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US AGAINST THEM: IDEOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF ASHURNASIRPAL II'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST ASSYRIAN REBELS IN ḪALZILUḪA

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This paper is a study of the rebellion against the Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal II in the city of Ḫalziluḫa in 882 BC, which is an unusual instance of a rebellion by Assyrians being recorded in the Assyrian royal inscriptions. This paper explores the significance of the rebellion from two angles: the ideological problem of rebellion by Assyrians, and the psychological impact on Assyrian troops of killing their fellow Assyrians. Within the ideology of the royal inscriptions, Assyrians did not normally rebel against the incumbent king, who was in all ways presented as a model ruler. It will be argued that Ashurnasirpal therefore made efforts in his inscriptions to stress that the Assyrian rebels in Ḫalziluḫa inhabited territory that had been lost to Assyria prior to his reign, and had become "de-Assyrianised" and "uncivilised." It will be argued that a similar message was conveyed to the Assyrian soldiers through the ceremonies surrounding the creation of a monument at the source of the River Subnat, and that this message helped the soldiers to "morally disengage" from the act of killing other Assyrians, thus avoiding "moral self-sanctions" for an otherwise morally problematic act.

Rebellion by Assyrians: An Ideological Problem for the Assyrian King

In the year 882 BC, the inhabitants of the city of Ḫalziluḫa in the Mount Kašijari region, modern Tur ʿAbdin, rebelled against Assyria. This was not in itself especially uncommon—rebellion was a frequent occurrence in Assyria's empire—but the description of this event in the account of Ashurnasirpal II's third campaign[1] from his annals (Grayson 1991 A.0.101.1: i 101–103) sets it apart from any other rebellion in the Assyrian royal inscriptions:

> *ina* URU.NINA *us-ba-ku ṭé-e-mu ut-te-ru-ni ma-a* LÚ.MEŠ-*e* KUR *áš-šu-ra-a-a* ^{m}*ḫu-la-a-a* LÚ.EN.URU-*šú-nu šá* ^{m}*sál-ma-nu*-SAG MAN KUR *aš-šur* NUN *a-lik pa-ni-a ina* URU.*ḫal-zi-lu-ḫa ú-šá-aṣ-bi-tu-šú-nu-ni i-ta-bal-ku-tú* URU.*da-am-da-mu-sa* URU MAN-*ti-a a-na aṣ-ba-te il-li-ku*
>
> Whilst I resided in Nineveh, a report was sent to me saying (that) the Assyrians (and) Ḫulājja, their city-lord, whom Shalmaneser, king of the land of Aššur, a prince who came before me, had settled in the city of Ḫalziluḫa, had rebelled and gone to seize Damdammusa, my royal city.

This episode is the only rebellion in the Assyrian royal inscriptions by Assyrians that begins in the reign of the incumbent king (see below). This unique situation makes the third campaign an interesting object of study.

It is clear that rebellions by Assyrians cast the Assyrian king in a worse light in Assyrian thought than rebellions by foreigners. For example, in a letter to Esarhaddon concerning disobedient shepherds (Cole and Machinist 1998 no. 19), the temple official Dadî asks how foreigners must behave towards the king if even Assyrians do not fear him (Cole and Machinist 1998 no. 19: rev. 2–6). Dadî's rhetoric draws a clear distinction between Assyrians, who fear (*palāḫu*) a good Assyrian king,[2] and foreigners, who lack the good judgement to do so.[3] In the royal inscriptions, subjugated foreigners would appear to sit somewhere between the two poles of Assyrians and unconquered foreigners, being generally obedient to a good and pious Assyrian king, but prone to

Some elements of this article began life as part of my doctoral dissertation *Representations of Rebellion in the Assyrian Royal Inscriptions* (University of Birmingham, 2019). These elements are here expanded and elaborated upon, and a new theoretical approach applied to the material, yielding new conclusions. All transliterations quoted below are taken from the cited editions. The accompanying translations are my own.

[1] Liverani (1992: 34) labels this campaign as "Campaign II." However, Ashurnasirpal undertook two campaigns prior to this one—labelled "Campaign I A" and "Campaign I B" by Liverani (1992: 19, 29)—and I will therefore refer to the events in question as the third campaign.

[2] Fales (2009–10: 203) views this fear of the Assyrian king as an important aspect of Assyrian identity.

[3] Fales 1982: 427–28; Machinist 1993: 85.

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the occasional rebellion.[4] When subjugated peoples rebelled, their actions could be portrayed as stemming from their unruly nature. When Assyrians rebelled, the cause would usually be viewed as poor kingship.[5]

The result of this is that rebellions by Assyrians are almost always omitted from the royal inscriptions. Only two other rebellions by Assyrians against the Assyrian king appear in these texts: Aššur-da''in-apla's revolt against Shalmaneser III in the inscriptions of Šamšī-Adad V (Grayson 1996 A.0.103.1: i 39–53), and the efforts of Esarhaddon's brothers to wrongfully seize kingship following the assassination of Sennacherib in Esarhaddon's "Apology."[6] Both of these episodes begin prior to the reign of the incumbent king; Aššur-da''in-apla rebels late in the reign of Šamšī-Adad's father, Shalmaneser III (Grayson 1996 A.0.103.1: i 39–41), whilst Esarhaddon is in exile when his brothers attempt to usurp the throne (Leichty 2011 no. 1: i 38–44). These events were included in the inscriptions because they were a step removed from the incumbent king, who stepped in to resolve the situation that had occurred before his reign, and it was thus clear that the rebellion had not occurred due to any wrongdoing on his behalf.[7] The Ḫalziluḫa rebellion, on the other hand, had occurred during Ashurnasirpal's own reign, and he therefore did not have this defence. We might therefore wonder what about the account of the third campaign made it an acceptable inclusion in Ashurnasirpal's inscriptions. This question will be addressed below. However, this ideological impact is not the only problem presented to the Assyrian king as a result of a rebellion by Assyrians. It will also be useful to consider the psychological impact of such an event.

