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‘Source of the Tigris’. Event, place and performance in the Assyrian landscapes of the Early Iron Age *Ömür Harmanşah*

Abstract

Performative engagements with specific, culturally significant places were among the primary means of configuring landscapes in the ancient world. Ancient states often appropriated symbolic or ritual landscapes through commemorative ceremonies and building operations. These commemorative sites became event-places where state spectacles encountered and merged with local cult practices. The Early Iron Age inscriptions and reliefs carved on the cave walls of the Dibni Su sources at the site of Birkleyn in Eastern Turkey, known as the ‘Source of the Tigris’ monuments, present a compelling paradigm for such spatial practices. Assyrian kings Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076 B.C.) and Shalmaneser III (858–824 B.C.) carved ‘images of kingship’ and accompanying royal inscriptions at this impressive site in a remote but politically contested region. This important commemorative event was represented in detail on Shalmaneser III’s bronze repoussé bands from Imgul-Enlil (Tell Balawat) as well as in his annalistic texts, rearticulating the performance of the place on public monuments in Assyrian urban contexts. This paper approaches the making of the Source of the Tigris monuments as a complex performative place-event. The effect was to reconfigure a socially significant, mytho-poetic landscape into a landscape of commemoration and cult practice, illustrating Assyrian rhetorics of kingship. These rhetorics were maintained by articulate gestures of inscription that appropriated an already symbolically charged landscape in a liminal territory and made it durable through site-specific spatial practices and narrative representations.

Keywords

mytho-poetic landscape; commemorative monuments; rock reliefs; place; performance; event; rhetorics of kingship; acts of inscription

Abandoned cities [*alāni natûte*] which during the time of my fathers had turned into ruined hills, I took in hand for renovation [and] settled therein many people. Ancient palaces [*ekalli mahrâte*] throughout my land I built anew. I decorated them in a splendid fashion [and] stored grain and straw in them.

Excerpt from the Commemorative ‘banquet stele’ from the Northwest Palace of Aššurnasirpal II (883–859 B.C.); translation by A. Kirk Grayson (1991, 291)

Introduction: performing the world

Performative engagements with specific, culturally significant places were a primary means by which political elites configured the landscapes in the ancient world. Through such performances landscapes constituted networks of socially significant places and landmarks which became imagined, mythologized, marginalized and contested in their various representations. The places that constituted these landscapes were often made durable as ‘sites of memory’, to borrow Pierre Nora’s (1989, 7) term – *les lieux de mémoire*.¹ Such sites of memory, he argues, materially demarcate places that exist by virtue of their relationship with specific historical events and persist through commemorative practices, those formalized performances that maintain the durability of places. Commemoration is a performative spectacle of reiterating the past and a way of ‘socializing’ the world in a particular way: it creates a narrative account of history at an outstanding climactic moment and relates it to a particular locale through an active bodily engagement with that locale (Connerton 1989). The production of space, then, partly involves the appropriation, acting out and monumentalization of a constellation of places in the landscape. Their reconfiguration over time and their incorporation into historical narratives work to configure landscapes as part of the apparatus of power in early complex polities (Smith 2003).

It is important not to see this process as a transformation of a neutral or ‘natural’ place into a socialized space. Rather, in diverse and subtle ways, commemorative practices appropriate already symbolically charged, culturally saturated landscapes.

These rhetorics of ‘untouched landscapes’ are usually associated with colonial discourse offering only a ‘representation of space’ (Lefebvre 1991). Other scholars have spoken of such discursive practices in the form of *terra nullius* or ‘virgin soil’ (Gosden 2004, 114–52) or the notion of the ‘pristine myth’ as explored by Erickson (2006) in the case of the Bolivian Amazon. Such rhetorics are abundant in Assyrian and Urartian imperial accounts of founding new cities in ‘uncultivated steppelands’ or places where ‘the earth was wilderness’ or ‘the rock was untouched’.² However, I argue in this paper that landscapes always carry a subtle imprint of social practices and cultural imaginations, and they are always in a fluid state of sociality and hybridity. Ancient states often appropriated symbolic or ritual landscapes, making them durable through their commemorative ceremonies, acts of inscription and building operations. These commemorative sites became event-places where state spectacles encountered and merged with local practices that were anchored to those places.³ By definition, commemorative practices are also ideological. Sites of commemoration, therefore, served as public spheres in which elite and local ideologies interacted in a set of material and discursive practices related to notions of kingship and servitude. They constituted *loci* for the display and its material embodiment, becoming places through which local histories were negotiated and written. In this study, I will attempt to illustrate the Assyrian practice of raising commemorative monuments in peripheral geographies. One remarkable example of such commemorative activity takes place at the so-called ‘Source of the Tigris’, where a symbolically charged landscape was materially transformed and conceptually demarcated by means

of place-making practices. I explore how these monuments were incorporated into a spatial narrative of imperial landscapes that was constructed through textual accounts, visual representations and architectural practice.

During their military campaigns, the Early Iron Age Assyrian kings Tiglath-pileser I (Tukulti-apil-ešarra, 1114–1076 B.C.) and Shalmaneser III (Šulmanu-ašared, 858–824 B.C.) visited the source of the Dibni Çay (the eastern tributary of the Tigris) at the site locally known as Birkleyn (alternatively spelled *Birkilin*) in Eastern Turkey,⁴ located in the midst of a remote, mountainous but politically contested region (figures 1 and 2). During these place-events, both kings had their craftsmen carve their 'images of kingship' (*salam šarrutiya*) and royal inscriptions on the walls of the caves from which the Dibni Su waters emerge at Birkleyn. This impressive site of multiple caves, gorges and rocky outcrops is known in Near Eastern scholarship as the 'Source of the Tigris' or 'Tigris Tunnel' (Shafer 1998, 182–88; Schachner 2006). Notable is the fact that this important commemorative event (carving of the reliefs and inscriptions, accompanied by feasting and animal sacrifices) was not only described explicitly in Shalmaneser III's annalistic texts that were publicly displayed on an urban monument in Assyria, but also represented pictorially on bronze repoussé bands installed on the gate of a monumental building at Imgul-Enlil (Tell Balawat), dated to the time of the same king (see figures 10–12). This paper approaches the making of the Source of the Tigris monuments as a spectacular event that reconfigures a socially significant mytho-poetic landscape into a landscape of commemoration and cult practice, as part of the Assyrian rulers' rhetorics of kingship. It argues that these rhetorics are located at a specific, performatively monumentalized place, and operate by both spatializing and narrativizing a shared understanding of the past. While the king's agency is distributed through the making durable of his presence at the imperial frontiers with his rock-carved images and inscriptions, the spectacles of the state and the performative transformation of the Source of the Tigris site were transported to the Assyrian urban core through textual and pictorial representations which performed this place to an audience beyond its immediate local context.

Rhetorics of kingship: images, texts and events

The Upper Mesopotamian and Anatolian states of the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages had a special interest in engaging with their environments and transforming their imperial landscapes through large-scale programmes of building operations, from the foundation of new cities to the plantation of orchards, from the construction of irrigation systems to the carving of rock reliefs.⁵ Intriguingly, Aššurnasirpal's statement cited in the epigraph does not refer to a particular building project but captures a pervasive landscape policy meant to transform the built environment which he claims to have inherited. His words evoke a collective and admirable past world that has declined, but which he now sets out to restore in the social imagination. As Sue Alcock puts it, 'the king is actively engaged in the construction of social memory' (2002, 1).

