

Empire's Inner Theatre

Interiority and Power during the
Neo-Assyrian Period, c.750-650 BC

Chaitanya Dutta Kanchan

UCL

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

I, Chaitanya Dutta Kanchan, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

What role do concepts of the thinking and feeling self play in the processes of imperial rule? How do individuals within empire manage and subvert the government of the self the ecumenical power demands? I address these questions through an exploration of the inner theatre of operations of the Assyrian Empire, which dominated the Middle East in the early first millennium BC from its capitals in North Iraq. The key sources are the state correspondence, c.4,000 letters on clay tablets, written in the Semitic Akkadian language in the cuneiform script. They provide a window into the everyday practice of empire, supplemented by royal inscriptions on clay and stone. These texts have recently been edited and published in high quality interactive scholarly editions online.

In the first part of the thesis, I propose the concept of an ‘intentional loop’ traversing the interior and exterior world. I explore the concepts of *ṭemu* ‘thought, intention, order, news’ and *libbu* ‘interior,’ which linked these worlds. *Ṭemu*, a thought traversing the *libbu*, unfolded through language and action, manifesting events which looped around into further thought and action. I then analyse techniques used by the Assyrians to shape the interiorities of subjects to satisfy the demands posed by these concepts, using the material to interrogate theories of governmentality and biopolitics.

The second part of the thesis explores how subjects negotiated this regime of interiority through language, before proceeding to explore alternative relationships defined by kinship terminology, and finally antagonistic relationships. By employing methods inspired by linguistic anthropology’s application of Bakhtin’s insights into dialogue and quotation, the dyadic relations explored in this section are resituated in the larger currents of imperial ideology. Thus, building on the recent work by Pongratz-Leisten and Liverani, the thesis further advances our understanding of the Assyrian imperial phenomenon.

Impact Statement

This thesis is the product of a four year Economic and Social Sciences Research Council & Arts and Humanities Research Council multidisciplinary studentship under the rubric of 'Intercultural Interactions,' exploring processes that take place above the level of states and nations. It fulfils this aim by exploring the ontological and linguistic processes that motivated a well-documented ancient empire, the Assyrian Empire of the first millennium BC. Spanning the entirety of the Middle East, this empire produced ideas, infrastructures and cultural changes utilised by the subsequent Achaemenid Persian, Greek Seleucid and Roman empires. The Assyrian Empire's representation in the Hebrew Bible, as well as in nineteenth century European discourse, serve to underline the historical importance of understanding this hitherto obscure period of world history.

This thesis integrates historical and linguistic anthropological approaches and offers impactful methodological contributions to both disciplines. In particular, it shows how a linguistic anthropology might be performed using historical sources, in contradistinction to requiring a participant-observer or ethnographer applying qualitative collection methods. The cuneiform letter's peculiar advantages and disadvantages as a 'transcript' are evaluated, before then being used to develop new concepts and knowledge regarding ancient ontology, subjectivity and biopower. Though sociocultural anthropology enjoys a productive dialogue with history, the extended application of procedures developed in the ethnography of speaking is novel. As the letters represent ephemeral, quotidian utterances, they serve as a particularly effective case study into the multidisciplinary use of historical documents

Consequently, not only does the thesis open up an entire historical period to a discipline previously distant from it, but also demonstrates that historical documents can be used to partially reconstruct interactive practice despite the impossibility of participant observation. Furthermore, by successfully applying anthropological approaches to the state correspondence of the Assyrian empire, the thesis generates new insights which advance our historical understanding of the Middle East, superstate processes, time, and the human subject's place in the world.

Table of Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	3
<i>Impact Statement</i>	4
<i>Table of Contents</i>	5
<i>Figures</i>	8
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	9
<i>Bibliographical Abbreviations</i>	10
<i>Text Abbreviations</i>	11
<i>Introduction</i>	13
The Assyrian Empire in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries.....	15
‘Lightning in the Night’—Sources and Scholarship.....	17
The Assyrian Letter.....	19
The Mule Express.....	22
Transcription and Normalisation.....	25
Overview of Key Events.....	28
1 <i>Ṭemu, Evidentiality and the Intentional Loop</i>	30
1.1 Everyone's Actions Must Be Reported	34
Do not conceal from me anything you see or hear.....	34
Speak in truth to me.....	35
Two Letters—The Sealanders and the Elamites.....	41
1.2 Intention	46
May the king establish <i>ṭemu</i>	46
Return <i>ṭemu</i> —whether it exists or not!.....	49
According to his <i>ṭemu</i> he brought tribute and gifts, came before me in Nineveh and kissed my feet.....	52
According to the <i>ṭemu</i> of the gods.....	53
1.3 Mind	57
Good advice is to be contemplated: not eating, not drinking disturbs <i>ṭemu</i> and adds to illness.....	57
Conclusions	59
The Looping <i>Ṭemu</i> and the Imperial Mission.....	59
The Simultaneous <i>Ṭemu</i> and Divine Ambiguity.....	62
2 <i>Ramaniya, Libbiya u Anaku: Myself, My Interior and I—Mapping the Assyrian Subject</i>	66
You will not place a bad word in your interior about Assurbanipal, the great son of the king of the House of Succession.....	66
2.1 The Topography of the Interior	68
<i>Libbu</i>	68
Privacy.....	70
Guard your <i>ramanu!</i>	74
2.2 Completeness of the Interior	77
The Men of Na'id-Marduk.....	77
Adad-šumu-ušur's Devotion.....	79

2.3 A Storehouse of Words: Libbu, Loyalty and Sincerity	83
Bel and Zarpanitu, Nabu and Marduk the wise know that the words, as many as we have sent to the king our lord in this letter, if they are all not true, of our interior.....	83
Interior Dialogue	85
2.4 The Permeable libbu	90
In and Out of the Libbu	90
Let this word be set as a thorn within your interior!	92
The affected <i>libbu</i>	96
2.5 The Impermeable Libbu: interiority, wilfulness and the ramanu	99
<i>ki libbi</i>	99
<i>ki ramani</i>	101
Polyautonomy.....	106
2.6 Libbali, Libbi Šarri: The Importance of Heart in Assyrian Ontology	107
Models and Maps of the Self.....	107
He lies in the interior of the king—no one may talk against him.....	108
3 Instruments of Imperial Interiority	110
3.1 The Managed Interior	112
The King's Word to Aššur-šarru-ušur	112
They are $\sqrt{pl}h$ people; may <i>libbu</i> be established for them, may they be secured.....	115
The king must not $\sqrt{rh}š$ the interior of those held captive.....	127
Aššur, spare the life of the one who \sqrt{tkl} you.....	129
3.2 $\sqrt{pl}h$ as Practice and Virtue	131
$\sqrt{pl}h$ of the gods begets beauty: $\sqrt{pl}h$ of the infernal deities returns life.....	131
Flavours of Fear	136
$\sqrt{pl}h$ the relationship.....	145
3.3 The Good Empire	148
Eat your crumbs, drink your water, let your interior be good	148
3.4 Conclusions	154
From Emotions to Biopower	154
From Biopower to Ideology	158
Intermezzo – From Ideology to Language	161
4 Temporality, Tablets and Text: Talk in the Time of Ṭemu	166
The Mule Express, Revisited.....	166
Tablets and Time	167
4.1 Citationality, Authority and the Past	170
Propagating Power through Chains of Conversation	171
Nested Dialogues and Communication Diagrams	173
Arguing over the King's Words	179
The father of the king	182
From Citationality to Metalanguage to Language Ideology	184
4.2 Transforming the Future	188
The desire of the king, [my] lord, will be seen through much talking.....	188
Imperatives	190
Modals I—Clashing Chronotopes in the Sealanders versus Nabu-ušallim	192
Modals II – Open Endedness and Hierarchy	198
4.3 Words to Wiggle With: Playing with Protocol	201
The Indirect Third Person	202

Dossier—Protocol and Play: Nabu-duri-uşur and the governor of Der	205
Conclusion	211
5 Kingship Against Kinship: A Contrasting Scheme of Self and Relation	213
I am not the son of the city lord [of Qunbuna]—I am the house-born slave, the servant of the king, my lord. The king my lord entrusted me in Qunbuna; whatever I see and hear, I speak it before the king, my lord.	213
5.1 Family and Empire	214
The Royal Family	215
Royal Family Feeling	219
Beer and Bread: Commensality and Citationality	222
5.2 Ramanu For Self and Kin: Evidence for Non-Imperial Relationships	225
Keeping Up with the Kin	226
Family Feeling.....	231
Letter–Dancing Data and The Death of Lady Gaga	232
Conclusion–Family, Irony and Internecine Struggle	235
6 Temu Overturned: Consent and Conflict	237
These—as to whatever there is that exists or that does not exist, from amongst them not a single one listens to me!	237
6.1 Dehumanisation	238
The Hand of Criminals: Dehumanising and Deauthorising.....	239
Animals, relationships and insults	242
Diminution	248
6.2 Sound, Silence, Speech	251
Storm and Winds, Bluster and Bloviation	251
Unword Words.....	252
The Silent Subject.....	254
Silence of the Assyrians	255
6.3 Dissent and Discontent in the Assyrian Hierarchy	257
Magnates Do Whatever	258
√ <i>grr</i> : Deterrence and the Aššur Temple	261
<i>la</i> √ <i>mgr</i> : Dissent.....	262
The <i>Temu</i> , Overturned.....	264
6.4 They do not consent, they do not listen! Popular Unrest	267
Docile Servants or Rebellious Riffraff? The People of Assyria	267
Communication Breakdown: <i>la</i> √ <i>sm</i> ’	267
Hostility and Skull Crushers	270
Resisting the <i>ilku</i>	275
Refusing the <i>dullu</i>	277
Mass Unrest: <i>bartu</i> and <i>killu</i>	279
Conclusion–From √<i>mgr</i> to Autonomy	281
Conclusions	284
Bibliography	289
Appendices	302
Place Names.....	303
Prosopographical Index	307

Figures

Figure 1 - Known Locations of Mentioned Places	12
Figure 2 - Phases of Assyrian Expansion, reproduced from Frahm 2017b: 179.....	16
Figure 3 - Example of a cuneiform tablet (SAA 10 no. 294) © Trustees of the British Museum.....	20
Figure 4 - Shadow Dialogues.....	23
Figure 5 - The Looping <i>Temu</i>	60
Figure 6 - Scripts of Imperial Interiority.....	155
Figure 7 - <i>tuppi ade</i> Treaty Tablet from Tell Tayinat, reproduced from Lauinger 2012: 88.	162
Figure 8 - Reproduction of Sennacherib's 'Seal of Destinies' from Wiseman 1958: 16	163
Figure 9 - Communication Diagram for SAA 19 no. 98, adapted from Haviland 2005: 92.....	174
Figure 10 - The Assyrian Royal Family, from Radner 2017	216

Acknowledgements

This thesis is a polyphony of many wonderful voices, offering wisdom, encouragement, advice and enthusiasm. Here, I offer gratitude in the completeness of my interior.

To my supervisors Eleanor Robson and Alex Pillen, whose serene sagacity, inexhaustible wonder and compassionate support made the PhD not only successful, but fulfilling and enjoyable. Their inspiring *temu* shines through every page of this thesis, and I am deeply grateful for the gift of their mentorship.

To my dearest friends, Edwin Clifford-Coupe and Tom Dillon, whose boundless humour, loving camaraderie and anarchic wit over many years made the final frontier of research liveable. This thesis would not exist without them.

To all of the above and also to the generous Rees Arnott-Davies go even more thanks for reading through patchy chapter drafts—their time, patience and comments were invaluable.

Thanks also go to my lovely Ma, whose loving and divine ginger tea powers this thesis writer to completion and beyond, and to my little sister, whose inspirational artwork moves the soul.

Additional thanks are due to my Bachelor's, Master's and first-year doctoral supervisor Karen Radner, whose relentless passion and indefatigable drive set this project in motion. This thesis was supported by an Economic and Social Research Council & Arts and Humanities Research Council Multidisciplinary Studentship.

Final thanks go to the three thesis cats, Bump, Fred and Barney, whose purring furry mischief brought much feline levity to my writing retreats.

Postscript gratitude I warmly offer to Alessandro Duranti and Mark Weeden, who kindly accepted invitations to read and examine this thesis. Their enthusiastic comments and generous constructive feedback have been welcome and invaluable.

Bibliographical Abbreviations

CAD	Biggs et al. 1956-2010
CDA	Black et al. 2000
GAG	Soden 1995
MZL	Borger 2004
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> n.d.
RINAP 1	Tadmor & Yamada 2012
RINAP 3/1	Grayson & Novotny 2012
RINAP 4	Leichty 2011
SAA 1	Parpola 1987
SAA 2	Parpola & Kazuko Watanabe 1988
SAA 3	Livingstone 1989
SAA 5	Lanfranchi & Parpola 1990
SAA 8	Hunger 1992
SAA 10	Parpola 1993
SAA 13	Cole & Machinist 1998
SAA 15	Fuchs & Parpola 2001
SAA 16	Luukko & van Buylaere 2002
SAA 17	Dietrich 2003
SAA 18	Reynolds 2003
SAA 19	Luukko 2013a

Text Abbreviations

'	line numbering beginning, or continuing, after damage
1	first person
3	third person
b.	bottom
col.	column
e.	edge
l.	line (in columnar inscriptions only)
NA	Neo-Assyrian dialect
NB	Neo-Babylonian dialect
obv.	obverse
QUOT	Babylonian quotative particle <i>umma</i>
1.QUOT	Neo-Assyrian first person quotative particle <i>muk nuk</i>
3.QUOT	Neo-Assyrian third person quotative particle <i>ma</i>
rev.	reverse
SB	Standard Babylonian dialect
x	damaged or illegible sign
[beginning of damage
]	end of damage
⌈	beginning of partial damage
⌋	end of partial damage
...	lines omitted

Introduction

This thesis is an experiment in ‘taking things too seriously.’¹ The preserved letters of the Assyrian Empire offer us an unparalleled window into the practice of power in a non-modern form, made available to us by the painstaking work of lexicographers, philologists and translators over the past two centuries.² The successful enterprise to translate the dead Akkadian language of tablets from an ancient past has been refracted through the living prisms of modern academes, interpreting, prioritising, slicing and dicing. Here, I offer another refraction, through a prism of the ethnography of language.

How do concepts of subject, person and action shape the practices of large scale political structures? Assyria has left us around four thousand letters spanning the gamut of topics relevant for ruling a territorial state spanning the Middle East:³ war, peace, resource extraction, infrastructure, diplomacy, divining the will of the gods. These letters, preserved in their original copies (Radner 2014: 64), provide us with a direct view into the everyday language practices of a social, political and cultural elite.

In this thesis, I explore the boundary zone between the subjective interior and the intersubjective, historical exterior. Flowing across this zone, speech, sound, perceptions, and intentions move back and forth in a dialogue that constituted an Assyrian empire and the subjects that lived it. This exploration is divided into three sections, a tripartite analysis of Assyrian concepts, practices of interior control, and relationships.

The first part comprises chapters one and two, which excavate from the correspondence the ontological terms that implicitly structured the schemas of imperial rule. Chapter one presents the concept of *temu*. This was a culturally specific model of causation—of thought, intention, action and event—which bound the divine, interior and exterior worlds together in a deliberate universe. The second chapter investigates the interior world of the subject, mapping a ‘topography of self

¹ Holbraad & Pedersen 2017 p. 291, 308.

² For a critical history of decipherment, see Holloway 2002: 1-79.

³ See Fincke 2017: 391 for a breakdown of the tablets found in the Assyrian capital Nineveh, and the introduction to Luukko 2013a for a corresponding breakdown of the tablets found in the capital Kalḫu.

comprising the indexical 'I,' the bodily interior of the *libbu*, and a partially disjunct *ramanu* 'self' that was associated with the 'will.'

The second part is concerned with the thoughts, ideals and acts of the imperial elite. The third chapter zooms out to a larger scale, exploring the strategies by which the imperial elite moulded and coerced the interiorities of their subjects in their effort to propagate the *temu* of the Assyrian gods successfully. We then zoom back in to explore the relationships that made up the network of elite subjects that claimed dominion over the imperial territory. The fourth chapter explores the socially distributed speaking strategies that assigned specific ways of conceptualising the self as a historical subject, in dialogue with the past and projected into the future, focusing on members of the Assyrian hierarchy in particular.

The final part continues with interpersonal relationships, but those which resist the imperialistic, elite model. Chapter five uses the limited evidence available for relationships defined by kinship terms to explore a contrasting value system held by those who did not define themselves solely as members of a ruling elite. Finally, the sixth chapter explores the abject: those set against the idealised imperial order, the ways in which they were conceptualised and denigrated, and how resistance was perceived and responded to in the everyday texts.

In the rest of this introduction, I introduce the 'ethnographic background' for this study: the geography, language and history of the Assyrian Empire in this period. We then move to the nature of the sources, the correspondence tablets, where I introduce how anthropological methods can be usefully adapted to get at the unwritten complexities of the dialogues contained therein.

The Assyrian Empire in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries

From the fourth millennium BC, the history of the Middle East was one of a rich contact zone of languages, traditions and communities. Ancient South Iraq was where the first cities and stratified societies in the region coalesced; from these a graphical accounting system was born, which eventually developed into the fully fledged cuneiform script.⁴ This script, a complex assemblage of ideographic and syllabic meanings, was associated with cosmological traditions which regarded all events in the world as intentionally authored by divinities, who constantly communicated via readable signs.

Over two thousand years of history sedimented over this ancient past, as the geopolitical landscape underwent upheaval and drastic transformation: mass demographic changes, the rise of new technologies, and the constant violence wrought by warring states fighting for supremacy. Sounds like 2018 AD, but in fact 745 BC:⁵ Sumerians, Akkadians, Mittanians, Hurrians, Kassites, Hittites, Aramaeans, Arabs and Chaldeans intermingled over millennia spanning the Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages. We enter the scene at the apex of the most powerful societal order that had hitherto existed in documented Middle Eastern history—the Assyrian Empire.⁶ Combining technological advantage (such as road systems, standing armies and iron weaponry) with an imperial administration steeped in the ancient practices of cuneiform culture, the Assyrian elite dominated the diverse population.

Beginning *circa* 900 and extending until the destruction of the final imperial capital Nineveh in 612,⁷ the Assyrian elite practiced an expansive, extractive imperialism across the Middle East. From their heartland in northern Iraq, the Assyrians expanded their territory to encompass Egypt in the West and the Zagros mountains in the East, incorporating ancient Babylonia in the South and the modern-day territories of Syria, Israel-Palestine, Lebanon, and the southernmost reaches of Turkey.

⁴ An account of cuneiform's emergence from token based accounting is sketched in Schmandt-Besserat 1995, and also see Houston 2004: 238-239, which cautions against the gradualist view and favours an episodic timeline.

⁵ All subsequent dates in this thesis will refer to BC/BCE dates unless stated otherwise.

⁶ This state has also been known as the 'Neo-Assyrian Empire.' This term carries connotations that that this was the 'last' phase of the Assyrian state, preceded by a Middle Assyrian 'kingdom'; and an Old Assyrian polity that some have attempted to describe as an 'empire' in its own right, though it was really a trading network. These teleological schemes are ultimately unhelpful and so I simply use 'Assyrian Empire' here. 'Neo-Assyrian period' is used to refer to the timespan rather than the state.

⁷ The first millennium saw Assyrian kings moving their capitals away from the ancient city of Aššur for various geopolitical reasons, beginning with Assurnasirpal II (r. 883-859), who moved to the site of Kalḫu. Sargon II (r. 744-727) began the new foundation of Dur-Šarruken, but after his death on the battlefield his son abandoned the site and moved to Nineveh, which remained the capital until its destruction.

From 745, following a coup by a man who took the throne name Tiglath-pileser (r. 744-727),⁸ this territory was reorganised into a carefully administered and highly centralised provincial system. The provinces were ruled by governors appointed by the Assyrian king, and were supplemented by client kings and tribal chiefs. This was a complex geopolitical landscape, encompassing ancient cities with distinctive local traditions, non-Assyrian countries, and independent tribes itinerant and sedentary. Figure 2 maps the territories and phases of growth of the empire across the first millennium:



Figure 2 - Phases of Assyrian Expansion, reproduced from Frahm 2017b: 179

The imperial elite, speaking the Neo-Assyrian dialect of the East Semitic Akkadian language, favoured the cuneiform script as part of the wholesale package of an ontological universe populated by signs and intentions. This was set above and within an increasingly Aramaic speaking milieu, with the cuneiform chancellery consciously resisting the wholesale adoption of the Aramaic alphabetic script, written upon parchment.

⁸ All regnal dates from Frahm 2017a.

However, despite the ancient, seemingly cumbersome cuneiform script, clay tablets were used to produce vast amounts of bureaucratic ephemera. Contracts, receipts, catalogues and correspondence made their way around the empire by mule express on the royal roads, and were deposited in archives at the capital cities for preservation when necessary. The closely related Babylonian language was spoken in the South and carried connotations of high culture (Barjamovic 2012: 149); it was also an acceptable language for state communication, and, in its archaising Standard Babylonian register, was the literary language of the highly edited heroic accounts of the reigns of the Assyrian kings, known to modern editors as the Assyrian royal inscriptions. These accounts comprised the first primary sources for narrative histories of the ancient Middle East, 'building blocks of an *histoire événementielle*,' though now they are appropriately read more critically as cultural artefacts (Van De Mieroop 2013: 89 ff.).

'Lightning in the Night'—Sources and Scholarship

The chronology and history of the empire in this period is secure (Frahm 2017b: 162-3). The history of this period has up until fairly recently tended to be characterised as a succession of kings, based on the royal inscriptions, which offer a pseudo-historical narrative account of events.⁹ Added to these have been the over six thousand tablets that form the 'everyday texts' concerned with running the Assyrian Empire; these texts have been rightly described as 'a truly outstanding wealth of administrative and related data' (Fales 2007: 96). Nevertheless, the letters on which this study is based

cluster around limited periods of time... illuminating, like lightning in the night, brief moments of Late Assyrian history only; but what they reveal about the power dynamics within the Assyrian state, the role of military and civilian officials, spies, priests, and scholars, most likely applies *mutatis mutandis*, to all of it.

Frahm 2017b: 164

The letters offer a close view on the day to day running of an empire that encompassed numerous states and nations within its ambit. This enables the Assyrian material to modify academic theories of power, which, particularly at the level of large territorial formations, tends to prefer thinking through ideologies, power over, and rational economic or political explanations for state

⁹ Dassow 1999; See also Van De Mieroop 1997: 298-9, who notes 'this tendentiousness is not taken seriously enough when history is written by the modern scholar.'

processes.¹⁰ Recent Assyriological work has emphasised an ‘ideological’ aspect of Assyrian power: Beate Pongratz-Leisten (2015) foregrounds the importance of ‘religion’ as an integral component of Assyrian ideology, as opposed to a separate structural component; Mattias Karlsson (2016) catalogues a large amount of textual data. Eckart Frahm, following Ariel Bagg, describes Assyria as ‘an empire without mission’ (2017c: 193). Contemporaneously, Mario Liverani has published a book actually entitled ‘Assyria: The Imperial Mission,’ where he emphasises Assyria’s commonalities with other empires, especially the requirement that there be an ideological ‘mission’ to attain hegemony over the whole world (2017: 1).¹¹ This particular combination of philological method and interpretation through the ‘empire’ concept seems to give rise to cross-talking conclusions about a unitary ‘nature’ of Assyrian domination. Whilst Liverani employs the ‘empire’ concept as a basis for comparative analysis, he flags up a certain yearning for legitimacy and relevance that leads scholars to define ancient phenomena such as Assyria in this way (2017: 2-3).¹²

By using the correspondence, ephemeral records of everyday dialogue, I aim to further problematise and augment our conceptual complement for theorising ancient power. Taking a leaf from the Indologist Sheldon Pollock’s book on the Sanskrit cosmopolis of the first millennium AD, this thesis attempts to derive a specific assemblage of ‘culture-power’ for the long Assyrian century under study,¹³ setting it in contrast to the ‘culture-power practices and their associated theories—legitimation, ideology, nationalism, civilizationism, and the like—that came into being in modern Europe’ (Pollock 2006: 9-10). Though I retain the use of the term ‘Assyrian Empire’ for the culture-power assemblage under study, I hope to show the multiple, overlapping and oftentimes paradoxical practices surrounding the dominion of the Assyrian elite. An understanding of ‘Assyrian Empire’ as one where an ‘imperial ideology’ distilled from ‘propaganda’ documents centred on the

¹⁰ The concept of a rational, autonomous self largely derives from a tradition of European philosophy, which developed a dualist model of mind-body, reason-emotion (associated with Descartes), subsequently privileging the ‘sovereignty of reason’ above denigrated emotionality (Plamper 2015: 18-24 provides a good overview of this). These definitions of ‘rational’ and ‘autonomous’ themselves are *also* situated within European philosophy: Descola draws our attention to the fact that the ‘rational’ is itself contingent on the ontology of a given society, as he evokes the Achuar hunter, singing the *anent*-plea to its prey (Descola 2013: 83). Upon these hulks the sciences were raised, shaping the analytical categories and approaches used to this day (Descola 2013: 68 ff.).

¹¹ This book in effect serves as a sequel to Liverani’s structuralist-Marxist reading of Assyrian imperial ideology (1979). Though an innovative interpretation at the time, Liverani’s paper has been cited as *the* work on Assyrian ideology for three decades.

¹² This reaction towards both defining a ‘legitimate’ object of academic study, as well as reacting against Orientalist interpretations, is particularly evident in the application of ethnocentric terms like ‘prime minister,’ ‘chief of staff,’ ‘the Assyrian cabinet,’ *contra* ‘emperor,’ ‘vizier,’ or ‘harem.’

¹³ *Pace* Pollock’s own dislike of this term, which he uses anyway (2006: 11-12)

King gives way to the interactions between local concepts of sign, act and time (*temu*), understandings of the subject (*libbu-ramanu*), affect-shaping practices, and the agencies of subjects as they act in the interstices, gaps, and contradictions of these terms of power.

The Assyrian Letter

egertu... ki mari edi attaşarši
I guarded the letter like an only son¹⁴

The letter evidence from Assyria provides us with a unique, if lacunose, dossier of the operation of ‘power’ over a large geographic region across a span of a long century. The letters themselves are written on clay tablets in cuneiform script, in the Assyrian or Babylonian dialects of the Akkadian language, an East Semitic language distantly related to Arabic or Hebrew. A photograph of a cuneiform letter tablet, whence the epigraph above derives, is reproduced in Figure 3. These letters have only recently been made available to wider audiences through the *State Archives of Assyria* project.¹⁵ Combined with the completion of a comprehensive Akkadian dictionary,¹⁶ together with various other text publication initiatives, ancient documents are now far easier to work with for the modern historian; reading and interpreting unclear, damaged cuneiform signs, or translating reams of difficult and dead language are all issues presently obviated.

These issues also existed in the Neo-Assyrian period: Assyrian, a language superseded by Aramaic in day to day activities, written in the unsuitable and difficult cuneiform logosyllabary, was mandated by court practice. Consequently, reading and writing in cuneiform was restricted, by dint of its complexity, to a learned group of individuals who could afford to specialise in the skill.¹⁷

¹⁴ SAA 10 no. 294 rev. 2, Urad-Gula *ašipu* to Assurbanipal.

¹⁵ 1987 —, twenty volumes so far, as well as online editions available at <http://oracc.org>.

¹⁶ The *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*.

¹⁷ Though Assyrian governors were trained to a basic level of literacy—see Parpola 1997.



Figure 3 - Example of a cuneiform tablet (SAA 10 no. 294) © Trustees of the British Museum

The letters thus represent a highly mediated, ossified view into quotidian ways of speaking about power. This enables us to partially interpret the ways Assyrian elites considered and thought about their duties, actions, and the world they operated upon.

Something we must always bear in mind is that, not only is our sample just a partial representation of the cuneiform correspondence that must have been generated, but cuneiform letters were only one way in which Assyrian governance was practiced: interaction written in Aramaic script, on biodegradable parchment, and actual face-to-face interactions, one of the most valued ways of communication,¹⁸ are lost to us.

The Assyrian letter itself represented a complex hybrid of orality and textuality. The vast majority of the documents were composed to be understood as speech. On one end, the message would be dictated by the person sending the message to the scribe. Sometimes, these roles were combined: the scribe was the sender. Then, this document would travel via mule-express to the recipient, who would use a literate scribe to read out the message encoded on the tablet. The oral nature of the letter utterance is evident in the presence of discourse markers.¹⁹ Yet the recognition of the entextualisation process by the parties involved allowed for a flexibility a slavish representation of speech would not offer. Letters may quote the entire contents of other letters,²⁰ or even shift genres into quoting bureaucratic lists, which were not intended to be spoken at all.²¹ Finally, metadiscursive markers such as address to the scribe reading out the letter,²² or desiring that a letter itself become an incantation indicate a keen awareness of the written nature of cuneiform letters.²³

¹⁸ Radner 2014: 92-3.

¹⁹ E.g., *minu aḥḥur* 'what else?' SAA 13 no. 40 rev. 4, Taqiša to Aššur-šarru-ušur; *alimma minu* 'what else?' SAA 16 no. 52 obv. 9, rev. 6, unassigned to unassigned. See p.232 for discussion on how emotional oral interjection might have penetrated the conventional 'scribal filter' that compressed oral utterances with generic, tropic forms.

²⁰ For example the letter SAA 16 no. 148, in which the official Aššur-ušallim quotes an extensive, apparently contiguous passage from a previous letter he received from Esarhaddon.

²¹ For example, a letter sent by Nabu-zeru-lešir, basically a list (SAA 16 no. 50); also SAA 15 no. 181, where a list is framed by a letter in the more usual epistolary style.

²² *mannu atta tuṣšarru ša tasassuni issu pan šarri belika la tupazzar ṭabti ina pan šarri qibi Bel Nabu ṭabtaka ina pan šarri liqbi'u* 'Whoever you are scribe who reads out, you will not hide (this) before the king, your lord. Speak my goodness in the presence of the king, and may Bel and Nabu speak your goodness before the king' (SAA 16 no. 32, rev. 17-22).

²³ *egirtu annitu lu šiptu* 'may this letter be an incantation' (SAA 16 no. 60, rev. 16').

The Mule Express

abatu... ahiš tappaluni... ana puluḫti la šaknata
A word... that answers another... does it not establish \sqrt{plh} ?²⁴

Disentangling the various parties involved in a correspondence interaction takes some doing. Martti Nissinen derives a scheme to describe how prophetic utterances were recorded, drawing out the scribal layer interposed between speaker and addressee (2000: 268-9). He also emphasises that, despite whatever priority may be attached to rendering the utterance as faithfully as possible, a ‘scribal filter’ persists which transforms the utterance as it is transmuted (Nissinen 2000: 245). Dominique Charpin, drawing on both Neo-Assyrian practices and those at the court of the city of Mari a millennium earlier, posits a particularly thick filter. A king would dictate a memo to the scribe, who later would compose a ‘definitive text’ in the king’s voice (Charpin 2010: 122-123). Thus, even at the letter’s genesis we have multiple subjects behind the singly voiced utterance a tablet might represent: the king’s original utterance, recorded in both written memo and the scribe’s memory, and the scribe’s own ‘royal voice’ that emerges from this.