"Remorse for Killing:" The Psychological Impact of Rebellion by Assyrians

In addition to being unusual due to the scarcity of rebellions by Assyrians in the royal inscriptions, the third campaign is also unusual for the apparent relative infrequency of such events in Assyrian history. At a glance, the Assyrian Eponym Chronicle would seem to suggest that rebellion by Assyrians was at times actually fairly common (Frahm 2016: 83; Radner 2016: 46). This text records rebellion in thirteen years between 840 and 700 BC — two protracted, widespread rebellions in 826–820 and 763–759 BC, and Tiglath-pileser III's usurpation of the throne in 746 BC (Millard 1994: 56–61; Radner 2016: 46). However, the average gap between the known rebellions and succession wars within Assyria from 826 to 681 BC — those recorded in the Eponym Chronicle, plus the irregular successions of Sargon II in 721 BC and Esarhaddon 681 BC — is 33.75 years. An Assyrian soldier would be unlikely to have fought in more than two such events in their lifetime. As a result, the rebellion in Ḫalziluḫa was not only a unique event in the royal inscriptions, but was also an unusual encounter for the Assyrian soldiers. Fighting and killing their fellow Assyrians was not the norm for the Assyrian soldiers, and we might therefore wonder how this event affected them.

Psychological approaches to Assyrian history have been rare in the previous scholarship, with the most prominent examples being a "psychohistorical" study of the life of Sennacherib by Eckart Frahm (2014) and a study of the Assyrian palace reliefs by the psychoanalysts Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit (1985). Less prominent, but more relevant to the current purpose, is a brief discussion of the psychological barriers that must be overcome to commit acts of violence against others in a study on the audiences for Assyrian royal communications by Mario Liverani (2014: 381–82). Using psychoanalytical studies on war and violence, most notably the work of Franco Fornari (1974: 3–38), Liverani (2014: 381) writes: "people going to war have to surmount (by

[4] A tripartite distinction in the royal inscriptions between unconquered foreigners, subjugated foreigners, and Assyrians is also suggested by Machinist (1993: 91).

[5] A distinction must be drawn here between the conception of how Assyrians and subjugated foreigners behave in the official ideology and rhetoric, and the understanding of identity and alterity in other texts, where Liverani (2017: 206–208) identifies a conception of "Assyrianisation" that is solely focused on the payment of tax and corvée to Assyria.

[6] Leichty 2011 no. 1: i 8-ii 11. I do not include Šamaš-šuma-ukīn's revolt against his brother, Ashurbanipal, in this list, as he is a Babylonian king and none of his allies, in the royal inscriptions, are Assyrian (Novotny and Jeffers 2018 no. 7: vii 36–45; no. 11: iii 96–106). This episode in the royal inscriptions is therefore better viewed as a rebellion by foreigners.

[7] Liverani 2004: 153 n. 9.

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means of an appropriate ritual elaboration) two terrible obstacles: the fear of being killed and the remorse for killing."

In terms of overcoming the fear of being killed, Liverani highlights the Assyrian focus on the organisational and moral superiority of the Assyrians compared to their enemies.[8] He uses this concept to explain the stereotyped low numbers of casualties recorded at the end of the Letters to the God as a demonstration of Assyria's military invincibility to the people of Aššur. Regarding remorse for killings, he argues that the Assyrian official ideology aimed to overcome this remorse through stereotyped portrayals of enemies as immoral and subhuman, and as bringing about their own punishment by resisting or revolting against Assyrian imperialism and thus invoking the wrath of the gods. The victims of Assyrian violence are assigned the blame, while the Assyrians enact this violence out of moral necessity and to carry out the will of the gods (Liverani 2014: 382–83).

As stated above, Liverani's discussion of the psychological impact of warfare is based on psychoanalytical scholarship. This is somewhat problematic. Although it has enjoyed some popularity in the humanities, psychoanalysis has been heavily criticised (for example, in Grünbaum 1984; Popper 1962: 34–38; Schmitz 2007: 195–97) as pseudoscientific, speculative, androcentric, and based on the assumption that the nuclear family of husband, wife, and children is the standard family unit throughout human history. Its value for application to historical research is therefore dubious, particularly with regards to non-modern, non-western cultures, and I am hesitant to rely on it as the theoretical basis for Assyriological research. However, Liverani's conclusions are supported by more recent and more robust psychological approaches, especially Albert Bandura's conception of "moral disengagement" (Bandura 1999; 2002; Bandura *et al.* 1996).

Moral Disengagement as Model for Understanding Violence

Using both psychological experiments on how various factors affect human behaviour in differing contexts (for example, Bandura, Underwood, and Fromson 1975; Bandura *et al.* 1996: 367–72) and statements by those who have perpetrated various inhumanities, such as arms dealing, torture, or execution (for example, Bandura 2002: 103–13), Bandura has created one of the more developed models for understanding how people are capable of committing violence against others. Working from the perspective of social cognitive theory, which views human behaviour as being constantly self-monitored and self-regulated in relation to both one's own "personal standards" and environmental factors (Bandura 1991), he argues that moral self-censure, the negative psychological impact of violating one's own moral standards, is not a constantly active process, but one which must be "engaged" in order to function. Equally, morals can be "disengaged", allowing an individual to engage in "detrimental conduct" whilst avoiding self-censure (Bandura *et al.* 1996: 364–65). Bandura identifies several ways in which moral disengagement is achieved (Bandura *et al.* 1996: 365–66):

- Moral justification: construing detrimental behaviour as morally necessary or carried out in service to "the greater good."
- Euphemistic language: applying a "sanitised" vocabulary to the detrimental behaviour in order to make it less morally repugnant to its perpetrators.
- Advantageous comparison: comparing a detrimental behaviour with a more morally reprehensible act in order to either place it in a favourable light or trivialise the harm resulting from it.
- Displacement of responsibility: an individual viewing themselves as not responsible for their detrimental behaviour because they are "just following orders."