These material engagements with landscapes were not uniquely Assyrian. Hittite, Urartian and Syro-Hittite elites employed pictorial and textual narrative accounts to fashion strikingly similar discourses over their

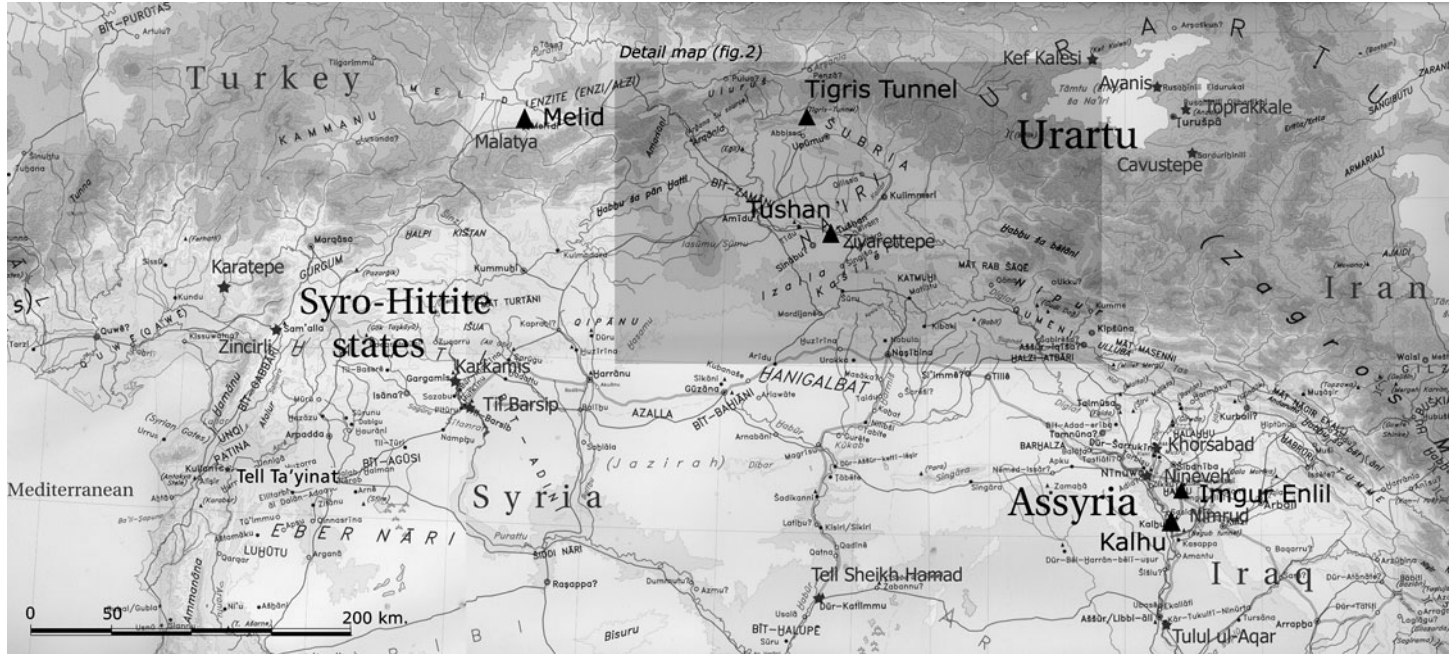


Figure 1 Map of Upper Mesopotamia during the Early Middle Iron Age.

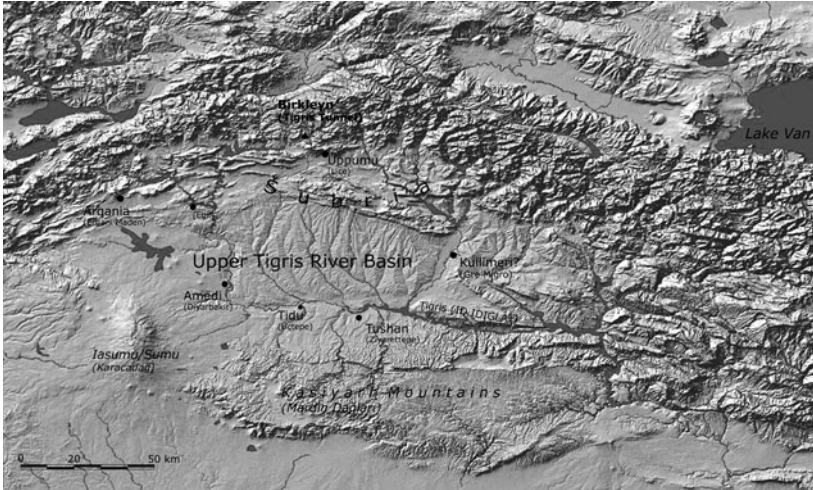


Figure 2 Detail map of Upper Tigris River Basin and the area of the Tigris Tunnel.

historically significant accomplishments. It is this set of practices that I refer to here as ‘the rhetorics of kingship’ (see chart 1). In one definition, rhetorics of kingship are a discursive, representational practice with distinct social interests.⁶ In the Near Eastern context, it has come to be associated with the construction of the narrative accounts of historical events in textual and pictorial form, often displayed in monumental contexts of public spaces. Nevertheless, my approach adopts a wider definition of these rhetorics of kingship, in which the rhetorical discourse is not limited to the confines of language and imagery, but refers to all kingly ‘signifying’ activities in the public domain (Holliday 2002). As such, the spatializing and performative rhetorical acts such as state ceremonies, urban spectacles, sacrificial rituals and royal hunts must be included in this definition. All are articulate monumental ‘gestures’, forms of social power and public performance that shape political landscapes in close reciprocity with their reception in the public sphere. These rhetorics of kingship are necessarily performative; they are both located and locating, in the sense that they materialize in the complex layering of specific sites and potent landscapes, where textual and pictorial narratives are used in the kingly acts of inscription and commemoration.

The study of commemorative practices comes with dichotomies of its own. On the one hand, commemorative monuments are frequently considered as ideological statements of the ruling elite, thereby as vehicles for securing social prestige and political power (compare this to Shafer 2007; Marcus 1995). On the other hand, Peter Holliday (2002, pp. xv–xxv) has argued that rhetorical acts of the ruling ideology ‘effectively constitute culture’ and ‘confer meaning on the world’. The production of monuments as a social practice cannot therefore be disengaged from the cultural practices of the society. In this paper, I argue that the study of powerful event-places such as the Source of the Tigris is crucial to understanding the state’s relationship with landscape as both spectacle and everyday performance of its symbolic repertoire of power and social order.

