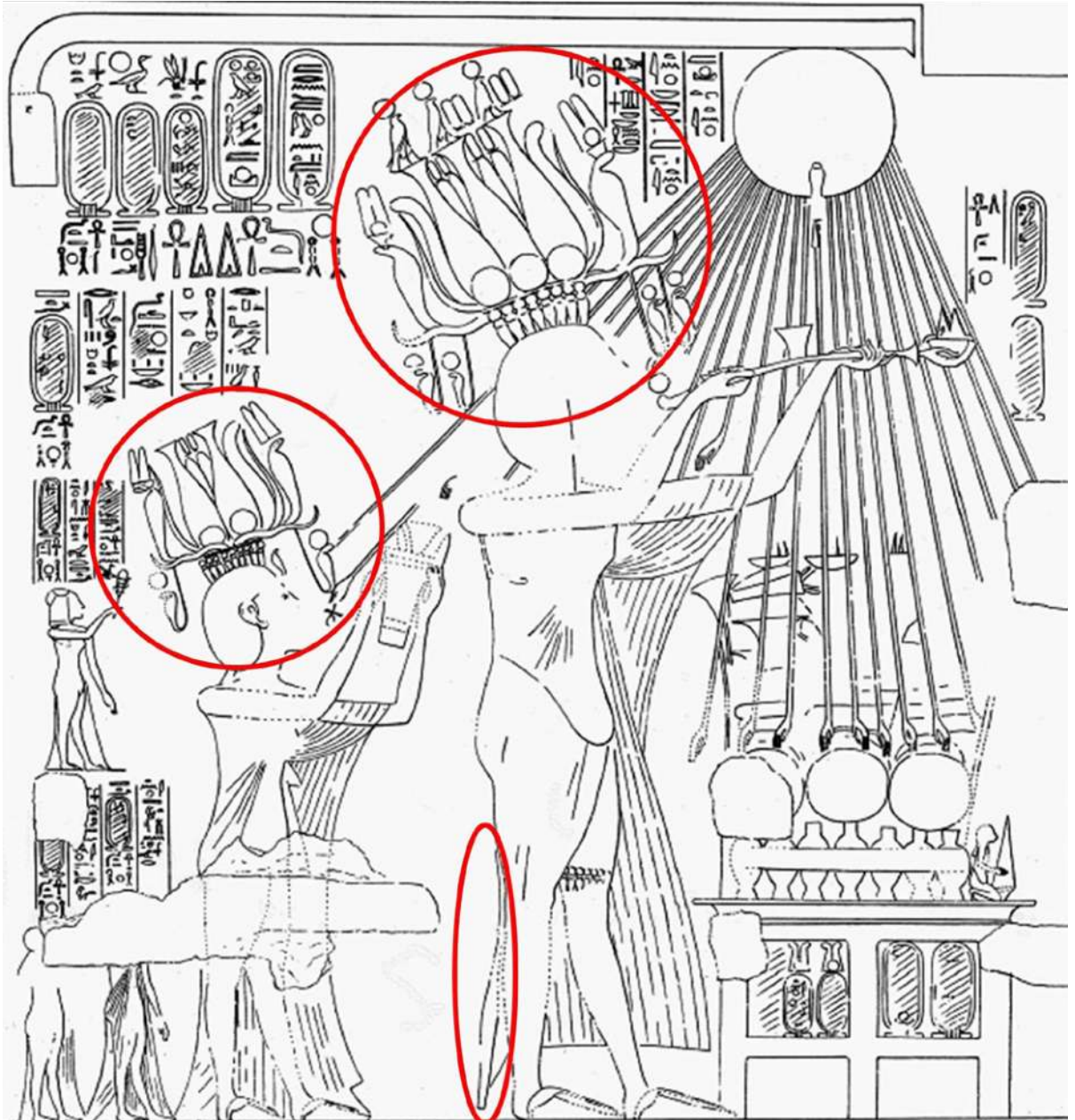
Figure 3.2. Relief from the Amarna tomb of *P꜄nḥsy* (TA 6) after Davies (1905: Plate 8). © The Egypt Exploration Society.

Artificial hybridism associated with specific crowns endowed with feathers and/or horns is known for Akhenaten, Nefertiti, and the queen-mother Tiy in Amarna. The number of these crowns is limited, as Akhenaten and Nefertiti obviously prefer their respective blue crowns which are usually devoid of hybrid markers. Furthermore, almost all the horned/feathered crowns disappear after year 14. See for instance Akhenaten and Nefertiti both already wearing a large crown[17] in Thebes, the triple/double *꜄tf*. The

crown incorporates numerous vegetal, animal, and astral elements which coalesce to form a complex composition.[18] The representations from Thebes, Hermopolis, and Amarna are badly damaged, but the almost perfect state of Tutankhamun's crown (here as Tutankhaten) on his golden throne[19] permits the assessment of the various elements in their original

---

[17] New for Collier (1996: 52), but a similar arrangement atop a *dšrt* crown is already used by Amenhotep III in Soleb (Bayer 2014: Plate 52 b).

[18] Akhenaten: Karnak talatats (Smith and Redford 1976: Plate 18 n. 3); Hermopolis talatats in Roeder (1969: Plate 32 962/VIII + 300/VI: Plate 146 338/VIC); tombs of *P꜄nḥsy* (Davies 1905a: Plate 8) and *P꜄rnnfr* for an audience (Davies 1908b: Plate 6). Nefertiti: Tombs of *Ꜣy* (Davies 1908: Pl.26) and *P꜄nḥsy* (Davies 1905a: Plate 8).

[19] Cairo JE 62028 in Tiradritti (1998: 219), with the child-king's Atenist name.

colors. Hybridism manifests itself here in the form of lapis-blue horizontal twisted horns that belong to a domestic sheep[20] associated with traditional ram gods, thin curved cow horns (absent on Tutankhamun's crown) framing two curling ostrich feathers (traditionally worn by several divinities such as Osiris); the non-curly high falcon feathers (Abubakr 1937: 43; Malaise 1976: 216) are associated with *Ḥrȝḫty*, the solar falcon (Malaise 1976: 228) of the horizons (Troy 1986: 126–127), or with *Šw* and the vivifying breath (van de Walle 1980: 34). It has been suggested that the crown is related to the sun child with which the king identifies, that emerges from a nymphaea at sunrise (Goebs 2001: 324); the same must then be said of the queen wearing the diminutive crown. All examples of the crown in Amarna belong to regnal years 5–14,[21] except perhaps for statues wearing this crown represented in the sanctuary of the Sunshade of Ra of Tiy in the tomb of *Ḥwyȝ* (Davies 1905b: Plates 8–9). (Figure 3.2.)

In Amarna,[22] *organic royal hybridism* of the sphinx-type also belongs to regnal years 5 to 14;[23] but royal sphinxes carved on the sides of a portable chaise are still represented in tomb scenes carved in the last years of the reign (Davies 1905: Plate 40; 1905b: Plate 13). Apparently old images of royal sphinxes are tolerated on furniture still in use in the last phase of Akhenaten's reign. Akhenaten's reliefs as sphinx have the king's human head and arms held at a sharp angle in a dynamic position.

On the basis of the non-funerary context of these sphinxes,[24] they may represent Akhenaten as a living king. The solar implications of the lion-man hybrid as well as its relationship with the horizon explain the use

of the motif in Amarna up to year 14. Except for a few scarabs (Stevens 2006: 52–53), no griffin-king has been uncovered at this site.[25]

A Human Metaphor of the Divine

As the anthropologist Lawrence assumed about the centaur, human-animal composite creatures test boundaries by displaying fundamental dichotomies: 'animal/human, wild/tame, savagery/civilization, sensuality/spirituality, physical power/intellect, passion/reason, freedom/constraint, natural law/human law, violence/gentleness, and foolishness/wisdom—all encompassed by the age-old nature/culture duality.'[26]

Many traditional depictions of Egyptian gods and kings are hybrid constructs that manifest a transcendental essence, their image offering a glimpse into a multifaceted ontology, a primeval unity between species, an otherness that implies superiority. Alterity is the mark of divinity and of its corollary, kingship. Hybridism transforms the person of the king into an idea, a strange abstraction (Feeley-Harnik 1985: 280–281). Visual hybridism is just another form of Egyptian syncretism (Schweitzer 1948: 33), of the practice of fusing powers into a superordinate unit on the model of the composite snake named *nḥb-kȝw*, the divine 'combiner of powers' (Gardiner 1950: 7 n. 2; Fischer 1987: 21). Like biological hybrids, cultural hybrids are endowed with *heterosis*, an 'increased vigor or capacity for growth' and for superseding their 'parents' (the human and animal categories) by borrowing the best traits of both worlds (Stross 1999: 257, 261). The hybrid bridges numinous and human worlds, cosmos and society; it is fundamentally a mediator for it possesses the characteristics of two species and is able to 'dialogue' with both (Stross 1999: 261; Lawrence 1994: 65). On a figurative level, the isolation of body parts from different species and their integration into new patterns diversify the artistic repertoire (Stross 1999: 261; Lawrence 1994: 65), reinvest dead images, and allow the ruler, through the hand of the artist, to play the part of a demiurge, creating new life-forms.

The visual presentation of Akhenaten and his god and its evolution reveal a progression in the conceptualization of their fundamental nature. Clearly, divinity and kingship in Amarna are envisioned as more human than beast, the royal-divine category being basically anthropocentric. Similar to Tallay Ornan's conclusions in her survey of the divine in Mesopotamian art (Ornan 2009), in Egypt in general, but also during the Amarna

---

[20] *Ovis longipes palaeoaegyptiacus*; see Nicholson and Shaw 2000: 269.
[21] See also MMA 66.99.41 for a relief fragment of Akhenaten wearing an *ȝtf* crown from Amarna (Aldred 1973: 100). Akhenaten is also represented with feathered headdresses: Karnak colossi (Cairo JE 49528, 98894, 99065 and Karakôl 42 in Manniche 2010b: 36–41), as figurines worshipping the first Protocol of Aten in the tomb of *Ἰpy* (Davies 1906: .Pl. 31) and on the relief fragment Brooklyn 41.82 (Petrie 1894, Pl.12).
[22] For tridimensional sphinxes of Amenhotep IV and Nefertiti in Karnak, see Traunecker 1986: 20–22.
[23] Hornung 1999: 88; see, e.g., block Brooklyn 36.881 (Aten Protocol damaged) in http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/46933/Block; slab Geneva MAH 027804 in http://www.villege.ch/musinfo/bd/mah/collections/detail.php?type_search=simple&lang=fr&criteria=fragment&page=23&pos=269&id=1241655; slab Boston MFA 64.1944 in Freed, Markowitz, and D'Auria (1999, cat. 89); slab Kestner 1964.3 in Freed, Markowitz, and D'Auria (1999, cat. 90); Cairo JE 65926 in Pendlebury (1936, pl. 20.4); talatat Louvre E 15589 (http://cartelen.louvre.fr/cartelen/visite?srv=car_not&idNotice=23824); limestone slab Thalassic Collection in Arnold (1996, fig. 14). For fragments of tridimensional sphinxes from Amarna dating to Akhenaten's reign, see headless Fitzwilliam E77.1933 in http://webapps.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/explorer/index.php?oid=53269, Pendlebury (1951: 17, Plate 58.3 n. 32.20) and Kemp *et al.* (2012: 16) who assign the fragment to the first phase of construction of the temple; various fragments in Pendlebury (1934: 133; 1951: 12, Plate 60.1 n. 33.4 and 141: Plate 79.11, a headless wooden sphinx) and Borchardt and Ricke 1980: 75 n. 265. For wholly theriomorphic sphinx amulets, see Stevens 2006: 53.
[24] From sunshade complexes, see Aldred 1973: 99; Freed, Markowitz, and D'Auria 1999: 231.

[25] For griffins as architectural ornaments in Karnak, see talatats n.3/330B and 3/346 in Vergnieux 2006–2011; Redford 1976: 129.
[26] Lawrence 1994: 62; for similar considerations about Gorgon, see Vernant 2003: 220.
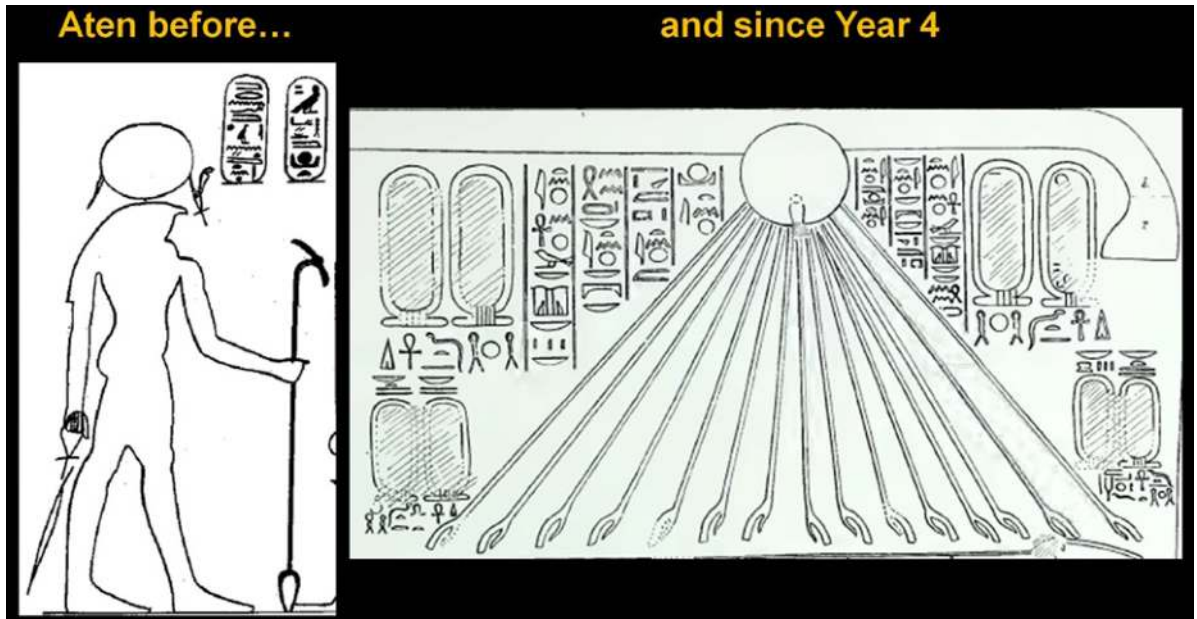
Figure 3.3a. Rock relief from Assuan after Habachi (1965: 91 Figure 13). Courtesy of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Cairo.

Figure 3.3b. Relief from the Amarna tomb of *MrirꜤ* (TA 4) after Davies (1903: Plate 26). © The Egypt Exploration Society.

period, the *visual and textual discourse on divinity* is conceptualized in anthropomorphic terms. The god Aten functions as a human king from whom he inherited the titulary and 'frontal' cobra (he represents a divine image of kingship), and is offered food, perfumed resins, fluids that are not represented in his grasp but which he is nevertheless assumed to consume (the volatilization of their fumes perhaps thought to reach the hovering aster). The fundamental link between Aten and the royal couple in Amarna texts is still conceived in terms of kinship, Aten being the father[27] whose rays nurse them (Sandman 1938: 95, Line 9).

The divine Aten icon evolved from a falcon-man to an 'emblematic' form: the metaphorical solar icon with its sphere, cobra, life hieroglyph, and hieroglyphic hands at the end of its rays. It is an 'emblematic personification,' a combination of personifying elements and a non-personal object (Baines 1985: 37), of representational and scriptural elements in a visual metaphor.[28] Transcending human and animal categories in its solar perfection, the abstract concept cannot be summarized, not by an outdated zoomorphic presentation associated with the ancient pantheon nor by rays emanating from a sphere; the icon is always accompanied by lengthy titulary and epithets also modified several times to better translate the essence of the Atenist concept and its evolution. One of the

remarkable aspects of Amarna iconography is in fact the drastic reduction of emblematic representations, almost exclusively limited to Aten.[29]

As for the king, Amarna imagery focuses on his figure, Akhenaten's human form providing a dramatic counterpoint to Aten's icon, in sharp contrast with the traditional formal proximity between a hybrid or anthropomorphic divinity and the king. The abstract concept behind the new divine icon requires an anthropomorphic agent for the cult to enable a 'body-to-body interaction'[30] to involve the spectator in the ritual. Thus Akhenaten (*ꜣḫ-n-itn*) is also light-effective (*ꜣḫ*; Friedman 1986: 99–101; Jansen-Winkeln 1996: 201, 215; Goebs 2008: 13) for Aten in the sense that he facilitates and conditions the perception of Atenism; by embodying the enlightenment of Aten, the royal body becomes the sole true personification of Aten's concept (the feminization and solar markers of the royal body bringing to mind the solar creator's duality in terms of gender), a living human metaphor of the divine. This is made clear by the contrast, emphasized in large, detailed scenes,[31] between the non-gripping hieroglyphic hands of Aten (a mild personification of an emblematic icon) and the supple, grabbing ones of Akhenaten (an overemphasized, pseudonaturalist version of the

---

[27] Father classified with an anthropomorphic icon, e.g., Davies 1905: Plate 5, east architrave.
[28] On the 'emblematic' mode of representation, a 'textual encoding' which combines figures and hieroglyphs in the iconography, see Fischer 1972; 1976; Baines 1985: 41 ff.; 2007: 285; Wilkinson 1992.

[29] For the *rḫyt* birds, see, e.g., Davies 1905: Plate 6, left jamb; for the Karnak talatats, see Redford 1973: Plate 3.1.
[30] Nadali (2013: 222) for Mesopotamia.
[31] See, e.g., the relief MMA 1981.449 (http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/544057) or the Cairo stela JE 44865 (Freed, Markowitz, and D'Auria 1999: Figure 70).

human hand with its improbable increased number of phalanxes noted by Dimitri Laboury (Laboury 2008: 80).

Since Aten did not retain theriomorphic aspects in Amarna (except on some early items),[32] bull tails, horns, and feathers as remnants of pre-Atenist iconography have all disappeared by the end of Akhenaten's reign in years 14–17, except the double plume on certain of the queen's headdresses (because with its orb it represents the sun on the horizon). The couple is rather represented with the respective blue crowns, neutral in terms of zoomorphic allusions. Blatant forms of royal animalism and alterity, organic or artificial, are finally expelled from Amarna's artistic repertoire. The relinquishing of animal elements in the royal presentation cannot be explained merely as a general tendency at the end of the 18th Dynasty to abandon outdated and cumbersome paraphernalia: although Akhenaten was previously thought to have created the most awkward of all crowns, the triple *3tf*, it is already part of the attire of his father, Amenhotep III, and of Amenhotep II before him.[33] After Akhenaten, in the early phase of Tutankhamun's reign (when he is still an Atenist *Tutankhaten*), the young king is depicted wearing the same crown. After the Atenist episode, the Ramesside kings are also rather fond of huge regalia in depictions. Furthermore, iconography does not precisely reflect courtly life usage, and most traditional crowns probably exist only in representation; Akhenaten does not strive to depict reality. Their absence is an ideological statement; it both rejects the association with the traditional pantheon of theriomorphic gods and the animality of the king. Thus cobras, although firmly associated with the gods Wadjit and Ra, are not evicted from the royal attire since they do not transform the king into a hybrid creature, but the bull tail, though not referring to specific gods, is nevertheless eliminated as a sign of royal hybridism.

Kingship assumes a wholly human form in the final phase of Atenism, though one cannot confuse the royal image with a naturalistic portrait; Atenist images remain semiotic constructs, icons which may entertain some measure of resemblance to their subject but are still conventions. The king is anthropomorphic in his divinity. He relinquishes animal features to assert a divine nature far removed from the zoomorphic gods of the traditional pantheon, eliminating outdated similes of a lesser divinity and fusion metaphors that are not part of the divine image Aten reflects. Similarly, in hieroglyphic monumental inscriptions in Amarna,

Akhenaten uses only anthropomorphic classifiers to refer to himself. By renouncing traditional hybridism, he relinquishes his status of lesser divinity to gain full divine status in all his anthropomorphic glory. The iconographic means to visually enhance his divine status are of another nature, emphasizing that the king is the luminous and 'beautiful child of Aten' (Sandman 1938: 14, Lines 11–15, 2 Line 19 and 8 Line 8; Redford 1980: 25, n. 210), embraced in the sacred space of his domain.

References

Abubakr, Abd el M.J. 1937. *Untersuchungen über die ägyptischen Kronen.* Glückstadt.

Aldred, C. 1973. *Akhenaten and Nefertiti.* New York.

Andrews, C. 1994. *Amulets of Ancient Egypt.* London.

Arnold, D. 1996. *The Royal Women of Amarna: Images of Beauty from Ancient Egypt.* New York.

Baines, J. 1985. *Fecundity Figures: Egyptian Personification and the Iconology of a Genre.* Warminster.

Baines, J. 2007. *Visual and Written Culture in Ancient Egypt.* Oxford.

Baqué, L. 2002. On That Day When the Long-Horned Bull Was Lassoed... (PT [254] 286). A Scene in the 'Corridor of the Bull' of the Cenotaph of Sethos I in Abydos: An Iconologic Approach. *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 30: 43–51.

Barta, W. 1973–1974. Der Greif als bildhafter Ausdruck einer altägyptischen Religionsvorstellung. *Jaarbericht ex Oriente Lux* 23: 335–357.

Bayer, C. 2014. *Die den Herrn Beider Länder mit ihrer Schönheit erfreut Teje: Eine ikonographische Studie.* Wiesbaden.

BD (Book of the Dead) = Naville, E. 1971. *Das ägyptische Totenbuch der XVIII. bis XX. Dynastie.* Graz, Austria.

Borchardt, L. and Ricke, H. 1980. *Die Wohnhäuser in Tell el-Amarna.* Berlin.

Chappaz, J.-L. 1983. Le premier édifice d'Aménophis IV à Karnak. *Bulletin de la Société d'Egyptologie, Genève* 8: 13–42.

Collier, S.A. 1996. *The Crowns of Pharaoh: Their Development and Significance in Ancient Egyptian Kingship* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles). Ann Arbor.

CT (Coffin Texts) = de Buck, A. 1935–1961. *The Egyptian Coffin Texts.* Chicago.

David, A. 2014. Hoopoes and Acacias: Decoding an Ancient Egyptian Funerary Scene. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 73: 235–252.

Davies, N. de G. 1903–1908. *The Rock Tombs of El Amarna.* 6 vols. London.

Davis, W. 1992. *Masking the Blow: The Scene of Representation in Late Prehistoric Egyptian Art.* Berkeley.

De Cenival, F. 1988. *Le mythe de l'oeil du soleil: Translittération et traduction avec commentaire philologique.* Sommerhausen, Würzburg.

---

[32] E.g., the canopic chest from the royal tomb with the first Protocol of Aten (Martin 1974: Plates 21–24). See Redford 1976: 53; Vergnieux and Gondran 1997: 88–92. On the avoidance of scriptural zoomorphic or anthropomorphic classification of the word Aten in Amarna's monumental inscriptions, see Goldwasser 2002: 124–126; 2006.

[33] An innovation of Akhenaten for Collier (1996: 52), but already attested for Amenhotep II and III (Bayer 2014: 350 n. 582 and Plate 52 b).

Even-Zohar, I. 1990. Depletion and Shift. *Poetics Today* 11: 195–206.

Feeley-Harnik, G. 1985. Issues in Divine Kingship. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 14: 273–313.

Fischer, H.G. 1972. Some Emblematic Uses of Hieroglyphs with Particular Reference to an Archaic Ritual Vessel. *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 5: 5–23.

Fischer, H.G. 1977. Some Iconographic and Literary Comparisons. In: Assmann, J., Feucht, E., and Grieshammer, R., eds. *Fragen an die altägyptische Literatur: Studien zum Gedenken an Eberhard Otto.* 155–170. Wiesbaden.

Fischer, H.G. 1986. Ungeheuer. In: Helck, W. and Westendorf W., eds. *Lexicon der Ägyptologie,* Vol. 6.: 848–851. Wiesbaden.

Fischer, H.G. 1987. The Ancient Egyptian Attitude Towards the Monstrous. In: Farkas, A.E., Harper, P.O., and Harrison, E.B., eds. *Monsters and Demons in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds: Papers Presented in Honor of Edith Porada.* Mainz: 13–26.

Forceville, C. 2000. Compasses, Beauty Queens and Other PCs: Pictorial Metaphors in Computer Advertisements. *Hermes, Journal of Linguistics* 24: 31–55.

Frankfort, H. (1948) 2011. *Ancient Egyptian Religion: An Interpretation.* New York.

Freed, R.E., Markowitz, Y.J., and D'Auria, S.H. 1999. *Pharaohs of the Sun: Akhenaten, Nefertiti, Tutankhamen.* Boston.

Freiherr von Bissing, F.W. and Kees, H. 1923. *Das Re-Heiligtum des Königs Ne-Woser-Re (Rathures) II: Die kleine Festdarstellung.* Leipzig.

Friedman, F. 1986. *Ꜣḫ* in the Amarna Period. *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 23: 99–106.

Gabolde, M. 1998. *D'Akhénaton à Toutânkhamon.* Lyon.

Galán, J.M. 1994. Bullfight Scenes in Ancient Egyptian Tombs. *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 80: 81–96.

Gardiner, A.H. 1947. *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica.* Oxford.

Gardiner, A.H. 1950. The Baptism of Pharaoh. *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 36: 3–12.

Gilhus, I.S. 2006. *Animals, Gods and Humans: Changing Attitudes to Animals in Greek, Roman and Early Christian Ideas.* London.

Goebs, K. 2001. Crowns. In: Redford, D.B., ed. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt.* Oxford: 321–326.

Goebs, K. 2008. *Crowns in Egyptian Funerary Literature: Royalty, Rebirth, and Destruction.* Oxford.

Goebs, K. 2011. King as God and God as King: Colour, Light, and Transformation in Egyptian Ritual. In: Gundlach, R. and Spence, K., eds. *5th Symposium on Egyptian Royal Ideology Palace and Temple: Architecture – Decoration – Ritual, Cambridge, July, 16th–17th, 2007.* Wiesbaden: 57–101.

Goldwasser, O. 1999. Review of Charles Forceville, Pictorial Metaphor in Advertising. *Journal of Pragmatics* 31: 609–618.

Goldwasser, O. 2002. *Lovers, Prophets and Giraffes: Wor(l)d Categorization in Ancient Egypt.* Wiesbaden.

Goldwasser, O. 2006. A Comparison between Classifier Languages and Classifier Script: The Case of Ancient Egyptian. In: Goldenberg, G. and Shisha-Halevy, A., eds. *Egyptian, Semitic and General Grammar: Workshop in Memory of H.J. Polotsky (8–12 July 2001).* Jerusalem: 16–39.

Gombrich, E. H. 1984. *The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art.* Oxford.

Habachi, L. 1965. *Varia from the Reign of King Akhenaten. Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 20: 70–79.

Hendrickx, S., De Meyer, M., and Eyckerman, M. 2014. On the Origin of the Royal False Beard and its Bovine Symbolism. In: Jucha, M.A., Debowska-Ludwin, J., and Kolodziejczyk, P., eds. *Aegyptus Est Imago Caeli: Studies Presented to Krzystof M. Cialowicz on His 60th Birthday.* Krakow: 129–143.

Hornung, E. 1992. *Les dieux de l'Egypte: L'Un et le Multiple.* Paris.

Hornung, E. 1999. *Akhenaten and the Religion of Light.* Ithaca.

Hornung, E. 2013. Ägyptens göttliche Mischwesen. In: Michel, P., ed. *Spinnenfuss und Krotenbauch: Genese und Symbolik von Kompositwesen.* Zürich: 53–60.

Hsu, Shih-Wei. 2011. The 'Griffin' as a Visual and Written Image for the King. *Göttinger Miszellen* 231: 45–56.

Jansen-Winkeln, K. 1996. 'Horizont' und 'Verklärtheit': Zur Bedeutung der Wurzel *Ꜣḫ. Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 23: 201–215.

Jéquier, G. 1918. La queue de taureau insigne des rois d'Égypte. *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 15: 165–168.

Kemp, B., Hill, M., Hodgkinson, A., and Shepperson. M. 2012. *Great Aten Temple: Spring 2012 Season Preliminary Report.* http://www.amarnaproject.com/documents/pdf/GAT-report-2012-1-Spring-HI.pdf.

Laboury, D. 2008. 'L'art selon Akhénaton, une révolution dans la tradition et l'histoire de l'art pharaonique.' In : Chappaz, J.-L., Vandenbeusch, M., and Tiradritti, F., eds. *Akhénaton et Néfertiti: Soleil et ombres des pharaons.* Geneva : 77–85.

Lacau, P. 1903. *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire: Sarcophages antérieurs au Nouvel Empire,* Vol. 1. Cairo.

Lacau, P. 1906. *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire: Sarcophages antérieurs au Nouvel Empire,* Vol. 2. Cairo.

Lange, E.R. 2008. *Ritualepisoden: Das Sedfesttor Osorkons II. in Bubastis* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Leipzig). Leipzig.

Lawrence, E.A. 1994. The Centaur: Its History and Meaning in Human Culture. *Journal of Popular Culture* 27: 57–68.

LD = Lepsius, C.R. 1849–1859. *Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien: Nach den Zeichnungen der von Seiner Majestät dem Könige von Preussen Friedrich Wilhelm IV. Nach diesen Ländern gesendeten und in den Jahren 1842–1845.* Leipzig.

LeBlanc, M.J. 2015. The Zoomorphic Transformation of the King in Early Egyptian Royal Military Victory Rituals and Its Relationship to the Sed Festival. *CENiM* 11: 229–244.

Lorton, D. 1979. Towards a Constitutional Approach to Ancient Egyptian Kingship. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 99: 460–465.

Lucarelli, R. 2010. Demons (Benevolent and Malevolent). In: Dieleman J. and Wendrich, W., eds. *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*. Los Angeles: http://digital2.library.ucla.edu/viewItem.do?ark=21198/zz0025fks3.

Malaise, M. 1976. Histoire et signification de la coiffure hathorique à plumes. *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 4: 215–236.

Manniche, L. 2010. *The Akhenaten Colossi of Karnak*. Cairo.

Martin, G.T. 1974. *The Royal Tomb at El-Amarna I: The Objects.* London.

Meeks, D. 1986. Zoomorphie et l'image des dieux dans l'Egypte ancienne. In : Malamoud, C. and Vernant, J.-P., eds. *Corps des dieux. Le temps de la réflexion* 7. Paris : 171–191.

Meeks, D. 1992. Le nom du dieu Bès et ses implications mythologiques. In: Luft, U., ed. *Intellectual Heritage of Egypt: Studies Presented to László Kákosy by Friends and Colleagues on the Occasion of his 60th Birthday.* Budapest: 426–436.

Meeks, D. 2012. La hiérarchie des êtres vivants selon la conception égyptienne. In : Gasse, A., Servajean, F., and Thiers, C., eds. *Et in Aegypto et ad Aegyptum: Recueil d'études dédiées à Jean-Claude Grenier.* Montpellier: 517–543.

Merz, R. 1978. *Die numinose Mischgestalt: Methodenkritische Untersuchungen zu tiermenschlichen Erscheinungen Altägyptens, der Eiszeit und der Aranda in Australien.* Berlin.

Morenz, L.D. and Schorch, S. 1997. Der Seraph in der Hebräischen Bibel und in Altägypten. *Orientalia* 66: 365–386.

Morenz, S. 1992. *Egyptian Religion*. Ithaca.

Morris, E.F. 2010. The Pharaohs and Pharaonic Office. In: Lloyd, A.B., ed. *A Companion to Ancient Egypt* I, Oxford: 201–217.

Morris, E.F. 2013. Propaganda and Performance at the Dawn of the State. In: Hill, J.A., Jones, P., and Morales, A.J., eds. *Experiencing Power, Generating Authority: Cosmos, Politics, and the Ideology of Kingship in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia*, Philadelphia: 33–64.

Nadali, D. 2013. When Ritual Meets Art. Rituals in the Visual Arts *Versus* the Visual Arts in Rituals: The Case of Ancient Mesopotamia. In: Ambos, C. and Verderame, L., eds. *Approaching Rituals in Ancient Cultures: Questioni di rito, Proceedings of the Conference, November 28–30, 2011, Roma.* Pisa and Rome: 209–226.

Newberry, P.E. 1893a. *Beni Hasan*, Vol. 2. London.

Newberry, P.E. 1893b. *El Bersheh*, Vol. 2. London.

Nicholson, P.T. and Shaw, I. 2000. *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology.* Cambridge.

Nims, C.F. *et al.* 1980. *The Tomb of Kheruef: Theban Tomb 192.* Chicago.

Ornan, T. 2009. In the Likeness of Man: Reflections on the Anthropocentric Perception of the Divine in Mesopotamian Art. In: *What Is a God? Anthropomorphic and Non-Anthropomorphic Aspects of Deity in Ancient Mesopotamia*. Porter, B.N., ed. Winona Lake, IN: 93–151.

Pendlebury, J.D.S. 1934. Excavations at Tell el Amarna: Preliminary Report for the Season 1933–1934. *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 20: 129–136.

Pendlebury, J.D.S. 1936. Summary Report on the Excavations at Tell El-'Amarnah, 1935–1936. *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 22: 194–198.

Pendlebury, J.D.S. 1951. *The City of Akhenaten III: The Central City and the Official Quarters.* London.

Petrie, W.M. F. 1894. *Tell el Amarna.* London.

PT (Pyramid Texts) = Allen J. P. 2013. *A New Concordance of the Pyramid Texts*. 6 vols. Providence.

Quaegebeur, J. 1975. *Le Dieu Egyptien Shaï dans la religion et l'onomastique.* Leuven.

Redford, D.B. 1973. Studies on Akhenaten at Thebes I: A Report on the Work of the Akhenaten Temple Project of the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania.' *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 10: 77–94.

Redford, D.B. 1976. The Sun-disc in Akhenaten's Program: Its Worship and Antecedents, I. *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 13: 47–61.

Redford, D.B. 1980. The Sun-disc in Akhenaten's Program: Its Worship and Antecedents, II. *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 17: 21–38.

Redford, D.B. 1988. *Rwd-Mnw and Inscriptions*, Vol. 2 of *The Akhenaten Temple Project.* Toronto.

Riggs, C. 2010. Body. In: Frood, E. and Wendrich, W., eds. *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*. Los Angeles: http://digital2.library.ucla.edu/viewItem.do?ark=21198/zz0025nqg2.

Roeder, G. 1969. *Amarna-Reliefs aus Hermopolis: Ausgrabungen der Deutschen Hermopolis-Expedition in Hermopolis 1929-1939.* Hildesheim.

Saleh, M. and Sourouzian, H. 1987. *Catalogue officiel Musée égyptien du Caire.* Mainz.

Sandman, M. 1938. *Texts from the Time of Akhenaten.* Brussels.

Sauneron, S. 1964. Remarques de philologie et d'étymologie (§ 26–35). *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 62: 15–31.

Schweitzer, U. 1948. *Löwe und Sphinx im alten Ägypten.* Glückstadt.

Smelik, K.A.D. and Hemelrijk, E.A. 1984. Who Knows Not What Monsters Demented Egypt Worships? Opinions on Egyptian Animal Worship in Antiquity as Part of the Ancient Conception of Egypt. In: Temporini, H. and Haase, W., eds. *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung*, Vol. 2, Band 17/4. Berlin: 1852–2000.

Smith, R.W. and Redford, D.B. 1976. *The Akhenaten Temple Project*. Warminster.

Staehelin, E. 1982. Ornat. In: Helck, W. and Westendorf, W., eds. *Lexicon der Ägyptologie,* Wiesbaden: 4: 613–618.

Stafford, B.M. 2007. *Echo Objects: The Cognitive Work of Images*. Chicago.

Stevens, A.K. 2006. *Private Religion at Amarna: The Material Evidence*. Oxford.

Stross, B. 1999. The Hybrid Metaphor: From Biology to Culture. *Journal of American Folklore* 112: 254–267.

Tait, W.J. 1976. The Fable of Sight and Hearing in the Demotic Kufi Text. *Acta Orientalia* 37: 27–44.

Tawfik, S. 1976. *Was Aton – The God of Akhenaten – Only a Manifestation of the God Reꜥ?* (Aton Studies 4). Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo 32: 217–226.

Tiradritti, F. 1998. *Egyptian Treasures from the Egyptian Museum in Cairo*. Vercelli.

Traunecker, C.. 1986. Aménophis IV et Néfertiti: Le couple royal d'après les talatates du IXe pylône de Karnak. *Bulletin de la Société française d'égyptologie* 107: 17–44.

Troy, L. 1986. *Patterns of Queenship in Ancient Egyptian Myth and History*. Uppsala.

*Urk.*IV = Sethe, K. 1927–1930. *Urkunden der 18 Dynastie: Historisch-biographische Urkunden*. Leipzig.

van de Walle, B. 1980. Survivances mythologiques dans les coiffures royales de l'époque atonienne. *Chronique d'Egypte* 55: 23–36.

van Mulken, M. and Le Pair, R. 2012. Appreciation and Interpretation of Visual Metaphors in Advertising across Three European Countries. In: MacArthur, F., Oncins-Martínez, J.L., Sánchez-García, M., and Piquer-Píriz, A.M., eds. *Metaphor in Use: Context, Culture, and Communication*. Amsterdam: 177–194.

Vergnieux, R. 2006–2011. *Base Talatat (Archeogrid)*. Bordeaux.

Vergnieux, R. and Gondran, M. 1997. *Aménophis IV et les pierres du soleil: Akhénaton retrouvé*. Paris.

Vernant, J.-P. 2003. Frontality and Monstrosity. In: Garber, M. and Vickers, N.J., eds. *The Medusa Reader*. New York: 210–231.

Wengrow, D. 2014. *The Origins of Monsters: Image and Cognition in the First Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. Princeton.

Wildung, D. 1977. *Egyptian Saints: Deification in Pharaonic Egypt*. New York.

Wilkinson, T.A.H. 1999. *Early Dynastic Egypt*. London.

Winter, I.J. 1996. Sex, Rhetoric, and the Public Monument: The Alluring Body of Naram-Sîn of Agade. In: Kampen, N.B., ed. *Sexuality in Ancient Art*. Cambridge: 11–26.

Wood, M. 2000. *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780-1865*. Manchester.

Žabkar, L.V. 1968. *A Study of the Ba Concept in Ancient Egyptian Texts*. Chicago.

Chapter 4

The Architectural Presence of the Assyrian King in His Palaces

David Kertai
The National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden

Abstract

The stone reliefs that decorated the palaces of Assyria are perhaps their most famous legacy. In the past, they were primarily discussed as decontextualized works of art with an emphasis on their intended meaning. They have gained more attention as a result of the publication of articles that examine their architectural contexts as reliefs (Reade 1979b; Winter 1981, 1983; Porter 2003). This article elaborates on these approaches by looking at the spatial contexts of the king's presence within the palaces. The king's image was employed most prominently in the throne room of the Northwest Palace in Kalḫu, where it guided movement into and through the room. Two niches depicting the king multiple times framed the actual king within the room. The niche at the end of the room formed a template for other monumental reception rooms both in this palace as well as in the royal palace of Sargon II at Dur-Sharruken. It was the king's image rather than the overall topics depicted within the rooms that marked these settings.

The Palaces of Assyria

This article focuses on the *c.* 250-year-period that began with the reign of Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BCE) and ends with the demise of the Assyrian Empire in the years surrounding 612 BCE. The start of this time frame is chosen pragmatically and reflects our lack of knowledge about the palaces built before Ashurnasirpal II's reign. This is an exceptional era in the history of the Ancient Near East. The palaces of Assyria form one of the best, and arguably only, corpus of palatial architecture known from the Ancient Near East (Heinrich 1984; Kertai 2020).

Excavations have unearthed all three primary palaces used by the royal court during this period (Kertai 2013; 2015b). The first of these palaces was located in Kalḫu, the city that was transformed into Assyria's new royal center during the reign of Ashurnasirpal II. The pre-existing city was concentrated on a *c.* 20 ha ancient tell. It became the southwest corner of the new city that measured *c.* 360 ha (Oates and Oates 2001: 27). The southeast corner of the city was occupied by a large military complex, which was built during the reign of Shalmaneser III (858–824 BCE) and included its own monumental palace (Mallowan 1966; Kertai 2011). The main temples and the royal palace were located on the city's citadel, which occupied the ancient mound. This palace is currently called the Northwest Palace (named by its first excavator, Layard, for its location on the citadel). It remained Assyria's primary palace for *c.* 150 years, until the court moved to the newly founded city of Dur-Sharruken during the last years of Sargon II's reign (722–705 BCE). Dur-Sharruken city was *c.* 300 ha in size with a citadel of *c.* 20 ha (Novák 1999: 148). These measurements as well as its general form were similar to Kalḫu (Reade 1981: 161).

The citadel contained several large palatial residences, the main temples of the city, and the royal palace. A second mound and its surroundings formed the location of the military complex. The amount of information we have about the architecture of Dur-Sharruken's citadel is exceptional (Loud and Altman 1938). Unfortunately, with Sargon's untimely death on the battlefield, the royal court condemned the city and it was abandoned a year after the palace's inauguration (Frahm 1999). Thereafter the royal court resided at Nineveh, one of the ancient centers of Northern Iraq. During the reign of Sennacherib (704–681 BCE), the city came to measure *c.* 750 ha (Novák 1999: 159) and incorporated two ancient mounds. Kuyunjik, the center of ancient Nineveh, became its main citadel, whereas Nebi Yunus, whose earlier history is unknown, became the location of the city's military complex. The citadel was renowned for the temple of the goddess Ishtar of Nineveh (Reade 2005; Kertai 2015e). The new royal palace, currently called the Southwest Palace (Russell 1991; Kertai 2015b: 122–147), was constructed next to it. Besides these three royal palaces and the military complexes, several other palaces, especially the palatial residences of the elite, have been unearthed from this period (Heinrich 1984: 98–197; Miglus 1999, 131–175).

The Architectural Presence of the King

A discussion of the architectural presence of the king might seem somewhat superfluous. One could rightly argue that the palace functioned as a metonym for kingship and that the king's presence was inherent in all its aspects and spaces. The palace associated everything inside its confines with the king. Nonetheless, this association differed in the degrees and the ways in which it was emphasized and in its intended audiences.

This article addresses a more limited aspect of the subject by focusing on the spatial significance of the king's depiction within the palaces. Such analysis is complicated, however, by the only partial preservation of most ancient Assyrian palaces. Knowledge of their decoration tends to be limited to stone reliefs and therefore to the four palaces that were decorated with them. These are the three primary royal palaces and Ashurbanipal's (668–631 BCE) North Palace in Nineveh. Reliefs belonging to the unfinished palace of Tiglath-pileser III have also been found, but the associated architecture is not known (Kertai 2013). Reliefs were also used in Esarhaddon's Southwest Palace in Kalḫu and the military palace at Nebi Yunus in Nineveh, but the first was never finished, while the latter is mostly unknown (Kertai 2015b: 147–153; Al-Juboori 2017). Wall paintings could have depicted the king as well, especially in the palaces that did not use stone reliefs. However, only in the palace of Til Barsip have wall paintings been preserved in substantial numbers (Thureau-Dangin and Dunand 1936). In the palaces where stone reliefs were used, wall paintings were mostly ornamental (Nunn 1988: 102–134; Albenda 2005).

Approaching the Throne Room

The main temples and palaces of Assyria were generally located on citadels situated at the edge of the city. While this made them visible from afar, their location within the cities is still unclear due to our lack of knowledge of urban topography (Ur 2013). Assur, the cultic center of Assyria throughout its existence, was exceptional for not having a proper citadel. Its monumental buildings, including some of the most important Assyrian temples, were concentrated along the northern edge of the city. This set them apart from the rest of the city, but the area does not seem to have been separated by a wall. The citadel of Dur-Sharruken formed a second exception. The citadel was separated from the rest of the city by a wall, but was located on the same level as the city. Only the royal palace complex, with the adjoining temples, and the Nabu Temple, were placed on platforms, raising them above their surroundings. Most other citadels were located on ancient tells, i.e., the accumulated debris of prior settlements, resulting from the long occupation history of most sites.

Assyrian palaces were enormous and occupied prominent places on the citadels of their respective cities. Their location and sheer size would have made them stand out from their surroundings. Whether they were made to be recognizable as palaces is less clear. Like most Assyrian architecture, their exteriors were relatively nondescript (Reade 1979a: 335–336). Most people would have known the location of the palace regardless of whether or not its architectural features were pronounced. Modern scholars find it

more difficult, for instance, to recognize the main entrance to the Northwest Palace at Kalḫu (Kertai 2013) or to reconstruct the nature of the *bēt nakkapti* in Nineveh (Russell 1991: 86; 1997). It is possible that some rooms stood out from the urban fabric due to their considerable height, but monumental rooms were part of the adjacent temples as well. The external walls of the palace would however have blocked most views. The visibility of the palaces was further diminished by their placement on the side of the citadel facing away from the city. This provided views of the surrounding landscape, but also suggests that visibility from the city was not a main concern.

Assyrian throne rooms stood out for their monumentality (Kertai 2019). They dwarfed all other rooms of the palace in size. Within the Near East of the time, few rooms matched their size of up to 500 sq m and height of up to 18 m (Kertai 2015b: 8–10). Their size would have been impressive regardless of their location within the palace, but their placement was meant to increase their impact. The courtyard in front of the throne room was surrounded by offices and storerooms. The other monumental reception rooms of the palace were located further inside. The throne room was the first monumental room encountered when moving through the palace. The route towards the throne room was not without its monumentality, if only for the size of its gates and courtyards. These spaces, however, were dwarfed by the throne room. Moreover, the decoration along this route was restrained and consisted mainly of reliefs depicting apotropaic creatures.

Ashurnasirpal II's Northwest Palace is the best-preserved and I will use it to discuss the manner by which its throne room could be approached. The image of the king was not made visible until one reached the façade of the throne room.[1] Here, the king's image was placed strategically to chaperone people on their way into the throne room. There is much theatricality evident in the placement of the king's image in the Northwest Palace. The courtyard's gate faced the edge of the citadel, but the monumental throne room along its southern side undoubtedly drew the visitor's gaze (Figure 4.1). Assyrian throne rooms had three entrances: a central entrance flanked by two slightly less monumental ones. From the courtyard's entrance, the view of the throne room's façade was dominated by the central entrance and the large apotropaic creatures surrounding it. The façade was protected by ten large colossi—two in each of its three entrances and two along each of its two buttresses—and two winged humanoids, one in the center of each buttress (Paley and Sobolewski 1992: 3–31).

---

[1] The king's image was not totally absent from the city and could for instance be seen on the obelisks that stood in more accessible urban spaces.
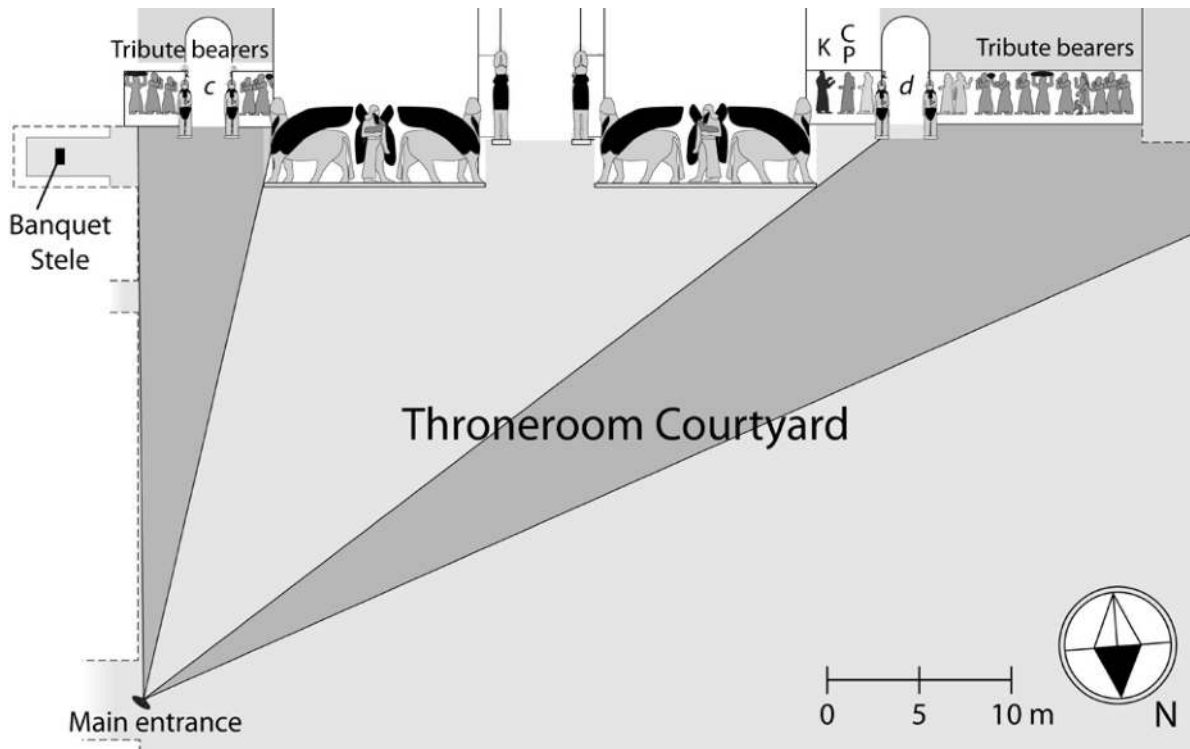
Figure 4.1. Courtyard in front of throne room, Northwest Palace, Kalḫu. Sections at Entrances *c* and *d* visible from the access to the courtyard. (K = king; CP = crown prince) (image by author).