[8] Liverani (2014: 382) argues that technological superiority is not really emphasised in the Assyrian sources. This may be the case for written sources (although see Grayson 1991 A.0.99.2: 54–55 for an exception to this), but the palace reliefs do contain messages of Assyrian technological superiority in scenes depicting siege technologies (for example, Budge 1914: pls. XIII, XXIV; Smith 1938: pls. XI, XIV, XVI) or in which enemies are armed with technologically inferior weapons such as spears instead of bows (Cifarelli 1998: 224).

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- Diffusion of responsibility: an individual feeling less responsible for detrimental behaviour that they engage in as part of a larger group.
- Disregarding or distorting the consequences of actions: glossing over or actively attempting to disprove the negative effects of detrimental behaviour, or focusing only on the positive outcomes.
- Dehumanisation: minimising the perceived impact of detrimental behaviour by viewing its victims as less than human.
- Attribution of blame: exonerating oneself of blame for engaging in detrimental behaviour by blaming the victim for provoking it or identifying mitigating circumstances that left no other choice.

Liverani's discussion of the overcoming of remorse for killing summarised above includes several of these forms of moral disengagement: moral justification, displacement of responsibility, dehumanisation, and attribution of blame (Liverani 2014: 382–83). However, in the case of rebellious Assyrians, such as in Ḫalziluḫa, the situation is more difficult. An additional psychological barrier presents itself in the fact that the enemy is not so different from the Assyrian soldiers facing them. Bandura argues that greater moral self-censure results from detrimental conduct against those whom the perpetrator identifies with more closely:

> The strength of moral self-sanctions depends partly on how the perpetrators view the people they mistreat. To perceive another as human activates empathetic and vicarious emotional reactions through perceived similarity… The joys and suffering of those with whom one identifies are more vicariously arousing than are those of strangers, out-group members, or those who have been divested of human qualities. It is, therefore, difficult to mistreat humanised persons without risking personal distress and self-censure.[9]

A greater effort must therefore be made to morally disengage from detrimental conduct against those whom the perpetrator identifies with more closely,[10] as is the case for the Assyrian soldiers fighting against the Assyrian rebels in Ḫalziluḫa. It will therefore be interesting to consider how the Assyrian soldiers morally disengaged from killing other Assyrians, and what steps the Assyrian king and his scribes took to encourage this moral disengagement.

Channels of Discourse

There are therefore two unique problems presented by rebellions against Assyria by Assyrians, one ideological, the other psychological. These two problems are dealt with through different channels of discourse. On the ideological level, Ashurnasirpal must justify himself to the gods, to future kings, and to the elites within Assyria. I am dubious of the extent to which the content of the Assyrian royal inscriptions served to convey royal ideology to contemporary audiences. A full and detailed defence of this position will be offered elsewhere, but the most prominent points are outlined below.

The idea that Assyrian royal inscriptions were not intended for a contemporary audience was first proposed by Oppenheim (1979) in the nineteen-seventies. Since then, several scholars have discussed the question of audience for these texts, with the general consensus being that the royal inscriptions also had a contemporary audience, but that this audience was limited to the Assyrian elite (Richardson 2007: 199; Tadmor 1997: 334) and the scribes producing the inscriptions (Bagg 2013: 132; Liverani 2014: 374). Others, most notably Barbara Porter (1993: 106–17, also Karlsson 2017: 7; Machinist 1993: 99–100; Sano 2016) argue for a more widespread intended audience for the royal inscriptions through the recitation of these texts at ceremonies carried out during the construction of palaces and temples.

There are problems with all of these arguments. They generally conflate intended and actual audience: See for example Bagg (2013), where "intended audience" encompasses all those with

[9] Bandura *et al.* 1996: 366. It should be noted that Bandura includes those who have been othered more generally ("strangers" and "out-group members") under the umbrella of "dehumanisation" alongside "those who have been divested of human qualities." We should therefore consider all methods of increasing the perceived social distance and inequality (or "social geometry," see Campbell and Manning 2019) between two groups as falling under Bandura's category of "dehumanisation." For the correlation between social geometry and levels of violence in resolving disputes, see Black 2004.

[10] Niditch (1993: 21) similarly states that in order to kill those in their in-group, a person must dehumanise or other them.

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access to the inscriptions and "possible audience" would appear to describe those whose access to the inscriptions is uncertain.[11] There is also a tendency to interpret the royal inscriptions solely in terms of power and propaganda, although this approach is subject to critique (Bahrani 2003: 66–68). The proposal that the Assyrian scribes were an intended audience of the rhetoric of the royal inscriptions, who were "self-indoctrinated" through writing and copying these texts (Liverani 2014: 374), overstates the extent to which people unquestioningly accept official ideology (Bahrani 2008: 67–73) and overlooks the fact that scribes were well-placed to see the inconsistencies and obfuscations present in the inscriptions. Furthermore, the scribes existed in a reciprocal relationship with the crown, enjoying privileged positions in the employ of the palace in return for performing their scribal duties. They were therefore strongly invested in continuing the imperial system without the need for a programme of "self-indoctrination" through the production of royal inscriptions.

Reliefs, statues and stelae, religious festivals, the public display of captive or mutilated enemies, the implementation of tax exemptions, and various other forms of spectacle and event existed by which the Assyrian kings could convey royal ideology to their people (Liverani 2014: 376–79; Siddall 2013: 143–44). The royal inscriptions are better understood in terms of preserving the royal legacy and communicating the king's good deeds to the gods. These factors were essential to ensuring that the king enjoyed a long reign and a good afterlife, and this — together with royal ego (Siddall 2017: 65) — provided ample motivation for a king to commission royal inscriptions that portrayed him in the best light possible.