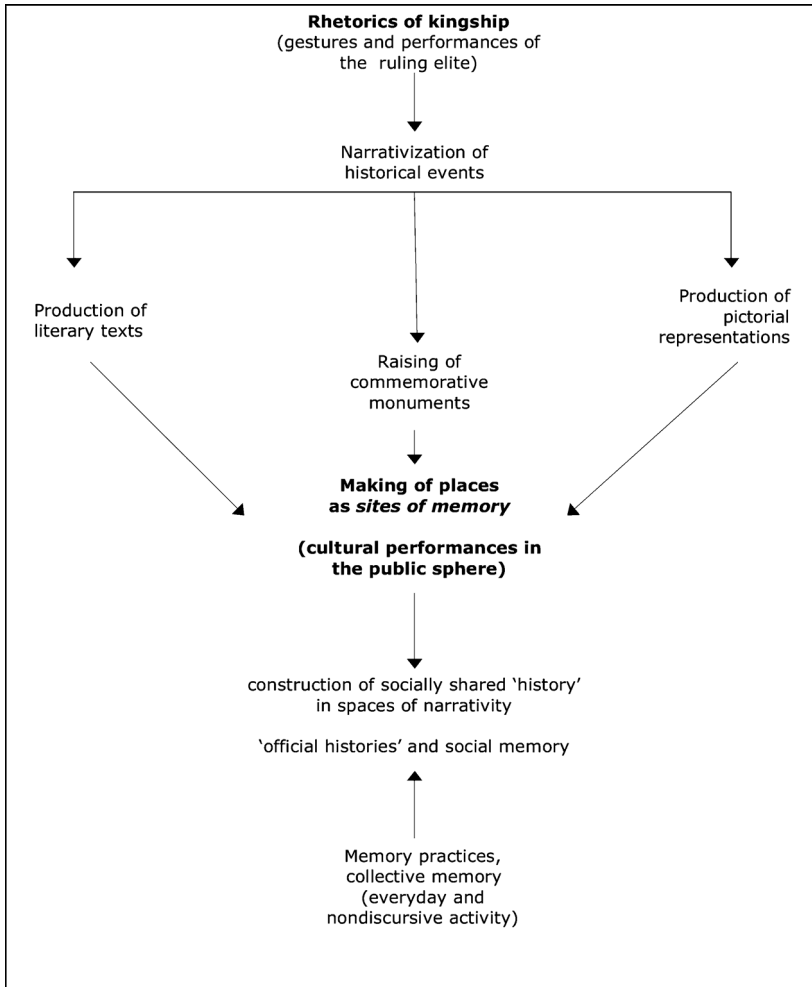


Chart 1 Royal rhetoric, memory practices and the making of spatial narratives in the ancient Near East.

An eventful landscape

In 1862 J.G. Taylor visited the Tigris Tunnel or the source of Dibni Su site, made note of the Assyrian rock images and inscriptions and presented a detailed, evocative description of the landscape around the site in the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* (Taylor 1865, 41–43). It is worth quoting Taylor here as his description illustrates the archaeological richness and the geological peculiarities of the place; it also presents yet another performative engagement with this culturally saturated landscape:

About three miles below the sources the river [Dibni Su] enters a high cave, 80 feet high and two miles long, running northeast and southwest, and emerges from it near the village of Korkhar, at a point where the

rocks are smooth and hard. Here, just outside the cave, on the right bank, and some twenty feet up the face of the rock, is the figure of an Assyrian king, with ten lines of a cuneiform inscription, in excellent preservation . . . During the spring floods, the river, confined in a narrow gorge with high perpendicular cliffs, comes down with immense force; the north-east end of the cave is naturally, therefore, a mass of fallen rock and smaller fragments . . . I am inclined to believe that from the numerous *débris* which now choke the stream, and the cave-like appearance through which it runs, this subterranean channel of the Tigris, or Dibeneh Su, extended close up to its sources, and thus gave some countenance to the fabulous length of its underground course as mentioned by Strabo. At one side of the cave, but perched up on the top of the mountain it has pierced, are the ruins of a small ancient fort. From it a flight of narrow steep steps, cut out of the face of the rock, leads down to a shelf, from which, entering by a narrow doorway, another stair, tunnelled in the solid stone, conducts to an opening in the roof of the cave, at a considerable height, however, from the water, which, as there is no reason to believe that the stair was intended for anything else than as a means of supplying the garrison of the fort with water, must have been obtained by a bucket and rope. At the base of the hill is a small level spot, round the edges of which are the remains of old buildings and a dilapidated arch . . . (Taylor 1865, 41–43).

German philologist Ferdinand Lehmann-Haupt was the first Assyriologist to publish the inscriptions and reliefs, following his visit to the site accompanied by his colleague Waldemar Belck in 1899 (see Lehmann-Haupt 1907, 15–18).

The Tigris Tunnel is a series of 'efflux' or 'resurgence' caves (Halliday and Shaw 1995; Waltham 1976) through which the eastern tributary of the Tigris, namely the Dibni Çay, emerges in the mountainous zone approximately 90 km north-east of modern Diyarbakır. It lies only 24 km from the town of Lice, which is provisionally identified with Upūmu/Uppumu, the Early Iron Age Hurrian capital of the Šubria (Kessler 1995; Parpola and Porter 2001; see here figure 2). The site is located immediately above a small but well-protected agricultural valley watered by the Dibni Çay and delimited by the Inceburun mountains to the north of the Diyarbakır plain. The modern road that connects the Diyarbakır plain to Bingöl, Lake Van and the highlands of Eastern Anatolia goes through this small valley, passing immediately to the east of the Tigris Tunnel (Schachner 2006, 77–78). At this geologically ubiquitous site, the Dibni Çay emerges at the end of a 900-meter-long tunnel underneath Korha Mountain (figure 3).⁷ The site constitutes therefore an excellent example of DINGIR.KASKAL.KUR, a particular Hittite/Hurrian landscape feature attested in cuneiform Hittite and hieroglyphic Luwian texts and usually translated as the 'Underground Water-Course' or the 'Divine Road of the Earth'. This natural feature has been modified by a series of rock reliefs and monumental inscriptions carved on the limestone surfaces of the entrances of two main caves. Lehmann-Haupt was able to identify the monuments belonging to the Assyrian kings Tiglath-pileser I and Shalmaneser III. The inscriptions and reliefs were carved during multiple visits of the kings which stretched across several centuries of the Early Iron Age.

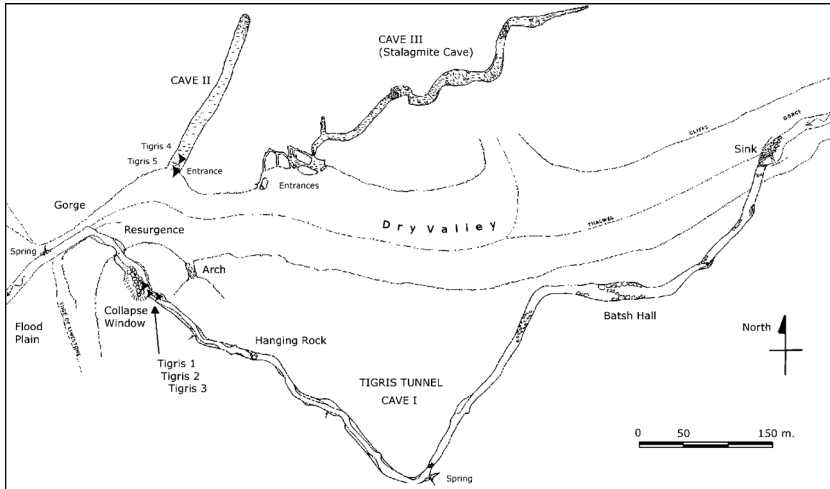


Figure 3 Plan of the Tigris Tunnel area (after Waltham 1976).



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

Figures 4 and 5 Birkleyn gorge and the course of Dibni Su (author's photographs).

Approaching the site along the shallow river course, a narrow but spectacular gorge appears, and one arrives at the lower tunnel through which the Dibni Çay still flows. This is a limestone ravine that cuts through an otherwise largely volcanic landscape (Waltham 1976, 31). As acutely described in Taylor's text, Dibni waters emerge from the lower tunnel at a place where the cave 'brow' covering the limestone gorge had collapsed



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

Figures 6 and 7 Entrance of Cave I and Cave II (author's photograph).



Figure 8 Entrance of Cave II (author's photograph).

in a rockfall or 'collapse window', opening up large breaks on its course. At the mouth of this broken stretch of the bedrock where direct sunlight is allowed to penetrate the water and rock surfaces the Assyrian rulers located the first set of the reliefs and accompanying inscriptions. Immediately outside the exit of the tunnel and in a prominent position about four meters above the knee-deep water is the relatively small (about one meter high), but deeply carved, relief image of Tiglath-pileser I, who is depicted performing *ubana tarasu*, the so-called 'stretching-the-finger' gesture, with the raising of the right hand (figure 9). This highly symbolic prayer gesture became common in the iconographic repertoire of Assyrian monuments, seal impressions and other media where the king addresses 'one or more full-figured images of deities' (Shafer 2007, 137). Ursula Magen (1986) has suggested that *ubana*



Figure 9 Relief image of Tiglath-pileser I on the Lower Cave (Cave I) walls, with Tigris 1 cuneiform inscription to his left (author's photograph).

tarasu can be understood as a gesture of speech that established a 'positive communication' between human subjects and the divine ones, putting the king in direct contact with the divinities.

