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INTERGENERATIONAL RECIPROCITY IN ASSYRIAN PALACES

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This paper investigates how Assyrian kings protected their material legacies for posterity and why in some prominent instances such protections failed, with a particular focus on the palaces of Kalḫu and Nineveh during the Sargonid Period. I approach this question through the lens of intergenerational reciprocity; Assyrian worldviews provided various channels through which past, present, and future kings could engage with one another in reciprocal and coercive relationships across time. Unlike curses and blessings, which were relatively easy for Assyrian kings to disregard, these reciprocal relationships provided more compelling incentives for rulers to honour and preserve their predecessors' material legacies. However, practical or ideological concerns would sometimes result in the need to alter buildings in ways that damaged the material legacy of a past ruler. In some of these instances, steps were taken to symbolically compensate the past ruler in question for this damage. In this fashion, rulers were able to negotiate the ideological tension between tradition and innovation to preserve historical memory while adapting living cultural heritage to meet current needs.

Introduction

Achieving symbolic immortality was an important aspect of Mesopotamian kingship.[1] Nowhere is this clearer than the Standard Babylonian *Epic of Gilgameš*, a text which takes the search for immortality as one of its core themes. Famously, Gilgameš travels to the end of the earth in search of the secret of immortality but is ultimately unsuccessful. Instead, he must content himself with recording his exploits in a foundation inscription for the walls of Uruk—ostensibly the epic itself—to be read by his successors.[2] Gilgameš cannot live forever, but his memory can survive through his text and building works.[3] To the authors of the epic, a king's monuments were built with an intended audience of future generations in mind.

A similar focus on the future is clear in the production of actual royal inscriptions and monuments during the 1st Millennium B.C. Along these lines, the past decade has seen a growing trend towards investigating the Assyrian royal inscriptions' non-contemporary audiences.[4] The most developed of these studies is that of Hannes Galter, who demonstrates royal concerns with ensuring kings enjoyed "historical resonance" through their foundation inscriptions.[5] These texts were written with future audiences in mind, and regularly address the later king who will unearth them during renovations to the building in question.[6] In this fashion, Assyrian kings used building works and texts deposited therein to position themselves within the "stream of history", thus achieving symbolic immortality.[7] Assyrian art and architecture have also been characterised as shaping cultural memory and providing the king with symbolic immortality,[8] suggesting that royal inscriptions, images, and monuments were all created with future audiences in mind. From the inverse perspective, Davide Nadali and Ludovico Portuese's work on the "intericonicity" of Assyrian art has explored how later kings also engaged with their predecessors' reliefs.[9]

[1] For symbolic immortality, see Vigilant and Williamson 2003 and cited literature. For preservation of the royal name in Mesopotamia, see Radner 2005: 90–178.

All translations below are my own and follow transliterations from the cited editions.

[2] George 2003: 538–39 lines 10–28, 724–25 lines 323–38.

[3] See for example, Foster 2011: 130–31; Jonker 1995: 36–37; Machinist 2018: 355–56; Michalowski 1996: 187–88; 1999: 79–81. For George (2003: 526–27), this is "too specific a view" on the meaning of the text. Instead, his interpretation is that "though men are mortal, mankind is immortal". As will become clear below, the enduring nature of humanity is precisely why Mesopotamian kings sought symbolic immortality through texts and building works; the two points are intrinsically linked.

[4] Collins 2019; Dewar 2020: 114–15; Galter 2022: 89–90 and cited literature.

[5] Galter 2022: 99–103. The role of royal inscriptions in symbolic immortality is also explored by Arnett 1991; Radner 2005: 129–61.

[6] For examples, see Galter 2022: 93–99.

[7] Galter 2022: 100–101.

[8] For example, Gansell 2016: 93; Portuese 2023: 73–76; Reade 1979a: 340; Sonik and Kertai 2021.

[9] Nadali and Portuese 2020; Portuese 2020; 2023. For contact with the past through royal inscriptions and monuments in Mesopotamia more generally, see Bahrani 2014: 87–114.

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In short, both text and image played important roles in preserving royal name and legacy. However, studies on this subject primarily focus on how Assyrian kings used inscriptions, reliefs, and building projects—and engaged with those of their predecessors—to produce historical continuity, position their achievements in relation to it, and achieve symbolic immortality. They have less to say on how these rulers ensured that future kings would properly preserve and maintain their monuments, texts, and building works for posterity. This subject deserves further interrogation. Royal inscriptions frequently support their instructions to future rulers with curses and blessings.[10] Although explicit statements that future kings should preserve a palace's reliefs occur only in Sargon II's (721–705 B.C.) inscriptions,[11] more generalised instructions for the proper care of palaces are common, and must logically include their reliefs.[12] That this was the case is suggested by the longevity of Ashurnasirpal II's (883–859 B.C.) reliefs from the Northwest Palace at Kalḫu, which were never replaced by those of later kings. In fact, one relief displays evidence of maintenance and repair.[13] This is perhaps to be expected. Unlike mudbrick, which deteriorated relatively quickly and was replaced when it did, stone's permanence provided continuity across the multiple renovations and rebuilds a building might experience during its lifetime.

How Assyrian rulers ensured proper treatment of their texts, buildings, and monuments (hereafter "material legacy")[14] might therefore seem relatively straightforward. Closer examination proves this is not the case. Instructions for the conservation of royal material legacy were at least sometimes ignored. For example, Ashurnasirpal II and Tiglath-pileser III's (744–727 B.C.) relief orthostats from the Northwest and Central Palaces at Kalḫu were removed by Esarhaddon (680–669 B.C.), some two centuries after their creation, for reuse in his own Southwest Palace there.[15] Similarly, Ashurbanipal (668–c. 631 B.C.) re-carved reliefs in several rooms of Sennacherib's (704–681 B.C.) Southwest Palace at Nineveh.[16] These examples of recycled stonework are identifiable due to their unsubtle execution; the orthostats were flipped so that the original reliefs faced the wall,[17] or the original relief was not entirely chiselled away, so that parts of it remain visible around the edges.[18] It is plausible that instances wherein more care was taken to remove previous text and image may have gone unrecognised in the scholarship due to insufficient recording of architectural phasing by the original excavators.[19] It is therefore unclear how common this practice actually was. What we can say is that two of the three primary palaces of the Neo-Assyrian Empire had elements of their stonework recycled by later kings.[20] Conversely, the obvious nature of these alterations suggests that hiding them was not considered important.

It is tempting to conclude that Assyrian kings simply ignored their predecessors' wishes for the care of their material legacies whenever it suited them to do so. After all, the question of whether the interests of past and future generations are observed in the present is one of intergenerational justice, a concept commonly framed in terms of perceived power differentials between those who can act in the present and those who cannot.[21] We might expect, then, that Assyrian kings treated the material legacy of past rulers however they saw fit, while past kings, unable to act in the present, could not deter later rulers from erasing their names and achievements should they decide to do so.

[10] For examples, see nn. 27 and 30 below.

[11] RINAP 2 no. 9: 103–106; no. 43: 76–77; no. 44: rev. 57–60.

[12] For examples, see CAD s.v. *anḫūtu* [2a], *edēšu* [2a].

[13] Reade 2000: 610.