Since we lack access to other channels by which Ashurnasirpal might have communicated royal rhetoric to the Assyrian elites, we are left to investigate the rhetoric conveyed to the gods and future kings for the purpose of maintaining divine support and preserving the royal name and deeds for posterity. The inscriptions did not reach the rank-and-file soldiers of the Assyrian army in our view, and we must look for evidence of other channels by which messages were conveyed to this audience. This paper will therefore approach the account of the third campaign from two directions, first considering the ideological message that the inscription conveyed to the gods and future kings, then attempting to reconstruct some aspects of royal rhetoric that were conveyed to the Assyrian soldiers to aid them in morally disengaging from the act of killing their fellow Assyrians, and to identify the channels by which this rhetoric reached them.

The Rhetoric of the Ḫalziluḫa Campaign Account

The rebellion in Ḫalziluḫa is not the only time Assyrians appear in the account of the third campaign. Following his victory over Ḫulājja and a subsequent series of battles against the people of Nirbu (Grayson 1991 A.0.101.1: i 111-ii 2), Ashurnasirpal arrives at the city of Tušḫa, an important regional centre that he proceeds to rebuild. Once the city has been renovated, he states that (Grayson 1991 A.0.101.1: ii 7–8):

> UN.MEŠ KUR *aš-šur an-ša-te šá* TA *pa-an su-un-qi bu-bu-te a-na* KUR.KUR.MEŠ *šá-ni-a-te a-na* KUR.*šub-re-e e-li-ú-ni ú-te-ra-šú-nu ina* URU.*tu-uš-ḫa ú-šá-aṣ-bít-su-nu*
> I brought back the people of the land of Aššur who had fled from famine and starvation up to other lands — to the land of Šubria — and settled them in Tušḫa.[12]

We therefore have two separate references to Assyrians in this campaign. In both instances, the people in question engage in behaviour that would not usually be expected of Assyrians in the royal inscriptions: rebelling in one instance and fleeing to the mountains in the other. Assyrians under a good and pious king should never behave in such a way, as discussed above. The important thing here, however, is the qualification "under a good and pious king." The early Neo-Assyrian kings presided over a period described by Liverani (2017: 118–20) as the Assyrian "*reconquista.*" The late Middle Assyrian period had seen Assyria undergo a period of decline, accompanied by loss of

[11] See Russell (1991: 223–62) for a clearer distinction between "actual" and "intended" audiences.

[12] Aššur-dān II makes a similar statement, using the same terminology, but in the more general sense that he resettled Assyrians who had fled from their cities, and as part of a broader statement on how he improved his land (Grayson 1991 A.0.98.1: 60–67).

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territory outside of the Assyrian heartland. The military campaigns of the early Neo-Assyrian kings from Aššur-dān II to Ashurnasirpal II were primarily concerned with recovering this lost territory, and the royal inscriptions of these kings sometimes mention Assyrian losses during the preceding period (e.g. Grayson 1991 A.0.98.1: 6–41; A.0.99.2: 34–35, 52–53).

However, the account of Ashurnasirpal's third campaign has a more pronounced focus on late Middle Assyrian decline than any other early Neo-Assyrian campaign account. Only Aššur-dān II's descriptions of the "invasion" of the Assyrian heartland by the Jausu (Grayson 1991 A.0.98.1: 6–9), or of Assyrians oppressed by marauding Aramaeans (Grayson 1991 A.0.98.1: 16–18), and abandoning their cities due to famine (Grayson 1991 A.0.98.1: 60–62), can match the level of decline presented by Ashurnasirpal.[13] Even then, Aššur-dān only describes the oppression of Assyrians by foreigners, whereas Ashurnasirpal also describes Assyrians becoming enemies of Assyria. Ḫalziluḫa has become isolated from the Assyrian centre, and the loss of Assyrian power in the region has therefore led its inhabitants to become "de-Assyrianised." This process removes the negative connotations that a rebellion against Ashurnasirpal by Assyrians might have otherwise held, as the rebels are no longer really Assyrian.

In this light, one of the punishments enacted on the rebels in Kinabu, a fortified city of Ḫulājja, is especially interesting (Grayson 1991 A.0.101.1: i 108–109):

> 3 LIM *šal-la-su-nu ina* IZI.MEŠ GÍBIL … LÚ.*ba-tu-li-šú-nu* MUNUS.*ba-tu-la-te-šú-nu a-na* GÍBIL-*te* GÍBIL
> 3000 captives from them I burnt with fire … I burnt their boys (and) their girls as burnt offerings.[14]

I have demonstrated elsewhere that the punishment of burning captives is otherwise only applied in the royal inscriptions to peoples whom the Assyrians saw as "uncivilised," particularly those in Mount Kašijari, and in Zamua in the east.[15] The Ḫalziluḫans are treated like any of these "uncivilised" people living in the same region. They have not just become "un-Assyrian", but have become as radically Other as possible.

"Going Native" in Mount Kašijari?

At a glance, this episode, in which an isolated, alien and hostile landscape causes settlers from the imperial centre to become "uncivilised," might appear to bear some similarities to modern colonialist discourse on the nature of "civilisation." Nineteenth-century European literature frequently features ideas of Europeans in Asia or Africa "going native" or suffering from *tropenkoller*, "tropical madness," perhaps most famously in the figure of Mr Kurtz in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (Bratlinger 2011: 65–85; Griffith 1995: 119–52; Loomba 1998: 134–36). This line of thought survives after a fashion into the twentieth century. For example, in *The Conquest of America*, Tzvetan Todorov (1984: 144) associates massacre with a location far from the civilised centre, where morality and social convention break down and give way to unchecked violence.[16] The events in Ḫalziluḫa do have some things in common with this line of thought. Isolation from the Assyrian heartland in a hostile, alien landscape has led the Assyrian settlers to become "de-Assyrianised," and they have sunk — from the Assyrian viewpoint — to the level of the "uncivilised" mountain people amongst whom they have been living.