The brief ten-line inscription on the left-hand side of the image (Tigris 1) refers to Tiglath-pileser's campaigns to the Nairi lands, mountainous landscapes located to the east and north of the site.

With the help of Aššur, Šamaš (and) Adad, the great gods, my lords, I, Tukulti-apil-Ešarra, king of the land of Aššur, son of Aššur-rēša-iši, king of the land of Aššur, son of Mutakkil-Nusku, king of the land of Aššur as well, the conqueror (of the territory) of the great sea of the land of Amurru [the Mediterranean Sea] and the sea of the land of Nairi [Lake Van], went three times to the land of Nairi.⁸

The first set of Shalmaneser's images and inscriptions, however, are located further inside the Lower Cave and, therefore, are far less visible. The two distinct groups of reliefs and inscriptions (Tigris 2 and 3) of Shalmaneser III were dated to his seventh and fifteenth regnal years, 852 and 844 B.C. respectively, and, therefore, they were raised in the course of at least two separate expeditions to the site (Shafer 2007, 141; Schachner *et al.* 2007). The earlier inscription is a brief account of campaigns to the lands Gilzānu and Nairi, while the later and longer inscription summarizes campaigns to Babylonia and his confrontation with the twelve kings of Hatti from coastal Syria.⁹ It is important to note that in the earlier and longer inscription (Tigris 2), Shalmaneser III describes the extent of his conquests with the phrase 'I subjected [the territory from] the source of the Tigris to the source of the Euphrates, from the Sea of Inner Zamua to the Sea of the land of Kaldu' (Grayson 1996, 95). In this description the sources of the two rivers appear to mark the edges of the king's imagined territory. Shalmaneser III completes the second inscription (Tigris 3) with the phrase 'At the source of the Tigris, I wrote/inscribed my name.' Accompanying the first of the two inscriptions is a worn, incised rather than carved, image of Shalmaneser performing the same gesture as his predecessor (Schachner 2006, 79).

To see the other set of inscriptions and the relief of Shalmaneser III, one has to climb northwards some 50 meters over the rock outcrop and

through the vertically rising gorge to the mouth of a larger cave, situated on a higher elevation. This is the largest of the caves at the Birkleyn site, approximately 25 meters in height and 30 meters in width, and extending some 250 meters in length. Andreas Schachner of the University of Munich and his team have recently, in the summer of 2004, conducted a survey of the area. During that survey the team identified Iron Age and Byzantine-period ceramics within this cave from the surface as well as in robbers' pits (Schachner *et al.* 2007; Schachner 2006). Medieval architectural remains are immediately visible on the western side of the cave. The relief and two sets of inscriptions of Shalmaneser III are again dated to his seventh and fifteenth regnal years (Tigris 4 and 5) and were carved on the northern face of the cave's entrance. In 1984 a British Institute of Archaeology team was able to discover further reliefs, unnoticed by Lehmann-Haupt as they were covered with lichen (Russell 1986).

The Birkleyn/Dibni Çay valley was part of an extensive region rich in metal as well as agricultural resources, including the Upper Tigris valley, other tributary river valleys and the foothills of the eastern Anatolian (south-eastern Taurus) mountains. Between the late second and the early first millennium B.C. it was a critical and complex frontier zone between Assyria, Šubria and Urartu, as well as the Syro-Hittite states such as Malizi and Bit Zamani (Schachner and Radner 2000; Russell 1984; Kessler 1995; Karg 1999; Parker 2001; Köroğlu 2002). The immediate area of the Tigris tunnel, the Taurus Piedmont region, was under the control of the Mitanni, the Hurrian state during the Late Bronze Age, while in the Early Iron Age the kingdom of Šubria controlled the area (Radner and Schachner 2001, 757). Šubria was centred at two main urban centres, Upūmu and Kullimeri, the former of which was most probably associated with the modern town of Lice, immediately south-east of the Birkleyn site (Kessler 1995, 57). The Assyrian programmes of settlement in the Upper Tigris river basin during the Late Bronze (Middle Assyrian) and Early Iron (Neo-Assyrian) Ages have recently been explored through surveys and excavations (Parker 2001; 2002; 2003; Parker *et al.* 2003).

It is reasonable to think that these territorial and regional states had material interests in the region, considering the significant concentrations of iron, copper and silver ores in the area. Ergani Maden (ancient Arqania) to the west of the Source of the Tigris has always been one of the best-known copper sources for northern Mesopotamia in antiquity (figure 2). The lower plains south of the Tigris sources, the Upper Tigris basin, were an important Middle and Neo-Assyrian frontier region, where the Assyrians attempted to control agricultural production through the regional capital of Tušhan on the Tigris (modern Ziyarettepe) and a series of frontier fortresses across the region (Matney 1999; Parker 2001). In 882 B.C. Aššurnasirpal II refounded the city of Tušhan, as one of the provincial centres within the region, and it is now identified with the recently excavated Ziyarettepe in the Diyarbakır province in Turkey (Radner and Schachner 2001, 758).¹⁰ On the Kurkh stele, another commemorative stele from the region, he also mentions that Tidu and Sinābu, towns along the Upper Tigris near Tušhan, had already been garrisoned by Shalmaneser (I) (Grayson 1991, 256–62, text A.0.101.19). The rock monuments at the Source of the Tigris essentially marked the northern

limit of this fertile and politically contested geography, where the Assyrians attempted to establish a frontier through urbanization, especially against the independent kingdom of Šubria to the north.

Also significant for the present discussion is the Early Iron Age kingdom of Malizi/Melid, which evidently was crucial in the political landscape of the Iron Age. Settled in the intermontane Malatya-Elbistan and Tohma Su basins, immediately west of the Birkliñay valley, the ‘Country Lords’ of Malizi of the 12th and 11th centuries B.C. raised a large number of commemorative monuments, including stelae and rock reliefs featuring pictorial imagery as well as hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions, demarcating the territorial limits of this regional polity (Hawkins 2000). The rock monument from the narrow gorge of the Upper Tohma Su valley near Gürün, for instance, was raised by the Malizian ruler Runtiyas, some time in the second half of 12th century B.C. Tiglath-pileser I, the first king who had his image carved at the Source of the Tigris, is known at that time to have visited Melid in the course of his expedition to the lands of Nairi and Daiēni in Eastern Anatolia, where according to his inscriptions he received the yearly tribute of lead ore. Urartian forts and rock-carved monumental cuneiform inscriptions are also present in these territorial frontiers, especially along the Euphrates, from the 9th century B.C. onwards. The practice of carving rock reliefs that structured imperial landscapes was part and parcel of the interregional rhetorics of kingship shared among Near Eastern polities of the Iron Age. Seen in this context, the Birkleyn site, where the Assyrian kings performed commemorative spectacles in multiple instances during the Early Iron Age, was an event-place where political contestations in this frontier zone as well as cult practices associated with a local mytho-poetic landscape were already materialized and gathered. In the next section I will argue that this potent place was transformed into a site of memory through the acts of inscription, particularly through the inscription of the king’s bodily image (*salmu*) and his words (*šumu*).