We can build on these models of the letter production process by drawing on concepts and tools created by sociologists and linguistic anthropologists studying the production of utterances in verbal exchanges. In his seminal study of conversational experience, Goffman differentiates between a number of roles that can be taken in the presentation of a single utterance:

- the *principal*, ‘the party who is held responsible for having wilfully taken up the position to which the meaning of the utterance attests’;
- the *emitter*, ‘the current, actual sounding box from which the transmission of articulated sound comes’;
- the *animator*, encompassing the role of the emitter but recognising the stylistic, embodied presentation of the emitted utterance.

Goffman 1986: 517-518

²⁴ SAA 10 no. 30, rev. 5-8, Issar-šumu-ereš to Esarhaddon.

To these Goffman adds the concept of the *figure*, an imaginative entity the speech of which neither the principal nor the animator claims responsibility for. This emphasises a disjuncture between ‘authoring,’ and ‘making’ (1986: 523). However, this term is not particularly helpful when thinking through the Assyrian letters: all speech carries responsibility in a world composed entirely by the actions of intentional beings.

These roles help us to think through the transmission process of an Assyrian letter a bit more carefully. The principal is the subject or subjects whose names are inscribed in the letterhead of the tablet; the animator is the scribe who speaks the utterance from the tablet at the end. Still, this remains inadequate: it recognises only the cataphoric nature of the oral utterance, and effaces the inscription activity in between.

To really get at what was going on we can mobilise Judith Irvine’s decomposition of roles into ‘shadow conversations.’²⁵ Irvine critiques the destructuring of speaker roles suggested by Goffman and, contemporaneously, Hymes: they have got things ‘back to front’ (1996: 134). She suggests that rather than assigning a repertoire of fixed roles to various entities in a conversation, which ‘reifies the fragments’, we focus on the ‘fragmentation’ process’ (1996: 134).

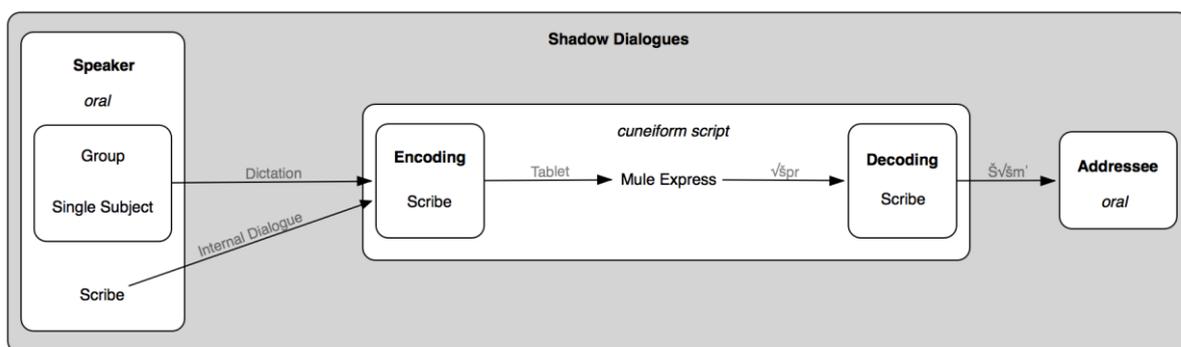


Figure 4 - Shadow Dialogues

The above diagram captures the different dialogues and modalities a single speaker → addressee message is transformed by when sent through the mail system. The message is transformed across

²⁵ Judith Irvine’s ethnography draws on her fieldwork in a rural Wolof community in Senegal, which particularly focused on language and ways of speaking in a complex, hierarchical social structure (1995: 251-2).

a subjective ‘intent’ to author an utterance, through spoken language, into the interiority of a scribe, who encodes it into cuneiform script, whereupon it is transmitted across space and time to its destination, whereupon it undergoes a decoding process by a literate being, who utters the message to its recipient. In particular, the transcoding of a spoken utterance into cuneiform is a powerful site for the imposition of a linguistic-ideological ‘rationalisation’ of the utterance: procedures such as regularising structure and compressing idiosyncrasies (Woolard 1998: 12). This phenomenon is opaque to us and must be teased out through its traces, two examples being the non-lexical expression of affect in a letter between imperial officials,²⁶ and a conflict between expressive language and generic conventions in a woman’s private letter to her brother.²⁷

Linguistically, during this period not only was Aramaic the daily language of most people in the Middle East, but it most likely also interacted and interfered with the Assyrian and Babylonian languages themselves, leading to a ‘Assyro-Aramaic symbiosis’ (Fales 2007: 111). Not only this, but the cuneiform letters transparently translate utterances in non-related languages such as Urartian, which further complicates the multiple meanings, voices and, interpretations and dialogues a single tablet represents. For the purposes of this thesis we will flag up when the linguistic issue become pertinent, but otherwise restrict ourselves to assuming the best of the letters, as the Assyrians did. This thesis also makes use of tools developed by the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin and his associates. In particular, the concept of *dialogism*, which emphasises that language-in-use never conforms to a systematically pure vision,²⁸ but is ‘saturated with history... permeated with the intentions of others’ (Mannheim & Vleet 1998: 332). Words, quotes, tropes and talk are soaked with the context and meanings of previous uses, and, situated in an utterance, look forward to being heard by a speaker (Vološinov 1973: 86).²⁹ The questions posed by a dialogically-oriented approach—whose voices are ‘behind’ which word, the ownership, framing or interpretation of utterances—bring into the foreground interactive power dynamics that can be obscured by

²⁶ P.49

²⁷ P.233

²⁸ Such as the Saussurean *langue* in relation to its *parole*. Vološinov decries such structural linguistics as ‘hypostasizing abstract objectivism,’ creating a ‘synchronic system’ which ‘does not correspond to any real moment in the historical process of becoming’ (Vološinov 1973: 66-67). Irvine further notes that the Saussurean model itself embeds a temporal language ideology, one that freezes languages into a ‘single plane of simultaneity’ (2004: 107). We take up the theme of simultaneity in contrast with linearity in our discussion of *temu* later on.

²⁹ Ironically, Vološinov lays the blame for the neglect of spoken language at the feet of ‘philologists’ who concern themselves with ‘dead, written, alien language’ (1973: 73).

plumbing the letters solely for their referential content. In addition, I adopt the *chronotope* to capture specific temporalities of subjects in historical space. Despite the ‘daunting Greekness of the term’ (Blommaert 2015: 106), it enables us to talk of time-space ideas at a higher level than the specific context: for example, I propose a chronotope of royal suzerainty, which implicates subjects in a temporalised narrative.³⁰ There, a conception of Assyria as the source of unfolding authority, with various subjects such as its king in his palace and his deputies in the field, is contrasted with a narrative of familial succession,³¹ shadowed by the same chronotope of royal authority transposed to the kingdom of Elam instead. These histories are furthermore juxtaposed on a temporality of *ṭemu*, a looping time evoking somewhat Walter Benjamin’s idea of ‘messianic temporality’ (Irvine 2004: 99-100).

Transcription and Normalisation

Traditionally, Assyriologists have represented the texts found on cuneiform tablets in three ways. The first, *transliteration*, represents each discrete cuneiform sign in the Roman script according to a set of fixed conventions, for example:

ʽe¹-[gír-tu] TA GIŠ.GU.ZA ša ʽPA ina ŠÀ tukul-ti as-sa-kan-ši ki-i DUMU e-ʽdi¹
ʽat¹-[ta]-ʽsar¹-ši

*egertu issi kussie ša Nabu ina libbi tukulti assakanši ki mari edi
attašarši*

I placed the letter in trust before the throne of Nabu and guarded it like an only son

SAA 10 294 rev. 8-9, Urad-Gula *ašipu* to Assurbanipal

This is generally a lossless process. Each sign is separated either by the hyphen or by whitespace from its neighbours, and each sign is assigned a specific reading by the transliterator. However, knowing the reading of the sign (whether it is the first variant of phonetic *gír*, the second variant *gír*, etc.) allows one to convert it back to its graphic variant. This thus preserves on some level the polyvalency of the cuneiform system, but it interposes the transliterator’s opinions and interpretations about how a sign should be read. Signs read as Akkadian syllabograms are written

³⁰ See p.197

³¹ Itself evoking a small scale kinship temporality, instead of the stately, divine temporalities of the Empire.

in *italic* script; signs read as Sumerian logograms in CAPITAL script; full breakages are indicated by square brackets, and partially readable signs by half brackets, 「 and 』.

A transliteration is an attempt to represent the tablet *as a written document*. By contrast, *normalisation* attempts to render the signs on the tablet into a grammatically regularised form, smoothing out the irregularities in cuneiform spellings. Though this process is ‘destructive’ in that it loses the spellings and idiosyncratic writings of the scribes, it is a representation that foregrounds the language instead of the script, making it preferable for use here.³²

In this thesis, I have adopted a modified form of the normalisation process, as what we are interested in is imagining the text as spoken utterance.³³ The normalisations are formatted to graphically make clear the nested discourse frames demarcated by the quotative speech marker, *ma* or {*muk|nuk*} in Neo-Assyrian, *umma* in Neo-Babylonian. This example from chapter four demonstrates the advantages of this approach:

ŠB and NN	Past	TP	Future TP
	ŠB/NN		
<i>anini ki anni ana mar Babilī niqṭibi</i>			
<i>ma</i>	<i>šarru ina muḥḥikunu issa[prannaši]</i>		
	<i>ma</i>	<i>ina pikunu issi mar [Babilī] ki [anni ladbub]</i>	
	<i>ma</i>	<i>[a]na [du]ra[ri] ša Babilī u kidinnutkunu laškun ana Babilī allaka</i>	

We spoke with the sons of Babylon like this			
3.QUOT	The king has s[en]t us before you		
	3.QUOT	[I shall talk] with the sons [of Babylon] with your mouths like [this]	
	3.QUOT	I shall establish [the am]ne[sty o]f Babylon and your privileged status and I am coming to Babylon.	

SAA 19 no. 98, obv. 11-18, Šamaš-bunaya and Nabu-nammir to Tiglath-pileser

³² Von Soden in his standard grammar of the Akkadian language emphasises the importance of ‘zusammenhängender Umschrift’ for establishing grammars and dictionaries (GAG §6, p.33). These normalisation procedures—smoothing out misspellings and selecting the ‘grammatisch korrekte’ form of an Akkadian word—bear notable similarities to other contemporary transmutations. For example, Haviland explores some of the issues of normalisation in the process of transcribing Tzotzil to text. Of particular interest are his observations of the imposition of a ‘standard or normal form on pragmatic features of the original speech context,’ which reflects some of the attempts to show the structures of nested dialogues in this work as well (1996: 47).

³³ I deviate from standard Assyriological practice here in omitting vowel length markers such as the macron and circumflex. Though this is unorthodox, it reflects the lack of consensus on how to represent the Neo-Assyrian dialect in normalisation. Von Soden noted the ‘sehr uneinheitlich’ variety of normalised forms in Assyriological texts in 1974, and though the system he outlines in his grammar provide a consistent scheme for normalising the fairly regular Old Babylonian form of Akkadian, no standard grammar yet exists for the Neo-Assyrian dialect. This is illustrated by the heterogeneity of normalisations of the letters on the Oracc interface, and so I deem the issue out of scope for the purposes of this thesis.

Hopefully, the nested indentation helps to make it clear to the reader increasingly embedded citation frames, in a way following the tablet formatting would not.

For the complete transliteration of signs, the reader is advised to consult the SAA edition indicated with its extensive markup and critical apparatus. Otherwise, full breaks in the tablet are indicated with square brackets; partially broken signs are generally not indicated unless the breakage is of critical importance to the interpretation of the text, whereupon these breaks are marked with the square half bracket characters \lrcorner and \llcorner . Lines I have omitted in the quotation are indicated with ellipses; a series of damaged or broken lines by ellipses in square brackets.

Finally, as a Semitic language, the majority of Akkadian words fell into morphological categories defined by trilateral roots: three consonants which, when placed into vowel patterns and supplemented with infixes, formed a morpheme.³⁴ For example, from the root \sqrt{grr} were derived the words *gararu* ‘to be frighten, to be scared’ and *ussagriri* ‘they frightened.’ Methodologically, this thesis is interested in moving away from neat, fixed dictionary definitions, and so I use the $\sqrt{\quad}$ semantic root in the text to indicate the domains of meaning without actualising them into a specific verbal or substantive form. In particular, we question translations such as \sqrt{plh} , \sqrt{grr} , \sqrt{gld} as ‘fear,’ \sqrt{dbb} \sqrt{qb} as ‘talk, speak,’ and $\{libbu|temu\}$ $\sqrt{\check{s}kn}$ as ‘to establish’ $\{libbu|temu\}$. Where a word can be translated with multiple terms, those terms are separated by /; when an expression can be formed with a choice of words occupying a single slot, the slot is demarcated with curly braces {} and alternatives separated by |.

³⁴ NB that not all Akkadian words can be easily assigned to a semantic root e.g. *temu*; some words are loanwords from other languages, e.g., *sukkallu* from Sumerian, *unzarhu*, from Hurrian.

Overview of Key Events

c. 4000	Nascent development of stratified city societies and cuneiform writing in southern Iraq
c. 879	Assurnasirpal (II) begins to move the Assyrian political capital away from Assur to Kalḫu
754	Assyrian army defeated by an Urartian coalition
745	Tiglath-pileser (III) takes the Assyrian throne in a coup
726	Shalmaneser (V) succeeds his father
722	Sargon (II) takes the Assyrian throne in a coup
713	Construction of Dur-Šarruken begins
705	Sargon dies in battle and his corpse is lost
704	Sennacherib ascends to the Assyrian throne and moves the capital to Nineveh
689	'Destruction of Babylon' — deportations, lapses of cults, kingless years
683	Sennacherib appoints Esarhaddon <i>mar-šarri</i> , his official successor, passing over Urdu-Mullissu
681, 20 th of Tebet (X)	Murder of Sennacherib by his son Urdu-Mullissu
680	Esarhaddon takes the Assyrian war after fighting a violent war of succession
673	Esarhaddon's wife Ešarra-ḫamat dies
672, 18 th of Iyyar (II)	Esarhaddon appoints Assurbanipal <i>mar-šarri</i> and Šamaš-šumu-ukin <i>mar-šarri Babilī</i>

670	Conspiracy of Sasi
	Purge of high officials
669, 10 th Araḥsamna (VIII)	Esarhaddon dies en-route to a military campaign to put down rebellion in Egypt
	Smooth accession of Assurbanipal, supported by his grandmother Naqi'a
652	'Brother War' between Assurbanipal, king of Assyria, and Šamaš-šumu-ukin, king of Babylonia
	Period of historical obscurity
614	Destruction of the city of Assur and the Temple of Aššur
612	Destruction of Nineveh
	Clay tablets in palace storage are preserved by fire and buried in the ruins
609	Destruction of Ḫarran
	Assyrian Empire comes to an end

1 *Temu*, Evidentiality and the Intentional Loop

Introduction³⁵

The motor driving Assyrian imperialism has long been conceived of as the will of the god Aššur, enacted by his representative in the mortal realm, the Assyrian king. A variety of terms were used to describe the communication of the divine command to the king, and thence to his subjects in a chain of delegation: *qibitu* ‘command,’ {*abatu*|*abutu* |*amatu*} ‘word,’ and *temu*. Of these, only *temu* is not derived from a semantic root associated with speaking.³⁶ It remains one of the most puzzling terms in the Assyrian lexicon. *Temu* appears in a number of different contexts, which at initial glance appear quite incongruous to us:

Aššur-rešuwa issapra
ma temu ša Urarṭaya
ma paniu ša ašpuranni

Aššur-rešuwa has sent to me
3.QUOT The *temu* of the Urarṭians
3.QUOT that I sent previously...

SAA 1 no. 31, obv. 22-23, Sennacherib *mar-šarri* to Sargon

minu ša temuni aḥuwa lišpur
Whatever is *temu*, let my brother send

SAA 5 no. 81, rev. 4-5, Aššur-zeru-ibni to Nergal-eṭir

šar Urarṭa[ya ana] bel paḥetešu temu i[sakkan]
ma emuqikunu ina qatikunu šabta...

The king of Urarṭu es[tablished] *temu* upon his governors
3.QUOT Take your troops in your hands...

SAA 1 no. 29, obv. 14-15, Sennacherib *mar-šarri* to Sargon

³⁵ Parts of this chapter were presented as the paper ‘Evidentiality and Power in the Assyrian Empire’ in the ‘Evidentiality and Contact Zones’ panel of the 115th Meeting of the American Anthropological Association 2016. Much gratitude is due Professor Judith Irvine for her generous comments as respondent.

³⁶ *Qibitu* is derived from \sqrt{qb} , ‘speak, say, command,’ which was often used in verbal form in this period, as well as substantivised; {*abatu* | *abutu* | *amatu*} is derived from \sqrt{w} ‘speak,’ though its usage in verbal form is only attested for Old Assyrian period texts. See p.184 for discussion on the language ideology behind some of these terms.

ki ašmu ilten rikissunu u ilten tenšunu

I have heard that they are of their one bond and of their single *temu*

SAA 18 no. 132, rev. 8, Nabu-iqbi to Esarhaddon

ka[ru] ikki la a[ka]lu la šaṭu temu ušašša muršu urad

Restlessness, not eating and not drinking disturbs *temu* and adds to illness.

SAA 10 no. 196, Adad-šumu-ušur *ašipu* to Esarhaddon³⁷

In these five excerpts alone, *temu* demonstrates an extensive polyvalence:

- it is an object that can be sent, or that can be requested to be sent in the future, optionally with linguistic content;
- it is something that can be ‘established’ ($\sqrt{\check{s}kn}$) upon others, also optionally with linguistic content;
- it is something that can be shared intersubjectively;
- it is something that, when disturbed, adds to illness.

During the Neo-Assyrian period, all of these meanings were operative in an everyday capacity: they were all frequently employed throughout the correspondence, and this was regarded as unremarkable. Consequently, *temu* resides in the interesting position of being a complex and difficult concept for us that was central and essential to the Assyrian elite. Understanding what *temu* was is thus critical in understanding the subjective experience and ontological world of the Assyrian Empire.

Modern translators have attempted to resolve this problem in various ways, most straightforwardly by imputing multiple meanings to *temu* sharing a vaguely common semantic sphere: thus, *temu* in the first two examples could be taken as ‘news’; when used with $\sqrt{\check{s}kn}$ ‘put, place, establish,’ it could mean ‘order’ or ‘instruction,’ especially when accompanied by linguistic content with future aspect;³⁸ *temu* could mean intention, or a subjective attribute even more inchoate. Dividing *temu* up into these multiple meanings is the preferred strategy of the standard Assyrian and Akkadian

³⁷ For a definition of *ašipu* and the other Mesopotamian sciences, see p.79.

³⁸ The quoted speech attached to the *temu* contains an imperative or precative form, expressing something that should be done, or might be done, at some point in the future. The imperative form was almost exclusively used when attached to *temu*—see p.190 for more.

dictionaries.³⁹ Alternatively, other authors have chosen to focus on only one aspect of *temu*, without attempting to address its polyvalent nature.⁴⁰

This chapter presents a challenge to the reader in attempting to think *temu* as a single, unitary phenomenon whose axis of variation is time. I propose that *temu* can be conceived of as an intentional process, a phenomenon unfolding through time, originating from within an interiority and being actualised in the world; something that can be perceived via sensory apparatus, reported upon, and thus reacted upon by the Assyrian elite—in effect, a loop.

To clarify, we can step through *temu* from a different perspective. The Assyrian correspondence network was, in one aspect, an extensive information gathering network, receiving reports, rumours and information from across the imperial domain (i.e., *temu*) and transmitting it to the officials, governors, magnates and kings. In concert with this worked the scholars specialising in celestial and terrestrial divination, who would read the cosmos for signs indicating the intent of the gods (again, *temu*).⁴¹ Decision-makers, who would ideally possess the *nous* for making correct decisions (a quality known as *temu*) would thence formulate instructions and orders in response (called *temu*), which, when enacted, would cause changes in the world.

This schema did not solely apply to the Assyrian imperial machine: all thinking beings were possessed of *temu*, and especially the gods. As nothing that happened in the world happened against the *temu* of the gods, it stood to reason that all actions in the world were *temu*. This is in complete

³⁹ The CAD divides *temu* into seven different lemmata (CAD T s.v. *temu*, p. 85) whereas CDA prefers just four (CDA s.v. *temu*, p. 414).

⁴⁰ Most recently, Ulrike Steinert explores *temu* synchronically through an investigation of divinatory and medical texts from the second and first millennia, choosing to exclusively investigate its associations with intelligence and understanding. She writes:

Temu bezeichnet besonders die menschlichen intellektuellen Fähigkeiten, über sein handeln zu reflektieren, es bewußt und zielgerichtet zu steuern, an Veränderungen anzupassen. *Temu* ähnelt somit unserer Vorstellung von Bewußtsein/Geist (oder dem Englischen *mind*).

2012: 395

In his review, Foster takes Steinert's conclusions forward and highlights the 'motivational' aspect of *temu*. His favoured translation, 'reason,' attempts to map that word's polyvalency—'reason' as mental faculty, 'reason' as cause, justification—to *temu*'s multiple meanings (Foster 2014: 316). Though a particularly excellent use of punning and meaning, it does not really capture all of *temu*'s senses; his further offering, 'intelligence,' with its overloaded meaning of 'intelligence report,' is also subject to a similar inadequacy of scope.

⁴¹ It was these gods, above all Aššur, who ruled the world, and the Assyrian king was but their 'deputy.' This delegation of authority, and the need to divine the intentions of the ruling deities, is similar to the principles of the Late Shang polity described by Campbell (2009: 826).

contrast to certain Western understandings of intentional action,⁴² unintended actions, unintended consequences, accidents, natural events and the like,⁴³ and is symbolic of an ontology that fully incorporates subjective, inhuman entities.

Thus, conceptualising *temu* in this way allows us to think the subjective, intersubjective and introspective dimensions of action, an Assyrian notion of intentional action, and directly link the ‘thought-world’ and the ‘real-world,’ the imagined, and the future. Rather than being an esoteric and obscure term, *temu* was a central concern of the Assyrian correspondence, and thus investigating its facets exposes the central motivations of this ancient imperium.⁴⁴

⁴² I use ‘Western’ as a shorthand term to cover the Euro-American intellectual tradition and English language ideologies in which this thesis is situated.

⁴³ Hill and Irvine briefly draw attention to the historical development of liability in English law (1992: 2-3). Duranti draws attention to the fact that there are a variety of attitudes and theories towards intention and interpretation that fall under a ‘Western’ tradition (2015: 40), which includes the intentional meaning behind utterances as described by speech act theory, pragmatists and their emphasis on ‘consequences and effects of human actions,’ and neuroscientific models of action (2015: 41). He notes that, in Samoan, ‘one cannot say “I didn’t mean it”’ (Duranti 2015: 121). All these models are situated within what Descola calls a ‘naturalist’ ontology: one which creates a discursive concept of ‘nature,’ which is subject to non-intentional laws. In this ontology, only humanity is granted the capacity for intentionality, which strongly differs from the Assyrian ontology.

⁴⁴ Although in this chapter I propose we think of fact, orders, intentions and the *temu* mental attribute all as aspects of a single ontologically specific Assyrian concept, I will continue to use the English terms to differentiate between these aspects to enable us to follow along without getting too confused.

1.1 Everyone's Actions Must Be Reported

mar tammaruni [tašammuni] issu paniya la tupazzar
Do not conceal from me anything you see or hear⁴⁵

In 672, three years before his death, Esarhaddon announced his succession arrangements for the continued stability of the Assyrian realm: the appointment of his eldest son, Šamaš-šumu-ukin, to the throne of Babylon, and a younger son, Assurbanipal, to the throne of Assyria. This dual succession was unprecedented, as the king's personal healer Adad-šumu-ušur so breathlessly proclaims.⁴⁶ Throughout the empire spoken loyalty oaths were thus sworn to uphold these arrangements, the treaty tablets then set up in temples throughout the land (Lauinger 2012: 87). Enshrined in the oath was the obligation, *mar tammaruni tašammuni issu paniya la tupazzar* 'Do not conceal from me anything you see or hear.' Variations on this injunction appear not only in this *ade* treaty,⁴⁷ but throughout Assyrian letters from the eighth and seventh centuries,⁴⁸ highlighting the importance of information gathering for the Assyrian ruling elite. All were enjoined to look out and listen up: Sargon writes to his governor about the Phrygian ruler Midas *kayyamani minu ša tenšuni šimi* 'constantly hear whatever is his *temu*';⁴⁹ the client ruler of Šubria writes *ina muḥḥi teme ša Urartaya ša šarru beli išpuranni ma [m]inu ša tašmuni arḥiš [šupra]* 'Regarding the *temu* of the Urartian of which the king sent "Whatever you hear, [send] swiftly!"⁵⁰ This request was so pervasive

⁴⁵ SAA 16 no.66, obv.5'-6', unassigned to Esarhaddon

⁴⁶ See p.221.

⁴⁷ Though I gloss *ade* as 'treaty' here, the term refers to a more complex assemblage of 'duty, destiny.' See Lauinger's critique of *ade* (2013: 100-104) and p.161.

⁴⁸ E.g., SAA 19 no. 119, rev. 17'-18' *abutuma ša ašmuni ša amar[uni] aq[ṭibi]* 'I am tel[ling] a word that I have heard, that I have se[en]';

SAA 16 no. 78, obv. 11-12 *abutu ša amuruni ašmuni ana šarri beliya laqbi* 'I shall speak to the king my lord the word that I have seen and heard';

SAA 18 no. 83 obv. 1-5 *[ana] ade šar šarri abika nitirub [u a]na ade ša šarri belini nitirub u šarru iltaprannašu umma minma mala tammara u tašemma' šuprani* 'We entered [into] the *ade* of the king your father [and] we entered into the *ade* of the king, our lord, and the king sent to us, "Send to me whatever you see and hear."

⁴⁹ SAA 1 no. 1, obv. 15; see p. 112ff.

⁵⁰ Cf. SAA 5 no. 85, obv. 3-5 *ša šarru beli išpuranni ma dayalika ana qanni Ṭurušpa šupur ma temu ḥaršu liš'ullu* 'As to that the king my lord sent to me "Send your scouts to the environs of Ṭurušpa" 3.QUOT "may they investigate detailed *temu*"; no. 144, obv. 6-8, rev. 10', where a similar order of Sargon is quoted, and then replicated by the unknown correspondent when he gives the same instruction to a subordinate client king.

that correspondents would pre-empt it with *issuri šarru iqabbi* ‘perhaps the king will speak,’ followed by a question about events.⁵¹

Ṭemu, as an account of facts, was essential for the operation of the Assyrian machine. Sargon’s chosen successor, *mar-šarri* ‘son of the king’ Sennacherib, forwarded edited compilations of letters to him.⁵² These letters were introduced with the formula PN *issapra ma* ‘PN has written to me,’ with the quotative particle *ma* (NB *umma*) introducing third person speech. They were terminated with the phrase *anni’u ṭemu ša* PN, ‘this is the *ṭemu* of PN.’⁵³ There are two levels of *ṭemu* here: the letter as reported speech, and the reported speech as evidence of the doings of the speaker. Further, the veracity and verifiability of *ṭemu* was paramount. A hierarchy of the senses and experience thus underlay evidence: personal experience was emphasised above the written word, and the written word was authenticated by many control mechanisms (Radner 2014: 92-93). Personal experience itself was further subdivided, with a specific differentiation between \sqrt{mr} ‘seeing’ and \sqrt{sm} ‘hearing.’

ina kette qibi’a
Speak in truth to me

What is truth? Intuitively, we could simply regard it as the correspondence between a linguistic statement and the ‘real world.’ In truth, truth is a complex, socially mediated affair, cross-culturally variable and a key site for the manifestation of power. Duranti problematises truth, beginning with the European tradition differentiating analytic and contingent truths (2015: 106). He draws attention to the meaning-making aspect of truth: that it can emerge through social action, or negotiated in dialogue (2015: 132). This punctures a model of truth as ‘word-to-world’ fit, restituting it into the realm of unfolding relationships.

Ṭemu, in its protean relation to the world, fares well from the problematisation of truth. As we will see, *ṭemu* was not only a reflection of a ‘true’ world, but was itself a constituent of what the ‘true world’ was. Nevertheless, it did not coincide with the semantic zone usually translated as truth, $\sqrt{k’n}$.

⁵¹ This use of the modal particle *issuri* is an example of imaginative ‘time-travel’ and modelling of the future (Maurice Bloch 2016 p. S85), for which see p.188.

⁵² E.g., SAA 1 nos. 29, 31.

⁵³ *anni’u ṭemu ša Ariye* SAA 1 no. 29, obv. 22; *anni’u ṭemu ša Aššur-rešuwa* rev. 11.

Nabu-šallim-aḥḥe’s intensity, we cannot know—only that ‘death in untruth’ was a sufficiently powerful statement to resolve the investigation.⁵⁶

The importance of $\sqrt{k}’n$ to the Assyrian state was so highly prioritised that a metadiscourse about the truthfulness and accuracy of reports and events overlaid most communication, either implicitly, with the use of $\sqrt{k}’n$ as an emphatic particle or discourse marker,⁵⁷ or more explicitly with accusation and protest. The governor of Sargon’s new royal foundation city responds to an accusation from the king:

ina muḥḥi betani ša mušarkisani ša šarri beli išpuranni
ma betani rašpate šina
ma tasalla’anni
ma basi tadani ana urdanika

issu mašin anaku la ketu ina pan šarri beliya addabbubuni

In regards the houses of the procurement officers that the king my lord sent to me

3.QUOT The houses, they are built
3.QUOT you are deceiving me,
3.QUOT soon you will give them to your servants.

As if I, I would talk untruth before the king my lord

SAA 1 no. 124, obv. 3-9, Kišir-Aššur to Sargon

Unsurprisingly, Kišir-Aššur’s response to Sargon is emphatic: a counterfactual state of affairs introduced by *issu mašin*, with further affective charge supplied by the *anaku* first-person pronoun. A similar challenge-response couplet occurs in an exchange between a minor official and the king Esarhaddon:

ake anaku issi šarri beliya la kettu addabbub
Why would I, I talk untruth with the king, my lord?