[13] Aššur-dān's longest extant inscription (Grayson 1991 A.0.98.1) contains more references to Assyrian decline than Ashurnasirpal's annals do, but these references are spread out across multiple campaign accounts, whereas Ashurnasirpal's references to decline are almost all concentrated in the account of the third campaign.

[14] I take the use of the phrase *ana maqlūte* in relation to the burning of children by Ashurnasirpal II as an example of euphemistic language and dehumanisation used to avoid moral self-censure for a detrimental behaviour (the killing of children) as outlined above. I therefore translate *maqlūte* in this passage as "burnt offerings" in spite of the apparent lack (*pace* Karlsson 2016: 119–20) of any religious connotations to this punishment.

[15] These findings were presented in a paper at the conference *The Strange and the Familiar: Identity and Empire in the Ancient Near East* at the University of Helsinki in August 2019, and will be published as part of the conference proceedings in *Studia Orientalia Electronica*.

[16] For the colonialist discourse present in *The Conquest of America*, see Root 1988. Todorov's understanding of massacre does not encompass many of the atrocities committed by modern dictatorships. He therefore identifies the actions of these states as "massacrifice", combining elements of his definitions of massacre and sacrifice (Todorov 1984: 252–53).

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However, it would be overstepping the limits of the evidence to suggest a more generalised Assyrian conception of "going native;" I know of no equivalent episode elsewhere in Assyrian sources. Furthermore, the events in Ḫalziluḫa differ from the colonialist concepts of *tropenkoller* and "going native" in several key points. In the colonialist perspective, Asia and Africa cause a form of madness in Europeans because they fundamentally differ from Europe in their atmosphere or climate (Griffith 1995: 128–29; Loomba 1998: 136). The incorporation of these regions into the European empires does not remove this difference. By contrast, the de-Assyrianisation of the Assyrian settlers results from the fact that Assyrians have come to inhabit a region no longer under the jurisdiction of the Assyrian king. Once Mount Kašijari is reincorporated into the empire, it ceases to possess its de-Assyrianising effect, and the Assyrians living there, now under the rule of a good and pious Assyrian king, will hence forth behave in a manner befitting of Assyrians, as discussed above. Landscape does play a small part in this process of de-Assyrianisation, but only in so far as it dictates that the Ḫalziluḫans should be treated like "uncivilised" mountain people, as opposed to like more "civilised" foreigners held in higher regard by the Assyrians. The more prominent concern is that these Assyrians, living outside the confines of the Assyrian Empire, are — within the narrative of Ashurnasirpal's inscriptions — not "real" Assyrians.

The Stele at the Source of the Subnat

In addition to the rebellion by Assyrians, there is a second, more subtle aspect of the third campaign account that is unique in the Assyrian royal inscriptions (Grayson 1991 A.0.101.1: i 104–105):

> *ina* SAG-*e-ni* ÍD.*su-ub-na-at a-šar ṣa-lam šá* [m]GIŠ.*tukul-ti*-A-*é-šár-ra ù* [m]GIŠ.*tukul-ti*-[d]MAŠ MAN KUR *aš-šur* AD.MEŠ-*a i-za-zu-ú-ni ṣa-lam* MAN-*ti-ia ab-ni it-ti-šú-nu ú-še-zi-iz*
> At the source of the River Subnat, where stand images of Tiglath-pileser and Tukultī-Ninurta, kings of the land of Aššur, my fathers, I created my royal image and erected it alongside them.

This episode may not seem especially out of the ordinary. There are several instances from the royal inscriptions of a king creating a monument in a foreign city or landscape on campaign,[17] and several such monuments survive today, most notably at the Tigris Tunnel (Lehmann-Haupt 1906: 31–44; Grayson 1996 A.0.102.21–24; Radner 2009: 173–197), and the Nahr al-Kalb, a favoured location for the monumental reliefs and inscriptions of various powers in the region from the Late Bronze Age to the modern day (Da Riva 2017: 18–20).

However, the placement of the stele at the source of the Subnat differs from the other inscriptional accounts of the creation of monuments on campaign in its position within the narrative. All other instances of the creation of a monument during a campaign in the Assyrian royal inscriptions occur either after a battle or at the end of a campaign.[18] The placement of monuments at these times is unsurprising; these monuments served to commemorate Assyrian victories,[19] convey the message of Assyrian dominance to the local populace (Bagg 2016: 62), or act as part of a symbolic attainment of the borders of the world (Liverani 1990: 59–65; Morandi 1988: 120–24).

[17] For some examples, see Morandi 1988. Liverani (2017: 94) states that Aššur-bēl-kala was the first Assyrian king to erect stelae on campaign, but Šamšī-Adad I records placing a stele at Mount Lebanon some seven hundred years earlier (Grayson 1987 A.0.39.1: 81–87), and the existence of rock reliefs of Tiglath-pileser I (Lehmann-Haupt 1906: 15–18; Grayson 1991 A.0.87.15–16) — together with an additional monument of this king at Mount Lebanon mentioned in Shalmaneser III's inscriptions (Grayson 1996 A.0.102.10: iv 12–15) — demonstrates that this practice was current during the reign of Aššur-bēl-kala's father, and it is possible that other earlier kings similarly placed monuments on campaign without including them in their inscriptions (for example, it is possible that the Tukultī-Ninurta whose image stood at the source of the Subnat was the first king of this name, see n. 20 below).