The smaller entrances would have been less visible from the courtyard's entrance (Paley and Sobolewski 1992: 18). Although the nearest entrance could be seen, it was somewhat hidden in the corner of the courtyard. This entrance was protected by two apotropaic colossi. The surrounding façade showed two groups of tribute bearers walking towards the door. The foreignness of these individuals was indicated by their features, especially their 'crouching' posture (Cifarelli 1998). The second door, located farther away from the courtyard's entrance, was probably visible as well. The buttresses surrounding the central entrance of the throne room would have blocked most views. From behind these buttresses, the heads of the apotropaic statues, are likely to have emerged, indicating the presence of the entrance. One would also have been able to see another group of tribute bearers walking towards the door. The view from the entrance gate was thus dominated by the apotropaic protection of the throne room and the tribute bearers at its edges. All these aspects correlated with the king, but the king himself was not visible from this vantage point (Kertai 2019: 46–47).

Most scholars have argued that people would enter the throne room from Door *d* located farthest from the courtyard's entrance. Mallowan's (1966: 103)

interpretation was still based on Layard's presumption that the room lacked a central entrance.[2]

The placement of the king's image supports the hypothesis that most people would have entered through Door *d*. It is only when walking towards this door that the rest of the procession of tribute bearers unfolds. The first Assyrian courtiers standing in front of the tribute bearers would have been visible from the courtyard's entrance, but it is only when walking further that one would see the end of the procession, where the crown prince would be standing in front of the king. The Assyrians are recognizable by their erect posture (Cifarelli 1998), clothes, and placement, but the king is not emphasized and is set apart only subtly (Winter 1981: 12; 1983: 19; Reade 2009). His size is comparable to the other humans and is even slightly smaller due to the need to fit his crown, which forms his main distinguishing apparel, within the same frame.

The king's presence in front of his throne room can be seen as a gesture of welcome (Porter 2003: 91). His image signaled that the entrance to the throne room had been reached. He stood outside his throne room welcoming the visitors depicted on the reliefs as well as the actual visitors walking towards him.

_____

[2] For the reconstruction of the third door, see es-Soof 1963; Reade 1965.

The king's image appeared once more when leaving the throne room through Door *c*. Here a niche was created for a 128 cm high stele. The stele included a small depiction of the king, but its surfaces were mostly filled with an inscription (Börker–Klähn 1982: 182–183). This so-called Banquet Text describes the king's successes and includes an extensive description of the food used for the inauguration of the palace (Grayson 1991: 288–293; Fales 1994; Fuchs 2009). As is common on Assyrian stelae, the king is surrounded by divine symbols. These show the crescent moon (Sin), winged disk (Shamash), star (Ishtar), horned crown (Assur), thunder bolts (Adad), and seven dots (Sebetti) (Seidl 1971). The stele was somewhat hidden and was best seen just outside the throne room's side entrance. It was not made to be visible from other locations. The image of the king could only be seen clearly at such short distance.

Although the throne room façade focussed on apotropaic protection, it also highlighted one of the throne room's main functions—submission to the Assyrian king. The gruesomeness for which the Assyrians have come to be known is absent. Instead, this part of the palace focused on the benevolent king (Porter 2003). The throne room façade set the stage for the activities within the throne room itself (Winter 1981: 17).

The general organization of the throne room's façade in Sargon's royal palace was similar to the one in the Northwest Palace of Ashurnasirpal II (Winter 1983: 26), but its architectural setting created differences. The main distinction was in the organization of the courtyard in front of the throne room. The entrance to the courtyard was in the corner.[3] This resulted in a rather oblique angle to the throne room. From the gate's vantage point, the view would have been restricted to the closest entrance. Unfortunately, the reliefs surrounding this door are unknown. Views of the rest of the throne room's façade were blocked by the nearest buttress.[4]

Opposite the entrance to the courtyard, and therefore more visible, was the entrance to Corridor 10. This corridor led to the palace's external terrace and the monumental suites located there. The door was flanked by two apotropaic colossi. At a distance of at least 90 m, the details of this entrance would have been difficult to discern, but it seems prominent enough to have functioned as a visual marker within the courtyard. In order to view the decoration surrounding the courtyard, including that which belonged to the throne room's

façade and Corridor 10, one had to move towards the center of the courtyard.

The image of the king was present on the throne room façade, ready to meet approaching groups close to the smaller door farthest from the courtyard entrance. His position, however, was slightly different from that at the Northwest Palace in Kalḫu; here two apotropaic creatures had been inserted between the king and the entrance to the throne room, moving the king and his entourage away from the entrance. The effect for people moving towards the throne room's entrance would have been the same as before. The file of courtiers—who replaced the tribute bearers—became visible first, with the king's image emerging last, after one had walked further into the courtyard.

In the Northwest Palace, the king faced everybody who walked into the throne room through its farthest door. In Sargon's palace, an additional walk along the throne room's façade would have been required to achieve a similar effect. Entering the throne room without such detour would have brought people into the room behind the king's back. By placing the king's image at the other side of the door, people now walked behind him rather than towards him. One of the noteworthy aspects of the decoration of Sargon's palace is the prevalence of groups of people walking towards the king (see also below, related to the inside of the rooms). Three such processions were depicted in the throne room courtyard alone. The two additional processions flanked the entrance into Corridor 10. Both groups walked towards this entrance where the king awaited them. Walking into this corridor thus occurred behind and between the backs of the two kings. A similar setting existed outside the central entrance into Room 2 on the terrace, where two further processions ended.

It is possible that the act of entering behind the king's back was avoided by entering these doors from an angle. An additional walk along the courtyard's walls could have led people along the procession and past the king. While entering behind the king's back might be presumed to have been improper, the prevalence of the king's position suggests that this was not how the reliefs were interpreted. The king was probably not seen as standing with his back to these entrances, but as flanking and marking them.

The throne room courtyard of Sennacherib's Southwest Palace seems to have been organized differently. The gates leading into the courtyard have not been found, with the exception of what appears to have been the corridor connecting to the Ishtar of Nineveh Temple (Kertai 2015b: 130). The courtyard's main entrance was most probably located along its eastern side, opposite the throne room. This would have changed the

---

[3] The palace was excavated in the middle of the 19th century. Its architecture remains conjectural (Kertai 2015b: 87–92).

[4] Note that Figure 6 of Novák 2012 shows Citadel Gate A (Loud, Frankfort, and Jacobsen 1936: Plate 7) rather than the throne room's entrance.

approach to the throne room. The throne room's façade continued to be occupied by apotropaic creatures. The decoration surrounding the southern entrance, closest to the probable throne dais, remains unknown except for the apotropaic creatures standing in its door. Narrative scenes surrounded the northern entrance into the throne room.

The nature of the narrative scenes within the Southwest Palace differed considerably from the older palaces. Large scale processions of humans were mostly absent. Instead, the walls of the palace were covered with scenes of military expeditions. These were depicted in minute detail and filled the entire surface of the relief (Russell 1991; Barnett, Bleibtreu, and Turner 1998). The king was still prominent, but was depicted on a smaller scale, in line with the overall miniaturization of the scenes. This was also true for the throne room's façade where the king no longer awaited visitors.

The direct approach in the direction of the throne room and the absence of a large-sized image of the king are likely to reflect a change in how people moved toward the throne room. Such an approach, however, was not uncommon in Assyria. The throne rooms of the military palaces appear to have been approached in a like manner, but their original decoration is unknown.

The Throne Room

Throne rooms were not unlike typical ancient Assyrian reception rooms, but they were embedded in a unique architectural setting (Turner 1970: 181–194; Kertai 2015b: 210–219). The room associated most specifically with the suite is the throne room ramp (Kertai 2019). Vertical connections were otherwise extremely rare in Assyrian palaces, reflecting the absence of second stories within these palaces (Kertai 2015f). The ramp was placed at the end of the throne room and accessible through a vestibule. The suite also included a room between the throne room and the courtyard behind it. This room sometimes connected to the adjacent suites (Kertai 2015a), although these connections diminished over time and were absent in the throne rooms of Nineveh during the 7th century BCE. From the palaces of Dur-Sharruken onwards, bathrooms became a common feature of the suite (Kertai 2015b: 190–195). These were located close to the throne dais. This solved an anomaly in the earlier throne rooms, which had been the only suites without their own bathroom.

Except for a few apotropaic creatures, reliefs were encountered first on the throne room's façade. Even here, the focus on apotropaic protection crowded out narrative scenes. The contrast with the throne room could hardly have been more pronounced. The throne room was completely surrounded by reliefs,

which mostly focused on the king and his military successes. Unfortunately, comparing throne rooms is complicated by a lack of known reliefs from the throne room of Sargon's palace in Dur-Sharruken and the fragmentary preservation of the throne rooms in Nineveh. Discussions have therefore focused mostly on the throne room of the Northwest Palace in Kalḫu (Winter 1981; Porter 2003).

In the throne room of Ashurnasirpal II movement of individuals was guided from western Entrance *d* towards the other end of the room where the main throne of the empire stood. The image of the king played an important role in guiding this movement. For heuristic purposes, one can divide the reliefs within the room into three groups. The first group consists of the apotropaic creatures and the tree-like object[5] depicted throughout the palace. The apotropaic creatures were concentrated in and around the room's doors, guiding movement in and out of the room. This movement emanated from the throne room courtyard and continued further inside towards Rooms C and F (Kertai 2015a).

Apotropaic figures also framed the second group, which consisted of the reliefs within and around the two niches located in the room. One niche was placed behind the throne dais at the room's end. The second niche was placed opposite the room's central door. Each niche depicted the same scene, which consisted of the king standing on both sides of the tree-like object. The scene opposite the central door was expanded by two additional depictions of the king. The four kings created an especially forceful image. The niches formed the main focal points within the room (Winter 1983: 17). They were intended to be seen from a distance and formed the backdrop for the actual king.

The two niches were oriented toward different audiences (Novák 2012: 260–261). The niche behind the throne dais formed the focal point for those in the room and guided movement from the room's opposite end. The niche opposite the central door was directed towards the outside (Figure 4.2). For those present in the throne room courtyard, and especially those walking towards Entrance *d*, the niche opposite the central door would have signaled the potential presence of the king and his association with the room (Kertai 2019).

The third group of reliefs can be described as narrative (Winter 1981). They depicted military scenes, as well as hunting scenes closer to the throne dais. These scenes accompanied people walking along the length of the throne room from Entrance *d*. It is the king's image that gives directionality to the scenes. The

---

[5] For discussions of the tree-like object see, for instance, Porter 1993; Seidl and Sallaberger 2005–2006; Giovino 2007.
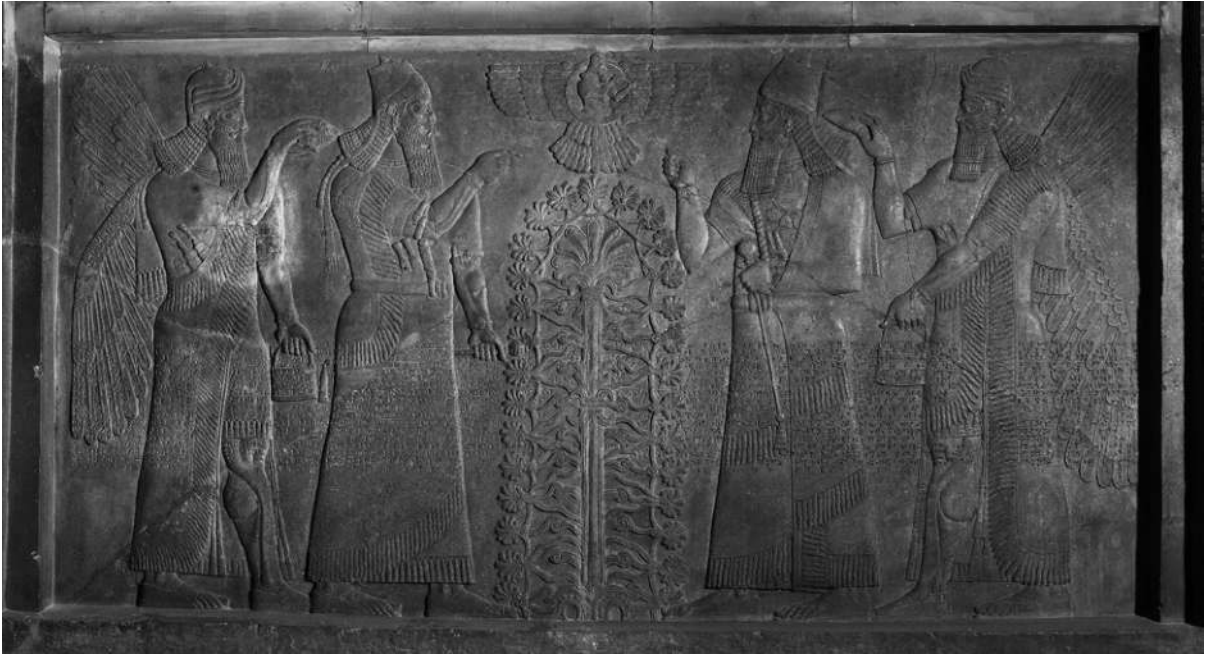
Figure 4.2. Relief 23, throne room, Northwest Palace, BM 124531
(© The Trustees of the British Museum).

overall scenes show people moving in both directions, but the king generally faces Entrance *d* (Winter 1983, 19–21).[6] The general orientation of the king is unlikely to be coincidental and is best explained as a means to orient the king's gaze towards the people coming from Entrance *d*.[7] The narrative scenes are interrupted by the central niche and the doors, but continue towards the throne dais at the end of the room. The niches and the narrative scenes were further distinguished by the 'symmetrical reliefs' within the niches and the 'asymmetrical historical representations' of the narrative scenes (Winter 1981: 22).

The decoration of Sargon's throne room (Blocher 1999) is almost entirely unknown and will therefore be ignored here. The decoration of Sennacherib's throne room is also known only fragmentarily (Russell 1998a). In general, it follows the modes of decoration used throughout the palace rather than those of Ashurnasirpal's Northwest Palace. This means that apotropaic creatures were absent from the walls of the room. The room is almost entirely filled with narrative scenes showing military expeditions. Within these scenes, the king does not seem to be facing a specific direction.

The end of the room, where the throne dais was likely located, has not been preserved. The niche opposite the central entrance is very poorly preserved, but its lower right corner can still be traced (Russell 1998a: 223). The fragment shows the feet of two large-scale figures facing south. It seems probable that one pair of feet belonged to the king. The depiction of large-scale individuals is exceptional within the palace. Corridor 51s is the only other place within the palace where humans were depicted in a similar manner.[8] Their presence on the central niche indicates the importance of this setting and the longevity of the throne room's traditions.

Rooms

The niches in the throne room of the Northwest Palace were the template for how the image of the king was seen in settings in other monumental reception rooms of the palace. Narrative scenes were used in Rooms WK and WG as well, but the exact location of the few individual reliefs that can be associated with these rooms is mostly unknown (Paley and Sobolewski 1987: 65–79; Kertai 2015b: 34–38). All other rooms depicted apotropaic creatures and libation scenes.

In each room where the king was depicted, he was also shown at the center of the room's end (Figure 4.3). Whereas these scenes were set apart in the throne room by having 'their own unique disposition of space,

---

[6] The orientation of the king on the northern wall of the throne room remains unknown as the king's image has not been preserved on the two reliefs with narrative scenes found along this wall.

[7] Relief 5 forms the exception, showing the king directed towards the east. It was explained by Winter (1983: 21) as belonging to the aftermath of the battle, when the king returned to his own military camp.

[8] Room 28 might represent another exception, although these figures were more likely apotropaic creatures (Kertai 2015c: 344).
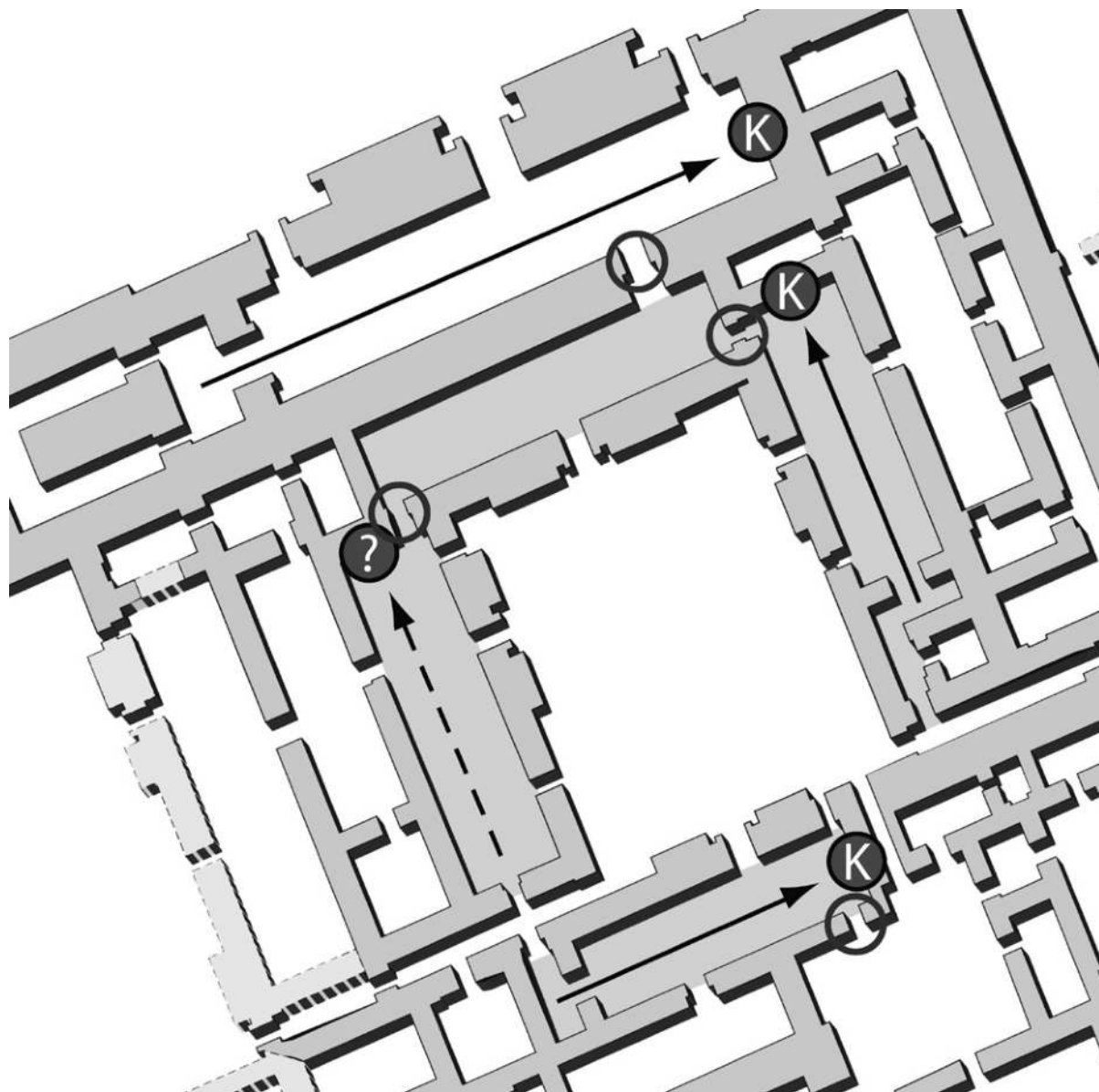
Figure 4.3. Architectural features related to the king. Representation of the king (K) on a short wall, an axis leading towards it and the presence of a nearby back door (image by author).

visually apart from the others' (Winter 1981: 10), the other rooms created subtler differences. Rooms G and H showed the king multiple times on their walls. In Room H, he was probably shown at both ends of the room (Figure 4.4; Kertai 2015d: 57–59), but the depiction itself followed those used throughout the rest of the room. Room G created a more elaborate scene at the end of the room. Although the courtiers, apotropaic creatures, and attributes were the same as those shown in the other scenes in the room, this specific scene was more elaborate and showed the king seated, an otherwise uncommon posture for the king within this palace.

In Rooms F and S, the king was depicted only in the room's short end, with the remaining rooms occupied by apotropaic figures. Vestibules C[9] and N showed the king on their long walls, but these vestibules are best seen as extensions of the adjacent throne room (Winter 1983: 24). Room G presented the king at both ends of the room (Ataç 2006: 81–82). The king is not shown in the similar vestibule (T) attached to Room S. Within these settings the king is generally surrounded by various apotropaic creatures. Only in Rooms C and G is the king surrounded by his courtiers (as well as apotropaic creatures).

_____

[9] The king on Relief 7 of Room C is only partially preserved. For its reconstruction, see Meuszyński 1981: 29.

Figure 4.4. King surrounded by apotropaic creatures in Room H,
reliefs 8–10, Northwest Palace, Kalḫu (image by author).

All rooms in Sargon's palace were decorated with narrative scenes. Unfortunately, excavators have found reliefs only in a small part of the palace. This area is mostly limited to the large suite excavated by Botta (1849; cf. Albenda 1986), on the palace's terrace (Figure 4.5). The known reliefs depict a broad range of topics, which are markedly different from those found in the Northwest Palace. Apotropaic creatures were used in a few places only and were not depicted in close proximity to the king (Ornan 2004). It is the scene that was only depicted on the throne room façade of the Northwest Palace, showing the crown prince bringing a group into the presence of the king (Figure 4.6) that forms the most common setting in which the king was shown in Sargon II's royal palace (Kertai 2017). These scenes usually occupied the entire height of the reliefs. Processions were shown on the walls of the palace's courtyards as well as in several rooms.

As is typical for Assyrian reliefs, those inside the room were not made to communicate with the outside. Room 9 of Sargon's palace, however, is an exception. The room provided a secondary entrance into the inner part of the suite (Kertai 2015b: 115–117). The reliefs in the room show groups of courtiers standing behind and in front of the king. The king was placed so as to align with the room's external door. This placement was certainly intentional and explains why the king is not placed at the center of the wall as is common within the palace. Why Room 9 created an axis towards the king from the outside is unclear. The room, and therefore the view of the king, was not very pronounced from the outside as the door was tucked away in the corner of the courtyard.

In the reliefs in Sargon's royal palace, the king was generally placed at the center of the short wall of

the room. His image has been found in this location in Rooms 2, 4, 6, 7, and 8. Not coincidentally, these represent the biggest rooms within the suite. Not unlike Ashurnasirpal's Northwest Palace, the king's image created a setting within the room which is likely to have correlated with the place where the king would have been seated within the room. His placement was generally in the left end of the room, as seen from the outside. In another similarity with the Northwest Palace, the placement of the king's image coincided with the presence of a small back door that connected with additional rooms. The rooms did not create special scenes for these places, as was the case in the Northwest Palace, but organized the ongoing scenes in such a way that the king came to stand at the center of the short wall. Here he was shown standing, while a procession of prisoners, courtiers, or tribute bearers headed by the crown prince approached him.

The placement of the king's image was most pronounced in Room 8, the secondary throne room of the palace (Kertai 2015b: 113), because of a throne dais located in front of him. Interestingly, the prisoners and courtiers depicted on each of the long walls moved towards the throne dais. Both walls showed the king once, facing away from the throne dais, and thus facing the people coming from the other end of the room. Although these aspects are reminiscent of the throne room of the Northwest Palace, other features differed. Room 8 did not, for instance, contain a setting opposite its central entrance. Instead, a sequence of doors connected to the other side of the suite. While the smaller external door farthest from the dais might have formed the room's main entrance, the room contained another monumental door that connected it to Room 4. In the Northwest Palace, a vestibule providing an alternative
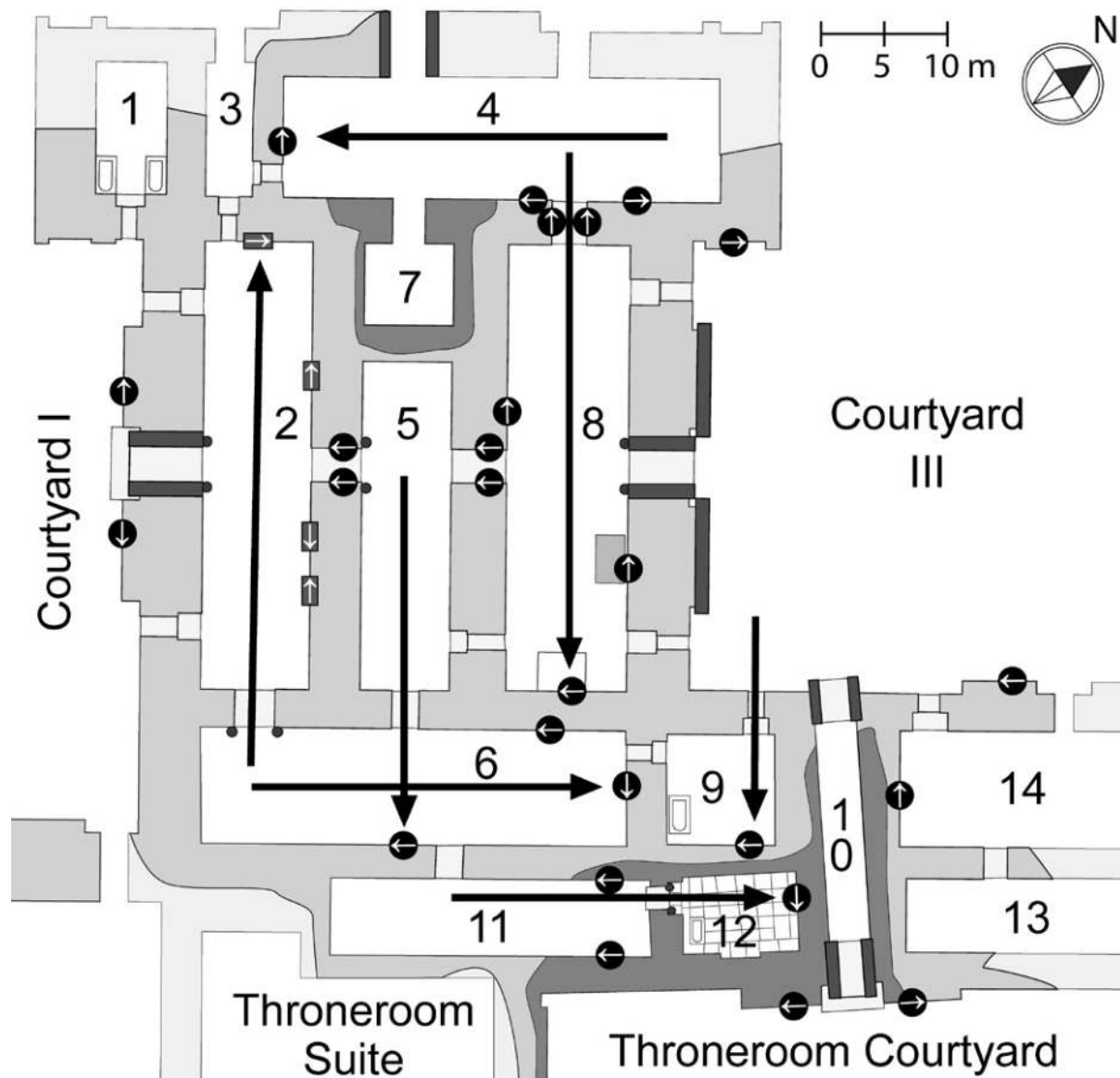
Figure 4.5. Floorplan of the terrace surrounding Dur-Sharruken, Sargon's palace. Circles (processions) and squares (military scenes) indicate locations of the king's image. The small arrows indicate the direction in which the king is facing (image by author).

entrance to the suites was generally located at a similar location (except in the throne room, where this room led towards the ramp). Room 4 can be interpreted similarly, but would represent a more monumental version of the principle. Its door into Room 8 was surrounded by four images of the king. Two images flanked the walls surrounding this entrance, while two additional images on the doorjambs faced those entering from Room 4. This accumulation of the king's image gives prominence to this passage and suggests that it formed one of the main entrances to Room 8.

The king's image was used in a similar manner in Rooms 6 and 11, which are located in the inner part of the suite. Both rooms showed processions walking towards the king in one large register covering the entire relief. In both rooms, the movement along the long walls was directed towards the short wall at the northeastern edge of the room. Only in Room 6 was the king actually depicted on the wall. The short wall in Room 11 showed two courtiers/soldiers, who were unlikely intended to act as a focal point within the room. The king's image, however, was shown at the center of the short wall of the adjacent Room 12. The processions in Room 11 seem directed towards this room. This correlation is further enhanced by the placement of the king within Room 11. The king is depicted twice in the room, once on each of the long walls. Exceptionally, both images are

Figure 4.6. Crown prince Sennacherib facing King Sargon II. Relief 12 in courtyard I, royal palace, Dur-Sharruken (Botta 1849: Pl. 12).
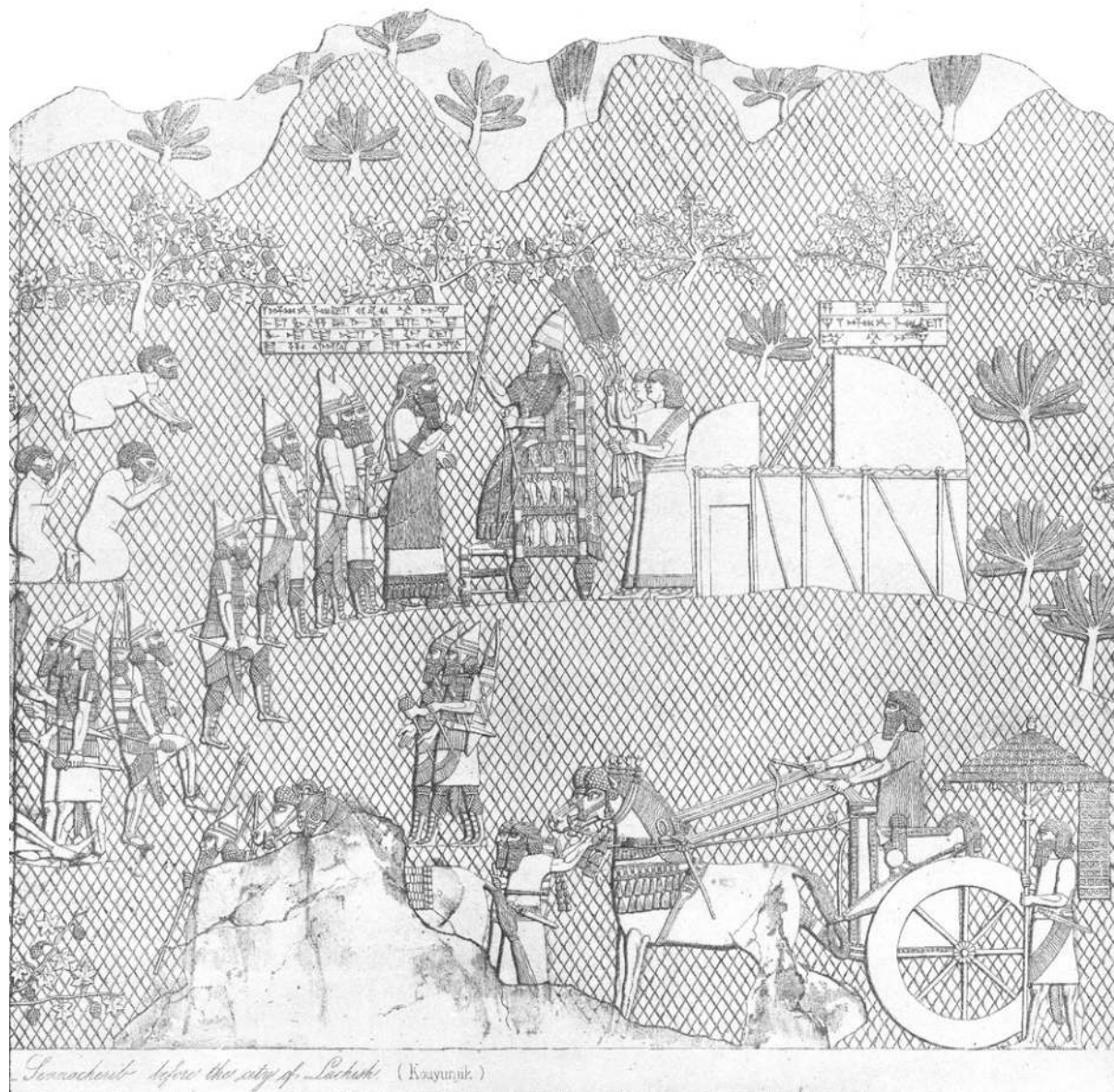
Figure 4.7. Crown prince introducing prisoners from Lachish. Relief 12 in room 36,
Southwest Palace, Nineveh (Layard 1853: Plate 23).

located at the same place at the end of the room facing people heading towards Room 12. Such symmetry is unique and enhances the king's role in framing the route towards Room 12. Room 6 is more typical, with each long wall showing a procession moving towards the king, who is situated at different locations along the wall. The king's image on the short wall at the end of the room is adjacent to the back door towards Room 9.

Thus far the discussion has focussed on the scenes showing processions. Directionality is much easier to depict and reconstruct in these scenes. The military and other scenes in Sargon's royal palace are more fragmentarily known. Room 2, the biggest room to

depict military scenes (in its lower register) shows the king standing at the center of a short wall, similar to his depiction at other locations. In the room at large, directionality is more difficult to discern. The king is shown frequently, standing in his chariot, but he does not seem to face a particular direction. Room 14, a badly preserved room outside the large suite, also shows the king at the far end of the room. The room combined military scenes in two registers with a procession towards the king in a single register. This allowed a full-sized image of the king to be placed at its common location. The reliefs from the short end of Room 5 are not preserved, but the room's function as the central connector within the large suite might have made the

king's presence less important. Rooms 7 and 13 do not seem to have shown the king in a spatially meaningful way, at least not in the preserved reliefs.

The wall paintings of the palace at Til Barsip show similarities to Sargon's palace, even though the Til Barsip palace is probably somewhat older. This probably reflects its similarities with, and the continuity provided by the unfinished palace of Tiglath-pileser III (Barnett and Falkner 1962). The known Tiglath-pileser III reliefs show the king in front of numerous groups, suggesting his image was intended to be used as a spatial marker. In the few rooms of the Til Barsip palace whose paintings are known, the king is shown at the center of the short wall in Rooms 24 and 47, i.e., the two main reception rooms of the palace beside the throne room, whose decoration is however mostly unknown. The king is also shown at the center of the bathroom niche in Room 27, a location where the king is not otherwise shown in the other known palaces.

The reliefs in Sennacherib's Southwest Palace differed in many of their aspects in comparison to what had preceded them. They embedded the king into larger landscapes. In general, the king's image does not seem to have been used as a spatial marker, although a few exceptions might be suggested. The most famous example was found in Room 36 in which the siege of Lachish was depicted. The king is shown atop a hill in front of his tent in the center of the northern wall of the room (Figure 4.7; Russell 1991: 200–209). The scene was, however, only visible from within the room. Its focal point from the outside was formed by the pyramid-shaped city of Lachish shown in the center of the room opposite the axis running towards the room. The use of foreign cities as markers opposite doors seems to be common within the palace, but is difficult to reconstruct in detail. Due to the fragmentary nature of the reliefs and the imprecise knowledge of their exact location within the rooms, it is impossible to say whether the king's image was used in a spatially significant way.

Discussion

The complexity and variation of the king's scene does not reside in its spatial setting but rather in the meanings communicated about kingship. The scenes differed considerably in the surroundings, posture, and attributes of the king. In the Northwest Palace, in the rooms with cultic and apotropaic scenes, the king's image was based on the rest of the room, or on similar rooms elsewhere in the palace. The short end of the throne room, the only room where the narrative reliefs can be reconstructed, did not incorporate the king's image into narrative scenes, but created special settings that drew upon the cultic and apotropaic vocabulary used within the rest of the palace. The

palace of Dur-Sharruken created similar settings at the short end of its rooms, but used different scenes. Cultic and apotropaic scenes were absent. Instead, the king was embedded in different kinds of processions and, less frequently, in military scenes. The reliefs were organized in such a way that the king's image ended up at strategic places within the rooms.

Whether these variations signify differences in the activity taking place in front of the scene is less obvious and might need further exploration. More often, the king's depiction is correlated with the rest of the room, suggesting that if a correlation existed it was on the level of the room. Tracing functional information on the basis of the reliefs is, however, complicated. The apotropaic and cultic reliefs in the suite surrounding Room G of the Northwest Palace can be interpreted as signaling the suite's use for the purification and storage of royal objects (Russell 1998b). The use of narrative scenes within the palace seems restricted to the three main reception rooms, thereby providing a correlation. In these contexts, at least, the general topic of the reliefs gave cues about the intended use of the corresponding room. Such correlations are more difficult to discern in Sargon's palace and are almost certainly absent in the Ninevite palaces where every room showed military campaigns.

The discrepancy is most pronounced when it comes to the Ninevite palaces of the 7th century BCE. In these two palaces, the king's image no longer seems to have been employed as a spatial marker. This might indicate that the traditional cues were no longer needed, perhaps because they had become culturally engrained (Rapoport 1982: 67). This might support the argument made by Winter (1981: 29–31) that the growing complexity within the narrative scenes was related to an audience that was more accustomed to Assyrian iconography. It is however also possible that the traditional cues were no longer needed because of changes in court protocol. This is suggested by the disappearance of the wall at the short end of the room where the king's image had been most prominent (Kertai 2015b: 244). While some rooms still retained this setting, most prominently in the throne room, most reception suites replaced it with a large door. The absence of large-scale depictions of the king might nonetheless reflect a decline in the importance of the king's image over time, but Ornan (2004) has convincingly argued the opposite: that the king became more prominent over time. In the palaces of Nineveh, the king was everywhere even if he was no longer present at specific places.

References

Albenda, P. 1986. *The Palace of Sargon, King of Assyria: Monumental Wall Reliefs at Dur-Sharrukin, from*

Original Drawings Made at the Time of Their Discovery in 1843–1844 by Botta and Flandin, Synthese 22. Paris.

Albenda, P. 2005. *Ornamental Wall Painting in the Art of the Assyrian Empire* (Cuneiform Monographs 28). Leiden.

Ataç, M.-A. 2006. Visual Formula and Meaning in Neo-Assyrian Relief Sculpture. *The Art Bulletin* 88(1): 69–101.

Barnett, R.D., Bleibtreu, E., and Turner, G. 1998. *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh*. London.

Barnett, R.D. and Falkner, M. 1962. *The Sculptures of Aššur–nasir–apli II, 883–859 B.C., Tiglath-pileser III, 745–727 B.C. and Esarhaddon, 681–669 B.C., from the Central and South-West Palaces at Nimrud*. London.

Blocher, F. 1999. Der Thronsaal Sargons II—Gestalt und Schicksal. *Altorientalische Forschungen* 26(2): 223–250.

Börker–Klähn, J. 1982. *Altvorderasiatische Bildstelen und vergleichbare Felsreliefs* (Baghdader Forschungen 4). Mainz.

Botta, P.E. 1849. *Monument de Ninive. Tomes I–II: Architecture et sculpture*. Paris.

Cifarelli, M. 1998. Gesture and Alterity in the Art of Ashurnasirpal II of Assyria. *The Art Bulletin* 80(2): 210–228.

es–Soof, B.A. 1963. Further Investigations in Assur–nasir–pal's Palace. *Sumer* 19: 66–68.

Fales, F.M. 1994. A Fresh Look at the Nimrud Wine Lists. In: Milano, L., ed. *Drinking in Ancient Societies. History and Culture of Drinks in the Ancient Near East. Papers of a Symposium Held in Rome, May 17–19, 1990*. Padova: 361–380.

Frahm, E. 1999. Nabû–zuqup–kēnu, das Gilgameš–Epos und der Tod Sargons II. *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 51: 73–90.

Fuchs, A. 2009. Nieuw–Assyrische feestvreugde – licht gedempt. *Phoenix* 55(2): 76–91.

Giovino, M. 2007. *The Assyrian Sacred Tree: A History of Interpretations* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 230). Fribourg.

Grayson, A.K. 1991. *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC I (1114–859 BC)*, Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Assyrian Periods 2. Toronto and Buffalo.

Heinrich, E. 1984. *Die Paläste im alten Mesopotamien* (Denkmäler antiker Architektur 15). Berlin.

Al-Juboori, A.Y. 2017. Recently Discovered Neo-Assyrian Royal Inscriptions from the Review Palace and Nergal Gate of Nineveh. *Iraq* 79: 3–20.

Kertai, D. 2011. Kalḫu's Palaces of War and Peace: Palace Architecture at Nimrud in the Ninth Century BC. *Iraq* 73: 71–85.

Kertai, D. 2013. The Multiplicity of Royal Palaces. How Many Palaces Did an Assyrian King Need? In: Kertai, D. and Miglus, P.A., eds. *New Research on Late Assyrian Palaces. Conference at Heidelberg, January 22nd, 2011*. Heidelberg: 11–22.

Kertai, D. 2015a. The Architecture of Connectivity: Ashurnasirpal II's Late Assyrian Palace in Kalḫu. In: Kurapkat, D., Schneider, P.I., and Wulf-Rheidt, U., eds. *Die Architektur des Weges: Gestaltete Bewegung im gebauten Raum*. Regensburg: 337–347.

Kertai, D. 2015b. *The Architecture of Late Assyrian Royal Palaces*. Oxford.

Kertai, D. 2015c. The Guardians at the Gate. Entering the Southwest Palace in Nineveh. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 74(2): 325–349.

Kertai, D. 2015d. The Winged Genie in Its Original Context. In: de Freitas, A., ed. *Arte da Mesopotâmia: Atas do Colóquio 24 e 25 de maio de 2013*. Lisbon: 44–63.

Kertai, D. 2015e. The Creatures that Protected the Doors of Nineveh during the Second Millennium BCE. *Mesopotamia* 50: 147–156.

Kertai, D. 2015f. Imagining Second Storeys in Late Assyrian Palaces: The Architectural Reconstructions of James Fergusson and Jean-Claude Margueron. In: Nadali, D. and Micale, M.G., eds. *How Do We Want the Past to Be? On Methods and Instruments of Visualizing Ancient Reality*. Piscataway, N.J.: 49–76.

Kertai, D. 2017. The Iconography of the Late Assyrian Crown Prince. In: Kertai, D. and Nieuwenhuyse, O., eds. *From the Four Corners of the Earth. Studies in the Iconography and Cultures of the Ancient Near East in Honour of F.A.M. Wiggermann*. Münster: 111–133.

Kertai, D. 2020. Deconstructing the Canon of Ancient Near Eastern Palaces. In: Gansell, A.R. and Shafer, A., eds. *Testing the Canon of Ancient Near Eastern Art and Archaeology*. Oxford: 195–213.

Loud, G. and Altman, C.B. 1938. *Khorsabad, Part II, the Citadel and the Town* (The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications 40). Chicago.

Loud, G., Frankfort, H., and Jacobsen. T. 1936. *Khorsabad, Part I, Excavations in the Palace and at a City Gate* (The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications 38). Chicago.

Mallowan, M.E.L. 1966. *Nimrud and Its Remains*. London.

Meuszyński, J. 1981. *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen und ihrer Anordnung im Nordwestpalast von Kalhu (Nimrud) (Räume: [B.C. D.E.F.G.H.L.N.P]* (Baghdader Forschungen 2). Mainz.

Miglus, P.A. 1999. *Städtische Wohnarchitektur in Babylonien und Assyrien* (Baghdader Forschungen 22). Mainz.

Novák, M. 1999. *Herrschaftsform und Stadtbaukunst: Programmatik im mesopotamischen Residenzstadtbau von Agade bis Surra-man-ra'ā* (Schriften zur vorderasiatischen Archäologie 7). Saarbrücken.

Novák, M. 2012. Dūr–Šarru–ukīn – Die Festung Sargons, Schaltzentrale eines Weltreiches. In: Dally, O., Fless, F., Haensch, R., Pirson, F., and Sievers, S., eds. *Politische Räume in vormodernen Gesellschaften ; Gestaltung – Wahrnehmung – Funktion ; Internationale Tagung des DAI und des DFG–Exzellenzclusters TOPOI vom 18.–22. November 2009 in Berlin*. Rahden: 255–265.

Nunn, A.. 1988. *Die Wandmalerei und der glasierte Wandschmuck im Alten Orient.* Leiden.

Oates, J. and Oates, D. 2001. *Nimrud, an Assyrian Imperial City Revealed.* London.

Ornan, T. 2004. Expelling Demons at Nineveh: On the Visibility of Benevolent Demons in the Palaces of Nineveh. *Iraq* 66: 83–92.

Paley, S.M. and Sobolewski, R.P. 1987. *The Reconstruction of the Relief Representations and Their Positions in the Northwest Palace at Kalḫu (Nimrūd) II* (Baghdader Forschungen 10). Mainz.

Paley, S.M. and Sobolewski, R.P. 1992. *The Reconstruction of the Relief Representations and Their Positions in the Northwest Palace at Kalḫu (Nimrūd) III (The Principal Entrances and Courtyards)* (Baghdader Forschungen 14). Mainz.

Porter, B.N. 1993. Sacred Trees, Date Palms, and the Royal Persona of Ashurnasirpal II. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 52(2): 129–139.

Porter, B.N. 2003. Intimidation and Friendly Persuasion. In: *Eretz Israel: Archaeological, Historical and Geographical Studies. Hayim and Miriam Tadmor Volume.* Eph'al, I., Ben-Tor, A., and Machinist, P., eds. Jerusalem: 180–191.

Reade, J. 1965. Twelve Ashurnasirpal Reliefs. *Iraq* 27: 119–134.

Reade, J. 1979a. Ideology and Propaganda in Assyrian Art. In: Trolle Larsen, M., ed. *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires.* Copenhagen: 329–343.

Reade, J. 1979b. Narrative Composition in Assyrian Sculpture. *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 10: 52–110.

Reade, J. 1981. Neo–Assyrian Monuments in their Historical Context. In: Fales, F.M., ed. *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: New Horizons in Literary, Ideological, and Historical Analysis. Papers of a Symposium held in Cetona (Siena) June 26-28, 1980.* Rome: 143–168.

Reade, J. 2005. The Ishtar Temple at Nineveh. *Iraq* 67: 347–390.

Reade, J. 2009. Fez, Diadem, Turban, Chaplet: Power-Dressing at the Assyrian Court. In: Luukko, M., Svärd, S., and Mattila, R., eds. *Of God(s), Trees, Kings, and Scholars: Neo–Assyrian and Related Studies in Honour of Simo Parpola.* Helsinki: 239–264.

Russell, J.M. 1991. *Sennacherib's Palace without Rival at Nineveh.* Chicago.

Russell, J.M. 1997. Sennacherib's Palace Without Rival Revisited: Excavations at Nineveh and in the British Museum Archives. In: Parpola, S. and Whiting, R.M., eds. *Assyria 1995: Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, Helsinki, September 7-11, 1995.* Helsinki: 295–306.

Russell, J.M. 1998a. *The Final Sack of Nineveh. The Discovery, Documentation, and Destruction of Sennacherib's Throne Room at Nineveh, Iraq.* New Haven.

Russell, J.M. 1998b. The Program of the Palace of Assurnasirpal II at Nimrud: Issues in the Research and Presentation of Assyrian Art. *American Journal of Archaeology* 102(4): 655–715.

Seidl, U. 1971. Göttersymbole und –attribute. In: Weidner, E. and von Soden, W., eds. *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie.* Berlin: 483–490.

Seidl, U. and Sallaberger, W. 2005–2006. Der Heilige Baum. *Archiv für Orientforschung* 51: 54–74.

Thureau-Dangin, F. and Dunand, M. 1936. *Til-Barsip*, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 23. Paris.

Turner, G. 1970. The State Apartments of Late Assyrian Palaces. *Iraq* 32: 177–213.

Ur, J. 2013. The Morphology of Neo-Assyrian Cities. *Subartu* 6–7: 11–22.

Winter, I.J. 1981. Royal Rhetoric and the Development of Historical Narrative in Neo-Assyrian Reliefs. *Studies in Visual Communication* 7(2): 2–38.

Winter, I.J. 1983. The Program of the Throneroom of Ashurnasirpal II. In: Harper, P.O. and Pittman, H., eds. *Essays in Near Eastern Art and Archaeology in Honor of Charles Kyrle Wilkinson.* New York: 15–31.