[14] I use "material legacy" to describe what Hunter and Rowles (2005: 335) call "symbolic material legacy", that is, "public legacies that might result in a form of symbolic immortality for the donor". Of course, a king's name, image, texts, buildings, and monuments are distinct concepts. It may seem inelegant to conflate them in this way. However, their shared role in preserving royal legacy means that their preservation was frequently approached similarly, as will become clear below. Addressing these concepts under the general umbrella of "material legacy" is therefore justified in this context.

[15] Barnett and Falkner 1962: 23–30; Kertai 2015: 156; Oates and Oates 2001: 73–76.

[16] Reade 2000: 612; Russell 1991: 62, 63, 150–51; RINAP 5/2: 15.

[17] Barnett, Bleibtreu, and Turner 1998: 84; Barnett and Falkner 1962: 23; Russell 1991: 62; Turner 2020: 189–90.

[18] Reade 1967: 42–45, pl. XXII.

[19] I am thankful to Yağmur Heffron for raising these points.

[20] For the term "primary palace", see Kertai 2013: 11. Other examples of recycled stonework include Ahmad 2000; Al-Juboori 2017: 15–16; Maul and Miglus 2021: 188–89 no. 2.3.1, 194 Abb. 82, 196; Oates 1963: 27–28; Reade and Walker 1982: 113–14. The reuse of orthostats from the Northwest Palace in the Nabû Temple at Kalḫu is most likely post-Assyrian (Oates 1957: 36).

[21] Meyer 2021.

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However, this assessment is based on modern, secular perceptions of time, death, and human agency. The assumed fundamental power imbalance between present, past, and future generations in this perspective has led scholarship on intergenerational justice to focus primarily on moral obligations and ethics.[22] By contrast, ancient understandings of the world provided various avenues for past and future generations to directly affect the present. In Assyria, the afterlife, ghosts, curses, and gods' ability to influence the world in concrete, observable ways were all understood as incontrovertible fact.[23] All of this allowed meaningful contact between past, present, and future rulers. Intergenerational justice in Assyria—and premodern societies in general—is therefore not a purely moral or ethical question but might include reciprocal or coercive relationships between chronologically distant parties. These relationships are not limited to direct relationships between specific individuals but might also include broader forms of "generalised reciprocity". I use this term as defined by the social scientists Peter Abell and Diane Reyniers as "a form of social capital" that "arises when actor 1 will now cooperate with actor 2 on the expectation that *either* actor 2 *or* somebody else (actor 3) will reciprocate later, when actor 1 needs it".[24] A king may treat a past ruler's material legacy correctly either in return for receiving something beneficial from that king in particular or so that future kings might do the same for him.

These observations mean that the recycling of orthostats from the palaces of Kalḫu and Nineveh cannot be explained solely by kings disregarding their predecessors' wishes whenever they proved inconvenient. The transtemporal relationships between kings reframe chronological distance as a more permeable barrier than often presumed. They have important implications for our understanding of Assyrian political, religious, and cosmological thought and open new avenues for exploring the intellectual history of premodern societies more generally. Most pertinently to this paper, they provide additional nuances to the conservation and adaptation of living cultural heritage in the past, and the role of monumentality and the built environment in shaping and preserving cultural memory.[25] This broad and significant comparative applicability means that the possibility of meaningful retribution for damaging past rulers' material legacies and the ways kings avoided such retribution require further analysis. This paper will provide this analysis by investigating the mechanisms by which Assyrian building projects were protected for posterity, with particular focus on the palaces of Kalḫu and Nineveh.

Inscriptional Violence and its Limitations as a Deterrent

Let us begin by analysing the most obvious and explicit system for protecting material legacy in Assyria: curses and blessings. The Egyptologist Jan Assmann argued that these features, which he dubbed "inscriptional violence", are well-suited to situations in which a potential crime might occur either in secrecy or in a future where a bad ruler or official could freely allow, encourage, or perform acts that should rightly be prohibited.[26] They would therefore seem a logical choice for ensuring future rulers will preserve a king's legacy. As a result, they frequently feature in the concluding sections of Assyrian royal inscriptions. The most basic form is a blessing stating that, if the text's instructions are obeyed by a future king, the gods will hear his prayers.[27] This formula often appears without further curses or blessings and shows a high degree of continuity across Assyrian history. Although it may seem that blessings provide only a "carrot" to encourage good conduct and no "stick" to deter bad conduct, they are in fact veiled threats of curses. A good and pious Assyrian king

[22] Meyer 2021: §1. For the dissenting view that present and future generations engage in direct intergenerational reciprocity in modern secular worldviews, see Corvino 2023.

[23] Robson 2008: 463; Schwemer 2011: 420.

[24] Abell and Reyniers 2000: 4. Note that this definition is less focused on putative altruism and largesse than e.g. Sahlins 1972: 193–94.

[25] For these subjects in various cultures, see Van Dyke 2019 with cited literature.

[26] Assmann 1992: 46–47, 63–64.

[27] For Old and Middle Assyrian examples, see Greenwood 2010. Neo-Assyrian examples include: RIMA 2 A.0.98.1: 81–83; A.0.98.3: 14–19; A.0.99.1: rev. 16'–18'; A.0.99.2: 131–133; A.0.99.3: rev. 12'–13'; A.0.100.2: rev. 6'–11'; A.0.100.3: rev. 13'–15'; A.0.100.5: 142–145; A.0.101.17: v 24–26; A.0.101.26: 67–69; A.0.101.50: 44–47; RIMA 3 A.0.102.10: lower edge 3–left edge 1; A.0.102.25: 34–36; A.0.105.2: 23–28; RINAP 1 Tiglath-pileser III no. 35: iii 6'–10'; no. 37: 51–54; RINAP 2 no. 8: 82–85; no. 45: 44–48; RINAP 3/1 no. 1: 93–94; no. 2: 70–71; RINAP 4 no. 1: vi 65–74; no. 3: vi 23'–36'; RINAP 5/1 no. 1: vii 16'–25'; no. 23: 177–179; no. 61: rev. 15'–23'.

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is Aššur's representative on earth, moulded by the gods into the perfect ruler.[28] That the gods would hear the prayers of such an individual is unsurprising, and the blessing explicitly stating this might therefore seem superfluous. More important is the subtext: prayers by a ruler who disregards these instructions will fall on deaf ears. His gods will have abandoned him.