[18] Shafer 2007: 134–36. It should be noted that Shafer's discussion of the developments in the purposes of Assyrian monuments placed on campaign is in fact primarily a consideration of the purposes implied by narratives in the Assyrian royal inscriptions, with supporting evidence from the extant rock reliefs and stelae. She overlooks the fact that, in light of Tiglath-pileser I's silence on his monuments at the sources of the Tigris and Euphrates and at Mount Lebanon (see n. 17 above), it is equally possible that the developments and changes that she identifies are due to a combination of the situations in which each king deemed it necessary to include mention of the creation of monuments on campaign on the one hand, and survival bias on the other.

[19] For example, the stele that Sennacherib describes placing at Ḫalule following his victory over the Babylonians and their Elamite allies at that site (Grayson and Novotny 2014 no. 230: 113–14).

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All of these purposes need either the Assyrian king to have won a battle, or the campaign to have reached a remote point at the edge of the known world, and this naturally places them late in the campaign accounts. The stele at the Subnat differs from these instances of monuments being placed on campaign in that it happens at the very beginning of the campaign, before Ashurnasirpal fights a battle. Earlier kings had apparently also left stelae at the source of the Subnat, but had not deemed this detail worthy of inclusion in their own inscriptions.[20] We might therefore wonder what purpose this episode serves in the narrative that warranted its inclusion where other kings' inscriptions might have omitted it.

An answer to this question can be found in the geographical significance of the Subnat. This river, to be equated with a spring at modern Babil, southeast of Cizre,[21] appears to have formed the border of Mount Kašijari in Assyrian thought. Tukultī-Ninurta II crosses the Subnat *en route* to that region (Grayson 1991 A.0.100.5: 14):

> […] ÍD.*su-ub-na-at a-na* KUR.*kaš-ia-*⸢*ri*⸣ *at-ta-bal-*⸢*kàt*⸣
> [… *At*] the River Subnat, I crossed over to Mount Kašijari.

Similarly, Ashurnasirpal II places the source of the Subnat as the near border of the territory that he conquered in the direction of Nirbu, a designation that he uses for Mount Kašijari (Grayson 1991 A.0.101.1: ii 128–129):

> *iš-tu* SAG-ÍD-*e-ni* ÍD.*su-ub-na-at a-di* KUR.*ni-rib šá bi-ta-ni* ŠU-*su* KUR-*ud*
> He conquered from the source of the River Subnat as far as inner Nirbu.[22]

The campaign would therefore appear to begin with Ashurnasirpal placing a stele at the border between Assyria and Mount Kašijari. This is significant in light of the focus in this campaign account on reversing the decline of the late Middle Assyrian period; Ashurnasirpal begins a campaign aimed at returning Mount Kašijari to the Assyrian sphere by first symbolically reclaiming the northwestern border of the Assyrian heartland. In doing so, he highlights the fact that the Assyrian rebels in Ḫalziluḫa have fallen outside of Assyrian influence, and thus provides the context for their actions that absolves him of any suspicion of poor kingship; the Assyrians in Mount Kašijari behave as they do because they are effectively no longer part of Assyria.

Ashurnasirpal gives a demonstration of how quickly rebellion can foment within the passes of Mount Kašijari in his description of events during his return from Tušḫa (Grayson 1991 A.0.101.1: ii 15–17):

> *ina ta-ia-ar-ti-ia šá* KUR.KUR *na-i-ri* KUR.*ni-ir-bu šá* ŠÀ KUR.*kaš-ia-ri* BAL-*kát* 9 URU.DIDLI-*šú-nu ú-ta-še-ru a-na* URU.*iš-pi-li-ip-ri-a* URU *dan-nu-ti-šú-nu ù* KUR-*ú mar-ṣu it-tàk-lu-ma*
> During my return march from the lands of Nairi, the land of Nirbu within Mount Kašijari rebelled. They left their nine cities (and) trusted in Išpilipria, their fortified city, and a difficult mountain.

This is the only instance in the royal inscriptions of the Assyrian king's location at the onset of a rebellion or other act of aggression towards Assyria being stated in which he is not separated from

[20] The fact that no patronymics are given for the Tiglath-pileser and Tukultī-Ninurta whose stelae stood at the source of the Subnat makes it difficult to ascertain which kings of these names are referred to, and none of the possible kings mention placing a stele at the Subnat in their own inscriptions. An identification of Tiglath-pileser as the first king of this name is most likely, but the identity of the Tukultī-Ninurta here is more difficult to establish with any certainty (for an identification of this king as Tukultī-Ninurta I, see Badalì *et al.* 1982: 40, for Tukultī-Ninurta II, see Liverani 1992: 34; Baker 2011: 1333). Tukultī-Ninurta II states that he crossed the Subnat to enter Mount Kašijari (Grayson 1991 A.0.100.5: 14). However, this king's inscriptions give far more details of his journeys on campaign than those of Tukultī-Ninurta I. The earlier king also campaigned to Kašijari (Grayson 1987 A.0.78.1: iii 30-iv 37), making it possible that he too crossed the Subnat, but did not mention this point in his own, far less detailed, inscriptions.

[21] Hawkins 1969: 119–20; Liverani 1992: 34. A badly worn stele of Ashurnasirpal II found at this location (Hawkins 1969: pl. X; Grayson 1991 A.0.101.20) may well be the one referred to in the inscriptions.

[22] Later inscriptions of Ashurnasirpal instead describe his northern conquests as stretching from the source of the Subnat to Urarṭu (for example, Grayson 1991 A.0.101.2: 13; 23: 9), or to the source of the Tigris (for example, Grayson 1991 A.0.101.3: 37–38; 28: iv 2–3). For the use of these differences in determining the relative chronology of Ashurnasirpal's inscriptions, see de Filippi 1977: 30; Russell 1999: 32–38.