Chapter 5

The King's Faithful Servants: The Eunuch's Role as Sovereign Attribute with an Emphasis on Assyria

Irit Ziffer

Eretz Israel Museum, Tel Aviv

Abstract

The Assyrian king's entourage was comprised of officials, the *ša ziqni*, distinguished by a beard, the primary marker of masculinity, and of smooth-faced courtiers, the LÚ.SAG/*ša rēši*, literally 'he of the head,' the eunuch. Together the group constituted the male officials of the Neo-Assyrian palace. Literary and visual sources shed light on the various eunuch functions in the Assyrian administration and military. Art reveals that those in closest proximity to the king, hence also in contact with him, were the eunuchs. Sacrificing their sexual prowess and potential to procreate, physically and psychologically distinct from a mature man, the eunuch was constructed by society to fulfill particular sets of official tasks. Severed from family ties and with no offspring, his loyalty was to the king and to the king alone. The paper examines the king's entourage from an artistic perspective, focusing on the eunuch and his distinct characteristic as guardian. It draws on later cultures and proposes an origin and a badge of office characteristic of the eunuch's position in the court.

Introduction

The royal entourage of the Assyrian king included both bearded and beardless figures who fulfilled various functions in the regime. The following discussion focuses on the visual and textual evidence of the beardless figures, the eunuchs, in Assyria, and traces their history in ancient Mesopotamia with comparative data of visual and written sources from the Achaemenid, Sasanian, Byzantine, and Mamluk courts. I argue that the eunuch, a term that describes the physically different official, had a badge of office already identifiable in the art of third-millennium BCE Mesopotamia. This badge of office finds its closest parallel in the Mamluk blazons, the earliest blazons known from the area that had once been the heartland of Assyria, though their bearers had not been eunuchs.

The Eunuchs of the Assyrian Kings

The Assyrian king's eunuchs had distinctive physiognomy, dress, and attributes and their close contact with the king emphasizes their positions of power in the court. These beardless guardians stand in contrast to the bearded figures who were also in the king's vicinity (Figure 5.1a). Both groups, the bearded *ša ziqni*, and the smooth-faced courtiers, the LÚ.SAG *ša rēši,* often denote the entire governing cabinet of the Assyrian kings (Figure 5.1b). Significantly, when *ša rēši* appear in inscribed cylinder seals, at no time does the seal's legend identify a bearded man. This suggests that the inscription fits the appearance of a eunuch.[1]
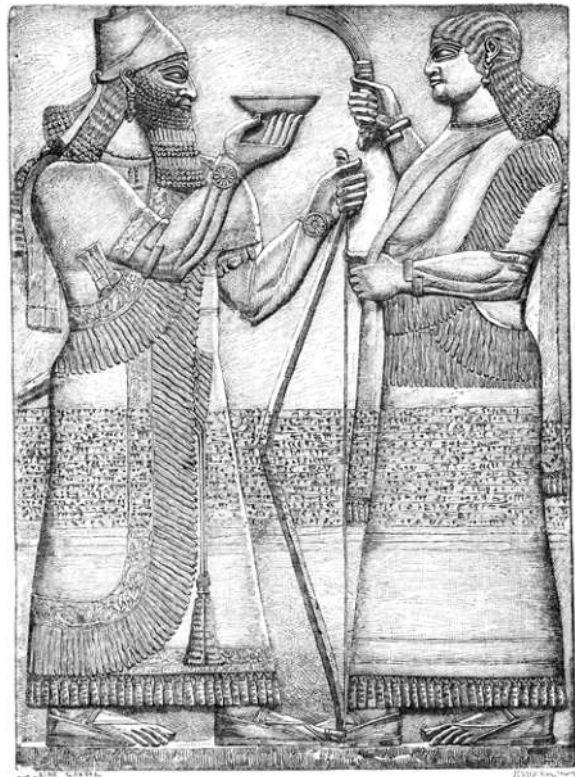

Figure 5.1a. Eunuch before the king with towel over left shoulder and waving fan. Wall relief, Nimrud, Northwest Palace, of Ashurnasirpal II. Perrot and Chipiez 1884 Vol. II: Figure 113.

---

[1] Winter 2010: 132; Watanabe 1992: 369; 1999: 319; Mattila 2000: 131–133; Fischer 2004: 103; and most recently Niederreiter 2015, 2016, 2018; Niederreiter and Sass 2018.

Figure 5.1b. Eunuch and bearded courtier *ša rēši*
and *ša ziqni.* Wall relief, Khorsabad, palace of
Sargon II. Perrot and Chipiez 1884 Vol. II: Plate 118.

The *ša rēši*'s soft full face with a double chin bore a striking resemblance to the typical portraiture of the ideal elite woman. This has at times led to confusion in identifying the figure (Strommenger 1964). Schmidt-Colinet suggested that the enthroned person with a mural crown banqueting with Ashurbanipal under the vine arbor was a trusted eunuch (Schmidt Colinet 1997). Moreover, the servants in the banquet scene have been identified as either eunuchs or females.[2] But the lack of a beard and the plump face may also signify gender ambiguity, a male that is different from a whole male. Comely features denoting sexlessness in this group of beardless males was created when boys were castrated before puberty. They preserved their prepubescent handsome youthful looks, remained beardless, and retained the distribution of body fat characteristic of women and their hair appeared thick.[3]

They sacrificed their sexual and reproductive potential to become physically and psychologically distinct from a mature adult male and were thus capable of fulfilling a particular set of official tasks (Bonatz 2008: 139; Ringrose 2003: 59–60). They were men, though with different attributes, talents, and physiology.

ša rēši 'Eunuch,' a Figurative Term

The *ša rēši* was an ancient term for a personal servant. *ša rēši* literally means 'he of the head' and the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary (*CAD*) translates the term as 'attendant, soldier, officer, official, and eunuch' (*CAD* R 292). Biggs suggested that Assyrian boys were made eunuchs by crushing the testicles inside the scrotum, not by total ablation of the scrotum and male organ,[4] which was a dangerous, often fatal operation that was inflicted as corporal punishment for sexual transgressions, as decreed in Middle Assyrian law, *ana ša rēšēn utâr/utarrūš,* literally 'he will be turned into (one) with two heads,' meaning 'he will be castrated.' *ša rēšēn,* 'a man of two heads,' the dual form of LÚ *ša rēši,* is only documented in Middle Assyrian law (Dalley 2002: 117–18, 121). Possibly, the head was taken as a metaphor for the round or ovoid form of the testicle. That castration should be denoted by the peculiar expression, '(of) two heads,' may find its equivalent in the form of two testicles. The English word testicle goes back to Latin, *testiculus,* which is a diminutive form of *testis* (*test-iculus*). The element *test* may be connected to Italian *testa,* 'head.' *Testiculus,* therefore, could be 'small head,' metaphorically referring to the male scrotum (Deller 1999: 304–305, 311). Hence, Akkadian *ša rēšēn,* 'one with two heads,' could easily become 'one without two heads' or 'with mutilated heads,' a euphemism for the person whose testicles were totally removed. It would seem that even the Assyrian terminology distinguished between a court eunuch and a man castrated as punishment for a sexual offense.

Eunuchs: The New Elite in the Neo-Assyrian Period

Eunuchs played a significant role in Assyrian society and administration, as evidenced by texts and by analogy to other societies. Because their ties to family were severed by castration and they could not procreate,

---

[2] Males behind the king, female servants behind the queen, Bonatz 2008: 139; also Tallis 2014: 74; Feldman 2014: 101, 'immediate entourage of women surrounding the couple...may likewise point to the textually attested serving women who came with these foreign brides' (assuming that Ashurbanipal's queen was a foreigner like the queens with West-Semitic names buried in the 9th century tomb under the Northwest Palace at Nimrud). Margaret Cool Root 2011: 445 postulates that the servants in the banquet scene are defeated Elamite princes.
[3] Byzantine: Ringrose 2007: 497–498; Islamic: Ayalon 1999: 303–304.

For evidence of castration of good-looking youth at Ugarit, RS 17.144, see Peled 2014: 132.
[4] Assyrian: Biggs 1969: 100, cited in Grayson 1995: 92; *CAD* M 223 *murruru* B 'castrated'; Deller 1999: 305; Byzantine: Tougher 1997: 175–176. Ayalon 1999: 304–307, 314–315 reproduces passages from Islamic sources on the castration procedures current among the Muslims and the Byzantines as well as the estimate of children who survived complete castration. When describing castration in Ottoman Egypt, Clot Bey, French physician and surgeon, who laid the foundation of modern medicine in Egypt in the 19th century, speaks only of complete castration.

their loyalty was to the king.[5] Xenophon (Cyropaedia VII: 59–60) explains the eunuchs' fidelity:

> He [Cyrus] looked around to see who were the most faithful men that he could have around him at such times; and he held that no man was ever faithful who loved anyone else better than the one who needed his protection. Those, therefore, who had children or congenial wives or sweethearts, such he believed were by nature constrained to love them best. But as he observed that eunuchs were not susceptible to any such affections, he thought that they would esteem most highly those who were in the best position to make them rich and to stand by them if ever they were wronged, and to place them in offices of honor.[6]

Xerxes I entrusted the safe return of his sons to the most honored eunuch, Hermotimus, 'for among the barbarians (Persians), eunuchs are, in respect to their uncompromising fidelity, held in higher esteem than the uncastrated' (Herodotus VIII: 104, 105; Brosius 2007: 26). Trustworthiness was the cornerstone of the eunuchs' social success and their contribution to political power.[7]

The Assyrian LÚ.SAG *ša rēši* pl. LÚ.SAG.MEŠ *šut rēši*, is attested from Old Babylonian on. The title encompasses various functions in the Assyrian court (Groß 2015). They had a highly respectable place in Assyrian society and were admitted into the service of 'eunuchship' *šut rēšūtu* headed by the *rab ša rēši,* the chief eunuch attached to the king's court and also to the court of the crown prince (Holloway 2002: 379, 411; Radner 2011: 360–361, 375). From the 9th century BCE, they held prominent positions in the administration and could rank with provincial governors.[8] The higher ranks of the Assyrian army consisted of a large number of eunuchs who were invested with supreme power.[9] Because they could not father sons, they produced successors either by adopting children, or they received royal grants that
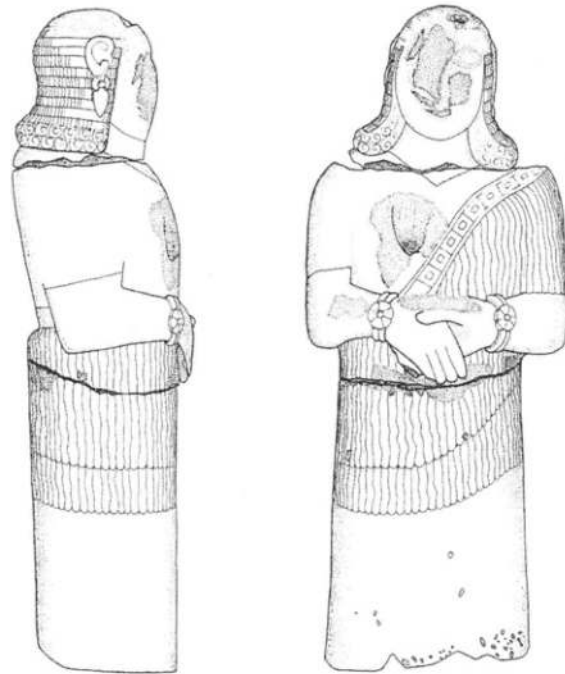
Figure 5.2a. Eunuch's stone statue, Til Brsip. Roobaert 1996: Figure 2b.

ensured their well-being in the afterlife (Barjamovic 2011: 57–59).

According to Parpola, the Assyrians understood earthly government as a projection of divine rule (Parpola 1995: 386–391). The king as the sole representative of the god commanded through a state council comprised of his magnates, just as the god Ashur ruled the universe through a divine cabinet. Earthly government was likened to an anthropomorphic body and the individual officials were the body's limbs and organs; everything they did was often ascribed to the ruler. Accordingly, the heart corresponded to the chief eunuch and was equated to the goddess Ishtar, androgynous goddess of love and war. The chief eunuch who commanded the king's personal troops as an image of Ishtar was the divine protector of the king.

The chief of the eunuchs, the *rab ša rēši*, head or commander of the court attendants (*CAD* R 1999: 289–290) and commander in chief of the royal corps, often led the army on campaigns, and acted together with the field marshal on Sennacherib's behalf at the gates of Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:17).[10] He may be identified with the eunuch standing behind the king in submission

---

[5] Ringrose (2003: 85) argues for medieval eunuchs that an important part of their gender construct was centered in their perceived loyalty. Reade raised the question whether some of the court eunuchs were blood-relations, such as the superfluous sons of Assyrian kings. They may have been castrated in order to prevent them from becoming kings. In Byzantium castration was a political weapon that would befall the sons of deposed emperors (Tougher 1997: 179–180).

[6] Grayson 1995: 95–96.

[7] Aucoin and Wasserburg 2006: 3165. One is reminded of the Assyrian conspiracy against Esarhaddon in 671–670 BCE, which resulted in the execution of several eunuchs (Holloway 2002: 336); and of the chief eunuch Sîn-šumu-lēšir, the guardian of Ashur-etel-ilāni, king of Assyria, who was enthroned for a short while.

[8] Bonatz 2008; *šut rēšiya bēl pīhate elīšunu aškun*: 'I placed eunuch(s) of mine as provincial governors'; *ina qātāte šut rēšiya šākin māt x amnû* 'I entrusted it [newly annexed land] to my eunuch the governor of x,' Tiglath-pileser III (see Yamada 2014: 47 and n. 47).

[9] Officials such as the chief eunuch, the chief cupbearer, and the palace herald were invested with supreme military powers (Parpola 1995: 380; Tadmor 2002: 607–611).

[10] Two of Nebuchadnezzar's high officials participated in the conquest of Jerusalem: Samgar-nebo, Sarsechim Rab-saris in Jeremiah 39:3 has been identified with the *rab ša-rēši* named Nabû šarrūssu-ukīn mentioned in a tablet dating from 594 BCE (see Jursa 2008; Vanderhooft 2008: 87 and previous literature within); and Nebushazban Rab-saris (Nabû šēzibanni), Jeremiah 39:13.

Figure 5.2b. Unfinished stone statue of a eunuch, Nimrud. Gadd 1936: Figure 2.

scenes, such as Tiglath-pileser III's rehabilitation of Hanun of Gaza.[11] The *ša rēši* 'eunuch' entered biblical Hebrew as סָרִיס (*sârîs*) not only in texts from the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid millieu, but also in texts depicting the Israelite and Judahite courts.[12] In ancient Egypt there were no royal eunuchs. In the Joseph stories, however, eunuchs appear as part of the Egyptian court. They are qualified by their roles, סְרִיס פַּרְעֹה שַׂר הַטַּבָּחִים 'an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard' or 'a courtier of Pharaoh, chief steward' (Gen 37:36, 39:1, LXX εὐνοῦχος Φαραώ ὁ ἀρχιμάγειρος) and שַׂר הַמַּשְׁקִים, 'chief cupbearer' שַׂר הָאֹפִים 'chief baker' (Gen 40:1–2), thus reflecting the Assyrian governmental system.[13] The inclusion of Egyptian words, names, and customs in these stories served to authenticate the Egyptian setting. Life-size portraits of eunuchs manifest their official image, recognizable by the lack

of a beard. The Til Barsip and Nimrud statues[14] have the characteristics of high-quality Assyrian works of art (Figures 5.2a–b). The Til Barsip statue was deliberately broken in antiquity; with its feet missing it measures 1.45m in length. The Nimrud unfinished statue measures 1.75m. The Til Barsip statue's posture, dress, and bracelet suggest the seniority of the individual. By analogy to the king's official portrait, referred to as *ṣalam šarrutīya*, 'image of my kingship,' I suggest that the eunuch portraits were images of their office of eunuchship, practically a *ṣalam ša rēšutti* (Winter 2009: 265–266). Fuchs suggested that the Til Barsip statue was the image of the most powerful *turtānu* at Til Barsip, the eunuch Shamshi-ilu, whose office commenced during the reign of Adad-Nērāri III and lasted for over 40 years (796–752 BCE) and that the destruction of the statue took place after Tiglath-pileser's revolt and accession to power (Fuchs 2008: 78–98, 128–134). The eunuch Bēl-Ḥarrān-bēl-uṣur created his own commemorative stele, which was found at Tell Abta west of Mosul. He was originally the palace herald of Shalmaneser IV, who remained in office for over 50 years (782–727). In the stele he commemorates the founding of the city named after him, an act attributed unusually to himself rather than to the king. He depicted himself wearing the

---

[11] Uehlinger 2002: 106, Figure 6; see also king receiving the submission of an enemy in Barnett and Falkner 1962: 27, Plate 84.
[12] 1 Samuel 8:14–15; 1 Kings 22:9; 2 Kings 8:6; 18:17; 23:11; 25:19; Jeremiah 38:7; Daniel 1:3; Esther 2:3, 14, 15, 21; 4:5; 6:14; Isaiah 56:3–4; Tadmor 1995, 2002: 610.
[13] It is interesting that in Genesis 39:1 the King James Version translates the term eunuch as officer: 'and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmaelites,' and in 40:2, preserves the original term eunuch: 'And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butler, and against the chief of the bakers.'

[14] Roobaert 1996. See also unfinished statue of a eunuch in Gadd 1936: 228, Figure 2.

Figure 5.3. Asurnasirpal enthroned, surrounded by guardian eunuchs and genii. Wall relief, Nimrud, Northwest Palace. Wikimedia Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 Osama Shukir Muhammed Amin.

royal bracelet, further demonstrating independence. His image, gesturing before divine symbols, a gesture usually reserved for the king, indicates that he assumed kingly prerogatives.[15] The usurpation of the royal image by the eunuchs was practiced during the heyday of the Assyrian magnates (830–746 BCE) and came to an end with Tiglath-pileser's accession (Ambos 2009).

The Eunuch: Guardian of the King

In composite visuals, the eunuch virtually protects the physical space that surrounds the monarch, very much like the protective genii who flank him along with the sacred tree in the throne room of Ashurnasirpal at Nimrud (Figure 5.3). The scene, carved on two reliefs placed at focal points in the throne room, one behind the throne itself, the other opposite the entrance to the room, proclaimed the king as the earthly representative of the god Ashur. This extended group of the king's guardians, mortal eunuchs, and supernatural beings underscores the protective nature of courtiers. Similarly, in the small Throne Room S5 at Fort

Shalmaneser, armed eunuchs parade from the entrance along the walls toward the king who faces them at the point where the foot of the throne would have been (Oates and Oates 2001: 184–186) (Figure 5.4).

In her study of royal Assyrian furniture, Ellen Rehm (2003, 2005) emphasized the Assyrian context of furniture decoration, arguing that for royal furniture the motifs would be selected from a meaningful repertoire that would convey the message of Assyrian royal ideology. From the reign of Tiglath-pileser III through Sargon II, Sennacherib, and Ashurbanipal, Assyrian thrones and tables were decorated with guardian figures, whether the king's royal ancestors (Figure 5.5a–b),[16] or protective genii (Figure 5.6), or a combination thereof (Figure 5.7). Sennacherib's royal seat (Figure 5.8), a divine throne with a godlike aura, was borne on the hands of superhuman figures, much like Ninlil/Mulissu/Ishtar's throne at Maltai (Figure 5.9).[17] Ashurbanipal's bed in the Banquet Relief adds another dimension to the guardians of the throne (Figures 5.10a-b). The banquet relief of Ashurbanipal, a condensed version of the Near Eastern victory scene, shows the king and his consort[18] under the vine arbor, rejoicing after the victory over Elam, the severed head of the enemy hanging from a tree in the garden and the bow and quiver displayed on a table.[19] The king reclines on a bed, the legs of which are borne on cones that are superimposed by volutes and lions. The upper parts of

[15] Unger 1917; Ornan 2005: 137; Collon 2010: 154–155; Karlsson 2016: 221–222. Seals depicting the eunuch in the same gesture before a deity also point to the eunuch's assumption to royal statutes; see Kühne and Radner 2008: 42. The eunuch Sîn-šumu-lēšir was instrumental in securing the throne for Ashur-etel-ilāni's after the death of his father, Ashurbanipal, when he was still a minor. After Ashur-etel-ilāni's death he was no longer content in his role as king-maker. He ascended the throne and ruled in 627/626 BCE (Ambos 2009: 6). His royal seal, a variant of Assyrian royal seals, shows him beardless, fighting a lion; see Herbordt 1992: Table 2, Nos. 90, 98, Plate 35: 11, 14. Reade 2008: 102 suggested that the Assyrian eunuchs may have been the superfluous sons of kings and princes. Interestingly, Tomb I of the Queens' Tombs at Nimrud contained no headdress, a few earrings, an unusual number of stamp seals, and three erotic figurines depicting couples engaged in the sex act. Gibson proposed that the buried person was a eunuch rather than a woman, who had held a high position in the domestic quarters. The erotic figurines may have been meant to gain for him a sexual capability that he had not had in life (Hussein 2016: 9 and footnote 18, added by McGuire Gibson). I dare to suggest that the fact that his burial was grouped with the royal women of the palace, i.e., the female members of the king's family, lends support to Reade's proposal that these 'superfluous sons,' upon their demise, were given a royal burial.

[16] Rehm 2005: 190. For representations of the ancestral cult at the Northwest Palace of Nimrud and a reading of the royal figure in the Northwest Palace at Nimrud as ancestors in order to emphasize historical continuity of Assyria, see Brown 2010.
[17] Uehlinger 2003: 288; Ornan 2013: 588. Moreover, Ninlil/Mulissu/Ishtar's throne at Maltai features figures of the king gesturing alternately with the divine supporters of the throne. The throne itself rests on the figures, a frontal king standing next to winged creatures who constitute a platform or footstool for the enthroned goddess; see Keel 1977: 174–175, Figure 115.
[18] For an Elamite origin of the queen, see Álvaraez-Mon 2009: 147–160.
[19] Albenda 1977: 36 proposes that the bow and quiver are in Babylonian or Elamite style.
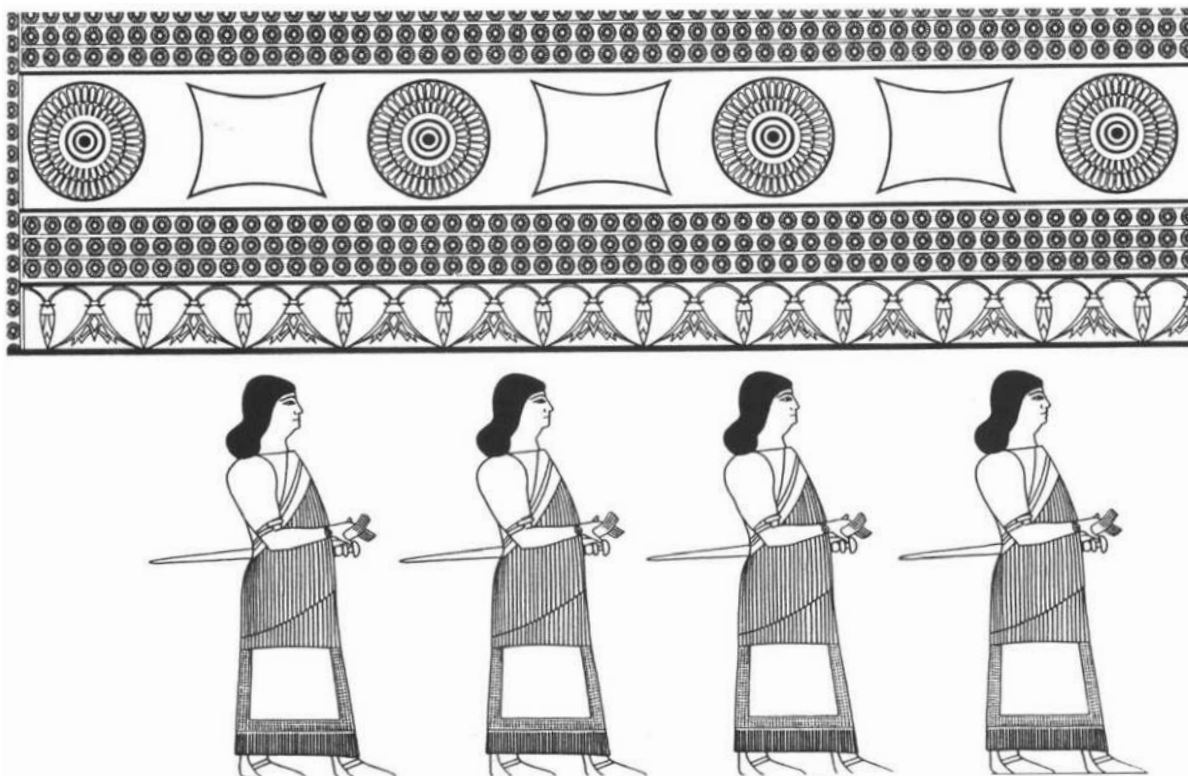
Figure 5.4. Procession of eunuch courtiers approaching the king. Mural, Fort Shalmaneser, small throne room S5, queen's residence, reign of Esarhaddon. Oates and Oates 2001: Figure 113.

Figure 5.5a. Assyrian king enthroned. Mural, Til Barsip Audience Hall 24. The armrest bears images of the king's royal ancestors. Keel 1977: Figure 26.
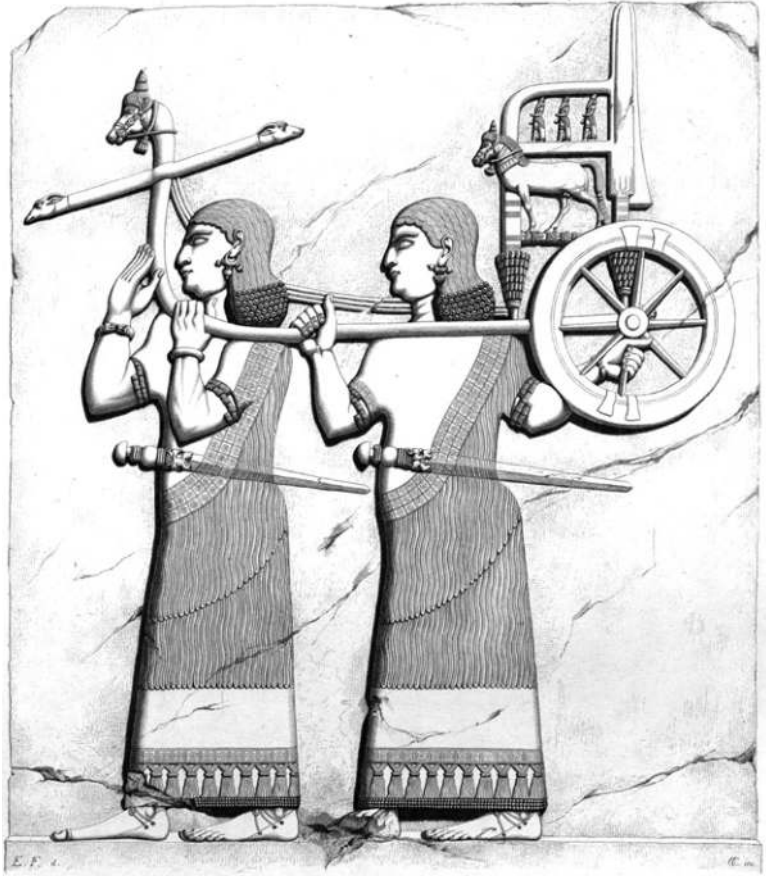
Figure 5.5b. Wheeled chair with armrest depicting royal ancestors. Khorsabad, palace of Sargon II. Flandin and Botta 1849 Vol. I: Plate 17.

Figure 5.6. Table supported by protective genii. Khorsabad, palace of Sargon II. Flandin and Botta 1849 Vol. I: Plate 19.

Figure 5.7. Chair with combined protective
beings: ancestors and genii. Khorsabad,
palace of Sargon II. Flandin and Botta 1849
Vol. I: Plate 18.

Figure 5.8. Sennacherib enthroned.
Wall relief, Southwest Palace, Nineveh.
Drawing: Judith Dekel.
Ussishkin 1992: Figure 71.

Figure 5.10a. Ashurbanipal's bed-throne. Wall relief,
North Palace, Nineveh. Barnett 1957: Figure 46.
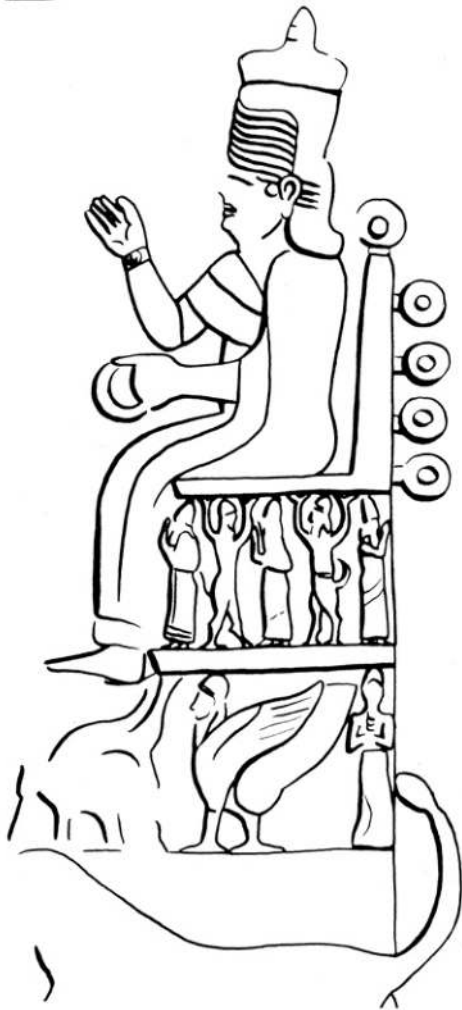
Figure 5.9. Ninlil/Mulissu/Ishtar enthroned, borne by
protective genii and figures of the king gesturing in
reverence. Rock relief, Maltai. Keel 1977: Figure 15.
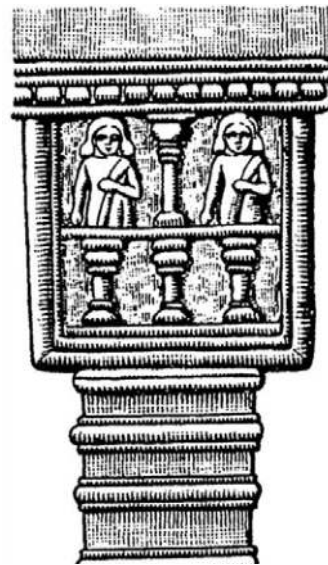
Figure 5.10b. Detail of Figure 5.10a: Ashurbanipal's bed:
smooth-faced figures wearing towel over left shoulder on
the bed's legs. Rehm 2005: Figure 8.

the legs are embellished with inlays, each depicting two frontal figures standing on a balcony (Figure 5.10b). The combination of textual and visual sources illustrates how the king, his family, and his confidants retreated to the vine arbor in search of relaxation and peace. Access was strictly denied to those unwanted.[20] Following Richard Barnett (1957: 119, 130), previous studies, including my own, connected the scene with the heavily bejeweled Woman at the Window (Figure 5.7), a shorthand depiction of the naked female, herself an attribute of Ishtar (Gubel 1989: 47–48). These interpretations underscored the sexual and martial aspects of the banquet,[21] neglecting the fact that the

two figures depicted on the king's bed are differently garbed, and executed in Assyrian style.[22] Alternatively, these figures were interpreted as representations of heroic male figures armed with a club and holding

[20] Deller identified the vine arbor with the *qersu*, the king's private apartment. After the sacrifice in the *Akītu*-house of Ishtar and the performance of the war ritual, the king entered the city triumphantly and retreated to the *qersu*, where he rejoiced in the banquet. We know that intercourse took place there. Deller 1987; May 2010.

[21] For example, Barnett 1985. Stronach 1995: 190 traced the banquet under the grapevine theme back to an Iranian tradition dating from the early second millennium BCE, as depicted in Old Elamite cylinder

seals. For illustrations, see Aruz 1994, Catalog No. 74; Álvarez-Mon 2009: Plates. 9–10. The theme lived on into Sasanian and post-Sasanian silver; see Ward 1993: 42–45. Greek authors knew about artificial tree and vine decorations in the Persian court. Drawing the inventory lists of Susa in 316 BCE, Antigonus the One-Eyed comments that 'he found the golden climbing vine' and Chares of Metylene, describing the luxury of the Great King, mentions that 'in the bed chamber a golden vine, jewel studded, extended over the bed,' Nylander 1991: 81. The Hellenistic author, Phylarcus, wrote about 'The famous plane tree and even the golden vine under which the Persian kings often sat and held court' (Briant 2002: 236). Compare the west wall of the Dura-Europos Synagogue, where Jacob, reclining on his deathbed, blesses Ephraim and Manasseh under a vine arbor (Goldstein 1984–1985: 108–110, 137).

[22] Herrmann and Millard demonstrated that the ivories found in the reception suites at Nimrud were all of Assyrian style, decorated with narrative scenes of courtiers and tribute bearers, which were used to decorate the royal furniture reserved for the king's or the queen's use (Herrmann and Millard 2003: 390–391).
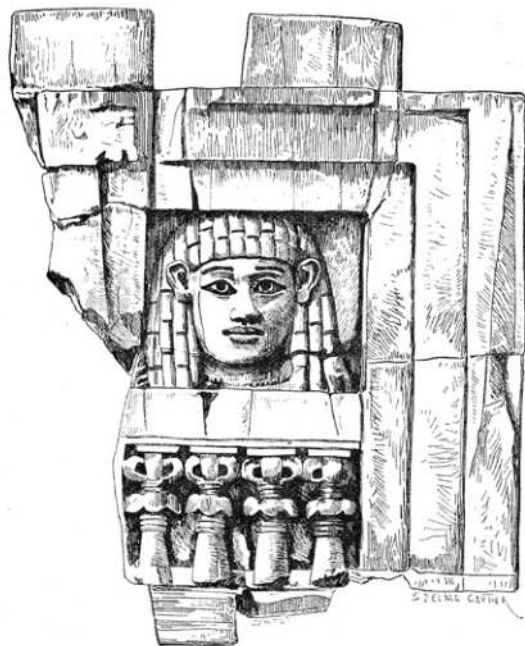
Figure 5.11. 'Woman at the Window', ivory carving, Nimrud, Northwest Palace. Perrot and Chipiez 1884 Vol. I: Figure 129.

a lion, common in Mesopotamian art (Tallis 2014: 74). By the rule, in the Woman at the Window motif, only the woman's head and neck are visible above the volute-columned balustrade that is in a triple recessed window. The women may be embellished with a head ornament, earrings, or a necklace (Suter 1992, Figures 4a–4g) (Fig. 5.11). The figures decorating Ashurbanipal's bed are seen from the hips up; the legs are hidden by the balustrade. They are beardless and have shoulder-length coiffures. They seem to wear a long garment, and a stole sits on their left shoulder. Their appearance, typical of the Assyrian attendants who stand next to the king, led Ellen Rehm to conclude that the figures decorating Ashurbanipal's bedstead were not women but the king's eunuchs. Moreover, since the banquet bed actually functioned as a throne, it should be understood as an image of power and part of the fabric of the palace.[23] It would bear images signifying Assyrian kingship rather than women of Syrian or Phoenician extraction peeping out of the window.[24]

Successors of Assyrian Eunuchs: Achaemenid, Sasanian, Byzantine and Islamic

Reflecting the bureaucratic structure set up by the Achaemenids, the Persian imperial artistic program of power and hierarchy emphasizes the eunuchs' protective role in relation to the king. Eunuchs are depicted on the audience slabs at Persepolis (originally the focal representations in the audience palace, Apadana), where they appear with a folded towel behind the crown prince who stands closest to the enthroned king. They wear headdresses that are wrapped around the chin (Schmidt 1953: Plates 121, 122). On other slabs echoing the audience scenes from the Throne Hall doorways, a towel- and fan-bearing attendant with a covered head stands behind the enthroned king (Schmidt 1953: Plates 97–99, 104–107). The towel-bearers with headdresses covering the chin were beardless.[25] On the doorways of the Palaces of Darius and of Xerxes, the headdress is shed, and a beardless towel- and fan-bearer along with a bearded parasol-bearer follows the king entering the hall (Schmidt 1953: Plates 139B, 140, 178–181). In Persepolis, there is another manner of carrying the towel, in which it is laid in the middle upon the palm of the beardless figure who stands behind the king (Schmidt 1953: Plates 148, 149, 193–194). This intimacy with the king seems to be reflected in Esther 1:10: 'the seven eunuchs who ministered in the presence of king Ahasuerus'.[26] Shaul Shaked suggested that this title and its Sasanian counterpart, 'the (eunuch) who sees (the king) in person' or '(the eunuch) who is in the visible presence of the (king)' notes the intimacy with the king (Shaked 1982: 299). This intimacy is evident in Sasanian investiture scenes, where a beardless attendant holding a fly whisk stands next to the king. The three representations of Ardashir I's investiture show a beardless figure behind the king, always waving a fly whisk. Firuzabad I (Vanden Barghe 1983: 126, No. 34, Plate 17; Overlaet 2013: 340, Plate 1, top) (Figure 5.12) shows among the bearded dignitaries a young 'page' next to the king. He is smaller than the other dignitaries and must represent the young eunuch still as a prepubescent child, perhaps shortly after castration, wearing a curled headdress. This representation of a child eunuch fits with Overlaet's suggestion that the Firuzabad I relief is the earliest of

---

[23] For the bed-throne, *nemattu/nemettu*, seat or couch for kings, see Müller 1937: K8669, p. 60 col. I:3, p. 62 col. II:3, p. 85 (Middle Assyrian ritual); *CAD* N2 164: 4; Deller and Finkel 1984: 86). I would argue that the Iranian *taḫt* and Islamic *sarīr* (attested in pre-Islamic texts as a royal throne) bed-thrones (Sadan 1976: 33–34) evolved from the ancient Near Eastern throne-beds such as that first mentioned in the Middle Assyrian ritual and as depicted in art. For their multiple uses, sitting, sleeping, and banqueting, see Shaked 1986: 79. Actual remains of a couch were found in a barrack at Nimrud; see Reade 1995: 47–48.

[24] Reade 1979: 335 uses Ashurbanipal's bed as proof of the notion that 'we find Assyrian kings sitting happily on Phoenician furniture.' It is commonly agreed, that the Assyrians adopted the bed for banqueting from the Levantine states that came under their sway, and indeed

beds/couches were taken as booty from Syria (Luckenbill 1926: 165–166 §, §475–746). However, in view of the bed-throne mentioned in the Middle Assyrian ritual (n. 23), it seems that the bed-throne was in use in Assyria before the Assyrian expansion to the West.

[25] Razmjou 2010: 239 identifies the figures with headdresses covering the chin as clean-shaven priests fighting a variety of creatures, including insects, created by evil spirits. While it is true that figures with headdresses such as these perform cultic duties, it seems that in the case of the state-centered audience reliefs, the figures wearing these particular headdresses embody a political role.

[26] Assyrian palace edicts show that the prerequisite for serving as *mazziz pāni* ('one who stands before') and *ša rēš šarri* was to be *a maruru*, 'castrate.' In the Hittite court, lords and princes sought access to the king through the LÚ^MEŠ SAG. Hawkins 2002: 220–221.

Figure 5.12. Young eunuch
holding fly whisk behind
Ardashir I. Rock relief, Firuzabad.
Overlaet 2013: Plate I, top.

the Ardashir's investiture scenes, commemorating the foundation of the city (Overlaet 2013: 326, 328). Thus, on the later Naqsh-i Radjab III relief, commemorating his rise to power over the Persis (Vanden Berghe 1983: 126–127, No. 35, Figure 9 on p. 65; Overlaet 2013: 326–327), the same 'page' is shown behind the king, this time as a grown man without a beard (Figure 5.13). His curled headdress is emblazoned with a flower. On the horseback investiture scene at Naqsh-i Rustam I (Vanden Berghe 1983: 127, No. 36, Plate 18; Overlaet 2013: 314) this 'page' appears again, as a fully grown man without a beard, standing behind the horse-mounted king who faces the horse-mounted god (Figure 5.14). On his headdress, now domed, is emblazoned a flower, his personal emblem. The same headdress is worn by the beardless military eunuch on the Firuzabad II battle scene depicting Ardashir's victory over the Parthians; he is assumed to be the 'page' from the investiture scenes (Overlaet 2013: 328). The beardless carrier of the fly whisk must be a continuation from the Achaemenid court (Overlaet 2013: 321; Shahbazi 2001: 66–69), and indicates the eunuch's military role. He is not shown after Ardashir I. In Shapur I's trilingual inscription at Naqsh-i Rustam the Greek ΕΥΝΟΥΧΟΥ 'eunuch' corresponds to the Middle Persian *šābestān*, the person in charge of 'the nightly (sleeping) quarters (of the women),' describing his function at the court (Kolesnikov 1999). That the *šābestān* was a castrated man has been demonstrated by Skjaervø,[27] based on a Pahlavi text which specifically relates that the *šābestān*'s penis and testicles were removed, preventing him from having children. Shaul Shaked provided textual evidence for a Sasanian title

wēnān-pad-tan šābestān as 'a eunuch seeing (the king) in person,' a position of great proximity to the king, literally corresponding to the person holding the fly whisk in the investiture scenes mentioned above (Shaked 1982: 299–301; Shaked 2013: 222–223, 237).

Eunuchs had a wide range of functions open to them not limited to their exclusive palace posts and which far exceeded those of their bearded counterparts. Byzantine sources demonstrate that the royal eunuchs in the palace service were not limited to their exclusive palace posts, but were also able to serve in other administrative functions. The Byzantine palace eunuch *protovestiarios*, was 'first dresser' in charge of the imperial wardrobe, which included the king's garments, table service, swords, pharmaceuticals, and a large amount of silver; he slept in the imperial chamber and signaled the emperor's presence at ceremonies. His sign of office was a golden baton. He could be the most powerful person in the state after the emperor, a trusted advisor, and a successful military commander. His office was second to that of the *parakoimomenos*, literally 'the one who lies beside,' or 'keeps watch beside' senior imperial chamberlain, the highest-ranking eunuch, whose duty centered on guarding and personally serving the emperor. Interestingly, the term eunuch derives from Greek *eunochos* which comes from εὐνή, 'bed.' The bearer of this title was 'the holder (supervisor) of the beds.' This reflects the eunuchs' function in traditional aristocratic society, as guardians of the bedchamber, in close intimacy with their masters.[28] The term alluded

---

[27] Skjaervø 2007. See also Lerner and Skjaervø 2006.

[28] Tougher 1997: 171–172; Ringrose 2003: 16, 130, 136, 138–139, 168–169. Notably, Hittite texts indicate that the eunuch had access to the É.ŠÀ 'bedroom,' Güterbock 1957: 361.

Figure 5.13. Eunuch holding fly whisk behind Ardashir I. Rock relief, Naqsh-i
Radjab. Vanden Berghe 1984: Figure 9.

Figure 5.14. Eunuch holding fly whisk behind Ardashir I. The 'horseback'
investiture Rock relief, Naqsh-i Rustam. Overlaet 2013: Plate II, top.

to a castrate by using a euphemism instead of the pejorative term, and signified only those attendants who were emasculated. Similarly, Ayalon argued that the predominant appellation of Arabic *khādim,* 'servant,' was in the sense of eunuch, again a euphemism. Ayalon finds support for this argument in texts that identify the term *khādim* with the term eunuch, *khāṣi, khiṣyān* (from *khuṣya,* 'testicle' *khaṣā* 'castrate'). It is specified that these particular servants, i.e., eunuchs, did not have children. Ayalon emphasizes that only in rare cases the terms *khādim* and *khadam* might indicate non-eunuchs (Ayalon 1979: 71–72, 84–89; 1999: Appendix A, 290–299). Thus, the use of a euphemism for eunuch in Arabic recalls the Akkadian term *ša-rēši* which does not refer to the physical state of the person's testicles, indicating that he is a castrate, but to their oval shape, rather than naming the organs or the fact that they were removed and the person was castrated, *murruru* (*CAD* M/s 223). One may conclude that in different cultures euphemisms were employed to qualify eunuchs.

The Eunuch's Signature Badge of Office: The Longevity of an Emblem

The beardless figures closest to the Assyrian king hold in one hand a fringed towel with a decorative border folded double with the fist closer to the loop thus formed than to the ends. In the other hand they hold a fly whisk. This set of objects in fact signals the eunuch. The set was extracted from the ancient Near Eastern banquet scene, where the banqueters are waited on by attendants holding a towel and a fly whisk or fan. In fact, towel and whisk or fan were the attendant's standard equipment over the millennia (Figure 5.15a–c). The fan induced airflow for the purpose of cooling and refreshing the banqueters during the meal, and at the same time drove away flies.[29] In his discussion of third millennium BCE drinking scenes, Amiet conjectured that the small bowls shown in the hands of the servants were not serving bowls (Figure 5.16). Rather, they are hand-washing bowls for use after a meal, since eating was done with the fingers (Amiet 1980: 126). Logically, the towels represented in such a context would have had the practical purpose of wiping the hands after they had been washed. The Sumerian term for towel was TÚG.ŠU.SU.UB, GADA. ŠU.ZU.UB, literally 'hand-wiping cloth' from which the Akkadian *šušuppu, šusippu, šušippu, sasuppu* made of wool or linen is derived.[30] An Akkad period list of professions mentions 'the one who for the hands of the king holds the water (ready)' and 'the one who carries the towel.'[31] In Old Babylonian Mari it is specifically used for the hands (Deller and Watanabe 1980: 220–221, Nos. 30, 31, 33). A napkin

Figure 5.15a. Banquet scene seal of Queen Pu-abi, an attendant carrying towel and fly whisk. PG 800, Royal Cemetery of Ur, Early Dynastic III, mid-third millennium BCE. Amiet 1980[2]: Plate 90: 1182.

Figure 5.15b. An attendant carrying towel and fan. Cylinder seal from Ugarit, 18th-17th centuries BCE. Schaeffer-Forrer 1983: R.S. 29.116 p. 55.

(literally: 'cloth for the beard') is attested in a fragment of Hittite inventory lists 1 GADA.SU$_6$ LUGAL KEŠ[D]A, GADA KAxSA LUGAL EZ[EN?] 'one lip cloth of the king (for a) fe[stival]?'[32] undoubtedly used to wipe the mouth.[33] A Neo-Assyrian royal ritual indicates that the attendant receives the dirty towels *sasuppate* and hand-cloths TÚG *ša-qātē* (ŠU pl.) and supplies clean ones, the hand washing water is poured, while another attendant stands opposite, holding a fly whisk and a wooden bowl.[34]

---

[29] Akkadian: *ša zumbi, zubbi* CAD Z 1961: 156.
[30] *CAD* Š III 1992: 376; Deller and Watanabe 1980: 218–223.
[31] Sjöberg 1996 UET VII 73: 23–26 ŠU!? LUGAL A<MEŠ> *ú-ka-al-lu-ú na-aš šu-ši-ip-pi-im*

[32] Haroutunian, 2002: 47, footnotes 28, 29.
[33] Interestingly, on one Hittite festival (probably the AN.TAḪ.ŠUM), the king throws a towel (GAD) to the guards, who catch it and bring it back to the attendants of the table. Throwing the towel is always preceded by a meal, and its return to the table is followed by libation. The practical use of the towel was for wiping the hands after the ritual washing, when it was laid on the knees of the seated royal couple. The towel was used as a shroud for cremated bones, which were laid on the throne and then on the deathbed. It also served to bundle food and incense. See Gonnet 1981.
[34] Müller 1937: MVAG 41/3 62 II:17–22; Deller and Watanabe 1980: 221;

Figure 5.15c. An attendant carrying towel and fan.
Ahiram sarcophagus, Byblos, tomb V, 13th-12th/11th-
10th century. Rehm 2004: Figure 11.
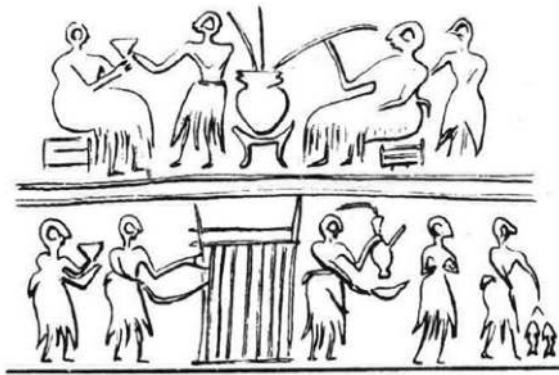
Figure 5.16. Hand-washing vessels. Cylinder seal, PG
1749, Royal Cemetery of Ur, Early Dynastic III, mid-
third millennium BCE. Amiet 1980²: Plate 90: 1190.

However, the towel could be worn over the left shoulder like a stole (Figures 5.1a, 5.17), as is also the case with the figures decorating Ashurbanipal's throne (Figure 5.10b). From Ashurnasirpal onwards beardless attendants wear the fringed towel with ornamented borders in scenes of drinking (Figure 5.3), libation, or the king cleansing arms (Figure 5.1a). A long towel is thrown over the shoulder of the attendant who serves wine to the king (Figure 5.3). Textual evidence for wearing the towel in this particular fashion comes from the 8th century BCE delivery of cut lengths of fine cloth belonging to the god, which was intended for the king's napkin.[35] The temple administrator was responsible for tying the towel on the king's shoulders before cultic meals.[36] Another way of wearing the towel was around the waist, as an apron (Deller and Watanabe 1980: 221, Nos. 43–48). In a royal ritual the priest girds Ashurbanipal with a towel, then the king offers water to the god Ashur (Menzell 981: 58–89, 136–138, T32–38; Deller and Watanabe 1980: 221). In Amarna letter 22, listing gifts that Tushratta King of Mitanni sent Amenhotep III when he gave him his daughter Taduhepa as a wife, a *šusuppu ša* GADA *ša birma kub-bu-ú*, 'linen *šusuppu* on which multicolored trimming is sewn' is mentioned among the garments and another towel with multicolored trimming (*EA* 22, III:27–28, Knudtzon 1915: 170–171; Moran 1992: 55). The trimming recalls the decorative borders of the Neo-Assyrian towels. The same letter mentions a golden fly whisk with its linen cloth (*EA* 22, I: 58–59; Knudtzon 1915: 160–161; Moran 1992: 52). I would venture to suggest that the cloth GADA is a towel, and the whole set: fly whisk and towel.