This implicit threat of curses is often complemented or replaced by explicit curses against one who would damage or mistreat royal material legacy.[29] These curses display greater variety and invention than the more standardised blessing formulae, but a common theme is the disappearance of the offender's name (*šumu*) and seed (*zēru*) from the land or the mouths of the people.[30] The victim will die and be forgotten, with no successors to continue his line or provide his funerary offerings. This was a terrible fate in Mesopotamian thought. Tablet 12 of the *Epic of Gilgameš*, for example, describes the deceased individual without funerary offerings as scavenging for scraps in the street.[31]

Although inscriptional violence is an obvious method for protecting royal material legacy, several factors can impede its effectiveness as a deterrent. To be deterred by curses and blessings, would-be perpetrators must understand them to be efficacious.[32] There are several layers to this; one may simply understand curses not to be real, but one might equally accept the existence of curses as real and effective but view an individual curse as inefficacious due to elements of its construction or execution. Assmann argues that curses are reliant on "metaphysical agents", such as gods, demons, or the magic of the curse itself to punish transgressions.[33] Transgressors will therefore only be deterred if they understand the relevant metaphysical agents (in this case, the gods) to both exist and be able and inclined to enforce the curse.[34]

A rejection of the existence of curses in general or the gods' ability to punish transgressions does not seem applicable to Mesopotamian contexts, where divine influence was central to conceptions of how the world worked.[35] The extensive body of anti-witchcraft texts amply demonstrates that curses were understood as real and dangerous threats.[36] Indeed, the letter ABL 31 (= SAA 10 no. 15), written to the king by the chief scribe, Issar-šumu-ereš, strongly suggests the presence or absence of curses from texts was taken seriously in the Sargonid period:

> (Concerning) that which the king, my lord, wrote to me, saying "is a curse written therein?": I have looked. No, a curse is not written (there).[37]

On this combined evidence, we can discount the more cynical solution that Assyrian kings simply disregarded curses without justification whenever they proved inconvenient.

Curses were accepted fact in Assyrian systems of knowledge, but not all curses were effective. For example, many identifiable instances of recycled stonework in Assyrian building works relate to material taken from unfinished buildings, such as Esarhaddon's use of reliefs from Tiglath-pileser III's incomplete Central Palace in the Southwest Palace at Kalḫu and his usurpation of inscriptions on two slabs from Sennacherib's unfinished work on the *Ekal māšarti* at Nineveh, or the

[28] Karlsson 2016: 75–123; Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 198–218.

[29] Generally, renovations to the building appear in the blessing formulae, while both blessing and curse formulae contain instructions on the proper treatment of the inscription (for examples, see nn. 27 and 30).

[30] For example, RIMA 1 A.0.33.1: 23–25; A.0.33.14: 27–31; A.0.76.2: 48–53; A.0.76.9: 30–31; A.0.76.11: 28'–34'; A.0.77.1: 166; A.0.77.2: 22–24; A.0.77.3: 42–46; A.0.78.5: 114–115; A.0.78.6: 39–42; A.0.78.7: 8–9; A.0.79.1: 37–40; A.0.86.4: 9–10; RIMA 2 A.0.87.1: viii 88; A.0.91.3: 5'–6'; A.0.99.2: 132–133; A.0.99.3: rev. 13'–14'; A.0.100.5: 146; A.0.101.26: 72; A.0.101.32: 20–21; A.0.101.38: 48–49; RIMA 3 A.0.104.6: 28–29; RINAP 3/1 no. 10: 29; no. 12: 3'; no. 103: 8; RINAP 4 no. 57: viii 5'–6'; RINAP 5/1 no. 3: viii 91–92; no. 4: viii 91–93; no. 12: viii 13'; RINAP 5/3 Aššur-etel-ilāni no. 6: 16–17; Sîn-šarra-iškun no. 7: v 17; no. 10: 44; no. 19: 47; Radner 2012: 272–73 lines 22'–24'. For similar curses in Hittite and biblical contexts, see Kitz 2014: 205–207.

[31] George 2003: 734–35 lines 152–53.

[32] Assmann 1992: 47.

[33] Assmann 1992: 47–48. Similarly, Kitz (2014: 134–69) focuses on the connection between efficacy and divine support in Ancient Near Eastern curses.

[34] Apotropaic rituals to counter curses further impinge on their perceived efficacy. These protections are well-attested in Mesopotamian contexts, such as the ritual series *Šurpu* (Reiner 1970). However, curses in official contexts are often described as unrelenting or impossible to dispel (for examples, see Altman 2004: 50 n. 26). This suggests that ritual protections had at least some limitations.

[35] Robson 2008: 463; Schwemer 2011: 420.

[36] Abusch and Schwemer 2011; 2016; Abusch *et al.* 2020.

[37] SAA 10 no. 15: obv. 7–rev. 3. Parpola (1983: 12) suggests, based on the use of *izzirtu* as the term for curse in this letter, that it may concern a royal inscription unearthed during building works.

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incorporation of bulls from Tukulti-Ninurta II's (890–884 B.C.) unfinished palace at Nemed-Tukulti-Ninurta into a later bridge.[38] If a palace had never been completed, consecrated, and used, then any curses and blessings proscribing its proper care and maintenance were presumably rendered moot.[39]

Even when this was not the case, the ways curses functioned significantly hampered their effectiveness as deterrents. Metaphysical agents must not only exist and be able to enforce the curse; they must also be inclined to do so. A king enacting divine will might disregard curses and blessings that prohibit actions the gods have instructed him to undertake. Take, for example, Sargon II's relocation of the capital from Kalḫu to Dur-Šarrukin. Ashurnasirpal II's Nimrud Monolith Inscription contains lengthy curses and blessings that prohibit, amongst other things, moving the seat of kingship out of Kalḫu.[40] Despite this, Sargon II built a new capital city at Dur-Šarrukin.[41] His inscriptions justify this move by stating that the new capital was built in accordance with divine will (*kī ṭēm ili*).[42]

This highlights a glaring problem with inscriptional violence as a deterrent: since all royal decision-making was accompanied by divination, a king could always ensure divine support for his actions.[43] Thus, alterations to the urban landscape that a king viewed as important or necessary, but which went against a predecessor's wishes, could be made permissible through appeals to divine will. That curses remained part of royal inscriptions throughout Assyrian history suggests that they were consistently viewed as useful deterrents against misdeeds by future kings. Nevertheless, kings did not usually believe their own actions to fall into this category, so curses' usefulness as a deterrent was limited in practice. Equally, if a king had practical reasons for altering or damaging a predecessor's material legacy, then as chosen representative of the gods, he could rest assured that his actions enjoyed divine support. Thus, the alteration or demolition of building works in Sargonid inscriptions is sometimes justified by the previous structure being too small, without mentioning divine instruction.[44]

Practical Considerations behind Recycling Relief Orthostats

In light of the above discussion, we might consider the practical concerns which led Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal to recycle earlier kings' relief orthostats. In both instances, the dates of the relevant building works reveal such practical concerns. In Esarhaddon's case, the inscriptions from the Southwest Palace mention Esarhaddon's conquest of Egypt,[45] providing them a *terminus post quem* of 671 B.C.[46] This late date in Esarhaddon's reign is supported by the building's unfinished nature, which suggests that work was ongoing at the time of his death.[47]

This late date raises some interesting points of historical context. The latter years of Esarhaddon's reign were characterised by conspiracy and opposition to the crown among the Assyrian elite.[48]

[38] Ahmad 2000; Barnett and Falkner 1962: 23–30; Maul and Miglus 2021: 188–89 no. 2.3.1; Oates and Oates 2001: 73–75. Another inscribed piece of stonework intended for Nemed-Tukulti-Ninurta (RIMA 2 A.0.100.6) was discovered in Ashurnasirpal II's palace at Nineveh, where it "had been cut down and the back hollowed out as a trough" (Thompson and Hutchinson 1929: 117).

[39] For the consecration of palaces and temples in 1st Millennium B.C. Mesopotamia, see Ambos 2010: 235–36; Hurowitz 2014.

[40] RIMA 2 A.0.101.17: v 39–41.