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the event by a considerable distance.[23] Ashurnasirpal subjugates the people of Nirbu immediately before rebuilding Tušḫa (Grayson 1991 A.0.101.1: i 111-ii 2), but in the time that it takes him to complete the renovations to this city and begin his homeward journey, the people of Nirbu rebel again. This episode emphasises the unruly and lawless nature of Mount Kašijari and its inhabitants, and, by doing so, provides further context for the rebellion in Ḫalziluḫa. Cut off from "civilisation", the Assyrian settlers inhabit an especially rebellious region, and become rebellious and "uncivilised" themselves as a result.[24]

Moral Disengagement through Ritual

The above discussion has dealt with the stele at the Subnat in terms of its role in the rhetoric and ideological message of Ashurnasirpal's inscriptions. This focus has proven fruitful for explaining the stele's inclusion in the inscriptions. However, we can also go beyond the emplotment of this episode in a narrative text to discuss the role that the stele itself played in historical reality at the time of its creation. The stele was erected during a military campaign, and there was therefore a very different audience present for this event than the intended audiences for the Assyrian royal inscriptions: the soldiers in Ashurnasirpal's army.

Monuments placed by the Assyrian kings on campaign have usually been interpreted in terms of the symbolic attainment of the world border.[25] However, some scholars have instead considered these monuments in terms of the rituals accompanying their creation. Shafer (2007: 141–45) highlights the involvement of Assyrian troops in ritual celebrations marking the creation of monuments at the source of the Tigris and on the shore of the Sea of Nairi depicted on Shalmaneser III's Balawat Gates,[26] and Harmanşah (2007) has highlighted the performative aspects of the creation of these monuments and their contribution to the construction of social memory.[27] This approach opens interesting avenues for understanding Assyrian monuments in terms of their significance to those present during the ceremonies surrounding their creation.

In a similar vein, Brad Kelle (2014) has recently suggested that post-battle ritual acts, such as ritual purification or the creation of monuments, served the purpose of helping soldiers to overcome any "moral injury" that they had sustained during warfare. He defines "moral injury" as (Kelle 2014: 233): "experiences of guilt, shame, and moral and ethical ambiguity that result from a sense of having 'transgressed one's basic moral identity,' abandoned one's ethical standing as a decent person, and lost any reliable, meaningful world in which to live." In short, moral injury is precisely the kind of "moral self-censure" that moral disengagement allows to be avoided (see above). Just as moral injury was healed through post-battle rituals, we might also consider the possibility that it was avoided through pre-battle rituals.

In light of this, I would suggest that the creation of the stele at the source of the Subnat occurred before any other event of the campaign because it served as a form of moral disengagement for the Assyrian soldiers. As stated above, the Ḫalziluḫa campaign contained an additional barrier for the

[23] The rebellion in Ḫalziluḫa is reported to Ashurnasirpal while he is residing in Nineveh (Grayson 1991 A.0.101.1: i 101–103), as is a rebellion in Zamua (Grayson 1991 A.0.101.1: ii 49–50), a rebellion in the Middle Euphrates region is reported to him in Kalḫu (Grayson 1991 A.0.101.1: iii 26–28), and a rebellion in Bīt-Ḫalupe is reported to him while on campaign in Katmuḫu at the opposite edge of Assyrian territory (Grayson 1991 A.0.101.1: i 74–76). From the inscriptions of other kings, Shalmaneser III hears of rebellion in Patina whilst he is in Kalḫu (Grayson 1996 A.0.102.14: 147–48), and Ashurbanipal receives reports of rebellion in Egypt and an Elamite invasion of Babylonia whilst he is in Nineveh (Novotny and Jeffers 2018 no. 3: i 60–62, iv 30–43) and of aggression by Teumman whilst he is in Arbela (Novotny and Jeffers 2018 no. 3: v 16–24). In several other episodes in the inscriptions of Tukultī-Ninurta II (Grayson 1991 A.0.100.5: 4–8, 11–29), Ashurnasirpal II (Grayson 1991 A.0.101.1: ii 23–25), and Sennacherib (Grayson and Novotny 2012 no. 1: 5–16), a report of rebellion or other aggression is reported to the king, but his location at the time is not specified. However, the context of these episodes —at the very beginning of a campaign account—implies a location within the Assyrian heartland. For the connection between "evil" in the land and the absence of the king in Ancient Near Eastern Literature, see Liverani 2004: 153 n. 9.

[24] Radner (2006: 286) points to the fact that Kašijari was still under the control of a local ruler during the reign of Ashurbanipal as evidence of its inaccessibility and remoteness from the Assyrian heartland.

[25] Liverani 1990: 59–65; 2017: 91–92; Morandi 1988: 120–24; Tadmor 1999: 56; Yamada 2000: 294–95.

[26] In a similar vein, Kreppner (2002: 375) notes that: "An invisible and inaccessible rock relief was perhaps quite 'public' during an inauguration ceremony as shown on the Bronze Gate of Balawat."

[27] Similarly, Da Riva (2018: 27–41) considers the ritual and performative aspects of monument-making in the Neo-Babylonian Empire.

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Assyrian soldiers to deal with in overcoming their remorse for killing: the enemies were themselves Assyrian. The solution to this problem was, as in the royal inscriptions, to dehumanise the rebels in Ḫalziluḫa by presenting them as having become "de-Assyrianised" and "uncivilised." Towards this end, the creation of the stele at the Subnat served to convey a similar message to Ashurnasirpal's soldiers as the account of it in the royal inscriptions: Assyria has, prior to Ashurnasirpal's reign, lost control of Mount Kašijari. As a result of their isolation from the centre, the Assyrian settlers are now no better—from the Assyrian viewpoint—than the "uncivilised" peoples inhabiting the region. The symbolic reclamation of the northwest border of Assyria, at a site where stood the stelae of earlier kings, was a powerful way to convey this message to the soldiers.[28]