SAA 16 no. 78, obv. 6-7, Mannu-ki-Libbali to Esarhaddon

Here, Mannu-ki-Libbali phrases the counterfactual as a question, rather than a hanging subjunctive, but the underlying proposition is the same. However, this response did not always need to be

⁵⁶ For violent reprisal for deception, see p.238.

⁵⁷ E.g., SAA 15 no. 4, obv. 13 *ketu anaku la ubarri la aqabbaššunu bet šarri beli išapparšanuni* ‘Truth, I have not disclosed nor told them where the king, my lord, is sending them’; SAA 10 no. 240 rev. 9 *kettu šumma ina pan šarri beliya maḥir* ‘Truth, if it is agreeable before the king’; see also SAA 10 no. 242, rev. 8; 254 rev. 10; 257 obv. 8; 284 rev. 8.

phrased counterfactually: a letter to Esarhaddon from the *ašipu* Nabu-našir simply has *ketu issi šarri beliya addabbub* ‘I talk the truth with the king my lord.’⁵⁸

All three correspondents thus report important information to the king: Kišir-Aššur, building affairs; Mannu-ki-Libbali, a palace dispute; Nabu-našir, the health of a royal child. All are challenged regarding the $\sqrt{k'n}$ of their words: $\sqrt{k'n}$ {*šupra|qibi'a*} ‘{send|speak} the truth to me,’ or directly accused of deceit, as with Kišir-Aššur. The three correspondents diverge after this in their approaches to reporting truth. Nabu-našir continues in an unmarked manner, suggesting that the king’s injunction was not something to be worried about in his case. Nabu-našir was able to assert *ketu... addabbub* by virtue of his medical expertise: his access and training in *ašiputu* granted him the authority to pronounce the truth in health matters, borne out of immersion in the discipline’s esoteric texts. This kind of construction of authority is explicitly found through citations of *ašiputu* and other scholarly texts in correspondence to the king, for example in another of Nabu-našir’s letters,⁵⁹ foregrounding the entextualised, communicative and replicative nature of scholarly authority.⁶⁰

By contrast, Kišir-Aššur requests a trustworthy emissary, a *ša-reši* of the king, to observe the situation on the ground firsthand and inform the king in person:

ša reši ša šarri beliya lillika ša ketu issu šarri beliya idabbubuni betati annate ša mušarkisani lemuru

May a *ša-reši* of the king my lord, who will speak the truth with the king my lord, come and see these houses of the recruitment officers

SAA 1 no. 124, obv. 10-13

This request is demonstrative both of the social determination of truth and of the hierarchy of sensorial information. Unlike Nabu-našir the *ašipu*, Kišir-Aššur was unable to rely on entextualised authority, being accused of misusing his official authority. Consequently, he cannot rely on his assertions being taken as valid truth on their own. Rather, truth is determined in a dialogical, communicative process between Sargon, his trusted *ša-reši*, Kišir-Aššur and his accuser, with

⁵⁸ SAA 10 no. 302, obv. 9-11.

⁵⁹ SAA 10, no. 298, obv. 8-rev. 1.

⁶⁰ Kuipers, following Urban’s definition of entextualisation as ‘a process rendering a given instance of discourse a text, detachable from its local context’ (1996: 21), conceives of authority as incorporating a fundamental entextualisation component (2013: 404). He critiques Bakhtin’s position that authoritative discourse has ‘its authority already fused to it,’ instead drawing attention to processes of authorisation (2013: 404). Being able to cite *ašiputu*-texts, as Nabu-našir does, is thus not only a process which demonstrates Nabu-našir’s qualifications and *ašiputu*-authority, but reproduces the authority of that ancient text by having it be recognised as authoritative in the contemporary Neo-Assyrian *milieu*.

Sargon's ability to rule upon $\sqrt{k'n}$ a constituent of his sociopolitical power. The gradations of trusted testimony are thus inscribed in the social hierarchy: the closer an official was to the king, the more reliable their words were construed. We might compare this to the 'communal explanation' for the construction of trust underlying epistemology (Lipton 1998: 12). Describing the community of gentleman scholars in seventeenth century AD Britain, Lipton adapts Shapin's explanation that this was based on shared values and an 'honor code,' suggesting that this arose out of communal proximity (1998: 11-12). Though the Assyrian administrators were all members of the same ruling elite, we can detect smaller communities or networks of trust—such as the king, his *ša-rešis* and *ša-qurbuti* 'Close Ones'—that determined truths. This multiplicity of truth-networks, *temu*-networks, manifested itself in disagreements, conflicts and paradoxes, resolved by royal fiat, as seen here.

In addition to this social dimension, Kišir-Aššur requested that the *ša-reši* come and *see, lemuru*, and then speak to the king directly, alluding to a hierarchy of sensorial experience intertwined with a valorised system of evidentiality. The words of a close royal confidante, having witnessed the situation with his own eyes, were more trustworthy than that of a governor's tablet. Multiple hierarchical systems are embedded in this assumption of trustworthiness: that of the imperial power hierarchy itself, where the *ša-reši* or *ša-qurbuti* dispatched by the king is able to provide 'expert' testimony as a result of his station.⁶¹

Underlining the importance of witnessing and informing is Mannu-ki-Libbali, who after further counterfactual spinning finally asserts *abutu ša amuruni ašmuni ana šarri beliya laqbi* 'I shall speak to the king the word that which I have seen and heard.'⁶² Thus, senses were marshalled towards the constant reporting of truth. However, truth was both socially mediated (the higher status one was, the more trustworthy your sensorial experience), and inflected by circumstance:

⁶¹ Somewhat analogous to the hierarchies of authoritative speech present in a 1980s American court system: expert witnesses trained in specialist knowledge are trusted to interpret specific kinds of evidence (Philips 1992: 251- 254); in this Assyrian context, the *ša-reši* or *ša-qurbuti* possess a similar social asset which allows them to interpret the evidence of their own eyes, over and above their act of witnessing, and thus offer the king more valuable evidence than that presented by Kišir-Aššur on his tablet.

⁶² Compare *amiri emmara šemu išemme* 'Will he who can see it see it? Will he who can hear it, hear it?' found repeatedly in oracle queries (e.g., SAA 4 no. 129, obv. 9).

[*abutu*] *kuntu šiti* [*te*]*mu anniu šinišu* [*šalaši*]*šu aki annie* [*asse*]*me*
[The word] is true. [I have heard] this [*te*]*mu* twice, [*thri*]*ce* like this.

SAA 5 no. 162, rev. 4-7, Upaq-Šamaš to Sargon

Temu on the war-torn northern frontier seems to have been held to different evidential standards, at least by Upaq-Šamaš's description of his sources. Rather than providing names, or attesting to having seen that which he reports, the $\sqrt{k'n}$ of his report comes from repetition. This is an unusual and marked circumstance, yet considering that Upaq-Šamaš is monitoring enemy movements, it might have been that hearsay was satisfactory here.⁶³ By contrast, the easily accessible core of the empire was a realm open to the eyes of the highest officials, their first-person eyewitnessing being the height of truth-making:

šarru beli kettu lemur
May the king my lord see the truth!

SAA 15 no. 15, rev. 8', Issar-duri to Sargon

Once again, someone upon whom have been cast aspersions exhorts that Sargon himself see the truth: the highest status man in the world, using the most privileged sense, eliminating all mediation.

⁶³ Lanfranchi and Parpola's translation of Upaq-Samaš's subsequent words, *annurig maššartu*[*šu*] *anaššar* (rev 7-8) as 'I am keeping an eye on [him] now' is unduly creative; 'Now I am guarding his guard' is more literally correct, whilst also bringing up the question of how this expression *maššartu* $\sqrt{nšr}$ relates to the linguistically equivalent *maššartu ša šarri* $\sqrt{nšr}$. The discussion on p.279 considers this guard as a guard against divine disfavour expressed in untoward *temu*: uprisings and rebellion, demons and curses. In this context, we can consider *maššartu* $\sqrt{nšr}$ of this enemy king in a similar light: protecting against untoward *temu*. The untoward *temu* for this hostile king, however, would not be one that, from his defective perspective, materially benefited him. Rather, the correct and appropriate *temu* for him would, hazarding conjecture, be one of his defeat by the forces of Assyria, to be followed by a suitable punishment. This would be good for him, as he would be fully integrated into the divinely sanctioned *temu* of Aššur. By this logic, *maššartu* $\sqrt{nšr}$, as a procedure of guarding for the correct outcome, works as a consistent translation here.

Two Letters—The Sealanders and the Elamites

To have mastery over *temu* as the knowledge of people's actions and doings could be a powerful advantage in the contentious geopolitical circumference of Assyria's orbit. The Assyrian state demanded a monopoly on *temu*—to report *all* that you see and hear—but nevertheless it could be accessed and employed by others for their own ends. Claiming privileged access to *temu* and its distribution was one of the main rhetorical strategies through which one of Assyria's erstwhile enemies attempted to replace Assyria as a suzerain in southern Babylonia.

The marshy region at the head of the Gulf known as the Sealand was a focal point for conflict between the Assyrians to the north and the Elamites to the east, centred around the powerful Bit-Yakin tribe. At the end of the eighth century, the chief of the Bit-Yakin, Marduk-apla-iddina, declared himself king of Babylon, with Elamite support; by Esarhaddon's reign, Assyria was again ascendant in the area. Nevertheless, the region remained volatile.

A sequence of three extant letters from the Elders of the Sealand recount their interactions with Elamite messengers. The first is a retelling by the Sealand Elders of their first interactions with the Elamites, who are attempting to install Nabu-ušallim, son of Marduk-apla-iddina, as ruler of the region.

*ištenšu šanišu mar-šipri ša Tumman aḥušu ša šar Elamti naggari u Zineni ana panini ittalkuni
umma alkanimma Nabu-ušallim mar belikunu ḥišnama
ina panikunu lillik*

Once, twice a messenger of Teumman, the king of Elam's brother, of the herald and of Zineni have come before us
QUOT Come, embrace Nabu-ušallim, the son of your lord,
may he go before you

*anini ul nimangur
umma Na'id-Marduk belani baliṭ
u arde ša šar mat Aššur anini ki rubbušu ina mati šibatunu ana pan šar mat Aššur šupurraššuma
ḥadu šarru lurabbiš ina bit šutunu taltapraniššu
anini ul niḥeṭtema ina muḥḥini ul irabbu ina šibit-qati ana pan šar Aššur nišapparšu*

We, we did not consent
QUOT Na'id-Marduk our lord is alive
and we are the servants of the king of Assyria. If his magnification in the land is your wish, send him to the presence of the king of Assyria,
let the rejoicing king magnify him. Wherever he is, you will have sent him here.
We will not do wrong, he will not be magnified over us. We will send him in manacles to the king of Assyria.

adu ki ibukuniššu Targibata Naḫal Dutayya Bananu aḫi ša matini ki iššu ittannuniššu
u adu mar-šiprišu ana pani šibutu ša mat tamti ittalkunu
umma ana paniya elanimma
emuqi ana mat-tamti rida
u ki ana paniya la tatelanu qiba la taqabba allakamma
matkunu u bitatikunu aḫeppu
u mindema taqabba
umma lapan šar Aššur palḫanu
anaku putu šar mat Aššur našaka

Now they have brought him in, taken the Targibateans, Naḫaleans, Duteans, the Bananu, the border regions of our land, and given them to him. And now his messenger has come before the elders of the Sealand

QUOT Ascend to me and
 lead the forces to the Sealand.
 And if you do not ascend to me and do not speak my speech, I will come
 and I will destroy your land and houses.
 And maybe you will say
 QUOT We are $\sqrt{plḫ}$ before the king of Assyria
 It is I, I will carry responsibility (lit. forehead) of the king of Assyria.

ki nišmu šarru [beliani] nulte[šmu]
 As we heard, we are making the king [our lord hear].

SAA 18 no. 86, obv. 7-rev. 23, Elders of the Sealand to Esarhaddon

In presenting this temporally straightforward narrative, the Elders of the Sealand emphasise that they are satisfying the duty *minu ša tašmuni šupra* ‘write me whatever you hear’: *ki nišmu šarri nulte[šmu]* ‘as we heard, we are making the king [hear].’ Implicit throughout the letter is the direct experience of the Sealander: they report direct speech conversations between themselves and the enemy messengers, those messengers being deemphasised vessels for the speech of the Elamite King and Nabu-ušallim.⁶⁴ Throughout this narrative, they inform Esarhaddon of their loyalties, and present their impeccable conduct against the Elamite threat.

In particular, the Sealander demonstrates their loyalty through their own self-reported speech, where they use indirection and imperatives to demarcate a hierarchy debasing the Elamites and situating the king of Assyria at its apex. The Elamite messenger, and thus his superior, are addressed in the second-person in the phrase *ana pan šar mat Aššur šupurraššuma... ina bit šutunu taltapraniššu* ‘send him to the presence of the king of Assyria... in the house (where) he is, you will have sent him.’ The parallelism between *šupurraššuma* and *taltapraniššu* emphasises the

⁶⁴ For more on replicative accuracy, see p.170.

disclaiming of responsibility on behalf of the Sealanders for the actions of the Elamites; the imperative and second-person forms indicate that they view the Elamites as inferior in status. Finally, the character of the Assyrian king himself is introduced and presented with maximum agency: *hadu šarru lurabbiš* ‘may the king magnify him.’ The precative form of the verb (*lu-* or *li-* prefix) roughly indicates a desire for the events described by the clause to occur.⁶⁵ Further, by supplying *√hd'*, an adjective associated with emphatic happiness, the free agency of the king is boosted to profound levels. The juxtaposition of this with the Sealanders’ obvious expectation and desire that Nabu-ušallim fail suggests that this statement, whilst reinforcing a pro-Assyrian power structure, mocks the Elamites with the ironic presentation of an impossible future.

Contrasting with the loyal self-presentation of the Sealanders is the direct speech of the messengers. We cannot be certain to what extent the mediation of the reported speech of the messengers has altered the ‘real words’ dictated by Nabu-ušallim. Even without alteration, selective quotation and framing devices provide a powerful means for the dialogic representation and reinterpretation of the words of others. As it happens, the Sealanders present Nabu-ušallim as particularly villainous: *ki ana paniya la tatelanu qiba la taqabba allakamma matkunu u bitatikuni aḥeppu* ‘If you do not ascend to me and do not speak my speech, I shall come and destroy your land and house.’ Again, a particular concern with speech and replication is found in Nabu-ušallim’s threat: *ki... qibaya la taqabba* ‘if you do not speak my speech...’ That this is one of two actions the messenger demands of the Sealanders is significant: replicated speech is prioritised above other demonstrations of loyalty, indicating the primacy of language ideology in the construction of relationships.⁶⁶

The Elders send a second letter to Esarhaddon, narrating more of their misadventures with the Elamites. The letter opens with a recapitulation of the events described above: the Elders have received no reply to the first letter, under the belief Esarhaddon did not hear it, so they send another one. In new developments, the Elamite king’s messenger reveals he knows of an alarming *ṭemu*:

u uttirma mar-šipri ša šar Elamti ana panini ittalku
umma mare [x x x x] amelu qablišunu [x] Nabu-ušallim belikunu lipušuma
[ana] muḥḥikunu ina mati lirbi
u mindema taqabba
umma Na'id-Marduk
anaku ṭemu ša Na'id-Marduk alla [x x] haršak Na'id-Marduk mitu

⁶⁵ See p.188 for discussion.

⁶⁶ For more on which, see p.77 on *libbu* *√gmr* as ‘loyalty,’ p.184 for language ideology.

*ina ĥudikunu u ina la ĥudikunu Nabu-ušallim abbakamma
ana muĥĥikunu urabbi šabeya attunu alla aga šar mat Aššur ana muĥĥikunu ul išallať*

And a messenger of the King of Elam returned and came before us

QUOT Sons...man... their battle... let Nabu-ušallim be made your lord, let him become great over you in the land. And maybe you will speak

QUOT Na'id-Marduk

It is I, I am clear re: the *ťemu* of Na'id-Marduk moreso than (you?): Na'id-Marduk is dead.

I am going to bring in Nabu-ušallim, in your joyousness, or in your unjoyousness, and I shall magnify him over you. You are my men. From henceforth, the king of Assyria does not exert authority over you.

SAA 18 no. 87, obv. 14'-rev. 2, [Elders of the Sealand] to Esarhaddon

As in the first letter, a messenger anticipates the Elders' objections with an irrealis, here *mindema* 'perhaps.' Previously, the Elders were \sqrt{plh} before the king of Assyria;⁶⁷ Nabu-ušallim would 'carry responsibility' for him. Here, the Elamites have changed tack: the Elders of the Sealand might proclaim their allegiance to Na'id-Marduk, but the Elamites are in possession of *ťemu* unknown to the Sealander: *Na'id-Marduk mitu*, 'Na'id-Marduk is dead.'

From our evidence we cannot be certain whether Na'id-Marduk really *was* dead, as the Elamite messenger claims. However, the messenger's attempt to use his privileged access to *ťemu* against the Sealander remains pertinent. This scenario demonstrates that *ťemu* reports, regardless of the veracity of their content, could be used to manipulate and influence affects and political events: it is notable that the Elamites have not militarily attacked the Sealander, but are still using communicative channels at this stage. By deploying this *ťemu* of Na'id-Marduk at this juncture, the Elamites intended to break the Sealander's resistance. That this was the case is emphasised by what the messenger says next: he will install Nabu-ušallim *ina ĥudikunu u ina la ĥudikunu* 'in your joyousness or in your unjoyousness.' There is no precative used here: a bald durative aspect⁶⁸ asserts the inexorability of this enthronement, with due disregard for the Sealander's response expressed with the binary opposition of *ĥudu* (\sqrt{hd}). Potentially, this use of *ĥudu* might even be in response to the Sealander's ironic use of it described in the previous letter: an aggressive requotation of the Sealander's words.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ \sqrt{plh} is usually translated 'fear, revere,' which works as a gloss. In chapter three (p.131) I reread \sqrt{plh} as a specific, socially mediated and practiced emotion, a superset of 'fear, revere' without the negative connotations of 'fear' that inhere in the English language.

⁶⁸ The Akkadian verb does not distinguish between the present and future tenses, a characteristic which Richardson suggests leads to a temporal 'ambivalence' over past, present and future (2010: 248).

⁶⁹ For more on this, see p.192ff.

The conclusion of the letter once again illuminates the importance of replicating words, reporting and hearing, as the Elders vie for royal support:

[a]du mar-šipri ana pan šarri beli[ni n]iltapra mimma ša šar Elamti ana panini isapuraššu ana šarri belini liqbi
[N]ow [w]e have sent a messenger to the presence of the king [our] lord; whatever the king of Elam sent to us, may he speak it to the king our lord.

u mindema Elamtu ana muḥḥini illakuni Kaldanu šarru ṭemu liškuna ana ayalinu...
And perhaps Elam will proceed against us. May the king establish a *ṭemu* on the Chaldeans for our aid...

mamma šanamma [x x] ana muḥḥinu la išemmi [ard]e ša šarri nini mar-šipri šar Elamti išpurannaši adu ana šarri belini niltapraššu ša pišu šarru lišmi
Whatever another... against us, he must not hear. We are the [servant]s of the king. The king of Elam sent a messenger to us; now we have sent him to the king, our lord. May the king hear that of his mouth.

rev. 11-rev. 22

The Sealenders employ a couple of linguistic strategies to underscore to Esarhaddon the importance of listening to the Elamite's words. Firstly, they explicitly demarcate their accurate transmission of the messenger's speech, *mimma ša šar Elamti ana panini isapuraššu* 'whatever the king of Elam sent to us,' *ana šarri belini liqbi* 'let (the messenger) speak it to the king our lord.' Secondly, they narrate out their expectations of how the verbal audience should proceed as an engaged, reciprocal process. The king should attend to the words of the messenger: *ša pišu* 'that of his mouth.' Correspondingly, Esarhaddon must engage in active hearing: he must not hear anyone else (*la išemmi*), but he should hear the messenger (*lišmi*). The importance of hearing is inverted: instead of telling the king whatever one sees and hears, now it is the king who should hear whatever the Sealenders show and tell.⁷⁰

All of this is to induce the king to royal action: the only request the Elders make is that the king *ṭemu liškuna*: may he establish a *ṭemu*. This *ṭemu*, that the Chaldeans come to the aid of the Sealenders, is not something that is reportable: it has not happened yet. However, it is still described as *ṭemu*: in this case, a *ṭemu* to be established: an intention.

⁷⁰ This might be compared with the couplet in the text known as the 'Coronation Hymn of Assurbanipal': *šeḥru liqbima [rabu] lišme rabu liqbima [šeḥru] lišme* 'May the small speak and the [great] listen; may the great speak and the [small] listen' (SAA 3, no. 11 obv. 12-13).

1.2 Intention

šarru beli temu liškun
May the king establish *temu*

In the first part of this chapter, we explored how the term *temu* described ‘facts,’ things done in the word; how *temu*-reports in this aspect were a field in which \sqrt{k} 'n-truth was constructed through sensorial experience and contingent on social position; how knowledge of *temu* could be deployed to manipulate others such as the Sealand Elders. Reports on *temu* facts were thus not only a locus of power, but the *temu* described by language was itself a record of a universe of exclusively intentional actions.

The use of the word *temu* to refer to what we translate as both reports and intents in the letters is widespread and unproblematic: we have already seen it used in both senses in the letter SAA 18, no. 87 above. We see the same duality in Sennacherib's compilation of reports about Urartu, where the quotation of a *temu* of the king of Urartu is embedded in the quotation of a letter of an Assyrian client. The client's letter is *itself* described as *temu*, resulting in a Matryoshka-like nesting:

Sennacherib	Ariye	King of Urartu
	<i>šar Urarṭ[aya ana] bel paḥatešu temu i[ssakkan ma]</i>	<i>emuqikunu ina qatekunu šabta...</i>
	The king of Urartu i[mposed] a <i>temu</i> [on] his governors	
	3.QUOTE Take your forces in your hands...	
 <i>anni'u temu ša Ariye</i> This is the <i>temu</i> of Ariye		

SAA 1 no. 29, obv. 14-16+22

This description of the Urartian king suggests that the Assyrians easily applied their schema of action and intentionality to actors outside their collective group: that their model of interiority was

open to recognising the same kinds of actions amongst other collectives.⁷¹ Establishing a *temu* was an act that was conceivably open to anyone, and thus practiced throughout the Assyrian hierarchy.⁷²

How is it that the word *temu* can refer to both an account of facts, as well as the words that bring those acts about? Duranti's historical exegesis of truth, in its relation to intentionality, highlights that an Aristotelian conception of truth represents a 'correspondence between mind and world' (2015: 105); intentionality, in its widest sense as mind directed towards world,⁷³ encompasses the widest array of relations between mind and world (2015: 108). Duranti proceeds to critique these concepts, drawing attention to notions of the individual actor acting intentionally as the site of ethical and social movement (Duranti 2015: 109-111). *Temu* also seems to question these notions. Though it captures a 'truth' relation as well as an 'intention' relation, it does not differentiate between the two; it collapses the linear temporality of act→fact into a single instance. The temporality of *temu* is differentiated then only by the words used to describe it:

šarru beli temu issaknanni
ma sisse kayyamanute muḥuru ana Dadi dini
ma sissu ša šarri muḥuru

The king my lord established *temu* for me
 3.QUOT Receive regular horses and give them to Dadi
 3.QUOT Receive the horse of the king

SAA 19 no. 91, obv. 9-11, Aššur-da"inni, governor of Mazamua to Tiglath-pileser

Here Aššur-da"inni quotes, as direct speech encoded in a previously received letter, the king's *temu*. The royal utterance establishes *temu* by means of imperatives—a verbal mood that replicates

⁷¹ Historically, groups considered to be alien to the Mesopotamian way of life, such as the Gutians, were described as having the *temu* of animals, as opposed to lacking *temu* at all (Steinert 2012: 388). This is in stark contrast to individuals denigrated in royal inscriptions (on which see below) and thus creates an interesting tension in the classifications that could give rise to relations within an Assyrian ontology (to adapt terms from Descola 2013: 113). The Gutians, with their animal *temu*, were integrated into an Assyrian order in a way that those *la teme* 'without *temu*' were not: thus in the royal inscriptions, the legitimacy of Assyrian might is underlined by the fact that their enemies cannot inherently be related to in any fashion, unlike the Gutians, who, as *temu* bearing animalistic entities within the Assyrian ontology, could be dealt with and related to as phenomena of 'nature.'

⁷² Various non-royal examples include SAA 10 no. 212 rev. 9-15, the *ašipu* Adad-šumu-ušur and lamentation priest Urad-Ea; SAA 15, no. 60, rev. 13'-15', Aššur-bel-ušur, governor of a province to Sargon; SAA 16 no. 90, obv. 4'-5', unassigned to Esarhaddon; SAA 19 no. 33, obv. 16, Inurta-bel-ušur to Sargon.

⁷³ Duranti builds on Husserl's phenomenology, which interpreted intention as the inherent quality of 'aboutness' present within human thought (2015: 26). 'Intention' as the will to do something is thus a subcategory of this definition.

itself across codes, from language sign to physical sign.⁷⁴ The imperative appears as a language to world relation, carrying illocutionary force to change the world to fit the word (Duranti 2015: 15). The *temu* does not share this temporality: it is what it is.

Here, though the king has established *temu*, uttering royal imperatives, the imperatives have not been effective. Aššur-daʿinanni reports that he is not in fact receiving the regular horses, nor the king's horse, due to personal rivalry with the ruler of a city in Iran. It is because of this failure to establish the king's *temu* that the letter has been written.

Indeed, just as reports of actualised-*temu* were ideologically and practically central to the operation of the Assyrian machine, the circulation of potential-*temu* was the blood-flow that kept it alive and moving. The number of letters in which *temu* is requested is vast: again, these requests for *temu* could be described linguistically or remain open. Requests for open *temu* appeared as little more than requests for instructions,⁷⁵ indicative of a lack of agency on the part of the correspondent. Requests for described *temu*, whilst also indicative of the correspondent's inability to act autonomously, also presented a strategy through which they could potentially shape imperial action:

šarru beli aṭemu liškun kallī'u ina Dur-Atanate lušazzizu aḫe'iši nutin

The king my lord should establish a *temu*, a mule-express should be stationed at Dur-Atanate that we strengthen each other.

SAA 5 no. 227, rev. 10-15, Šamaš-bel-ušur, governor of Arzuḫina to Sargon

issi libbini la nida[bbub] kettu ṭemu liškunu kayyamani lušeribunaši

We do not talk with our interior. Truth—may a *temu* be established, let them have us enter regularly.

SAA 10 no. 290, rev. 1'-3' Urad-Gula, *ašipu* to Esarhaddon

šarru beli ṭemu liškun kima ḫiddu etiqiši liddinuni ša da'ani ša la manni ḫiddu iddanuni

May the king my lord establish a *temu* that he daub her with *ḫiddu*, they will give it to me, they will give the *ḫiddu* to me by force, without anybody

SAA 16 no. 65, rev. 7'-10', unassigned to Esarhaddon

These three correspondents all use the construction *šarru beli ṭemu liškun* 'may the king my lord establish a *temu*' to make a request, in three very different contexts. The governor Šamaš-bel-ušur suggests that a communication upgrade be installed in his province, a matter of optimising Assyrian

⁷⁴ Discussed in detail p.190.

⁷⁵ For example: *minu ša ṭemuni šarru beli lišpura* 'May the king send me what the *temu* is' (SAA 19, no. 49, rev. 8', Aššur-ila'i to Tiglath-pileser); also SAA 15 no. 30, rev. 17-18.

rule; the *ašipu*-exorcist Urad-Gula needs access to conduct a rite, underlined with an emphatic *kettu* ‘truth’; an unknown informant takes it as a given that *ṭemu* will be established according to his wishes, proclaiming he will gain the *ḥiddu* by force, with no one stopping him.⁷⁶ Whilst the three of them lack sufficient authority to make these scenarios a reality, by requesting the king establish *ṭemu* they are able to suggestively shape the future within the constraints of the Assyrian hierarchy.

uma ṭemu tere šummu ibašši šummu laššu
Return *ṭemu*—whether it exists or not!

It was essential that *ṭemu*-intentions were communicated smoothly, without disruption or delay. In the vast majority of letters, the requests for *ṭemu*-instructions are relatively unmarked: they appear at the end of a narrative, without additional comment, implying that routine communication was in operation and that the request for *ṭemu* was typical and expected. Letters were sent indicating the successful establishment of a *ṭemu* received from central officials:

ša šarru belini išpurannašini
ma ki annaka attanuni
ma ṭemu assakankunu...

Regarding what the king our lord sent to us:
3.QUOT While you were here
3.QUOT I established this *ṭemu* upon you...

SAA 1 no. 98, obv. 5-7, Ṭab-šill-Ešarra and Na’di-ilu to Sargon

The disruption of *ṭemu* communication resulted in strong affective responses. A letter sent by Ariḫu, an official of uncertain position demonstrates frustration at the lack of *ṭemu* received from his superior:

ana Nabu-duri-ušur ṭuppi Ariḫi lu šulmu ana ʿDUMUʿ
ina muḫḫi nusaḫi ša Samirnaya beli ṭemu lutere šummu i[baš]ši šummu laššu ina muḫḫi libbini lu ṭab
bel piqittate qalu izzazzu la illuku dullašunu eppušu la ṭemu nišakkanšunu
ki annimma issu šaddaqdiš adunakanni ina muḫḫi eribi attanaḫḫarka eribuma la nušerib
uma ṭemu tere šummu ibašši šummu laššu

⁷⁶ The question of what *ḥiddu* actually refers to remains open.

To Nabu-duri-ušur, a tablet of Ariḫu, may wellbeing be for DUMU⁷⁷

Regarding the corn tax of the Samaritans, may my lord return a *ṭemu* if either it ex[ist]s or it does not exist, and let it be good inside us concerning it.

The officials are silent, they stand still and do not go and perform their work, we cannot impose *ṭemu* on them.

I have been appealing to you just like this since the previous year concerning the income, and we have not brought in any income. Now return (imp.) a *ṭemu* if it exists or it does not exist.