[41] Ashurnasirpal also declares that the Northwest Palace should not become a store house (*bīt nakkamte*, RIMA 2 A.0.101.17: v 35). Nevertheless, Sargon's Juniper Palace Inscription describes him using part of the building as a *bīt nakkamte* for spoils of war (RINAP 2 no. 73: 21). This may seem like another contradiction of Ashurnasirpal's wishes (thus alludes Russell 1999: 99). However, Ashurnasirpal himself describes how he filled the Northwest Palace with loot from his campaigns (RIMA 2 A.0.101.17: v 19–24) and one might reasonably presume that the primary palace of the empire contained a strongroom or treasury. Sargon's Juniper Palace Inscription describes only a single room, Room U, as a *bīt nakkamte* (Russell 1999: 99), whereas Ashurnasirpal's Nimrud Monolith Inscription refers to the whole palace. We should therefore distinguish *bīt nakkamte* that are rooms from those that are buildings; Ashurnasirpal and Sargon do not discuss comparable building uses (I am thankful to Andrew George for raising this point). For the construction of Dur-Šarrukin, see Elayi 2017: 201–210; Kertai 2021; Parpola 1995.

[42] RINAP 2 no. 7: 154–155. Although the creation of Dur-Šarrukin was recontextualised after Sargon's death as a poor decision inviting divine displeasure, it was not viewed this way at the time (Kertai 2021: 220–21). On religious justifications for relocating Assyrian capitals, see Zaia 2021: 126–28.

[43] For divination in Assyrian royal decision-making, see Radner 2011: 361–75; Robson 2019: 110–18.

[44] For example, RINAP 3/1 no. 1: 68; no. 22: vi 39–43; RINAP 4 no. 1: v 40–47; no. 77: 42–44.

[45] RINAP 4 nos. 83–85.

[46] Glassner 2004 no. 16: iv 23–28, no. 18: 28–29.

[47] Russell 1999: 150–51.

[48] Frahm 2023: 264–72; Radner 2003.

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This eventually resulted in mass executions of officials in 670 B.C.[49] Lorenzo Verderame has argued that the upheaval caused by this "purge" is observable in changes within the circle of scholars surrounding Esarhaddon; some scholars disappear from the record at this time, while individuals such as Balasî and Nabû-aḫḫe-eriba rise to prominence but appear to sit outside the traditional scholarly community.[50] Similar indications of disruption among officials are more difficult to find as no extant letters from Esarhaddon's reign are by provincial governors.[51] The Southwest Palace at Nimrud provides a tantalising view of one way in which such disruption might have manifested. Assyrian building projects relied on networks of cooperation amongst governors and local officials in various parts of the empire for transport of building materials and provision of labour.[52] Such networks would undoubtedly have been disrupted at this time by both the execution of officials and the accompanying air of mistrust and paranoia at court.[53] All of this would have impeded major state building projects. As a result, corners were cut at Nimrud by using pre-existing palaces as impromptu "quarries" requiring minimal transportation and preparation of materials.

In Ashurbanipal's case, we can divide the relevant relief programmes in the Southwest Palace into two parts. The first is Room XXXIII, decorated with reliefs of Ashurbanipal's victory over Elam at the River Ulai and subsequent campaign to Gambulu in 653 B.C.[54] The second comprises Courtyard XIX and some orthostats in adjacent corridors (Rooms XXII, XXVIII, XLII, and XLIX), which were re-carved with scenes from Ashurbanipal's Babylonian campaigns (652–648 B.C.), or chiselled clean in preparation for re-carving.[55] The subjects of these reliefs suggest dates in the late 650s and early 640s B.C.[56]

These dates are interesting in light of Ashurbanipal's other building works at Nineveh. Work on the North Palace began early in his reign with the brick platform in c. 666 B.C. However, work on the building itself did not begin until c. 645 B.C.[57] This is particularly slow progress for a Sargonid royal building project. By comparison, the entirety of Sennacherib's (much larger) Southwest Palace was completed within thirteen years, with the foundation platform taking less than three years.[58] The North Palace is not the only unusually long building project at Nineveh during the first half of Ashurbanipal's reign; renovations to the citadel wall are the focus of the building accounts in both Prism E2 (ca. 665–664 B.C.) and Prism D (648 B.C.).[59] In fact, relatively few building accounts are extant from the period in between Prism E2 and Prism D, and those that do survive relate to temples in other cities.[60]

The early 650s B.C. may have been a particularly dry period in Mesopotamia, reducing agricultural yield and the ability of the Assyrian Empire to support multiple large-scale building projects simultaneously.[61] In such circumstances, Ashurbanipal may have prioritised some building projects over others, slowing down or halting work at Nineveh. Any disruption would have been extended by war in Babylonia in 652–648 B.C.; very little royal building work appears to have occurred throughout Assyria during this period, suggesting conscription was prioritised over corvée labour during the protracted conflict in the south.[62] When Ashurbanipal looked for space within

[49] Glassner 2004 no. 16: iv 29, no. 18: 30.

[50] Verderame 2014: 724–27. That Balasî and Nabû-aḫḫe-eriba sat apart from the traditional scholarly community is also suggested by Jones's (2023: 320 table 3) social network analysis of the scholarly correspondence. These two scholars have a drastically lower "betweenness centrality" than the other members of Esarhaddon's "inner circle". In other words, they interact almost exclusively with the king and not with other scholars.

[51] SAA 16: XVI–XVII.

[52] Tudeau 2019: 130–31.

[53] Most recently Frahm 2023: 269–70.

[54] Barnett, Bleibtreu, and Turner 1998: 94–100 pls. 286–320.

[55] Reade: 1967: 42–45, pl. XII; Russell 1991: 45–46, 62, 66, 69, 150–51. Reade (1979b: 109–10) attributes the Courtyard XIX and Room XXVIII reliefs to Sîn-šarra-iškun (c. 626–612 B.C.) due to stylistic differences from the North Palace reliefs. I follow Russell (1991: 306 n. 35) and Bleibtreu (Barnett, Bleibtreu, and Turner 1998: 80, 84 n. 1, 88, 91 n. 1) in viewing these as relatively minor differences, explained by these sculptures being from earlier in Ashurbanipal's reign than the North Palace reliefs.

[56] For the chronology of Ashurbanipal's reign, see RINAP 5/1: 14–36 and cited literature.

[57] Reade 2022: 2–4.

[58] Russell 1991: 88–91.

[59] RINAP 5/1 no. 2: vii 4'–8'; no. 4: viii 58–69.

[60] RINAP 5/1 no. 61; RINAP 5/2 nos. 116, 207, 209–214, 219, 222, 231.

[61] Schneider and Adalı 2014; Schneider and Adalı 2016a; Sinha *et al.* 2019. The broader implications of this "Late Assyrian Dry Phase" are contested (Frahm 2023: 343–45; Schneider and Adalı 2016b; Sołtysiak 2016) but are not relevant for the current purpose.