In antiquity textiles served many functions: they were utilitarian; and they were culturally expressive. They bore witness to advanced technologies and they were prized possessions, bearers of symbolic meaning. As visual materials, textiles were recognized and utilized as powerful means of non-verbal communication: of status and roles, indicating social relationship or maintaining certain ideas. The towel/napkin certainly was such a textile.[37]

_____

Ermidoro 2015: 167. The term for whisk was GIŠ *sāru* and *ša zumbi* 'of the flies,' a fly whisk, *CAD* S 189; *CAD* Z 156.
[35] Kwasman and Parpola 1991: SAA VI: 152, no. 190 K379 s.1-2 TÚG. sa-su-pu ša UGU MAŠ.QA 'A napkin (to be placed) over the (king's)

shoulder'.
[36] *CAD* Š III 376 *šusuppu* d.
[37] Even when preparing food, the eunuch-cook fanning over small vessels (perhaps containing sauces and condiments) laid out on a folding table wears the towel over the left shoulder. Ashurnasirpal relief of a kitchen in an encampment tent; see Fales and Rigo 2014: 423–424, Figures 42–43.
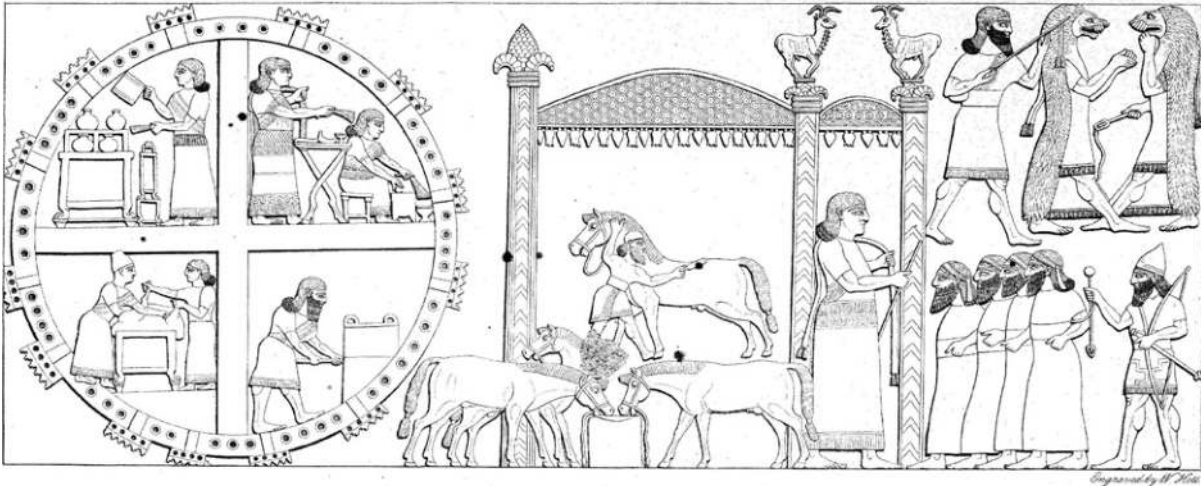
Figure 5.17. Eunuch with stole-like towel inspecting prisoners. Wall relief, Nimrud, Ashurnasirpal, Northwest Palace, throne room. Layard 1849: Plate 30.

As an emblem, the closest parallel to the ancient Near Eastern towel/napkin is the *buqjah*,[38] the diamond-shaped piece of cloth, one of the blazons of Mamluk heraldry. These blazons, unique to the Mamluk world, indicated and identified the offices held by the most trusted royal Mamluks of the sultan, the *khāṣṣakīyyah* (from: *khāṣṣ*), who formed his immediate entourage. The amirs and later the senior amirs were selected from these trusted Mamluk ranks. And later still some of these senior amirs came to the throne.[39] The blazon was the attribute of the amiral office and was used by the amir who held the post as well as by everyone in his household. It was placed on his houses and religious foundations as well as his property and belongings. The *buqjah*, napkin, was the badge of office of the *jamdār*, the master of the robes/wardrobe (Walker 1998: 231). Its uses were manifold, including the wrapping of garments and chancery deeds. Together with the office of the cupbearer, *sāqī*, the office of the master of the robes were to become extremely important as the sultan's personal bodyguard (Walker 2004: 58, 110).[40] The historian Ibn al-Dāwādārī reports that the audience hall restored by Sultan al-Ashraf Khalīl ibn Qalāwūn in 1293 had representations of his amirs, each with his own blazon above his head, as a means of identification. They represented the *khāṣṣakīyyah*, the chosen or selected Mamluk royal guard, private corps of the ruler, selected to perform certain tasks, and the whole composition constituted a symbol of royalty.

Figure 5.18. Cup-bearer holding folded towel. Stone niche, Guʾ Kummet at Sinjar. Gibson 2012: Figure 2b.

Similar representations of earlier dates can be found in the Jazira, for example the stone niche Gu̇ Kummet at Sinjar, around 1240, showing within a continuous frieze of alternating vegetal and figural alcoves, beardless men carrying attributes of their various court offices, each standing in his own trilobe niche (Rabbat 2006: 100; Gibson 2012: 84; Rabbat 2012: 26). The figures in the outer corners each hold a beaker and a napkin (Figure 5.18) and are identified as the cupbearers, *sāqī*

---

[38] Arabic: *mandīl*, 'a piece of cloth cut in a rectangular shape, of small or medium size, usually carried detached from the body.' It was carried in the hand, or tucked in the belt. The ideal *mandīl* 'towel' had fringes 'split edge' for drying one's hands after washing following the meal (Rosenthal 1971: 67, 72–73, 76–78).

[39] Kinnier-Wilson 1972: 35, 100–104 suggested that the Assyrian persons closely related to the king corresponded with the amirs in Arabic times.

[40] The *jamdār*'s office brings to mind the Byzantine *protovestiarios*, 'first dresser' in charge of the imperial wardrobe, who signalled the emperor's presence in ceremonies; see above.

pl. *suqāh*.[41] That blazons such as these were not entirely an Egyptian invention is indicated by the historian Abu al-Fida. According to him, the Mamluks may have been influenced by the practice of the Khwarazmshah Muhammad ibn Takash (reigned 1200–1220) who assigned members of his entourage emblems of office, the square cloth *buqjah* for the master of the robes (Whelan 1988: 221, n. 17). It is significant that in both Ibn al-Dāwādārī's account and in the actual visual representation at Gú Kummet, the ruler is not shown; but the presence of his sovereignty is implied by the attendance of their courtiers.[42] Thus the representation of the ruler's servant functioned as a sovereign attribute. On the Baptistère de Saint Louis (1320–1340) the amirs of the sultan's closest circle, the *khāṣṣakīyyah* are depicted around the ruler's figure, each carrying the object signaling their particular office. The *jamdār*, master of the robes, carries a bundle on his back and a cloth draped over his left arm. The bundle and draped cloth signify the multiple uses of the *buqjah*.[43]

Conclusion: Mythical Origins of the Eunuch's Role, Coming Full Cycle

In Mesopotamian thinking, world order and political organization were based on mythical foundations. The fact that the eunuch had no progeny and was destined to serve the king was explained in the Sumerian myth of the creation of man, Enki and Ninmah. It is told that after Mankind was created the mother goddess created six defective creatures for whom the god Enki decreed fates that enabled them 'to have bread,' i.e., to support themselves and lead a fulfilling life despite their impairments. The last creature among these six defective creatures, named TIRU, had neither penis nor vagina, and therefore could not procreate. Enki appointed TIRU 'to stand before the king,' that is in intimate proximity of his master.[44] Childlessness using the term TIRU is also referred to in the poem Bilgamesh and the Netherworld. The shade of Enkidu reports on the conditions in the netherworld, where the prospects of a man with sons in the hereafter are better than those of a man without children, since they would provide their fathers with regular libations and water. When a man without an heir is mentioned, in three out of the four manuscripts the passage begins with TIRU,

who stands like a useless stick in the corner. The stick image recalls the description of the eunuch in Isaiah as a dry tree עץ יבש: 'neither let the eunuch say: "Behold, I am a dry tree." or thus saith the LORD concerning the eunuchs that keep My sabbaths, and choose the things that please Me, and hold fast by My covenant…. Even unto them will I give… *a monument and a memorial better than sons and daughters*; I will give them an everlasting memorial, that shall not be cut off whom the Lord will give a monument and a *name better than sons and daughters*, an everlasting name which shall not perish" (Isa 56:3–5).

Sumerian TIRU is a generic term often applied to personnel of the palace household. Given the common Near Eastern practice of employing eunuchs as royal servants, TIRU was childless because he was sexually incomplete, castrated. Not being able to continue a family line, the sole allegiance of the eunuch was to the king, as already conceived in the Sumerian myth of Enki and Ninmah. His close proximity to the king stood for the eunuch's trustworthiness, the cornerstone of his social success and his contribution to the political power. To sum up briefly: the ideal courtier was a eunuch.

References

Albenda, P. 1977. Landscape Bas-Reliefs in the Bīt-Ḫilāni of Ashurbanipal. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 225: 29–48.

Álvarez-Mon, J. 2009. Ashurbanipal's Feast: A View from Elam. *Iranica Antiqua* 44: 131–180.

Ambos, C. 2009. Eunuchen als Thronprätendenten und Herrscher im alten Orient. In: Luukko, M., Svärd S., and Mattila, R., eds. *Of God(s), Trees, Kings and Scholars: Neo-Assyrian and Related Studies in Honour of Simo Parpola.* Helsinki: 1–7.

Amiet, P. 1980². *La glyptique mésopotamienne archaïque.* Paris.

Aruz, J. 1994. Sceau-cylindre avec des personnages assis dont l'un est une vigne. In: Caubet, A., Harper, P.O., Aruz, J., and Tallon, F., eds. *La cité royale de Suse. Trésors du Proche-Orient ancien au Louvre.* Paris: 115–116.

Aucoin, M.W. and Wasserburg, R.J. 2006. The Sexuality and Social Performance of Androgen-deprived (Castrated) Men throughout History: Implications for Modern Day Cancer Patients. *Social Science and Medicine* 63: 3162–3173.

Ayalon, D. 1979. On the Eunuchs in Islam. *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 1: 67–124.

Ayalon, D. 1999. *Eunuchs, Caliphs and Sultans: A Study of Power Relationships.* Jerusalem.

Barjamovic, G. 2011. Pride, Pomp and Circumstance: Palace, Court and Household in Assyria 879–612 BCE. In: Duindam, J., Artan, T., and Kunt, M., eds.

---

[41] Rabbat 1995: 173. This was the *mandīl al-sharāb* ('for wine'), Rosenthal 1971: 81.

[42] In the case of Sinjar, the baldachin carved at the pinnacle of the composition symbolically represented the absent ruler, see Whelan 1988: 221–225.

[43] Similarly, the hieroglyph of a bolt of cloth was used in Old Kingdom Egypt to designate the titles of the 'overseer of the wardrobe' and 'keeper of linen,' Fischer 1975: 14, 16–20.

[44] Lines 75–78: IGI LUGAL.LA.KE₄ GUB.BU.DÈ, http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr112.htm. Compare the titles of Nergal-ēreš, *ša rēši* and *manzāz pāni* of the king during the reigns of Adad-nērārī III and Shalmaneser III. Literally *manzāz pāni* is 'the one who stands before the king,' meaning the one most familiar with the king. See Niederreiter 2009: 99–101.

Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires. A Global Perspective. Leiden: 27–61.

Barnett, R.D. 1957. *Catalogue of the Nimrud Ivories.* London.

Barnett, R.D. 1985. Assurbanipal's Feast. *Eretz Israel* 18: 1*–6*.

Barnett, R.D. and Falkner, M. 1962. *The Sculptures of Aššur-nasir-apli II (883–859 B.C.), Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 B.C.), Esarhaddon (681–669 B.C.) from the Central and Southwest Palaces at Nimrud.* London.

Biggs, R.D. 1969. Medicine in Ancient Mesopotamia. *History of Science* 8: 94–105.

Bonatz, D. 2008. Bartlos in Assyrien: Ein kulturanthropologisches Phänomen aus Sicht der Bilder. In: Bonatz, D., Czichon, R.M., and Kreppner, F.J., eds. *Fundstellen: Gesammelte Schriften zur Archäologie und Geschichte Altvorderasiens ad honorem Hartmut Kühne.* Wiesbaden: 141–144.

Botta, P.-E. and Flandin, E. 1849. *Monument de Ninive*, Vol. 1. Paris.

Briant, P. 2002. *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire.* Winona Lake, IN.

Brosius, M. 2007. New Out of Old? Court and Court Ceremonies in Achaemenid Persia. In: Spawforth, A.J.S., ed. *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies.* Cambridge: 17–57.

Brown, B. 2010. Kingship and Ancestral Cult in the Northwest Palace at Nimrud. *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 10(1): 1–53.

Collon, D. 2010. Getting It Wrong in Assyria: Some Bracelets from Nimrud. *Iraq* 72: 149–162.

Dalley, S. 2002. Evolution of Gender in Mesopotamian Mythology and Iconography with Possible Explanation of *ša rēšēn,* 'The Man with Two Heads.' In: Parpola, S. and Whiting, R.M., eds. *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East. Proceedings of the 47th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki.* Helsinki: 117–122.

Deller, K. 1987. Assurbanipal in der Gartenlaube. *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 18: 229–238.

Deller, K. 1999. The Assyrian Eunuchs and Their Predecessors. In: Watanabe, K., ed. *Priests and Officials in the Ancient Near East. Papers of the Second Colloquium on the Ancient Near East—The City and Its Life Held in the Middle Eastern Culture Center in Japan March 22-24, 1996.* Heidelberg: 303–311.

Deller, K. and Finkel, I.L. 1984. A Neo-Assyrian Inventory Tablets of Unknown Provenance. *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 74: 76–91.

Deller, K. and Watanabe, K. 1980. Šukkulu(m), šakkulu 'abwischen, auswischen.' *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 70: 198–225.

Ermidoro, S. 2015. *Commensality and Ceremonial Meals in the Neo-Assyrian Period* (Antichistica 8). Venice

Fales, F.M. and Rigo, M. 2014. Everyday Life and Food Practices in Assyrian Military Encampments. In: Milano, L. with Bertoldi, F., eds. *Paleonutrition and Food Practices in the Ancient Near East: Towards a Multidisciplinary Approach* (History of the Ancient Near East Monographs IV). Padova: 413–437.

Feldman, M.H. 2014. *Communities of Style. Portable Luxury Arts, and Collective Memory in Iron Age Levant.* Chicago.

Fischer, C. 2004. A Goddess with Two Faces, a Story of Two Cultures. *Orient-Express* 2004(4): 102–105.

Fischer, H.G. 1975. An Elusive Shape within the Fisted Hands of Egyptian Statues. *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 10: 9–21.

Fuchs, A. 2008. Der Turtān Šamši-ilu und die große Zeit der assyrischen Grossen (830–746). *Welt des Orients* 38: 61–145.

Gadd, C.J. 1936. *The Stones of Assyria: The Surviving Remains of Assyrian Sculpture, Their Recovery and Their Original Positions.* London.

Gibson, M. 2012. A Symbolic *Khassakiyya*: Representations of the Palace Guard in Murals and Stucci Sculpture. In: Graves M.S., ed. *Islamic Art, Architecture and Material Culture: New Perspectives* (BAR International Series 2436). Oxford: 81–91.

Goldstein, J. 1984-85. The Central Composition of the West Wall of the Synagogue of Dura-Europos. *Journal of the American Near Eastern Society* 16–17: 99–141.

Gonnet, H. 1981. Remarques sur un geste du roi Hittite lors des fêtes agraires. *Hethitica* 4: 79–94

Grayson, A.K. 1995. Eunuchs in Power. Their Role in the Assyrian Bureaucracy. In: Dietrich, M. and Loretz, O., eds. *Vom Alten Orient zum Alten Testament. Festschrift für Wolfram Freiherrn von Soden zum 85. Geburtstag am 19. Juni 1993* (Altes Orient und Alter Testament 240). Kevelaer: 85–98.

Groß, M. 2015. Innovation and Tradition within the Sphere of Neo-Assyrian Officialdom. In: Archi, A., ed. *Tradition and Innovation in the Ancient Near East. Proceedings of the 57th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale at Rome 4-8 July 2011.* Winona Lake, IN.: 251–265.

Gubel, E. 1989. À propos du Marzeaḥ d'Assurbanipal. In: Lebeau, M. and Talon, P., eds. *Reflets des deux fleuves. Volume mélanges offerts à André Finet. Akkadica. Supplementum* 6: 47–53.

Güterbock, H.G. 1957. Hethitisches Wörterbuch. Kurzgefasste kritische Sammlung der Deutungen hethitischer Wörter by Johannes Friedrich. *Oriens* 10: 350–362.

Haroutunian, H. 2002. Bearded or Beardless? Some Speculations on the Function of the Beard among the Hittites. In: Yener, K.A. and Hoffner, H.A., eds. *Recent Developments in Hittite Archaeology and History: Papers in Memory of Hans G. Güterbock.* Winona Lake, IN.: 43–52.

Hawkins, J.D. 2002. Eunuchs among the Hittites. In: Parpola, S. and Whiting, R.,M., eds. *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East. Proceedings of the 47th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki.* Helsinki: 217–233.

Herbordt. S. 1992. *Neuassyrische Glyptik des 8.–7. Jh. v. Chr.* (State Archives of Assyria Studies I). Helsinki.

Herrmann, G. and Millard, A. 2003. Who Used Ivories in the Early First Millennium BC? In: Potts, T., Roaf, M., and Stein, D., eds. *Culture through Objects: Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of P.R.S. Moorey.* Oxford: 377–402.

Holloway, S.W. 2002. *Aššur Is King! Aššur Is King! Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 10). Leiden.

Hussein, M.M. 2016. *Nimrud: The Queens' Tombs.* Gibson McG., ed.; Altaweel, M. trans. Chicago.

Jursa, M. 2008. Nabû šarrūssu-ukīn, *rab ša-rēši*, und 'Nebusarsekim' (Jer. 39:3). *Nouvelles assyriologiques brèves et utilitaires* 2008(1): 9–10.

Karlsson, M. 2016. *Relations of Power in Early Neo-Assyrian State Ideology* (Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records 10). Boston/Berlin.

Keel, O. 1977. *Jahweh-Visionen und Siegelkunst. Eine neue Deutung der Majestätsschilderungen in Jes 6, Ez 1 und 10 und Sach 4* (Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 84/85). Stuttgart.

Kinnier-Wilson, J. 1972. *The Nimrud Wine Lists: A Study of Men and Administration in the Assyrian Capital in the Eighth Century, B.C.* London.

Knudtzon, J.A. 1915. Die *El-Amarna Tafeln.* Leipzig.

Kolesnikov, A.I. 1999. Eunuchs. The Sasanian Period. *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 9: 65–66.

Kühne, H. and Radner, K. 2008. Das Siegel des Išme-ilu, Eunuch des Nergal-ēreš, aus Dūr-Katlimmu. *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 98: 26–44.

Kwasman, T. and Parpola, S. 1991. *Legal Transactions of the Royal Court of Nineveh, Part I: Tiglath-pileser III through Esarhaddon* (State Archives of Assyria 6). Helsinki.

Layard, A.H. 1849 *The Monuments of Nineveh from Drawings Made on the Spot.* London.

Lerner, J.A. and Skjaervø, P.O. 2006. The Seal of a Eunuch in the Sasanian Court. *Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology* 1: 113–118.

Luckenbill, D.D. 1926. *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia I. Historical Records of Assyria from the Earliest Times to Sargon.* Chicago.

Mattila, R. 2000. *The King's Magnates. A Study of the Highest Officials in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (State Archives of Assyria Studies 11). Helsinki.

May, N.N. 2010. The *Qersu* in Neo-Assyrian Cultic Setting: Its Origin, Identification, Depiction and Evolution. In: Kogan, L., Koslova, N., Loesov, S., and Tishchenko, S., eds. *Languages in the Ancient Near East. Proceedings of the 53th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale. Moscow and St. Petersburg 2007.* Winona Lake, IN.: 441–489.

Menzel, B. 1981. *Assyrische Tempel.* 2 vols. (Studia Pohl Series Maior 10/1). Rome.

Moran, W.L. 1992. *The Amarna Letters.* Baltimore.

Müller, K.F. 1937. *Texte zum assyrischen Königsritual.* Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatisch- Aegyptischen Gesellschaft 41/3. Leipzig.

Niederreiter, Z. 2009. La 'sainte offrande' de Nergal ēreš à Aššur et Adad en 775. Une interprétation de l'inscription votive de la masse d'armes ASS 10274 (VA 5929). *Revue d'assyriologie* 103: 91–110.

Niederreiter, Z. 2015. Cylinder Seals of Eleven Eunuchs (*ša rēši* Officials): A Study on Glyptics Dated to the Reign of Adad Nērārī III. In: May, N.N. and Svärd, S., eds. *Change in Neo-Assyrian Imperial Administration: Evolution and Revolution.* Padova: 117–156.

Niederreiter, Z. 2016. An Unpublished Neo-Assyrian Cylinder Seal ('Property of Adad Nasḫira, the eunuch of Bēl-tarṣi-ilumma') kept in the Harvard Art Museum. *Nouvelles assyriologiques brèves et utilitaires* 2016 (2): 81–82.

Niederreiter, Z. 2018. Bead (*Neck Stone*) of Aššur-iddin, Palace Herald of Shalmaneser, King of Assyria. *KASKAL* 15: 67–84.

Niederreiter, Z. and Sass, B. 2018. On a Neo-Assyrian Cylinder Seal with a Cult Scene and an Unusual Aramaic Legend. *Semitica et Classica* 5: 219–226.

Nylander, C. 1999. Breaking the Cup of Kingship: An Elamite Coup at Nineveh? *Iranica Antiqua* 34: 71–83.

Oates, J. and Oates, D. 2001 *Nimrud: An Assyrian Imperial City Revealed.* London.

Ornan, T. 2005. *The Triumph of the Symbol. Pictorial Representation of Deities in Mesopotamia and the Biblical Image Ban* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 213). Fribourg and Göttingen.

Ornan, T. 2013. A Silent Message: Godlike Kings in Mesopotamian Art. In: Brown, B. and Feldman, M.H., eds. *Critical Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Art.* Boston: 569–595.

Overlaet, B. 2013. And Man Created God? Kings, Priests and Gods on Sasanian Investiture Relief. *Iranica Antiqua* 48: 313–354.

Parpola, S. 1995. The Assyrian Cabinet. In: Dietrich, M. and Loretz, O., eds. *Vom Alten Orient zum Alten Testament. Festschrift für Wolfram Freiherrn von Soden zum 85. Geburtstag* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 240). Neukirchen-Vluyn: 379–401.

Peled, I. 2014. Men in Question: Parallel Aspects of Ambiguous Masculinities in Mesopotamian and Biblical Sources. *Maarav* 21: 127–148.

Rabbat, N.O. 1995. *The Citadel of Cairo: A New Interpretation of Royal Mamluk Architecture* (Islamic History and Civilization 4). Leiden.

Rabbat, N.O. 2006. The Militarization of Taste in Medieval Bilād al-Shām. In: Kennedy, H.N., ed. *Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria from the Coming of Islam to the Ottoman Period.* Leiden: 84–105.

Rabbat, N.O. 2012. In Search of a Triumphant Image: The Experimental Quality of Early Mamluk Art. In: Behrens-Abouseif, D. ed. *The Arts of the Mamluks in Egypt and Syria: Evolution and Impact.* Göttingen: 21–35.

Radner, K. 2011. Royal Decision Making: Kings, Magnates, and Scholars. In: Radner, K. and Robson, E., eds. *Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture*. Oxford: 358–379.

Razmjou, S. 2010. Persepolis: A Reinterpretation of Palaces and Their Function. In: Curtis, J. and Simpson, St. J., eds. *The World of Achaemenid Persia: History, Art and Society*. London: 231–245.

Reade, J.E. 1979. Ideology and Propaganda in Assyrian Art. In: Larsen, M.T., ed. *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires* (Copenhagen Studies in Assyriology 7). Copenhagen: 329–343.

Reade, J.E. 1995. The Symposion in Ancient Mesopotamia: Archaeological Evidence. In: Murray, O. and Tecuşan, M., eds. *In Vino Veritas*. London: 35–56.

Reade, J.E. 2008. An Interpretation of the Vaulted Complex and Well 4 in the Northwest Palace, Nimrud. In: Curtis, J.E., McCall, H., Collon, D., and al-Gailani-Wehr. L., eds. *New Light on Nimrud. Proceedings of the Nimrud Conference 11th–13th March 2002.* London: 101–102.

Rehm, E. 2003. Abschied von der Heiligen Hure. Zum Bildmotiv der 'Frau am Fenster' in der phönizisch-nordsyrischen Elfenbeinschnitzkunst. *Ugarit Forschungen* 35: 487–519.

Rehm, E. 2004. *Dynasten sarkophage mit szenischen Reliefs aus Byblos und Zypern Teil 1.1: Der Ahiram-Sarkophag.* Mainz.

Rehm, E. 2005. Assyrische Möbel für den assyrischen Herrscher. In: Suter, C.E. and Uehlinger, C., eds. *Crafts and Images in Contact: Studies on Eastern Mediterranean Art in the First Millennium BCE* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 210). Fribourg and Göttingen: 187–206.

Ringrose, K.M. 2003. *The Perfect Servant: Eunuchs and the Social Construction of Gender in Byzantium.* Chicago.

Ringrose, K.M. 2007. Eunuchs in Historical Perspective. *History Compass* 5(2): 495–506.

Roobaert, A. 1996. A Neo-Assyrian Statue from Til Barsip. *Iraq* 58: 79–87.

Rosenthal, F. 1971. A Note on the Mandīl. In: Ettinghausen, R. and Kurz, O., eds. *Four Essays on Art and Literature in Islam* (L. A. Mayer Memorial Studies in Islamic Art and Archaeology 2). Leiden: 63–99.

Root, M.C. 2011. Elam in the Imperial Imagination: From Nineveh to Persepolis. In: Álvarez-Mon, J. and Garrison, M.B., eds. *Elam and Persia.* Winona Lake, IN. : 417–419–474.

Sadan, J. 1976. *Le mobilier au Proche Orient médieval.* Leiden.

Schaeffer-Forrer, C.F.-A. 1983. *Corpus I des cylindres-sceaux de Ras Shamra-Ugarit et d'Enkomi-Alasia.* Synthèse synthèse n° 13. Paris

Schmidt, E.F. 1953. *Persepolis I. Sculptures, Reliefs, Inscriptions* (Oriental Institute Publications 68). Chicago.

Schmidt Colinet, C. 1997. Ashurbanipal Banqueting with His Queen? Wer thront bei Assurbanipal in der Weinlaube? *Mesopotamia* 32: 189–308.

Shahbazi, A.S. 2001. Early Sasanians' Claim to Achaemenid Heritage. *Nāme-ye Irān-e Bāstān* 1(1): 61–73.

Shaked, S. 1982. Two Judaeo-Iranian Contributions. In: Shaked, S. and Netzer, A., eds. *Irano-Judaica: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture throughout the Ages.* Jerusalem: 292–303.

Shaked, S. 1986. From Iran to Islam: On Some Symbols of Royalty. *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 7: 75–91.

Shaked, S. 2013. The Sayings of Wuzurgmihr the Sage—A Piece of Sasanian Wisdom Transmitted into Arabic. In: Ben- Shammai, H., Shaked, S., and Stroumsa, S., eds. *Exchange and Transmission Across Cultural Boundaries. Philosophy, Mysticism and Science in the Mediterranean World. Proceedings of an International Workshop Held in Memory of Professor Shlomo Pines.* Jerusalem: 216–275.

Sjöberg, Å.W. 1996. UET VII, 73: An Exercise Tablet Enumerating Professions. In: Tunca, O. and Deheselle, D., eds. *Tablettes et images aux pays de Sumer et d'Akkad. Mélanges offerts à Monsieur H. Limet.* Association pour la Promotion de l'Histoire et de l'Archéologie Orientales Mémoires n° 1. Liège: 117–139.

Skjaervø, P.O. 2007. A Postscript on 'The Seal of a Eunuch in the Sasanian Court.' *Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology* 2(1): 39.

Strommenger, E. 1964. Neuassyrische Statuenköpfe. In: Bittel, K., Heinrich, E., Barthel, H., and Nagel, W., eds. *Vorderasiatische Archäologie. Studien und Aufsätze Anton Moortgat gewidemet.* Berlin: 239–242.

Stronach, D. 1995. The Imagery of the Wine Bowl: Wine in Assyria in the Early First Millennium B.C.E. In: McGovern, P.E., Fleming, S.J. and Katz, S.H., eds. *The Origins and Ancient History of Wine.* Philadelphia: 175–195.

Suter, C.E. 1992. Die Frau am Fenster in der orientalischen Elfenbein Schnitzkunst des frühen I. Jahrtausend v. Chr. *Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen in Baden Württemberg* 29: 7–28.

Tadmor, H. 1995. Was the Biblical sārîs a Eunuch? In: Zevit, Z., Gitin, S., and Sokoloff, M., eds. *Solving Riddles and Untying Knots: Biblical, Epigraphical and Semitic Studies in Honor of Jonas C. Greenfield.* Winona Lake, IN.: 317–325.

Tadmor, H. 2002. The Role of the Chief Eunuch and the Place of Eunuchs in the Assyrian Empire. In: Parpola, S. and Whiting, R.M., eds. *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 47th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki.* Helsinki: 603–611.

Tallis, N. 2014. Banquet Relief of Ashurbanipal. In: *Assyria to Iberia at the Dawn of the Classical Age.* In: Aruz, J., Graff, S., and Rakic, Y., eds. New York and New Haven: 73–74.

Tougher, S.F. 1997. Byzantine Eunuchs: An Overview, with Special Reference to Their Creation and Origin.

In: James, L., ed. *Women, Men and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium*. London: 168–184.

Uehlinger, C. 2002. Hanun von Gaza und seine Gottheiten. In: Hübner, U. and Knauf, E.A., eds. *Kein Land für sich allein. Studien zum Kulturkontakt in Kanaan, Israel/Palästina und Ebirnâri für Manfred Weippert zum 65. Geburtstag* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 186). Fribourg and Göttingen: 92–125.

Uehlinger, C. 2003. Clio in a World of Pictures—Another Look at the Lachish Reliefs from Sennacherib's Southwest Palace at Nineveh. In: Grabbe, L.L., ed. *Like a Bird in a Cage: The Invasion of Sennacherib in 701* (*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* Supplement 363). Sheffield: 221–304.

Unger, E. 1917. *Die Stele des Bel-Harran-beli-ussur. Ein Denkmal der Zeit Salmanassars IV*. Constantinopel.

Vanden Berghe, L. 1983. *Reliefs rupestres de l'Iran ancien*. Brussels.

Vanderhooft, D.S. 2008. Biblical Perspectives on Nineveh and Babylon: Views from the Endangered Periphery. *Journal of the Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies* 3: 83–92.

Walker, B.J. 1998. *The Ceramic Correlates and Decline of the Mamluk Sultanate: An Analysis of Late Medieval Sgraffito Ware* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto). Toronto.

Walker, B.J.. 2004. Ceramic Evidence for Political Transformations in Early Mamluk Egypt. *Mamluk Studies Review* 8(1):1–114.

Ward, R. 1993. *Islamic Metalwork*. London.

Watanabe, K. 1992. Nabû-uṣalla, Statthalter Sargons II in Tam(a)nuna. *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 23: 357–369.

Watanabe, K. 1999. Seals of Neo-Assyrian Officials. In: Watanabe, K., ed. *Priests and Officials in the Ancient Near East: Papers of the Second Colloquium on the Ancient Near East—The City and Its Life Held in the Middle Eastern Culture Center in Japan (Mitaka, Tokyo), March 22–24 1996*. Heidelberg: 313–366.

Whelan, E. 1988. Representations of the *Khāṣṣakīyyah* and the Origin of Mamluk Emblems. In: Soucek, P.P., ed. *Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World: Papers from a Colloquium in Memory of Richard Ettinghausen, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 2–4 April 1980*. University Park, PA: 219–243.

Winter, I.J. 2009. What/When Is a Portrait? Royal Images of the Ancient Near East. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 153(3): 254–270.

Winter, I.J. 2010. *On Art in the Ancient Near East* Vol. 1: *Of the First Millennium B.C.E.* (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 34.1). Leiden.

Yamada, S. 2014. Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III: Chronographic-Literary Styles and the King's Portrait. *Orient* 49: 31–50.

The Arch of Titus: Jerusalem in Rome

Galit Noga-Banai
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Abstract

In his account of Emperor Titus' triumphal procession in 71 CE, Flavius Josephus described the spoils of war taken from the Jerusalem Temple and carried publicly through the streets of Rome. This procession is sculpted on the arch built in 81 CE in tribute to Titus upon his unexpected death and consequent deification. This paper argues that the representation of the Temple spoils on the arch is the earliest visual frame of Jerusalem taken in Rome. Consequently, to fully understand the following Jerusalemite compositions and relics translated to the city when it became a Christian center, it is necessary to consider the objects and their reproduction as seen on the imperial Roman arch.

'The spoils in general were borne in promiscuous heaps; but conspicuous above all stood out those captured in the Temple of Jerusalem. These consisted of a golden table, many talents in weight, and a lampstand, likewise made of gold, but constructed on a different pattern from those which we use in ordinary life. Affixed to a pedestal was a central shaft, from which there extended slender branches, arranged trident-fashion, a wrought lamp being attached to the extremity of each branch; of these there were seven, indicating the honour paid to that number among the Jews. After these, and last of all the spoils, was carried a copy of the Jewish Law' (Flavius Josephus, *B.J.* 7: 148–50).

So writes Flavius Josephus in his eyewitness account of Titus's triumphal procession in 71 CE, describing the spoils of war taken by the emperor from the Temple in Jerusalem some months earlier as they were paraded publicly through the city of Rome. Following the procession, the gold vessels were eventually deposited in Vespasian's Temple of Peace, while the Law and the purple veil of the sanctuary were stored in the imperial palace. The Temple of Peace, Josephus says, was speedily built after the triumphal ceremonies were concluded (*B.J.* 7:158–162). Situated parallel to the Forum of Augustus, it was dedicated in 75 CE. The name referred to the end of (the civil and the Jewish) war, and the structure functioned as a public space for exhibitions.[1] Some of the objects on display had been looted earlier by Nero, and some, like 'the vessels of gold from the Temple of the Jews,' were the pride of the Flavian dynasty.[2]

The Jerusalem spoils were treasured in Rome, as one can tell from the public references. The contemporary sources vary: coins proclaiming IUDAEA CAPTA, showing a Jewess mourning and/or Jewish captives, were issued by Vespasian and minted in large numbers by Titus as well. Even Domitian, Titus's brother and the last Flavian emperor (81–96 CE), issued IUDAEA CAPTA coins 15 years after the event and continued their distribution.[3] At the beginning of his epic poem, *Argonautica*, the poet Valerius Flaccus (d. *c.* 90 CE) referred to the reign of the Flavians by mentioning the apotheosis of Vespasian and the war in Judea.[4] Early in 81 CE, a little over a decade after the end of the war, a triumphal arch was erected in the Circus Maximus. Its foundations were recently found; excavations thus far indicate that it was a triple-bay arch.[5] Its monumental inscription was recorded by an early medieval monk, most likely from Fulda, who made a pilgrimage to Rome sometime in the 9th century: 'The Senate and People of Rome to Imp[erator] Titus Caesar Vespasianus, son of the Deified Vespasianus, *pontifex maximus*, with *tribunicia potestas* for the tenth time, [hailed as] Imp[erator] for the seventeenth time, consul for the eighth time, their *principes*, because on the instructions and advice of his father, and under his auspices, he subdued the race of the Jews and destroyed the city of Jerusalem, which by all generals, kings, or races previous to himself had

---

[1] See Richardson 1992: 286–287; Darwall-Smith 1996: 55–68, esp. 65–67; Steinby 2000, 4: 67–70; Millar 2005: 108–112; Panzram 2007: 173–178. A series of articles on the Temple of Peace can be found in Coarelli 2009.

[2] *B.J.* 7: 158–162. Cf. Pliny, *Natural History* 34.84; Suetonius, *The Lives of*

the Caesars, *Vespasian* 9.1.

[3] See Mattingly, Sydenham, *et al.* 1926, 189 No. 280; Goodman 2005: 171–172; and Hendin 2007: 123–130.

[4] *Argonautica* 1: 12–14; cf. Silius Italicus, *Punica* 3.600–624, for the association of the Argonautic victory with Titus's victory in Jerusalem. For the date of the *Argonautica*, see Stover 2012. Most recently on Flaccus, see *Brill's Companion to Valerius Flaccus*, Heerink and Manuwald 2014.

[5] See Nick Squirs 'Massive triumphal marble arch built by Romans to honour Emperor Titus discovered,' http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/italy/11638975/Massive-triumphal-marble-arch-built-by-Romans-to-honour-Emperor-Titus-discovered.html. Last access 8/12/2021.

Figure 6.1. The Arch of Titus, Rome. Photo: Deutsche Archäologische Institut, Rome.

either been attacked in vain or not even attempted at all.'[6]

Thousands of people must have seen the inscription, which thus kept the Jewish War before the public eye. A little earlier, in 80 CE, when the Colosseum was inaugurated by Titus, a dedicatory inscription reminded the audience that the extravagant amphitheater built to host the games they came to watch had been financed by the booty brought back by the Flavian rulers. Géza Alföldy, who deciphered and reconstructed the actual inscription, suggested that it had once appeared on the inner walls of all four entrances.[7]

In the same year that the triumphal arch was erected in the Circus Maximus (81 CE), another triumphal arch was built, this time in tribute to Titus upon his unexpected death and consequent deification. This

arch, located on the Velia (the future Via Sacra), carried a shorter and more traditional dedicatory inscription: '*Senatus/Populusque Romanus/Divo Tito Divi Vespasiani f(ilio) Vespasiano Augusto*' (Figure 6.1).[8] The absence of a specific textual reference to the war in Judea was compensated for by an elaborate decorative program, visible to all onlookers and passers-by. A large relief showed Titus in triumph, crowned by Victory and riding a chariot pulled by four horses (Figure 6.2). The opposite panel represented the booty from Jerusalem, carried in a triumphal procession and about to pass under a city gate (the Porta Triumphalis?), or perhaps a triumphal arch. One group of young soldiers, with laurel wreaths upon their heads, carries on its shoulders the seven-branched menorah, another group the silver trumpets and the table for the showbread (Figure 6.3).[9] At the apex of the passageway, Titus is rising on the back of an eagle. Under his apotheosis, the triumphal procession proceeds towards the Velia, as if anticipating the display of the famous vessels in the Temple of Peace.

The public monuments in the Roman urban landscape—i.e., the Arch of Titus on the Velia, together with the arch in Circus Maximus, the Temple of Peace, and the Colosseum—marked out a new Flavian topography in the city. Although this network of monuments was strongly associated with the triumph over Judea, it also depicted a turning point in the history of the Roman Empire.[10] Apart from capturing the end of Jewish Jerusalem, and an end of the Jewish Temple-based cult, it celebrated the new era of peace under the dynasty of the Flavians (69–96 CE), in implicit contrast to the excesses of Nero (Darwall-Smith 1996: 72–73; Aitken 2002: 140–142; Millar 2005: 102, 110–116). The fact that the Temple spoils were details in a much larger historical picture may be the reason why, after the Temple of Peace was destroyed by a massive fire in 191/192, there is scarcely a clue to the fate of the spoils from Jerusalem.[11] Perhaps the golden vessels were melted in the fire.[12] Perhaps they lost the interest of the public after 135, when under Hadrian, Jerusalem became Aelia Capitolina and

---

[6] CIL VI 944=ILS 264: '*Senatus populusque Romanus imp. Tito Caesari divi Vespasiani f. Vespasian[o] Augusto pontif. max. trib. pot. X imp. XVII [c]os. VIII p.p. principi suo quod praeceptis patr[is] consiliisq. Et auspiciis gentem Iudaeorum domuit et urbem Hierusolymam omnibus ante se ducibus regibus aut frustra petitam aut omnino intemptatam delevit*'; text taken from Walser 1987: 87–88; English translation from Millar 2005: 120. See also Bauer 1997: 190–228; Eck 2006: 570–585.

[7] Alföldy 1995: 225; Panzram 2007: 171–173; Millar 2005: 117–119; Feldman 2001: 20–31, 60–61. On entrances, arches, and gates as political bulletin boards in late antiquity, see Malmberg 2014: 150–189.

[8] 'The Senate and the Roman People to the Deified Titus Vespasianus Augustus, son of the Deified Vespasianus'; English translation from Millar 2005: 123. For the date and restorations, see Pfanner 1983: 91–92; Darwall-Smith 1996: 166–172.

[9] A discussion of the spoils panel of the arch is found in Yarden 1991. A study and digital reconstruction of the original polychromy of the arch has been undertaken by Steven Fine of Yeshiva University. See Fine 2013: 3–25.

[10] On the sack of Jerusalem as Titus's only claim to glory, and the Flavians' emphasis on this achievement, see Goodman 1987: 235–251; Millar 2005; Tanner 2010: 72–76, esp. 74; Hollander 2014: 195–199.

[11] The Temple was most likely rebuilt by Severus. Ammianus Marcellinus (*Roman History* 16.10.14) reports that the site was admired in 357 by the imperial tourist Constantius II.

[12] On the total silence of Greek and Latin sources written between 100 and 475 CE concerning the fate of the actual vessels from the Jerusalem Temple, see Boustan 2008: 11; also Lewy 1960: 255–258; Harrison 1994: 239–248; Fine 2005: 169–180.

Figure 6.2. Detail of Fig. 6.1., Titus in a chariot being
crowned. Photo by author.

Figure 6.3. Detail of Fig. 6.1., Triumphal procession.
Photo by author.

the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus was built on the site of the Temple of the Jews.[13]

From 81 until the fire in 192, for a little over a century, the Flavian monuments could activate a local memory related to the Temple implements; as far as is known, they were still in Rome.[14] No matter how vague the fate of the spoils or how silent the textual sources, we may assume that even after the fire of 192, the Arch of Titus kept the spoils present in the public eye and consequently to some extent in the public consciousness.[15] The procession carrying the Temple implements was the earliest visual frame of Jerusalem taken in Rome. True, the subject portrayed was neither the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, nor a picture of the city in the east, but rather the arrival of the Temple cult vessels in their new location—as well as a portrait of their local Roman possessor. Nonetheless, this spatial alliance between event and objects, between the original models and their monumental reproductions, gave Rome the potential to become a site of memory; and the dislodged trophies, along with their representations on the Arch of Titus, had the potential to become relics—i.e., pilgrimage attractions in the net of spots mapping the sacred landscape of Rome.[16]

***

From a Christian point of view, the year 70 CE served as a dated anchor in the Christologica narrative.[17] The synoptic gospels report that the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom the moment Christ took his last breath (Mark 15:37–38; Luke 23:45–46; Matt 27:50–51). This was an omen for what was to come. Justin Martyr established the connection between the Destruction of the Temple and the crucifixion: 'For of all races of men there are some who look for Him who was crucified in Judea, and after whose crucifixion the land was straightway surrendered to you as spoil of war.'[18] Origen of Alexandria followed suit, emphasizing that the Destruction of the Temple was a punishment from God for the crucifixion of his Son (Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 4.22; Wilken 1983: 132–136). Eusebius linked the crucifixion with the siege of Jerusalem.[19] In the 4th century, this linkage was in the background of the choice of the Gospel verses recited on the 11th Sunday after Pentecost: the verses in Luke (19:43–44 and 21:22) where Jesus prophesies the destruction of Jerusalem and where this is described as God's vengeance. That specific Sunday often fell in the week of Tisha b'Av, the day the Jews mourn the Destruction of the Temple.[20]

The links between the destruction of the Temple and the crucifixion, and between old Jerusalem and New Jerusalem (so named by Eusebius), took on spatial and material dimensions in 4th-century Rome, when a relic of the true cross arrived in the city. The person responsible for the import, as with the Jerusalem spoils, was a member of the imperial family, quite likely Constantine himself. This relic was installed in a church within the complex of the Sessorian Palace, later known as Santa Croce in Gerusalemme.[21] The *Liber Pontificalis* attributes the foundation of the church to Constantine:

> At the same time Constantine Augustsus constructed a basilica in the Sessorian Palace, where also he placed and enclosed in gold and jewels some of the wood of the Holy cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he dedicated the church under the name by which it is called even to this day, Hierusalem.[22]

The name *Hierusalem* was given to the church after the relic was installed, and as attested by the *Liber Pontificalis*, the church was known by that name until at least the 6th century.

The visual guarantee of the long-lasting victory over Judea represented in the Roman Forum after 81 CE was carried forward by the church within the Sessorian Palace. The end of Jewish Jerusalem as evoked on the Arch of Titus eventually enabled the construction of the New Jerusalem.

---

[13] For Hadrian's establishment of Aelia Capitolina, see Golan 1986: 226–239; and see recently Andrade 2013: 174–177.

[14] In the *History of the Wars* (4.9:1–9) Procopius claims that the Vandal Gaiseric had taken the spoils from Rome in 455, but elsewhere (5.12: 41–42), he claims that the Temple vessels were taken by Alaric to Gaul after the sack of Rome in 410. See Cameron 1979: 3–35; Lewy 1960: 255–258.

[15] The Arch of Titus is not mentioned by Ammianus Marcellinus in his description of the sightseeing tour taken by Emperor Constantius II in Rome in 357; but the Temple of Peace was seen by the emperor as well as the Coliseum—both related, as I discussed above, to the Jewish war. It is difficult to imagine that Constantius intentionally bypassed the arch, located on the Via Sacra in close proximity to the Coliseum. Perhaps Marcellinus avoided mentioning the arch. Scholars have dealt extensively with this significant imperial visit. From the standpoint of landscape and memory, see Muth 2006: 438–456.

[16] Since Halbwachs (1941), much has been written on the process by which a place becomes sacred. In relation to late antique Rome, see for instance, Diefenbach 2007, 1–37; Hartmann 2010.

[17] Frey 2012: 447–507. On the paradigm of the 'parting of the ways,' see also Reed and Becker 2003: 1–32.

[18] *1 Apol.* 32; quoted in Clements 2012: 527.

[19] Eusebius, *Church History* 3.5; *Demonstration of the Gospel* 10.1; Heid 1993: 1–22; idem 2001: 113–119; see also Wilken 1983: 136.

[20] See Linder 1987: 253–292; Yuval 2008: 39: 48–49.

[21] De Blaauw 1997: 55–73; 2012: 27–39; 2014: 136–166. See also Brandenburg 2013: 108–13.

[22] "*Eodem tempore fecit Constantinus Augustus basilicam in palatio Sossorianum, ubi etiam de ligno sanctae Crucis domini nostri Iesu Christi posuit et in auro et gemmis conclusit, ubi et nomen ecclesiae dedicavit, quae cognominatur usque in hodiernum diem Hierusalem.*" Mommsen 1898: 34 c. 22. English translation from Loomis 2006: 58. The association of the relic of the true cross with Constantine rather than with his mother suggests that the deposition of the relic took place after Helena's death in 329 and before 390 when Ambrose recorded, for the first time, the legend of the finding of the true cross by Helena. See De Blaauw 1997: 62–66; Klein 2004: 69.

When we compare the arrival of the Temple spoils with that of the relic of the true cross, it is clear that, although both movements were from Jerusalem to Rome, the Temple implements were going into exile, representing the defeated status of old Jerusalem, while the fragment of the cross signified the triumph of the New Jerusalem in a Christianizing Rome. Unlike the dislocated Temple cult vessels, which, according to Josephus, were kept in the emperor's palace and in the Temple of Peace, the relic of the cross consecrated a site that adopted the name of its source, *Hierusalem*. The memorial monument of the true cross did not recall the Jerusalem of the Temple Mount, but rather the Jerusalem of the Holy Sepulcher, Golgotha, and the Mount of Olives; the relic represented the city of the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and the Second Advent. It was this New Jerusalem, the Jerusalem of the triumph of the Church, that in the 4th century penetrated into the evolving Christian cityscape and the sacred center of Rome, thus supplanting the old, historical (Jewish) Jerusalem that had been present and been represented by the Temple spoils in the visual culture and the public memory of Rome for the previous two and a half centuries.