SAA 1 no. 220, obv. 1-edge. 1, Ariḫu to Nabu-duri-ušur

Subordinates requesting a *ṭemu* to be imposed by a superior figure are found throughout the letters, and occasionally those subordinates would address their superior with an imperative, just as in this letter.⁷⁸ We notice in the first part of this letter the usual characteristics of address towards a superior: third person address, with precative constructions (*beli ṭemu lutere*) and a standard greeting formula. However, after Ariḫu describes the situation on the ground, his language becomes more direct, with a second-person suffix address and an imperative (*uma ṭemu tere*). Although this is just one letter, we can draw some tentative conclusions by contrasting it with the use of imperatives throughout the letters. We know that the king and most officials each had a scribe (or scribes) to whom they dictated their letters to in normal circumstances,⁷⁹ and that these letters were likely reviewed before sending. It therefore seems that this shift in tone actually does represent an affective shift, during dictation, towards what we might call frustration or anger, especially in light of Ariḫu's statement about his officials not working properly. In addition, if this were reviewed before sending, it may have been deemed appropriate to forward such a terse letter to the governor, presumably because either the imperative order indeed corresponded to the governor's normal duties, or simply because Ariḫu thought he could get away with it without being punished. Taken together with Taklak-ana-Bel's letter to the *sukkallu* discussed in chapter six,⁸⁰ we have two

⁷⁷ The sign on this tablet has been read DUMU, a logogram usually interpreted as *maru* 'son'. Parpola, in his translation, simply translates the expected '*my lord*' here. However, there are no other attested readings of DUMU with a value of *belu*, at least when consulting a recent sign list (MZL s.v. TUR, p.255). This is particularly puzzling in that the remainder of the letter uses the expected logogram EN for *belu*, so why DUMU should mean *belu* here is a question Parpola does not answer. This could be a scribal error, or it could be a misreading as the sign is partially broken on the tablet. I have not had the opportunity to consult the tablet myself, and thus make no reading here.

⁷⁸ See for example SAA 15 no. 186, a letter from Šamaš-abu-ušur, an Assyrian official of unknown position, to an unnamed Assyrian governor. It contains an intelligence report, ending with the line *ṭemu ina ekalli tere batiqtu ši assapparakka* 'Return this *ṭemu* to the palace. I have sent this information to you' (rev. 7-10).

⁷⁹ See Parpola 1997: 319 ff. where he discusses normal circumstances by way of abnormal circumstance: an Assyrian official writing to the king asking for a scribe. In order to write to the king, however, the official would need basic cuneiform literacy, which is what Parpola suggests.

⁸⁰ P.255.

instances of register shift towards more direct forms of speaking indicating a more emotive, frustrated underlying affect. This suggests that one of the problems caused by a stopped flow of *ṭemu* is an inability to enact Assyrian authority. Ariḫu *requires* that his superior send him *ṭemu* so that he can establish his own *ṭemu* towards his subordinate officials: without *ṭemu* flowing downwards through the hierarchy, Ariḫu is powerless. Thus, not only is *ṭemu* as intent ubiquitous, it is an essential component of Assyrian dominion.⁸¹

Underscoring this point, not only was *ṭemu* needed as a prerequisite for authoritative speech, but it was actively desired. A letter from an unknown cultic functionary to the *mar-šarri* Assurbanipal demonstrates a longing for his patronage:

mar-šarri lu ušia panešu šulanšu lu amur issiya lu tadbub ṭemu lu taškunanni

Would that the son of the king came out, would that I saw his face and health, would that you talked with me, would that you established a *ṭemu* for me.

SAA 13 no. 158, obv. 8'-10', unknown to Assurbanipal

Though the letter is somewhat broken and the context unknown, the pleading use of language is interesting. Requests to see the king and crown prince's face and health—i.e. audience requests—are fairly frequent for supplicants such as the scholars who rely on the patronage of the royal family (Westbrook 2005). Here, however, the verbs are in the past tense, emphasised with the optative particle *lu* (Huehnergard 1983: 572), indicating an impossible wish in this case. Furthermore, the desire to have talked with Assurbanipal (*lu tadbub*) and have him impose a *ṭemu* (*ṭemu lu taškunanni*) are atypical. In this case, they seem to emphasise the author's desire to be part of the Assyrian household,⁸² to be subject to, driven, and made to implement the crown prince's *ṭemu*. That this is not the case is the cause for 'weeping before all the lands.' To be part of a relationship within the Assyrian hierarchy, in which one would receive *ṭemu* from one's social superior in

⁸¹ A further example underlining the supreme importance of *ṭemu* is potentially offered by the events described in the letter SAA 5 no. 142. This tablet is unfortunately severely damaged. However, if we take Lanfranchi and Parpola's suggested restoration of *ṭemu* for line rev. 4, then we have a sequence of events where an official does not listen (*la išammani*, obv. 7'), does not establish the *ṭemu* (*ṭe'ṣmu la iš'kun*¹, rev. 4), and is to be whipped for this transgression.

⁸² The social position of scholars was precarious: unlike political appointees, they did not possess a named, abstract office and status and were reliant on the personal whims of royal family members to keep them in post.

constant communication—this was an idealised position for the subordinate, one which resulted in anger and upset when defective.⁸³

*ki temešuma biltu u mandattu ilqamma ana Ninua adi maḥriya ilikamma inaššiq
šepeya*
According to his *temu* he brought tribute and gifts, came before me in Nineveh and
kissed my feet⁸⁴

The *temu*-intentions of the Assyrian hierarchy were the motors that powered the Assyrian imperial machine. However, the Assyrian elite recognised that other beings were possessed of *temu*, were intentional actors. Assyrian ontology recognised that this *temu* indicated others possessed their own agency. This could be something to proudly celebrate: in a royal inscription, Esarhaddon describes how a Chaldean chieftain, *ki temešuma* ‘according to his own *temu*,’ submitted to Assyrian authority. As memorial texts, highly literate and authored, the royal inscriptions foregrounded the most important aspects of an Assyrian king’s record, emphasising their greatest triumphs. That Esarhaddon, in concert with his scribes, deliberately mentions Bel-iqiša’s submission as one according to *temu* suggests that it was viewed as a substantial achievement.

More often than not, the agency of others’ *temu* represented a threat. Another passage from Esarhaddon’s accession account narrates his inner speech as he tells the story of his brothers:

*itti libbiya atammuma uštabila kabatti
umma epšetišunu šurruḥama ana teme ramanišunu takluma ša la ilani mina ippušu*

I debated with my interior and my ‘liver’ considered thoroughly
QUOT Their deeds are haughty and they trust in the *temu* of their own *ramanu*. What will they do that is
not of the gods?

RINAP 4 Esarhaddon 1, col. i 32-34

This passage is deeply interested in describing interior state: using florid Standard Babylonian idioms for interior speech, Esarhaddon describes the failure of his brothers in trusting in their own

⁸³ The theme of constant instruction is one that reappears in several contexts throughout this thesis, for example chapter six, where dogs without direction wander about aimlessly (p.242); the need for upkeep in communication is discussed in chapter five (p.230).

⁸⁴ RINAP 4 Esarhaddon 1 col. iii 71-83

temu.⁸⁵ As a result, instead of acting together with the gods, as is right, their actions are completely untrammelled and consequently dangerous.

That such views of *temu* were not just confined to ideological literature is demonstrated in this letter written on behalf of Nabu-iqbi. A Babylonian of unknown status providing information to the Assyrian king, he speculates through rhetorical questioning on the interiors of some potentates:

minu ibašši ki itti libbišunu idabbubu ša 3 šanati aga ana šulmu ša šarri belišunu la illikunu ki ašmu ilten rikissunu u ilten tenšunu u mimma ša la aḫameš ul ippušu minu ibašši ki itti libbišunu ipitqunu

What is it that they have been talking with their interior that for three years they have not come for the wellbeing of the king, their lord? I have heard that they have one resolve and a single *temu*, and they do not do anything separately. Whatever is it that they are plotting with their interior?

SAA 18 no. 132, rev. 2-rev. 12, Nabu-iqbi to Assurbanipal

Whoever he is writing about must have been of some import, as they appear to be under obligation to maintain audience with the king of Assyria, an obligation usually required of the king's highest staff. Notably, Nabu-iqbi emphasises the unity of this group of people: *iltent rikissunu u iltent tenšunu*—and this unity is a unity of intention. This concern with unified interiority is further underlined when he asks, what are they plotting with their interior? The interior of other human beings, not being directly accessible to the loyal informers of Assyria, is a dangerous, mysterious place where sedition and disorder can roost, just like they do in a 'chaotic periphery' (Liverani 1979: 306).

ki tem ilani

According to the *temu* of the gods

Thus far, we have seen that the flow of *temu*-intention was critical to the action of the Assyrian state. *Temu* was requested, required, desired and demanded by the army of administrators, scholars and cultic functionaries that carried out the day-to-day duties of domination. *Temu* was communicated through signs and speech, established in ascending order through the Assyrian hierarchical chain, up to the king himself. The king of Assyria is not an autonomous source of *temu*, however. As we

⁸⁵ Specifically, the *temu* of their *ramanu*, which is commonly translated 'self' and often rendered transparent in translation. However, *ramanu* is rather a fully fledged descriptor in an Assyrian understanding of the topography of the subjective self, which we deal with in the following chapter.

have seen, autonomous acts of *ṭemu*, unless aligned with Assyrian interests, were unbridled and dangerous. The Assyrian king derived his *ṭemu* from following that of the gods.

Enacting the *ṭemu* of the gods was the key mission of the Assyrian king and his state.⁸⁶ The scholars maintained in the Assyrian court allowed the king to inquire as to the *ṭemu* of the gods through divinatory acts both active and passive: reading ominous signs written on the livers of sheep, or the movements of the celestial bodies.⁸⁷

Ṭem Šamaš Adad almadma 'I learnt the *ṭemu* of Šamaš and Adad,' the voice of Sennacherib proclaims in a royal inscription.⁸⁸ Royal *ṭemu*, royal action, and all events validly deriving thenceforth are justified as enacting the will of the gods. That the Assyrian king's actions are *ki ṭem ilani* is repeated over and over again in royal inscriptions, to emphasise this point.⁸⁹

The perception of the gods acting in the world, events unfolding according to their *ṭemu*, was not restricted to literature: a Babylonian letter attempts to persuade Esarhaddon to implement beneficent tax policies for the city of Nippur by describing the *ṭem ilani*:

[*ilani rabuti*] *ašibu šame u eršeti ultu ullanumma* [*x x ina muḫḫi Ni*]ppuri u Babilī *ṭenšunu ilteni*
[The great gods] dwellers in heaven and earth, suddenly their *ṭemu* has changed [regarding] Babylon and Nippur.

SAA 18 no. 124, obv. 6-7, Bel-ušeziḫ to Esarhaddon

⁸⁶ The kingship of the Assyrian ruler was founded on implementing and 'maintaining' the order of the great gods of Assyria and Babylonia (Liverani 2017: 13-14). Pongratz-Leisten likens the claims to explicit divine authorisation as a 'cultural strategy' (2015: 5).

⁸⁷ The integration of divination practices into the evidential system of the Assyrian empire was not only undifferentiated from other 'commonplace categories of evidential coding systems' (Bois 1987: 91), but was specifically conceived of as a communicative act with intentional divinities. This demarcates the practice from the doubly unintentional divinations presented by Du Bois, where although the oracle 'cannot in a direct sense vocalize... which words are selected, and which meanings, are in principle *beyond the utterer's control*' (1987: 92, emphasis mine). The Assyrian diviners, just as the Yoruba and Sisala diviners, are restricted in that their utterances are chosen by the oracle, but in a different code that needs to be transposed into language. In particular, the Yoruba procedure, where specific configurations of cowrie shells point to specific ritual verses, strongly parallels the Assyrian tradition, which relied on ancient omen compendia; both traditions thus employ 'duplex speech events' uttered (at least) once in the past, and once in the present, forming a complex temporality. However, unlike the impersonal divinations, which are more like sensorial extensions which open up a space for interpretation (1987: 107), the Assyrian divination is *explicitly intentionally driven*: the procedures are designed to discover the *ṭemu* of the gods, which directly feeds into the imperial ideology with the Assyrian king and hierarchy as interpreters and implementers of *ṭemu*.

⁸⁸ RINAP 3 Sennacherib no. 168, 29.

⁸⁹ For example: *epēš šipru šuati ki ṭem ilani ina uzniya ibšima* 'The performing of this work existed in my ear according to the *ṭemu* of the gods' RINAP 3 Sennacherib no. 1, 70; 2, 41; 3, 41; 68, ff.; in another context in 17, vii 16; RINAP 4 Esarhaddon 1, i. 38.

As an astrologer, Bel-ušeziḫ was well-placed to pronounce upon the *ṭemu* of the gods, qualified to read the signs in the sky indicating their intent.⁹⁰ Much like the Elamite messenger's privileged access to *ṭemu*, the report that Na'id-Marduk was dead, Bel-ušeziḫ uses his privileged access to the *ṭemu* of the gods to influence Esarhaddon's intentions towards Nippur. Despite the *ṭemu* in these two situations being in different temporal states,⁹¹ the function it plays is the same.⁹²

Importantly, the gods were conceived of as the ultimate source of *ṭemu*—as the creators of the world and of humankind, all intention ultimately originated from the divine. Though subjects could act according to their *ramanu* against the gods, this too was considered a *ṭemu*, though one that was in opposition to the divine *ṭemu* supported by the Assyrian hierarchy, and yet paradoxically *also* a divine *ṭemu*.

Consequently, all perceptible events within the world were attributable to some kind of *ṭemu* behind them, leading to an ontology where not only is nothing unintentional, but a Western style model of intentional acts having a one-to-one mapping with an autonomous individual breaks down. Returning to Duranti's exploration of truth and intentionality, he notes that it is individual actors and their acts that serve not only as a 'point of reference for universal ethics' but enable us to make suppositions about the mental intentions of others (2015: 110). At the same time, there is the possibility for things that happen to be unintended; speech act theory does not consider something like 'tripping on a banana peel' to be an intentional action, whereas a conversational utterance does not encode intention in a formulation like 'he tripped on the banana' (Duranti 2015: 19). By contrast, Assyria resembles more the causality described by Evans-Pritchard, who concluded of the Central African Azande that 'witchcraft' was a cause of events that we might explain as accidents (1976: 22-25). However, *ṭemu* did not indicate a simple causative temporality that might be suggested by

⁹⁰ Celestial signs were specifically expressions of the 'will' of a god: there was no causal connection between a celestial omen and the event it portended, rather, the event is caused by the god's intention to enact it, and the celestial sign is an index of this intent. See Ossendrijver 2016: 148.

⁹¹ Na'id-Marduk being dead is completed in the past; the god's *ṭemu*, though they changed it in the past, is potential: it is up to Esarhaddon to actualise it.

⁹² This opens up an intriguing avenue of thought: as *ṭemu* plays the same role in both these narratives, and furthermore points to the same 'thing,' do we need to alter our understanding of Assyrian temporality in order to accommodate this schema? We return to this question in the conclusion to this study, which composes evidence from this thesis and understandings of Assyrian divination practices to posit a 'firm yes' in answer.

witchcraft causing accidents; rather, there was a paradoxical simultaneity to it, which we will return to in the conclusion.

Finally, the grammatical construction of *temu*—*temu* $\sqrt{\text{škn}}$ ‘establish *temu*’—demonstrates how action was not conceived of as directly linked to an autonomous individual. Firstly, *temu* does not exhibit any possessive suffixes indicating ownership of acts.⁹³ Secondly, the verb itself, $\sqrt{\text{škn}}$, evinces a particularly durative temporality: instead of giving an order, a speech act that, once uttered, leaves responsibility for implementing the order to its audience, *temu* $\sqrt{\text{škn}}$ openly implicates both establisher and established in a perpetually unfolded process. *Temu* is established, and once established *continues to be* established, rather than being spoken and thence completed. This consequently suggests why *temu* is never described in terms of truth or falsity. *Temu* is not a linguistic reflection corresponding to a world ‘out there,’ but is language fully integrated with the world, and is in effect always ‘true.’

⁹³ This is to be differentiated from constructions like *ki temešuma*, which locate *temu* as a kind of character quality and are not verbally described with $\sqrt{\text{škn}}$.

1.3 Mind

mil[ku] damqu iḥḥassasa ka[ru] ikku la a[ka]lu la šaṭu ṭemu ušašša muršu urrad
Good advice is to be contemplated: not eating, not drinking disturbs *ṭemu* and adds
to illness

Thus far, we have seen *ṭemu* used in several ways: as reporting on the activities of the intentional beings that inhabit the Assyrian world; as linguistically enunciated orders or instructions, required and desired; as the motivating intention that drives the Assyrian machine and flows down from the gods through to the meanest functionary; as a dangerous intention that can lead to chaotic action. In this final part of the chapter, we complete the association of *ṭemu* with intentional being by observing it in a completely interiorised, non-verbal state: when *ṭemu* is used to describe an interior attribute.

As Adad-šumu-ušur implies in a letter to Esarhaddon, *ṭemu* indexes not only events, orders and intentions, but a mental attribute that can be disturbed by physical distress.⁹⁴ Considering that the king was the prime conduit of *ṭemu* for Assyria, that this *ṭemu* could be disturbed was, as the letter describes, a matter for alarm: Adad-šumu-ušur exhorts the king to listen, *lišmi*. Esarhaddon's father, Sennacherib, was not modest in describing his own *ṭemu*:

ina milik ṭemeya u mereš kabattiya pitiq eri ubaššimma
I created a work of copper in the advice of my *ṭemu* and the wisdom of my *kabattu*.

RINAP 3/1 Sennacherib 17 col. vii 5-7

Further to this, Sennacherib frequently denigrates his Elamite enemies as being *la ṭemu* throughout his inscriptions.⁹⁵

This abstract form of *ṭemu* enabled the production of authoritative speech;⁹⁶ it was differential and

⁹⁴ SAA 10 no. 196, rev. 14-right edge. 18.

⁹⁵ For example, RINAP 3/1 Sennacherib 22 col. v 15, v. 34 *arkišu Umman-menanu la raš ṭeme u milki aḫišu uppušu ina kussešu ušibma* 'After him, Umman-menanu, one who does not have *ṭemu* or *milku*, his younger brother sat on his throne'; Sennacherib 230 l. 20 *šu šar Elamti la ḥasis amate ša la išu ṭemu u milku* 'He, the king of Elam, the unwise, his words without *ṭemu* or *milku*.' That *ṭemu* is paired with *milku* 'advice, counsel' here is a Standard Babylonian literary device, and is not a pairing that occurs in the spoken Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian dialects.

⁹⁶ Steinert notes that the Sumerian terms *dimma* and *umuš* mean both 'mind' and 'command,' similar to *ṭemu*. She explicitly draws a parallel with Western understandings of language and thought (2012: 386).

could apply in certain circumstances, and not others. This is suggested by Adad-šumu-ušur's remark when Esarhaddon corrects his medical instructions:

anakuma minu aqabbi paršumu ša tenšu laššuni
Who am I to speak, an old man that is without his *temu*?

SAA 10 no. 191 rev. 2-5, Adad-šumu-ušur to Esarhaddon

Here, Parpola translates this as 'an old man who has got no sense'; Steinert views this as a description of senility (2012: 388-389). However, drawing on our understandings of *temu* as intimately associated with intents and the actualisation of those intents in events, we can think of its use here more specifically as an effective intentionality, a specific agency to act. In this situation, rather than self-abnegating himself with derogatory language, Adad-šumu-ušur is recognising that he does not have the authority to issue *temu* himself, implying that there is also a status, hierarchical dimension to the possession of *temu* and thus the authorisation to speak effectively. Here, it will be Esarhaddon who issues the decision, and Adad-šumu-ušur is only claiming to advise, therefore it is not his intention that is being actualised, but that of Esarhaddon's. This is further underlined by stating the king's word 'is like the god's.' This letter thus redistributes intentionality and responsibility: attributing *temu* to the king, but emphasising the cooperative jointness of action with the use of first-person plural verbs.

Conclusions

The Looping *ṭemu* and the Imperial Mission

In this chapter, we have moved from the world as perceived and described in language, via the world as performatively shaped by language, to a concept of subjective interiority. These phenomena are indexed by a single word, *ṭemu*, and I have contended that, rather than functioning as a term with distinct meanings, *ṭemu* represents a specifically Assyrian ontological concept that integrates thought, intent, act and fact into a single temporality. This temporality manifested itself in at least two ways: as a looping temporality, where facts and acts are linked by intentionality, and a more compressed, almost simultaneous temporality, where future and past almost collapse into each other. We will explore each of these in turn in this concluding section.

Consider the metaphor of a cuneiform tablet. Like a lump of clay that has the potential to be transformed into a meaningful tablet, reality is inchoate until intentionally acted upon; the words to be written on the tablet must be chosen by the scribe—an intentional process; they must then be inscribed upon the tablet, a transmutation between a mental code and a physical reality; once inscribed, the tablet can be read, the signs turning back into interior words as their readings are seen, selected, spoken, and heard.⁹⁷ In a similar way, *ṭemu* is subject to transmutation: from a relation in the stars, upon a liver, into human interiority, into cuneiform, into action, into actualisation, each of which engages differing schemas of translation and mediation.

The difficulty in mapping '*ṭemu*' to a single English lexeme is not due to the term possessing multiple meanings: rather, it indexes a single concept, and it is English that is deficient in translating it (Duranti 2015: 31). Duranti explores the 'subtle differences' in terms for mind, intention, and meaning, noting that French and German have no word corresponding to 'mind'—the word 'mind' itself is derived from Old English *gemynd*, which covers 'memory, remembering, state of mind, purpose, intention' (Duranti 2015: 32-33). He suggests one cause of this difference is that the map of interiority and physicality is drawn by different cultures in different ways (Duranti 2015: 33). Indeed, Steinert concludes from her study of Mesopotamian concepts of the human that the

⁹⁷ The concept of 'transmutation' derives from Jakobson's typology of translation varieties, where transmutation is an 'interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems' (1959: 233).

Mesopotamians did draw the map of interiority and physicality in a culturally specific way: mind and body were a singular unity of substance (2012: 385). We will explore the topography of the interior as understood by the Assyrian elite more fully in the next chapter, but it is evident that *temu* is not limited to the interior alone, but can be encoded and travel across ominous signs, language, and manifested act. Rather than representing a specifically embodied ‘intention’ alone, as the Latinate *intentio* does (Duranti 2015: 31), the Assyrian *temu* ‘escapes’ interiors, and pervades the world.⁹⁸

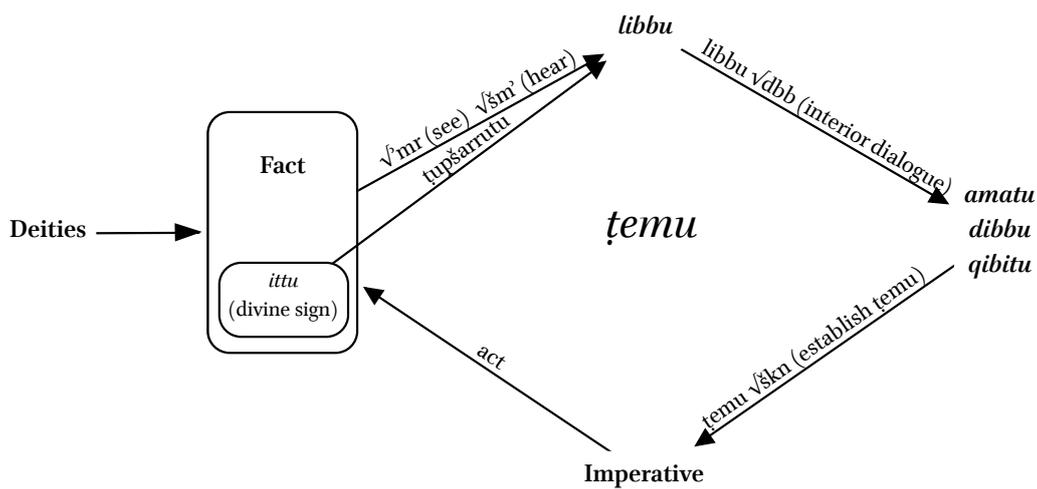


Figure 5 - The Looping Temu

⁹⁸ Another idiosyncrasy of *temu* is that it is not found in verbal form in the letters excavated from Nineveh and Kallū during this period, despite its processual characteristics. However, instances of a derived verb *temu* is attested in a tablet from the provincial town of Ḫuzirina (modern Sultantepe):

ki ša tareminnima
tem ilutiki rabiti taṭeminni tem ilutiki rabiti šuprimma
puya lušeši
 Just as you were merciful to me and
 you $\sqrt{t'm}$ the *temu* of your divinity for me, send the *temu* of your divinity and
 I will cause it to go out of my mouth.

STT 1 no. 73, obv. col. 1 40-41

This text, a ritual to obtain an oracular decision, is particularly interesting because of its ‘peripheral’ status: not only was it excavated in a small town outside the Assyrian imperial core, but it also provides evidence for private divinatory practices not associated with the ruling elite (Reiner 1960: 24). Consequently, the adaptation of *temu* to a verbal form occurring in this markedly different context to the evidence presented in this thesis suggests the possibility of different models of intentionality in operation, or even emerging, in the cuneiform world at this time. It is telling that van Buylaere translates *taṭeminni* as ‘looked after me.’

Figure 5 illustrates the different aspects of *temu*, as well as their looping transformations. The grey text illustrates the mechanisms by which *temu* was communicated; the bold text shows locations where *temu* could inhere. The looping aspect clearly comes out in this representation, showing how the actions and perceptions of human subjects allowed *temu* to propagate throughout the Empire. *Temu* traversed many subjects, those perceiving, reporting and interpreting *temu*-facts (which might include ominous signs); those voicing *temu*-intentions and everyone associated with them in the ‘shadow dialogues’ of the mule-express; those performing the labour of transforming a *temu*-imperative into a *temu*-fact i.e., making orders reality. *Temu* can thus be thought of as representing a ‘socially extended mind’ (Gallagher 2017: 469). The Assyrian communication network is a machine of collective intentions: a manifestation of ‘longer-term, distributed processes that require the formation of detailed [distal]-intentions,’ ‘prior intentions specified in a reflective (prospective) process of deliberation’ (Gallagher 2017: 468). That collective *temu*, in whatever state, was a concept recognised by the Assyrians is clear from multiple expressions throughout the letters;⁹⁹ thinking of Assyria as a collectively held *temu* can thus be justified.¹⁰⁰

On one level then, Frahm and Bagg’s thesis that Assyria was ‘without mission’ fails when considering Assyrian *temu* and its inscription upon the world (Frahm 2017c: 193). Not only was Assyria on a mission to implement the *temu* of its gods, through the king and a hypercognised chain of dependency hierarchically stretching downwards, this *temu* was socially constructed through the multiple *temu* of all the actors involved, a social process (Gallagher 2017: 469). This must however be qualified: the Assyrians implement the *temu* of the gods; however, the gods provide no explanation for their messages, only the means by which those messages can be read. Despite an avowedly ‘mentalist’ view of causality (Danziger 2017: 452), there is no justification for the divine *temu*, only its imperative:

Everything is fixed by the gods: all historical vicissitudes are signaled and explained by astral *omina* and hepatoscopy... human and political events are at the mercy of the capricious gods, of the unalterable position of the stars, of the signs inscribed on the livers of sacrificial victims.

Liverani 2017: 156

⁹⁹ SAA 15 no. 1, obv. 19-20, Issar-duri to Sargon *la paḥuru aḥḫur mar-šiprišunu u ten[šunu] la išparuniššu* ‘They are not assembled and have not sent [their] *temu* to him’; SAA 17 no. 111, obv. 5, Aqar-Bel-lumur to Sargon *tem ša niši mati šulum* ‘The *temu* of the people of the land is well’; SAA 18 no. 132, rev. 7-8, Nabu-iqbi to Esarhaddon *ki ašmu ilten rikissunu u ilten tenšunu* ‘I have heard they are of a single bond and a single *temu*.’

¹⁰⁰ The union of ‘action’ and ‘intention’ in a single word (*temu*) is perhaps paralleled by the Samoan word *uiga*, meaning ‘meaning’ but also ‘deed, action’ (Duranti 2015: 121).

The Simultaneous *ṭemu* and Divine Ambiguity

Assyria was not only an Empire that fulfilled this imperative *ṭemu* of the gods—Assyria was a terrain of *ṭemu* itself. *ṭemu* not only covered intentions to be realised, but the realised intentions themselves: the facts of the acts. These facts—the perceptible world—contained within them ominous signs, the writing of the gods, through which their intent could be interpreted, their future actions revealed. The future is thus partially located in the past, suggesting an even more complex temporality than the notion of ‘loop’ might suppose.

We can experimentally divorce ourselves from a ‘sequential’ understanding of *ṭemu*, attempting to understand it as something different. Mobilising Pillel’s destabilisation of the indexical relation through her exploration of the ‘antipodal utterance’—that which contains “a radical opposition of meaning and perspective”¹⁰¹—and the simultaneity it entails helps us to understand what *ṭemu* might be.

The notion of *ṭemu* as being a thought, intention, order, news report transgresses our understandings of substance, speech and causality. Thought, word, and world are clearly not the same thing. Yet *ṭemu* encompasses them all. Thought, word, and world are the same thing—they are *ṭemu*—and thus we need to reach a different understanding of what ‘thing’ was to the Assyrian elite. Pillel sets out a manifesto for us to step back from our linguistically mediated notions of stuff and substance:

Our concept of substance—a very powerful faith—is conceived as an outcome of our concept of the subject. The subject connotes our belief in an entity underlying all the different moments of intense sensation of reality. We believe in our belief to such an extent that—on its account alone—we imagine “substantiality” (1910: 13-15). Nietzsche concludes that our ontological categories are illusions perpetuated by the chance subject/predicate structure and grammatical habits of Indo-European languages (Benes 2006:220). In other words, *familiar categories of reality reflect a misplaced faith in our grammar.*

2017: 726, emphasis mine

Even in this thesis, we are forced to use Indo-European terminology to at best approximate an ontology of word, writing and reality quite different to ours. The *ṭemu* was a term that embedded within it a specifically Mesopotamian temporality. The concept of ‘intentional loop’ in effect implies a closed system, which is deliberate. The creation of the universe by the great gods, and the

¹⁰¹ Pillel 2017: 728.

association of the Assyrian imperium with enacting the *temu* of the great gods, was set within a world where every act and fact was intentional, decreed by divinities. Pongratz-Leisten evokes Jorge Luis Borges when she writes of

the writing of the god as instantaneous absolute plenitude that leaves diachronic writing behind in merging the past, present, and the future into the cosmic plan.

2015: 359

Further to this, Bahrani writes:

Divination is a reading of a previously written sign in the real. In other words, it is, to some extent at least, in the past.... there appears to have been a perceived circulation of past and present, the one having an effect on the other, inseparably and continuously.

2008: 65

The signs of divination thus form a locus of temporal collapse, just as *temu* collapses by combining mind, intent, order and fact into one concept.¹⁰² Taking this to its conclusion however, we can draw on Rochberg's analysis of omen divination, where she writes:

T. Abusch has shown the parallelism between *temu* and *alaktu* in the meaning "decision," "decree," or "oracle," suggesting specifically that this oracular decision is conveyed through ominous celestial signs, as the request for such a divine pronouncement is addressed to the gods of the night, or to specifically named astral deities...