The pre-battle ritual, which reinforced the dehumanisation of the rebels in Ḫalziluḫa, was paired with a corresponding post-battle "ritual" in the form of the renovation of Tušḫa, during which the Assyrians in Šubria are resettled in the city, a palace is built and royal inscriptions are deposited therein, a royal stele is erected, tribute is imposed on the local populace in Nirbu, and the rulers of neighbouring Bīt-Zamāni, Šubria, Nirdun, Urumu, and Nairi also give tribute (Grayson 1991 A.0.101.1: ii 2–15). This episode is a demonstration of the positive effects of the campaign. An Assyrian outpost has been restored, Assyrians suffering due to their isolation from Assyria have been rescued and returned to "civilisation", and the native inhabitants of Nirbu have been placed under obligation to give tribute. Not only does the ceremony surrounding the construction of a palace serve as a ritual of reintegration in the manner described by Kelle, but the other details of this episode further serve as ceremonialised demonstrations that the preceding war against the Assyrian settlers in Ḫalziluḫa was performed "for the greater good." In this fashion, ceremonial and ritual actions before and after the confrontation with the rebels in Ḫalziluḫa served to help the Assyrian soldiers in coming to terms with killing their fellow Assyrians.

Conclusion

Both in the inscriptions and in the messages conveyed to the soldiers "on the ground", Ashurnasirpal dealt with the problematic situation of a rebellion by Assyrians in Ḫalziluḫa in broadly similar terms. The rhetoric surrounding this event was couched in the ideology of the early Neo-Assyrian *reconquista*; the decline of Assyrian power in Mount Kašijari had cut off the Assyrians living there from the centre, causing them to become "de-Assyrianised", "uncivilised", and rebellious. In the royal inscriptions, this rhetoric countered the possible appearance that a rebellion by Assyrians was the result of poor kingship on Ashurnasirpal's part. In the message to the Assyrian soldiers, demonstrating that the rebels had become "de-Assyrianised" and "uncivilised" was part of an effort to dehumanise them, allowing the soldiers to avoid moral self-censure for killing their fellow Assyrians.

This study has been carried out in two sections. First, the ideological message conveyed by the inscriptions has been analysed through a close reading of the text. By identifying elements that differ from the norm of the heavily stereotyped campaign accounts, it has been possible to find elements of the narrative which hold an ideological significance beyond the usual message of the inscriptional "iterative scheme."[29] The ideological message conveyed by the text having been established, it has then been possible to interpret the production of a monument during the campaign in question in similar terms, paying particular attention to how the performative aspects of its creation conveyed a similar message. In this approach, we might be reminded of the thoughts of A. Leo Oppenheim (1979: 118) on the ideological content of the Assyrian royal inscriptions: "(These) texts are therefore basically ceremonial writings, rather than messages meant for communication. In their substance, however, they reflect a dialogue that took place

[28] Of course, this display also served to demonstrate to the soldiers that the rebellion in Ḫalziluḫa was not a result of poor kingship on Ashurnasirpal's behalf in much the same fashion as the reference to the stele in the inscriptions conveyed this point to future kings (see above).

[29] For the concept of the "iterative scheme" of a heavily stereotyped literary genre, see Eco 1984: 117–22. For the application of this concept to the Assyrian royal inscriptions, see Younger 1990: 71–124.

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continuously at the court between the ruler and those who helped him to reconcile political and economic realities with the traditional aspirations of Mesopotamian rulers over an ever-expanding empire."

The royal inscriptions may not, in Oppenheim's view, be propaganda, but they do share elements with propagandistic messages conveyed through other channels. Towards this end, the rituals and ceremonies carried out by the king and his troops on campaign are a particularly fruitful source. By interpreting these events through the lens of the rhetoric of the royal inscriptions, we can, in at least some instances, go some way towards reconstructing aspects of the messages that they conveyed to the Assyrian soldiers participating in them. In this fashion, the Assyrian royal inscriptions, although not themselves propaganda, are an important source for understanding the propagandistic communications of the Assyrian kings.

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حن ضد هؤلاء : الجوانب الآيديولوجية والنفسية لحملة آشورناصربال الثاني ضد المتمردين في مدينة خلزيلوخا Ḫalziluḫa
بقلم : بن ديوار

يدور البحث في هذه الدراسة حول التمرد الذي نشأ ضد الملك الآشوري آشورناصربال الثاني في مدينة خلزيلوخا Ḫalziluḫa في عام 882 قبل التاريخ، وهو مثال من التمرد غير معتاد من قبل الآشوريين تم تسجيله في الكتابات الملكية . يتحرى هذا البحث أهمية هذا التمرد من ناحيتين : الناحية الأولى هي مشكلة آيديولوجية التمرد من قبل آشوريين، والثانية هي عن الوقع النفسي عند افراد الجيش الآشوري عنما يأمرون بقتل مواطنين آشوريين من ملتهم. ففي آيديولوجية الكتابات الملكية نجد ان الآشوريين لا يتمردون اعتياديا ضد ملك جالس على العرش والذي يقدم لهم في جميع النواحي كحاكم نموذجي. ويجادل البحث بأن آشورناصربال قد بذل جهدا في كتاباته للتأكيد

بأن المتمردين الآشوريين في مدينة خلزيلوخا Ḫalziluḫa كانوا يقطنون في أقليم كانت آشور قد فقدته قبل توليه هو الحكم، وبذلك انتزعت عن هذا الأقليم الصفة "الآشورية" و"المدنية." ويجادل البحث بأن شرحا كهذا تم توجيهه الى الجنود الآشوريين خلال المراسيم المحيطة بانشاء نصب تذكاري عند مصدر النهر سبناط وبأن هذا الشرح ساعد الجنود علد"فك الارتباط معنوياً" عن قتل الآشوريين الآخرين، وبالتالي تفادي تأنيب الضمير عن فعل ذو اشكال معنوي اعتياديا.

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