Distributing the king, transporting the place

The Birkleyn caves were evidently a site of major symbolic significance in the Early Iron Age, and were repeatedly visited by particular Assyrian kings. These visits involved a multiplicity of commemorative activities that made the site durable through the performative acts of kingship and the acts of inscribing the place with images and inscriptions. Especially from the Early Iron Age onwards, Assyrian monuments appear overwhelmingly in the contexts of peripheral territories, being used to mark rural landscapes at strategic, symbolically charged places such as mountain passes, stone quarries, springs or river sources (Shafer 1998). These commemorative monuments appear either as free-standing stelae raised in public spaces (such as city gates, temple courtyards, urban plazas, ruined mounds, newly founded cities and so on) or as rock reliefs in powerful landscapes.¹¹

Assyrian annalistic texts make occasional references in both text and imagery to the raising of such monuments, and quite consistently identify them as *narû* – that is, a stele or inscribed monument.¹² The pictorial component was usually described as *salam šarrutiya*, ‘the image of (my) kingship’, or *salam bunnanniya*, ‘the image of (my) physique’. While *narû* signified the

entire monument itself, either a free-standing stone stele or a rock-carved monument as a combination of text and image, *salmu* referred to the pictorial image of the king represented within the monument. Assyrians, however, did not distinguish between relief images on stelae, orthostats (monumental wall slabs), rock reliefs or even the statues, as they were all collectively understood as *salmu*. The image of the king appeared in these representations as a 'culturally mediated, conventionally coded' representation of kingship, an idealized rather than a naturalistic likeness of the king's body (Bahrani 2003, 123). In contrast to Western post-Enlightenment conceptualizations of portraiture, the *salmu* acted as the king's double, an indexical representation of the king's corporeality, fully endowed with the efficacious powers of the king's body. *Salmu*, as a uniquely efficacious material object, transported and established the king's own flesh in foreign landscapes.

The commemorative inscriptions, on the other hand, narrate the historical circumstances surrounding the making of the monument and place it into a narrative context of imperial geographies. In the course of an Assyrian territorial expedition, the making of the *narû* monuments appears to be introspective moments of reflection, when the king had his scribes and craftsmen articulate a narrativized account of their immediate expedition in verbal and visual form. The immediacy of the present was made durable through an act of inscription. The pictorial representation and the texts together then communicated complex rhetorics of kingship, as discussed above, but they also emerge at unique historical moments at specific sites where the linear rhythm of the expedition was halted for commemorative performances and productive engagements with those sites or *lieux de mémoire*. This practice can be characterized as the making of official histories of the state in an impressively performative and spatializing way: narratives of the state are anchored to places.¹³ In this way, the sites of commemoration were transformed into mnemonic repositories of textual and visual narratives, and become spaces of social memory maintained through continuous construction activities and related ceremonies. The raising of each of the commemorative monuments was a climactic event in the course of the expedition, and through such spectacles of spatial articulation distinct places were incorporated into the spatial narratives of the territorial state.

A striking example of such a commemorative place-event is found in Aššurnasirpal II's annals:

At that time I made an image of my physique [*salam bunnannîya*] [and] wrote thereon the praises of my power [*tanatti kiššûtiya*]. I erected [it] on the *Eqû* Mountain in the city called URU.Aššur-nasir-apli at the source of the spring [*rēš ēni*].¹⁴

Although the geographical location of this place is unknown, it is understood that the king claims to have raised his commemorative monument at the source of a spring on a mountain, precisely where he had founded (or refounded) a new city named after himself, i.e. the city of Aššur-nasir-apli. Here two commemorative acts, two place-events, literally overlapped: the foundation of a new city and the raising of the *narû* monument at a

symbolically charged landscape (Harmanşah 2005, chapter 3). But perhaps more importantly, here two event-places are merged into one: the mountainous site of a spring as a place of sacred character and a newly founded provincial urban centre.

A significant aspect of the *narû* commemorations is the fact that the sites of these monuments are visited repeatedly by the Assyrian kings. As a matter of fact, discovering the monuments raised by former kings in foreign landscapes and deciphering their inscriptions was considered a major accomplishment in and of itself. One might suggest here that this landscape-memory practice is well paralleled by the Mesopotamian practice of excavating foundation deposits or inscriptions of former builder-kings in the course of the renovation or restoration of a truly ancient building. This ‘archaeological’ interest in the ancestral past as anchored in ‘topographies of remembrance’ was particularly prevalent among Neo-Babylonian kings (Winter 2000; Jonker 1995).

Likewise, in foreign landscapes the king would raise his own monuments right next to those of his ancestors. For instance, Aššurnasirpal II claims in his display inscriptions on the orthostats of the Ninurta Temple in Kalhu that in the course of his second campaign he had his craftsmen fashion his royal image at the source of the Subnat river, beside the images of the former kings Tiglath-pileser I and Tukulti-Ninurta II.¹⁵ In Mt Lebanon, Shalmaneser III claims to have located a *salmu* of Tiglath-pileser I and raised his own (Yamada 2000, 284–85). At the site of Kurkh, near Diyarbakır, J.E. Taylor discovered in 1861 two steles on an ancient mound, one belonging to the time of Aššurnasirpal II and the other to that of Shalmaneser III.¹⁶ In this sense the Source of the Tigris monuments are not unique as repeatedly visited, materially maintained, resymbolized ancestral landscapes.

In her 1998 dissertation on the ‘Neo-Assyrian monuments on the periphery’, Ann Shafer suggested that the Assyrian commemorative monuments cannot simply be explained by their widespread functionalist interpretation as markers of the borders of military conquest. Instead, she argued that the stelae and rock reliefs gathered ritual performances around them and that with their presence they constituted sites of cult practice. As illustrated in many literary and pictorial representations of the making of these monuments, Assyrian landscape commemorations involved not only the carving of the king’s image and inscriptions, but also cultic activities such as sacrificial rituals, washing and raising of the sacred ‘weapons of Aššur’, and feasting. The king also often received tributes and offerings at these occasions. We know from the monumental inscriptions of Shalmaneser III that this was the case for the commemorations at the Source of the Tigris:

In my seventh regnal year . . . I went as far as to the source of the Tigris [*rēš id ēni ša id Idiqlat*], the place where the water comes out. I washed the weapon of Aššur therein, made sacrifices to my gods, [and] put on a celebration banquet. I fashioned a splendid royal image of myself [*salam šarrūtīya*], inscribed thereon the praise of Aššur, my lord, [and] all the heroic deeds which I achieved in the lands, [and] set [it] up therein (Grayson 1996, 65).

This is an excerpt from a public monument with a pictorial and a textual narrative, known in the scholarship as the ‘Black Obelisk’, which was

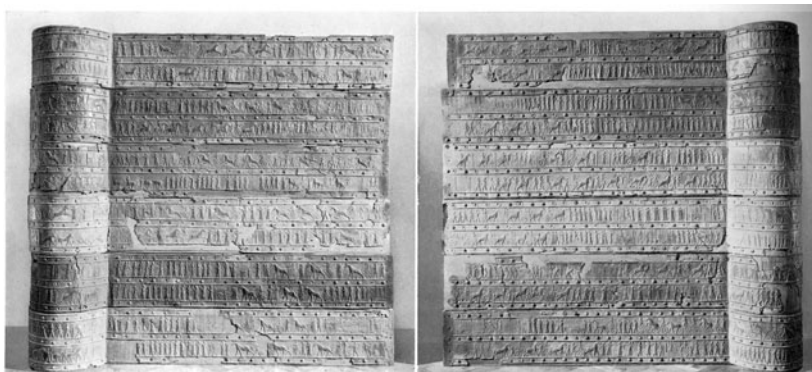


Figure 10 Bronze door reliefs of Shalmaneser III, Tell Balawat (Imgur-Enlil) (King 1915).

raised in a public setting on the citadel of Kalhu (Nimrud), the Assyrian capital at the time of Aššurnasirpal II and Shalmaneser III. 'Obelisks' are Assyrian commemorative monuments that were extensively raised in the public realms of Assyrian capital cities during the Early Iron Age. They are tall, free-standing, pillar-like stelae with tapering form, usually with a rectangular cross-section and pictorial narrative scenes carved on all four sides in registers. The Black Obelisk had 20 relief panels in five registers, presenting a visual account of the submission of foreign kings and their tribute-bearing processions, in particular those of the regional states of Gilzānu, Humrī, Suhu and Patina, identified in the epigraphs. Some of the well-preserved obelisks have long annalistic inscriptions on them, such as the Black Obelisk. However, almost all of these monuments also consistently have epigraphic inscriptions that identify particular pictorial scenes.