The conflation of old and New Jerusalem in 4th-century Rome has attracted less scholarly attention than the fusing of old and New Rome in Constantinople.[23] When Constantine desired to make visible the preeminence of his new capital, he lured the old gods of the empire by confiscating their cult images from civic and religious centers throughout Greece, the Eastern Mediterranean, and Rome, bringing all of them to Constantinople.[24] The transplantations may have been related to the Roman ritual of *evocatio deorum*, wherein, before an attempted conquest, the deity of the enemy city was lured to abandon the city and promised a new temple in Rome (Gustafsson 2000). In this case, though no conquest was in view, the cultic objects were relocated and given a new social context. Even today, it is possible to see the bronze serpent column of the Plataean Tripod, said to have been taken by Constantine from the shrine of Apollo in Delphi and installed in the Hippodrome.[25] Another such reuse relevant to our context was the so-called *Palladium*, an ancient wooden guardian statue of the armed Athena, said to be of divine origin, that guaranteed the safety of Troy. According to Roman tradition, the statue had been taken by Aeneas to Rome, where it was kept in the Temple of Vesta.[26] Sources such as the chronicler John Malalas in the 6th century and

the *Chronicon Paschale* in the 7th century report that the statue was taken from Rome by Constantine and placed in the Forum beneath the emperor's triumphal column.[27] Removing the *Palladium* from Rome was an act that reinvoked its historic significance in a new urban context, i.e., the New Rome; the transfer created 'an image of urban pre-eminence intended to describe Constantinople as the premier city of the Roman world' (Bassett 2007: 198).

The Temple spoils were not deities, but they were cult objects that represented the cultic site of the Jewish God and His place of dwelling (Exod 25:8). In fact, Titus's transfer of the Temple spoils to Rome may itself have been a type of *evocatio deorum*.[28] From 75 CE they 'earned' a new social life and environment among the deities and other cult images in the Temple of Peace.[29] Whether or not the *evocatio* was employed in relation to Jerusalem, Josephus asserted that God had left Jerusalem in favor of Rome, and the Romans were sure that their gods were responsible for the victory over the Jews (*B.J.* 3: 354; 6: 300; Goodman 1987: 235; 2007: 452; Mason 2005: 255; Magness 2008 204–207). Much later, when Constantine or another member of the imperial family brought the relic of the cross to Rome, the circumstances were clearly different; but in at least one aspect the outcome was the same: this inanimate object with a glorious past was given a new social life in a new urban context.

The motivation for the *translatio* of the cross to Rome may be elucidated by taking a further look at Constantinople. Constantine did not stop at merely decorating the new city with images of the glorious imperial past in order to construct its identity as a New or Second Rome. Byzantium had no apostolic foundation or any other Christian past, and the emperor was also determined to import Christian relics. His plan was eventually accomplished in 356–357 by his son Constantius II, when the relics of S. Timothy, followed by the relics of Ss. Andrew and Luke, were brought to Constantinople and installed in the Church of the Holy Apostles, next to the Mausoleum of Constantine (Mango 1990; Burgess 2005: 5–36; Klein 2006: 79–99). According to later sources, Constantine brought the Staff of Moses to the city as well. This was later transferred to the Great Palace, and carried in imperial processions together with the 'Cross of Constantine' (*De cerimoniis*, II, 40: 640–641; Dagron 2003: 84, 98, 216; Klein 2006: 93).

[23] For the foundation of Constantinople as the New or Second Rome, see now the introduction by Grig and Kelly in their 2012 book. See also the article there by Neil McLynn 2012: 345–363.

[24] Bassett 2004: 37–78, with additional bibliography.

[25] So Eusebius *Vit. Const.* 3.54; and see Bassett 2004: 224–227.

[26] Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 1:.68–69; Livy, *The History of Rome*, 26: 27.14. The removal of the spoil from Troy is recounted by Procopius, *De Bello Goth* 1:15; see Bassett 2004: 205–206; Ando 2001: 397–404.

[27] Malalas 13.7; *Chron. Paschale* 1: 528: 'The same Emperor Constantine removed from Rome the so-called Palladium and placed it in the forum that he had built underneath the column [bearing] his statue: this is stated by some inhabitants of Byzantium who have heard it by way of tradition.' Translation by Cyril Mango (1986: 7); Bassett (2004: 68–71, 205–206); Ando (2001: 399).

[28] See Magness 2008: 201–217.

[29] For the notion of 'Objects' becoming 'Things' with a new social life, see Brown 2001: 1–22, esp. 6–8.

Indeed, there is hardly any doubt that the imported sacral objects functioned to underscore the legitimacy of royal power, and likewise to provide the agent of transfer and his descendants with imperial and religious credit in the public's cultural memory.

With the arrival of the apostolic relics in Constantinople, the strong foundation for a (new) Christian identity and historiography was complete. Shortly after the middle of the 4th century Constantinople was in possession of the imperial tomb and mausoleum of its founder and first Christian emperor, cult images and deities from the earlier empire, and sacred Christian relics. Gregory Nazianzen, addressing the residents of Constantinople in his autobiographical poem, *De Vita Sua* (382), put it nicely: 'the name for nobility in the world, you who inhabit a second universe, as I see it, enfolded in a beauty involving earth and sea, a new-made Rome, seat of a second nobility, city of Constantine and a monument of power.'[30]

Unlike Byzantium, Rome had been in possession of Christian relics and holy sites before the arrival of Constantine or the cross; the tombs of Peter and Paul are mentioned in 2nd century sources.[31] Also unlike Byzantium, a small town which mainly served the military personnel based there, Rome carried upon its shoulders the burden of a pagan cultural capital (Curran 2000). To Christianize Rome effectively, with Christian content of the first degree, the tombs of Peter and Paul, the local heroes, were certainly good anchors; their tombs mark holy sites. But an urban Christian identity would not be complete without a relic connected directly with Christ, with the events and sites of his life, death, and resurrection. This is where Jerusalem enters the local Roman visual frame once again, except this time it is a Christian rather than a pagan picture.

In the visual culture of Rome, the Temple vessels were *spolia*, effective to some extent as translated relics.[32] The translation of the relic of the true cross from Jerusalem to Rome not only made visible in Rome the Christian triumph, but also completed the basic theological and physical trajectory of the transfer of Jerusalem's sacred quality and reality to Rome. Titus made it possible and his arch makes it visible to this day.

---

[30] *DVS* 12–16, after McLynn 2012: 357. Future contributions to the local treasure continued under the Theodosian dynasty and even later. In fact, imported relics never stopped coming. Famous examples include the relics of St. Stephen imported by the Empress Eudocia in 439, and relics associated with the Virgin Mary imported by the Empress Pulcheria in 451. See Klein 2006.
[31] See Thümmel 1999; Heid 2011; most of the tombs of other martyrs were identified towards the end of the 4th century and even later. See Brandenburg 2013: 59.
[32] Elsner 2000: 149–184; Hansen 2003; Kinney 2011: 97–120.

References

Aitken, E.B. 2002. Portraying the Temple in Stone and Text: The Arch of Titus and the Epistle to the Hebrews. *Sewanee Theological Review* 45(2): 135–151.

Alföldy, G. 1995. Eine Bauinschrift aus dem Colosseum. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 109: 195–226.

Ando, C. 2001. The Palladium and the Pentateuch: Towards a Sacred Topography of the Later Roman Empire. *Phoenix* 55: 369–410.

Andrade, N.J. 2013. *Syrian Identity in the Greco-Roman World*. Cambridge.

Bassett, S. 2004. *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople*. Cambridge.

Bassett, S. 2007. Ancient Statuary in Fourth Century Constantinople: Subject, Style and Function. In: Bauer, F.-A. and Witschel, C., eds. *Statuen in der Spätantike*. Wiesbaden:189–200.

Bauer, F.-A. 1997. Das Bild der Stadt Rom in karolingischer Zeit: Der Anonymus Einsidlensis. *Römische Quartalschrift* 92: 190–228.

De Blaauw, S. 1997. Jerusalem in Rome and the Cult of the Cross. In: Colella R.L., *et al.*, eds. *Pratum Romanum: Richard Krautheimer zum 100. Geburtstag.* 55–73. Wiesbaden.

De Blaauw, S. 2012. Gerusalemme a Roma e il culto della Croce. In : Cassanelli, R. and Stolfi, E., eds. *Gerusalemme a Roma, la Basilica di Santa Croce e le reliquie della Passione* (Storia dell'arte 54). Rome: 27–39.

De Blaauw, S. 2014. Translations of the Sacred City between Jerusalem and Rome. In: Goudeau, J., Verhoeven, M., and Weijers, W., eds. *The Imagined and Real Jerusalem in Art and Architecture.* Leiden: 136–166.

Boustan, R.S. 2008. The Spoils of the Jerusalem Temple at Rome and Constantinople: Jewish Counter-Geography in a Christianizing Empire. In: Gardner, G. and Osterloh, K.L., eds. *Antiquity in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Pasts in the Greco-Roman World* (TSAJ 123). Tübingen: 1–45.

Brandenburg, H. 2013. *Die Frühchristlichen Kirchen in Rom vom 4. Bis zum 7. Jahrhundert: Der Beginn der abendländischen Kirchenbaukunst.* Regensburg.

Brown, B. 2001. Thing Theory. *Critical Inquiry* 28(1): 1–22.

Burgess, R.W. 2005. The Passio S. Artemii, Philostorgius, and the Dates of the Invention and Translation of the Relics of Sts. Andrew and Luke. *Analecta Bollandiana* 121: 5–36. Reprinted as Chapter 9 in Burgess. 2011. *Chronicles, Consuls, and Coins: Historiography and History in the Later Roman Empire.* Farnham.

Cameron, A. 1979. Images of Authority: Elites and Icons in Late Sixth-Century Byzantium. *Past and Present* 84: 3–35.

Clements, R.A. 2012. Epilogue: 70 CE After 135 CE—The Making of a Watershed? In: Schwartz, D.R. and Weiss, Z., eds. *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History?*

On Jews and Judaism before and after the Destruction of the Second Temple. Leiden: 517–536.

Coarelli, F. 2009. *Divus Vespasianus: Il bimillenario der Flavi.* Catalogue of an Exhibition Held at the Colosseo, Curia e Criptoportico neroniano, Rome, Italy, Mar. 27, 2009–Jan. 10. Milan.

Curran, J. 2000. *Pagan City and Christian Capital.* Oxford.

Dagron, G. 2003. *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium.* Cambridge.

Darwall-Smith, R.H. 1996. *Emperors and Architecture: A Study of Flavian Rome.* Brussels.

Diefenbach, S. 2007. *Römische Erinnerungsräume: Heiligenmemoria und kollektive Identitäten im Rom des 3. bis 5. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.* (Millennium-Studien 11). Berlin.

Eck, W. 2006. Rom und das jüdische Volk—Orte der Niederlagen und triumphale Erinnerungen. In: Stein-Hölkeskamp, E. and Hölkeskamp, K.-J., eds. *Erinnerungsorte der Antike—Die römische Welt.* Munich: 570–585.

Elsner, J. 2000. From the Culture of Spolia to the Cult of Relics: The Arch of Constantine and the Genesis of Late Antique Forms. *Papers of the British School at Rome.* Rome 68: 149–184.

Feldman, L.H. 2001. Financing the Colosseum. *BAR* 27(4): 20–31, 60–61.

Fine, S. 2013. Menorahs in Color: Polychromy in Jewish Visual Culture of Roman Antiquity. *Images* 6: 3–25.

Fine, S. 2005. When I Went to Rome, There I Saw the Menorah...: The Jerusalem Temple Implements between 70 C.E. and the Fall of Rome. In: Edwards, D.R. and McCollough C.T., eds. *The Archaeology of Difference: Gender, Ethnicity, Class and the "Other" in Antiquity. Studies in Honor of Eric M. Meyers.* Boston: 169–180.

Frey, J. 2012. Temple and Identity in Early Christianity and in the Johannine Community: Reflection on the Parting of the Ways. In: Schwartz, D.R. and Weiss, Z., eds. *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History? On Jews and Judaism before and after the Destruction of the Second Temple.* Leiden: 447–507.

Golan, D. 1986. Hadrian's Decision to Supplant 'Jerusalem' by 'Aelia Capitolina.' *Historia* 35(2): 226–239.

Goodman, M. 1987. *The Ruling Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt Against Rome, AD 66–70.* Cambridge.

Goodman, M. 2005. The Fiscus Iudaicus and Gentile Attitudes to Judaism in Flavian Rome. In: Edmondson, S.M., and Rives, J., eds. *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome.* Oxford: 167–177.

Goodman, M. 2007. *Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations.* New York.

Grig, L. and Kelly, G., eds. 2012. *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity* (Oxford Studies in Late Antiquity). New York.

Gustafsson, G. 2000. *Evocatio Deorum: Historical and Mythical Interpretations of Ritualised Conquests in the Expansion of Ancient Rome* (Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis Historia Religionum 16). Uppsala.

Halbachs, M. 1941. *La topographie légendaire des Évangiles en Terre Sainte (GN2):* Étude de mémoire collective. Paris.

Hansen, M.F. 2003. *The Eloquence of Appropriation: Prolegomena to an Understanding of Spolia in Early Christian Rome.* Rome.

Harrison, M. 1994. From Jerusalem and Back Again: The Fate of the Treasures of Solomon. In: Painter, K., ed. *Churches Built in Ancient Times: Recent Studies in Early Christian Archaeology.* London: 239–248.

Hartmann, A. 2010. *Zwischen Relikt und Reliquie: Objektbezogene Erinnerungspraktiken in antiken Gesellschaften.* Studien zur Alten Geschichte 11. Berlin.

Heerink, M. and Manuwald, G., eds. 2014. *Brill's Companions in Classical Studies.* Leiden.

Heid, S. 1993. Auf welcher Seite Kämpft Gott? Der Anspruch Jerusalems und Roms auf die Waffenhilfe Gottes in frühchristlicher Apologetik. *ZKG* 104: 1–22.

Heid, S. 2007. *Kreuz Jerusalem Kosmos: Aspekte frühchristlicher Staurologie* (JACSup 31). Münster.

Heid, S. 2011. Die Anfänge der Verehrung der apostolischen Gräber in Rom. In: *Petrus und Paulus in Rom: Eine interdisziplinäre Debatte.* Freiburg: 283–308.

Hendin, D. 2007. Echoes of 'Judaea Capta': The Nature of Domitian's Coinage of Judaea and Vicinity. *Israel Numismatic Research* 2: 123–130.

Hollander, W. den. 2014. *Josephus, the Emperors, and the City of Rome: From Hostage to Historian.* Leiden.

Kinney, D. 2011. Ancient Gems in the Middle Ages: Riches and Ready-mades. In: Brilliant, R. and Kinney, D., eds. *Reuse Value: Spolia and Appropriation in Art and Architecture from Constantine to Sherrie Levine.* Burlington: 97–120.

Klein, H.A. 2004. *Byzanz, der Westen und das 'wahre' Kreuz: Die Geschichte einer Reliquie und ihrer künstlerischen Fassung in Byzanz und im Abendland.* Wiesbaden.

Klein, H.A. 2006. Sacred Relics and Imperial Ceremonies at the Great Palace of Constantinople. In: Bauer, F.-A., ed. *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft: Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen—Gestalt und Zeremoniell—Internationales Kolloquium 3./4. Juni 2004 in Istanbul.* Istanbul: 79–99.

Lewy, Y. (Hans). 1960. The Fate of the Temple Implements after the Destruction of the Second Temple. *Studies in Jewish Hellenism.* Jerusalem: 255–258 (Hebrew).

Linder, A. 1987. The Destruction of Jerusalem Sunday. *Sacris Eruditi* 30: 253–292.

Magness, J. 2008. The Arch of Titus at Rome and the Fate of the God of Israel. *Journal of Jewish Studies* 59: 201–217.

Malmberg, S. 2014. Triumphal Arches and Gates of Piety at Constantinople, Ravenna, and Rome. In: Birk, S., Kristensen, T.M., and Poulsen, B., eds. *Using Images in Late Antiquity.* Oxford: 150–189.

Mango, C. 1986. *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453: Sources and Documents* (The Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching 16). Toronto.

Mango, C. 1990. Constantine's Mausoleum and the Translation of Relics. *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 83: 51–62, 434.

Mason, S. 2005. Figured Speech and Irony in T. Flavius Josephus. In: Edmondson, J., Mason, S., and Rives Edmonson, J.B., eds. *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome.* Oxford: 243–289.

Mattingly, H., Sydenham, E.A., *et al.*, eds. 1926. *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, Vol. 2. London.

McLynn, N. 2012. 'Two Romes, Beacons of the Whole World': Canonizing Constantinople. In: Grig, L. and Kelly, G. 345–363.

Millar, F. 2005. Last Year in Jerusalem: Monuments of the Jewish War in Rome. In: Edmondson, J., Mason, S., and Rives, J., eds. *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome.* Oxford:101–128.

Muth, S. 2006. Die Stadt als Erinnerungslandschaft: Rom in der Spätantike. In: Stein-Hölkeskamp, E. and Hölkeskamp, K.-J., eds. *Erinnerungsorte der Antike: Die römische Welt.* Munich: 438–456.

Panzram, S. 2007. Der Jerusalemer Tempel und das Rom der Flavier. In: *Zerstörungen des Jerusalemer Tempels: Geschehen—Wahrnehmung—Bewältigung.* Hahn, J., ed. Tübingen: 166–182.

Pfanner, M. 1983. *Der Titusbogen.* Mainz.

Reed, A.Y. and Becker, A.H. 2003. Introduction: Traditional Models and New Directions. In: Becker, A.H and Reed, A.Y., eds, *The Ways That Never Parted.* Tübingen: 1–32.

Richardson, L., Jr. 1992. *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome.* Baltimore.

Steinby, E.M., ed. 2000. *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, Vol. 4. Rome.

Stover, T. 2012. *Epic and Empire in Vespasianic Rome: A New Reading of Valerius Flaccus.* Oxford.

Tanner, M. 2010. *Jerusalem on the Hill: Rome and the Vision of Saint Peter's Basilica in the Renaissance.* London.

Thümmel, H.G. 1999. *Die Memorien für Petrus und Paulus in Rom: Die archäologischen Denkmäler und die literarische Tradition.* Berlin.

Walser, G. 1987. *Die Einsiedler Inschriftensammlung und der Pilgerführer durch Rom.* Codex Einsidlensis. Stuttgart: 326.

Wilken, R.L. 1983. *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late Fourth Century.* Berkeley.

Yarden, L. 1991. *The Spoils of Jerusalem on the Arch of Titus: A Re-investigation.* Rome.

Yuval, I.J. 2008. *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.* Berkeley.

Chapter 7

Basileus basileion:
Weberian Approaches to Authority in the Roman Near East

Michael Sommer
Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg

Abstract

This paper examines the heuristic potential of Max Weber's sociology of authority for the study of pre-modern societies, namely, the Roman Empire, and particularly, Palmyra, the ancient trading hub in the oasis of Tadmor in the Syrian Desert. Weber's ideal types—'legal,' 'traditional,' and 'charismatic' authority—do not describe any given society from any historical reality; rather, they represent artificial abstractions, which in their purity are to be found nowhere in the real world. As any society, the Roman Empire, established by Augustus in the wake of his victory over Mark Antony, featured a hybrid mixture of all three types. However, authority in Augustus' and his successors' system of government, the principate had a relatively weak 'legal' component, while the presence of 'charisma' and 'tradition' was substantially stronger. This changed over the decades until, by the 3rd century CE, the ratio between 'law' and 'tradition' was practically reversed. The kingship that evolved at Palmyra by mid-century can mainly be described in terms of 'charisma' and 'tradition.' This turned out to be an explosive mixture that plunged Palmyra into conflict with Aurelian, the Roman emperor from 270–275 CE, and ultimately brought about the collapse of Palmyrene power in 272 CE.

Seizing Power in the Syrian Desert

In August, 272 CE, the final assault was imminent. A massive army had been assembled in the desert surrounding the oasis, while within the walls of the city, leading dignitaries were discussing the course of action to take. Parties had been forming since defeat had become virtually imminent. Those close to the queen, who had fled the city some days before, advised defending it to the last man. Others, headed by a certain Septimius Haddudan, advocated peace. Finally, the peace party prevailed: the gates were opened and the leader of the opposing forces entered the city.[1]

The stage of these dramatic events was Palmyra, the trading hub in the Syrian Desert that had turned global player in Rome's military crisis following the defeat of the emperor Valerian in the Battle of Edessa in 260 CE. The local ruler who had just abandoned her city was Zenobia, the desert queen whom Syrians to the present day credit as Rome's Arab nemesis. And in the role of conqueror was none other than the Roman emperor Aurelian, who managed, after half a century during which the Roman world had been shaken by defeat and political instability, to consolidate Roman power in the West and East. Zenobia was the wife and successor of Septimius Odaenathus, who had played a key role in the aftermath of the 260 disaster. Odaenathus had

merged with local forces under Palmyrene leadership what had remained of the Roman military presence in the Near East. In all likelihood, such local forces consisted of tribal warriors bonded to the upper echelons of Palmyrene society through ties of kinship. Odaenathus also achieved a series of strategic victories over Shapur, the Sasanian king of kings, and his Persian army. Soon, the Persians were driven from the Roman provinces, and only months later Odaenathus closed the siege ring around the Persian capital of Ctesiphon in southern Mesopotamia. Then, with the news that Heruli tribesmen had landed on the northern shores of Asia Minor, the Palmyrene leader abandoned the Mesopotamian theater of war to fight the barbarians in Pontus and Bithynia. By 268, Odaenathus was dead, whether of natural causes, a hunting accident, or assassination, possibly commissioned by the Roman emperor Gallienus himself, we will never know. The evidence is too contradictory—Odaenathus' end shall forever be clad in mystery (Kaizer 2005; Sommer 2008).

What is certain is that Odaenathus' son with Zenobia, Vaballathus, then a ten-year-old youngster, was accepted as *rex regum*, as *vir clarissimus, corrector totius Orientis* and probably as *dux Romanorum* throughout the Near East immediately thereafter. Those were the same titles Odaenathus had used before. Zenobia, who was in charge politically, received the title of *clarissima regina*. The titles of *corrector totius Orientis* and of *dux Romanorum* had been awarded to Odaenathus by Gallienus in the aftermath of the 260 crisis and essentially formed the legal basis of the former's factual supreme command

---

[1] Septimius Haddudan is attested in a Palmyrene inscription published by Gawlikowski 1971. On the events at Palmyra, see Hartmann 2001: 384.

in the Eastern provinces. In all but name, Odaenathus had been a Roman viceroy in the vast area stretching from the Mediterranean to the Persian frontier. The construction worked for several years, as the Roman emperor and his viceroy were mutually dependent on each other: Gallienus needed Odaenathus because he alone could guarantee the military integrity of the Eastern provinces; and Odeanathus needed Gallienus because the emperor was the sole source of his legitimacy (Hartmann 2001: 65–128).

By 270, this political arrangement collapsed. In the autumn of that year, Zenobia, seized Roman provinces, namely Arabia and Aegyptus, which had never been part of her late husband's sphere of interest. At about the same time, Vaballathus assumed the titles of *imperator* and *vir consularis*, thus adding an imperial touch to his previously chiefly regional authority. The fact that the *imperator* Vaballathus somewhat challenged the authority of the Roman emperor Aurelian who had just assumed office, is unquestionable; but his actions fell short of a fully-fledged usurpation, which would have required the Palmyrene ruler to call himself Augustus and to ban Aurelian from all official documents issued within the perimeter of his power. Instead, the Palmyrenes, from 270 onwards, issued coins with Aurelian on the obverse and a youthful representation of Vaballathus on the reverse.[2] All this changed in April 272, when Vaballathus was proclaimed Augustus and his mother was proclaimed Augusta. The image of Aurelian accordingly disappeared from the coins minted within the Palmyrene sphere of influence. Udo Hartmann, in his Ph.D. dissertation (Berlin: 2000), shows that Vaballathus' and Zenobia's usurpation of power coincided with Aurelian's victory over Palmyrene forces at Antioch in the same spring of 272. In all likelihood, when Zenobia's army was crushed by Aurelian's forces, she saw no alternative course of action but to stand up to him and challenge his claim to imperial power. Both Hartmann and Fergus Millar, who dedicated several pages of his ground-breaking 1993 study, *The Roman Near East,* to the events that unfolded around Zenobia and Aurelian, point out the distinctively Roman style of Zenobia's and Vaballathus' usurpation. According to Hartman, the coins issued by mother and son reveal no 'specific, oriental program' (*kein besonderes, orientalisches Programm*; Hartmann 2001: 357). To Millar, the entire undertaking was no more and no less than 'an abortive claim to the empire' and certainly no 'separatist movement designed to detach Syria, or the whole Near East, from Roman rule' (Millar 1993: 335).

While there is no doubt about this, both Hartman and Millar fail to explain the extraordinary chain of events that made Palmyra a powerhouse of military leadership with far-reaching autonomy from the political center

of Rome; and which also frustrated any effort for détente, leaving confrontational behavior the only option available to all players involved. Why could Odaenathus establish a form of authority that was local yet intertwined with imperial rule at the same time? Why would Roman emperors from Gallienus to Aurelian accept Odaenathus as an autonomous 'viceroy,' but reject Zenobia and Vaballathus? What was the rationale of authority in Rome? And how did Odaenathus and Zenobia substantiate their leadership in Palmyra and the Near East?

In order to understand these issues, this paper will examine patterns of authority in Palmyra and imperial Rome.

Max Weber: The Sociology of Authority

Max Weber's sociology of authority, based on the sociologist's hermeneutics of 'ideal types,'[3] is, we believe, the theoretical framework best-suited for such a structural comparison. Weber, born in 1864 in Erfurt, but himself an almost ideal-typical representative of Prussia's protestant bourgeoisie, took his doctorate, in 1889, in law, but then set out to become an economist. As such, he obtained his first professorship in Berlin in 1893, at the age of 29. In the following year, he moved to the prestigious chair at Freiburg and in 1896 to the even more renowned Lehrstuhl für Nationalökonomie at the University of Heidelberg. Suffering from severe burnout, Weber took unpaid leave in 1900 and retired completely in 1903. His position as an independent scholar and gentleman gave him the time and scope to explore all kinds of new avenues into thus far unchartered territories of scholarship, which in turn allowed him to become the founding father of a new discipline, sociology. In the early 1900s Weber became increasingly obsessed with the mystery of modernity. According to him, modernity had had its breakthrough in early modern Europe: neither in classical antiquity, nor in the Islamic world, nor in India or China. The question as to why this leap occurred in early modern Europe—and only there—was the great riddle to which Weber dedicated the rest of his life.

Famously, Weber found in Protestantism and its ethic an important driving force behind the rise of modernity. But his Protestant assumption, this has often been overlooked, is based on ideal, not real types. In a well-known essay on 'objectivity' in the social sciences, Weber explains:

An ideal type is formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and

---

[2] RIC V.1 308. See Hartmann 2001: 252–253.

occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those onesidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct ... [Weber 1949: 90].[4]

Ideal types are tools, not purposes of cognition. That having been said, the 'Protestant Ethic' is merely one explanatory model, which owes its existence to Weber's 'onesided emphasis' on specific 'viewpoints.' Other explanations are not only possible but equally legitimate. Weber himself cuts the building blocks for an alternative model, taking into account not so much the religious constitution of societies but their political institutions.

One building block in this theory of modernity is Weber's sociology of authority. Authority (*Herrschaft*), he maintains, is 'the chance of specific commands being obeyed by a specifiable group of people' (*die Chance, für einen Befehl bestimmten Inhalts bei angebbaren Personen Gehorsam zu finden*; Weber 1981: 87). Weber departs from a concept of 'legitimacy' which is radically different from the classical doctrine of legitimacy as developed by constitutional law. While the classical concept departs from the 'lawfulness' of authority by virtue of (legally) defined procedures (such as elections, succession, investiture, anointment, coronation, etc.), to Weber 'legitimacy' is simply the 'prestige of exemplarity or bindingness' (*Prestige der Vorbildlichkeit oder Verbindlichkeit*; Weber 1981: 55). Any political order that has some chance of success is, in Weber's eyes, by definition 'legitimate' but the sources of such legitimacy can be manifold: Weber distinguishes between three 'pure types' of legitimate authority, based on (1) law, (2) tradition, and (3) charisma.[5]

1. Legal authority usually takes the form of bureaucracy. The one in command is the 'superior.' The one who obeys is the 'subordinate' and obeys by virtue of legal rules. The administrative staff is composed of public servants who hold their offices because of their factual expertise; administrative duties are performed *sine ira et studio* with no bearing whatsoever on 'personal motives' or 'emotional factors.'
2. Traditional authority in its purest form is patriarchic. The one in command is the 'lord,' the one who obeys is the 'subject.' The lord holds authority because of his 'innate dignity' (*Eigenwürde*), which is sanctified through tradition. His administrative staff is composed of 'friends' and 'favorites.' The ones who perform administrative duties totally depend on the lord, as slaves, serfs, or eunuchs. Alternatively,

traditional authority is exerted in feudal societies where power is devolved according to social order and privilege. Here, the 'officials' are not personal slaves of the lord, but independent notables who stand out by virtue of their social rank and prestige; they are tied to the lord through fiefdom or sinecure, but in control of their own 'material means of administration' (*sachliche Verwaltungsmittel*).

3. Charismatic authority rests on followers believing in the 'gift of grace' (*Gnadengabe*) of the 'leader' (*Führer*). Leadership is strictly personal and depends on the personal, 'extraordinary' (*außeralltäglich*) qualities of the leader. They constantly need to be given proof of this. The prototypical charismatic leader is the 'hero' or the 'prophet,' a person with exceptional qualities in exceptional times. While the hero relies on his followers' belief in his innate powers, the prophet is supposed to be inspired by divine beings. Under specific circumstances, charisma can be perpetuated and handed down to subsequent generations by means of inheritance ('inherited charisma' = *Erbcharisma*). This, however, comes at a price: the charisma loses some of its inherent extraordinary qualities and becomes, to an extent, trivial. Inherited charisma running 'in the blood' is the idea behind most monarchic dynasties.

It is unnecessary to emphasize the ideal-typical character of all three 'pure types.' They do not exist in any given reality, but are creations of Weber's mind and as such purely fictional constructions. No authority in any given society ever 'was' legal, traditional, or charismatic. Any form of leadership that existed in some historical reality had to encompass aspects of all three types. Modern parliamentary democracies, for instance, invariably feature charismatic and legal components to different extents. They also rest on sets of norms and beliefs which are utterly traditional in character and are often rooted in religious beliefs of some sort. However, while identifying the various components and possibly weighing them against each other is not easy; it yields valuable information on the configuration of a system of government

From Tradition to Bureaucracy: The Roman Empire

When the then Gaius Caesar Divi Filius, in 27 BCE, set up the principate as Rome's new system of government to become Augustus, he made it look like a restored Republic.[6] Augustus himself, whose de-facto monarchic

---

[6] Cass. Dio 50:7; Vell. Pat. 2,89. On Augustus' settlement of 27 BCE, Mommsen 1907: 190–203; Castritius 1980; Bleicken 1998: 315–348; Syme 2002: 313–330; Dahlheim 2010: 201–205; Börm and Havener 2012; Girardet 2014; Pabst 2014: 200–254.

power rested on the pila of the legionaries he commanded, held no 'office,' no 'magistracy' which set him apart from other office-holders. In his own words: 'After that time, I exceeded all in authority, but I had no greater power than the others who were colleagues with me in each magistracy' (Res gestae Divi Augusti 34 [RGDA]). What did this 'authority' consist of?

When, in 31 BCE, Octavian's and Agrippa's naval forces won a decisive victory over Mark Antony's and Cleopatra's navy at Actium, a century of unrest, instability, and civil war came to end. Not a single man or woman alive in the Roman world had seen a Republic without gory strife for power between leading aristocrats. Octavian himself had been a cruel warlord who had ordered to kill, exile, or dispossess Roman citizens by the thousands. With Octavian's victory, all this changed abruptly . Octavian-Augustus managed to reconcile the victims of his previous policies. He brought internal peace back to the empire and energetically enforced the Roman peace at its outer perimeters: from Pannonia to Parthia, from Meroe to the Moenus, resistance to the Roman eagle was futile—or so it seemed to everybody in the empire's distant frontiers receiving the cheerful news from Rome.[7] Augustus was the bearer of peace. This was no sheer 'propaganda' or 'ideology'; it was an achievement of the new regime that everybody—no matter his status, position, and rank—could sense. The various voices, unsolicited by the emperor or his staff —from Rome's poets, senators, the locals across the Hellenistic, Eastern provinces who first established the imperial cult; everyone celebrated Augustus as a genuine savior.[8]

Having brought peace to a peaceless world was no trifle. It was precisely the kind of extraordinary achievement Weber saw as constituent for a charismatic leader. The Augustan peace which was duly celebrated on various occasions throughout the empire, made it plausible to all contemporaries that the princeps really did enjoy the grace of the gods. Who but Augustus could have brought about this period of new stability, security, and prosperity? Experience told everyone—senators, soldiers, urban plebians—that Augustus was a leader with whom they fared well. After he died in 14 CE, the charisma of the peace-bringing founder was retained by the Julio-Claudian dynasty as a family inheritance for another 50 years. But by 68 CE the hereditary charisma had all but been consumed and Nero, the last Julio-Claudian emperor, was overthrown. Hereditary charisma was weak in the Roman Empire; each emperor had to live up to expectations for himself or his days were numbered. Personal charisma was a powerful

component of the early principate, but extending it to subsequent generations was fraught with difficulties.[9]

Traditional elements were strong, as well. Augustus left the social order of the Republic, which had grown over the centuries, and the *mos maiorum*, its normative foundation, untouched. On the contrary, he successfully presented himself as a champion of the *mos maiorum*, accepted, confirmed, and fortified senatorial privileges and, through the rigor of his legislation, restored the senatorial order's moral foundations (Sonnabend 2014). Visible to everybody, he also restored the Roman state's good relationship with the divine world, building, refurbishing, and dedicating countless sanctuaries and honoring long-forgotten religious traditions.[10] His administrative staff was minimalistic and downright prototypically traditionalist: key positions in the provinces and the armies were filled with senators who held them by virtue of their social rank, not as a result of skills or professionalism; and the core piece of the empire's administrative architecture was the domus Augusta, the princeps' private household, in which key roles were performed by Augustus' personal liberti and slaves. At its very heart, the empire was managed like a patriarchic estate.[11]

In contrast, the principate's legal foundation was flimsy. Initially, Augustus held the consulship year by year. But as he pointed out himself, in terms of effective legal powers he did not outrank his respective colleagues. The only legal prerogatives that set him apart from other office-holders were the *imperium proconsulare* he held for periods of five or ten years from 27 BCE onwards; and the *tribunicia potestas* he received annually on June 26 from 23 BCE onwards (Mommsen 1887 2: 735–736; Kienast 1982: 74–79; Dettenhofer 2000: 111–112; König 2009: 149–150; Girardet 2014). While the former effectively provided him with the supreme command over every single Roman soldier, the latter earned him the plebeian tribune's right to override magisterial decisions, the *ius Senatus habendi* and the *sacrosanctitas* of his person. This was, by all standards, a feeble contribution to Augustus' legitimacy, the more so as he shared both prerogatives with his potential successors Agrippa and Tiberius and the *imperium proconsulare* with Drusus and with Gaius Caesar.[12]

---

7 Sommer 2014. See also Mehl 1990.
8 On Vergil, for instance, Holzberg 2006: 44–61. But see Parry 1963 for the supposedly hidden subtext of Vergil's Aeneid. Just how deceptive the concept of propaganda is when applied to premodern societies has been shown by Eich (2003).

9 The observation that, in principle, any senator, no matter how closely he was related to the imperial dynasty, was *capax imperii*, has been made by none other than Tacitus (hist. 1,17 on Galba). The lack of formal legitimacy—such as explicit rules for succession, rites of investiture. and a set of official regalia—has been emphasized by Flaig 1992, for whom the individual princeps' authority is based on 'acceptance' rather than 'legitimacy.'
10 RGDA 19–21 and app. 2–3.
11 With some notable differences: only the imperial household controlled military units; the imperial household also featured positions, originally held by freedmen, which held sway over the empire in its entirety. See Winterling 1999: 115–116. Also Eich 2005: 67–78.
12 Agrippa: Mommsen 1887: 2: 745, Dettenhofer 2000: 126; Tiberius:

Durable and static as it may seem, the empire's institutional setup was in constant flux. Hence the parameters originally set by Augustus changed with time, and quite radically. Generally speaking, the traditional component gradually lost ground while the legal element gained in importance considerably. All changes notwithstanding, imperial authority to a great extent continued to depend on personal charisma. The need for a proper legal basis for the principate emerged when, after the crisis of 68/69, Vespasian assumed power, the extent of which was, possibly for the first time in the empire's history, explicitly laid down in the *lex de imperio Vespasiani*, a *Senatus consultum* issued in December 69.[13] Here, for the first time, an emperor received en bloc all the special powers vested separately in previous emperors. Each paragraph of the law begins with the formula *utique liceat* ('so that he may be allowed'). Besides being given the prerogatives encompassed in *tribunicia potestas* and *imperium proconsulare*, the emperor is authorized to conclude agreements with foreign powers, to select candidates for the magistracies, to enlarge the *pomerium*, the capital's sacral perimeter. Furthermore, he is empowered to 'do and decree everything that he deems, with respect to divine and human, public and private institutions, appropriate for promoting the public good—as did the deified Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius.' This is a clear indication that, while the empire's republican façade is still standing, the emperor has acquired a legal position in his own right within the institutional framework.

Legalization of the principate came with its bureaucratization and gradual professionalization (Millar 1966: 59–131; Winterling 1997; 1999: 47–75; Eich 2005: 85–257). Augustus was the first emperor to create offices, such as the one of the *praefectus annonae* (the overseer of Rome's vital grain supply), to which he appointed non-senators by virtue of their administrative skills.[14] As early as the reign of Claudius, the emperors employed a number of specialists, all freedmen, who were in charge of various 'departments' of government, such as finances or justice. Such specialists were still personally dependent on the emperor and hence formed part of a patrimonial, albeit now very large, household. From Nero onwards, most specialists were of equestrian rank and thus became more independent of the emperor. Soon, there were career-paths for civil servants and military officers.[15] The brass of the army were no longer recruited from the senatorial, but from the equestrian order; an increasing number of them rose to their commands from the rank

and file of the legions, in return for having proven skills and professionalism. From the late 2nd century onwards, the ever-expanding law schools, most notably the one at Berytus, spat out recruits for the upper echelons of the imperial administration in astonishing numbers (Schemmel 1923; Schuol 2010). Holding higher offices, either in the provincial administrations or in the empire's central bureaucracy, now required a sound training in law. Social mobility had hugely increased as a consequence. No longer was a glorious pedigree alone a convincing argument for someone who ran for office.[16]

By the 3rd century, the legal component of the princeps' legitimacy had become a great deal more important than it had been in the Augustan period. It had clearly eclipsed the traditional element and was beginning to overshadow the charismatic traits of imperial authority. While successfully convincing the empire's population that his extraordinary 'gifts of grace' were still part and parcel of being—and remaining—an emperor, military professionalism at a time when Rome's control over vast areas in Europe and Asia was disputed was at least as pivotal. Unsurprisingly, most emperors of the 3rd century were professional soldiers and their staff was employed because of their professional qualities. Not only had the tip of the pyramid become more 'legal' and 'bureaucratic'; the entire policy of staff recruitment in the public sector had changed for ever.

From Tradition to Charisma: Palmyra

The local level was largely detached from these developments. The thousands of cities that formed the local cells of government within the Roman Empire had diverse histories and traditions, but they were all, socially and politically, manifestations of the Mediterranean city of the polis type. Invariably, they featured wealthy, landed aristocracies, which were exclusive and oligarchic. Wealth and landownership were key to office-holding: especially in the formerly Hellenistic East, there was a differentiated economy of honor, with a reciprocal relationship between social and political power on the one hand, and public largesse, the so-called euergetism, on the other (Veyne 1976). In such a system, generosity bought legitimacy. The norms on which legitimacy rested were largely traditional, but each city had its legal framework, as well. There were magistracies and constitutional organs, such as people's assemblies and councils, which had clearly defined functions and rights. The polis-type city within the Roman Empire was no arena for grand displays of

Dettenhofer 2000: 185; Drusus: Timpe 1971: n. 17; C. Caesar: Bernett 2007: 223.
[13] CIL 6,930; Tac. hist. 4,3 ,3. Cf. Brunt 1977; Pabst 1989, 1997; Mommsen 1887: 2: 876–877; and now the contributions to Capogrossi Colognesi and Tassi Scandone 2009.
[14] Liv. 4, 12, 8; Cass. Dio 52: 33, 1. Cf. Herz 1988.
[15] On career paths and the impact of patronage, Saller 1980.

[16] As illustrated by the stunning careers of P. Helvius Pertinax (emperor in 193) and M. Cn. Licinius Rufinus (consul c. 230 CE). Cf. Lippold 1983; Herrmann 1997; Millar 1999; Potter 2004: 227; Eck 2006: 71–77.

extraordinary 'gifts of grace'—and no breeding ground, therefore, for charismatic authority.

According to the French scholar Maurice Sartre, this was precisely how Palmyra was organized. Indeed, the epigraphic evidence from the Syrian city seems to suggest that Sartre's assumption is right. Numerous references to *strategoí*, a *boulê*, an assembly, and other institutions and officials can be found. There was even a theater and probably a gymnasium, and there was a temple for the imperial cult. The cityscape with its columns, planned roads, and colonnaded façades looks strikingly 'classical.' There were also tribes or *phylaí*, but they can be interpreted as artificial subdivisions of the city's civic body. No doubt: Palmyra was a Greek city (Sartre 1996).

Or was it? A deeper look reveals a Palmyra that is considerably less 'Greek.' It turns out that when seen through the eyes of a trained classicist, the semantics behind the vocabulary is not what it at first appears to be. The supposedly classical language in architecture emerges as a composite of classical forms and decidedly non-classical purposes. A sanctuary like the Temple of Bel, for instance, was home to a cult that had virtually nothing in common with the religions of Greece and Rome (Starcky and Gawlikowski 1985: 116–120; Will 1995: 29; Freyberger 1998: 77; Sommer 2005b: 142; Kaizer 2008,: 183–187). The so-called 'house tombs' with their temple-like façades look Western, but they are actually an architectonic feature exclusive to the oasis city (Schmidt-Colinet *et al.* 1992). Of the 'magistrates' mentioned in the inscriptions, not even a glimmer of an idea of the duties they performed has come down to us. And the organization of the *phylaí* has turned out to be so elusive that it is hard to believe that they resembled anything similar to the artificial 'tribes' of classical Athens or republican Rome (Yon 2002: 66–78; 2003; Kaizer 2002: 43–66; Sommer 2005a; Smith 2013: 33–54; Hoffmann-Salz 2015: 235–239).

Above all, the model of Palmyra as a Greek city utterly fails to explain the sudden emergence of Septimius Odaenathus as a quasi-monarchic ruler *c.* 250 and of Palmyra as a power center in its own right a decade later (Sommer 2008). To be sure, both developments had been released by the crisis, which in turn had been triggered by Shapur I's three successive Roman campaigns in the 240s and 250s (Millar 1993: 159–173; Hartmann 2001: 129–140; Winter and Dignas 2001: 41–45; Edwell 2008: 149–200; Glas 2014: 163–180). But no Greek city in the Roman Empire ever adopted a monarchic regime and no Greek city became a player in inter-imperial power politics, not even Athens at the apex of the Heruli crisis in 267. The development Palmyra took in the 250s and 260s is simply not reconcilable with the traditional-

legal framework of the polis-type cities spread across the Roman world and ruled by local oligarchies.

Now, is there an alternative model? In my opinion, a radically different definition of Palmyra's *phylaí* points to a potential way out of the aporia. Rather than interpreting the phylai as artificial subdivisions of Palmyra's civic body—which in itself is a construction made by modern scholars—these tribes were far more likely a legacy of Palmyra's nomadic past: 'authentic' kinship groups sharing the belief of being related by blood. As the anthropologist M.B. Rowton has pointed out in a series of articles,[17] such 'tribes' could well include sedentary populations in towns and villages as well as nomads in the steppe, provided a number of political and ecological conditions did apply. In Palmyra, the organization of long-distance trade was the common cause creating ties of solidarity between the settled and the nomads.

Leadership in Palmyra in the 2nd century CE was strictly patriarchic. The power the tribal elites wielded was rooted in tradition. Since times of yore, it was handed down from generation to generation. Palmyra's necropolises reflect the all-important role of clans and families in social organization: hierarchies of prestige and influence ran through the kinship groups, which embraced people from the highest ranks down to the lowest social level. The big men of the clan groups also emerge in the city's most significant epigraphic corpus: the so-called caravan inscriptions dedicated to powerful patrons of Palmyra's long-distance trade. Such patrons supported the merchants with all kinds of services they were able to perform because of their authority over the nomadic parts of the tribe. Most of them had Roman citizenship which, by the 2nd century CE, was granted to tribal elites in many parts of the empire.[18]

Authority in Palmyra was thus for the most part traditional. It may have been cloaked in the political terminology of a Greek polis. But its foundation was the patriarchic structure of the Palmyrene tribes and a society based on kinship. However, a charismatic component was beginning to take shape. The tribal leaders were expected to perform duties in favor of the merchants active in the long-distance trade, and some of these duties seem to have involved rather heroic achievements. The tribal leaders had to be at least part-time warlords in order to provide the caravans with the military protection they required. The situation changed when, from the 220s onward, the Sasanians posed a much more massive threat to Palmyrene trade

---

17   Rowton 1973a, 1973b, 1974, 1976a, 1976b, 1977.
18   E.g., M. Ulpius Abgar (Inv. 10,81); M. Ulpius Yarhai (CIS 2,3928; Inv. 10,111; Inv. 10,90; Inv. 10,90; Inv. 10,95; CIS 2,3960; Inv. 10,107; Inv. 10,77).

across Mesopotamia than the Parthians had previously. How precisely the merchants were affected we do not know, but that their commercial activity had to suffer, at least to some extent, is plausible and is confirmed by the decline of caravan inscriptions which are phased out after 211 (but then see a brief revival in the 240s, Inv. 3,21; Inv. 3,13).

From 241 onward, after the Persian conquest of Hatra, Palmyra, like many cities in the Eastern provinces, was directly under threat from Shapur's incursions deep into Roman territory. The situation, especially after the cataclysmic defeat of 260, required a completely new type of leadership: an individual with sufficient authority to rally all available combatants behind him. This man, whose family background was obscure, was none other than Septimius Odaenathus. In all likelihood his father had received Roman citizenship under Septimius Severus. This suggests that the family had gained some prominence by the 190s, but it is conspicuously absent from the caravan inscriptions. By 252, Odaenathus held the rank of Roman senator and was *rš' dy tdmwr*, the Palmyrene equivalent of the Greek title *éxarchos Palmyrenôn* (PAT 2753; PAT 2815). The new title never attested before suggests that he wielded quasi-monarchic power in Palmyra, which was somehow recognized by Rome. This position only makes sense if Odaenathus could boast an extraordinary achievement that, in Roman eyes, made him worthy of such an honor. The reason for Odaenathus' 'promotion' was probably Shapur's 252 CE campaign, his second, which led Sasanian troops deep into Syria and Cappadocia. During that campaign, a certain Uranius Antoninus, who was, in all likelihood, Sampsigeramus, the high priest of the sanctuary of Emesa, issued coins styling himself as Roman emperor. Sampsigeramus had won a local victory over the attacking Sasanians, and it is possible that Sampsigeramus, prior to his usurpation, had achieved at Emesa a position similar to that of Odaenathus (Strobel 1993: 237–239; Berrens 2004: 55–57; Huttner 2008: 220–221).

The crisis of 260 further boosted Odaenathus' comet-like career. In 263 he and his son Hairan assumed the title of *rex regum* (Inv. 3,19,1). This cannot be seen in a Roman context. On the contrary: by assuming a Persian royal title (Shah-in-Shah), Odaenathus gave his authority a local dimension; indeed, he may even have aspired to the Persian throne. The title may also give witness to his desire to provide his thus far purely charismatic rule with a traditional foundation.

As early as 260/261 he had been appointed *dux Romanorum*, an unprecedented title, and *corrector totius Orientis*—further proof that his role was recognized by Rome and the surviving emperor Gallienus (Hist. Aug. Gall. 1,1; Zos. 1,39, 1; Inv. 3,19). These titles secured Odaenathus' authority some legal legitimacy. But not only did Rome recognize Odaenathus' importance, the local population in the Eastern provinces did as well. The 13th Sibylline Oracle, a cryptic text that probably originated in a Jewish environment in mid-3rd century Alexandria, with hindsight celebrates Odaenathus as the 'sun-sent lion' crushing Persians and Roman usurpers alike and restoring peace in the entire Near East. The allegory depicts the Palmyrene *dux* as a savior, an almost messianic figure—in short: a charismatic leader whose legitimacy rests upon solid military achievements.[19]

This was the local perspective. From a Roman point of view, Odaenathus was a Roman official who had earned his position through proven military professionalism. Gallienus simply had no choice but to legalize the de-facto supreme command Odaenathus had acquired in the power vacuum of the 260 crisis. Yet from a Roman standpoint, the source of Odaenathus' legitimacy was the Roman emperor and his alone. He had awarded him, strictly *ad personam*, the titles and his prerogatives and it was up to him to revoke them any time. From the Roman Empire's legal perspective, Odaenathus' position had to expire once the *dux* was dead. What mattered to Rome was the legal foundation of his authority; its charismatic and traditional components were irrelevant.