Omen divination therefore evinces a fundamental anthropomorphism, where what we call nature is perceived as divine speech, matter turned expressive, meaning materialized in the world of phenomena.

2010: 414-415, emphasis mine

Rochberg's critique of matter and nature as divine speech echoes the findings synthesised from exploring *temu*'s usage in quotidian speech, significantly strengthening both conclusions. She compellingly develops this line of thinking in a subsequent work, mobilising Descola's ontological deconstruction of the nature-culture divide to show that cuneiform science was not only a 'rational' enterprise, but one that was predicated on an entirely different ontological basis to our

¹⁰² This specifically cuneiform schema of sign and reality provides an important corrective to ideas of 'word magic.' Tambiah's 1968 Malinowski Lecture explored this magical word power, noting particularly that 'the Semites and the Sumerians have held that the world and its objects were created by the word of God' (1968: 182-3). Though this is certainly one way to interpret the opening lines of *Enuma Eliš*, not only does it describe a simple temporality but Tambiah utterly neglects the importance of non-alphabetic writing systems. Instead of the cosmological primacy of the 'word' utterance, we have a multiplicity of utterance, sign and interpretation, with the ambiguities, temporalities and disjunctures between them forming an essential component of ontology, a space in which 'free will' can exist in a world of fixed destiny.

contemporary sciences which culturally construct a category of ‘nature’ as object (Rochberg 2016: 135-6).

A further, experimental approach in thinking we might take would be considering the Assyrian language verbal system in light of *temu*. The Assyrian verb does not distinguish between present and future tense: rather, there are the preterite and perfect aspects, and the durative aspect, indicating an unfolding action. This grammatical system, like *temu*, seems to collapse the present and the future together, rendering the future immanent in the present.

Considering the temporal aspects of *temu*, as well as the subjects which encompassed it—divinities, diviners, king, subjects, and even ‘expressive matter’—we can construe *temu* as a sort of *chronotope*. *Temu*, as envisaged by the imperial elite, captured a looping temporality where future led into past, where act and fact merged—and where there was a defined assignment of subjects to specific biographical stations. The gods would communicate *temu*, diviners would interpret it, the king and his administration would command it, and the people would act it. This schema, with the future foreclosed in the past and tied up in the imperial system, brooked no differentiation, disruption, disjuncture or dissent amongst the subjects implicated in it.

However—there remained an interpretive gap. As the cuneiform sign was polyvalent, so was the divine sign. There was a fundamental disjuncture between the singularity of a sign form, and its multiple meanings, requiring the extensive expertise of scholars learned in *tupšarrutu*—the scribal discipline—just to interpret into a linguistic form. This meant that the divine *temu* was never unambiguous, reflecting an ontological instability at the core of what was otherwise a confident system. Furthermore, this principle of disjuncture permeated not only the sign, but the human being itself, and the language it spoke in. In the next two chapters, we explore the disjuncture of the human being through a tour of the subjective interior and the disciplinary instruments used by the Assyrians to minimise this disjuncture through the establishment of an affective regime. We then explore how language-in-interaction was used to negotiate the potential for disjuncture: cultivated by subordinates who used imagined futures to stake autonomy; collapsed by authoritative speakers who entextualised past authority and uttered imperatives that mingled utterance and act. We then move to spheres resistant to the ontology of *temu* itself, demonstrating the existence of coexisting

and even conflicting notions of time, subject and social order, and thus showing how the *temu*-driven pretension to dominion failed in its aim of collapsing ambiguity and openness into a single hierarchical machine.

2 *Ramaniya, Libbiya u Anaku: Myself, My Interior and I—* Mapping the Assyrian Subject

šumma attunu... abutu la ṭabtu ša Aššur-bani-apli mar-šarri rabu ša bit-reduti ina libbikunu tašakkanani

You will not place a bad word in your interior about Assurbanipal, the great son of the king of the House of Succession.¹⁰³

In the last chapter we reintegrated the concept of *ṭemu* as a unitary model of mind, thought, action, and fact, distancing ourselves from the modern English concepts of ‘intention’ and ‘reason’ that have been mapped onto it by previous translators. By doing so, we saw how *ṭemu* was a concept that could be used to explain Assyrian concepts of dominance, as the extension and unfolding of divine and royal ‘intentions’ across a distributed network of agents. A corollary to this was that *ṭemu* underwent processes of translation and transmutation across boundaries: from the inchoate *ṭemu* of the gods, solicited and read by divination, to the written *ṭemu* of the king, to the *ṭemu* of other beings that could be read, seen, heard. *Ṭemu* was a phenomenon that traversed both the exterior world and the interior. Assyria’s wellbeing depended on controlling both these territories.

Ṭemu however was not a prerogative of the gods of Assyria alone. The Assyrian ruling elite had to contend with a world of subjects each with their own *ṭemu*, which represented a serious issue: how to gauge the *ṭemu* of people who might not act to Assyria’s benefit? As we may recall, in the year 672, when Esarhaddon announced his succession arrangements, he imposed a loyalty oath upon all the subjects of Assyria. One of the clauses of this treaty policed the territory of the *libbu*—bad words against Assurbanipal were not to be placed there, evil designs against him were not to be thought. This powerful example of concern with the *libbu* of Assyrian subjects demonstrates the importance with which the interior was held by the ruling elite. As *ṭemu* linked and traversed the interior and exterior worlds—a thought, an order, a fact—the *libbu* represented an important locus of control for the Assyrian state.

The *libbu* could not be accessed by force, so it was necessary to legislate against it, as we see in the words of the treaty cited in the above epigraph. Sincere words come from the *libbu*, as we will see

¹⁰³ SAA 2 no. 6 obv. 180-185

in a letter by Abi-yaqiya and friends, local rulers desperate for Assyrian military aid, where they insist on the truth of their account; in another letter, the men of Na'id-Marduk, declare his *libbu* is completely with the king, Esarhaddon, his lord.

The variable permeability of the *libbu*, then, was a key component in the functioning of Assyrian power. The social acceptability of the practice of making inferences regarding interior state of another being is unremarkable to the average European. No-one thinks twice about trying to guess at the thoughts and intent behind someone's actions, an aspect integral to modern judicial procedure (Philips 1992: 256). However, whilst the ability to make these inferences may be unsurprising, the appropriateness of voicing them is in no way a cross-cultural universal. Many societies in the Pacific, for example, consider making statements about another's interiority to be absolutely taboo. The Nukulaelae consider such conjecture 'irresponsible, demented, asocial' (Besnier 1992: 166). The problematisation of our intuitive understanding of the minds of others has been a rich source of theory questioning causality and intentionality, from an Anthropological Quarterly issue on the 'Opacity of Minds'¹⁰⁴ to Duranti's concept of an 'intentional continuum.'¹⁰⁵

By contrast, Assyrian epistolary discourse is rife with *libbu* references, about oneself and others. However, the *libbu* was not the only component that could represent a threat to the Assyrian hegemony. Disobedience was railed against as acts enacted *ki ramani* 'according to the *ramanu*.' This *ramanu* further complicated the Assyrian 'topography of the self' by positing a third element, one that could pose a significant threat to the Assyrian elite.

¹⁰⁴ For which see Duranti 2008; Keane 2008; Robbins 2008; Robbins & Rumsey 2008; Rumsey 2008; Schieffelin 2008; Stasch 2008.

¹⁰⁵ Presented in Duranti 2015: 238 ff. and see also Duranti 2017.

2.1 The Topography of the Interior

Libbu

The question of how *libbu* related to the Assyrian subject has exercised scholars for a century, symptomatic of the wider interest into subjectivity and consciousness that continues to engage the humanities. In 1912 AD, the Orientalist Morris Jastrow published the article ‘The Liver as the Seat of the Soul,’ its very title already taking as given the concept of a ‘soul’ which can be localised in a bodily organ. He considered *libbu*, and its collocated term *kabattu*, to refer to the organs of the heart and liver respectively (Jastrow 1912: 155). A century later, Steinert considers the terms ‘partiell synonymen,’ together with *karšu* ‘stomach’ and *qerbu* ‘insides’ (2012: 133). Both seek to associate and localise interior phenomena according to the topographical scheme of human anatomy: Jastrow proposes *libbu*, as the heart, as the site of intellect, and *kabattu*, as the liver, as the site of the emotions (1912: 155); Steinert moves towards a more nuanced, undifferentiated view where the specific role of each organ is less important than the fact that there was no division between the physical flesh and psychic process (2012: 232).

Both these approaches have interesting insights, but rely on an embedded anatomical model which, particularly in Jastrow’s case, uses Mesopotamian hepatomantic practices as evidence for the liver’s importance in the human body, thus implicitly equating ovine and human interiority. A glance at the pragmatics of these anatomical terms in Assyrian texts actually exceeds Steinert’s undifferentiation model. *Libbu* is the only term used to refer to human interiority in regular language: *kabattu* appears only twice, in the generic blessing *nummur kabatti* ‘brightening of the liver,’ both times in letters written by scholars heavily steeped in Standard Babylonian literary language.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, *karšu* ‘stomach’ is only used to refer to the stomachs of animals in lists of goods, never to that of humans.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ SAA 10 no. 97, obv. 3’-5’, Akkullanu to Esarhaddon *ulšu baltu ḥidutu melulu u nummur kabatti ana šarri beliya lu taqiš* ‘May she gift the king my lord delight, pride, joy, play, and brightening of the liver’; no. 197 rev. 13-18, Adad-šumu-ušur to Esarhaddon *ṭub libbi ṭub širi nummur kabatti... ana šarri beliya liqišu* ‘May they gift the king my lord goodness of interior, goodness of flesh, brightening of the liver...’

¹⁰⁷ For example, in lists of offerings made at the Aššur temple, SAA 7 no. 197, obv. 3 *ša 1 GUD kar-šú UR5.ÚŠ BIR-MEŠ ŠÀ* ‘of 1 ox: the stomach, liver, kidneys, heart’; cf. no. 201, obv. 3, no. 203, 206, and others following. I have reproduced a transliteration to further demonstrate the documentary function of the text. Rather than transmuting an oral utterance into written form, to be read out at a later date, this administrative list uses a terse ideographic written register more suited to taking notes.

Thus, during the Neo-Assyrian period *libbu* was the only word used to describe human interiority explicitly, and attempting to map psychic phenomena according to our contemporary concepts are at best anachronistic.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, mappings of the interior are highly variable cross-culturally: the Tzeltal of Cancun Mexico see seventeen souls to one being; the Dogon in Mali count eight (Descola 2013: 120). Words do not map neatly to English concepts either: for example, Tamil *ullam* ‘spans the distance between the English “mind” and “heart”’ (Pandian 2010: 74). In mid-first millennium Assyria, *libbu* was the exclusive term used to describe interior space in Neo-Assyrian everyday discourse. How are we to understand how the Assyrian interior space was conceptualised?

Firstly, the word *libbu* is not restricted to a human context. It is most often attested in prepositional constructions: {*ina|ana|issu*} *libbi* X, roughly ‘{in(to)|at|with|from|out of}’ the *libbu* of X. In this position, we can see that a wide variety of objects can be described as possessing a *libbu*: items can be located within built containers such as *betu* ‘house’ or *eleppu* ‘boat,’ shading into geographical zones such as cities (which can be construed as built containers if they possess a city-wall), *tahumu* ‘border,’ *matu* ‘land,’ *midbaru* ‘steppe.’ Single instances could be extracted from the *libbu* of mass or collective objects, such as groups of people,¹⁰⁹ or quantities of goods like gold or wool. More abstractly, words and messages were contained *ina libbi egirte* ‘within a tablet,’ or *ina libbi le’i*, ‘within a wooden writing-board.’¹¹⁰ Whilst these terms were highly conventional, they do indicate that in its most general aspect *libbu* indexes an interior of some kind, which extended even to the use of *libbu* to describe time periods,¹¹¹ a concept without a clear physical correlate.

Contrasted with this spatial or temporal use is the sense of *libbu* translated as ‘heart’—a human attribute which, like the metaphorical ‘heart’ we are familiar with, was closely associated with affect, thought and other interior processes. This seems mostly irreconcilable with the purely prepositional meaning of *libbu*: all that they share is a spatial, ‘interior’ aspect. However, rather than specifically separating the human *libbu* from the prepositional *libbu a priori* based on our own cultural assumptions (and then contemplating whether houses, tablets and days have ‘hearts’), let us vacate

¹⁰⁸ As Descola notes, even the contemporary West has a profusion of differing interior maps, from the Christian soul to the Freudian trinity *inter alia* (2013: 120).

¹⁰⁹ E.g., SAA 1 no. 11; *issen LÚ.NAGAR.MEŠ issu libbišunu*; see also no. 96.

¹¹⁰ SAA 1 no. 233, obv. 23-24 *ki ša ina libbi egerte ša šarri beliya ša[ti]runi etapaš* ‘As that the king my lord wrote in the *libbu* of the tablet, I have done’; no. 192, rev. 3-4 *ammar reḥuni ina libbi le’i assaṭar* ‘As many as remained I wrote in the *libbu* of a wooden writing-board.’

¹¹¹ Most frequently *umu* ‘day’, e.g., SAA 1 no. 64 obv. 9 *ina libbi ud.3.kam* ‘on the 3rd.’

our understanding of the human ‘heart’ and consider *libbu* almost literally, as the zone bounded by the envelope of the human body.

Privacy

Like the *libbu* of a protected place, a fortified space, the *libbu* of the human being was treated as variably permeable: only those authorised were able to access it freely. Subjects could talk either with (*{itti|issu}*) or in (*ina*) the *libbu* attributed to them without restriction.¹¹² Otherwise, access to a subject’s *libbu* was authorised either through consent, or derived from the authority of the accessor’s office (kingship or divinity). Forcefully transgressing the boundary through violence was imagined with horror as a terrible fate:

dektu ay[a]ši libbi ikaššad
Slaughter will reach my interior.

SAA 5 no. 46, rev. 7, client king to Sargon

In this letter, an unidentified client ruler writes to Sargon about the difficulties he is having with a neighbouring potentate; according to the sender, his adversary is attacking his towns, taking his people and slandering his reputation. Worse, instead of revealing the *temu* of his terrible acts, he refuses to communicate.¹¹³ Without Sargon’s intervention, his adversary’s attacks will penetrate right to the very heart of this client’s kingdom—to the client’s interior itself.

The sender uses uncommon language to emphasise the agency of his oppressor and problematise his actions. Firstly, he reports his own words to his oppressor: *ale milikka* ‘where is your sense?’ (obv. 12’), before repeating twice that his tormentor does not provide *temu*. As we have seen, *milku* and *temu* were portrayed as positive attributes of authority in the Standard Babylonian dialect royal inscriptions;¹¹⁴ we might posit that a client king might be familiar with the ceremonial trappings of his far more powerful suzerain. Rather than accusing the other party outright of lacking these things (and thus casting them in an ‘enemy’ role), the sender suggestively highlights that his oppressor is not demonstrating these aspects when dealing with him. This implicitly reinforces the power relationships between the sender, his tormentor, and Sargon, drawing out their differential access to intention and interiority. Whilst the clients are in a fraught relationship, and the sender from his

¹¹² This was not necessarily a fully ‘transparent’ or passive relationship: one needed to actively *talk* with the interior and thus solicit ‘thought’ or feeling in a process.

¹¹³ *temumma la išakkan* ‘he does not establish *temu*’ (obv. 13’).

¹¹⁴ P.57.

point of view is the victim of a senseless attack, Sargon, by dint of his authority and perspective, can see the *temu* and *milku* of the situation, intercede, and change it.

Having set up a context foregrounding *temu*, *milku*, and correct access and exercise of these interiorly associated attributes, the sender's description of his fate if Sargon ignores his plea is given particular punch. His oppressor will reach his *libbu*, an access cast as the ultimate transgression, a fate where *temu*, *milku* and Sargon are nowhere to be seen.

That the *libbu* of a human being was indeed a special and protected place, whose access by unauthorised parties was a horror, is underlined by one of the curses in Esarhaddon's succession treaty. Unlike the situation described above, the treaty curses, activated upon the breaking of its covenant, were granted untrammelled authority. Thus, their access to the *libbu* of the oathbreakers was indeed legitimate, allowing this fate to be inflicted:

ki ša libbu ša ḥuppi raquni libbikunu liriqū

Just as the interior of a hole is empty, may your interior be empty.

SAA 2 no. 6, obv. 641-642

Situated within the context of many awful fates, this *libbu* curse epitomises the most undesirable state of affairs: an interior as empty as a hole. The text swiftly moves on and thus we as readers do not get any further elaboration of what this 'emptiness' entails: whether it refers to a prosaic empty stomach, or a more spiritual void. However, the uses of *libbu* throughout the rest of the text are instructive:

ina ketti ša libbikunu issišu la tadabbubani milku damqu ša gammurti libbikunu la tamallikašuni

[If] you do not speak with him in the truth of your interior, if you do not counsel him good counsel that is of the completeness of your interior...

SAA 2 no. 6, obv. 51-53; cf. obv. 98-99

šabani ša barti eppašuniššuni ina gammurti libbikunu la tādūkani

[If] you do not kill, in the completeness of your interior, the force that committed rebellion against him...

SAA 2 no. 6, obv. 169-170

This pair of examples are illustrative of a phrase that is repeated throughout the treaty: {*ša|ina*} *gammurti* (Babylonian *gummurti*) *libbikunu*, literally 'that/in the completeness of your interior.' It is telling that this is repeated multiple times, in contexts that do not necessarily require it: though it might appear to function as an emphatic, additional gloss, it rather underlines the absolute

control and commitment the Assyrians demanded. The totality of the individual, not just the exterior that could be perceived through the senses, but the interior as well, needed to obey and implement the terms of the treaty. The recognition of the disjuncture between exterior and interior, and the need for both to be with Assyria, is even more evident in this clause:

šumma attunu ki ina qaqqar tamiti annitu tazazani tamitu ša dababti šapti tattamani ina gummurti libbikunu la tatammani...

If you stand on the place of this oath, and swear an oath that is talk of the lips, and you do not swear in the completeness of your interior...

SAA 2 no.6, obv. 385-387

Here, a contrast between spoken talk—*dababti šapti* ‘talking of the lips’—and completeness of interior is explicitly recognised. Swearing only with the lips is grounds for divine punishment. The terms of the treaty need to be implemented in the subjects’ interiors, and to dissemble, to speak without cultivating the corresponding interior state, is to unleash hell. The Assyrian treaty-writers insisted on this sincerity, using the powerful tool of the oath to ensure it. The quality of this demanded sincerity is particularly interesting: one recent definition of sincerity describes it as a state

achieved when feelings, thoughts, and intentions are matched by exterior, spontaneous speech that expresses that interiority without the mediation of persons, things, and other people’s words.

Haeri 2017: 123-4

This definition reflects the extended engagement of the anthropology of Christianity with the question of what sincerity is. Particularly worth highlighting are the emphasis on spontaneity and a lack of external mediation.¹⁵ By contrast, the stipulation in the Assyrian treaty is fundamentally mediating: its words, its oath are ostensibly the external creations of the Assyrian royal scribes. Yet the oath must be fully internalised (*ina gammurti libbi*), and not under duress. This already seems to modify our understanding of ancient Assyrian interiority and subjectivity: individuals were perfectly capable of sincerely expressing oaths in words devised by others. However, rather than this being a kind of indoctrination, dissimulation or doublethink, we can conceptualise this logic

¹⁵ See also Robbins 2004, where he explores the hybridisation of an Urapmin ‘opaque mind’ ethics with the demands of Christian subjectivity and morality (which, like the Assyrian, emphasise internal transparency with external conjuncture). Robbins 2004: 225 is particularly useful for the transformation of interiority to accord with a Christian ethics, and note the ‘peaceful heart’ achieved by the ‘renunciation of ‘will,’ which bears striking correspondences with the effacement of *ramanu* and the promotion of *libbu šīb* (p.148).

through a *temu*-inspired lens: as the flow of divine *temu* proceeds through human agents, and especially the organisation that was the state of Aššur, so a subject's *libbu* could express *ina gammurti libbi* obeisance to Aššur. This oath would indeed be their own, coming from their interior, because if this oath was the divine *temu* of the gods, then those swearing the oath and those imposing it would both have sincerely drawn the words out from their *libbu* separately: two parties reaching the same conclusion from the same divine *temu*.

We can glean two further insights from this. The first is that, ironically for a 'totalitarian' state, personal autonomy and interior integrity was valued. Recall Esarhaddon's pride in having a potential enemy swear fealty to Assyria *ki temešuma* 'according to his own *temu*'; similarly, the treaty-writers wanted everything sworn *ina gammurti libbi*. To be without this kind of interior capability—to have an interior as empty as a hole—was a worthy punishment and grievous fate therefore: the implication is that with an empty *libbu*, one cannot do anything sincerely, one cannot *libbu √dbb*, 'speak with the interior.' The *libbu* was not to be coerced or transgressed by force: as the client king of SAA 5 no. 46 laments, this is a violation associated with death.

These emerging concepts of personal integrity and sincerity feed into our second important insight, concerning the consequences of a *libbu* that is not completely with Assyria. This is explicitly pointed at in the treaty clause that is the epigraph to this chapter:

šumma attunu... abutu la ṭabtu ša Aššur-bani-apli mar-šarri rabu ša bit-reduti ina libbikunu tašakkanani
 If you place a word of not-goodness of Assurbanipal the great son of the king of the House of Succession in your interior...

SAA 2 no. 6, obv. 180-185

The interior of the human could be perceived or penetrated neither arbitrarily nor easily. It could be reached by 'slaughter,' but this meant the death of the subject with whom the *libbu* was associated. For an organisation dedicated to bringing about the *temu* of Aššur, slaughtering everyone to get at their interior would have proven counterproductive.¹¹⁶ Hence, the treaty oath, and the policing of the interior space via that means.

¹¹⁶ As we shall see, the Assyrian rulers rather favoured living people with *libbu √ṭ'b* 'good interior' getting on with their work. See also Rosenzweig 2016: 311ff.

ramanka ušur

Guard your *ramanu*!

The cleavage of the Assyrian ‘self’ between a speaking subject and a *libbu* associated with them is further complicated by subjects also being associated with a *ramanu*. *Ramanu*, confusingly translated ‘self’ by most editors, represented an alternative source of intentional action, differentiated from the *libbu* or the *temu* of self or deity. *Temu*, when associated with the self, was an abstract attribute; *libbu* was a location, a storehouse, a communicative partner. The *ramanu* was not identified with either of these things: unlike *libbu*, things did not go in or out of it, it could not be good ($\sqrt{t'b}$), broken (\sqrt{hp}), or otherwise affected. Steinert notes that *ramanu* substitutes for a reflexive pronoun, which the Akkadian language does not possess (Steinert 2012: 257).

Ramanu instead was associated with the practice of \sqrt{nsr} , ‘guarding, protecting,’ implying a further association with aspects of self-integrity:

maššartu ša ramenikunu ušra
Guard the guard of your *ramanu*

SAA 19 no. 1, obv. 13-14, Tiglath-pileser to the Babylonians

maššarti ša ramnišu šarra liššur
Let the king guard the guard of his *ramanu*

SAA 8 no. 387, Rašil the older *tupšar Enuma Anu Enlil* to Esarhaddon¹¹⁷

šulum ramanka hussu
Be mindful of the wellbeing of your *ramanu*

SAA 18 no. 64, rev. 5-6, Bel-upaq to his father Kuna

The same self-operation—care of the *ramanu*—is being exhorted across three different power relationships: the first is a letter from the Assyrian king to his Babylonian supporters in the midst of a conflict for supremacy in that city. The second is an astrological report to the Assyrian king from a scholar specialising in celestial omens: this expression of guarding the royal *ramanu* was thus an exhortation in the face of potential cosmic threat. Finally, the last example is from a letter defined

¹¹⁷ See also SAA 8, no. 386 obv. 10-11, no. 399, rev. 1-2 for more letters by Rašil; SAA 18 no. 92, rev. 7-8;

exclusively with kinship terminology, showing that the concept of guarding *ramanu* was consistent across several social spheres.¹¹⁸

The association of a subject's wellbeing with the *ramanu* is further underlined by passages associating it with 'bare' life processes:

ma rameni la ušarra
ma qaqqad urḫi šu
ma kusapi lakul karani lassi

Imagined direct speech of Esarhaddon in the future
3.QUOT I will not starve my *ramanu*
3.QUOT It is the beginning of the month
3.QUOT I shall eat crumbs and drink wine

SAA 10 no. 43, obv. 18-rev. 4, Balasi and Nabu-aḫḫe-eriba, astrologers, to Esarhaddon

urdani ša šarri iqabbuni
ma šarru muḫur alik ramanka ballit

The servants of the king speak to me
3.QUOT Go, face the king, vivify your *ramanu*

SAA 13 no. 66, Urdu-Nabu, *sangu*-priest, to Esarhaddon

In both of these letters the authors link the *ramanu* to life processes. The first is a letter from two scholars to Esarhaddon imploring him to take food and drink. They do this by using the device of future speech, which allows them to safely and appropriately project their wishes through an imagined, inchoate future state of affairs.¹¹⁹ A kind of reflexivity is created through the future king's voice uttering 'I will not starve my *ramanu*'—the king acts on an object associated with his self, rather than simply 'starving.' This formulation thus attributes agency to the king whilst at the same time implicitly linking the *ramanu* to the life process of food consumption. The second example

¹¹⁸ See also p.225.

¹¹⁹ See p.198.

makes the link between the *ramanu* and life explicit, with the imperative *ballit* 'vivify,' in quoted medical advice the author received about how to deal with an illness he was suffering.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Though there is no space to explore further, it is striking that an audience with the king was described (albeit in unspecific voice) as possessing vivifying properties. This evokes belief in the 'sacred touch' of European monarchs in the Mediaeval period (Marc Léopold Benjamin Bloch 1973: 3); Sahlins suggests royal powers more generally were derived from a 'usurpation' of divine power (Sahlins 2017: 60).

2.2 Completeness of the Interior

The Men of Na'id-Marduk

Recognition of human psychic privacy as a locus of agency and a locus of threat meant that, as with the exterior, earthly territories Aššur sought to envelop, the internal landscape of the *libbu* also needed to be completely for Aššur: *libbu √gmr*. We have already encountered this phrase repeatedly in Esarhaddon's official succession treaty, but it is also tellingly deployed in epistolary discourse. Subjects caught in situations of varying stakes make this claim about themselves, or even others: a Babylonian scholar recommends a candidate to rule Borsippa whose *libbu* is completely for Assyria;¹²¹ the Assyrian king's personal *ašipu*-exorcist praises him; a supposed criminal submits his *libbu* to be crushed by the king's chariot; the men of Na'id-Marduk desperately advertise his pro-Assyrian *libbu* during his ouster by the Elamites. In all of these situations the author believed that emphasising the *libbu √gmr* would be efficacious. Indeed, considering the frequent specification *ina gammurti libbi* in the clauses of Esarhaddon's succession treaty, such statements would certainly have drawn the king's notice.

We return to the Sealand, caught between Babylonia, Assyria and Elam. The tribal elders of the region repeatedly sent letters to Esarhaddon's palace begging for military support for their seemingly missing leader, Na'id-Marduk, in the face of Elamite attempts to install their own, anti-Assyrian candidate in the region. Unlike the previous missives, which emphasised the imminent Elamite threat, the authors here focus on the character of Na'id-Marduk himself:

ki nišmu libbi ša šarri ana muḥḥi belini šeḥtu niptalaḥ
umma ḥiṭu ša belini ina pan šarri yanu
ina libbi ša šeru u kašu umu Šamaš u Bel ana balaṭi napšati ša šarri belišu ušallu u libbašu itti šarri belišu qatu

When we heard that the *libbu* of the king our lord jumped up concerning our lord, we were *√plḥ*

QUOT There is no crime that is our lords before the king.

During the morning and evening every day he beseeches Šamaš and Bel for the life and breath of the king his lord, and his *libbu* is completely with the king, his lord.

SAA 18 no. 88, [the men of Na'id-Marduk] to Esarhaddon, rev. 3'-10'

In their concern with establishing a case for Assyrian military support, the senders of this letter narrate an argument deeply invested in interior state. Despite their insistence that there is no reason

¹²¹ Further examples include SAA 10 no. 118, rev. 5 *libbašu ana mat Aššur gummur* 'his interior is completely for the land of Assur.'

for the king to be angry (and this is insisted upon in indirect language), the affects described are appropriate and idealised. Esarhaddon is described as having *libbu šeh̄tu*, ‘jumping interior,’¹²² seemingly a prerogative of the king.¹²³ In response, the authors practice the appropriate \sqrt{plh} ,¹²⁴ before advancing their case that Na’id-Marduk is the ideal Assyrian client: Na’id-Marduk prays constantly, and *libbašu itti šarri qatu*. Here, *qatu* (\sqrt{qt}) is similar in meaning to \sqrt{gmr} , emphasising a complete totality of devotion. Thus, we get an idea of common conceptions of an idealised Assyrian subject: interiority and action were combined into a unified gesture dedicated to the wellbeing of the king, and thus Aššur.

The authors’ engagement with interior states does not end there, but proceeds to a paean praising the *libbu* of Esarhaddon’s royal father, before shading into direct quotations drawing on his ancient authority:

abuka ša ana la šarrane gabbi patu u putqudu libbu aga iqabbi
umma ina Akkadi u matati gabbi šibuta ya’nu
ki la ki ina libbišu Na’id-Marduk enna šarru la iqabbi
umma Na’id-Marduk ilten šu
1-me 1-lim šabe šu

Your father, of whom the *libbu* was open and attentive to all the non-kings, spoke thus:¹²⁵

QUOT In Akkad and all the lands there is no desire of mine.

Whether or not Na’id-Marduk was in his interior, now the king should not speak

QUOT Na’id-Marduk, he is one

He is one hundred thousand troops.

SAA 18 no. 88, [the men of Na’id-Marduk] to Esarhaddon, rev. 12’-19’

The quotational strategies used in this letter are a creative and ambivalent manipulation of a typical device used for bolstering authority, the citation of the words of royal ancestors.¹²⁶ The authors open

¹²² CAD separates out *šahaṭu* ‘to jump’ and *šahaṭu* ‘to be angry’ into separate headwords A and C, the latter only having three citations. I find this unconvincing.

¹²³ This is emblematic of a socially determined distribution of affective expression. Expressions of affects such as ‘anger’ were particularly associated with socially powerful subjects, such as the king of Assyria; by contrast, the emotion \sqrt{plh} was practiced by all subjects in the Assyrian order, but was intertwined within specific social relationships, rather than a basic affect.

¹²⁴ \sqrt{plh} , commonly translated ‘to fear’ or ‘to revere’, is the most frequently mentioned emotions in the Assyrian material, and was one of the central emotions driving the Assyrian state; see p.131 for full discussion.