This practice is comparable to another type of public monument of Aššurnasirpal II and Shalmaneser III: the bronze repoussé reliefs that fastened monumental timber gates, largely known from the city of Imgur-Enlil (Tell Balawat – see figure 10). In the Balawat bronze-gate narratives, selected scenes of culminating ceremonial events were captioned with short epigraphic inscriptions identifying the particular event, often with the names of specific figures taking part in the scene and the location of the event, such as the scenes of the king receiving tribute, the making of commemorative monuments in foreign landscapes or the conquest of a city. This aspect of the bronze-gate reliefs and obelisk narratives suggests that they were intended for wider audiences and were, therefore, constructed as public monuments.

The Black Obelisk's lengthy annalistic inscription provides a relatively detailed description of the making of the Source of the Tigris monuments, pointing to a complex series of events including the washing of the sacred 'weapons of Aššur', animal sacrifices and a ceremonial banquet. However, the place-event did not appear on the individual pictorial scenes. For such a visual representation of the Source of the Tigris events, one must turn to the series of bronze strips from the gates of Tell Balawat dated to the time of King Shalmaneser III. Tell Balawat, ancient Imgur-Enlil, was founded by



Figure 11 Bronze door reliefs of Shalmaneser III, Tell Balawat (Imgur-Enlil), Relief Panel 10 (King 1915).

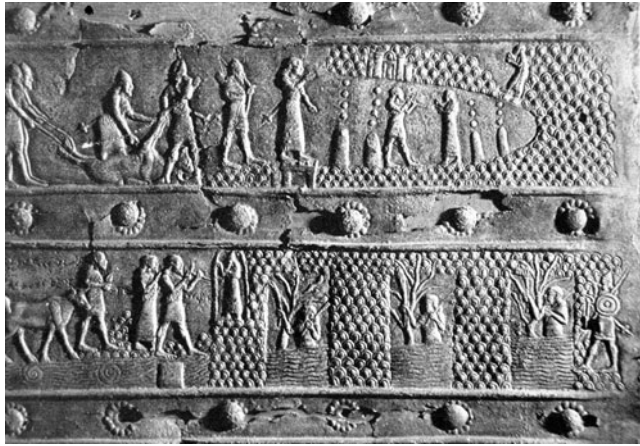


Figure 12 Bronze door reliefs of Shalmaneser III, Tell Balawat (Imgur-Enlil), Relief Panel 10, detail (King 1915).

Aššurnasirpal as a medium-sized, orthogonally planned settlement, located 15 km north-east of Kalhu (Oates 1974). Limited archaeological work at the site has uncovered a temple complex dedicated to Mamu, a deity associated with dreams and dream oracles. Two sets of bronze strips fastened to monumental wooden gates were excavated in a palatial building: the earlier and more fragmentary set dates to the time of Aššurnasirpal, while the better-preserved set dates to Shalmaneser III (figures 10–12).

Finely decorated in *repoussé* technique, Shalmaneser's bands depict a narrative account of his first 13 expeditions to various lands. Each band has two horizontal registers of pictorial imagery, which are occasionally captioned with brief epigraphs that identify the scenes. Michelle Marcus (1987; 1995) argues that the overall layout of the narratives is arranged geographically rather than chronologically. She suggests that the entire visual programme acted as a narrativized map of the king's travels across the empire's frontiers. The episode on Relief Panel 10, which narrates the king's seventh-year campaign, culminates with a ceremonial scene, understood as Shalmaneser's visit to the Source of the Tigris, where he received the submission of local kings, made offerings to the gods, celebrated a banquet and had his craftsmen carve his images and inscriptions on the rock faces (figure 11). In this outstanding scene, the cultic and ceremonial activity is depicted in great detail, while the rock

faces, the river and the caves from which the Tigris emerges are represented in articulate spatial specificity. In the upper register a sacrifice takes place, while within a large cave-like space the image of the king is carved attended by a high Assyrian official standing on a raised platform. In the lower register, while a series of sacrificial animals are being led to the scene from the left, the stele-shaped image of the king is carved by the artisan on the rock face. Given our knowledge of the actual topography of the Birkleyn caves, the interpretation of this scene as a depiction of those performative acts at the Source of the Tigris is compelling. The cave on the upper register represents a large and clear cave space, just as it is in the upper cave at the Birkleyn site, whereas the topography of the lower register reminds us of the multiple breaks in the bedrock that covers the river. The spatial representation on the Balawat bronze bands is remarkably commensurate with the topography of Birkleyn caves.

In both textual and pictorial narrative programmes of the time of Shalmaneser III, the commemorative performances at the Source of the Tigris, the Birkleyn site, were transported to one of the major Assyrian cities in the Land of Aššur, the core territory of Assyria, and put on public display. This constituted a performative act which, I propose, made the Source of the Tigris commemorations available to an urban Assyrian audience. In their presence a state spectacle performed on the empire's frontiers was re-enacted in an intimate interaction with the making of social memory. While the acts of inscription at the Birkleyn site distributed the Assyrian king's symbolic body into this frontier landscape, a liminal place, the representational monuments at the Assyrian urban core reincorporated the commemorative frontier performances of the remote landscapes of the north into the narratives of the state. Such indexical extensions of places and bodies from the centre to the edge, and from the edge to the centre, constituted the landscape as a complex web of material interactions, spatial engagements and corporeal cartographies.

Placing the rhetorics of kingship: appropriating symbolic landscapes

In this final section I would like to return to the Birkleyn site, the Source of the Tigris, and revisit my argument that landscapes are always already configured by the material practices and cultural representations that are not simply related to places but are, perhaps, often generated by those places. Ancient states frequently appropriated such places through the performative enactment of commemorative events that built upon the already existing and dense socio-symbolic associations and materialities of places. In this way, particular landscapes were woven into narratives of the state, which, by their linear mentality, might hinder or mask such rich layers of human interaction in generating rhetorics of kingship and official histories. It is the task of the archaeologist to 'excavate' such place-palimpsests that the elite-dominated representational record of the past usually obfuscates.

Shalmaneser III's craftsmen, who produced the Balawat bronze bands, had an unusual interest in depicting the topographical specificity of the Source of the Tigris site as evidenced by the decision not to represent the event with much more generic pictorial conventions. This suggests to the viewer of the Balawat monumental gates that he/she is dealing with an extraordinary locale. The site's specificity also derives from the fact that it constituted a

liminal space between the underworld and the lived world, according to the Anatolian Hittite/Hurrian conceptualization of similar geological landscapes.