Not surprisingly, the local perspective was different. Odaenathus himself had played the card of traditional legitimacy when he assumed the title of *rex regum*. From a Palmyrene point of view, there was also the patriarchic dimension to Odaenathus' power. In the oasis city, authority had been, for generations, handed down within the leading families. A dynastic outlook on monarchic power was only natural for Odaenathus and his relatives. When the *corrector totius Orientis* died a sudden, unexpected death, his widow, Zenobia, had no choice but to claim succession for her underage son, Vaballathus. Letting go of the position the deceased *rex regum* had achieved would have been unthinkable, even dangerous for the surviving members of the Odaenathus clan. In accordance with the traditionalism shaping concepts of legitimacy in Palmyra, Vaballathus had to fill the void created by Odaenathus' death.

This claim collided with the Roman perspective according to which the emperor and the legal order that he represented had been the only sources of Odaenathus' legitimacy. From a Roman point of view, once Odaenathus was dead there was no longer a supreme commander in the Eastern provinces. The gap could only have been filled through another official being appointed by the emperor, and this did not happen. In Rome, Zenobia's claim to Odaenathus' position, on Vaballathus' behalf, from the outset looked

---

[19]   Orac. Sibyll. 13,155–171. Cf. Potter 1990.

like an act of usurpation. It was not Zenobia's and Vaballathus' arrogation of the full imperial title in 272, but their succession to Odaenathus' position already in 267 or 268, that had the quality of rebellion. The fact that it took Rome so long to respond to Zenobia's perceived act of defection can easily be explained by the fact that the emperors Claudius Gothicus and Aurelian were both tied up in military operations against the Goths, the Iuthungi, and the Vandals in the Balkans and in northern Italy. Only after these groups had been defeated and Italy secured could Aurelian launch his campaign to retaliate against Zenobia's 'rebellion.' The escalation of hostilities was inevitable, a compromise between the two parties beyond reach.

Conclusion

Palmyra's defeat in 272 did not mark the city's definite disappearance from world politics —at least not its immediate disappearance. According to the Historia Augusta, admittedly not the most reliable of all sources, there was a brief episode in the spring of 273 CE, during which Zenobia's relative Antiochus Achilleus staged a usurpation in an attempt to restore Palmyra's former glory. Without much effort, the Romans crushed this short-lived revolt. But Palmyra was not destroyed. Its wealth and power were gone, but people still lived in the oasis city, which was later fortified by Diocletian and became the seat of a bishopric in the 4th century. Zenobia, who was not Arab, lived on in the collective memory of the Arabs and played her role in Syrian nation-building in the 20th century. Odaenathus was largely forgotten.

The conflict between Rome and Palmyra has its roots in antagonistic conceptions of authority and its legitimacy. While the Roman Empire, from Augustus to Aurelian, had gone a long way from a system of government in which the ruler's legitimacy mainly rested on charisma and tradition towards a more legal and bureaucratic foundation of leadership, this legal framework was largely ignored by the Palmyrenes. In a patriarchic, tribal society where kinship was an all-important factor in politics, Odaenathus had found his way into the top position by virtue of his success as a military leader and his recognition as a heroic savior of the Roman Eastern provinces. Charisma coalesced with tradition, and the emerging complex was, in the long run, incompatible with the position those who had responsibility in Rome had envisaged for Odaenathus. The war that doomed Palmyra and Zenobia was thus the fruit of a colossal misunderstanding in which the cultural gap between Rome and Palmyra played an important role.

References

Bernett, M. 2007. Der Kaiserkult *in Judäa unter den Herodiern und Römern. Untersuchungen zur politischen* und religiösen Geschichte Judäas von 30 v. bis 66 n. Chr. Vol. 203 of Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament. Tübingen.

Berrens, S. 2004. *Sonnenkult und Kaisertum von den Severern bis zu Constantin I (193-337 n. Chr.).* Stuttgart.

Bleicken, J. 1998. *Augustus. Eine Biographie*, 2nd ed. Berlin.

Börm, H. and Havener, W. 2012. Octavians Rechtsstellung im Januar 27 v. Chr. und das Problem der 'Übertragung' der res publica. *Historia* 61: 202–220.

Brunt, P.A. 1977. Lex de imperio Vespasiani. *The Journal of Roman Studies* 67: 95–116.

Capogrossi C., Tassi Scandone, L. and E., eds. 2009. *Acta Flaviana,* Vol. 1. *La Lex de Imperio Vespasiani e la Roma dei Flavi: (atti del convegno, 20–22 novembre 2008).* Rome.

Castritius, H. 1980. Das römische Kaisertum als Struktur und Prozeß. *Historische Zeitschrift* 230: 89–103.

Dahlheim, W. 2010. *Augustus. Aufrührer, Herrscher, Heiland. Eine Biographie.* Munich.

Dettenhofer, M.H. 2000. *Herrschaft und Widerstand im augusteischen Principat. Die Konkurrenz zwischen 'res publica'und 'domus Augusta,' Historia Einzelschriften.* Stuttgart.

Eck, W. 2006. Der Kaiser und seine Ratgeber. Überlegungen zum inneren Zusammenhang von amici, comites und consiliarii am römischen Kaiserhof. In: Kolb, A., ed. *Herrschaftsstrukturen und Herrschaftspraxis. Konzepte, Prinzipien und Strategien der Administration im römischen Kaiserreich.* Berlin 67–77.

Edwell, P.M. 2008. *Between Rome and Persia: The Middle Euphrates, Mesopotamia and Palmyra under Roman Control.* London.

Eich, A. 2003. Die Idealtypen 'Propaganda' und 'Repräsentation' als heuristische Mittel bei der Bestimmung gesellschaftlicher Konvergenzen und Divergenzen von Moderne und römischer Kaiserzeit. In: Weber, G and Zimmermann, M, eds. *Propaganda—Selbstdarstellung—Repräsentation im römischen Kaiserreich des 1. Jhs. n. Chr.* Stuttgart: 41–84.

Eich, P. 2005. *Zur Metamorphose des politischen Systems in der römischen Kaiserzeit. Die Entstehung einer 'personalen Bürokratie' im langen dritten Jahrhundert.* Berlin.

Flaig, E. 1992. *Den Kaiser herausfordern. Die Usurpation im Römischen Reich.* Frankfurt am Main.

Freyberger, K.S. 1998. *Die frühkaiserzeitlichen Heiligtümer der Karawanenstationen im hellenisierten Osten. Zeugnisse eines kulturellen Konflikts im Spannungsfeld zweier politischer Formationen.* Mainz.

Gawlikowski, M. 1971. Inscriptions de Palmyre. *Syria* 48: 407–426.

Girardet, K.M. 2014. Roms Verfassungstradition und die Rechtsgrundlagen des augusteischen Prinzipats. In: Horster, M. and Schuller, F., eds. *Augustus. Herrscher an der Zeitenwende. Regensburg:* 56–77.

Glas, T. 2014. *Valerian. Kaisertum und Reformansätze in der Krisenphase des Römischen Reiches.* Paderborn.

Hartmann, U. 2001. *Das palmyrenische Teilreich,* Vol. 2. Oriens et Occidens. Stuttgart.

Herrmann, P. 1997. Die Karriere eines prominenten Juristen aus Thyateira. *Tyche* 12: 111–123.

Herz, P. 1988. *Studien zur römischen Wirtschaftsgesetzgebung. Die Lebensmittelversorgung*, Vol. 55. *Historia Einzelschriften.* Stuttgart.

Hoffmann-Salz, J. 2015. The Local Economy of Palmyra: Organizing Agriculture in an Oasis Environment. In: Erdkamp, P., Verboven, K., and Zuiderhoek, A., eds. *Ownership and Exploitation of Land and Natural Resources in the Roman World.* Oxford: 234–248.

Holzberg, N. 2006. *Vergil. Der Dichter und sein Werk.* Munich.

Huttner, Ulrich. 2008. Von Maximinus Thrax bis Aemilianus. In: Johne, K.-P., ed. *Die Zeit der Soldatenkaiser.* Berlin: 161–221.

Jaspers, K. 2014. Max Weber. Vorwort zur Neuauflage 1958. *Offener Horizont. Jahrbuch der Karl Jaspers-Gesellschaft* 1: 134–135.

Kaizer, T. 2002. *The Religious Life of Palmyra: A Study of the Social Patterns of Worship in the Roman Period.* Stuttgart

Kaizer, T. 2005. Odaentathus von Palmyra. Römischer Orient, 267/68. In: Sommer, M., ed. *Politische Morde. Vom Altertum bis zur Gegenwart.* Darmstadt: 73–79.

Kaizer, T. 2008. Man and God at Palmyra: Sacrifice, Lectisternia and Banquets. *Religions in the Graeco-Roman World* 164:179–191.

Käsler, D. 2014. *Max Weber. Preuße, Denker, Muttersohn. Eine Biographie.* Munich.

Kaube, J. 2014. *Max Weber. Ein Leben zwischen den Epochen.* Berlin.

Kienast, D. 1982. *Augustus. Prinzeps und Monarch.* Darmstadt.

König, I. 2009. *Der römische Staat. Ein Handbuch.* Stuttgart.

Lendon, J.E. 2006. The Legitimacy of the Roman Emperor: Against Weberian Legitimacy and Imperial 'Strategies of Legitimation.' In: Kolb, A., ed. *Herrschaftsstrukturen und Herrschaftspraxis. Konzepte, Prinzipien und Strategien der Administration im römischen Kaiserreich.* Berlin: 53–63.

Lippold, A. 1983. Zur Laufbahn des P. Helvius Pertinax. In: *Bonner Historia-Augusta-Colloquium 1979/1981.* Bonn:173–192.

Loomis, L.R. (1916) 2006. *The Book of the Popes (Liber Pontificalis).* Merchantville, N.J.

Mehl, A. 1990. Imperium sine fine dedi. Die augusteische Vorstellung von der Grenzlosigkeit des Römischen Reiches. In: Olshausen, E. and Sonnabend, H., eds. *Stuttgarter Kolloquium zur historischen Geographie des Altertums.* Amsterdam: 431–464.

Millar, F. 1966. The Emperor, the Senate and the Provinces. *Journal of Roman Studies* 56: 156–166.

Millar, F. 1993. *The Roman Near East: 31 BC–AD 337.* Cambridge, MA.

Millar, F. 1999. The Greek East and Roman Law: The Dossier of M. Cn. Licinius Rufinus. *Journal of Roman Studies* 89: 90–108.

Mommsen, T. 1887. *Römisches Staatsrecht*, 3rd ed. Leipzig.

Mommsen, T. ed. 1898. *Liber Pontificalis, MGH Gest, pont. Rom. i.* Berlin.

Mommsen, T. 1907. *Abriß des römischen Staatsrechts, 2nd ed.* Leipzig.

Pabst, A. 1989. '… ageret, faceret quaecumque e re publica conseret esse.' Annäherungen an die lex de imperio Vespasiani. In: Dahlheim, W., ed. *Festschrift Robert Werner zu seinem 65. Geburtstag.* Konstanz: 125–184.

Pabst, A. 1997. *Comitia imperii. Ideelle Grundlagen des römischen Kaisertums.* Darmstadt.

Pabst, A. 2014. *Kaiser Augustus. Neugestalter Roms.* Stuttgart.

Parry, A. 1963. The Two Voices of Virgil's *Aeneid. Arion* 2: 66–80.

Potter, D.S. 1990. *Prophecy and History in the Crisis of the Roman Empire: A Historical Commentary on the Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle.* Oxford.

Potter, D.S. 2004. *The Roman Empire at Bay, AD 180–395.* London.

Radkau, J. 2013. *Max Weber. Die Leidenschaft des Denkens*, 2nd ed. Munich.

Rowton, M.B. 1973a, Autonomy and Nomadism in Western Asia. *Orientalia* 42: 247–258.

Rowton, M.B. 1973b. Urban Autonomy in a Nomadic Environment. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 32:201–215.

Rowton, M.B. 1974. Enclosed Nomadism. *Journal of the Social and Economic History of the Orient* 17: 1–30.

Rowton, M.B. 1976a. Dimorphic Structure and the Tribal Elite. In: Thiel, F.J., ed. *Al-Bahit. Festschrift Joseph Henninger zum 70. Geburtstag.* St. Augustin: 219–257.

Rowton, M.B. 1976b. Dimorphic Structure and Topology. *Oriens Antiquus* 15: 17–31.

Rowton, M.B. 1977. Dimorphic Structure and the Parasocial Element. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 36: 181–198.

Saller, R. 1980. Promotion and Patronage in Equestrian Careers. *Journal of Roman Studies* 60: 38–49.

Sartre, Maurice. 1996. Palmyre, cité grecque. *Annales archéologiques arabes syriennes* 43: 385–405.

Schemmel, F. 1923. Die Schule von Berytus. *Philologische Wochenschrift* 43: 236–240.

Schmidt-Colinet, A., Heimberg, U., Caselitz, P., Müting-Zimmer, C., and al-Asʿad, Ḥ. 1992. *Das Tempelgrab Nr. 36 in Palmyra. Studien zur palmyrenischen Grabarchitektur und ihrer Ausstattung*, 2nd ed. Mainz.

Schuol, M. 2010. Die Rechtsschule von Berytus. Römische Jurisprudenz im Vorderen Orient. In: Rollinger, R., Gufler, B., Lang, F., and Madreiter, I., eds. *Interkulturalität in der Alten Welt. Vorderasien, Hellas, Ägypten und die vielfältigen Ebenen des Kontaks*, 161–184. Wiesbaden.

Smith, A.M. 2013. *Roman Palmyra: Identity, Community, and State Formation.* New York.

Sommer, M. 2005a. Palmyra and Hatra: 'Civic' and 'Tribal' Institutions at the Near Eastern Steppe Frontier. In: Gruen, E.S., ed. *Cultural Borrowings and Ethnic Appropriations in Antiquity. Stuttgart*: 285–296.

Sommer, M. 2005b. *Roms orientalische Steppengrenze*, Vol. 9. *Oriens et Occidens*. Stuttgart.

Sommer, M. 2008. Der Löwe von Tadmor. Palmyra und der unwahrscheinliche Aufstieg des Septimius Odaenathus. *Historische Zeitschrift* 287: 281–318.

Sommer, M. 2011. Empire of Glory. Weberian Categories and the Complexities of Authority in Imperial Rome. *Max Weber Studies* 11: 155–191.

Sommer, M. 2014. Pax Augusta—Roms imperialier Imperativ und das Axiom der Weltherrschaft. In: Horster, M. and Schuller, F., eds. *Augustus. Herrscher an der Zeitenwende*. Regensburg: 144–155.

Sonnabend, H. 2014. Gesellschaft und Moral. Die Ehe- und Sittengesetzgebung des Augustus. In: Horster, M. and Schuller, F., eds. *Augustus. Herrscher an der Zeitenwende*. Regensburg: 78–91.

Starcky, J. and Gawlikowski, M. 1985. *Palmyre*, 2nd ed. Paris.

Strobel, K. 1993. *Das Imperium Romanum im 3. Jahrhundert. Modell einer historischen Krise? Zur Frage mentaler Strukturen breiterer Bevölkerungsschichten in der Zeit von Marc Aurel bis zum Ausgang des 3. Jh. n. Chr.* Stuttgart.

Syme, R. 2002. *The Roman Revolution*. Oxford.

Timpe, D. 1971. Der römische Verzicht auf die Okkupation Germaniens. *Chiron* 1: 267–284.

Veyne, P. 1976. *Le pain et le cirque. Sociologie historique d'un pluralisme politique*. Paris.

Weber, M. 1949. *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*. New York.

Weber, M. 1956. Die drei reinen Typen der legitimen Herrschaft. In: *Weltgeschichtliche Analysen, Politik*, 151–166. Stuttgart.

Weber, M. 1981. *Soziologische Grundbegriffe*, 5th ed. Tübingen.

Will, E. 1995. Architecture locale et architecture impériale à Palmyre. *Aram* 7: 29–35.

Winter, E. and Dignas, B. 2001. *Rom und das Perserreich. Zwei Weltmächte zwischen Konfrontation und Koexistenz*. Berlin.

Winterling, A. 1997. Hof ohne 'Staat.' Die aula Caesaris im 1. und 2. Jahrhundert n. Chr." In: Winterling, A., ed. *Zwischen 'Haus' und 'Staat'. Antike Höfe im Vergleich*. Munich: 91–112.

Winterling, A. 1999. *Aula Caesaris. Studien zur Institutionalisierung des römischen Kaiserhofes in der Zeit von Augustus bis Commodus (31 v. Chr.–192 n. Chr.)*. Munich.

Yon, J.-B. 2002. *Les notables de Palmyre*. Beyrouth.

Yon, J.-B. 2003. L'identité civique et ethnique de Palmyre. In: Freyberger, K.S., Henning, A., and von Hesberg, H., eds. *Kulturkonflikte im Vorderen Orient an der Wende vom Hellenismus zur römischen Kaiserzeit*. Rahden: 11–18.

Chapter 8

Royal Sovereignty in Frankish Jerusalem: Davidic Legacy and the Transformation of Jerusalem's Cityscape in the 12th Century

Anna Gutgarts

University of Haifa

Abstract

This paper examines the role of the Frankish kings in the re-shaping of the city of Jerusalem during the first part of the 12th century, following the first Crusade. Through an analysis of the involvement of the kings in municipal undertakings, and of the geographical spread of the monumental foci of royal patronage throughout the city, it challenges previous notions concerning the scope and character of royal impact on the transformation of the cityscape. The transfer of the royal palace from its initial location in the Al-Aqsa Mosque to the Tower of David is then used as a case study to demonstrate the complex circumstances that affected the urban manifestations of kingship in Frankish Jerusalem.

The conquest of Jerusalem by the crusaders in July 1099 was depicted in contemporary accounts as a great triumph of Christianity, imbued with apocalyptic anticipation.[1] However, the need to defend Jerusalem from the counterattacks of the Saracens and to rule the newly conquered city posed a challenge to the crusaders. Hitherto divided into separate armies, the Frankish troops now faced the task of establishing a unified ruling mechanism. According to some of the Frankish sources, Godfrey of Bouillon, who was eventually elected as the crusaders' leader following the conquest, abstained from taking the title of king, choosing instead the rather ambiguous title of *advocatus sancti sepulchri* (defender of the Holy Sepulchre).[2] This title reflected the challenging position of the new rulers of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem, caught between a deeply eschatological notion of kingship and the secular-institutional demands of their newly acquired status.[3] This tension was further enhanced by the need for Jerusalem to reincarnate as a Christian religious, but also political, capital after over 400 years of Muslim rule during which it had been of secondary political importance. Furthermore, it took several decades to establish a ruling dynasty and settle the inheritance of the throne of Jerusalem.

For the Frankish kings, royal charisma was inextricably linked to the city of Jerusalem. This link was based on their association with the Davidic lineage, connecting them both to the city's foundation story as well as to Jesus and salvation history. However, the role of such prominent Frankish monarchs as queen Melisende in the monumental transformation of Jerusalem, which aimed to recast the city as the capital of the newly formed Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, was often constrained by the need to balance competing institutional interests. In the following, I examine a key aspect of Frankish kingship: how royal initiative was reflected in Latin Jerusalem's urban development. Although this topic cannot be comprehensively explored in a short essay, I wish to suggest several lines of inquiry, arguing that changing spatial and institutional patterns that can be detected in Jerusalem's urban layout in the first and formative decades of the 12th century reflect the shifting status of the Frankish kings. This analysis aims to modify some of the current notions concerning the role, impact, and function of Frankish kingship in Jerusalem's transformation into a Latin Christian capital.[4]

First, this paper will challenge the notion of Frankish royal patronage as a primary catalyst of urban renewal, through an examination of property transactions conducted in Frankish Jerusalem. Second, in an examination of the foci of royal patronage it will

---

[1] There is a vast literature on the role of Jerusalem in Crusader rhetoric, granting considerable attention to the shift that occurred following the conquest of 1099 and the subsequent increasing importance of the earthly city. See for example Housley 1992: 27–40; Hamilton 1994: 695–713; Schein 2005: 9–20; Purkis 2008: 59–75. For the most recent discussion of this issue, see Rubenstein 2019: 49–65.
[2] For uses of the term *advocatus* in other geographical contexts in the 12th century, see, for example, Bartlett 1989: 41.
[3] For the title of Godfrey of Bouillon, see Riley-Smith 1979: 83–86; France 1983: 321–330; Murray 1990: 163–178; John 2018: 178–190. For studies of royal identity in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, see Gerish 1999; Crouzet-Pavan 2013.

[4] There is a vast literature concerning the involvement of the Frankish kings in Jerusalem's monumental transformation, particularly dealing with issues of art and architecture. See, for example, Kühnel: 1994; Folda 1995:130–137, 246–249; 2012: 429–479. On some of the liturgical aspects of royalty in Frankish Jerusalem, see, for example, Mayer 1967: 141–232, particularly pages 150–164 referring to the 12th century. On royal participation in liturgical processions in Jerusalem, see Shagrir 2014: 13–15.

elucidate the constraints under which the Frankish kings operated in their efforts to exert their influence in Jerusalem's changing cityscape. This analysis will pay particular attention to the transition of the royal curia from the *Templum Salomonis* (Al-Aqsa) to its subsequent location in or near the Tower of David, and the implications this transition signified for royal participation in the shaping of the cityscape.

The Impact of the Frankish Kings on the Formation of Jerusalem's Cityscape—History and Historiography

Quite according to the rules of their genre, the chronicles of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem often dedicated extensive parts of their accounts to the personae and actions of the Frankish rulers, often stressing their humility and dedication when faced with the great responsibility of governing and protecting Jerusalem.[5] In the early chronicles, this tendency was usually evident in the narration of the events leading to, and immediately following, the conquest of Jerusalem, depicting the piety and awe expressed by the Frankish rulers in regard to the holy city.[6] William of Tyre's later testimony was even more specific in detailing some of the measures taken by the Frankish kings in order to improve the condition of Jerusalem so that it would befit its status as the new Christian capital of the Latin Kingdom.[7] Such accounts correspond with additional evidence concerning the involvement of the Frankish kings in the renovation of some of the most important shrines in Jerusalem and its environs. These sources are all the more remarkable considering the archaeological remains from this period, which to this day constitute some of the city's most renowned symbols.

This combination of archaeological remains and the evidence of narrative sources accounts for the current historiographical tendencies in the interpretation of the royal impact on Frankish Jerusalem's cityscape. This issue is considered predominantly through the prism of royal patronage, investment, or collaboration with the Latin patriarchate, in various monumental architectural endeavors erected throughout Jerusalem towards the middle of the 12th century.[8] Further studies of the city's

ruling mechanisms, which facilitated these endeavors, led scholars to conclude that municipal authority in Jerusalem was divided so that its greater part was left under royal jurisdiction (*pars regis*). The lesser part was the patriarch's quarter (corresponding to the current Christian Quarter), yet the legal implications of this division are still debated.[9]

Drawing on these perceptions, in the scholarship the kings were granted a prominent and defining role in the renovation and alteration of Jerusalem's cityscape during the formative first decades of the 12th century (Prawer 1980: 96–97; Riley-Smith 2008: 96–97).

The analysis of royal involvement in the transformation of the cityscape drew both on the depictions of royal patronage in the narrative sources, as well as on the legal definitions of royal authority, as attested by the documents. However, the same documents can facilitate the recovery of additional, previously unexplored aspects of royal involvement in municipal matters, placing them within a wider framework of socio-economic processes that the city underwent.

The Extent and Spatial Patterns of Royal Engagement in the Cityscape

Compared to the other periods in Jerusalem's history, the period of Frankish rule is fairly well documented. This is mostly due to the fact that Jerusalem was the center of the Latin Kingdom's most prominent ecclesiastical institutions, such as the Holy Sepulchre and Hospital of Saint John, whose archives managed to survive the calamitous events of the kingdom's demise.[10]

Although only a fraction of the royal documents has survived,[11] it is to be expected that since at least officially, the kings were the lords of the greater part

---

[5] The portrayal of kingship in the Latin chronicles is discussed in Gerish 1999: 47–90.
[6] A noteworthy example is Albert of Aachen's description of the pious acts of Godfrey of Bouillon upon his entrance to Jerusalem, and the mystical vein in which they are recounted: Albert of Aachen 2007: 435-439.
[7] This included the famous one year and a day legislation, along with the well-known settlement in Jerusalem of Eastern Christians brought from Transjordan. William of Tyre 1986: 446, 535-36, 709.
[8] Some studies of Frankish Jerusalem's artistic and architectural output stress the pivotal role ascribed to the kings in the renovation of Jerusalem's shrines, by structuring their discussion according to the reigning periods of each king. See, for example, Folda 1995. For a general discussion of the transformation of Jerusalem's monumental skyline during this period, see, for example, Hamilton 1977: 105–116.

For a discussion of this transformation as a collaborative effort of the Patriarch William, Queen Melisende, and the Hospitallers, see Riley-Smith 2008: 170–171.
[9] The documents however attest that the patriarch and the king, as well as a multitude of other Jerusalemite religious institutions, possessed properties in different areas throughout the city. For the debate on the legal implications of the official division of the city between the king and the patriarch, see Prawer 1980: 296–314; Mayer 2003: 179–188. The most recent analysis of the documents in this context is Mayer 2016: 33–38.
[10] Many other documents, including complete archives, were lost. A summarized version aiming to encompass all of the documents was first published in Röhricht 1893–1904. Other publications provided full text editions of some of the documents. The main collections included in the corpus used for this study, are Delaville Le Roulx 1894–1906; Delaville Le Roulx 1883; Bresc-Bautier 1984; Delaborde 1880; Kohler 1899: 108–222; Mayer 2010. A new online resource offering an updated and translated edition of the entire corpus, known as the *Revised Regesta Regni Hierosolymitani,* was initiated by the late Professor Jonathan Riley-Smith, and launched in 2016. It is available at crusades-regesta.com.
[11] For a detailed study of the diplomatic practices of the Frankish royal chancery, see Mayer 2010.

of the city, their influence would have reiterated in the documents concerning other institutions as well. Therefore, an analysis of their involvement in Jerusalemite transactions is an important supplement to our understanding of the royal impact on the cityscape. Moreover, such a comparative perspective, examining royal documents against the backdrop of the broader corpus of Jerusalemite documents, can shed further light on the discrepancies between legal expressions of the kings' formal authority and its practical manifestations in the cityscape.

Indeed, in the first two decades following the Crusader conquest, many properties both in the greater Latin kingdom, as well as in the city of Jerusalem itself, were distributed by Godfrey of Bouillon and his successors, Baldwin I and Baldwin II. This was a tendency befitting the state of affairs in a newly formed political and institutional entity. Furthermore, many of the properties allocated by these first rulers were often defined in very vague and general terms, such as a church, an oven, a marketplace, a street, a bathhouse, etc.,[12] suggesting an arbitrary process of distribution. In some cases, this was the result of the dispersal of properties that were yet to be conquered, often as a privilege aimed to attract new settlers or to provide economic incentives for potential collaborators in the crusading project.[13]

An examination of the documents directly concerning properties within the city of Jerusalem reveals a similar picture. In the first decade of the 12th century, the kings were involved in the vast majority of real-estate transactions conducted in Jerusalem, predominantly granting entire areas, and more rarely, public infrastructures (such as ovens) and specific properties. This corresponds with the testimony of later chroniclers such as William of Tyre, who, several decades later, documented the legislative measures taken by the first rulers of the city in order to enlarge its dwindling population by means of privileges and grants.[14]

However, this tendency was abruptly reversed towards the 1120s. During this period, most transactions concerning the city and its environs were conducted by, or concerned the properties of, Jerusalem's prominent ecclesiastical institutions, most notably, the Holy Sepulchre. Direct royal involvement in urban affairs,

as reflected in participation in Jerusalemite property transactions, began to rise again only towards the end of the 1130s, and more notably by the 1150s.

These tendencies can be at least partially ascribed to the geo-political circumstances of the kingdom in this period. Thus, the tribulations of the 1120s and 1130s demanded the kings' attention in securing the safety of the newly established kingdom, preventing them from directly participating in municipal affairs. The stabilization of the kingdom during the following decades allowed the Frankish monarchs to turn their attention and efforts to the expansion and reinforcement of Frankish settlement.[15] Possibly contributing to the decline in royal engagement in Jerusalem during the 1120s and 1130s, was the emergence of new influential social groups within the city's population and within broader administrative mechanisms, such as burgesses and ecclesiastics.[16]

This process corresponded to a period of internal political instability that resulted from the tensions between King Fulk and Queen Melisende, which were finally dissolved towards the end of the 1130s (Mayer 1972: 99–110). The ensuing period of stabilization within the monarchy correlated with the peak in the monumental growth of Jerusalem. Many of the architectural endeavors undertaken as part of this process, including the Armenian Cathedral of Saint James, the expansion of the Abbey of Saint Mary of the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and the foundation and endowment of the Convent of Bethany and the Church of Saint Anne, were either sanctioned by the king and queen or carried out under their direct patronage.[17]

However, further examination of royal transactions shows that additional factors were at play in the shaping of Jerusalem's transforming cityscape. These are reflected in a notable rise in commercial property exchanges, such as sales, leases, etc., evident in Jerusalem and its environs already from the late 1120s and even more so from the 1130s. The diverse types of documented real-estate exchanges in Jerusalem beginning with this period, allow tracing the emergence and growth of non-monumental residential areas throughout the city, thus expanding current notions concerning the extent and diverse manifestations

---

[12] See, for example: Mayer 2010, Vol. 1: 104–105, 125–127. The corresponding terminology used in the documents is *ruga, platea, balnea*. For a discussion of the term *platea* and its changing meaning and uses during the 12th century, see Dey 2016.
[13] As was the case with the privileges granted to the Italian communes. See, for example, the privileges extended to the Venetians, Pisans, and Genoese (though some were shown to be later forgery). For examples, see Mayer 2010, Vol. 1: 105–107; Vol. 3: 1326–1337
[14] See Note 7.

[15] For this type of explanation, see: William of Tyre 1986: 709. William of Tyre 1986: 709.
[16] The collaboration between burgesses and religious institutions and its role in the development of Jerusalem's municipal mechanisms are discussed in Gutgarts 2021a; on new groups within the Latin nobility, see Mayer 1989: 1–25.
[17] According to Mayer, the foundation documents of Bethany were part of the struggle for hereditary rights between Fulk and Melisende. See Mayer 1977: 376; Folda 1995: 130–136. Mayer's seminal study on Melisende was joined in recent years by several additional studies dedicated to Melisende's royal persona, as well as to the broader issue of female queenship in the Latin East. See, for example, Hamilton 1978: 148–157; Lambert 1997: 155–159; Gaudette 2005; Folda 2012.

Figure 8.1. Cambrai map of Jerusalem, mid-12th century: Wikimedia commons.
The *curia regis* is circled in red.

of urban change (Gutgarts 2016: 265–281). While the complex bureaucratic and socioeconomic implications of this shift are beyond the scope of this paper, suffice it to say that they were no doubt indicative of socioeconomic changes that were affecting Jerusalem's cityscape and its monumental transformation.

Therefore, the documents show that Jerusalem's urban renewal can be re-formulated as a multifaceted process in which monumental construction supplemented earlier onset processes of urban change. The shift in the proportions of commercial transactions referring to these urban properties, combined with their chronology and social composition, challenges previous notions not only concerning the scope but also the underlying causes of the transformation of Jerusalem's cityscape. Thus, the relatively low proportion of royal participation in the earlier stages of urban renewal shows that the changes that the city underwent not only extend beyond the renovation and construction of religious shrines, but certainly did not owe exclusively to royal patronage.

The changing patterns of royal engagement in the cityscape of Jerusalem are reflected not only in its sheer volume, but also in its topography. As I argue elsewhere, while at first generous royal endowments were distributed to various ecclesiastical institutions in Jerusalem and its environs, the 1130s and 1140s saw a transition towards the endowment of newly established institutions outside the city walls.[18]

Such a shift can be associated with the increasing density of settlement patterns and property ownership networks, and the expanding involvement of Jerusalemite religious institutions therein, which limited the monarchy's opportunities to engage in municipal affairs.[19] The 1150s saw yet another shift in the tendencies of royal involvement in municipal affairs, expressed in two consequent transactions that concerned properties and municipal infrastructures. One of these is particularly intriguing, due to its proximity to David's Gate, which served at the time as the primary entrance to the city.[20] While the complex political background of this transaction is beyond the scope of the present article, it merits additional

attention in the context of the transition of the royal palace from its first location in the Al-Aqsa Mosque to the Tower of David, currently dated sometime between 1120 and 1169.[21] The migration of the palace from its first location in the mosque to this new site provides a particularly interesting example of the complex and changing urban circumstances that affected the employment of Jerusalem's topography and symbolic status in the formulation of Frankish royal identity. The following section will place the transition of the palace within a broader context of the different forces that were shaping the cityscape towards the middle of the 12th century, suggesting that it was part of the effort to create royal presence and exert royal authority in an area that by then was rapidly evolving as the religious, institutional, and economic center of the city.

The Royal Palace and the Shifting Uses of Davidic Legacy and Biblical Topography in the Shaping of Frankish Kingship

The double faceted political and religious transition of Jerusalem to its new status as a Christian capital entailed a revival and adaptation of various traditions associated with different places within the city, as well as the formulation of new ones.[22] One of the prominent foci of this transformation was the Haram al-Sharif, where the Dome of the Rock was 'rebranded' the *Templum Domini* (the temple of the Lord) and the Al-Aqsa Mosque as the *Templum Salomonis* (the temple of Salomon). The kings first chose to settle in the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which suited them not only due to its favorable location and sheer size, but also thanks to its symbolic status and linkage to the palace and temple of Salomon. Thus, the identification of the first palace with the biblical image of King Salomon, and its importance for the depiction and imagery associated with the Frankish monarchs, echoes in Albert of Aachen's description of Baldwin I in the days following his coronation:

> *Proxima autem die a Bethleem migrans, Ierusalem reuersus, curiam ac consilium suum cum omni primatu suo in palatio regis Salomonis tribus diebus eiusdem sollempnitatis tenuit, honorifice quindecim diebus illic in ciuitate regia moram faciendo. In hiis itaque diebus potenter sedit rex in throno suo, ut faceret iudicium et iusticiam inter Christianos confratres, si cui illata fuisset iniuria, uel si qua accreuisset discordia, uolens omnia cum equitate tractare, et non ficta pace componere.*

---

[18] Gutgarts 2019: 177–188; Mayer 2010, Vol. 1: 336, 338, 348, 362–365, 393–394; Vol. 2: 514–516; Röhricht 1894: 43–44, 53, 57, 88.
[19] It is important to recall that this depiction reflects the partial preservation of the sources, causing a bias in favor of the institutions whose records have survived. Nevertheless, as previously stated, even if this was the case, royal engagement in municipal affairs still could have been reflected in their participation as a third party in transactions conducted by the Hospital and the Holy Sepulchre.
[20] This becomes evident in the pilgrims' accounts immediately following the conquest. See Shagrir 2010: 5–9. For the first transaction, see Mayer 2010, Vol. 1: 362–363. The second transaction concerned a street or market in Jerusalem, which Melisende wished to construct. For the presumed location of this street, see Bahat 1991: 79; Boas 2001: 147.

[21] The term 'palace' is somewhat anachronistic in this context, considering the widely ranging medieval terminology used to designate structures used as residences of rulers, or government locations. This point will be briefly discussed later in the context of European medieval royal architecture. On the political context of the transactions, see Mayer 1972: 160–169.
[22] For several examples of various aspects of this process, see Schein 2005: 63–91; Shagrir 2014: 1–20.

Moreover, the next day he returned from Bethlehem to Jerusalem and he held court and council with all his nobility in the palace of King Solomon for three days of the same festival, delaying there in the royal city for fifteen days as a mark of honour. And so in these days the king sat on his throne in authority, to dispense law and justice among his Christian brothers, if there had been wrong done to anyone, or if any quarrel arisen, wanting to handle all things fairly and not to settle them with a false peace. (Albert of Aachen 2007: 550–551)

The connection with biblical royal heritage was one of the key factors in the formulation of Frankish royal imagery. Moreover, the 'Davidic nexus' linking the Frankish kings to their ancient predecessors, was reinforced and infused with additional meaning by the dynastic connection between David and Jesus, as stated in the genealogy of Jesus according to the first verses of Matthew (Gerish 1999: 189–244; Schein 2005: 102–103). This dual symbolic system was reflected in royal rituals, such as the burial in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the choice of Bethlehem as the venue for the first coronation ceremonies.[23] These actions stressed the need of the Frankish kings to establish dynastic legitimacy in an essentially new lineage that at first was constantly challenged by the lack of male heirs.[24]

However, notwithstanding its meaningful symbolic status, the palace in Al-Aqsa was soon abandoned by Baldwin II, probably towards 1120. According to the testimony of Fulcher of Chartres, dwindling royal resources led to the gradual deterioration of the structure.[25] Later documents, as well as the chronicle of William of Tyre, recount that eventually portions of the complex were rented out to the newly established order of the Knights Templar.[26] A textual reference to a royal palace only re-surfaced as late as 1169, in the account of the German pilgrim Theoderich, who described a 'newly built palace' near Jerusalem's citadel, or the 'Turris David' (Huygens 1994: 146). Theoderich's description was preceded by a pictorial evidence, namely a map of Jerusalem known as the map of Cambrai, dated to the middle of the 12th century. The map depicted an elaborate structure bearing the inscription 'curia regis' in that same location. (Figure 8.1).[27]

The significant time gap between the abandonment of Al-Aqsa by the Frankish kings, and the emergence of the first direct evidence concerning a royal palace near the Tower of David towards the second half of the 12th century did not merit much scholarly attention. While some suggested that the palace was transferred immediately after the abandonment of Al-Aqsa,[28] others took the first textual appearance of the palace for a *terminus post quem* (Boas 2001: 80). Thus, for example, Adrian Boas suggested that there were several palaces in the interim period between the abandonment of the *Templum Salomonis*, and the final settling in the palace next to the Tower of David, sometime during Amalric's reign (1163–1174; Ellenblum 2007: 107–109).

The extensive archaeological debates concerning the dating of the citadel at the Tower of David add another facet to the chronological ambiguity of the written and pictorial sources. While the construction of the citadel was traditionally attributed to the early Islamic period, more recently it has been suggested that it was in fact built during the Crusader period, the royal palace having formed an early stage in its development. Moreover, the Tower of David seemed in retrospect as an obvious alternative to Al-Aqsa, especially considering its strategic importance, previous functions as the headquarters of the Fatimid commanders, and symbolic connotations to King David.[29]

However, a careful reading of the sources referring to the Tower indicates that its symbolic status was not static, and in fact was subject to evolution and change during the first decades of the 12th century. This shift is indicative of the new meanings that were ascribed to the Tower, as it became the official abode of the Frankish kings. Moreover, since no direct evidence ties the royal palace to the Tower of David earlier than the middle of the 12th century, such vicarious evidence concerning its symbolic status may shed further light on the timing and implications of its relocation. These suggest that the migration of the palace can be placed within the broader context of urban transformation, discussed in the first sections of this paper, and the unique challenges this process entailed for the Frankish kings.

---

[23] Gerish 1999: 215. On the sculptural design of Frankish royal tombs, see Jacoby 1979. On the connection of Bethlehem, and particularly the Church of the Nativity, with Latin Kingship, and the Davidic nexus, see, for example, Mahoney 2018: 9–36.

[24] On the construction of royal dynastic legitimacy, see Murray 2000: 146–154.

[25] Fulcher of Chartres 1913: 291.

[26] William of Tyre 1986: 553; Mayer 2010, Vol. 1: 233–234.

[27] On the map and its dating, see Heydenreich 1965: 83–90.

[28] Thus, Schein suggested that an improvement in the crown's financial circumstances allowed Baldwin II to renovate the citadel, which was the former residence of Jerusalem's Fatimid governor. Schein 1984: 180.

[29] For the tower's functions in the Early Islamic period and under the Fatimid rule, see Johns 1950: 160–163, who also traces the roots of these functions to the Byzantine period. It seems that the Tower's symbolic meaning to the early Frankish crusaders and settlers were hitherto not questioned in the scholarship. Thus, the Tower is commonly presented as an obvious and fixed symbol of Frankish sacral kingship, with clear connotations to King David. See, for example, Folda 1995: 334; Gerish 1999: 218. As will be shown in this section, the sources suggest a more complex situation.

Although the documents do not mention a palace adjacent to the Tower of David, the titles of some of the city's officials make it clear that it served in one way or another as a government center already from the early years of Frankish rule. Moreover, it quickly became one of the city's three main symbolic edifices, alongside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the *Templum Domini*, as attested by Frankish seals, and architectural elements.[30] As recently shown by Cathleen Fleck and Robert Kool, the Tower's use as one of the city's three main symbols, and particularly as a representation of sovereignty, was reiterated in other media as well. This is demonstrated not only by the seals of the Frankish kings, but also in architectural elements that were later re-used as spolia in Mamluk Cairo (Fleck 2018: 37–67; Kool 2020: 245–262).

Both the early Latin chroniclers and the pilgrims who visited Jerusalem in the first decades of the 12th century only rarely elaborate on the Tower's association with the biblical figure of King David. Instead, traditions connected to King David were mentioned predominantly in regard to the Temple Mount or Bethlehem,[31] while the descriptions of the tower focused mainly on its strategic importance or its function as the entrance to the city.[32]

However, it is noteworthy that some of the chroniclers obviously regarded the tower as topographically related to Mount Zion or associated with the biblical citadel of Zion[33] that from the 4th century on was alternately depicted as the palace of King David, the same Zion that he conquered and reigned.[34] This notion may already have been rooted in Byzantine traditions that located David's tomb on Mount Zion and continued to echo in its 12th century descriptions.[35]

Among those pilgrims who arrived in Jerusalem in the years immediately after the Crusader conquest, the only one who provided further details regarding the traditions associated with the tower was the Russian Abbot Daniel, traveling to Jerusalem *c.* 1106–1108.

According to him, the Tower of David was the place of the House of David, where he had seen Bathsheba bathing, and where he had written the Book of Psalms. A 'stone's throw' away, to quote Daniel, was the *metokhion* of the monastery of Saint Sabas, the most important Greek-Orthodox center in Jerusalem, where, at the time, one could still see a remnant of Bathsheba's bath.[36]

Daniel's description echoed earlier Christian traditions that were associated with David, and were linked to the tower during the Byzantine period. These depicted David primarily as the author of Psalms, and as a pious figure.[37] Daniel's emphasis on the story of Bathsheba perhaps reflected a certain shift that occurred in these traditions throughout the Early Islamic period, stemming from the vast exegesis to the Qur'an, *sūra* 38: 21–25.[38] These referred to the story of David and Bathsheba, and presented David as a penitent king withstanding the trial of God.[39] Although the early Muslim travelers indeed associated the biblical events with the Tower of David, or Mihrab Daud, as it was known during the Early Islamic period,[40] the rise of a competing tradition, that placed the Mihrab on the Temple Mount, obscured the importance of the Tower towards the arrival of the Crusaders (Busse 1994: 156; Kaplony 2002: 658–659). Thus, Daniel's testimony was rather outstanding, especially compared to that of his Latin contemporaries.

While it is clear that the Tower was in fact associated with King David well before the 12th century, the different traditions were not conclusive about its function as David's palace. Moreover, the early chronicles and pilgrims' accounts did not necessarily draw on the Tower as their main source for Jerusalem's association with King David, but rather preferred to stress the city's biblical past and its connection to biblical royal ancestry through the events identified with the Temple Mount.

A certain shift in the rhetoric associated with the Tower can be traced *c.* 1130s–1140s. Several versions of a description of the holy places dated to this period

---

[30] For an extensive study of Frankish royal seals, see Mayer and Sode 2014.

[31] David and the Temple Mount. See, for example, *Gesta Francorum Expugnantium Iherusalem* 1866: 510; Fulcher of Chartres 1913: 289; First Anonymous guide, in: *Gesta Francorum et Aliorum Hierosolimitanorum*, Hill 1962: 100; *Qualiter sita est civitas Ierusalem*, in Tobler and Molinier 1879: 348.

[32] For descriptions of the tower and of the entrance to Jerusalem, see, for example, Fulcher of Chartres 1913: 284–285.; Saewulf, *Peregrinatio*, in Huygens 1994: 64. On the economic and strategic importance of the Tower in a wider context of Crusader defenses, see, for example, Pringle 2005: 100; Johns 1950: 163–166.

[33] See in Albert of Aachen 2007: 231; William of Tyre 1986: 385.

[34] See, for example, in Jerome 1955, Vol. 5: 167.

[35] See, for example, in the account of Raymond d'Aguilers, Hill 1969: 138–139. For a discussion of the shifts that occurred in the traditions associated with David's tomb/palace on Mount Zion, see Reiner 1998: 162–164. For a study of the development of the tradition locating the tomb on Mount Zion, see Limor 1988: 11–23.

[36] Prokhorova 1997, Vol. 4: online edition, last accessed December 23, 2015, http://lib.pushkinskijdom.ru/Default.aspx?tabid=4934.

[37] See, for example, The Piacenza Pilgrim. In: Geyer 1965: 140; Epiphanius the Monk in Donner 1971: 69. Epiphanius' account perhaps alludes to the story of Bathsheba through the presentation of David as a penitent figure ('...the Tower of David, in which he sat in the dust and wrote the psalter'), translated in Wilkinson 1977: 117; however, this may also refer to the census David took of the people of Israel, against the will of God, and his subsequent penitence (2 Sam 24).

[38] See, for example, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad, Tha'labī, *Lives of the Prophets*, in Brinner 2002: 468–480.

[39] For a survey of the traditions associated with the tower in the early Islamic period, see Elad 1999: 131–138.

[40] Busse 1998: 107. Some traditions even identified the tower as the first place in which the caliph Umar prayed upon his entrance to Jerusalem; Busse 1986: 165.

reflect a dual consciousness, quite common in this genre, balancing between historical realia and biblical traditions.[41] Thus, for example, contrary to previous descriptions, this account distinguishes between the Tower and the adjacent citadel, ascribing the construction of the Tower to Herod, but simultaneously reaffirming the connection of the entire area of the citadel to King David. Moreover, after recounting the history of the Tower and its traditions, the author returns to the Frankish present, describing how it was captured by Godfrey of Bouillon.[42] Although the text does not refer to a Frankish royal residence, the renewed attention paid to the Tower and citadel and the tripartite connection formed between the Tower, its biblical past, and Jerusalem's contemporary rulers, is noteworthy. The direct (and rather unprecedented, compared to other Latin sources from this period) reference to the citadel as the location of David's palace provides an early clue to the changes in Jerusalem's 'royal topography' associated with the transition of the royal palace from the *Templum Salomonis* to the Tower of David. Moreover, it is perhaps possible to cautiously suggest that this is the earliest, albeit vicarious, textual testimony to the palace's new location.

The revival of interest in the Tower's and citadel's biblical past, their association with the palace of King David, and the connection drawn between that chapter in their history and contemporary affairs, was in fact merely one of several manifestations of a broader phenomenon. The attempt to present the Frankish kings as the descendants of David was not new, but it peaked towards the middle of the 12th century, in correspondence with the crystallization of the image of Frankish Kingship. This tendency can be detected in documents and chronicles,[43] as well as in other media, the most prominent example perhaps being the lavishly adorned ivory cover of the psalter of Queen Melisende, depicting scenes from the life of King David, alluding directly to the image of King Fulk (Figure 8.2).[44] However, unlike before, when the Davidic connection was formulated predominantly in respect to the Temple Mount, as it was in the poem written by Acardus, prior of the *Templum Domini* (Gerish 1999: 192–193), during this period it was re-directed to the Tower of David. Although the Tower was indeed used as a symbol beforehand and was vicariously connected to David through its topographic identification as an

extension of Mount Zion, the agglomeration of textual and material evidence reflects a shift occurring in its symbolic status towards the 1140s. While earlier accounts depicted the Tower primarily as a military stronghold, deriving its importance from its role in the defense of Jerusalem, towards the middle of the 12th century its previously vague connotations to King David were being increasingly crystalized. The appearance of a new type of royal coin dated to the reign of Baldwin III, bearing the image of the Tower of David, further strengthens the notion that this was the zenith of the formulation of this monument's status as the ultimate symbol of Frankish royal sovereignty.[45]

While this evidence in itself may not provide conclusive proof of the exact time of the transfer of the royal palace to its new location, it highlights a shift that occurred in Frankish royal imagery as it was projected onto and manifested in Jerusalem's urban space. The chronological correspondence of this shift with the broader processes of urban change that were discussed earlier in this paper, suggests it should be examined as yet another example of their multifaceted manifestations.

The increasing focus on the royal connotations of the Tower of David marked not only the transition of the palace to a new location, but a more profound change in the spatial balance of the city. The accelerated urban development attested to in the documents towards the middle of the 12th century, signaled the increasing economic and institutional importance of the area around and to the west of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which was also the city's spiritual and religious center.[46] Therefore, although the palace's first location provided it with the prestige and grandeur associated with the magnificent edifices on the Temple Mount, its eventual relinquishing offered an opportunity, or conversely presented the challenge of transferring the royal residence closer to the heart of the city.[47] While it is impossible to determine whether this was an orchestrated transition, or a response to newly formed circumstances, the sources do allow tracing the adjustments this transition necessitated.