¹²⁵ Reynolds translates this passage differently, taking *libbu* as prepositional and thus having ‘Your father, who was more attentive and circumspe[ct] than all (other) kings...’. Mark Weeden suggests that the placement of *la* must mean that it is *šarrane* that is negated, thus requiring *libbu* to be translated substantively and resulting in the present, very attractive interpretation.

¹²⁶ See p.182.

with direct reported speech attributed to Sennacherib, seemingly implying he was speaking on the topic of Na'id-Marduk. However, the authors then immediately distance themselves from speculating on the intentions behind his words with the equivocal *ki la ki ina libbišu* 'Whether or not [he] was in his interior.' This reminds us of the Elamite messenger's sinister speech to the Elders of the Sealand: the Elamites would install their candidate *ina ĥudikunu u ina la ĥudikunu* 'in your joy or not in your joy.' In both cases, it implies a disregard: the Elamites of the Sealander's feelings, and the authors of SAA 18 no. 88 of Sennacherib's intentions. It is a complex manoeuvre for these authors: on the one hand, it implies a certain propriety in refraining to attach intentions to, speculate on the contents of, penetrate the *libbu* of, a king of Assyria. On the other hand, the authors extensively engage in describing Sennacherib's *libbu* in positive terms, characterising it as 'open,' which perhaps offers some explanation as to why they felt they might describe this king's interior in the first place. Nevertheless, it is a masterful example of the artful framing of discourse whilst maintaining decorum and status relationships.

Adad-šumu-ušur's Devotion

Moving from a geopolitical to a domestic scope, we now meet a healer working closely with royal bodies. Adad-šumu-ušur was an *ašipu*, a practitioner who battled invisible, intentional agents who do not fall easily into our ontology—what we would call 'supernatural' forces, demons, witches and angry gods. Together with experts from four other learned disciplines,¹²⁷ he formed the 'inner circle' of counsellors who resided at the royal court, a traditional fixture of Mesopotamian kingship (Frahm 2011: 516 ff.; Parpola 1993 pp. xxv-xxvi). As part of his role, Adad-šumu-ušur had privileged access to the king's body, dealing with his various ailments, which, in Esarhaddon's case, included chronic mental distress, seizures, and disfigured skin (Radner 2003: 169). Furthermore, as a healing professional vying with malady-causing deities and spirits, he was probably conceived of as a powerful agent in his own right (Worthington 2010). Here, he describes his manifest dedication to the king in a letter rich with praise:

anaku karib šarri beliya ina pan šarri beliya lazzizma ina gummurti libbiya ina aḥiya laplah kima aḥiya etanḥa ina kišir ammatiya emuqiya lugammir

¹²⁷ These were: *ašutu*, healing through herbal and physical therapies; *tušarrutu*, the reading of celestial (astrological) and terrestrial omens; *barutu*, querying the divine through ritual sacrifice of a lamb and examination of its entrails; *kalutu*, professional lamenters who appeased spirits and the divine through ritual (Parpola 1971: 12-15).

I, precant of the king my lord, may I stand before the king my lord, may I \sqrt{plh} him with my arms in the completeness of my interior, and when my arms are weary may I complete my strength in the clasping of my elbows.

SAA 10 no. 198, rev. 1-8, Adad-šumu-ušur to Esarhaddon/Assurbanipal

Adad-šumu-ušur conveys his body as one totally devoted to the king. He exercises the correct affective subjectivity towards his superior, \sqrt{plh} , in the completeness of his *libbu*. But not only is his interior completely (*gummurti*) marshalled towards \sqrt{plh} , he describes his body as physically in the presence of the king, blessing him with prayer—using his mouth—and adopting penitent gestures, utilising his physical strength completely, *lugammir*. Now, the circumstances prompting this panegyric missive are unclear, although the language of the ancient scholars has been frequently characterised by their modern counterparts as being particularly (over)emotional as a result of their precarious position e.g. Radner 2011: 365. Nevertheless, this presentation of an ‘ideal’ subject suggests a complete unity of embodied devotion towards the king.¹²⁸

In a similar vein, we find a peculiar petition to Esarhaddon from an unknown author, who describes himself as the author of a terrible crime, a recipient of undeserved mercy, and a deeply devoted subject:

hiṭu dannu ina bet beleya aḥtiṭi ša duaki anaku la ša balluṭi anaku

I committed a great transgression in the house of my lords; I am for dying, I am not for living.

šarru beli remu ana kalbišu issakan ina kume anaku mina ana šarri beliya ušallim

The king my lord established mercy for his dog—what conciliating have I done for the king my lord in stead?

libbi aḥiya šepeya ina šapal muḡir ša šarri beliya šakin

My interior, my arms, my feet are placed beneath the chariot of the king my lord.

kayyamanu enatiya issi šarri beliya šakna u kayyamanu mar-šarri beli libbu išakkananni

My eyes are constantly fixed on the king, my lord, and constantly the son of the king my lord establishes interior for me.

SAA 16 no. 36, obv. 7'-8', unassigned to Esarhaddon

This enumeration of body and gesture mirrors that of Adad-šumu-ušur's above: *libbu* and *aḥe*, interior and arms, but also *šepe*, feet, and instead of standing, the petitioner places his attributes beneath the chariot of the king. Even more than Adad-šumu-ušur, this professes a complete submission, where even the *libbu*-interior, an attribute not really characterised with any physical

¹²⁸ Also of note is the fact that scholars frequently needed to schedule face-to-face personal interactions with the king, which may also account for the florid description of the totally devoted Adad-šumu-ušur.

materiality, is given place beneath the chariot. The man's gaze is locked onto the king, evoking a sensorial gesture in the same register as Adad-šumu-ušur's vocalised blessing. We can consider these dramatically described gestures, and praise delivered to superiors in Assyria, in light of Appadurai's insights about the topography of the Hindu self (1990). He notes that Hindu praise 'often appears exaggerated, formal, and unrelated to the emotional interior of the person who praises' (1990: 105-6), but to see praise as concerned with reflecting an 'authentic' inner state is to misunderstand its purpose. rather, seemingly 'hyperbolic' praise is a skilful art related to the Sanskrit aesthetic tradition of *rasa*, the creation of an interdependent field of sentiment. This interdependent field of sentiment is thus one where gestures, acts and deeds generate a shared, durative and interpersonal 'situational affect,' one not defined by linguistic representation of an 'authentic' interior state, but fundamentally embedded in relationship and shared intentionality.¹²⁹

Here, at least, expressions of praise are also accompanied by statements of describing extremely loyal inner state. Whilst we might similarly be sceptical of just how 'sincere' Adad-šumu-ušur is about his feelings, to do so would be to perhaps miss the point that although the Assyrians recognised the disjuncture between interiority and exteriority and the possibilities for insincerity, that discontinuity is completely elided here through the homogenisation of *libbu* and gesture, interior and exterior. In a sense, this perfectly homogenised interior-exterior relationship mirrors the Assur-Aššur relationship: one the town, one the empire, both different aspects of a unity.

Concluding the latter letter is the phrase *mar-šarri beli libbu išakkananni*: 'the son of the king my lord establishes interior for me.' This fascinating phrase, often translated just as 'encouraged,' suggests more complex *libbu*-characteristics. Firstly, it portrays an operation upon *libbu* by a third party, but this is an operation that retains the bounded integrity of *libbu*. More pointedly, *libbu* in this phrase usually carries no personal possessive pronoun: grammatically, it appears to be independent, neither the *mar-šarri's libbu* nor the author's. Finally, the use of the verb $\sqrt{\text{škn}}$ 'place, establish' in this construction is telling, paralleling the expression *temu* $\sqrt{\text{škn}}$ discussed previously.¹³⁰ If *temu* $\sqrt{\text{škn}}$ takes an intention in a subjective form and transmutes it into a communicated order

¹²⁹ Brenneis explores the notion of 'situational affect' in reference to the Fiji Indian development of *rasa-bhava* theory into *bhaw*, which unites a prefixed affect, situation, display, and experience (Brenneis 1995: 244-245).

¹³⁰ P.46.

for implementation, what does *libbu* $\sqrt{\text{škn}}$ do?¹³¹ For an exploration of this question we must wait until chapter three, which sets *libbu* $\sqrt{\text{škn}}$ in a wider repertoire of imperial interiority management techniques.

¹³¹ I am assuming *libbu* is not to be taken in a 'literal' sense and Assyrians were not piling bloody hearts and innards on each other.

2.3 A Storehouse of Words: Libbu, Loyalty and Sincerity

*Bel u Zarpanitu Nabu u Marduk igigallu lu idu ki dibbi mala ina šipirti aga ana šarri
belini nišpura gabbi la kinu libbina*

Bel and Zarpanitu, Nabu and Marduk the wise know that the words, as many as we have sent to the king our lord in this letter, if they are all not true, of our interior.¹³²

Killing the enemies of the Assyrian king, speaking the truth of one's *libbu*, giving him advice from the *libbu*, swearing an oath to him from the *libbu*—to have one's exterior and interior attributes synchronised and serving the Assyrian king was an emphatic desideratum for the rulers of the Empire. However, this emphasis on complete and free submission did not only apply to the arguably exceptional and cosmically dangerous occasion of the royal succession, but appears time and again in the correspondence. These moments shed further light on *libbu* interiority, particularly its politically pertinent points.

As we have seen, the *ade* gave special consideration to *abutu la tabtu* 'not good words' being placed in the *libbu*.¹³³ We find similar ideas of words being placed in the *libbu*, and indeed moving in and out of them. The first example, the epigraph above, comes from a letter written by the sheikhs of Tubliaš, a border region between Babylonia and the kingdom of Elam. During Sargon's reign, Elam and Assyria violently contended for supremacy over southern Mesopotamia; the letter thus originates from a volatile and war-torn region. In this joint letter, the senders describe a messy situation where they require the king's military support in the face of a traitorous potentate who is out for *tukte*, 'revenge.'

Though the specific details of the situation are unimportant, tellingly the senders close the letter swearing by the gods that all their *dibbi* ('words') are *libbina*, 'of our interior.' That they chose to close their letter with such a statement implies what a powerful claim it must have been. It suggests that not only were words situated in/from the *libbu* sincere words, but they were also strongly associated with truth ($\sqrt{k'n}$).¹³⁴ Considering the importance assigned to the words of the treaty-oath

¹³² SAA 17 no. 152, rev. 22-rev. edge 26, Abi-yaqiya and the other sheikhs of Tubliaš to Sargon

¹³³ SAA 2 no. 6, obv. 180 ff. discussed above.

¹³⁴ 'Sincere' works as a gloss here, but we should be aware of the specificity of the term to Protestant Christianity. Keane characterises it as making available an 'inner self' to a specific other, without external compulsion (2002: 75). Though here Abi-yaqiya *et al.* emphasise truth, they are not asserting that the words represent an interior state.

being sworn *ina gammurti libbi*, the association of words located in the *libbu* with truth is unsurprising.

On a different scale but in similar vein, Akkullanu, the high priest of the Aššur temple, writes to Esarhaddon concerning expiatory rites against cosmic evil. After a fusillade of objurgation directed against other scholars and their bad advice, he writes:

šutu anaku dibbimma annute issu libbiya uttassiq

muk ina pan šarri adabbub ina muḫḫi abaki ša lumni ša Subarti

I chose these very words from my interior

1.QUOT I will talk before the king concerning the leading away of the evil of Su[bartu]

SAA 10 no. 90, rev. 21'-right edge 22', Akkullanu to Assurbanipal

Though at first glance the context appears less 'life-or-death' to us than that of a theatre of war, the ritual duties of the scholars were of profound importance to the wellbeing of the Assyrian order, and thus the world. Here, Akkullanu writes that the words that originate from his *libbu* are not words relating to the specific rites to be conducted, but rather, his *intention* that he will speak before the king about them. *Libbu* is thus further implicated in the operation of directed action. Here, we see a self-narrative of the formulation of a future action, originating as *dibbu* in the *libbu*, and framed as direct speech with the NA first-person quotative particle *nuk*. Akkullanu goes on to describe how he sent these words to the king, thus narrating a transmission chain of authentic words from his *libbu* to the king.

That Akkullanu's words describe his future intentions begs the question as to why he does not mention *ṭemu* once. As it happened, Akkullanu ended his letter with lament that he had not, in fact, been able to speak to the king: his narrated intentions had been stymied. Scholars were unable to gain an audience save at the king's pleasure, thus their ability to shift *ṭemu* from intent to event was negligible in this relationship. Rather than describing his words as *ṭemu*, drawing attention to his conflicting plans vis-a-vis the king, Akkullanu emphasises only the sincerity of his words. Indeed, by downplaying their effectiveness, he creates a certain pathos from his powerlessness. The absence of *ṭemu* here then is further evidence for a differential 'regime of *ṭemu*.'

Interior Dialogue

The last decades of the nineteenth century saw a “move toward [envisioning thought as] *a kind of inner speech... more authentic than conventional language*” (Sass 1992: 184; emphasis added). V. N. Volosinov, a Soviet-era linguist who has influenced recent linguistic anthropology, indeed described thought as inner speech. although thought is (to Volosinov) a kind of speech, speech may have but an unsure connection with mind.

(Wilce 2009: 146)

Despite Akkullanu’s words from his *libbu* failing to effect intent into event, the source of his *dibbi* was clearly important enough to emphasise. Indeed, the association of words with the *libbu* was strong. The *libbu* was not only a passive storehouse for words, *dibbu* or *abutu*, but it was conceptualised as an active participant in dialogue. The idea of *libbu* √*dbb*, to talk with the *libbu*, is pervasive and unremarkable, appearing throughout the Assyrian letter corpus. Indeed, to not engage in dialogue with the *libbu* could be considered peculiar, as Sargon queries:

issi libbika la tadbubu
ma ki našu rešišunu illakanni
ma paniya ina beti mannu ašakkan

Did you not talk with your interior
3.QUOT When the time comes for me to summon them
3.QUOT to whose house will I go for help?

SAA 1 no. 11, obv. 13-14, Sargon to Mannu-ki-Adad

Writing to a governor of his in the east, Sargon upbraids him for reassigning men under his care to military duty. As part of his rebuke, couched in a counterfactual query, he speculates why Mannu-ki-Adad did not ask his *libbu* about the eventual negative outcome: the king summoning these men. This suggests a rich theory of mind: Sargon is free to speculate upon the *libbu*-self dialogue that could—and in his opinion should—have taken place.¹³⁵ We may notice, however, that not only is Sargon in a great position of authority, which potentially grants him such access to speculativity, but more generally that the contents of Mannu-ki-Adad’s *libbu* are not being directly accessed: its integrity is maintained as it is cast in this dialogue. Consequently, this does not contradict the idea that *libbu* was normally impenetrable.

¹³⁵ The acceptability of ‘talking with oneself’ is not constant cross-culturally, as Kuipers shows in his study on Weyewa speakers on the island of Sumba in eastern Indonesia (1992: 95). The *li’i* ‘word’ was granted to ancestors, who gifted it to their descendants, creating a chain of social obligations of exchange (1992: 101); in this context, autonomous dialogue with the self was situated outside the social exchanges of *li’i*, and was ‘an image of utter desolation... a sign of total despair or even insanity’ (1992: 95).

Nevertheless, although *libbu* √*dbb* was considered a normal activity, its affective valency was highly contextual. In a couple of circumstances, the process of interior dialogue resembles considered deliberation resulting in directed, intentional action:

ina muḫḫi sangi ša šarru beli išpurannini annurig šalšu ina ume anni issi libbišu iddubub ki anni iqtibia...
Concerning the priest that the king my lord wrote to me about, now today is the third day, he spoke with his interior and said to me like this...

SAA 10 no. 95, obv. 3-7, Akkullanu to Esarhaddon

In this letter, Akkullanu is describing a conversation he had with an unnamed *sangu*-priest about an unclear cultic topic. Recounting his own experience, Akkullanu describes the priest as engaging in a dialogue with his *libbu*. Keeping in mind the ideas about *libbu* proposed above, it is unlikely that Akkullanu was able to see and hear this dialogue occurring. Rather, he observed the priest's external state, and made his own speculations about his interior activity, just as Sargon does above. Again, the integrity of the priest's *libbu* is not compromised: only that he was having a dialogue with it is what Akkullanu says. Consequently, not only was speculation on *libbu* √*dbb* open, but this activity could occur in face-to-face interactions, and carry a neutral value.

An equally interesting example is to be found in a troop report. He describes the actions of some unknown subordinate trying to arrange the passage of sheep and oxen:

ume 5 ina Deri [kam]musu adu libbušu iqbaššuni [u]ssetiqāššunu
(The soldiers) stayed five days in Der until his interior spoke to him and he made them cross over.

SAA 15 no. 37, obv. 16'-18', Nabu-bel-ka'in, governor of Kar-Šarrukin, to Sargon

Again, we have a third party describing another's interior dialogue, but the construction of interior speech is quite unusual. Firstly, *libbu* is in subject position, emphasising that it is the active agent in this dialogue. Secondly, the verb is not √*dbb* 'to talk,' but √*qb* 'to speak, command': a *verbum dicendi* with greater connotation of purposeful speech.¹³⁶ How to explain this peculiar turn of phrase?

On the one hand, Nabu-bel-ka'in suggests a possibility that these words may be self-ascribed: he says he has sent the words of another letter written by the man in question. On the other hand, the quotation of his words, such as they are, is far less explicitly demarcated than, say, a letter quoted

¹³⁶ √*dbb* covered a wide range of speaking valencies; √*qb* was generally restricted to authoritative speech, and was the root from which *qibitu* 'command' was derived. See p.184ff.

in one of Sennacherib’s compilations to Sargon: throughout the primary voice is that of Nabu-bel-ka’in. Now, earlier in the narrative woven by Nabu-bel-ka’in is described some disagreement between him and this other man: the governor wants the sheep and oxen to graze in one place, the other man, another place. Nabu-bel-ka’in concedes, and sends out some troops to escort the sheep, who are then turned back by the other man due to attacks by unspecified enemies. Only once *libbušu iqbaššuni*, ‘his *libbu* spoke to him,’ is the process completed. Consequently, in light of the governor’s indulgence of the other man, and the drawn out attempts to have the livestock graze, it seems that Nabu-bel-ka’in is emphasising the other man’s wilfulness. Rather than talking with his *libbu*, *issu libbi* √*dbb*, his *libbu* is speaking to him. The reciprocity of the internal dialogue is dissolved: he acts according to what his *libbu* commands. As we shall see later, this is associated with wilfulness and desire—fine in certain contexts, but inherently dangerous when untrammelled.

Most occurrences of *libbu* √*dbb* were not quite so emphatic, instead describing a process of deliberation. This deliberation often appears in negative situations, such that *libbu* √*dbb* has had negative connotations imputed to it by translators. These renderings are most frequently favoured in letters from scholars to the king advising him on various cosmic dangers and apotropaic matters, for example:

ina muḥḥi la ṭub širi šarru beli issi libbišu la idabbub

The king my lord should not talk with his interior concerning this badness of flesh.

SAA 8 no. 1, obv. 6-7, Issar-šumu-ereš to Esarhaddon

In his rendition, Parpola translates this as ‘The king my lord need not worry about this illness,’ and in similar vein restores and translates *libbu* √*dbb* as ‘worry’ even in instances where it may not be warranted.¹³⁷ Ultimately though, *libbu* √*dbb* as ‘worry’ only incontrovertibly appears in letters to the king from scholars, a specific circumstance which we might reconsider.

¹³⁷ For example SAA 10 no. 43 rev. 8-9, *issi libbini niddubub niptalah* ‘we became worried and were afraid’ (Parpola’s translation), which could also be translated ‘we talked amongst ourselves’ (Mark Weeden *pers. comm.*). Similarly, SAA 10 no. 289, [*ša*] *mu’ate issi libbini ni[ddubub]* ‘we... worri[ed to] death.’

As we have already seen, *libbu* √*dbb*'s association with internal dialogue could possess a neutral affective valency; the translation as 'worry' arises because of its use in a context of cosmic danger. Though adequate, 'worry' as a translation masks the dialogical aspect of the phrase, and also obscures the deliberative aspect. A translation as 'talk with the interior' is not incompatible with Parpola's 'worry,' but rather adds to and nuances it. *Libbu* √*dbb* could represent both considered deliberation and an anxious worry at the same time, suggesting a conception of the valency of internal dialogue not necessarily corresponding to ours. Consider this further example:

ina muḫḫi tamarti anniti ša Sin šu issi libbiya addubub milki lu šu

I have been talking with my interior concerning this observation of the Moon: let this be my advice.

SAA 10 no. 240, rev. 15, Marduk-šakin-šumi to Esarhaddon

Parpola translates *libbu* √*dbb* as 'worry' here, which can make sense. However the valency of Marduk-šakin-šumi's dialogue about the lunar observation need not be negative at all, rather being a learned contemplation. We can compare this to Urad-Gula's letter requesting *ṭemu* we saw in the previous chapter.¹³⁸ Now, if we reconsider the senior scholar Issar-šumu-ereš telling the king *not* to speak with his interior about a disease, it is in this context that 'worry' makes the greatest sense. In this situation, Esarhaddon, talking with his interior about the disease, would not possess the same breadth of medical expertise as Issar-šumu-ereš; thus, the internal dialogue might potentially take on anxious aspects.¹³⁹ By contrast, it is appropriate for Issar-šumu-ereš to think upon medical matters, and indeed it is appropriate for all the scholars to discuss the matters of their discipline with their *libbus*. Similarly, it would have been appropriate for a soldier's *libbu* to tell him to make manoeuvres; for a governor to discuss his king's future actions. The valency of *libbu* √*dbb* then appears to link to position and expertise, bringing to mind the analogous social distribution of *ṭemu*.¹⁴⁰

Illuminating this further, we may return to a line in Esarhaddon's accession account we read in chapter one, where he is portrayed as criticising the self-concerned *ṭemu* of his brothers:¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ See p.48.

¹³⁹ There are terms for describing anxiety more explicitly, for example *ḫip libbi*, breaking of the interior, or *nakuttu* 'throbbing.' Both of these are suggestive of the embodied experience of *libbu*. See footnote 146 on p.92 for more on *nakuttu*.

¹⁴⁰ See p.57.

¹⁴¹ P.52.

itti libbiya atammuma uštabila kabatti umma

I debated with my interior and my 'liver' considered thoroughly QUOT

RINAP 4 Esarhaddon 1, col. i 32-33

Recalling that royal inscriptions are written in the archaising, literary Standard Babylonian dialect, the self-portrayal of Esarhaddon's interior dialogue bears striking similarities to the quotidian descriptions of such experiences in the correspondence, though couched in suitably portentous language. Instead of *libbu* \sqrt{dbb} we have the verb \sqrt{w} , a verb also meaning 'to speak' but one having passed into exclusively literary use centuries before.¹⁴² Similarly, we find *kabattu* in parallelism, a term used exclusively in literary texts to describe the bodily interior.¹⁴³ Nevertheless, this passage, despite its grandiloquence, provides an example of internal dialogue which is considered, deliberative and wise.

¹⁴² Though recall that this root was the basis for {*awatu|abatu|amatu*} 'word.'

¹⁴³ Interestingly, CAD K s.v. *kabattu* suggests that the word does not mean 'liver' at all and is due only to a misunderstood equivalence in the synonym list CT 18 9 K.4233+ (CAD K: p. 13).

2.4 The Permeable *libbu*

In and Out of the *Libbu*

We have now seen that the *libbu* was a key component of an Assyrian's ability to be deliberate, loyal, and utter truthful language. Furthermore, the *libbu* was protected: it could not be breached by force normally, and to be deprived of its contents was a powerful curse. However, the *libbu* was not a passive component of a human subject: it played a dialogical role in the formation of thought and speech, indicated by *libbu* \sqrt{dbb} , but also by Assyrian ideas of a 'permeable' *libbu*.

Two examples demonstrate a voluntary permeability of *libbu*, with the self being able to take action with respect to the *libbu*'s contents. As it happens, both examples concern scholars writing to the king advising him on words he shouldn't entertain. The first, from the high priest of the Aššur temple, is fairly straightforward:

šumu anniu siliate šutu šarru beli ina muḥḥi libbišu la išak[kanšu]

This omen, a lie it is. The king my lord must not place it in his interior

SAA 8 no. 101, rev. 2-3, Akkullanu to Esarhaddon

Akkullanu's letter is fairly straightforward, advising Esarhaddon not to place the words of a false omen in his *libbu*, an omen that the king could have heard from one of Akkullanu's colleagues. As we have already seen, the *libbu* was a location whence the truest words were derived; to be of complete *libbu* was to be utterly devoted; the forced violation of *libbu* was death. To place false words in the *libbu*, to take lies to heart, would be not only to fall for deception, but to accept the deception deeply within one's subjectivity. For the interior of the king of Assyria, the human apex of truth and order, to be sullied by untruth—inconceivable.

Adad-šumu-ušur's advice, by contrast, sheds more light on ideas of impermeability, providing explanation for why Esarhaddon should take his advice:

dababu la danqi šarru beli issu muḥḥi libbišu lušeli ina libbi tenniš

To talk the not beautiful the king my lord should expel from his interior; you will become weak in the interior.

SAA 10 no. 185, Adad-šumu-ušur to Esarhaddon

He mentions the unspecific *dababu la danqi*, literally 'to talk the not beautiful.' The infinitive verb suggests that, rather than concrete *dibbi*, substantive 'words,' the speech that Adad-šumu-ušur

warns against is processual, unfolding. Furthermore, the verb has no subject: the talking seems to come from nowhere. The *ašipu* advises his lord that he expel, literally ‘cause to go up,’ this talking.¹⁴⁴ This is the first example we have come across so far of the *libbu* being affected by an entity without a clear subject ‘behind’ it. Adad-šumu-ušur does not explain whence *dababu la danqi* could arise—he only takes as given that it could arise. His advice, *lušeli*, attributes agency to the king: he is in control of the contents of his *libbu* and is thus able to expel this debilitating phenomenon. This therefore suggests a conception of a mindful interiority, the possibility of a subject purposively cultivating practice to influence their own interior, characterised as part of the self but not identified as the whole of it.

A second, markedly more prosaic letter, illustrates the embeddedness of *libbu*-talk in even the most mundane matters of administration:

ki memmeni abutu ina muḫḫi[šunu la x x] ina muḫḫi libbišunu laššu

As no one has [x x] the word in the[ir x x], it is not in their interior.

SAA 15 no. 248, rev. 9'-10', unassigned to unassigned

In this letter, probably written to Sargon, the unknown author laments he has not enough wood to do his construction work: as no one has told the local potentates, they are unaware of it: it is not in their interior. Whilst this is an example obvious and uninteresting to us (if you do not tell someone something then they do not know about it), it does demonstrate that even in the most prosaic proceedings knowledge of matters and affairs could be couched in *libbu* language, further demonstrating the embeddedness of the *libbu* concept in an Assyrian interpersonal schema.

But what does it mean to place words *ina muḫḫi libbi*? Where do these words come from? In the two instances above, though the scholars emphasise the voluntary nature of placing and expelling *dibbi*-words in the king's interior, those words have specific origins, if not necessarily clear. The Assyrians recognised that words *ina muḫḫi libbi* were dialogical: written or spoken by other entities. Intertwined with dialogue was power: the authoritative speaker's words could enter *ina muḫḫi libbi* without destructive consequence, providing a vector for shaping the subjectivities of others.

¹⁴⁴ The spatial aspect of this metaphor is interesting: the *dababu* is going up, from the king's *libbu* to (presumably) the exterior. This puts one in mind of the phrase ‘to throw up’ for ‘to vomit,’ which also expels harmful substances from a body.

amatu anniti ki gišši ina libbikunu lu nadata
Let this word be set as a thorn within your interior!

In most relationships, the *libbu* of any given subject was not normally permeable to anyone else. However, there are some occasions in which a kind of direct penetration and insertion of *dibbu* into another's *libbu* is described. Neither of these occasions are violent, and indeed in both of these there is a clear gradient of authority and a willing receptiveness on the part of the receiver.

In this first letter, sent by an unknown correspondent to the palace, the author freely describes how his *libbu* was directly manipulated by the king:

ana muḥḥi dibbi aḡannuti [ša] ana šarri beliya qabu [x x x x]-dišu libbi ḥassu u [x x x x] šu la išmu u adi šinišu šalašišu šarru beliya išpuranni libbi ša ardišu ušaškin

Concerning these words [that] were spoken to the king [x x x x] my interior remembers and [x x x x] it had not heard, and that which the king my lord has sent to me twice, thrice till now, he has caused to be established in the interior of his servant.

SAA 18 no. 142, rev. 8-13, Raši-il? to Esarhaddon

Here the author is at pains to emphasise that he has very much listened to what the king had written to him—to the extreme that those words were established in his very interior. In addition to that, this interior is something that autonomously remembers (*ḥassu*).¹⁴⁵ These statements of receptivity, like statements including *libbu* \sqrt{gmr} , declare how totally subject this individual is to the king: his *libbu* is easily affected and reconfigured by royal letters. Taking this together with the epigraph that opens this chapter, and Sargon's easy speculation over the thoughts of his governor, we can confidently assert that the interior was not completely private, a bounded personal space, but permeable to the powerful, and that this permeability was something that the Assyrian elite sought to take advantage of, in order to shape and mould thoughts and feelings.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Establishing words in someone else's interior is reminiscent of Urban's concept of the 'internal copy' (2017: 24). Urban posits an 'anaphoric replication' where indexicals uttered in speech point to the internalised copy, such as *dibbi aḡannuti* here. However, although this seems to imply the presence of Urban's 'word-for-word' copy, no copying process is mentioned in the Assyrian text itself: it is the original utterance that has been established in the interior in this description, not a replication as such.

¹⁴⁶ A striking contrast to this letter is to be found in a missive from the official Nabu-bel-ka'in, who also receives a communication from the king thrice, four times:

ša šarri beli išpuranni
ma ina muḥḥi dulli ša [x x x]...

Turning to the epigraph for this section, we now look at the fascinating text known to modern scholars as *The Netherworld Vision of an Assyrian Crown Prince* (SAA 3 no. 32). This literary composition, of which one copy exists, excavated from a ‘private house in Assur,’ has recently been proposed as being a counterdiscursive commentary by a scribe critical of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal (Finn 2017: 104 ff.). Consequently, though it was written by a member of the same scribal, textual and affective communities as the Assyrian texts from the palace archives, as an ‘unofficial’ text it would have been written in relative freedom, for ‘private’ uses.

In the text, an Assyrian crown prince, named Kumaya but identified with Assurbanipal, twice visits the Netherworld in his dreams, first in an audience with the goddess Ereškigal, in a sadly damaged passage. The next night he finds himself before the throne of Nergal, her husband, who is not pleased with him, makes to kill him, but is persuaded to relent by an advisor. However, Nergal delivers a homily on the virtues of kingship,¹⁴⁷ sharply closing thus:

ma la tašammanni

ša ana šarri beliya la ašammuni ana mannimma aḫḫur lašme annurig 3 4 šarru beli aki annie išappara ake lablaṭ ali nikitti dameya ina libbiya etablu ina qanni meḫreya dullu eppaš la ašaredumma ša libbišunu anaku la makiu anaku aki ša šunu eppašuni anaku eppaš

As to that which the king my lord wrote to me

3.QUOT concerning the work of [x x x]...