[62] Ashurbanipal's inscriptions mention no building works during the Šamaš-šumu-ukin Rebellion, only dedications of objects to deities (RINAP 5/2 nos. 155, 200–205). For the dates of Ashurbanipal's inscriptions, see RINAP 5/1: 30–32; RINAP 5/2: 26. For Assyrian conscription and corvée, see

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Nineveh for reliefs recording his victories over Elam and Babylonia in 653–648 B.C., the only suitable space available was in the Southwest Palace. Following his victory over Teumman, Ashurbanipal used Room XXXIII, which contained no prior reliefs.[63] His planned Babylonian reliefs were too extensive to fit into Rooms XXIX and XXX, which were also undecorated.[64] Instead, Ashurbanipal recycled relief orthostats from a courtyard and adjacent corridors, which provided far greater space. I will return to the case study of the Southwest Palace at Nineveh later in the paper to explore how Ashurbanipal might have compensated his predecessor for recycling his stonework. First, I will turn my attention to the limitations on kings' ability to appeal to pragmatism in justifying their actions.

The Limits of Royal Self-Justification

The above discussion might suggest that, for all their references to conserving material legacy, kings could easily justify breaking with building traditions. However, the transtemporal relationships between Assyrian kings meant that this was not always so. The reception of royal inscriptions by later generations in antiquity clearly demonstrates this point. During renovations, foundation inscriptions were unearthed and read, and were clearly studied upon rediscovery; royal inscriptions' importance as a source of knowledge about the past is clear from the body of cuneiform texts variously labelled by Assyriologists as "*narû*-literatur", "fictional autobiography", "pseudo-autobiography", or "pseudepigraphische Inschriften".[65] Haul identifies two types of these texts:[66] "fiktionale inschriften/*narûs*", literature presented as inscriptions of earlier kings (such as the Standard Babylonian Epic of Gilgameš or the Kuthean Legend of Naram-Sîn);[67] and "fingierte inschriften", ancient forgeries of royal inscriptions apparently intended to sway royal opinion in a temple's favour through appeals to tradition (such as the Cruciform Monument, ostensibly a stela of Maništušu of Akkad).[68] Both types demonstrate the importance of royal inscriptions in Mesopotamian thought for conveying information from past to present. In fact, Longman highlights the prevalence of didactic and prophetic elements in "fictional autobiography",[69] demonstrating a conception of royal inscriptions as ancient wisdom that later kings might learn from. Genuine royal inscriptions were also studied. Some private libraries contained copies of royal inscriptions,[70] and Ashurnasirpal II's Nimrud Monolith Inscription demands that future scholars (*ummânāte*) be allowed to read it.[71]

Galter's recent study on "historical resonance" in the royal inscriptions, outlined above, presents rulers' proper treatment of their predecessors' inscriptions as motivated by maintaining historical continuity.[72] While this certainly played a part in these decisions, I argue that these moments of transtemporal contact were reciprocal in nature. This is made clear in the Kuthean Legend of Naram-Sîn, which enjoyed popularity during the Neo-Assyrian period.[73] Here, Naram-Sîn's conduct is contrasted with that of Enmerkar of Uruk.[74] Like Naram-Sîn, Enmerkar faced the Umman-manda, a fantastical mountain horde. He apparently overcame this threat but left no inscription commemorating his success. As a result, Naram-Sîn cannot learn from his predecessor and fails at first in his own conflict with the Umman-manda. At the same time, the lack of Enmerkar's inscriptions means that Naram-Sîn is unable to honour his name. Enmerkar and his

Dezső 2016: 39–57; Postgate 1974: 40–93; Tudeau 2019: 135–38. For the Šamaš-šumu-ukin rebellion's longer-term financial impact, see Robson 2019: 82–83.

[63] Russell 1991: 92, 166, 258.

[64] Barnett, Bleibtreu, and Turner 1998: 91.

[65] For an overview of previous scholarship on these texts and problems of classification and terminology, see Haul 2009: 95–135.

[66] Haul 2009: 133–35.

[67] George 2003: 531–741; Westenholz 1997 no. 22.

[68] Finkel and Fletcher 2016: 239–46.

[69] Longman 1991: 97–190.

[70] For example, the only extant copy of Sargon II's Letter to the God Aššur (AO 5372 + VAT 8634 + VAT 8749 + VAT 8698a–c = RINAP 2 no. 65) and a unique Neo-Assyrian copy of an inscription of Aššur-uballiṭ I (c. 1353–1318 B.C.) on a clay amulet (VA 5707 = RIMA 1 A.0.73.1) where both discovered in the library of a family of exorcists at Aššur (Pedersén 1986: 56–57).

[71] RIMA 2 A.0.101.17: v 63–64.

[72] Galter 2022: 93–103.

[73] Six copies of the text were found at Nineveh (81-2-4,219; K. 5418a; K. 5640; K. 8582; K. 2021B; K. 13328 = Westenholz 1997 no. 22 exemplars A–F) and one more at Sultantepe (S.U. 51/67A + 76 + 166 + 21923 = Westenholz 1997 no. 22 exemplar G). Furthermore, a Sargonid text ridiculing a man called Bel-eṭir parodies its opening lines (SAA 3 no. 29: 1).

[74] Westenholz 1997 no. 22: 4–30. See also Jonker 1995: 102–104; Machinist 2018: 352–53; Michalowski 1999: 82–83; Sonik and Kertai 2021: 45.

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family therefore suffer miserable afterlives without access to clean water. In this light, past rulers' royal inscriptions provide their wisdom and examples of proper rule to kings in the present, who in turn honour their predecessors' names by reading and anointing those inscriptions in the present and returning them to their proper place.

In addition to this more specific reciprocal relationship between past and present rulers, proper treatment of royal inscriptions was also maintained through generalised reciprocity. Rulers cared for their predecessors' monuments so that their successors might do the same for them.[75] This is clear in some royal inscriptions, which instruct future rulers to imitate the current king's proper treatment of his predecessor's inscriptions. For example, from Ashurbanipal Prism B:

> Just as I read the inscription bearing the name of Sennacherib, the father of the father who created me, anointed (it) with oils, made offerings, (and) placed it with an inscription bearing my name, you, like me, (must) read my inscription, anoint (it) with oils, make offerings, and place it with an inscription bearing your name! (Then) may the great gods, as many as are written in this inscription, constantly bless your kingship and protect your reign.[76]

The limited efficacy of curses as a deterrent weighed intergenerational relationships between rulers in favour of later generations. Generalised reciprocity allowed past rulers to leverage the power future rulers held over the present king to protect their names and achievements for posterity; if a king mistreated the material legacy of his predecessors, then his successors might do the same for him.

In this fashion, a royal name's survival for posterity was ensured both through specific reciprocal relationships between an inscription's commissioner and the king who unearthed it, and by doing to others as one would want done to oneself. This system's success is suggested by its longevity; statements of generalised reciprocity in royal inscriptions first appear under Šamši-Adad I (c. 1808–1776 B.C.)[77] and last appear under Ashurbanipal (668–c. 631 B.C.), approximately 12 centuries later.[78]

"Compensation" to Past Kings?

While the discussion above has focused on intergenerational reciprocity as regards royal inscriptions, there is evidence that the concept applied to royal material legacy in general. Let us consider Aššur-uballiṭ I's (c. 1353–1318 B.C.) inscription on a stone from Aššur (hereafter the "Patti-ṭuḫdi Inscription").[79] The text describes how Aššur-uballiṭ's creation of a canal at Aššur (with the blessing of the god Aššur) required a well built by his predecessor, Aššur-nadin-aḫḫe,[80] to be filled in:

> When Aššur, my lord, permitted me to make (the canal) Patti-ṭuḫdi, carrier of abundance and plenty, (with regards to) the well that is called Uballiṭ-nišešu, of the pond behind the terrace, 10 cubits in depth to the water level, which previously Aššur-nadin-aḫḫe, vice-regent of the god Aššur, had dug with limestone, bitumen, (and) baked bricks; the limestone was secured firmly at the time the well was sunk. It was unsuitable for the work of an orchard. I filled (it) with earth.[81]

[75] A more rigorous definition of generalised reciprocity is provided above.