---

[41] For the transformation in 12th century pilgrims' accounts, see Qureshi 2014: 725–749.

[42] See Rorgo Fretellus, in Boeren 1980: 43. Another variation of the text continues to elaborate on Godfrey of Bouillon quoting the inscription on Godfrey's tomb.

[43] Schein 2005: 96; For earlier examples of this notion, see Röhricht 1893: 6; Schmitt 1951: 5.256, no. 324.

[44] Kühnel 1991: 340–357. Folda suggested that this manuscript was meant to be a reconciliation gift from Fulk following the strife between him and Melisende, thus dating it to late 1134 or early 1135. Folda 1993: 11.

[45] However, the novelty of the numismatic evidence should be treated cautiously, considering the scanty evidence from earlier decades. Metcalf 1995: 40–41, 52–57; Folda 1995: 289, 334–335. Folda suggested that the minting of these coins signified Baldwin III's victory over Melisende following their clash for control of the throne, thus dating them to 1153.

[46] This can be deduced not only from the significant involvement of the Holy Sepulchre in property transactions throughout Jerusalem, but also from the location of Jerusalem's commercial areas. For property transactions in the general area of the Holy Sepulchre, see Delaville Le Roulx 1883: 73–74; Röhricht 1893: 38, 42, 45, 50–51, 79–80, 85–86; Bresc Bautier 1984: 167–168; 215–216; 236–237; For the locations of markets, see Boas 2001: 142–155.

[47] However, this does not necessarily suggest or in any way indicate that the Temple Mount lost its significance in the urban layout, reinforced by the presence of such key institutions as the *Templum Domini* and the headquarters of the Knights Templar.
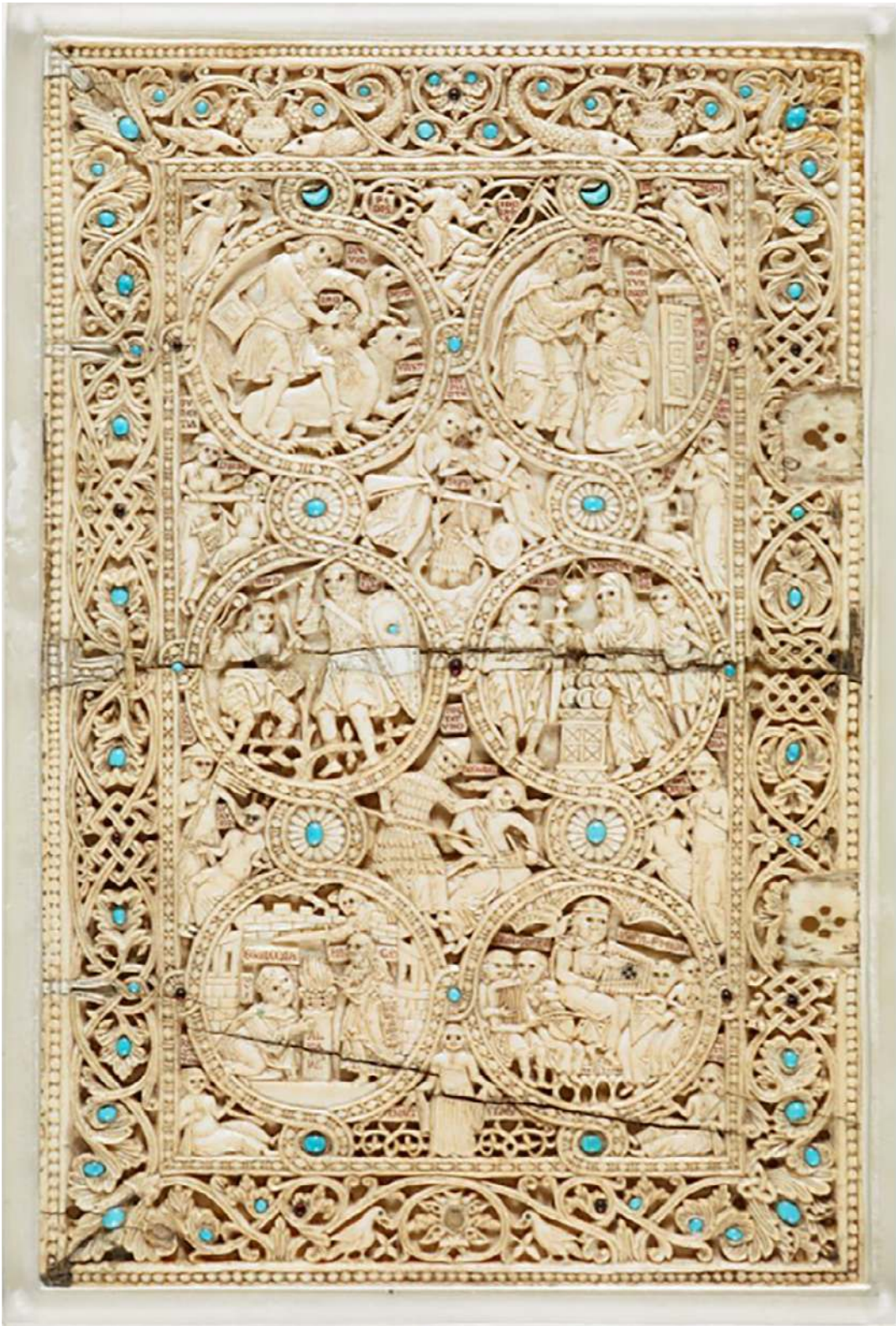
Figure 8.2. Ivory front cover of the Melisende Psalter,
British Library MS Egerton 1139, 12th century:
Wikimedia Commons.

The implications and importance of this transition for the Frankish kings may be further highlighted if we indeed embrace the comparative point of view provided by the analysis of the documents. As suggested in the first sections of this paper, such an analysis indicates that the extent of royal participation in property transactions inside Jerusalem significantly dropped after the first decade of the 12th century, recovering only towards the middle of the century. Furthermore, the spatial layout of the foci of royal patronage indicates that it was mostly spread on the outskirts of the city and its environs. Given these circumstances, it is perhaps understandable that the kings wished to expand their spheres of influence into the rapidly developing areas in which they were not yet directly involved.[48]

While the final choice of the Tower for a royal residence was previously considered to exemplify the continuity of Jerusalem's urban layout from the Early Islamic period, during which it was considered to have been the residence of the city's rulers,[49] a comparison with medieval European royal residences provides an additional perspective. Thus, for example, in England and France, particularly during the 12th century, palaces were increasingly becoming parts of fortified castles, while in other cases towers were often used as palaces or associated with social elites, and were therefore regarded as symbols of authority.[50] Moreover, different case studies in England suggest that royal residences in urban environments tended to be located in proximity to main city gates.[51] These processes not only entailed architectural changes, but also reflected shifts in political atmosphere and social structures.

This may suggest that the Tower's allure for the Frankish kings stemmed not only from its defensive functions, symbolic past, and urban setting, but also from its correspondence, albeit remote, with architectural manifestations of rulership that were simultaneously developing in Europe. However, it is important to bear in mind that the formulation of royal authority through distinctive architectural means, was not a linear process, and was only in its early stages,

particularly considering the itinerant nature and the feudal context of most European courts during the period in question. These were only beginning the gradual fixation of their administrative and ruling mechanisms around a single center or a capital, which later coincided with processes of political centralization, and further elaboration of the symbolic and ideological aspects of kingship.[52] In the course of this gradual process, which often involved the construction of new palaces, different administrative and symbolic functions were often dispersed between several new and pre-existing royal edifices.[53] This puts the transition of the palace in Jerusalem in a somewhat different perspective, highlighting, in addition to the unique complexity associated with the ambiguity of the royal status in Frankish Jerusalem, the cultural context in which royal power was only beginning to be associated with a uniquely characterized specific location. This can perhaps account for later sources, such as the so-called chronicle of Ernoul, either from the late 12th or the early 13th century, which continued to mention the *Templum Salomonis* as one of the royal palaces (De Mas Latrie 1871: 9). It can also explain other evidence suggesting additional locations for royal palaces, as shown by Adrian Boas, who pointed to the mention of an *aula regis* on one of the medieval maps of Jerusalem (Boas 2001: 80). These may be interpreted as traces of the dispersal of different royal functions between several locations inside the city. Further support of this notion relies on the different terms applied in the sources referring to royal palaces, varying from *palatium*, to *curia* and *aula*.[54]

Conclusion

This paper aimed to shed new light on the role of the Frankish kings on the transformation of Jerusalem, examining how Frankish kingship was manifested in Jerusalem's changing cityscape towards the middle of the 12th century. The analysis of the shifting patterns of direct royal participation in municipal issues, as reflected in property transactions, puts previous notions concerning the role and extent of royal impact on the cityscape in a different perspective. It reveals the complexity of the royal position in the cityscape, by analyzing it against the backdrop of the other forces that were active in the shaping of Jerusalem's intersecting symbolic and socio-economic landscapes. This problematizes previous notions concerning the pivotal role of the kings as the main driving

---

[48] I expand on this issue in Gutgarts 2021: 322–349.
[49] This notion, stemming directly from the debate concerning Jerusalem's Western or Eastern urban character, was supported by Prawer, and later criticized in Ellenblum 2009: 73–77.
[50] See, for example, Weikert 2018: 127–139; Renoux 2002: 15–26; Renoux 1997: 236; Marshall 2002: 27–44. The vast literature concerning the complex physical, morphological, and topographical manifestations of medieval rulership, concerning different regions in Europe, Byzantium, and the Islamic world, cannot be fully addressed in the present framework. The current comparison draws on European case studies, as some of the possible sources of influence for the Frankish kings.
[51] Rees Jones 2013: 96. However, in these cases there was a distinction between the palace and the urban castle. I thank Professor Iris Shagrir for bringing this reference to my attention, and for suggesting this course of inquiry.

[52] Vale 2001: 138–142. The symbolic aspects of this process are reflected in such issues as rituals, royal burial, and the connection between the palace and religious institutions. See Vale 2001: 200–246. The question of itinerant courts is closely related to broader issues concerning the constructs of feudal power and authority that are outside the scope of this paper.
[53] See, for example, Bove 2003: 45–67.
[54] On the role of terminology for distinguishing different functions of royal residences, see, for example, Renoux 1992: 184–185.

force behind the reshaping of Frankish Jerusalem's cityscape.

Although the evidence clearly indicates the complexity of the royal position both in symbolic as well as in sheer pragmatic terms, it also reflects the Frankish monarchy's adaptation to the changing circumstances, and the dialogue it was required to lead with other agents active in the city, in order to exert its authority. This was a process circumscribed by various and complex considerations, in which the kings did not always enjoy the most advantageous position.

This analysis yielded several observations concerning the shifting patterns of royal involvement in Jerusalem's cityscape in the first half of the 12th century. It indicated that the struggles to formulate the symbolic and institutional character of Frankish kingship characterizing the first decades of the 12th century echoed in the urban manifestations of royal authority. Thus, our notions of Jerusalem's urban development cannot derive from a solidified and emblematic perception of the Frankish monarchy, but rather need to pay more heed to the transformations it was subject to, primarily in the first decades of its establishment, and how these were articulated in various spheres. The analysis of urban transformation is particularly useful in this regard, since it allows juxtaposing symbolic and mundane manifestations of kingship and royal authority, showing how these intersected and were shaped by changing historical circumstances.

References

Albert of Aachen. 2007. In: Edgington, S.B., ed. and trans. *Historia Ierosolimitana. History of the Journey to Jerusalem*. Oxford.

Bahat, D. 1991. Topography and Archaeology. In: Prawer, J. and Ben-Shammai, H., eds. *The History of Jerusalem: Crusaders and Ayyubids (1099–1250)*. Jerusalem: 68–120.

Bartlett, R. 1989. Colonial Aristocracies of the High Middle Ages. In: Bartlett, R. and Mackay, A., eds. *Medieval Frontier Societies*. Oxford: 23–47.

Boas, A.J. 2001. *Jerusalem in the Time of the Crusades: Society, Landscape and Art in the Holy City under Frankish Rule*. London.

Boeren, P.C., ed. 1980. *Rorgo Fretellus de Nazareth et sa description de la Terre Sainte*. Histoire et edition du Texte. Amsterdam.

Bove, B. 2003. Les palais royaux à Paris au Moyen Âge (XIe–XVe siècles). In: Auzépy, M.-F. and Cornette, J., eds. *Palais et pouvoir de Constantinople à Versailles*. Saint-Denis: 45–67.

Busse, H. 1986. Omar's Image as the Conqueror of Jerusalem. *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 8: 149–168.

Busse, H. 1994. The Tower of David/Miḥrāb Dāwūd: Remarks on the History of a Sanctuary in Jerusalem in Christian and Islamic Times. *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 17: 142–165.

Busse, H. 1998. Brown, A., trans. *Islam, Judaism and Christianity: Theological and Historical Affiliations*, Princeton.

Bresc-Bautier, G., ed. 1984. *Le cartulaire du chapitre du Saint-Sépulcre de Jérusalem*. Paris.

Crouzet-Pavan, É. 2013. *Le mystère des rois de Jérusalem 1099-1187*. Paris.

Delaborde, H.F., ed. 1880. *Chartes de Terre Sainte provenant de l'abbaye de N.D. deJosaphat*. Paris.

Delaville Le Roulx, J., ed. 1883. *Les Archives, la bibliothèque et le trésor de l'ordre de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem à Malte*. Paris.

Delaville Le Roulx, J., ed. 1894–1906. *Cartulaire général de l'Ordre des Hospitaliers de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem, 1100-1310*, 4 vols. Paris.

De Mas Latrie, M.L., ed. 1871. *Chronique d'Ernoul et de Bernard le trésorier*. Paris.

Dey, H. 2016. From 'Street' to 'Piazza': Urban Politics, Public Ceremony, and the Redefinition of *Platea* in Communal Italy and Beyond. *Speculum* 91(4): 919–944.

Donner, H., ed. 1971. Die Palästinabeschreibung des Epiphanius Monachus Hagiopolita. *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 87(1): 42–91.

Elad, A. 1999. *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship: Holy Places, Ceremonies, Pilgrimage*. 2nd ed. Leiden.

Ellenblum, R. 2007. Frankish Castles, Muslim Castles and the Medieval Citadel of Jerusalem. In: Shagrir, I., Ellenblum, R., and Riley-Smith, J., eds. *In Laudem Hierosolymitani. Studies in Crusades and Medieval Culture in Honour of Benjamin Z. Kedar*. Aldershot: 93–109.

Ellenblum, R. 2009. *Crusader Castles and Modern Histories*. Cambridge.

Fleck, C.A. 2018. Signs of Leadership: Buildings of Jerusalem in a Crusader Relief. In: Parker, M.E., Halliburton, B., and Romine, A., eds. *Crusading in Art, Thought and Will*, Leiden: 37–67.

Folda, J. 1993. A 12th Century Prayerbook for the Queen of Jerusalem. *Medieval Perspectives* 8: 1–14.

Folda, J. 1995. *The Art of the Crusaders in the Holy Land, 1098-1187*. Cambridge, UK.

Folda, J. 2012. Melisende of Jerusalem: Queen and Patron of Art and Architecture in the Crusader Kingdom. In: Martin, T., ed. *Reassessing the Roles of Women as Makers. of Medieval Art and Architecture*. Leiden: 429–479.

France, J. 1983. The Election and Title of Godfrey of Bouillon. *Canadian Journal of History* 18(3): 321–330.

Fulcher of Chartres. 1913. In: Hagenmeyer, H., ed. *Fulcheri Carnotensis Historia Hierosolymitana (1095–1127)*. Heidelberg.

Gaudette, H.A. 2005. *The Piety, Power, and Patronage of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem's Queen Melisende* (Ph.D. dissertation, The City University of New York) New York.

Gerish, D. 1996. The True Cross and the Kings of Jerusalem. *The Haskins Society Journal* 8: 137–155.

Gesta Francorum Expugnatium Iherusalem. 1866. *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades: Historiens Occidentaux*, Vol. 3. Paris.

Geyer, P., ed. 1965. *Itineraria et alia Geographica*. Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 175. Turnhout.

Guibert de Nogent. 1996. Huygens, R.B.C., ed. *Historia quae inscribitur 'Dei gesta per Francos.'* Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis 127a. Turnhout.

Gutgarts, A. 2016. The Earthly Landscape of the Heavenly City: A New Framework for the Examination of Urban Development of Frankish Jerusalem. *Al-Masāq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean* 28(3): 265–281.

Gutgarts, A. 2019. Game of Thrones: Political Clashes and Urban Development in Frankish Jerusalem. *New Studies in the Archaeology of Jerusalem and Its Region* 23: 177–188. (Hebrew)

Gutgarts, A. 2021. Between Violent Outbreaks and Legal Disputes: The Contested Cityscape of Frankish Jerusalem through the Prism of Institutional and Socio-Economic Conflicts. *Journal of Medieval History* 47(3): 322–349.

Gutgarts, A. 2021a. Shaping Society and Urban Fabric in Crusader Jerusalem. *Urban History* 48(1): 2–19.

Hamilton, B. 1977. Rebuilding Zion: The Holy Places of Jerusalem in the Twelfth Century. In: Baker, D., ed. *Renaissance and Renewal in Christian History: Papers Read at the Fifteenth Summer Meeting and the Sixteenth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*. Oxford and Basel: 105–116.

Hamilton, B. 1994. The Impact of Crusader Jerusalem on Western Christendom. *The Catholic Historical Review* 80(4): 695–713. Reprinted 1999 in *Crusaders, Cathars and the Holy Places*. Aldershot: no. I.

Heydenreich, L.H. 1965. Ein Jerusalem-Plan aus der Zeit der Kreuzfahrer. In: *Miscellanea pro Arte: H. Schnizler zur Vollendung des 60 Lebensjahres, Schriften des pro Arte Medii Aevi* I, Düsseldorf: 83–90.

Hill, J.H. and Hill, L.L., eds. 1969. *Le Liber de Raymond d'Aguilers*. Paris.

Hill, R., ed. 1962. *Gesta Francorum et Aliorum Hierosolimitanorum*. London.

Housley, N. 1992. Jerusalem and the Development of the Crusade Idea, 1099–1128. In: Kedar, B.Z., ed. *The Horns of Hattin*. Jerusalem: 27–40.

Huygens, R.B.C., ed., 1994. *Peregrinationes Tres*. Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis 139. Turnhout.

Jacoby, Z. 1979. The Tomb of Baldwin V, King of Jerusalem (1185–1186), and the Workshop of the Temple Area. *Gesta* 18(2): 3–14.

John, S. 2018. *Godfrey of Bouillon: Duke of Lower Lotharingia, Ruler of Latin Jerusalem, c. 1060–1100*. London.

Johns, C.N. 1950. The Citadel, Jerusalem: A Summary of Work since 1934. *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine* 14: 121–190. Reprinted 1997 in *Pilgrims' Castle ('Atlit), David's Tower (Jerusalem) and Qal'at ar-Rabad ('Ajlun)*. Variorum Collected Studies Series. Aldershot. no. VII.

Kaplony, A. 2002. *The Ḥaram of Jerusalem, 324–1099: Temple, Friday Mosque, Area of Spiritual Power*. Stuttgart.

Kenaan-Kedar, N. 1998. Armenian Architecture in Twelfth Century Crusader Jerusalem. *Assaph Studies in Art History* 3: 77–91.

Kohler, C., ed. 1899. Chartes de l'abbaye de Notre-Dame de la vallée de Josaphat en Terre-Sainte (1108–1291). *Revue de l'Orient Latin* 7: 108–222.

Kool, R. 2020. Civitas regis regvm omnivm: Inventing a Royal Seal in Jerusalem, 1100–1118. In: Shotten-Hallel, V. and Weetch, R., eds. *Crusading and Archaeology. Some Archaeological Approaches to the Crusades*. New York: 245–262.

Kühnel, B. 1991. The Kingly Statement of the Bookcovers of Queen Melisande's Psalter. In: Dassmann, E. and Thraede, K., eds. *Tesserae: Festscrhift für Joseph Engemann*, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, Ergänzungsband 18. Münster: 340–357.

Kühnel, B. 1994. *Crusader Art of the Twelfth Century. A Geographical, an Historical of an Art Historical Notion?* Berlin.

Lambert, Sarah. 1997. Queen or Consort: Rulership and Politics in the Latin East, 1118–1228. In: Duggan, A.J., ed. *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe,*. Woodbridge: 153–169.

Limor, O. 1988. King David's Tomb on Mt. Zion: The Origins of a Tradition. In: Jacoby, D. and Tsafrir, Y., eds. *Jews, Samaritans and Christians in Byzantine Palestine*. Jerusalem: 11–23 (Hebrew).

MacEvitt, C. 2008. *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance*. Philadelphia.

Mahoney, L. 2018. The Church of the Nativity and 'Crusader' Kingship. In: Parker, M.E., Halliburton, B., and Romine, A., eds. *Crusading in Art, Thought and Will*. Leiden: 9–36.

Marshall, P. 2002. The Great Tower as Residence. In: Meirion-Jones, G., Impey, E., and Jones, M., eds. *The Seigneurial Residence in Western Europe, AD c800–1600*, Oxford: 27–44.

Mayer, H.E. 1967. Das Pontifikale von Tyrus Und Die Krönung Der Lateinischen Könige von Jerusalem: Zugleich Ein Beitrag Zur Forschung über

Herrschaftszeichen Und Staatssymbolik. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 21: 141–232.

Mayer, H.E. 1972. Studies in the History of Queen Melisende of Jerusalem. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 26(11): 99–110.

Mayer, H.E. 1977. *Bistümer, Klöster Und Stifte Im Königreich Jerusalem*. Stuttgart.

Mayer, H.E. 1989. Angevins versus Normans: The New Men of King Fulk of Anjou. *American Philosophical Society* 133(1): 1–25. Reprinted 1994 in *Kings and Lords in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Variorum Collected Studies Series V). Aldershot.

Mayer, H.E. 2003. King Fulk of Jerusalem as City Lord. In: Edbury, P. and Phillips, J., eds. *The Experience of Crusading, Volume Two: Defining the Crusader Kingdom*. 179–188. Cambridge, UK.

Mayer, H.E., ed. 1996. *Die Kanzlei der Lateinischen Könige von Jerusalem*. Hannover.

Mayer, H.E., ed. 2010. *Die Urkunden der Lateinischen Könige von Jerusalem.* Hannover.

Mayer, H.E. and Sode, C. 2014. *Die Siegel del lateinischen Könige von Jerusalem*. Wiesbaden.

Mayer, H.E. 2016. *Von der Cour des Bourgeois zum öffentlichen Notariat*. Wiesbaden.

Metcalf, D.M. 1995. *Coinage of the Crusades and the Latin East in the Ashmolean Museum.* London: Royal Numismatic Society and Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East.

Murray, A.V. 1990. The Title of Godfrey of Bouillon as Ruler of Jerusalem. *Collegium Medievale* 3(3): 163–178.

Murray, A.V. 2000. *The Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem: A Dynastic History 1099–1125.* Oxford.

Prawer, J. 1980. *Crusader Institutions*. New York.

Prawer, J. 1991. Geo-Ethnography of Crusader Jerusalem. In: Prawer, J. and Ben-Shammai, H., eds. *The History of Jerusalem: Crusaders and Ayyubids (1099–1250).* Jerusalem:135–149 (Hebrew).

Pringle, D. 1995. Town Defenses in the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem. In: Corfis, I.A. and Wolfe, M., eds. *The Medieval City under Siege.* Woodbridge: 69–121.

Prokhorov, G.M., ed. 1997. Khozhdenie Igumena Daniila. In: *Biblioteka literatury Drevnei Rusi*, Vol. 4. Saint Petersburg: Nauka. Online edition: http://lib.pushkinskijdom.ru/Default.aspx?tabid=4934.

Purkis, W. 2008. *Crusading Spirituality in the Holy Land and Iberia c. 1095–c. 1187*: Woodbridge.

Qureshi, B.H. 2014. A Hierophany Emergent: The Discursive Reconquest of the Urban Landscape of Jerusalem in Latin Pilgrimage Accounts from the Twelfth Century. *The Historian* 76(4): 725–749.

Rees Jones, S. 2013. *York: The Making of a City 1068–1350.* Oxford.

Reiner, E. 1998. Overt Falsehood and Covert Truth: Christians, Jews, and Holy Places in Twelfth-Century Palestine. *Zion* 63(2): 162–164 (Hebrew).

Renoux, A. 1992. Les fondements architecturaux du pouvoir princier en France (fin IXe-début XIIIe siècle). In: *Les Princes et le pouvoir au Moyen Âge. XXIIIe congrès de la S.H.M.E.S. Brest, mai 1992.* Paris: 167–192.

Renoux, A. 1997. Palais et Souveraineté en Francie occidentale (fin X^e-début XIIIe siècles). In: Magnou-Nortier, E., ed. *Aux sources de la gestion publique. Tome 3: Hommes de Pouvoir. Ressources et lieux du Pouvoir (Ve-XIIIe siècles).* Lille: 227–262.

Renoux, A. 2002. *Palatium* et *castrum* en France du Nord (fin X^e-début XIIIe siècles). In: Meirion-Jones, G., Impey, E., and Jones, M., eds. *The Seigneurial Residence in Western Europe, AD c800-1600.* Oxford: 15–25.

Riley-Smith, J. 1979. The Title of Godfrey of Bouillon. *Historical Research 52* (125): 83–86.

Riley-Smith, J. 2008. The Death and Burial of Latin Christian Pilgrims to Jerusalem and Acre, 1099–1291. *Crusades* 7: 165–179.

Röhricht, R. ed. 1893–1904. *Regesta Regni Hierosolymitani (MXCVII–MCCXCI).* Innsbruck.

Riley-Smith, J., ed. and trans. *Revised Regesta Regni Hierosolymitani.* www.crusades-regesta.com

Rubenstein, J. 2019. *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream: The Crusades, Apocalyptic Prophecy and the End of History.* Oxford.

Saint Jerome. 1955. *Jerome Letters.* In: Labourt, J., ed. *Les Belles Lettres.* Vol. 5. Paris.

Schein, S. 1984. Between Mount Moriah and the Holy Sepulchre: The Changing Traditions of the Temple Mount in the Central Middle Ages. *Traditio* 40: 175–195.

Schein, S. 2005. *Gateway to the Heavenly City: Crusader Jerusalem and the Catholic West.* Aldershot.

Schmitt, F.S., ed. *1951. Sancti Anselmi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi, Opera Omnia,* Vol. 5. Edinburgh.

Shagrir, I. 2010. The Guide of MS Beinecke 481.77 and the Intertwining of Christian, Jewish and Muslim Traditions in Twelfth-Century Jerusalem. *Crusades* 10: 1–22.

Shagrir, I. 2014. Adventus in Jerusalem: The Palm Sunday Celebration in Latin Jerusalem. *Journal of Medieval History* 4(1): 1–20.

Tha'labī. A. ibn M. 2002. *'Arā'is al-Majālis fī qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā, or: Lives of the Prophets.* Brinner, W.M., trans. Leiden.

Tobler, T. and Molinier, A. eds. 1879. *Itinera Hierosolymitana et descriptiones Terrae Sanctae.* Geneva.

Weikert, K. 2018. Creating a Choreographed Space: English Anglo-Norman Keeps in the Twelfth Century. In: Thomas, L. and Campbell, J., eds. *Buildings in Society: International Studies in the Historic Era.* Oxford: 127–139.

Wilkinson, J., trans. 1977. *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades.* Jerusalem.

Wilkinson, J., Hill, J., and. Ryan, W.F., eds. and trans. 1988. *Jerusalem Pilgrimage 1099–1185*. London.

William of Tyre 1986. In: Huygens, R.B.C., ed. *Willelmi Tyrensis Archiepiscopi Chronicon*. Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis, Vols. 63–63a. Turnhout. (Babcock, E.A. and Krey, A.C., English trans. 1943. *A History of the Deeds Done Beyond the Sea By William Archbishop of Tyre*. New York).

Vale, M. 2001. *Medieval Courts and Culture in North-West Europe, 1270–1380*. Oxford.

Chapter 9

Sacred Space and the Royal Seat: Islamic Imagery of Kingship

Rachel Milstein

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Abstract

This paper discusses the visual image of kingship through the design of enthronement scenes, how they originated in earlier civilizations and how they developed in the Islamic world up until the late 16th century. Thrones—their shape, size, and sheer luxury —no less than crowns—express the status and image of kingship. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the objection of early Islam to monarchy is reflected in the simultaneous use of various terms and forms for a royal seat. Nevertheless, members of the first Islamic Caliphal dynasty (651–750 CE) already imitated the regalia of their imperial neighbors. Although the shape of royal seats remained humble until the Mongol occupation (1258 CE), other symbolic elements in the composite space around the throne assumed ever greater importance. A description of these elements, in their historical contexts, reveals how the growing image of Islamic rulers as heavenly-chosen leaders returned to pre-Islamic models of visual propaganda.

A mid-16th century Ottoman miniature painting, probably a frontispiece of a dispersed volume of the illustrated *Shāhnāme-ye āl-i Osmān* from 1558, depicts Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent as the image of the prophet-and-king Solomon (Figure 9.1).[1] In this painting, a fiery-haloed prophet is seen kneeling on top of a stepped structure, a sort of a *minbar* or elevated platform, topped by an arch or a vaulted structure under a tall, domed tower. Three prophets and six scholars or highly ranked officials are seated on lower levels, and angels hover above domed roofs set against the golden sky. A hoopoe, King Solomon's mythological messenger, is seen perched on the pinnacle of the tower. The combined identity of the archetypal king and his Ottoman namesake (Sultan Suleiman) is disclosed by a set of architectural inscriptions above the arches. The hybrid architectural setting displays characteristics of Ottoman mosques and palaces,[2] and the vertical space, of which the sultan occupies the center, seems to combine a number of architectural components and concepts: a *maqṣūra*, (a royal enclosure within a mosque); the Ottoman sultans' elevated lodges in their mosques (*hünkâr mahfili*; Necipoğlu-Kafadar 1991: 15–22; Necipoğlu 1993: 304–306); a throne hall inside a palace; and perhaps a tower of justice, as in the Topkapı Palace.[3] This multivalent construction is an original

invention by the painter, yet it echoes the much earlier evolution of the Islamic *minbar* and throne, from the time of the Prophet Muhammad and the *rāshidūn* (the first four, Rightly Guided caliphs) through the fall of the Abbasid dynasty. Its most prominent characteristic is the fact that it represents neither a real throne nor an Ottoman *minbar*, and it thus suggests that the specific form of the seat matters less than the framing of the scene. In this stage-like design, the image of the monarch is iconic rather than temporal, even if his face closely resembles contemporary portraits of Sultan Suleiman. This picture, then, expresses an ideological, multi-layered image of his royal charisma in visual language.

The subject of this paper is the visual image of kingship through the design of enthronement scenes, originating in earlier civilizations and developed in the Islamic world until the late 16th century. From Late Antiquity through the Ottoman and Safavid dynasties, the throne, the most prominent article of regalia, changed its shape continuously, mainly as a reflection of contemporary or historical models of identification. My argument, however, is that the shape and the character of the royal enthronement space was often more important than the seating furniture itself. A close examination of the components and the structure of the seating space—which, unlike the shape of the seating furniture, remained quite consistent over time—reveals the meaning of sovereignty as well as the tactics of royal propaganda throughout the ages. This subject mainly addresses questions about the relationship between the king and the divine, and the relationship between the ruler and his subjects. Scholarship in this field has discussed the topics of royal ceremonies and related artifacts, pictorial images

---

[1] The now-isolated painting is in the possession of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Nasli M. Heeramaneck Collection, M.73.5.446. The identity of the image is the subject of Milstein 2013.
[2] The Topkapı and earlier Ottoman palaces are best described in Necipoğlu-Kafadar 1991.
[3] The Ottoman painting described here is not unique in depicting a hybrid throne. In 16th-century Persian painting, the royal thrones are often accompanied by footstools with several steps, much too high for the actual seat. A remarkable example of this hybrid construction is seen in an illustration of Buzurgmihr interpreting Nushirvan's dream, in a Shirazi *Shāhnāma* from c. 1560, in the collection of the Topkapi Museum, H.1500, fol. 564r. For a reproduction of this illustration, see Uluç 2006: Plate 127.

Figure 9.1. Sultan Suleiman as King Solomon, probably from a lost Ottoman volume of *Shāhnāme-ye āl-i Osmān* from 1558. Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Nasli M. Heeramaneck Collection, M.73.5.446.

of the rulers, and architectural aspects of the palaces. In an important paper on the ruler's appearance to his subjects, Gülru Necipoğlu focuses on the differences between the presentation, both real and artistic, of the Ottoman, Safavid, and Moghul sultans. Here, I hope to show, through a detailed analysis of real and imaginary designs of throne rooms or spaces, that, in spite of the variety of origins and political entities, the visual components and messages in the development of the throne space are remarkably consistent.

This paper covers only the Islamic Near East, but most of my findings also hold true with regard to the lands east and west of this geographic zone. Similar to other early Islamic phenomena, the conquered and neighboring civilizations yielded paradigmatic models of royal seats or sitting places; these were adopted by and adapted to the conquerors' developing cultures, only to be challenged once and again by immigrations from the East and by changing political patterns.

Evidence for the design of thrones and throne spaces through the ages consists of three categories: archaeological (mostly architectural); pictorial (mostly book-illustrations); and textual. The material remnants of thrones are scant and relatively late, but the architectural nature of throne rooms is quite telling. In the other categories, imaginary details often outnumber factual description, but, precisely because of that, they better reflect the intended image that shaped their form. The nature of the material evidence is divided roughly into two parts, corresponding to the main historical periods covered: From the beginning of Islam to late Abbasid rule, the evidence is mainly archeological and textual; from the fall of Baghdad to the 16th century, we find many visual depictions of enthronement scenes. Though miniature paintings (or rather book illustrations) became fashionable in the early 13th century, before the Mongol conquest, our acquaintance with the early paintings is rather modest in comparison with this art under Ilkhanid, Timurid, Turkmen, Safavid, and Ottoman royal patronage.

Concepts of Sovereignty in the Main Islamic Dynasties

In the pre-Islamic civilizations of the Near East, certain kings and royal dynasties were described as divine, and others were believed to be bestowed with the divine gift of heavenly charisma. Often, the two functions and offices of governor and priest were embodied in the person of the one king.[4] This was the case in Sassanid, Iran, where the two agencies were held to be twins. In monotheistic Byzantium, the emperor maintained some of the sanctity that had developed in the Roman

imperial cult, but, in Patricia Crones' words, 'they [the two agencies] were unrelated partners.' According to the creed of early Islam, on the other hand, Muhammad, like Adam, Seth, and Moses, was permitted by God to unite prophethood and kingship (Crone 2004: 5–15). This theory continued well into the Abbasid period, when Niẓām-i 'Arūẓī (d. 1161 CE) wrote that the king is the lieutenant of the *imām*, and the *imām* is the lieutenant of God, and, following Ibn al-Muqaffa' (d. 757 or 760), cited the Prophet Muhammad to the effect that state and religion are twins, both in form and in essence ('Arūẓī 1968, 33; Shaked 1984: 31, 37).

Based on the Qur'anic description of Adam as God's deputy (*khalīfa*) on earth (*sūra* 2; 30), the Umayyads (661–750 CE) conceived the multi-purpose role of *imām* and *khalīfat Allāh*, to administer the law and to show the community the road to salvation. The Umayyads did not credit the caliph with any personal sanctity, but, like the following Abbasid and Fatimid dynasties, presented themselves as bearers of redemption (*mahdī*). In spite of that, it is probably at the end of the Umayyad period that the title, 'Shadow of God upon the Earth' first appeared, and it spread rapidly under Abbasid rule. Three centuries later, most of the independent rulers who had taken over from the caliphs were using the royal title officially. The Buyid rulers of Iraq (945–1055 CE) even took to calling themselves 'King of Kings,' and other rulers soon followed suit (Meisami 1989: 61; Crone 2004: 41, 75, 128, 153–164). Authors of mirrors of princes began crediting the rulers with a cosmic role, describing the kings as endowed with divine effulgence, and the caliph's person was regarded as sacred. The changing status and image of the rulers is clearly expressed in a growing court ceremonial and luxurious material culture as early as the late Umayyad palaces.[5] These luxurious monuments were characterized by towers with prominent gates, windows of appearance in upper stories, through which the monarch showed himself to the public as proof of his being alive, domes above the caliphs' sitting places, and a rich painted and sculptural repertory of royal imagery.

The political upheaval caused by the Mongol conquest and the burning of Baghdad in 1258 CE introduced new historical perspectives, ideologies, and artifacts into the lands of Islam. The great ruling power was initially polytheist and much influenced by Chinese civilization. The Ilkhanid dynasty (1256–1353 CE) maintained its nomadic and Chinese affiliations and mores, even after its conversion to Islam, but combined them with Islamic concepts and creed, and ancient Iranian sentiments. Hence, coins issued by Ghazan (1295–1304 CE) title him as *Khān*, *Pādeshāh*, *Shāhānshāh*, or *Sultān*. Coins and other documents that express in many ways that the source of Mongol charisma was the might of

---

[4] Winter 2008, mainly pp. 29, 75–85; Lincoln 2008: 221–241. See also D. Kertai's paper in this volume.

[5] Grabar 1955. The entire text is dedicated to this subject.

Heaven (*Tengri*), charisma being a heavenly mandate, and kingship, universal (Allsen 2001: 20–21). As Charles Melville writes about Rashīd al-Dīn, the vizier and historian of the Ilkhanid court:

> [I]n describing so thoroughly the nature, methods and terms of reference of Ilkhanid government, he [Rashīd al-Dīn] provides the best evidence of the new elements introduced by the Mongols.... [A] transformation that could perhaps be formulated in terms of the titulature of kingship, as Saljuq 'sultan' progresses to Mongol 'khan' and on at last, at the start of the sixteenth century, to Safavid 'shah' (Melville 2013: 354).

The Ilkhanid theory of 'divine right' of rule much influenced the royal ideology of the Timurid dynasty (1370–1506 CE), which continued to reconcile, to various degrees, their Turco-Mongol origins with the already mixed Persianate culture. Timur himself (r. 1370–1405 CE) based his royal legitimacy on his alleged family ties with both Ghengis Khan and Caliph 'Alī (Lentz and Lowry 1989: 28). According to Maria Subtelny: 'In the case of Temür, the Turko-Mongolian conception of authority based on charisma (*qut*) rather than birthright meshed with Perso-Islamic notions of divinely bestowed kingly glory (*farr*), good fortune (*daulat, bakht*), and manifest destiny (*maqdara*).' She adds that: 'As if to underscore the cosmic dimensions of his own perceived universalist mission, Temür adopted the honorific title, "Lord of the auspicious conjunction," by which he is known in the Persian historiographical tradition. He claimed to communicate with the divine world through an angel, to have prophetic dream visions, and to read the thoughts of his followers' (Subtelny 2007: 11–12). These claims were further translated into the complex theoretical and artistic imagery of the Timurid sultans as cosmic kings and magicians.[6] From the days of Timur's son, Shāh Rokh (r. 1405–1447 CE), political propaganda focused more on the Islamic concept and titulature of sovereignty than on the nomadic Mongolian traditions. Already in Timur's biography, the *Ẓafarnāma*, the sultan is presented as a religious innovator (*mujaddid*), and his frequent visits to sacred Islamic sites are emphasized (Lentz and Lowry 1989: 100–103). During the second half of the 15th century, political language and the arts were endowed with Sufi symbolism. In this context, kingship was again equated with prophecy.

The subsequent rulers of Iran, the Safavids (1501–1732 CE), came into power on the grounds of religious claims—their charisma being based on their family ties with the Sufi saint Shaykh Ṣāfī, the eponymous founder of the Ṣafawiyya order. He and his offspring were seen as intercessors between the people and God, and Sufi rituals were performed alongside imperial ceremonies at his shrine in Ardabil (Rizvi 2011: 7–8). Shāh Ṭahmasp (r. 1527–1576 CE) wrote that kingship was a divine responsibility and an honorable and infinite gift of God. He himself was revered as a holy man, the 'Shadow of God over the Two Terrains' (Rizvi 2011: 77). The Safavid shahs successively renovated the Ardabil Shrine, where the Shaykh and his son were buried in two adjacent tomb towers. Shāh 'Abbās I (r. 1588–1629 CE) added his own monument to this sacred site, connecting the two previous towers with the Qur'an readers' communal building. Under the dome of this new, heavily gilded monument, a space isolated by a golden grill was reserved for the shah, and called the *shāh-neşīn* (the Shah's seat, throne, or throne room; Thompson and Canby 2003: 28, Plate 2.3).

The Islamic Attitude to the Royal Throne

An ambivalent attitude toward the function and shape of the regal seat is reflected in the redundancy of the terms designating a throne, each of which had several meanings. The word *kursī* can, in a very general sense, signify a seat, although it appears twice in the Qur'an, and the commentators tend to accord it the sense of throne. With regard to the first verse, however, which refers to the throne of God, other commentators explain it as one of the two furthest heavens encircling the earth. The other furthest heaven is called *'arsh*, another term signifying a throne (Sadan 1976: 91–94, 125–26; Huart and Sadan 2012). Additional words for a royal seat are *sarīr* and *takht*, chairs of a certain height, which focus attention on the person seated in them, as the hierarchy of seating height was one of the conventions of class distinction. According to medieval texts, the long sofa for reclining—the *sarīr*—was quite widely known in the courts of the Umayyads, the Abbasids, and local princes. The sovereign could recline on the *sarīr* or, alternatively, he could invite someone to sit beside him. The overlapping of the concepts of mattress-seat-throne-bed did not prevent the evolution of a ceremonial and the differentiation of functions. The word *sarīr* also designates a bed, while the term *takht* also refers to a geographic zone or a site directly related to a ruler, such as a capital town or a palace.[7] Most revealing, in this context, are the names given to Achaemenid palaces in Iran during the Islamic period: 'Takht-i Jamshīd' (King Jamshīd's Throne) to the palace (and especially the Apadana) in Persepolis,[8] and 'Takht-i Sulaymān' (King Solomon's Throne) to a site in current Azerbaijan, where the Ilkhanid ruler Abaka built a royal palace with an observatory (*c*. 1270).

---

[6] Anna Caiozzo, in her various publications, expounds upon the expression of this aspect in the Timurid visual arts. See, for example, Caiozzo 2011: 186; Caiozzo 2011; and Caiozzo 2012: 81–89.

[7] Lambton 2012; Sadan 2012. About the various seats used by the Umayyads, according to later sources, see Grabar 1955: 30–31.

[8] The word Takht stems from the Old Persian *gatu*. A recent study of this famous site is Root 2015, esp. 9.

The earlier fortified citadel at the latter site included the remains of a Zoroastrian fire temple from the Sassanid period, which housed one of the three 'Royal Fires,' before which the Sassanid rulers prostrated themselves in order to ascend the throne (Necipoğlu-Kafadar 1991: 13). This site, and others, such as the Achaemenid capital, Pasargadae, became known by this name following the Islamic conquest.

Minbar *and Throne, From Early Islam to the Late Abbasid Period*

The lack of a single, clear-cut term for a royal chair derives from early Islam's attitude towards the very concept and institution of kingship. Muhammad, however, in his role as leader (*c.* 7–9/628–630), introduced a raised wooden seat, the so-called *minbar*, into his mosque in Medina, and he sat or stood on it while addressing the community. It is told that he was asked by his companions to take up a raised position, as many missions from other tribes were arriving. The role of the *minbar* as a seat of honor is expressed in a common saying: 'the throne of the mighty Prophet in his capacity as ruler.'[9] According to tradition, it consisted of two steps and a seat, and after the Prophet's death, it was used by the first three Rightly Guided and the Umayyad caliphs. The latter, according to certain reports, carried the *minbar* to Syria and raised it by six steps. They, however, also used other kinds of seats (*kursī* or *sarīr*)[10] for diplomatic and administrative tasks while, at the same time, several of their governors and judges ordered the construction of *manābir* for themselves. We do not know how these *manābir* looked during the Umayyad period, but, with the years, they grew higher, to about 3.90m in the 9th-century Great Abbasid Mosque of Samarra, and 3.31m, with 11 steps, in the Great Mosque of Qayrawan.[11]

In its religious function as the site of the Friday *khuṭba*, the stepped *minbar* seems to have been influenced by the Christian pulpit. This assumption is corroborated by textual sources, relating that the *minbar* of the Prophet was made by a Byzantine or a Copt, and that a *minbar* in the Mosque of 'Amr in Fustat (Old Cairo) was of Christian origin. As a seat of power, on the other hand, the origins of the *minbar* go back to ancient Iran. Even if actual royal thrones designed as a set of steps have not been found in archaeological excavations, visual depictions attest to their existence, real or imaginary. The earliest known depiction of this form of throne

is a rock relief on the façade of the tomb of Darius at Naqsh-i Rustam, from the 6th or 5th century BCE.[12] Here, the huge, two-storied platform-throne is seen carried by rows of servants. A better-known version of this construct is the Achaemenid throne in Persepolis (started in 521 BCE), on top of which the king is seen raised like a statue, on a pedestal of three steps. In this position, he looks like a god, and the steps, and perhaps the entire throne, seem to express the concept of the king's apotheosis. Six other reliefs from Persepolis portray the king enthroned on top of a large platform. The throne, most likely a movable piece of furniture, was composed of two parts: 1) a high chair with a stool; 2) a large platform. The entire structure is seen carried by 20 bearers to one of the four designated points in the Apadana (in two of the reliefs, located at the top of a stairway), where the ruler could be seen at some distance, especially during the processions of gift and tribute bearers.[13]

Centuries later, depictions of stepped thrones resembling the shape of the *minbar* were painted within the frescoes of the Dura Europos Synagogue, from 244/245 CE. In this context, King Solomon is seen seated on what resembles the biblical description of his wonderful lions' throne (1 Kings 10:8–20). In another panel, King Ahasuerus is seen sitting on a specially made replica of King Solomon's legendary automaton (Weitzmann and Kessler 1990, Plates 143, 162). A detailed description of this throne, such as it appears in the second Aramaic translation of the Book of Esther, was probably known to the Byzantine emperors, and guided their engineers in their efforts to construct a similar machine. A 10th-century Italian visitor to the Byzantine court tried to decipher the mechanical secrets of their imitations, and the Byzantine *Book of Ceremonies* describes the emperor seated on his stepped 'King Solomon's Throne.'[14]

In light of the legendary importance attached to stepped thrones during pre-Islamic history and to the stepped *minbar* by the early leaders of the Muslim community, it is tempting to speculate that the representation of steps on the first Islamic gold coins was associated with the Prophet's seat (Figure 9.2b; Miles 1967: Plate XL VI 1–6). The design was borrowed from Byzantine gold coins, in which the steps represented the cross on Golgotha, and as such, symbolized an *axis mundi*, the cosmic, religious, and political intersection of heaven and earth (Jamil 1999: 11–15). However, at the stage of the new Islamic issue, *c.* 693 CE, the representation of the Byzantine

---

[9] About the etymology and the early history of the *minbar,* see Pedersen 2012; Mostafa 2016.1: 6–9; Sauvaget 1947: 134–144. In the latter publication, Sauvaget attempted to show that the *minbar*, as well as the al nave and the *miḥrāb*, were royal attributes. See pp. 21–25.

[10] In a description of Muʿāwiya's daily activities, al-Masʿūdī mentions a *kursī*, which the caliph used in the mosque, and a *sarīr*, which he used in his apartment. Maçudi 1869.5: 74–75.

[11] Pedersen and Golmohammad, 'Minbar': *EI²* (2012).

[12] Von Gall, 'NAQŠ-E ROSTAM.' *Encyclopædia Iranica* (2009).

[13] A hypothetical reconstruction of the transitory platform-throne and its locations, with detailed photos of the reliefs, in Saidi 2010: 77–86.

[14] Regarding the Second Targum of Esther and Islamic knowledge of similar legends, see Lassner 1993: 14–17 and 132. The Byzantine mechanical throne is described in Brett 1954.

Figure 9.2a. Dirham of ʿAbd al-Malik, the last decade of the 7th century. After Miles, 1952.

Figure 9.2b. Dinar of ʿAbd al-Malik, AH 77/695 CE. After Miles, 1967, Plate. XLVI 1–6.

emperor was replaced by the image of a Muslim caliph on one side of the coin, and the mutilated cross on Golgotha on the other side looks like a pillar crowned by a glob. The steps were kept intact. Could these steps be associated with the *minbar*, and as such, signify the position of the caliph (*khalīfat Allāh*), or rather that of the Prophet himself, as leader of the community? This suggestion is certainly hazardous, but it is based on the pre-Islamic tradition. Both in Byzantium and Sassanid, Iran, the monarch is depicted on one side of the coins, and the religion of the state on the other; hence the cross on Golgotha in Byzantine coins, and the fire altar in the Sassanid ones. The design of the fire altar itself recalls a set of steps, and the person officiating at its side is sometimes the shah. Moreover, our suggestion can be sustained by comparison with another short-lived issue—a silver *dirham* minted a couple of years earlier (Figure 9.1a; Miles 1952).