3.QUOT you are not listening

As to not listening to the king my lord, to who else would I listen? Now the king has sent thrice, four times just like this, how can I live? Where is my throbbing? My blood has dried up in my interior.

I do my work on the fringe of my equals. From amongst them, I am not the foremost, I am not the weak. I do as they do.

SAA 15 no. 30, obv. 4-21

In contrast to Raši-il’s interior, receptive to the words of the king, Nabu-bel-ka²in describes his response in a highly physical, somatic fashion; in contrast to the words Raši-il receives, Nabu-bel-ka²in is accused of disobedience par excellence (for more on which see chapter six). The question *ali nikitti* ‘where is my throbbing?’ raises the term *nakuttu*, which is almost invariably used in a negative fashion, something to be avoided. Here however, its absence is noted, even lamented—associated with dried-up blood, we get the image of a body whose life processes have ceased: how can a body like this live? This raises interesting questions as to the Assyrian understanding of *nakuttu*—referring to what we understand as the heartbeat, *nakuttu ṣrš* ‘to acquire throbbing’ thus alludes to the heightened heart rate that accompanies a stress and potentially anxiety response. Yet here, it is recognised as a prerequisite of life itself, despite its otherwise overwhelmingly negative associations. Thus, we are left to question whether *nakuttu* as anxiety was considered an essential aspect of life process, consequently undergirding the structure of $\sqrt{grr}-\sqrt{pll}-\sqrt{t}b$ that we explore in the next chapter. Space limitations mean that we cannot explore this any further here unfortunately.

¹⁴⁷ Wherein lies the meat of the text’s counterdiscursive thrust.

amatu an[ni]tu ki gišši ina libbikunu lu nadata atlak ana elati adi aḥassasaka

Let this word be set as a thorn in your interior. Go to the above, until I remember you!

SAA 3 no. 32, rev. 28

This passage can be read on two levels. First, in the narrative world of the text, we have a being of great authority—Nergal the deity—placing words in the *libbu* of a subordinate. This reminds us of Raši-il, attributing the king’s repeated letters ‘causing [the king’s words] to be established’ (*ušaškin*) in his *libbu*. Here, however, the words are likened to a thorn, *ki gišši*, evoking a sharp, penetrative quality much unlike the passive, almost gentle *ušaškin*. The harsher simile can be explained as a function of the artistic license of the author. If the text is to be read counterdiscursively, a product of the author’s disapproval of the Assyrian kings, then characterising Nergal’s speech on good kingship as a ‘thorn’ in the *libbu* of the prince character makes sense: the correct and wise words of kingly wisdom are a piercing intrusion into the *libbu* of the wayward prince.

Over and above illustrating another image of the permeable *libbu*, what is fascinating about this text is the author’s preoccupation with describing Kumaya’s *libbu*. The opening passage immediately describes Kumaya’s flawed subjectivity:

u šu itti šurrišu ul itama šalummatu imšima [x x x x x x x i-na e]-gi-it libbi [ša pu]luḫtu labšatu išitma ikpudma libbašu ana epeš tabi [x x ...

But he, he did not consult with his interior, he forgot the divine radiance ... in the carelessness of his *libbu* that was clothed in \sqrt{plh} he was negligent, but his *libbu* plotted the doing of good...

SAA 3 no. 32, obv. 6-7

This small passage, describing Kumaya’s failings as a ruler, beautifully underlines the understanding of *libbu* we have developed in this chapter. His first flaw is not discussing with his interior, *itti šurrišu itama*. The author has used the deliberately archaising Standard Babylonian dialect, and thus, though the phrase is not quite *libbu* \sqrt{dbb} , the underlying concept is equivalent. Nevertheless, by pointing out Kumaya does not do this, we have yet another example where the desirability of internal dialogue varies upon social position: for a king-in-waiting, to act without deliberation was clearly a violation of established royal prerequisites.

Kumaya's second flaw is his negligence, triply emphasised with his forgetting the *šalumattu* 'divine radiance',¹⁴⁸ his active negligence as the subject of the verb *šetū*, and the negligence of his interior. In this sentence Kumaya's *libbu* almost takes on a life of its own. It is described as *pu]luḫtu labšatu* 'clothed in $\sqrt{plḫ}$.' As we will explore in the following chapter, $\sqrt{plḫ}$ was a complex concept shading into fear, reverence and awe, but most importantly it was a social affect defining appropriate hierarchical and power relationships. Livingstone's translation of 'heart... clothed in fear' thus elides the respectful, appropriate dimensions of $\sqrt{plḫ}$, and by doing so obscures the meaning of this description. Taken straightforwardly, a *libbu* cannot be penetrated to discover the truth of its contents; a *libbu* 'clothed' in $\sqrt{plḫ}$ thus *appears* to be exhibiting the correct social emotion, in this case that of an Assyrian ruler towards his deities. However, the underlying truth is inaccessible to the ruler's subjects, and thus thoroughly obscured.

This dichotomy between internal reality and external appearances is further weighted by the author's description of Kumaya's *libbu* as *ikpudma... ana epeš ṭabi* 'plotting the doing of good.' Here, the autonomy of the *libbu*, which has been hinted at in such phrases as *libbu ṣqb* 'the interior spoke,' *libbu ṣḫṭ* 'the jumping interior,' is given nearly full force in a literary world. The imaginary Kumaya is set against himself: his act are unworthy of kingship, but his *libbu* 'plots' correct behaviour. The use of \sqrt{kpd} 'plot' is particularly colourful: it frequently appears throughout Assyrian texts, letters and royal inscription both, to refer to malevolent agents scheming against the Assyrian order. Here, however, we have a *libbu* scheming against the *disorder* of the Assyrian prince. Thus, a vision of a world of the self turned upside down.¹⁴⁹

Stepping out from the textual to the contextual level, the author of this piece, whatever his intentions, was not only concerned with the interiority of the powerful and defining what an 'ethical' sovereign should be, but also felt perfectly at ease committing a story to clay about the interiority of someone more powerful than he was. Though the character was 'imaginary,' that he can be identified with Assurbanipal strongly suggests that this was implicitly the author's intention

¹⁴⁸ Such radiance was a salient feature in the Assyrian sensorium. Thomason describes the 'haptic vision' engaged by the *melammu*-radiance of the Assyrian wall reliefs (2016: 246), whilst Pongratz-Leisten draws attention to the historical adoption of the *melammu* by the Assyrian kings (2015: 220). This radiance is implicated in the enveloping $\sqrt{plḫ}$ of the Assyrian king (Liverani 2017: 38).

¹⁴⁹ Having said that, the *libbu*'s limits are also implicitly clarified here: Kumaya does not actually commit good deeds, and the *libbu* does not commit these deeds on its own: bound to a named subject, it can only 'plot,' it cannot act without the subject-self engaging with it.

as well. It might be the case that this individual was particularly daring in thinking to comment on the interiority of the most powerful individuals in the world (albeit obliquely)—or perhaps critique and speculation on the intents and thoughts of superiors was more widespread and socially acceptable than the official palatial archives would suggest.

That open question notwithstanding, the problem of interiority was not just one confined to moralistic literature, but indeed preoccupied the Assyrian rulers constantly.

The affected *libbu*

Libbu could thus be affected by self-practices, or the words of others, whether divine or invested with earthly authority. However, the *libbu* could also be acted upon by ‘impersonal’ forces: things that had no motivating named being behind them. We have already encountered *dababu la danqi* but there existed a variety of such phenomena, the description of which was a key component in the Assyrian repertoire of affect.

The *libbu* often featured in what we might call indirect representations of emotion: ones which do not implicate the self as subject or agent (e.g. ‘I am happy,’ ‘I raged’) but locate the agent or object away from self (e.g. ‘Wellbeing is for me,’ ‘My heart was broken’). This conception was so heavily embedded in Assyrian convention that it was a regular feature of standard Assyrian greetings:

*ana šarri beliya urdaka Sin-aḥḥe-eriba lu šulmu ana šarri beliya šulmu ana Aššur šulmu ana ekurrate šulmu ana birat
ša sarri gabbu libbu ša šarri beliya adanniš lu ṭab*

To the king my lord, your servant Sennacherib. EMPH wellbeing for the king my lord. Wellbeing is for Assyria, wellbeing is for the temples, wellbeing is for all the fortresses of the king. The interior of the king, my lord, let it be very good.

SAA 1 no. 31, obv. 1-7, Sennacherib *mar-šarri* to Sargon

This is but one example but holds throughout letters sent to superiors.¹⁵⁰ Not only is it demonstrative of indirected affect—an affect affecting the *libbu*-interior and not the ‘self’ as such—but is also diagnostic of a socially structured regime of good interiors.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ See p.202.

¹⁵¹ See p.148.

Similarly, we have Adad-šumu-ušur writing to Esarhaddon speaking with a plural voice, writing that Esarhaddon's succession arrangements *libbinni ibtal[ta]* 'our interiors revived'¹⁵²; further in the passage, he exhorts the king:

mar'eka annute damqute dugul libbaka lu ḥaddi
 Look at these beautiful sons of yours, let your interior rejoice

SAA 10 no. 185, rev. 19-20

Conversely, the *libbu* was not only the subject of positive affects: a surfeit of explicitly negative experiences could be attributed to it. For example, it could be *muršu* 'sick,' as Esarhaddon's is when he is quoted as saying *libbi mariš adanniš* 'my interior is very sick,'¹⁵³ as Urad-Gula the *ašipu*'s is when he writes *muruš libbi uktammera* 'I heaped up the sickness of my interior.'¹⁵⁴ The *libbu* could move about, as the troubled Nabu-tabni-ušur writes *libbi issugu adanniš*, 'my interior is very displaced,'¹⁵⁵ as Esarhaddon writes *libbi išpiluni* 'my interior descends',¹⁵⁶ as Adad-šumu-ušur writes *libbini šapil* 'our interior is low.'¹⁵⁷ We might recall Na'id-Marduk's men mention Esarhaddon *libbi ša šarri ana muḥḥi belini šeḥtu* 'The interior of the king jumped up regarding our lord';¹⁵⁸ similarly, *šarru libbašu ana muḥḥikunu ilteḥta* 'the king, his interior jumped up concerning you'.¹⁵⁹ Finally, subjects could experience *ḥip libbi*, 'broken-interior,' as for example, Nabu-tabni-ušur again *ḥip libbi iššabtani* 'broken-interior has seized me.'¹⁶⁰

This dense catalogue of *libbu* experiences is not meant to be an exhaustive list of every affect associated with the *libbu* in this period; rather, it serves to demonstrate how the *libbu* could be

¹⁵² SAA 10 no. 185, obv. 15.

¹⁵³ SAA 10 187, obv. 7, Adad-šumu-ušur to Esarhaddon.

¹⁵⁴ SAA 10 no. 294, rev. 4, Urad-Gula to Assurbanipal.

¹⁵⁵ SAA 10 no. 334, rev. 14. The meaning of *is-su-gu* = *sagu* is uncertain: Parpola translates 'startled.' The editors of the SAA glossary suggest 'to be(come) displaced?' The CDA suggests 'is troubled,' and CAD 'to trouble(?)'. To be troubled, to be displaced: how to reconcile these two quite different translations? If we consider the English etymology of *trouble*, the OED proposes it derives ultimately from Latin *turba* 'crowd, disturbance': a word that itself carries connotations of 'matter out of place.' Thus, an association between displacement and trouble is not unwarranted for the translator to propose here, though without further examples of *sagu* this must remain an open question.

¹⁵⁶ SAA 10 no. 187, obv. 9, Adad-šumu-ušur to Esarhaddon.

¹⁵⁷ SAA 10 no. 226, rev. 5-6, Adad-šumu-ušur to Esarhaddon or Assurbanipal.

¹⁵⁸ SAA 18 no. 88, rev. 4'-5', and see p.77.

¹⁵⁹ SAA 10 no. 169, obv. 8, Zakir to Esarhaddon. Incidentally, it was not *only* the king whose *libbu* could be angry: Bel-ušeziḥ describes another man experiencing this in SAA 10 no. 110, obv. 7. Though the context is broken, the person being described was probably not the king as the passage is devoid of the usual deferential markers.

¹⁶⁰ SAA 10 no. 334, rev. 15.

conceived of as a corollary subject to the named self in its own right. It could be that specifying the *libbu* as the subject of these affects can be interpreted as a straightforward localisation of feeling: language such as *libbu šuplu* ‘lowering interior’ maps to the English expression ‘feeling down,’ *hip-libbi* the ‘broken heart’. Many of these phrases have Akkadian language counterparts that apply directly to the subject ‘I’, not to their *libbu*: \sqrt{hd} ‘rejoice’ for *libbu* $\sqrt{t}b$, $\sqrt{r}b$ ‘shake (with anger)’ for *libbu* $\sqrt{š}ht$. Why do speakers and writers choose to use *libbu* phrases over direct affective language? Perhaps not just for artistry or colour, but a way of speaking that diffuses responsibility for affective experiences and the actions that arise from them across different parts of the self. Furthermore, this is not just a linguistic technique, but an ontologically conditioned experience of interiority. It was a specifically Assyrian conception of the subject that construed it as consisting of named body, *libbu* and *ramanu*, a subject embedded in a world filled with intentional forces; specifying that *libbu* was the agent of affect was thus an understanding of embodied experience, not solely an artistic flourish.¹⁶¹

The *libbu* was conceptualised as experiencing a variety of affects that could be attributed to individuals, and that these experiences could not all be directly traced to specific agents. Coupled with *libbu* \sqrt{dbb} , we get an increasing sense of the *libbu* as not just an interior zone, but as an incompletely controlled realm subject to its own subjectivity. The Assyrians recognised this, and their empire had ambivalent attitudes to it: as with *temu*, to act *ki libbišunu* ‘according to one’s interior’ was laudable, if one’s interior accorded with Aššur’s; otherwise, it threatened the integrity of the imperial project.

¹⁶¹ The notion of ‘diffuse responsibility’ as a procedure for expressing particular affects, sometimes dangerous ones, has been explored by various linguistically-oriented anthropologists (Hill & Irvine 1992: 12-13). In particular, Irvine’s work on Wolof *xaxaar* performances highlights the intersubjective distribution of the ‘venting of affect’: responsibility for the authorship of a particular insulting utterance is highly diffused across many parties: low-status *griot* performers, groups of high-status women (Irvine 1992: 123). In this Wolof example, diffuse responsibility is particularly demarcated by the aesthetic *xaxaar* genre; by contrast, *libbu* language serves rather as small-scale generic expressions, which diffuse responsibility within a specific subjective constellation of *libbu-ramanu-name*.

2.5 The Impermeable Libbu: interiority, wilfulness and the ramanu

ki libbi

Throughout the correspondence, we find *libbu* associated with will and intent.¹⁶² This will or intent, depending on the context, could be evaluated positively or negatively. Unsurprisingly, the Assyrian state correspondence tended to evaluate *libbu* actions that benefited Assyria, or were granted by Assyrian fiat, positively. This example, taken from a report from the Phoenician coast, describes the desired outcome of some newly implemented tax orders:

urdanišu ki libbišunu bit-karrani errubu uššu iddumu imaḥḥaruni Labnana ina panišu ki libbišunu elliu urrudu eše ušerraduni

His servants, according to their interior, enter and leave the trading stations and sell and buy. Lebanon is before him and according to their interior they go up and down and collect the wood.

SAA 19 no. 22, obv. 6-10, Qurdi-Aššur-lamur to Tiglath-pileser

Here, Qurdi-Aššur-lamur, Tiglath-pileser's envoy to the nominally independent city of Tyre, describes how he has implemented the king's order *dibbi issišu lu ṭab* 'The words with him should be good.' This policy appears to have granted the Tyrians a measure of latitude and freedom, as reflected by their ability to go up and down *ki libbišunu*.¹⁶³ In a similar vein, Sargon expressly grants his governor Aššur-šarru-ušur latitude to do what he likes, writing *ki libbika dudu* 'wander about according to your interior' (SAA 1 no. 1, rev. 15).¹⁶⁴ Conceptualisation of some kind of autonomy as being able to act *ki libbi* extended even to the most mundane shopping transactions:

šibirtu ša pitte libbi ša beliya laššu

There are no belts that accord with the interior of my lord

SAA 19 no. 14, rev.2, Bel-abu'a to the Palace Scribe

¹⁶² Main examples of this are given in the subsequent body text, but a few examples are noted here:

šumma libbušu šadu lušabalkita lušešibšunu 'If it is his interior, he may take them over the mountains and settle them' SAA 1 no. 1, rev. 22—see p.112ff. for extended discussion; *šumrat libbi ana šarri beliya lušakšidu* 'May the king, my lord, attain the wish of his interior' SAA 10 no. 123, obv. 7-8; *la imaggar ma šumma libbakunu gilme* 'He does not consent, 3.QUOT 'If it is your interior, *oblige* (uncertain translation)' SAA 15 no. 199, e.3.

¹⁶³ Thus, although not specifically outlined as an explicit outcome, we have an example of Assyrian 'policy' having observable, remarkable effects on the interiorities and subjectivities of those subject to the empire, a foundational link explored fully in the next chapter.

¹⁶⁴ This kind of wandering about 'according to the *libbu*' can be contrasted with the 'aimless' directionality associated with dogs, whom subjects explicitly liken themselves to in certain self-abnegatory contexts. See p.242ff.

pitte issi libbišani tattidin

(Payment) according to her interior, she gave.

SAA 16 no. 53, rev. 5, unassigned to unassigned

The implications of defining autonomy and desire in terms of *ki libbi* are subtle. As with many other affects and attitudes associated with the *libbu*, there existed Akkadian equivalents that could express desire without invoking *libbu*: *šummurat ša šarri bel[īya lušak]šidu* ‘may the desires of the king my lord be achieved’;¹⁶⁵ *ardanutī ša šarri aššibi* ‘I desire servitude under the king.’¹⁶⁶ Again, we might postulate differing ways to distribute responsibility for desires as being the prime reason these variants exist; alternatively, that desires associated with the *libbu* are not clearly verbalisable.

However, acting *ki libbi* unbound by the parameters of the Assyrian state could have dangerous consequences. On one end of the spectrum, we find (probably biased) reports of cultic functionaries enacting non-traditional rites:

kima libbišunu [x x x x x x x x x x]ma libbišunu ina mušalli dariu...

According to their interior[x x x x x x x x x x]cording to their interior, the morning sheep offering...

SAA 13 no. 134, rev. 9-10, unassigned to the king

In this letter, an unknown priest is informing Esarhaddon about the actions of Pulu the lamentation priest, whom he alleges to have instituted widespread cultic changes in the temple of the god Nabu, without the permission of the king, even messing around with work done by Sargon himself. The wilfulness of Pulu and his associates acting *kima libbišunu* is very much disapproved of.¹⁶⁷ On the other end of the spectrum, wilfulness could lead to immediate disaster, as this statement in a damaged letter revealing a murderous conspiracy against Esarhaddon suggests: *ina muḥḥi libbi irtihīš*, ‘he √rḥš concerning his interior.’¹⁶⁸

That the *libbu* was both a source of autonomy and wishing and an impermeable stronghold to the agents of the king is highlighted by this letter from Bel-ušeziḫ the scholar, in which the unknown interior of a possible traitor could potentially be the birthing ground of sedition:

¹⁶⁵ SAA 16 no. 132, obv. 9

¹⁶⁶ SAA 17 no. 53 obv. 14

¹⁶⁷ Earlier in the letter as well Pulu is described as acting *ki ra[menišu]* ‘according to his self’ (SAA 13 no. 134, obv. 5’), although as we can see the key word is almost entirely broken off. See also SAA 13 no. 181, rev. 5.

¹⁶⁸ SAA 16 no. 60, obv. 9’.

dababu aga ul ša šarri beliya šu mimma mala [x x x x x] ikeššipu mamma kalame ul idi [x x x x x x x] ša libbišu ul idu ki baniti u ki la baniti [x x x] ippušu itti libbišu medaššu

This talking is not of the king, my lord... nobody knows whatever he is thinking ... do not know that of his interior. Whether good, or not good... what he will do, is known to him, with his interior.

SAA 18 no. 125, obv. 19'-22', Bel-ušeziḫ to Esarhaddon

Bel-ušeziḫ effectively summarises the problem that the impermeable *libbu* poses to Assyrian power. He tells the story of a certain Ḫinnumu, who is attempting to take rulership of the city of Uruk by claiming that Esarhaddon speaks *gabbi piršata* 'all lies.' However, whilst Bel-ušeziḫ is able to report upon everything he has heard,¹⁶⁹ he is thoroughly unable to speculate upon Ḫinnumu's intentions, writing about them in the most equivocal language. He emphasises that only he and his interior know, in a construction that makes it sound like they are two parties working together.¹⁷⁰

ki ramani

Unlike acting *ki libbi*, the autonomy described by { *ki | ina | ana* } *raman-* was deemed at best neutral, and usually negative. Not only could it be used to indicate that a subject was acting in an autonomous fashion, but unlike the *libbu* the *ramanu* could also be assigned physical property; the property-possessing *ramanu* was similarly regarded at best neutrally, usually negatively. The overlap between these two realms of operation and ownership is illustrated by these two examples:

attalaka issišu addubub
muku ata girri ramnika ša la šani'e karme ša šarri tapti

I went and talked with him

1. QUOT Why did you, by the way of your *ramanu*, open the granary of the king without the deputy?

SAA 1 no. 181, obv. 15-19, Bel-liqbi, governor of Šupat, to Sargon

eqli betu niše mar'e šelu'ate Urdu-Nabu sangu ina libbi unqi issaṭar ana ramanišu uttere

Urdu-Nabu the *sangu*-priest has written a field, a house and people, sons of temple votaries, in a sealed document and turned them to his own *ramanu*

SAA 13 126, rev. 6'-9', Iddin-Ea, priest of the Ninurta temple at Kalḫu, to Assurbanipal

¹⁶⁹ *ki ašmu ana šarri beliya altapra* 'As I heard this I wrote to the king my lord' (obv. 16)

¹⁷⁰ The variable permeability of the *libbu* is here represented as an explicit problem, and suggests that, unlike Stasch's conclusion that 'anti-telepathic' values also assert a 'pro-autonomy' stance (2008: 445-6), the valency of an opacity value was contingent on relationship and social domain.

These two quotations are exemplary of a significant number of instances where subjects appropriate property for their own *ramanu*. The first demonstrates how acting according to *ramanu* could directly contravene the chain of command of Assyrian authority: the lack of permission from the deputy governor is simply and typically described as *la šani'e* 'without the deputy.' This suggests a fungibility between the two terms: one can act according to *ramanu*, or according to the royal authority as delegated to an Assyrian official.

The second example features the *ramanu* of Urdu-Nabu, who was told by the servants of the king to vivify his *ramanu* above. Here the author of this letter is appealing to the king regarding what he considers to be Urdu-Nabu's inappropriate appropriation of his property. The *ramanu* was generally recognised as a holder of property,¹⁷¹ but is frequently attested as becoming the owner of property in negatively charged ways such as these.¹⁷²

A final example demonstrates the peculiarity of this *ramanu* split self:

ina datuwa rama[nšu] ina libbi ša šarri utamme 5 alani issarap

After, he put [his] *ramanu* under oath, in the interior of the king, but he burnt five towns.

SAA 19 no. 192, rev.5-8, Nabu-belu-ka" in to Sargon

The governor of Kar-Šarrukin is describing the activities of a certain subject active in the Zagros, possibly Dalta, a client of the Assyrian kings. Here, Nabu-belu-ka" in describes a disjuncture between Dalta's *ramanu* and his actual activities: though he subjected his *ramanu* to the oath of the Assyrian king, his violent actions belie this. Not only does this put us in mind of the clause Esarhaddon imposed in his succession treaty,¹⁷³ but it also uses a factitive inflexion of *√tm*, emphasising a disjuncture between Dalta the named subject and the *ramanu* he is associated with. Rather than Dalta acting according to his *ramanu*, he acts despite it. His actions, burning five towns, contravene

¹⁷¹ For example, as in the letters SAA 1 no. 33, obv. 14 *kusapi ša ramenišu ekkul* 'He eats the bread of his *ramanu*,' Sennacherib *mar-šarri* to Sargon; SAA 13 no. 172, rev. 8'-9' *kettu aninu ša ramenini ana Bel nušakkal* 'Truth, we have caused Bel to eat those (sheep) of our *ramanu*', Urdu-aḥḥešu to Assurbanipal; SAA 19 no. 15 rev. 7-8 *zar'e ša ramanini šu* 'It is the sown field of our *ramanu*' Aššur-šimanni to Tiglath-pileser or Sargon; SAA 19 no. 37, rev. 6' *ša ramenišunu lilqiu lekulu* 'Let them buy and eat that of their *ramanu*,' Šamaš-aḥu-iddina to Tiglath-pileser.

¹⁷² See also SAA 1 no. 11 obv. 12, where Sargon accuses Mannu-ki-Adad of appropriating troops for himself; SAA 1 no. 139 obv. 2'.

¹⁷³ See p.77.

the oath he swore and placed his *ramanu* under. The fact that Dalta was able to dissimulate in this way is thus evocative of a split self.

{*ki|ina|ana*} *raman-* was used to indicate an autonomy which was undesirable on the part of the speaker, and thus it presented a useful rhetorical strategy when presenting work disputes to the king:

anaku issu pani la ammagguru la eppaš ina muḫḫi bunni ina muḫḫi memmeni aqabbaššunu la išammuni aki ramanišunu [x x...]

I myself before this do not consent, I will not do it. Concerning its countenance, concerning anything, I am speaking with them but they do not listen, according to their *ramanu*...

SAA 13 no. 34, rev. 7-12, Nabu-ašared to the king

uma Pulu kalu ki ramenišu ina bet Nabu uppaš...

bel piqittate ša ramenišu ina libbi ekurri uptaqqid

Now Pulu the lamentation priest does according to his *ramanu* in the temple of Nabu...

he has appointed appointees of his *ramanu* within the temple

SAA 13 no. 134, obv. 5'-6' + obv. 16'-17', unassigned to the king

Both of these instances describe competition between priests; the first refers to aesthetic decisions regarding the casting of a statue, and the second is an unknown author complaining about the royally sanctioned appointment of Pulu by attempting to paint him as overly wilful. Both of these appear to be fairly innocuous professional disputes, at least to us, but we find far more grievous infractions against royal authority occurring blamed on the *ramanu*:

Abi-yaqar Puqudaya šulmu ša mati ana pan šarri beliya ul šebi

tukte uba”a šikin [ša] adannu ša iškunu ultennu makutu rakšu u ḫubti

umma ana ramniya lubuk

Abi-yaqar the Puqudean does not desire the wellbeing of the land before the king my lord

He seeks revenge, the date that he established he has changed—destitution, binding and plunder

QUOT I shall take away for my *ramanu*

SAA 17 no. 152, rev. 1-6, Abi-yaqiya et al. to Sargon

la-pan šarri ul iplah
umma anaku ina ramniya anamdinma šuma ašakkan

He does not \sqrt{plh} the king
QUOT I will give in my *ramanu* and establish my name

SAA 13 no. 181, rev. 4-6, Šuma-iddin to Esarhaddon

Such infractions could be so extreme that they were described as neglecting the *temu* of the king itself, which would present a significant threat to the Assyrian order.¹⁷⁴

In a similar fashion to *libbu*-autonomy, the appraisal of *ramanu*-autonomy was variable according to relationship and context. Unlike *libbu*-autonomy however, the neutral to negative valuation of *ramanu* was deliberately marshalled by the Assyrian elite, who were directed to dissimulate for their own purposes. The negative valorisation of interior-exterior disjuncture was only applicable to those presenting themselves to the Assyrian empire. Two examples illustrate this ambivalent, dissimulating *ramanu* well:

assa'alšu ki anni iqṭibi
ma ša šarru išpurannini
ma amur pani ša Iyaze aki
ma ina muḥḥi Gimirraya ammute qibaššu aki raminika attalak

I interrogated him and he spoke like this
3.QUOT As to that which the king sent to me
3.QUOT See how the face of Iyaze is
3.QUOT Concerning those Cimmerians, speak to him, go according to your *ramanu*

SAA 16 no. 15, obv. 7-9, Assurbanipal *mar-šarri* to Esarhaddon

anaku ki ramaniya ana sangi assa'al
I inquired of the priest according to my *ramanu*

SAA 10 no. 99, obv. 7-8, Akkullanu to Esarhaddon

¹⁷⁴ For more on this, see p.237ff.

Not only this but Esarhaddon inquires of one of his scholars

ibašši issi ramenika tadilibi

Is it that you have been concerned with your *ramanu*?

SAA 10 no. 320, rev. 7-9, Urad-Nanaya to Esarhaddon

Esarhaddon's inquiry illustrates that, despite the negative valorisation of acting *ina ramani*, it appeared to be something that a subject needed to attend to. This potentially illustrates a zone of overlap with a non-imperialised set of values, which we explore in chapter five.

Ultimately, the *ramanu* appears at least as a more opaque component of self than the *libbu* does. Unlike the *libbu*, the *ramanu* is not a particular locus of affect, nor does it engage in dialogue, nor is it something permeable. Now, as we flagged up earlier, topographies of the human subject are in no way a cross-cultural universal, with multiple models prevailing in the Western context alone. It is thus illuminating to compare this Assyrian tripartite structure of self with one that shares some striking similarities.¹⁷⁵ Joel Robbins describes a triple arrangement of the self in his ethnography on Urapmin subjects in Papua New Guinea (2004). This model of self consisted of 'thoughts (*aget fukunun*), feelings (*aget tem*), and desires (*san*)'; of these, *san* has striking correspondences with the *ramanu* we have just described:

Although like thoughts and unlike feelings, the will is definitely part of the person and is, on the linguistic level, obligatorily possessed, it is less like thoughts and more like feelings in that it seems to have a force of its own and can make the thinking part of people a passive onlooker as it "pushes" them in directions their hearts might not be inclined to take them.

Robbins 2004: 185

Unlike the Assyrian however, the Urapmin model refers to 'feelings' and the interior with the same term (*aget tem*); more importantly, though Assyrian understanding recognises that the *libbu* cannot be perceived through normal hearing, the Urapmin build on this a strong dispreference for talk regarding the thoughts, intents, and interiors of any others. The Assyrian empire, by contrast, developed a strong preference for transparency, controlling unauthorised disjuncture with threats, curses and punishments. If we clamber up towards an ontological level, Robbins notes that the

¹⁷⁵ We might also consider the Freudian *ego-superego-id* a tripartite model, exemplifying a highly culturally specific and historically contingent ethnotheory.