[76] RINAP 5/1 no. 3: viii 78–86. See also RINAP 4 no. 1: vi 69–74; no. 3: vi 29'–36'; no. 78: 40–44; RINAP 5/1 no. 1: vii 16'–25'; no. 4: viii 81–87; no. 5: v 13–26; no. 8: x 13''–20''; no. 61: rev. 15'–23'.

[77] Regnal years for 2nd-millennium kings in this paper follow Frahm 2017.

[78] For example, RIMA 1 A.0.39.2: iii 11–iv 1; A.0.76.14: 18–25; A.0.39.17: 13–18; A.0.77.1: 158–162; A.0.77.5: 28–35; RIMA 3 A.0.102.13: left edge 1'–10'; RINAP 4 no. 1: vi 65–74; no. 3: vi 23'–36'; RINAP 5/1 no. 1: vii 16'–25'; no. 3: viii 78–92.

[79] VA 5814 = RIMA 1 A.0.73.3. This object is 17 x 10.5 cm (RIMA 1: 111) or "etwas mehr als faustgroßer" (Andrae 1904: 40), and has been described as a "stone" (Grayson 1972: 42), "flint-shaped stone" (RIMA 1: 111), "stone in the shape of a flint" (Morello 2023); "Kiesel" (Andrae 1904), or "Kieselstein" (Borger 1964: 29; Ebeling, Meissner, and Weidner. 1926: XXI; KAH: 60*). I will refer to the object itself as a "stone" and to its inscription as Aššur-uballiṭ I's "Patti-ṭuḫdi Inscription".

[80] Whether this is Aššur-nadin-aḫḫe I (c. 1420s B.C.) or II (c. 1390–1381 B.C.) is unclear.

[81] RIMA 1 A.0.73.3: 5–23.

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After outlining his reasons for filling in the well, Aššur-uballiṭ makes an unusual statement on the reversibility of his actions:

In later days, a king who wants that well can remove its earth and reach its water.[82]

Aššur-uballiṭ's actions are justified by divine backing. Nevertheless, he makes a concession to his predecessor that is unique among extant royal inscriptions. He leaves the structure intact, so a future ruler might reinstate its use.

While filling in a well might be simply the most straightforward way to discontinue its use, the nature of the Patti-ṭuḫdi Inscription suggests that it served to draw particular attention to this event and the fact of its reversibility. The unusual choice of medium, an irregularly-shaped stone measuring 17 x 10.5 centimetres, makes it unlikely that this object was part of a foundation deposit—the foundation texts found in or apparently originating from wells are all written on more typical foundation objects.[83] Furthermore, the inscription assumes that the future ruler has not yet dug into the well. Although the stone's original context is unclear, it is therefore likely that it was placed above ground, somewhere visible without digging into the fill of the well.[84] This suggests that the text served to draw future rulers' attention to the site of the well, ensuring that future rulers would not overlook its existence and forget this contribution by Aššur-nadin-aḫḫe to the landscape of Aššur.

This inscription demonstrates nuances in Aššur-uballiṭ's moral justification for his deeds; the divine decree from Aššur and the unsuitability of the previous structure made his actions justified in divine-legalistic terms. He was therefore safe from curses. However, performing these actions would have harmed a past king's material legacy in ways that were not morally justifiable on an interpersonal level without compensating that king. Assyrian royal inscriptions have been routinely characterised as dealing almost entirely in moral absolutes.[85] Here we see that royal morality and divine legality did not always align exactly. When they did not, the current ruler might, at least sometimes, compensate the past king for injury to his legacy.

The text makes clear that, in at least one instance, an Assyrian king found alternative ways to negotiate his reciprocal relationship with past and future rulers through symbolic compensation for damaging their material legacy. Although this text is early Middle Assyrian, from some seven centuries before Esarhaddon's reign, it nevertheless raises the possibility that such negotiations and symbolic compensations occurred elsewhere in the Assyrian building tradition. As noted above, there is a high degree of continuity in expressions of intergenerational reciprocity from the Old Assyrian to Sargonid periods. This continuity means that later kings were operating within similar systems of intergenerational reciprocity to those engaged in by Aššur-uballiṭ I. We should therefore explore the possibility that they responded to similar challenges to Aššur-uballiṭ in similar ways to him.

Finishing What Grandad Started? Ashurbanipal's Alterations to the Southwest Palace, Nineveh

First, let us consider Ashurbanipal's alterations to the Southwest Palace at Nineveh. This king's addition of his Battle of Ulai reliefs to Room XXXIII did not involve re-carving any reliefs and was, therefore, presumably unproblematic. However, his alterations to Courtyard XIX and adjoining rooms erased or defaced many of Sennacherib's reliefs. In some respects, Ashurbanipal's alterations to Sennacherib's relief programme are more subtle than Esarhaddon's reuse of stonework from existing palaces, but also more surprising. Ashurbanipal apparently identified with his grandfather due to their similar military achievements in Elam and Babylonia. Ashurbanipal's Prisms Kh and

[82] RIMA 1 A.0.73.3: 24–30.

[83] Andrae (1904: 40) gives the clearest description of the stone. Extant foundation deposits from Assyrian and Babylonian wells are clay discs (RIMB 2 B.6.32.2015 = RINAP 5/3 no. 2006; Woolley 1939: 33, pl. 22a), a stone tablet (RIMA 1 A.0.78.1 exemplar 14), and clay cones (RIMA 3 A.0.102.18 exemplar 1; A.0.104.21 exemplar 1). An inscribed stone cylinder fragment (RIMA 1 A.0.76.5) seems to describe work on wells at Aššur but is poorly preserved and lacks a clear context.

[84] For the stone's provenience, see Andrae 1904: 40.

[85] For example, Fales 1982; Karlsson 2016; 2017; Liverani 2014: 381–83; 2017: 10–40; Peled 2022; Pongratz-Leisten 2015: 305–21. For a dissenting view, see Van De Mieroop 2010: 424–30.

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A contextualise his military actions in Elam in terms of Sennacherib's campaigns in the region,[86] while Prism A describes the execution of Babylonian rebels as a "funerary offering" (*kispu*) for Sennacherib.[87] Ashurbanipal's victories in Babylonia and Elam are thereby presented as finishing what Sennacherib had started during his own campaigns in the south.[88] In particular, presenting the execution of rebels as a funerary offering intrinsically links the two king's Babylonian campaigns in a manner unique in Assyrian royal inscriptions. All this suggests that Ashurbanipal viewed his grandfather in a particularly favourable light.