The obverse of this coin follows the Iranian image of a Sassanid shah, while the stepped Zoroastrian fire altar on the reverse side is replaced by an original combination of a spear within an arch or a niche. George Miles identified the object within the arch as the *ʿanaza*,[15] a short spear or staff carried by Muhammad during ritual occasions. During the service, this spear was planted in the ground and served as *sutra* (support) and *qibla* (the direction of the prayer). The custom of carrying a spear or a staff on ceremonial occasions was observed and expanded by the early caliphs. It became the rule that the preacher hold, or lean upon, a staff, a

sword, or a bow while ascending the pulpit during the Friday service—these articles expressing the concept of authority.

Arch, Niche, and Dome

The arch framing the spear on this silver coin was interpreted by Miles as a concave *mihrāb* (Miles 1952: Plate XXVIII3)—a niche in the mosque designating the direction of prayer. However, as the first known concave *mihrābs* in state-built mosques were introduced by al-Walīd I (r. 705–715 CE), later than the minting of this coin, this interpretation seems to be inexact. I, therefore, suggest considering the arch form as an Islamic adaptation of the Roman, late antique and Sassanid arches and niches, which provided symbolic frames for the images of gods or fire altars. Even before the invention of the Roman arch, the Greeks surrounded the statues of the gods with an architectural framing device (Gaifman 2017: 392–424). In Rome, arches were built for the triumphal advents of great heroes and emperors. Their passage through the monumental gates symbolized the liminal point between their previous, lower status and their new, elevated one. The rounded outline of the arch symbolized the heavenly domain of the gods, adding a universal dimension to their imperial control over the land. The heavenly support of the emperors and heroes was further expressed by the images of flying victories above the arch or the portrait of the ruler. These and other constituents of royal iconography in Rome were adopted and integrated into Byzantine art. There, they were confined mainly to the images of

---

15   See also Miles, "anaza,' *EI²* (2012).

Christ or biblical victories. Such images were painted around the triumphal arch inside churches, in addition to the image of the Pantocrator or the Madonna with Child in the apsidal half-dome behind the arch. Due to the sanctity attributed to the emperors, arches also indicated royal authority (Fowden 2004: 118).

In Roman architecture, niches were also used primarily as space-framing devices, in which the statues of gods, rulers, and consuls were given a special focus. Following this tradition, as well as the cultic niches of the Egyptian tradition, niches appeared in early Christian religious architecture as focal points, wherein iconic images were properly accentuated. In the 3rd-century Dura Europos Synagogue, a similar niche accommodated the Torah scroll, and the surrounding wall was decorated with scenes of victories in Jewish history, similar to the depiction of victories on Roman triumphal arches. In Christian church architecture, the niche grew to become an *apsis*; in Sassanid Iran, it became a huge barrel vault—*īwān*—serving as a throne hall for the shah. Moreover, the architectural arch, or *īwān,* was imitated in Sassanid rock sculpture, as in the case of Taq-i Bustan, where the flying victories reappear, as in their Roman predecessors (Fowden 2004: 132–133; Canepa 2009: 141, Figure 28;). In the category of minor arts, arches were used in Iran and in Sogdia as a framing design for royal and religious motifs (Ghirshman 1962: 434, Figures 257–258), while Byzantine painters and carvers turned the three-dimensional stone niches into small and flattish semi-architectural frames for saints and church dignitaries. A shallow arch or a flattish niche often surrounds an image of the cross.[16] In light of all the comparative material mentioned here, the arched frame of the *'anaza* on the early Umayyad coin may be interpreted as signifying liminal and celestial space rather than the architectural *miḥrāb.*

We can now see that, at the very beginning of Islamic imagery, late antique motifs were adopted to signify authority: the figure of a ruler; a spear or a staff; an elevated, stepped seat; and an arched frame or a niche. The latter two were joined by Umayyad architects into the inseparable duo of concave *miḥrāb* and *minbar* at the center of the *qibla* wall. Furthermore, the space in front of and around them was delimited by a *maqṣūra*, a box or compartment for the ruler, who could lead the prayer and read the sermon within its boundaries. Based on traditions and historiography, it seems that the *maqṣūra* was introduced no later than the beginning of the Umayyad period, to protect the ruler from hostile attacks, and in keeping with his growing dignity. Under Abbasid rule, central mosques, such as the Abu Dulaf Mosque in Samarra, were designed with built-in *maqṣūras*, with an additional room for

the caliph, adjacent to the *miḥrāb;* the mosque of Ibn Tulun in Cairo was built with a *maqṣūra* in front of the *miḥrāb*, and a large dome above it. In the great mosque of Isfahan, a large part of the hall in front of the *miḥrāb* was demolished in 1087, and a large and high-domed *maqṣūra* built in its place, in preparation for a visit by the Seljuq sultan.[17] In short, the space designated for the *miḥrāb* and the *minbar* became increasingly prominent.

Moreover, the *minbar* itself gradually acquired the shape of a closed architectural structure. With a lack of material remnants or clear textual descriptions, all that is known about the shape of the Prophet's *minbar* is the existence of a few steps and a seat. But elaborate wooden *minbars* that survived from later centuries show that these elements grew higher, imitating a semi-architectural structure, with an entrance door, a flight of stairs, and a domed or conical roof above the seat.[18] In entering the *minbar*, the *imām*, who in the early period was the caliph himself, secluded himself from the communal space of the other believers. In this type of *minbar,* the preacher entered a framed space, in which he appeared to be elevated to a high level under the dome of heaven.

The 'roof' of the *minbar* is, without doubt, a continuation of the ancient baldachins and domed structures that symbolized sacred space in Near Eastern pre-Islamic civilizations. In addition to appearing in churches, baptisteries, and burial monuments in Byzantium, or fire temples in Zoroastian Iran, domes covered the royal reception halls of both empires, where they were equated with the revolving heavens (L'Orange 1982: 24 and Figure 11; 110–111, 134, 137 and Figure 98). The dome's late antique symbolism was readily adopted by early Islam, both in the religious context of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, and in the royal context of the Umayyad palaces (Bloom 1993: 134–137).

The Isolating Curtain (ḥijāb, sitr)

An isolating curtain or screen constituted an additional expression of a special space for the monarch. This innovation, attributed by an Abbasid historian to Muʿāwiya (r. 661–680), the founder of the Umayyad dynasty, was common among the earlier Iranian dynasties (Cazzato).[19] The curtain separated the monarch from his audience, both to conceal his bad manners while drunk and—most importantly—to create an exclusive space for him. A chamberlain, or *khurram bāsh* in the Sassanid protocol and *ḥājib* in the Islamic version, served as intermediary between the two spaces.[20] In his palace, then, the caliph presided

---

[16] Evans and Wixsom, *The Glory of Byzantium*: 37, Figure 2b and 201, Figure 138.

[17] Grabar 1955: 32–40; Pedersen: 'Masdjid,' *EI²* (2012).
[18] A *minbar* of this design was made in 1081 for the Shrine of al-Husayn at Ascalon. See Bloom 2007: 135, Figure 101.
[19] Cazzato: 'Ideologie royale iranienne,' pp. 100–101.
[20] Lambton: 'Marāsim,' *EI²* (2012); Grabar 1955: 30, 53–57, 67, following

over court ceremonies seated on a throne, surrounded by the insignia of sovereignty and veiled by a curtain. The most remarkable use of the curtain is found in stories relating to al-Walīd II (r. 743–744), and, therefore, Fowden seems to be correct in concluding that al-Walīd's portrait on the alcove wall at Qusayr ʿAmra (Figure 9.2b) may have been initially closed off with a curtain of the sort often mentioned in *Kitāb al aghānī* (Fowden 2004: 128). The use of the curtain continued well into the later Islamic periods, as we read in Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī: 'Behind the high curtain and the inaccessible veil is a pious sovereign....'[21]

The Throne and Its Framing Space

Apart from the *minbar*, which was used by the caliphs (and their representatives) in mosques, and in the later Abbasid period was occupied by professional preachers, the first palatial thrones seem to have appeared only toward the end of the Umayyad period, probably merely as signifying images in painting and sculpture. As a rule, we have to consider the depictions of Islamic enthroned figures not as a material record of the court paraphernalia, but as artificial imagery, designed to enhance the glory of caliphs and sultans.

Remnants of stucco reliefs from the 8th-century Umayyad palace Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi depict two rulers (or perhaps they are one and the same). One image faithfully follows the official Byzantine model; the other recalls the seating position of the Sassanid shahs (Grabar 1955: 31–39; Fowden 2004: 121–122). The representation, side by side, of Byzantine and Sassanid visual motifs and styles obviously attests to the employment of various teams of artisans, who spread their local traditions across the new empire. But, at the same time, this lent a cosmopolitan air to the monument, and especially to its patrons. Therefore, the two adjacent enthroned images probably reflect the ancient idea of a universal ruler, a 'Great King of Kings' (Strootman 2019: 1, 6, 10, 16).

Another Byzantine model is reproduced in a wall painting in the alcove of the reception hall at Qusayr ʿAmra, where the (future?) Umayyad caliph, al-Walīd II, is seen enthroned under an arch or a baldachin, his feet resting on a footstool (Figure 9.3). Two servants complete the sides of the composition. The part of the painting below the caliph is described by Fowden as follows:

> [A]n aquatic scene including birds, fishes, and four or five fishermen in a boat that also contained amphoras. It may, then, represent... the Ocean
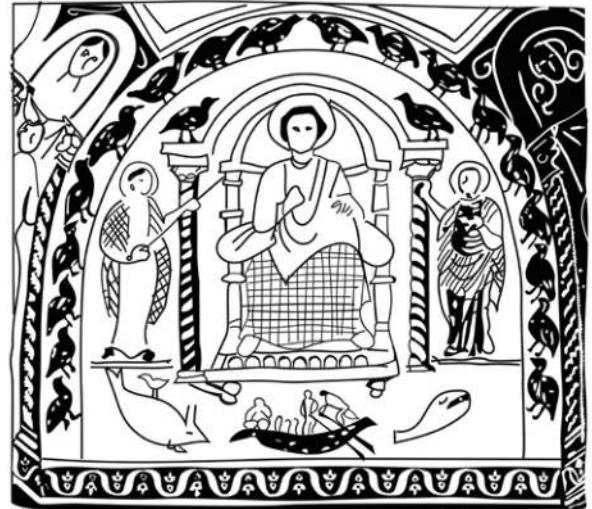

Figure 9.3 Depiction of al-Walīd II in Qusayr ʿAmra, first half of the 8th century. After Fowden 2004, 117, Figure 137.

that embraces the Earth, underneath Heaven's vault symbolized by the arch of birds that touches the aquatic scene at its left and right extremities. This was appropriate imagery with which to frame a world ruler, as has long been recognized in the Roman Empire. Indeed, the poet al-Farzandaq, in encomiastic mode, not only envisaged al-Walīd II seated under a dome that represented the heavens, but also emitted the conceit that al-Walīd was himself 'the sky of God (Fowden 2004: 123).

A recent interpretation of the same fresco suggests that the aquatic scene may depict the prophet Jonah being cast off the merchant boat: 'Although the latter [the aquatic scene] has no identifying inscriptions, the combination of sea-monster and a falling figure strongly recalls the central moment in the Jonah narrative' (Leal 2017: 237). As such, it adds a messianic meaning to the enthronement scene.[22]

But water as a component in the imagery of royalty had many faces in the ancient Near East. One of them is revealed in the 5th-century reliefs, illustrating royal hunts, on the two sides of the Taq-i-Bustan cave. On the left side, the king is seen being rowed across a swamp, escorted by a boatful of female musicians (Ghirshman 1962: 193, 194–196, Figure 236). A painting in an Afghan cave, probably from the 4th or the early 5th century, apparently shows the Avestan god Tištrya enthroned, with his feet resting on an ornamental footstool, under which fish swim in a lake or sea.[23] Earlier examples of this motif are mentioned by Suter, in this volume.

Christensen 1944: 395.
[21] Niẓām-i ʿArūḍī 1968: 19. This practice is also confirmed by Jāḥiẓ and Masʿūdī. See Cazzato, 'Ideologie royale iranienne,' 108: 223–224.

[22] I wish to thank Dr. Hannelies Koloska for calling my attention to this paper.
[23] Fowden 2004: 125, after Grenet 1998.

The presence of birds as symbols of heaven and as agents of the gods was even more prominent than that of water, first and foremost as a symbol of the sovereign's victories and apotheosis in the Roman sphere, or of his divine royal glory in Iranian culture. As a symbol of paradise, birds appear in late antique churches in Jordan, and they are depicted perched atop columns, arches, or roofs in folios of Christian canon tables. The Iranian (although post-Sassanid) royal equivalent is an effigy of a shah on a silver plate. He is depicted enthroned on a podium with the contemporary motif of lions' legs,[24] flanked by reliefs of two rows of birds on an arched façade (Ghirshman 1962: 206, Figure 246; Fowden 2004: 118–1119, Figure 38; Canepa 2009: 94;). In an early Islamic example, rows of birds frame the façade, the vestibule, and the reception hall of the Khirbat al-Mafjar palace near Jericho, which was built by al-Walīd II, the patron of Qusayr ʿAmra. Priscilla Soucek, who understands the composition on the post-Sassanid plate as a probable portrayal of a throne pavilion, interprets the façade of Khirbat al-Mafjar as a visual metaphor for Solomon's throne (Soucek 1999, esp. 112, 122–123).

Cosmic symbolism in its Islamic version is most likely what appears on another post-Sassanid gilded plate.[25] It depicts a pseudo-Sassanid shah reclining informally on a bench, or perhaps a carpet, framed by a body of water at the bottom and a bird perching on a tall vine above. In this composition, the water and the sky above are seen connected by a tree of life, and the monarch, thus equated with the cosmic tree, is represented as an *axis mundi.*

The rounded range of birds in the fresco at Qusayr ʿAmra accentuates the arched contour of the barrel-vaulted room. Thus, the arched shape of the high Byzantine-style throne is echoed by the contour of the arch/baldachin, and is further surrounded by the barrel-roof of the hall. As a result, the caliph is seen in the center of three receding arches, which create a sense of depth in front of and behind him, as if he were seated within an architectural niche, and, at the same time, in a large landscape. The enthroned monarch is depicted as a cosmic ruler, located above the underground cosmic ocean and under the dome of heaven. Thus, from the fresco at Qusayr ʿAmra, we can learn that the notion of kingship is transmitted by what surrounds the ruler—the painted objects as well as the architectural setting—no less than by the royal seat itself. The shape of the

Figure 9.4 Dirham of Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad, probably from Hisn Kayfa. New York, The American Numismatic Society (1925.13.1). Reproduction in Canby, Beyazit, Rugiadi, and Peacock 2016: 69, Figure h.

space and the nature of the place confer royal dignity upon the seated man.

All the elements discussed so far survived and continued to develop in the later phases of royal Islamic imagery. Not many figurative artifacts remain from the long Abbasid period, but a few palatial complexes, ceramic pieces, illustrations for texts, and, mainly, figurative coins, bear evidence of this. Coins from 11th to 13th century Mesopotamia, for example, show rulers seated in different positions on various forms of support, but most of them are framed by an arch and a pair of heavenly creatures above their heads. The latter may be, in addition to stars, a pair of angels, or central Asian *apsaras* (Figure 9.4).[26]

The artistic sources are many, Christian and Buddhist alike, but the important point is their frequent and consistent re-emergence on official Islamic objects. In at least one case, a stucco piece from Mesopotamia, the arch above the monarch's head is actually formed by the tails of two birds facing one another (Figure 9.5).[27] Alternatively, a pair of lions may be seen below the throne.[28] In Mesopotamian paintings of the same period, such as a small paper amulet and a frontispiece for an illustrated volume of *Kitāb al-agāhanī*, two exotic *apsaras* hold the arch of heaven in their hands (Canby, Beyazit,

[24] Lions (and other animals) as a structural or imaginary part of thrones, are yet another ancient motif that was adopted by Islamic art. They are not discussed in this paper precisely because they appear everywhere and are often mentioned in the research literature. This motif disappears from Islamic imagery after the 14th century.
[25] The 'Kazvin cup' with Chosroes I? (6th century CE) Teheran Museum, reproduction in Ghirshman 1962: 206, Figure 246.

[26] Dirham of Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad (r. 1167–1185 CE). Probably minted at Hisn Kayfa.
[27] Fragment of a storage vessel with enthronement scene.
[28] A relief on a stucco medallion from 12th century Iran.

Figure 9.5 Top Section of a water jug, Mesopotamia, late 12th–early 13th century. New York, Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Roebling Society (73.30.6). © Brooklyn Museum. Canby, Beyazit, Rugiadi, and Peacock 2016: 110, Figure 38.

Rugiadi, and Peacock 2016: 61, Figure 11; Hillenbrand, 2017: 223–227, Figures 2–6). A monumental version of these two *geniis* is carved in the upper corners of the gate of Konya's ancient citadel. Here, the sultan's image is absent, but the citadel signifies his protecting presence, and the arched gate is the passageway to his protected domain.[29] The symbolic combination of the ruler's image with a pair of hovering angelic figures was probably unknown in Umayyad art, and this late Abbasid formula (probably used only in Anatolia) certainly adds a sacred dimension to the concept of kingship as a gift or protection from heaven. In a way, the angels (or *geniis*) replace the earlier pairs of birds, but their symbolic meaning is more strongly pronounced.

Arches and niches also continued to be used as framing devices, and in Islamic palaces, were designed to accommodate the ruler in public ceremonies. This practice can be seen in the remnants of a Seljuqid site in Sinjar, Iraq, where the ruler sat inside the niche, surrounded by visual images of his special pages. There are no traces of the form or the material of the throne (Canby, Beyazit, Rugiadi, and Peacock 2016: 42, Figure 30). A figurative depiction of a similar niche, in stucco relief, was found in the vicinity of Rayy (Figure 9.6; Canby, Beyazit, Rugiadi, and Peacock 2016: 76–77, Figure 6). The throne, on which the sultan is seated in Oriental fashion, is located in the flat, imaginary niche, above the level of his young slaves. The sultan's reduced

dimension, however, suggests that he is located well behind his slaves, i.e., inside the space of a deep niche. In fact, many of the Abbasid depictions of caliphs and sultans show them seated with folded legs, in Oriental style or perhaps lotus position. Combined with the two flying *geniis*, this description is clearly reminiscent of the Central Asian statues of the Buddha, which became part of the cultural heritage of the Turkish tribes that settled in Mesopotamia and Anatolia.

Late Abbasid expressions of this iconography can also be seen in the frontispieces of Dioscorides' *Hayūlā 'ilāj al-ṭibb,* dated 621/1224, from Baghdad or North al-Jazira, and al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt*, dated 634/1237, from Baghdad.[30] It is true that the seated person at the center of the *Hiyūlā* composition is a scholar, Dioscorides, rather than a ruler. However, as Robert Hillenbrand convincingly shows, an image of an author could, at that stage of Arab painting, compete with and challenge that of his royal patron (Hillenbrand 2007: esp. 496–501). In any case, the pyramidal dome of the throne, and especially the horns at its top (recalling certain Sassanid crowns), together with the boat in the sea below, endow the composition with cosmic royalty and dimension. The two attendants beside the central person complete this royal presentation. A century later, a painter illustrating a *Maqāmāt* for a Mamluk patron may have misunderstood the meanings of this arrangement, as he replaced the aquatic scene with an acrobatic exercise over a rounded basin, disproportionally enlarged the pair of angels, and reversed the direction of the sky-blue ribbon in their hands (Ettinghausen 1977: Plate on p. 148).

A body of water beneath the image of a monarch appears in a number of late 12th and 13th century ceramics from Iran. Guest and Ettinghausen note that the aquatic world is not unique to royal iconography, and yet: 'In certain cases, it seems to reflect a cosmological order because we find a tripartite arrangement with the central band populated with the inhabitants of the earth.' They add that: 'In view of the basic importance of water for the fertility, even the very existence, of a country as barren in parts as Iran, it can also be assumed that the symbols for, or representation of, water on pottery from pre-historic times on had also a mythological or magic significance' (Guest and Ettinghausen 1961: 30–31, Figures 4, 6). In at least one of these illustrated ceramic bowls, the cosmic arrangement is completed by a group three architectural domes, in addition to birds flying above the mythological shah Farīdūn (Simpson 1985: 132, Figure 1).

---

[29] The reliefs are kept in the Museum of Stones and Wooden Works (Ince Minareli), Konya.

[30] Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, No. 3704, fol. Lv. Reproduction in Hillenbrand 2007: esp. 488–489; 467, Figure A; and 468–469, Figures 1a–1b.

Figure 9.6. Panel with enthroned ruler and courtiers, Iran, possibly the vicinity of Rayy, second half of the 12th century. Philadelphia Museum of Art, purchased with the Museum Funds, 1929 (1929-69-1). Canby, Beyazit, Rugiadi, and Peacock 2016, 111, Figure 39.

From the Mongol Conquest to the Late 16th Century

When the Mongols established their dominion over the eastern part of the Islamic world, the regional ruling dynasties, if not the Abbasid caliphs themselves, had already adopted and developed a royal ceremonial, architecture and art that endowed the monarch with universal and cosmic dimensions. The Ilkhans and their artists were thus able to shed their political concepts, nomadic traditions, and imported Chinese style in favor of the extant local visual models. As a result, their main contributions to the visual imaging of the charismatic, divinely chosen, and supported ruler, are a growing emphasis on the air of sanctity; a natural, outdoor background for the royal presence; and the representation of contemporary Chinese modes of apparel, furniture, and ceremonies.

All these changes are apparent in a depiction of an enthroned ruler on a tapestry roundel from the first half of the 14th century (Figure 9.7; von Folsach 2017: 66, Figure 21; Komaroff and Carboni 2003: 168, Figure 195). The form of the throne here is not different from the schematic seats depicted on Abbasid artifacts, nor is the shape of the crown. The cosmic essence of the enthronement is traditionally expressed by a vertical alignment of the sea, the throne and the birds, but the arch of the sky is replaced by a large and colorful parasol. This signifier of royalty, which was, of course,

well known in Achaemenid Iran, disappeared from Islamic iconography until the Mongol conquest, and then reappeared in Ilkhanid art via the Buddhist world of Central and Eastern Asia.[31] The parasol, which, like the dome, symbolizes the sky,[32] was used out of doors, and as such, suits the Mongol nomadic tradition. However, the most significant innovation in this iconography is the golden halo around the ruler's head. Halos were indeed a common and insignificant stylistic feature in late Abbasid painting and ceramics. The latter continued well into the Ilkhanid period, but in book illustrations from *c.* 1300 CE, round or fiery halos were attributed mainly to Muhammad and those whom Islam recognizes as prophets. Therefore, in the context of this tapestry, where the only haloed figure is the prince, this motif should be interpreted as a sign of sacred charisma. Another, isolated miniature painting goes even further in this direction.[33] It depicts a large king, haloed and dressed in gold, enthroned on a golden background, at the center of his Mongol subjects and three Central Asian heavenly creatures. The circular composition, the group of heavenly figures, and the sky-blue throne on the golden background all transform the scene into a Buddhist heaven, and the ruler, into a sacred image. Even in Rashīd al-Dīn's rationalistic

---

[31] Ghirshman 1962: 197–198, Figure 237; 323, Figure 433; Flood 2005: 78, Figures 2, 19; Lambton, 'Marāsim,' *EI²* (2012).

[32] Niẓām-i ʿArūḍī 1968: 19; Melikian-Chirvani 2011: 110.

[33] Berlin, Berlin State Library, Diez_A_fol_71_46-#4.

Figure 9.7. Ilkhanid tapestry depicting an enthroned ruler. Copenhagen, The David Collection, inv. no 30/1995, photographer Pernille Klemp.

history, with illustrations combining Chinese with Christian elements, the Seljuq sultan, Berkyaruk, is seen enthroned under a huge hovering crown, which seems to descend upon his head from a heavenly curtain.[34]

Another innovation in the tapestry composition is the blossoming background, which locates the enthroned ruler in the open air. In mid-14th-century book art, on the other hand, scenes of enthronement are usually depicted in a royal tent. Here, besides the elevated seat, the most prominent element of décor is the heavy curtains.[35] These may be a continuation of the earlier isolating device, discussed above, but perhaps also a souvenir of nomadic tradition, where the ruler, enthroned under the uplifted door curtain of his tent,

encountered his subjects, who gathered outside.[36] A depiction of the curtain, then, draws attention to the spatial separation between the outside and the inside, and to the proper location of the ruler at the meeting place between the two.

In the context of a built palace, the meeting point between the two spaces is the *īwān*, an architectural unit closed on three sides and completely open to the courtyard on the fourth side. This type of architectural space, which served as a royal reception hall at the Sassanid palace in Ctesiphon, became the most important unit of many types of Islamic public monuments. According to Jonathan Bloom: 'Literary and archaeological evidence suggests that the celestial dome favoured by early Islamic palaces for reception rooms was replaced by the vaulted iwan' (Bloom 1993: 137). Being half open and half closed, the space of the *īwān* can be conceived as a liminal point, an *in between*,

---

[34] Rashid al-Din's *Compemdium of Chronicles*, Tabriz, 714/1314-15. Edinburgh University Library, MS Arab 20, fol. 187v, reproduced in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *The Legacy of Genghis Khan*, p. 147, Figure 173.
[35] The known examples illustrated the grand royal *Shāhnāma*, perhaps from the time of Abu Saʿīd. See Grabar and Blair 1980: Figures 1, 11, 17, 45, 54, on pp. 59, 79, 91, 147, 165.

[36] About the importance of the royal tent, see O'Kane 1993: 249–252; Broadbridge 2008: 108; Blair, 'Sarāy,' *EI²* (2012); Melville 2013: 35.

Figure 9.8 Genghis Khan and his descendants. Illustration to *Ta'rīkh-i Jahān-Gushā*. Paris, Bibliothèque National de France, Mss. Orientaux, suppl person 1113, fol. 126v.

and, therefore, its role of framing enthronement scenes, in art and in reality, seems loaded with symbolism.

The Ilkhans' nomadic identification was further accentuated in the proliferating Timurid art of the book in the early 15th century. The Timurid sultans continued to hold receptions in the open, using tents and shades instead of brick buildings, and they are often depicted in the garden, seated on carpets instead of thrones. An illustration of Timur Leng holding court out of doors shows him enthroned in front of the door of his royal tent. The cylindrical tent, and its blue roof in particular, recalls Islamic burial shrines with domes symbolizing

the blue sky.[37] Nature plays a prominent role in an illustrated copy of Rashīd al-Dīn's *Ta'rīkh-i Jahān-Gushā* (History of Genghis Khan), in which Genghis Khan and his descendants are often seen enthroned out of doors, framed by trees instead of architecture (Figure 9.8).[38]

Plants as borders and framing devices were common in ancient Near-Eastern civilizations, and certain ones, such as the palm tree and the vine, often had symbolic meaning.[39] But Islamic art from the Ilkhanid

---

[37] See Lentz and Lowry 1989: 32–34, about Timur's decision to celebrate his ceremonies in his gardens. The illustration is reproduced on pp. 264–265.

[38] Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Mss Orientaux, suppl persan 1113 fol. 126v°.

[39] As an example, see the post-Sassanid plate, note 53.

period onward made constant and meaningful use of this convention. In certain cases, such as a depiction of Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad that resembles a religious icon, trees not only cut the composition into separate zones (each denoting a different historical period), but also surround the fiery halo behind Muhammad's throne, thus forming another arched frame.[40] Similarly, in another painting from the same period, an arc of angels around Muhammad's haloed throne supports the interpretation of trees as an extremely symbolic framing device.[41] Already in the Great Mongol *Shāhnāma*, two trees surround the central *īwān*s in enthronement scenes. It may be said that these trees are only intended to fill the empty side corners in the symmetrical tripartite compositions. However, in light of the importance attached to trees near and around sultans and prophets in the Timurid era, and even more so in the 16th-century Safavid period, one cannot rule out a meaningful role for these Ilkhanid pairs of trees. In royal Safavid painting, the figure of a shah is often surrounded by a pair of cypresses, be he seated in the garden, on the balcony, or even inside his *īwān* (Figure 9.9).

Innovations in the ceremonial and its visual imaging reach maturity in Safavid court paintings. Figure 9.9, for example, depicts an unreal but highly symbolic enthronement, virtually framed by two shallow façades of a high garden pavilion.[42] Without walls and interiors to support and complete the architecture, the transparent façades are no more than theatrical props. The front side imitates an *īwān*, but, instead of an interior, we see an open garden under a golden sky, where two cypresses frame and accentuate the vertical axis, upon which the shah is seated. The representation of the shah in open space is not surprising in light of Safavid policy—which was thus described by Gülru Necipoğlu: 'Instead of remaining hidden to make himself worthy of respect, the Safavid shah manifested his royal power through constant visibility, spectacle, and display' (Necipoğlu 1993: 306). A depiction of two flying angels in the spandrels of the imaginary *īwān* arch completes the royal iconography, wherein the shah is located at the very meeting point of the vertical and horizontal six directions, synonymous with 'the world' in Persian poetry.

*Īwān*s, cypresses, and a golden sky are common in Safavid painting, as we can see in the illustration of King Solomon enthroned in his garden terrace (Simpson 1997; 216, Plate 107).[43] Another common motif is the

fountain below the throne, which may be nothing more than a representation of reality in the hot Near Eastern climate. But in these, as in other Safavid and Ottoman paintings, the fountain is too large and too central to be a mere element of décor. In light of the long tradition of enthronement scenes with a body of water below the king's feet, it seems reasonable to see the fountains in the later imagery as yet another royal attribute.

The latter suggestion is strongly corroborated by an Ottoman painting of Sultan Suleiman holding a ruby cup, in 'Arīf Çelebī's *Süleymannāma*, from 1558.[44] This illustration, the most symbolic in the entire volume, is thus described by Esin Atıl:

> The painting is composed of three vertical sections subdivided horizontally by a number of architectural units showing various gates, entrances, windows, gardens, courtyards, arcades, terraces, balconies, and domes. Each component is elaborately decorated, some designs are highly abstract while others clearly constitute stained-glass windows, tiled walls, marble columns, and pavements. Süleyman sits in the center of this fantastic setting on an elaborate gold throne rising above a marble-inlaid courtyard with a central fountain; behind the throne is an archway opening onto the gardens in the background, above which is a stained-glass window with a central cypress tree. The sultan, resting on çintamani-patterned cushions, holds the renowned ruby cup in his hand....The possession of the mythical cup of Cemşid, the symbol of Ottoman power and victory over the Safavids, is fully exploited by the painter, who uses this opportunity to display the majesty of the sultan and the splendor of his court (Atıl 1986: 217).

As Atıl's description indicates, the schematic, tripartite composition indeed represents the entire imperial ideological and institutional order within a hierarchically organized tableau. The two lateral sections depict, in ascending order, the three consecutive palace courts, from the outer gate and gardens, via the administrative center to the private royal apartments. The throne, at the center of the composition, is located above a row of small arches. With its upper back section designed like a domed roof, a common motif in 16th-century Persian painting, it resembles a small pavilion rather than a piece of furniture. Ramp stairs leading to this throne room recall Solomon-Suleiman's elevated podium in Figure 9.1, which was painted for another volume of 'Arīf's *Shāhnāma of the Ottoman Family* (*Süleymannāma* being the last volume).[45] An unusually large fountain

---

[40] London, Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, Nour Foundation, MSS 620. Reproduction in Milstein 2005: 120, Plate 40.
[41] A single page from Baghdad, 1460–1465, in Bharat Kale Bhavan, Banaras Hindu University. Reproduction in Gray 1979: Plate 129.
[42] Coronation of Khusraw, from Niẓāmī's *Khamsa*, Tabriz: 1539–1543, London, The British Library, Or. 2265, fol. 60v. *Hunt of Paradise*: 118.
[43] Solomon and Balqīs, in Jāmī's *Salmān wa Absāl* (*Haft Awrang*), Iran:

1556–1565. Washington, DC, Freer Gallery of Art, 46.12, fol. 188a.
[44] Istanbul, Topkapi Saray Museum, H. 1517, fol. 557r. Reproduced in Atıl 1986: 216, Plate 57.
[45] Bruschetini Foundation for Islamic and Asian Art, fol. 20r. Reproduced in Atıl 1986: 58, Figure 23.

Figure 9.9. Coronation of Khusraw, Illustration to Niẓāmī's *khamsa*, Tabriz, 1539–43. London, The British Library, Or. 2265, fol. 60v. ©The British Library Board.

below the sultan's throne, an arched window open to a garden, and a big Ottoman dome above complete the symbolic axial arrangement. The arched contour of the window is actually formed by the outline of two cypresses, directly paralleling contemporary Safavid paintings. The space between the cypresses is filled with a combination of a green treetop and a blossoming tree; this, too, being a common poetical metaphor of paradisiacal peace, abundance, and love in Islamic painting, including enthronement scenes. Another allusion to paradisiacal abundance is the water streaming from the palatial fountain to the blossoming greenery at the bottom of the illustration.

In this mythological or apocalyptic sense, Sultan Suleiman's enthronement scene is paralleled by the depiction of Adam and Eve in paradise, in the *Anbiyā'nāma*, the first volume of the *Shāhnāma of the Ottoman Family*. Here, paradise is viewed as an Ottoman palace, at the center of which, on a longitudinal axis, an empty throne tops a fountain. At the bottom of the composition, Eve is seen handing Adam kernels from the large wheat plant growing beneath the fountain. These kernels will be carried out of paradise by the sinning couple during their expulsion, to start agricultural civilization upon the earth. Comparison between the two illustrations reveals a variety of allusions and metaphors connected with the fountain beneath an enthroned king. As in the case of the sea below the throne, kingship here has a cosmic dimension, with a specific Islamic overtone. Complementing the water at the bottom of the illustration, is the globular dome above, so different from the surrounding pointed roofs. In the image of Sultan Suleiman enthroned, this recalls the domes of the Ottoman mosques, and in the painting of Sultan Suleiman equated with King Solomon (Figure 9.1), it is small but tall, and topped by a bird.

Birds, indeed, never disappeared from Islamic enthronement imagery. In the Ilkhanid period, molded in ceramic tiles, they decorated both palaces and saints' tombs, such as the 13th-century palace, Takht-i Suleimān, and the tomb of the Sufi shaykh 'Abd al-Ṣamad at Natanz (Blair 1993: 242). In Timurid book illustrations of the Gengisid family, the khans' thrones are decorated with golden birds perched on their upper part, or, conversely, real birds (mainly cranes) can be seen flying near the figure of the monarch.[46] A unique depiction of King Solomon's cosmic kingship, made for the Ottoman sultan *c.* 1500 and indicating acquaintance with Western Christian iconography, shows him seated inside a domed castle at the top of a seven-floor hierarchical arrangement of earthly and heavenly

bodies. A flight of stairs under Solomon's feet leads to an underground space filled with water jars, and the sky around and above the king swarms with a variety of birds.[47] Under Ottoman rule, an amateur artist also depicted an abundance of birds above Solomon, who is seen enthroned on a stool, between two plants. All the small birds circle a large falcon with spread wings—Horus the divine falcon hovering above a king—clearly symbolizing the concept of kingship.**[48]**

Conclusion

This brief overview of the imagery of the throne in Islamic lands shows that from its inception through its peak, Islamic art drew heavily on foreign models of thrones from earlier and contemporary civilizations, in spite of its inherent objection to the status and symbols of kings and kingship. The only piece of furniture that may have served the Prophet as a seat of honor was simple and functional, albeit influenced by legendary thrones from the remote past. In any case, there is no proof that other forms of thrones were in use before the Mongol invasion. However, even if not in actual use, images of thrones proliferated, as part of the visual imagery of kingship. But the seats as such were less important to the image makers. What really mattered was the shape of the framing space, and certain symbolic elements in its staging.

A number of motifs, figurative and abstract, pictorial and architectural, were repeatedly used as building blocks for the real and pictorial *mis en scene* of the enthroned rulers. The architectural components of reception halls and pictorial images of enthronement consist, first of all, of arches, niches, *īwāns*, and domes. These elements frame the figure of the charismatic person, while creating an honored and even a sacred space for him. The liminal nature of this space is further accentuated by the presence of a door or a window behind the throne. The sense of separation between the ruler and his community is reinforced by curtains, wooden *maqṣūras*, and, eventually, a golden grill, in the case of Shah 'Abbās' *Shāh-neshīn* in Shaykh Ṣāfī's shrine at Ardabil. The seating place, which is often elevated, is visually depicted as even higher by means of stairs, stools, or raised balconies. In royal iconography, enthronement scenes include water below the throne and birds, *geniis*, and angels above it.

The combination of these elements creates a symbolic construct of sacred cosmic space, with the king located at its very center, at the meeting point between the vertical and horizontal axes. The vertical line is the

---

[46] An example of the first depiction is seen in Rashīd al-Dīn's *Compendium of Chronicles,* from Herat *c.* 1420, Paris, BnF, Mss. Orientaux, Suppl pers, 1113, fol. 204v; an example of the second in the same manuscript, fol. 183r, reproduced in Andrews 1999: Plate 109.

[47] *Sulaymānnāma*, Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Ms. Turk 406, fol. 2v. Reproduced in Rogers 2000: 187–200, Figure 1.
[48] Istanbul, Topkapi Saray Museum, R. 1658, fol. 123a. Milstein and Moor 2006: 42, Plate 14.

symbolic *axis mundi*, or in Islamic thinking—*quṭb*. The *quṭb* connecting the divine realm of the universe with life upon the earth, and in the human world; the term also denoting a saint. We are not in a position to assess Nadia Jamil's conclusion that the concept of *quṭb* was developed and associated with the caliph as early as the Umayyad period. But it may well have been in the formation process, as evidenced by the figurative experiments on the Umayyad coins. In the early Abbasid monuments of the round city of Baghdad and the spiral minarets of Samarra, this symbolism seems to have been fully developed, and there is no reason to doubt its role in all the later architectural spaces and visual depictions of enthronement. The rulers, at least from the time of al-Walīd II, had their leadership and charisma depicted as if conferred by heaven and dotted with sanctity. This predilection grew stronger after the Mongol conquest and, in certain extreme examples, such as those from the Ilkhanid and perhaps the later Moghul period (which is not discussed here), almost endowed the ruler with a divine essence. In most cases, however, the enthroned kings are depicted as deputies of God, sometimes as saints, and always as the 'Shadow of God upon the Earth,' *ẓill Allāh 'ala al-arḍ*.

References

Allsen, T.T. 2001. *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization). Cambridge.

Andrews, P.A. 1999. *Felt Tents and Pavilions: The Nomadic Tradition and Its Interaction with Princely Tentage*. London.

Atıl, E. 1986. *Süleymanname: The Illustrated History of Süleyman the Magnificent*. Washington, DC.

Blair, S.S. 1993. The Ilkhanid Palace. *Ars Orientalis* 23: 239–248.

Blair, S.S. 2012. Sarāy. In: *EI²*.

Bloom, J.M. 2007. *Arts of the City Victorious: Islamic Art and Architecture in Fatimid North Africa and Egypt*. New Haven.

Bloom, J.M. 1993. The *Qubbat al-Khaḍrā'* and the Iconography of Height in Early Islamic Architecture. *Ars Orientalis* 23: 135–147.

Brett, G. 1954. The Automata in the Byzantine Throne of Solomon. *Speculum* 29: 477–487.

Broadbridge, A.F. 2008. *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds* (Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization). Cambridge.

Caiozzo, A. 2011a. Propagande dynastique et celebrations princières, mythes et images à la cour timouride. *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* Damas, IFEA, Vol. 9: 177–201.

Caiozzo, A. 2011b. *Réminiscences de la royauté cosmique dans les representations de l'Orient médiéval*. Cairo.

Canby, S.R., Beyazit, D., Rugiadi, M., and Peacock, A.C.S. 2016. *Court and Cosmos: The Great Age of the Seljuqs*. New York.

Canepa, M.P. 2009. *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran*. Berkeley.

Crone, P. 2004. *God's Rule: Government and Islam*. New York.

EI² = *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. First published online 2012. Bearman, P., Bianquis, T., Bosworth, C.E., van Donzel, E., and Heinrichs, W.P., eds.

Ettinghausen, R. 1977. *Arab Painting*. New York.

Flood, F.B. 2005. A Royal Drinking Scene from Alchi: Iranian Iconography in the Western Himalayas. In: Hillenbrand, R., ed. *Image and Meaning in Islamic Art*. London: 73–97.

Fowden, G. 2004. *Quṣayr 'Amra: Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria*. Berkeley.

Gaifman, M. 2017. Framing Divine Bodies in Greek Art. In: Platt, V. and Squire, M., eds. *The Frame in Classical Art: A Cultural History*. Cambridge: 392–424.

von Folsach, K. 2017. Ornament, Decoration, and Symbol. In: von Folsach K. and Meyer, J., eds. *The Human Figure in Islamic Art*. Copenhagen: 64-97.

Von Gall, H. 2009. NAQŠ-E ROSTAM. *Encyclopædia Iranica* (online).

Gonnella, J., Weis, F., and Rauch, C., eds. *The Diez Albums: Contexts and Contents*. Leiden.

Ghirshman, R. 1962. *Persian Art: The Parthian and Sassanian Dynasties*, Gilbert, S. and Emmos, J., trans. New York.

Grabar, O. 1955. *Ceremonial and Art at the Umayyad Court* (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University). Princeton.

Grabar, O. 1977. Notes sur les ceremonies Umayyades. In: Rosen-Ayalon, M., ed. *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet*. Jerusalem: 51–60.

Grabar, O. and Blair, S. 1980. *Epic Images and Contemporary History: The Illustrations of the Great Mongol Shahnama*. Chicago.

Gray, B, ed. 1979. *The Arts of the Book in Central Asia 14th–16th Centuries*. London and Paris.

Guest, G.D. and Ettinghausen, R. 1961. The Iconography of a Kāshān Luster Plate. *Ars Orientalis* 4: 25–64.

Hillenbrand, R. 2007. The Schefer Hariri: A Study in Islamic Frontispiece Design. In: Contadini, A., ed. *Arab Painting: Text and Image in Illustrated Arabic Manuscripts*. Leiden: 117–134.

Hillenbrand, R. 2017. The Frontispiece Problem in the Early 13th-Century Kitāb al-Aghānī. In: Korn, L. and Müller-Wiener, M., eds. *Art, Culture and History of the Medieval Jazira (Northern Mesopotamia, 8th–15th Centuries)*. Wiesbaden: 199–227.

Jamil, N. 1999. Caliph and Quṭb: Poetry as a Source for Interpreting the Transmission of the Byzantine Cross on Steps on Umayyad Coinage. In: Johns, J., ed. *Bayt al-Maqdis, Jerusalem and Early Islam* (Oxford Studies in Islamic Art IX, part 2). Oxford: 12–57.

Komaroff, L. and Carboni, S., eds. 2003. *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256-1353*. New Haven.

Lambton, A.K.S. 2012. Marāsim [3]. In: *EI²*.

Lassner, J. 1993. *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba: Boundaries of Gender and Culture in Postbiblical Judaism and Medieval Islam*. Chicago.

Leal, B. 2017. The Symbolic Display of Water at the Qusayr Amra Bathhouse, Jordan. In: Lidov, A., ed. *Holy Water in the Hierotopy and Iconography of the Christian World*. Moscow: 232–259.

Lentz, T.W. and Lowry, G.D. 1989. *Timur and the Princely Vision: Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century*. Los Angeles.

Lincoln, B. 2008. The Role of Religion in Achamenian Imperialism. In: Brisch, N., ed. *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond*. Chicago: 221–241.

Maçoudi. 1869. *Les Prairies d'Or*. Texte et traduction par C. Barbier de Meynard V. Paris: L'Impremerie Impériale.

Meisami, J.S. 1989. Dynastic History and Ideals of Kingship in Bayhaki's *Tarikh-I Mas'ud. Edebiyat* 3(1): 57–77.

Melikian-Chirvani, A.S. 1971. Le Royaum de Salomon. In: Aubin, J., ed. *Le Monde Iranien et l'Islam*. Paris: 1–41.

Melikian-Chirvani, A.S. 2011. Iran to Tibet. In: *Islam and Tibet: Interactions along the Musk Routes*. Aksoy. A., *et al.*, eds. Farnham, UK: 89–115.

Melville, C. 2013. The Royal Image in Mongol Iran. In: Michell, L. and Melville, C., eds. *Every Inch a King: Comparative Studies on Kings and Kingship in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*. Leiden: 343–369.

Miles, G.C. 1952. Miḥrāb and 'anazah. In: *Archaeologica Orientalia in Memoriam Ernst Hezfeld*. New York: 156–171.

Miles, G.C. 1967. The Earliest Arab Gold Coinage. *MN* 13: 205–229.

Miles, G.C. 2012. 'anazah. In : *EI²*.

Milstein, R. 2005. *La Bible dans l'art islamique*. Paris.

Milstein, R. 2013. King Solomon or Sultan Süleyman? In: Faroqhi, S., İnalcık, H., and Ergene, B. eds. *The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage: Studies in Honor of Amnon Cohen*. Leiden: 15–24.

Milstein, R. 2014. King Solomon's Temple and Throne as Models in Islamic Visual Culture. In: Kühnel, B., Noga-Banai, G., and Vorholt, H., eds. *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*. Turnhout: 463–475.

Milstein, R. and Moor. B. 2006. Wonders of a Changing World: Late Illustrated '*Aja'ib* Manuscripts (part 1). *Jerusalem Studies of Arabic and Islam* 31: 1–67.

Mostafa, H. 2016. The Early Mosque Revisited: Introduction of the *Minbar* and *Maqṣūra. Muqarnas* 33: 1–16.

Necipoğlu, G. 1993. Framing the Gaze in Otttoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces. *Ars Orientalis* 23: 303–342.

Necipoğlu-Kafadar, G. 1991. *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*. Cambridge, MA.

Niẓāmī 'A. 1968. *Les Quatre Discourses, traduit par Isabelle Gastines*. Paris.

O'Kane, B. 1993. From Tents to Pavilions: Royal Mobility and Persian Palace Design. *Ars Orientalis* 23: 249–268.

L'Orange, H.P. 1982. *The Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World*. New Rochelle, N.Y.

Rizvi, K. 2011. *The Safavid Dynastic Shrine: Architecture, Religion and Power in Early Modern Iran*. London.

Rogers, M. 2000. The Chester Beatty Süleymânnâme Again. In: Hillenbrand, R., ed. *Islamic Painting from the Mongols to the Qajars: Studies in Honor of Basil Robinson*. London:187–200. .

Root, M.C. 2015. Achaemenid Imperial Architecture: Performative Porticoes of Persepolis. In: Babaie, S. and Talinn, G., eds. *Persian Kingship and Architecture*. London: 1–63.

Sadan, J. 1976. *Le mobilier au Proche-Orient medieval*. Leiden.

Sadan, J. 2012. Kursī. In: *EI²*.

Saidi, F. 2010. The Two Versions of the Achamenid Throne. *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 20: 77–86.

Sanders, P.P. Chalmeta, A.K.S., Lambton, A.H., and Groot, J. de Burton-Page. 2012. Marāsim. In : *EI²*.

Sauvaget, J. 1947. *La Mosquée Omeyyade de Médine, étude sur les origines architecturales de la mosquée et la basillique*. Paris.

Shaked, S. 1984. From Iran to Islam: Notes on Some Themes in Transmission. *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 4: 31–67.

Simpson, M.S. 1985. Narrative Allusion and Metaphor in the Decoration of Medieval Islamic Objects. In: Kessler, H.I. and Simpson, M.S., eds. *Pictorial Narrative in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*. Washington, DC: 131–148.

Simpson, M.S. 1997. Sultan Ibrahim Mirza's Haft Awrang. A Princely Manuscript from Sixteenth-Century Iran. New Haven and London.

Soucek, P.P. 1999. Solomon's Throne/Solomon's Bath: Model or Metaphor? *Ars Orientalis* 23: 109–134.

Strootman, R. 2019. The Great Kings of Asia: Universalistic Titles in the Seleukid and Post-Seleukid East. In: Oetjen, R. and Ryan, F.X., eds. *Seleukeia: Studies in Seleucid History, Archaeology and Numismatics in Honor of Getzel M. Cohen*. Berlin: 123–157.

Subtelny, M.E. 2007. *Timurids in Transition*. Leiden.

Thompson, J. and. Canby, S.R. 2003. *Hunt for Paradise: Court Arts of Safavid Iran 1501-1576*. New York.

Treadwell, L. 1999. The 'Orans' Drachms of Bishr ibn Marwān and the Figural Coinage of the Early Mawanid Period. In: Johns, J., ed. *Bayt al-Maqdis: Jerusalem and Early Islam*. Oxford: 223–269.

Uluç, L. 2006. *Turkman Governors, Shiraz Artisans and Ottoman Collectors: Sixteenth-Century Shiraz Manuscripts*. Istanbul.

Weitzmann, K. and Kessler, H.L. 1990. *The Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue and Christian Art*. Washington, DC.

Winter, I.J. 2008. Touched by the Gods: Visual Evidence for the Divine Status of Rulers in the Ancient Near East. In: Brisch, N., ed. *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond*. Chicago: 75–101.