As discussed earlier, the idea of setting up rock reliefs and commemorative monuments to demarcate symbolic landscapes was in fact not unique to Assyrians in the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age, but it was a practice shared interregionally among Upper Mesopotamian polities. In Anatolia and North Syria the 13th-century B.C. Hittite rulers of Hattuša and Tarhuntašša, and several rulers of the Syro-Hittite Iron Age, produced monumental inscriptions on stone monuments and rock faces, especially in Luwian using the ‘Hittite’ hieroglyphic script (Stokkel 2005; Ehringhaus 2005; Kohlmeyer 1982). The Hittites particularly favoured constructing elaborate cultic installations at prominent rocky landscapes and sacred springs. Due to its ubiquitous karstic geology with copious underground drainage, the Anatolian landscape is particularly abundant in springs, natural ‘tunnels’ or caves through which rivers and streams flow briefly, as well as poljes (‘blind valleys’, ‘karst windows’ or ‘potholes’ in geological parlance) where surface-flowing streams disappear underground (Gordon 1967). Scholars have identified such geological formations with the cuneiform phrase DINGIR.KASKAL.KUR of Hittite texts, with a one-to-one correspondence with the Hieroglyphic Luwian expression DEUS.VIA+TERRA, translated as ‘Divine Road of the Earth’ (Hawkins 1998, 76). These Divine Roads of the Earth, or the DINGIR.KASKAL.KUR sites, were considered liminal spaces, entrances to the underworld. Occurrences of this phrase in the Late Bronze Age texts are understood as ‘fixed geographical points in frontier descriptions, and also as divine witnesses to treaties joined with the mountains, rivers, and springs’ (Hawkins 1998, 76). Hittites often transformed such miraculous sites into cult places taking the form of sacred pools and dams, usually accompanied by rock reliefs and royal inscriptions. In fact, the Hittite practice of building sacred pool complexes, for example the Südburg ‘Sacred Pool Complex’ at Hattuša, was recently associated with the DINGIR.KASKAL.KUR (Hawkins 1998, 75–76). Along with Hittite divinities, mountains, rivers and springs, DINGIR.KASKAL.KUR sites were often invoked as divine witnesses, to the signing of treaties settling boundary disputes (for sample texts see Gordon 1967, 71 ff.; especially texts 2, 3 and 4). In antiquity, then, while springs, river sources and potholes already constituted symbolically charged and mythologically potent liminal places where communication with the underworld could be established, they also signified the thresholds of political territories.

It is then necessary to understand the Source of the Tigris site, with its 900-meter-long tunnel through which a major tributary of the Tigris flows, in this cultural context of local practices of marking territory. Assyrian kings were possibly appropriating the Anatolian practice of the DINGIR.KASKAL.KUR in ritualizing sacred topographies and settling their political disputes with Hurrians of Šubria. It is also notable that a great deal of the Hittite texts attesting to DINGIR.KASKAL.KUR or DEUS.VIA+TERRA refer to Hurrian-related contexts. Given the fact that Early Iron Age Šubria was still a heavily Hurrian cultural domain, the local cultural imagination of the Source of the Tigris site as a Divine Road of the Earth is more than likely. This corresponds well with our discussion of the *salmu* of the Assyrian kings

at the site. In the absence of the representation of any deities, it may be possible to suggest that the Assyrian king is himself interacting here with the underground world of divinities at the site. In this way it is possible to establish that the representation of the Assyrian king's image is not solely distributing the agency of kingship to the site through his *salmu*, but that his *salmu* is indeed performatively engaging with the place as a sacred, god-filled landscape.

Through the transportation of the Source of the Tigris performative event into the public realm by means of pictorial representations and display inscriptions, the Assyrians are presented with a state spectacle, curiously located in a remote and exotic mytho-poetical landscape charged with associations of the world's edge. On the other hand the king's own body and its efficacious powers were distributed to the imperial frontiers through such commemorative, spatializing acts, which were re-presented in the narrative programmes of the state. However, seen from the Anatolian point of view, when we closely scrutinize the Assyrian king's activities at the Source of the Tigris, it is notable that he is appropriating not only an already symbolically charged powerful landscape, but also that cultural landscape's cult practices and political gestures. In doing so he acknowledges the efficacy of Anatolian–Hurrian practices of engaging with DINGIR.KASKAL.KUR sites. In this way, they were most likely speaking to a local Hurrian/Šubrian audience in negotiating their presence, which was made durable with the reliefs and inscriptions and with their performances.

In dealing with the representational record of the past, elite practices and issues such as rhetorics of kingship, archaeologists and ancient historians are increasingly confronted with a disturbing polarization between ideologically defined state discourse and the bedrock of the social world, namely human practices on a mundane and everyday scale. Likewise, in the scholarship of the ancient Near East, little attempt has been made to look for the relationship between imperial rhetorics and the social sphere. Assyrian royal inscriptions, for instance, are usually studied with a presumed definition of ideology as 'illusion, distortion and mystification' of phenomena, suggesting that ideology creates a form of 'false consciousness' in the public domain (Eagleton 1991). As an epiphenomenon of social reality and detached from the structures of everyday life, ideology simply *mis*represents the world in alignment with the imperial propagandistic agenda.¹⁷

However, this very idea that a minority of elites monopolizes the construction of a world view on behalf of its subjects, while the rest of the people 'blunder around in some fog of false consciousness', has been called to question rather vigorously in the last few decades (Eagleton 1991, 11).¹⁸ It seems much more productive for the purposes of the present argument to move beyond the question of such epistemic falsehood (i.e. beyond worrying whether these ideological statements are true or false), and to approach such texts as rhetorical discourses with distinct social interests. These rhetorics of kingship may indeed be regarded as a social reality in their own right. Thus Terry Eagleton (1991, 30) has argued that the stuff of ideological discourse does not simply arise 'from the interests of a dominant class but from the material structure of society as whole'. This has been articulated

exceptionally well recently by Peter Holliday in the preface to his work on Roman commemorative monuments:

Anthropological studies have suggested that the symbolic actions of ideology effectually constitute culture. Such analyses argue that an ideological statement is not simply a misconceived understanding but a rhetorical act that draws its power from its capacity to 'grasp, formulate, and communicate social realities that elude the tempered language of science.' Ideology's symbolic actions thus confer meaning on the world. This approach leads toward a semiotic concept of culture as an interlocked system of construable signs. Rather than constituting that through which society mediates and makes visible the material interests that organize it, culture is itself the primary agency of the social constitution of the real (Holliday 2002, pp. xx–xxi).

Source of the Tigris monuments in south-eastern Turkey were made during a series of commemorative events at a frontier site charged with powerful mytho-poetics and local symbolic associations. The Assyrian performative engagements with the place and the acts of inscription made the site durable in the Assyrian cultural imagination, by specifically identifying this extraordinary landscape, the Birkleyn site, with the source of the Tigris, the river that was the source of life to all Assyrian core landscapes. These place-events are transported to the urban sphere of the Land of Aššur in specific and detailed narrative representations of the Assyrian expeditions in the foreign landscapes. In the construction of these official histories one can easily see a window into the complexity of situated human–nonhuman interactions through the performance of place. The Birkleyn site, as a unique locale where human practices, imaginations and engagements are gathered, asserts its agency into official histories of Assyrian kingship, as a place with a cultural biography of its own.

Eviatar Zerubavel, in his recent work on collective memory (2003, 8), referred to the idea of shaping the past as the coagulation of 'noncontiguous patches of history into a single, seemingly continuous experiential stream'. This form of narrativity was not only accomplished by means of the textual and visual media with the formulation of a complex royal rhetoric, but also in the configuration of social space through commemorative building activity. In the case of the Source of the Tigris monuments, the spectacular natural topography of the Birkleyn caves was coopted into the spectacle of the state while the commemorative activities of the Assyrian rulers at the site generated further localized spatial practices at this marginal landscape. Landscapes are active components of the processes of social signification. They are the domain of social practices and cultural representations in every sense, materially produced and mentally constructed in a collective manner, but they also hold the agency to affect the social constitution of culture.