Although Ashurbanipal's positive view of Sennacherib might seem to make his decision to recycle his orthostats more puzzling, I argue it provides the key to understanding these alterations to the Southwest Palace. Remnants of the previous reliefs on slabs from Courtyard XIX and surrounding corridors suggest the original subject matter in these rooms was Sennacherib's Babylonian campaigns.[89] It is unclear whether these reliefs related to Sennacherib's First Campaign in 704–702 B.C. or his Fourth Campaign in 700 B.C. Both campaigns were ultimately failed attempts to pacify Babylonia. Bel-ibni, enthroned in Babylon during the First Campaign, proved an unsatisfactory solution and was replaced in 700 B.C. with Sennacherib's son, Aššur-nadin-šumi, who was later captured (and presumably executed) by the Elamites.[90] Replacing reliefs concerning one of these campaigns with Ashurbanipal's own, more successful Babylonian campaign, which Prism A presents as culminating in symbolic funerary offerings to Sennacherib, was therefore a correction of the narrative. Ashurbanipal's victory in Babylonia concluded a struggle dating back to his grandfather's reign. Ashurbanipal's replacement of reliefs depicting Sennacherib's Babylonian campaigns with his own campaigns there did not demonstrate "a remarkable degree of disrespect" for Sennacherib and his material legacy.[91] Limitations of space led Ashurbanipal to recycle Sennacherib's relief orthostats. However, in doing so he engaged meaningfully and sympathetically with the historical significance of his grandfather's military achievements.

Symbolic Compensation at Kalḫu: The Nimrud Monolith

Possible symbolic compensation for damage to past rulers' material legacy can also be found at Kalḫu, in the reorganisation of monuments on the citadel at some point after the reign of Šamši-Adad V (823–811 B.C.). By the end of the Neo-Assyrian period, Ashurnasirpal II's Nimrud Monolith was located at the entrance to the Ninurta Temple shrine,[92] but Reade has convincingly demonstrated that it originally stood at the Northwest Palace, whence it was relocated when Šamši-Adad V's stele from the Ninurta Temple was moved to the Nabû Temple.[93] The Nimrud Monolith was too large for the new context. The hollow-topped square column that was supposed to stand beside it as either an incense burner or lamp stand could not fit, so an offering table with hollowed-out top was placed before it to serve this function.[94]

While the offering table was clearly intended to replace the earlier column, this new arrangement altered the monument's significance. If the column was an incense burner, then moving the incense from the side of the stela to its front made Ashurnasirpal's image a focus of the offering, rather than burning incense in the temple entrance in general. If it was a lampstand providing "porch lighting",[95] then placing it in front of the Nimrud Monolith would cast a shadow across the doorway, reducing

[86] RINAP 5/1 no. 7: ix 30''–40''; no. 11: iv 123–137.
[87] RINAP 5/1 no. 11: iv 70–76.
[88] For Sennacherib's southern campaigns, see Levine 1982; Rinap 3/1: 11–14.
[89] Reade 1967: 43–45; 1979b: 92.
[90] Dewar 2016: 33–34.
[91] Reade 2000: 612.
[92] Reade 2002: 187 fig. 47 (Nimrud Monolith labelled as no. 31).
[93] Reade 2002: 141–42, 169–71.
[94] Reade 2002: 169–70. For these columns as incense burners, see Neumann 2023: 67–70; Reade 2002: 151–52. For lampstands, see Holloway 1996; Nunn 2022: 108. The inscription on one of these objects from the Kidmuri Temple at Kalḫu refers to *muqallû šuātu*, "that burner", suggesting that they were incense burners (Reade 2002: 152). However, the term *muqallû* is otherwise only attested as the Akkadian equivalent to the Sumerian profession lu_2 še sa-sa, "barley roaster" (http://oracc.org/dcclt/Q000302, Seg. 3, 4). The inscription on the column clearly uses this word with a different but uncertain meaning. Reade (2002: 152) acknowledges that this term might refer to an object that sat atop the column instead. The two interpretations of the columns—as incense burners or as lampstands—are therefore both possible.
[95] Holloway 1996.

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its effectiveness, while also lighting Ashurnasirpal's image from below. Either scenario placed greater emphasis on Ashurnasirpal's image than there had previously been. Furthermore, replacing the column with an offering table stressed the stele's status as object of veneration. This unusual rearrangement gave Ashurnasirpal's image a privileged position next to the largest temple he had created at Kalḫu, outside the shrine of the city's patron god.[96] It is therefore a compelling possible instance of symbolic compensation for a previous king.

There are several possible motivations for this symbolic compensation. Sargon II's move from Kalḫu to Dur-Šarrukin and Esarhaddon's reuse of orthostats from the Northwest Palace are both potential candidates. Equally, there may have been other slights to Ashurnasirpal's legacy of which we are unaware.[97] Little convincing evidence exists to identify a particular culprit. Any conclusions must therefore remain speculative.[98]

These case studies demonstrate that, when kings felt it necessary to damage their predecessors' material legacy, they might symbolically compensate those predecessors for doing so. These acts of compensation were ad hoc and specific to the context in which they occurred. This allowed intergenerational reciprocity far more flexibility when faced with necessary changes to existing urban or monumental landscape. The significant timespan between Aššur-uballiṭ I's reign and the Sargonid Period and the ad hoc, context-specific nature of these acts make it unlikely that they formed part of a longstanding tradition. It seems more likely that, in similar circumstances, kings to responded to intergenerational reciprocity in similar ways.

Conclusion: Reciprocity and Reputation

This paper has demonstrated that Assyrian royal efforts to preserve past rulers' material legacies were motivated by a more complex moral framework than previously supposed. Kings were motivated not only by curses and blessings, but also by reciprocal relationships with past and future rulers. Since later rulers held more power in these relationships than earlier rulers, generic reciprocity allowed past rulers to leverage the power of future kings over those in the present to protect their material legacy. The interplay between these two systems of protection, one enforced by the gods, the other by future kings, meant that in some circumstances rulers might feel justified to disregard the usual care and maintenance of predecessors' material legacy but nevertheless offer symbolic compensation to those past rulers for doing so. This allowed rulers to morally justify deviation from the usual proper care for past rulers' material legacy.

The ad hoc nature of these compensations suggest they were relatively infrequent. We cannot assume they occurred every time a king deviated from the norms of intergenerational reciprocity. The examples examined above all relate to large-scale acts of harm towards a ruler's material legacy. Conversely, some damage to royal material legacy, such as Sennacherib's decision to erase and

[96] Barbara Parker-Mallowan (1993: 385) similarly argues that the offering table was placed before the Nimrud Monolith "as a homage to the founder of Nimrud". At first glance, SAA 20 no. 52 (= BM 121206), a Sargonid record of cultic events, might suggest that the offering table's placement before the Nimrud Monolith was not unusual. This text mentions a *maš-ki-tú šá* TÙR *šá ṣal-mu* ^{m}SU-^{d}IM *šá ina pu-ut né-re-bi šá* ^{d}NIN.LÍL (SAA 20 no. 52: rev. iii 9'–10'), translated by Parpola (SAA 20: 52) as "the altar for the image of Eriba-Adad in the courtyard opposite the entrance of Mullissu". However, this object is a *maškittu*, an altar for animal sacrifice, rather than a *paššūru*, an offering table for prepared food and drink (Vivante 1994). Furthermore, the long chain of genitive constructions, "the altar of the courtyard of the image of Eriba-Adad", is more ambiguous than Parpola's translation would suggest. This text therefore does not describe a comparable arrangement of monuments to that of the Nimrud Monolith and offering table.