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Notes

- ¹ Pierre Nora speaks of *lieux de mémoire* as places ‘where memory crystallizes and secretes itself’ created by a ‘play of memory and history’ (1989, 7). It represents a moment of rupture within the uninterrupted continuity of the past into the present, and the so-called ‘environments of memory’. This breaking of a temporal continuity by means of a social performative act imbues places with an aura of symbolic action that defines itself by means of its distancing from the past. It recalls what Michel de Certeau termed ‘the historiographical operation’, the writing of history as an act of inscription that highlights certain aspects of collectively shared histories/memories while silencing or destroying others (de Certeau 1988).
- ² Here I am particularly referring to the inscriptions of the Assyrian Tukulti-Ninurta I (1233–1197 B.C.) on the founding of Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta (modern Tulul ul-Aqar) in the Middle Tigris region across the river from Aššur, and the inscriptions of the Urartian king Argišti I (c.785/80–756 B.C.) on the founding of Argištihinili (modern Armavir) in the Ararat plain of Transcaucasia. For a more detailed discussion, including textual references, see Harmanşah (2005, 130–32).
- ³ I borrow the concept of event-place from Bernard Tschumi (1996), who suggests that ‘there was no architecture without event’ and that architecture is seen as a combination of spaces, events and movement. Similarly, one could argue that there is no landscape without event, and that landscapes are *event-ful*. Also useful in discussing performative engagements with place is Kaye (2000). See also Massey (2006) for an argument for seeing landscapes and places as events. For an anthropological approach to public events see Handelman (1998).
- ⁴ Birkleyn or Birkilin is the local Kurdish name of the site, presumably derived from the Arabic *birqat al-‘ayn*, which literally means ‘source of the river’. Local inhabitants also refer to the Dibni Su as Birkilin or Birkleyn Çay (Schachner 2006, 77–78).
- ⁵ For a detailed discussion of the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age landscape transformations in Upper Mesopotamia and Anatolia, see Harmanşah (2005, 128–251).
- ⁶ My definition of the rhetorics of kingship owes a great deal to Irene J. Winter’s (1981) concept of ‘royal rhetoric’. It is important to note here, however, that I also adopt Michel de Certeau’s (1984) creative use of ‘rhetorics’ as distinct performative strategies and ways of everyday acting.
- ⁷ The height of this natural tunnel ranges between 20 and 45 meters. For a topographic plan of the site see Schachner (2006, Abb. 3). The plan of the Tigris Tunnel/Birkleyn area that I present in figure 3 is derived from A.C. Waltham (1976), who carried out a preliminary speleological survey of the caves.
- ⁸ After Radner (2007) and Grayson (1991, 61, Text A.0.87.15). A translation and new edition by Karen Radner was posted at http://www.vaa.fak12.uni-muenchen.de/Birkleyn/html_englisch/cave_1.htm (viewed May 2007).
- ⁹ See Grayson (1996, 92 ff., Text A.0.102.21) for translations. A preliminary new edition of the text by Karen Radner can also be found at Schachner *et al.* (2007): http://www.vaa.fak12.uni-muenchen.de/Birkleyn/html_englisch/cave_1.htm (viewed May 2007).
- ¹⁰ The foundation of Tušhan was recorded in Aššurnasirpal II’s annalistic texts (Grayson 1991, 202, Text A.0.101.1 ii 1–9) and its identification with Ziyarettepe has been discussed by the excavators (Matney *et al.* 2003).
- ¹¹ Shafer (2007, 133) notes that approximately 50 such Assyrian monuments are known archaeologically, and a similar number of undiscovered monuments are mentioned or described in Assyrian texts (see also Hawkins 1969, 119). In fact an early and unusual example of such commemorative monuments is mentioned in Tiglath-pileser I’s annals, where the king describes his raising of bronze lightning bolts inscribed with a narrative

- of his conquests, to be set up on the ruins of a city (Hunusu) that he had just destroyed (Grayson 1991, 24, Text A.0.87.1, lines v.15–17).
- ¹² The *Chicago Assyrian dictionary* (s.v. ‘narû’) gives three different definitions of the word with respect to different contexts: ‘1. stone monument inscribed with laws and regulations; 2. boundary stone; 3. memorial monument set up by a king’. It is a loanword from Sumerian NA₄ NA.RÚ.A. The use of the word in the third meaning is specific to Old Babylonian–Old Assyrian and later texts. In such contexts, *narû* refers to free-standing stelae, rock reliefs as well as foundation inscriptions deposited in the foundations of public monuments. For *RIA* entry for Neo-Assyrian reliefs, see J.M. Russell, ‘Neoassyrische Kunstperiode III. Reliefs’ *RIA* 9 (1998–2001, 244–65). There are a number of important scholarly studies on the Neo-Assyrian carved monuments. Börker-Klähn’s (1982) comprehensive survey covers essentially most of the known monuments. Morandi’s article (1988) focuses on the *narû* monuments, from a more interpretative point of view. Shafer’s dissertation (1998) is comprehensive, especially in its discussion of individual monuments in the catalogue, but due to its particular focus it excludes the monuments in the Assyrian centre. Shafer’s study covers both the archaeologically known monuments and those that were referred to in royal inscriptions. Yamada (2000, 273–99) discusses the textual evidence for the commemorative monuments raised by Shalmaneser III during his campaigns to the west.
- ¹³ An even more ambitious form of such introspective moments was the refoundation of foreign cities, which constituted places of Assyrian imperial presence through provincial administration. One interesting account of such a project is Aššurnasirpal II’s report on the foundation of Tušhan (see Grayson (1991, 202, Text A.0.101.1, lines ii. 2–12).
- ¹⁴ Grayson (1991, 198, Text A.0.101.1, col. i, lines 68–69). The text is the orthostat inscriptions of the Ninurta temple at Kalhu.
- ¹⁵ ‘At the source of the River Subnat, where the *salmu* of Tiglath-pileser [I] and Tukulti-Ninurta [II], kings of the Land of Aššur, my forefathers, I built the image of my kingship [*salam šarrutiya*] raised with them. At that time I received tribute from the land Izalla, oxen, sheep, [and] wine’ (Grayson 1991, 200, Text A.0.101.1, lines 104–5). Dönbaz and Galter (1997) and Hawkins (1969) identify the Sources of the Subnat monuments with a stele of Aššurnasirpal, found in the village of Babil in south-eastern Turkey, 25 km south-west of modern Cizre, at the Syrian–Turkish border and on the River Tigris. To my knowledge, the identification has not been confirmed archaeologically.
- ¹⁶ Translations and discussions of the texts of these stelae, now located in the British Museum, are offered by several scholars (Grayson 1991, 256–62, Text A.0.101.19; Shafer 1998, 148–51; Radner and Schachner 2001, 754 ff.). The location of the village of Kurkh, visited by Taylor in October 1861, is unsure. Taylor mentions that it was located 14 miles from Diyarbakır (Taylor 1865, 22). In his brief commentary to the publication of the text, Grayson notes that ‘the scribe who engraved the text on the stele made several errors, some of which he attempted to correct. This suggests . . . that he was working hastily under a deadline’ (Grayson 1991, 257).
- ¹⁷ This assumption is especially present in the work of Liverani, who states that ‘ideology has the function of presenting exploitation in a favourable light to the exploited, as advantageous to the disadvantaged’ (1979, 298). In his model, Assyrian rulers are ‘authors’ of ideology and the subjects are passive ‘victims’ (ibid., 299). Ideology therefore emanates a ‘false consciousness’ and it is ‘not the mirror of physical and economic reality, but its inverted image’ (ibid., 298).
- ¹⁸ Cherry (1987, 170) has similarly argued that ideology can no longer be considered epiphenomenal, or understood as an ‘*ex post facto*’ development to justify a previously established political hierarchy’.

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