[97] Perhaps the decision to move the stele out of the palace was itself viewed as a slight against Ashurnasirpal's legacy that required compensation (I am thankful to one of the anonymous reviewers for this suggestion).

[98] Parker-Mallowan's (1993: 385) argument that Sargon II moved the Nimrud Monolith is reliant on similarities between the round, tripodal offering table before the stele and those found at Dur-Šarrukin (RINAP 2: 242–44 with cited literature). However, depictions of these objects in art demonstrate that they were far more common in antiquity than the handful of surviving exemplars might suggest (see e.g. the examples in Parker-Mallowan 1993). That the stele of Šamši-Adad V was relocated from the Ninurta Temple to the Nabû Temple offers no further useful evidence for identifying the king that moved the stelae. This ruler need not have worked on the building itself but even if they did, it is unclear which Sargonid rulers renovated the Nabû Temple; the common assumption that Sargon II was responsible for the extensive alterations to the façade of the Nabû Temple during this period is based on flimsy evidence (Reade 1970: 116).

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replace a two-line inscription of a previous king on a door socket from Nebi Yunus,[99] are comparatively very minor, and may have been too little to warrant symbolic compensation on a significant scale. At the same time, these concessions to past rulers might often be difficult or impossible to identify in the historical and archaeological records.

Identifying transtemporal relationships between kings allows a more nuanced approach to Assyrian political, religious, and cosmological thought. Assyrian royal morality has frequently been viewed solely in terms of divine will and the opposition between order and chaos.[100] Intergenerational reciprocity instead reframes moral arbitration as multi-faceted and polycentric. Furthermore, it resolves the often-cited tension between innovation and tradition in Assyrian royal ideology and provides a greater degree of complexity to Assyrian conceptions of time, history, and historiography. More broadly, this paper has explored the ways in which past people have flexibly and creatively reconciled the need to alter and adapt living cultural heritage with the need to honour obligations towards past generations. These are questions relevant to modern cultural heritage, wherein the concerns of those inhabiting and using historic sites and landscapes are becoming increasingly central to discussion surrounding conservation.[101] Further research is needed to explore the full significance of this paper's findings within both of these contexts.

I end this paper with one final observation: the examples of symbolic compensation identified in this paper all relate to kings held in high regard by later rulers. I have already noted above that Ashurbanipal viewed Sennacherib favourably. Equally, Ashurnasirpal II was one of the most highly regarded pre-Sargonid kings during the Sargonid period. He is one of the few pre-Sargonid kings mentioned by name in Sargonid royal inscriptions, and LKA 64, a hymn commemorating his western campaigns, was part of the Chief Singer's library during the late Sargonid period.[102] If the Aššur-nadin-aḫḫe in Aššur-uballiṭ I's Patti-ṭuḫdi Inscription is the same ruler of this name as mentioned in EA 16, a letter from Aššur-uballiṭ I to the Egyptian pharaoh, Aššur-uballiṭ apparently viewed this ruler favourably too. EA 16 states that Aššur-nadin-aḫḫe received comparable amounts of gold from Egypt to the king of Mittani.[103] Aššur-uballiṭ presents this as Egypt treating a past Assyrian ruler as the equal of the Mittanian king prior to Assyria's political independence.[104] Aššur-nadin-aḫḫe was apparently understood to have excelled on the world stage despite his subservience to Mittani.

It would seem, therefore, that prestige contributed to decisions surrounding symbolic compensation. This is not entirely surprising. The intergenerational cooperation described above is essentially mutualist; the present king treats his predecessors correctly so that he too will receive favourable treatment, through blessings (and not curses) from the gods and through his successors treating his own material legacy correctly.[105] Studies on mutualist systems of morality and cooperation have highlighted reputation as an important element of these systems.[106] Novotny's work on royal inscriptions' building accounts suggests this was true among Assyrian kings; only a few of the most prestigious past kings are in Sargonid royal inscriptions' building accounts.[107] Equally, kings who were remembered favourably would seem more likely to have received symbolic compensation. In this fashion, the survival of a king's material legacy ensured his name and deeds' survival, but his name and deeds' survival also ensured the survival of his material legacy.

[99] Maul and Miglus 2020: 194 Abb. 82, 196. This object also bears an inscription of Esarhaddon on its opposite (bottom) side (Maul and Miglus 2020: 195 Abb. 83, 196).

[100] See n. 85 above.

[101] For example, Higgins and Douglas (eds.) 2021; Mydland and Grahn 2011; Settimini 2021; Taylor 2010.

[102] For Ashurnasirpal II in Sargonid royal inscriptions, see Novotny 2018: 256, 264–65. LKA 64 (= VAT 10047) is edited as Bach 2018: 3–14; Fuchs and Edmonds 2024: 48–93; Prosecký (2001). Its context is addressed by Pedersén 1986: 34–35, 38 no. 24.

[103] EA 16: 19–25. This payment may have been a bride price (Moran 1992: 40 n. 9). Recent literature usually identifies the king in this letter as Aššur-nadin-aḫḫe I (Reculeau 2022: 718 and n. 46 with cited literature).

[104] EA 16: 19–31.

[105] For mutualist understandings of morality and cooperation, see Baumard, André, and Sperber 2013; Tomasello *et al.* 2012.

[106] See Nordin 2015: 131–33 and cited literature.

[107] Novotny 2018: 256–57.

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المُعاملةُ بالمثلِ بين الأجيال في القصورِ الآشورية

بَن ديوار

تبحثُ هذه الدراسة في كيفية قيامِ الملوك الآشوريين بحمايةِ تراثهم المادي للأجيال القادمة ولماذا فشلت هذه الحماية في بعض الحالات البارزة مع التركيز بشكلٍ خاص على قصور كالح ونينوى خلال الفترة السرجونية. وبدوري أتناول هذا المسألة من خلال منظار المعاملة بالمثل بين الأجيال، فقد قدّمتْ وجهاتُ النظر الآشورية للِعالمِ قنواتً مختلفةً يمكن من خلالها لملوك الماضي والحاضر والمستقبل أن يتعاملوا ويتفاعلوا مع بعضهم البعض في علاقات متبادلة وقسرية عبر الزمن. وقد وفّرتْ هذه العلاقات المتبادلة على عكس اللعنات والبركات التي كان من السهل نسبياً على الملوك الآشوريين تجاهلها حوافزَ أكثرَ اِقناعاً للحُكامِ لتثمين التراث المادي لأسلافهم والحفاظ عليه. ومع ذلك قد تؤدي المخاوفُ العملية أو الأيديولوجية في بعض الأحيان إلى الحاجة إلى تغييرِ المباني بطرقٍ تلحقُ الضررَ بالإرث المادي للحاكم السابق. وتمّ في بعض هذه الحالات اِتخاذُ خطواتً لِتعويضِ الحاكم السابق المعني رمزياً عن هذا الضرر. وتمكّنَ الحُكامُ بهذه الطريقة من التغلّبِ على التوتّر الأيديولوجي بين التقاليد والاِبتِكار للحفاظِ على الذاكرةِ التأريخية مع تكييف التراث الثقافي الحي لِتلبيةِ الاِحتِياجات الحاليةِ.

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