Urapmin considered the landscape as which they lived as comprised by ‘outer shells (*ipnal*, lit. ‘skin’) that obscure hidden ‘insides’ (*ibak tem*); for the cuneiform culture of Mesopotamia, the outer world was a tablet upon which one might read the ominous inscriptions of the gods.

Polyautonomy

The everyday Assyrian subject was thus not an individual as we might understand it: rather than a single named being to which responsibility is assigned for their actions, we find instead a subject composed of named body, *libbu*, and *ramanu*. Responsibility for an action could be assigned to all three of these subject components. However, to imperial eyes, certain responsible components were more highly regarded than others: a *libbu* acting for Assyria was laudable. By contrast, *ramanu* was self-interested: it seemingly could not be acted upon, disciplined towards the imperial interest. These multiple aspects of the subject, and the various potentials of responsibility assigned to them, give rise to a conceptual ‘polyautonomy’: in lieu of a defined system of subjective ‘rights’ or ‘freedoms’ assigned to a single ‘human’ subject, the various ways in which a subject was free to act were differentially distributed by internal topography. As we have seen, acting *ki ramani* was construed almost exclusively as bad in imperial eyes. Yet, as we have also seen, the *ramanu* was a holder of property, something to be guarded, and assuredly not something to talk to, implicated in truth or sincerity, or a locus of affect. This suggests that the specific autonomies that the *ramanu* exhibited were a potential reason for *why* it was held in such low regard by the imperial elite.¹⁷⁶ By contrast, the *libbu*, whilst not necessarily valorised, represented autonomies that would be valuable for Assyria if directed to its benefit. Speech was an important part of this, but also certain kinds of action, and particular affective states, which we explore in the next chapter.

¹⁷⁶ By contrast, we see a markedly different attitude to the *ramanu* in the kinship-defined letters, p.225.

2.6 *Libbali, Libbi Šarri*: The Importance of Heart in Assyrian Ontology

Models and Maps of the Self

Theft, lying, false witness, cheating in weights and measures, all kind of dissembling such as speaking ill of the deaf (and presumably smiling to their face), hating your brother in your heart (while presumably speaking kindly to him), these are clearly contradictions between what seems and what is.

Douglas 1966: 54-55, discussing Leviticus XIX

In this chapter we have explored the ways in which Assyrian subjects conceptualised their interior within the correspondence discourse, whilst emphasising the cross-cultural variability of topographies of the self and situating the Assyrian model in a comparative context. This loosely organised ‘tripartite’ self, of a named I, a *libbu* and a *ramanu* is suggestive of a complex distribution of responsibilities and capabilities across a body dwelling within a social hierarchy. It is this territory that the *temu* undergoes one of its many transmutations; thus, it is continuous with the exterior realm of “fact” events. Unlike the exterior world of facts and thought, the *libbu* and *ramanu* were unable to be apprehended directly using the sensorium of \sqrt{mr} and \sqrt{sm} . Consequently, the interior spaces of the Assyrian subject represented a locus for threatening disjuncture, a disjuncture which, like *temu*, stemmed from a gap between what could be perceived and an underlying ‘true’ meaning.

Though there are commonalities between the *libbu* and the *temu* in that both share an association with interiorised processes and interior words, the relation between these two terms remains obscure and indirect. For example, there is no one-to-one mapping between an English language model of thoughts contained within the mind, and *temu* contained within a *libbu*; rather, words (\sqrt{dbb}) can be sourced from the *libbu*, and in a similar way *temu* can be tagged with words. Additionally, *libbu* is not directly equated with any concept of ‘thought’ itself, as the Korowai *xulmelun*, which glosses both thought-concept and bodily interior does (Stasch 2008: 444). Thus, though *libbu* was in fact an interior, and *libbu* \sqrt{dbb} represented an interior dialogue, the concept of ‘a thought’ as a discrete quantum of mental ‘stuff’ did not exist as such. Instead, processes such as \sqrt{dbb} , interactivity between the *libbu*, *ramanu* and the I, and forces affecting and reacting with each other created the graph of dynamic unfoldings which constituted an Assyrian subject in this period.

The consciousness of a disjuncture between interior and exterior aspects of the self enables particularly complex attitudes to be expressed with an economy of language. In particular, this

disjuncture allows ironic utterances to be expressed (Fernandez & Huber 2001: 1-3). We will see this used to great effect in chapters five and six, where ironic utterances are used to comment on, criticise and parody the pretensions of the Assyrian Empire. The threat of this disjuncture was clearly recognised by the imperial elite, as the stipulations in their treaties demand.

ina libbi šarri ittila... memeni issišu [lu] la iddabbub
He lies in the interior of the king—no one may talk against him¹⁷⁷

In a letter to Esarhaddon advising him on the best way to deal with all the cases he hears, an Assyrian of unknown standing writes that a ‘servant of an Assyrian’ who is the target of a lawsuit is protected: he lies *ina libbi šarri*. This deceptively short statement in a peculiar letter packs within it an ontology of the Assyrian world, psyche, and body politic.¹⁷⁸

Libbu in its most general sense referred to the interior of things, in the broadest sense: the interior of a house, the interior of a message, the interior of a day, the interior of a human, a god, a city, a realm. These *libbu* spaces were not just metaphors or abstractions, but very real arenas in which the Assyrian world unfolded: just as towns and cities could participate in—or fight against—the Assyrian project, so could the *libbu* of human beings. Dominion over the *libbu* was thus a key part of the Assyrian programme.

The peculiar characteristics of the human *libbu* posed a challenge to the empire that laid claim to the knowledge of everything seen and heard. The privacy of *libbu*, although not absolute, was generally insurmountable. Although the dialogical nature of internal speech was recognised, it was also recognised that ‘taking words to heart’ required an active assent on the part of the individual. However, the individual and the *libbu* were not coterminous: word could arise in the *libbu* with no clear human source, and the *libbu* could experience affect of its own, overlapping with but not entirely identified with the individual. However, to act in accordance with one’s *libbu*, and to converse with it before action, were practices regarded as those belonging to a self-possessed individual. Whether this was a good thing or not simply depended on ‘what side you were on’: if you

¹⁷⁷ SAA 16 no. 64 obv. 10, unknown to Esarhaddon.

¹⁷⁸ See also p.148 for the *šilli šarri* ‘shadow of the king,’ which appears repeatedly in descriptions of the ideal Assyrian subject.

cultivated a thoughtful self with a *libbu* completely for Assyria, the members of the Assyrian state were bound to look on you favourably.

To lie in the interior of the king, then, was no simple metaphor. The *libbu* of the king represented the protected space of the man who was the envoy of Aššur himself. The desires of the king were the desires of Aššur; the contents of his *libbu*, the morally correct words and intents for Aššur. To be a servant of an Assyrian, enveloped within the *libbu* of the king of Assyria, was to be enveloped within a single affective, intentional and intellectual totality. This hypostatic ontology applied not only to this bodily conception of the *šar Aššur*, but to the language referring to the geographical phenomenon of Assyria itself: the *mat Aššur* 'land of Aššur,' the heart of which was the city of Aššur, home of the god Aššur—known to most as Libbali, *Libbi-ali*—the 'Interior City.'

3 Instruments of Imperial Interiority

*attunu yamuttu ina betišu ina libbi eqlišu dullakunu epša libbakunu lu ṭabakunu
urdani ša šarri attunu*

Do your work, each in his house, each in his field. Let your interior be good, you are
the servants of the king.¹⁷⁹

In the preceding two chapters, we explored concepts central to the ontological makeup of the Assyrian Empire. The first, *ṭemu*, was a unitary conception of thoughts, intentions and facts, in some ways resembling a loop. The second was the makeup of the Assyrian self: the indexical I, the *libbu*, and the *ramanu*, which together formed a dynamic, interactive subject where responsibility and valorisation was distributed across the different terms. The interior *libbu* represented a hidden space to which the Assyrian elite had only indirect access; though it could be a guarantor of loyalty, it was primarily a space of potential threat. The self of Assyrian subjects thus needed to be transformed into a state suitable for the smooth unfolding of the *ṭemu* of the gods of the king.

In this chapter, we address the question of how these subjectivities and states were established by the Assyrian ruling machine. The link between affect and power in this period has not really been explored (Van De Mieroop 2016a: 17). As evidenced by an ‘emotional turn’ in recent historiography, the paucity of subjective, feeling interpretations on this level has been observed. This has been attributed to European academic and societal norms condemning emotion and its study to a domestic, undervalued feminine sphere (Wilce 2009: 103). Certain assays into Assyrian affect have, unfortunately, been little more than toy applications of ethnocentric, naïve Freudianism (Frahm 2014); more serious work has looked at the royal inscriptions (Van De Mieroop 2016a), or the Old Assyrian letters from a thousand years before the period under study (Larsen 2001). The subjective and affective dimensions of state power are thus a rich seam for investigation, a gap foregrounded by Plamper in a recent overview of the subfield (2015: 281). The problem of establishing and maintaining the ideal domain for Aššur (constituted of beings of good *libbu* and the unfolding of the divine *ṭemu*) articulates with wider questions on the nature not only of self and feeling, but political power, statehood and ontological systems. Within Assyriology itself, understandings of the despotic

¹⁷⁹ SAA 5 no. 210, rev. 2-7, Nabu-ḫamatu’a to Sargon

military state, projected by fearsome stone reliefs and lurid royal inscriptions have given way to more nuanced ideas regarding ‘consensus’ building (Lanfranchi 1997). In particular, Parker’s deployment of ‘hegemonic power’ is an illustrative example of this shift in thinking:

Hegemony is ... a very interesting concept since it does *not* describe the image most commonly held of the Assyrian Empire in the modern world... it does not describe the Assyrian Empire as a militaristic colonial state. Instead, the idea of hegemonic rule emphasizes indirect power, the power to persuade or coerce without the direct use of military force.

2014: 285

Modifying this idea somewhat, we can say that indirect power is fundamentally an *affective* phenomenon, using methods of communication and display to shape attitudes and interiorities towards power’s desires. This chapter explores how the Assyrian elite implicitly conceptualised their actions in the ‘political sphere’ (a heuristic definition here) as intended to shape and mould subjectivities, such as those of internal potentates, members of the ‘formal’ Assyrian hierarchy (including the *šarru*), and external polities.¹⁸⁰ What was the ‘calculated frightfulness’ of Assyria,¹⁸¹ the projection of fear, if not an affective management technique underlying the maintenance of the Assyrian elite?

¹⁸⁰ This is to say nothing of immanent forces operating within Assyrian ontology: Šamaš and his liver omens, Ištar and her dream oracles, and the various demons and sorcerers who constantly threatened the Assyrian elite. Pongratz-Leisten’s 2015 monograph analyses the permeation of Assyrian society and culture by mythic and mystic elements, interpreting the whole as an Assyrian *Weltanschauung*. In this thesis, I specifically limit myself to the ‘everyday’ discourse found in the Assyrian letters, to which this larger ontology serves as a structuring structure.

¹⁸¹ A memorable phrase from Olmstead 1918.

3.1 The Managed Interior

The King's Word to Aššur-šarru-ušur

dibbi ṭabuti issišu ladbub libbi laškunšu

I shall say good words with them and I shall establish their *libbu*

As we saw in the previous chapter, the Assyrian ruling elite were keen to ensure that their subjects' fealty to Assyria was not just lip-service (*dababti šapti* 'talk of the lips') but a fully interiorised experience (*ina gummurti libbi* 'in the completeness of the interior'). There was a real concern with the hidden, potential acts of *libbu*, an opaque interior that could not be seen or heard without verbal mediation: a verbal mediation that could be falsified. The freedom to not say what you really think was yet another reason why the Assyrians insisted so sternly on truth-telling practices.

The Assyrian mission thus required not merely territorial expansion, but the creation and maintenance of certain kinds of interiority and subjectivity. This could arise spontaneously, which gratified the Assyrian rulers.¹⁸² More often, it required a suite of techniques to shape the interiority of others. Whilst these techniques were not enumerated in any treatise of government, they were repeatedly used to elicit specific affective outcomes. Consider these words from a letter composed by Sargon to Aššur-šarru-ušur, governor of Que:

dibbi ṭabuti šupraššu...

šebilaššu basi libbušu issini ippaššar

Send good words to him (Midas, a Phrygian king)...

Send (his servants) to him, soon his interior will relent with us.

SAA 1 no. 1, obv. 14 + obv. 18, Sargon to Aššur-šarru-ušur

¹⁸² Recall our discussion in chapter one regarding Esarhaddon's boast of a Chaldean chieftain submitting *ki ṭemešuma* 'according to his own *ṭemu*.'

ki anni qibaššu

ma ina timali šalši-ume issu pan Muskaya palḫaka
ma uma Muskaya issini issilim
ma atta issu pan mini palḫaka
ma uma šilli šarri beliya kusapika akul meka šiti
ma libbaka lu ṭabka

Say to him like this

3.QUOT Yesterday, the day before yesterday, you were $\sqrt{plḫ}$ before the Phrygian.
3.QUOT Now the Phrygian is reconciled with us.
3.QUOT Before what are you $\sqrt{plḫ}$
3.QUOT Now in the shadow of the king my lord eat your bread, drink your water.
3.QUOT Let your interior be good.

obv. 36-41

šumma libbušu šadu lišabalkita lušešibšunu...

ana šašu tašlišaka issen ana kallie lintuḫaššu lillika dibbi ṭabuti issišu ladbub libbu laškunšu

If it is [Balassu's] interior, he may bring (his people) over the mountains and settle them...

As for him, let one of your 'third men' carry him by express that he can come here. I shall speak good words with him and establish *libbu* for him.

rev. 60 + rev. 62-64

Three different men in different parts of the world, yet Sargon's attention to the affective state of all three of them is striking. Rather than just communicating in terse imperatives, he explains the expected outcomes of his instructions, each outcome being a manipulation of another's *libbu* into an idealised state. In the first episode, Sargon directs his governor to return Phrygian prisoners to their king, Midas, who had captured some enemies of Assyria and sent them to Aššur-šarru-ušur. Phrygia was a powerful rival to Assyria in Anatolia and Sargon's gratification at Midas' conciliation is most apparent: *tariš adanniš* 'very correct',¹⁸³ he replies, before directing Aššur-šarru-ušur to tell Midas that *šarru beli iḫtudu adanniš* 'the king my lord rejoiced greatly'.¹⁸⁴ Most important for us here is that Sargon justifies sending *dibbi ṭabuti*, a letter about how happy he is, and Phrygian prisoners, as acts to influence Midas' *libbu*.

¹⁸³ SAA 1 no. 1, obv. 7.

¹⁸⁴ SAA 1 no. 1, obv. 20-21

In the second situation, Sargon advises Aššur-šarru-ušur on how to manage a client king, Kilar, in light of these new developments, illustrating two key Assyrian engagements with interiority. Firstly, he demonstrates a sort of ‘empathy,’ narrating Kilar’s \sqrt{plh} , and explaining that there is no reason to experience it with respect to Midas. Secondly, he describes the ideal conception of a subject in the universe of Aššur: eat and drink in the protection of the king, and let your *libbu* be good.

Finally, Sargon addresses the business of Balassu the Babylonian. *Libbu* manifests itself both in a recognition and assurance of Balassu’s autonomy—let him do whatever according to his *libbu*—and the explicit practice of using *dibbi ṭabuti* to affect interior state: here, *libbu* $\sqrt{škn}$ ‘to establish *libbu*,’ though *šurḥušu* ‘to make confident’ is also attested.

This letter was probably a draft or an unsent copy, breaking off as it does ‘in the middle.’ Nevertheless it shows that Sargon’s attention to the interiorities of his subjects was detailed and sensitive. Action is linked to intended affective outcome, this outcome being a *libbu* attuned to Aššur. In the following section, we will explore the various Assyrian strategies for managing the *libbu* (through speech acts like *dibbi ṭabuti* and otherwise). Subsequently, we will look at the idealised interior of the Assyrian subject: *libbu* $\sqrt{t}b$ ‘good interior.’ Integral to this was \sqrt{plh} , a complex concept broadly indicating fear, respect, or reverence, but with an important component of submissive obedience. The idealised Assyrian subject also embodied the correct \sqrt{plh} appropriate to their station, and the Assyrian elite possessed more violent instruments to inculcate this. Importantly, these aspects of *libbu* $\sqrt{t}b$ and \sqrt{plh} were not exclusive to those ‘subjects’ subject to Assyrian power, but applied to the person of the king himself: all were subservient to Aššur and the gods.

palḫute šunu libbi liškunušunu litqunu

They are \sqrt{plh} people; may *libbu* be established for them, may they be secured.¹⁸⁵

In chapter two, we briefly encountered the phrase *libbu* $\sqrt{škn}$, literally ‘to place interior’. This expression has frequently been translated into English as ‘to encourage,’ a word which is derived from a similar underlying idiom, *en*, ‘in’ + *courage*, derived from Latin *cor* ‘heart’.¹⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the modern English connotations of ‘encourage’ obscure the underlying Akkadian concepts of *libbu*, which we’ve discussed at length as not coterminous with ‘heart’, and $\sqrt{škn}$, with its stronger associations of establishing. Additionally, *libbu* $\sqrt{škn}$ parallels *ṭemu* $\sqrt{škn}$ ‘establish *ṭemu*,’ which we discussed in chapter one (p.46): *libbu* reflects *ṭemu* in that *libbu* as a spatial-topographical designation takes on the qualities of an affective, personal characteristic. Both involve the imposition, establishment, of an inchoate state, *ṭemu* the shift from ordered intention to potential outcome, *libbu* a state associated with confidence ($\sqrt{rḫṣ}$), peacefulness ($\sqrt{n’h}$), order (\sqrt{tqn}).

The most frequently attested strategies for establishing *libbu* were linguistic and communicative strategies. Of these, *dibbi ṭabuti* ‘good words’ has already been fruitfully investigated by the Assyriologist Mario Fales as a distinct component of Assyrian political discourse (2009). Fales concludes that this speech activity was intended to expand and maintain *Pax Assyriaca*: friendly relations that favoured Assyrian interests outside the explicitly defined scope of royal territory (2009: 38-39). I would add to this that not only did speaking *dibbi ṭabuti* further Assyria’s political and economic position, but helped to shape the interiorities of their non-Assyrian audience into those of the ideal Assyrian subject. We have already seen this in Sargon’s letter quoted above, where he describes his intention to speak *dibbi ṭabuti* to Balassu *libbu laškunšu* ‘that I may establish his *libbu*.’ Balassu, as the leader of the pro-Assyrian Bit-Dakkuri tribe, was an asset to Sargon’s interests in Babylonia. Thus we have this ‘diplomatic’ manoeuvre here, a speech act to establish a specific ‘encouraged’ state within him. Additionally in the same passage we have Sargon writing that Balassu be allowed to act *šumma libbušu* ‘if it is his *libbu*’—according to his interior. Consequently, in this advisory to his governor we find that Sargon is quite preoccupied with securing and validating the interior state, *libbu* of a valued pro-Assyrian chief.

¹⁸⁵ SAA 10 no. 354, rev. 13-14, Mar-Issar to Esarhaddon.

¹⁸⁶ OED s.v. ‘encourage’

Nabu-ḥamatu'a and the Medes

In a similar fashion we have a letter sent on behalf of Nabu-ḥamatu'a, a deputy governor in the Zagros region, where he is recorded as saying

niše mati ša mar Bel-iddina dibbi ṭabuti issišunu addubub libbi ussaškinšunu...
muk attunu yamuttu ina betišu ina libbi eqlišu dullakunu epša libbakunu lu ṭabakunu
muk urdani ša šarri attunu
nehu dullašunu eppušu

To the people of the land of Bel-iddina's son, I spoke good words and caused *libbu* to be established for them,
 1.QUOT You, each of you in his house and in the interior of his field, do your work, may your *libbu*
 be good
 1.QUOT you are servants of the king.
 They are peaceful, they do their work.

SAA 5 no. 210, obv. 10-14 + rev. 2-9, Nabu-ḥamatu'a to Sargon

Here, though the progression *dibbi ṭabuti* → *libbu* √škn is the same as in Sargon's letter, the circumstances are markedly different. Firstly, we have a governor speaking these words in order to effect the affect, indicating that *libbu* management through speech acts was not restricted to the voice of the king alone. Secondly, rather than a singular, high-ranking other being the target of *libbu* management, we have a collective group, the *niše mati ša mar Bel-iddina* 'people of the land of Bel-iddina's son.' This man, who is given no designation except as Bel-iddina's son, is described as *bel ḥiṭu*, literally 'master of crime' and *parrīšu*, 'liar,' who does not listen to the word of the king,¹⁸⁷ a veritable catalogue of calumny. Nabu-ḥamatu'a does not go into the specifics of the son's misdemeanours, bypassing him entirely and speaking to his men instead. This suggests that *dibbi ṭabuti* only worked on those receptive to the royal word, which further implies a dialogic component to the process of affective Assyrianisation: rather than speaking *dibbi ṭabuti* indiscriminately in an attempt to establish *libbu* on just anyone, this procedure only occurred with those who were already willing and able to listen. Other techniques were required to condition the recalcitrant.

Most importantly, in this letter Nabu-ḥamatu'a reports his first-person speech to the people, invoking a picture of idealised subjectivity: 'may your *libbu* be good, you are servants of the king.' This statement explicitly associates work and being underlings of the Assyrian king with a *libbu* √ṭ'b, 'good interior,' a phrase used not only in this kind of address but frequently throughout the letters between the king and his underlings. *Libbu* √ṭ'b, the good interior, was indelibly associated with the

¹⁸⁷ *abat šarri la išamme*, a negation of appropriate behaviour that was associated with anti-Assyrian disorder and rebellion; see p.267.

smooth functioning of Assyrian administration: imperial wellbeing and personal wellbeing were as one, with the specific situational circumstances guaranteeing this dependent only on the individual's place in the social hierarchy. To be a servant of the king and peacefully do one's work was a cause of *libbu* $\sqrt{t}'b$ for the people (rather than *libbu* $\sqrt{t}'b$ being a prerequisite for obedience or such); for the people of Bel-iddina's son, in order to get on with work they needed the Assyrian administrator to *libbi ussaškinšunu* 'cause *libbu* to be established for them.' An implicit sequence of subjective and embodied practice emerges here:

1. *abat šarri* $\sqrt{š}m$ 'listen to the king's word'
2. *libbu* $\sqrt{š}kn$ 'interior established'
3. *dullu* $\sqrt{p}š$ 'do work'
4. *libbu* $\sqrt{t}'b$ 'good interior'

Not only does performing the allotted work lead to a good interior on behalf of the people performing it, but the performance of this work is associated with a good interior for the king himself, as evidenced frequently throughout the letters. *Libbu* $\sqrt{t}'b$ was thus in Assyrian administrative practice almost an ethical state borne out of active listening to orders ($\sqrt{š}m$) and performance of work: this kind of subjectivity was reinforced through *libbu* $\sqrt{š}kn$ (indeed, *libbu* $\sqrt{š}kn$ can be thought of as specifically reinforcing interiority), achieved via the speech act described by *dibbi ṭabuti*.

La tapallaḥ and Interior Work

As a genre of discourse named specifically by the Assyrians, *dibbi ṭabuti* usefully shows how specific political practices—here, speech practices—were used to elicit specific affective outcomes (at least in the instances where the use of *dibbi ṭabuti* is justified within a letter).¹⁸⁸ However, *dibbi ṭabuti* was not the only way in which the Assyrians established *libbu* upon others. In a damaged letter from the reign of Tiglath-pileser, an unknown correspondent reports his own speech to the 'heralds' of an unknown town:

¹⁸⁸ *Libbu* $\sqrt{š}kn$ was not the only outcome of *dibbi ṭabuti*; we also find $\sqrt{r}ḥš$ Š 'to make confident' e.g. SAA 15 no. 159, obv. 7'-9', discussed below.

naggaratešunu ana paniya [ittalkuni] libbu ussaškinšunu
 [muk] *la tapallaḥ*
muk *šiani*
 Their heralds [came] before me and I established interior for them
 [1.QUOTE] Do not $\sqrt{plḥ}$!
 1.QUOTE Come out!

SAA 19 no. 128, rev. 4-5, unassigned to Tiglath-pileser

In this instance, *libbu ussaškinšunu* ‘I established interior for them’ is used as a framing device, indeed as a *verbum dicendi* with the correspondent’s direct speech indelibly associated with the act *libbu* $\sqrt{škn}$.¹⁸⁹ Furthermore, the actual speech quoted as the instrument of *libbu* $\sqrt{škn}$ contains what could be described as an emotive: *la tapallaḥ* ‘do not $\sqrt{plḥ}$,’ which we can gloss ‘fear’ temporarily.¹⁹⁰ The concept of ‘emotive’ was coined by the historian William Reddy in his work on the affective dimensions of the French Revolution, where he situated it as a third kind of speech act between ‘performatives’ and ‘constatives’ (2001). An emotive, he argues, functions as a translation device between a notionally non-linguistic interiority (‘feelings’) and the socio-cultural realm of language: an emotive not only describes interior state but can also alter and shape it (Reddy 2001: 105). Now here we do not have one of Reddy’s emotives *per se*, but rather, as a second person description, a speech act that has the potential to cause the other party to ‘rehearse’ the affect (Reddy 2001: 107). In terms of the context, we have quite a complex layering of affective interplay. We have the correspondent of the letter undertaking an operation to alter the affectivity of these heralds (*libbu ussaškinšunu*)—this is described in the past tense as something already achieved. This affective manipulation is narrated as a speech act which exhorts the heralds to not be fearful—*la tapallaḥ*. This is a ‘prohibitive,’ the negated equivalent of the imperative. We shall have more to say about the role of the imperative in chapter four, but right now we can see that, in his act of establishing *libbu* for these heralds, the speaker has implicitly concluded first that the heralds are indeed experiencing $\sqrt{plḥ}$, and secondly that he can bring about a state of affairs where they are not experiencing $\sqrt{plḥ}$ solely through the utterance of this prohibitive. It is this statement, *la tapallaḥ... šiani* (do not $\sqrt{plḥ}$, come out) which is the performative fulcrum of the *libbu* $\sqrt{škn}$ procedure here: by using a

¹⁸⁹ As we have already observed, *libbu* $\sqrt{škn}$ could be achieved through the speech act *dibbi ṭabuti*: it could very well be argued that, as direct speech causing *libbu* $\sqrt{škn}$, the words here could also fall into the category of *dibbi ṭabuti*, even though this is not explicitly stated. I do not think this is a convincing assertion, especially as it easily becomes circular reasoning.

¹⁹⁰ The specificities of $\sqrt{plḥ}$ are extensively discussed in the next section of this chapter.

prohibitive, the utterance is not simply one of reassurance or encouragement, as a simple translation would have it, but carries much more of a transformative power-relation within it: the speaker is directing the heralds to not fear, and transforming their interiorities through this utterance, not simply using his speech to indirectly affect the interiority of another through their hearing and processing of it. Furthermore, this is not achieved through *libbu*-transgression as such. Rather, the imperative imposed upon these subjects, to alter their affective state to no longer express \sqrt{plh} , expresses the outcome, and it is incumbent upon the subjects to perform the necessary interior work themselves, through whatever method they wish.¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ In his comparative study of the phrase ‘fear not,’ though pinning \sqrt{plh} as ‘fear, reverence,’ Nissinen concludes that not only was *la tapallah* ‘an encouraging and soothing formula,’ but it was one whose utterance associated the utterer with the power of divine speech, a ‘supreme authority whose word is equal to the divine word’ (2003: 161). He writes:

The words *la tapallah* mean here more than neighborly consolation or encouragement: they are royal words coming from the one who himself is to be feared and whose “fear not” should inspire one with particular confidence in powers vested in him. In other words, the people have only the king to fear; otherwise, they have nothing to fear.

Nissinen 2003: 137

Words of the Powerful

The association of *libbu* √*škn* with Assyrians of authority is underlined by this final description of speech, where the authors respond to Sargon:

ki ša šarru beli ana urdišu išpuranni ki annimma issišunu nidabbub libbu nišakkanšunu
Just like the king wrote to his servant, just like this we will talk with them and establish *libbu* for them.

SAA 15 no. 305, rev. 2'-5'

In this letter, of unknown sender and context, we find the author specifically describing their future intention to accurately replicate the words of the king: *ki ša šarru beli... ki annimma*. We shall explore this concern with the accurate replication of words more fully in chapter four, but for our purposes here it suffices to say that it shows that the replicated speech of the authoritative and powerful was substantially linked to the affective outcome of *libbu* √*škn*, the establishment of a pro-Assyrian interiority; this is mirrored by Sargon's directive to Aššur-šarru-ušur regarding Midas:

ki anni šupraššu
ma *šabani Quwaya ša tušebilanni*
ma *ina muḥḥi šarri beliya assappar*
ma *šarru beli ihtudu adanniš*
Write to [Midas] just like this
3.QUOT Regarding the men of Que that you sent to me
3.QUOT concerning whom I wrote to the king my lord
3.QUOT the king my lord rejoiced greatly...

SAA 1 no. 1, obv. 19-21 Sargon to Aššur-šarru-ušur

Here we have Sargon explicitly 'putting words in the mouth of his governor, in order to achieve an affective manipulation of the newly diplomatic Midas.'¹⁹² Most notably, we have the king directing his underling to illustrate the royal personage as *ih̄tudu adanniš*, 'rejoicing greatly,' a very strong self-representation.¹⁹³

The link between authoritative, royal communication and *libbu* √*škn* was not limited solely to the replication of words or the artful deployment of *dibbi ṭabuti*. Rather, it was an aspect of

¹⁹² *basi libbušu issini ippaššar* 'so his *libbu* will be appeased with us' obv. 18.

¹⁹³ Sargon did not only direct his administrators to replicate his words in order to *libbu* √*škn*: in a damaged letter he also is cited as asking his official to give someone a house, a field and plough to establish *libbu* for them (SAA 5 no. 263, obv. 12' ff.). This has echoes of the 'ideal interiority'—everyone in his house, in his field, do work and may your *libbu* be good.

communication with a beneficent authority more generally, and was thus actively solicited by those subject to that authority. A letter to Esarhaddon from Šumaya is illustrative:

mamma ina libbi ali aga issiḫu mar-šipri ša šarri beliya lillikamma ali lušarḫiṣ u yašu libbi ṭabu liškunanni
Whoever is in this city is rebellious. May a messenger of the king my lord come and make the city confident, and establish good *libbu* for myself

SAA 18 no. 113, rev. 15'-18', Šumaya to Esarhaddon

Though Šumaya does not request Esarhaddon write *dibbi ṭabuti* or suchlike to his city, he does request a *mar-šipri* messenger to be dispatched, implying some kind of message from the king. He hopes for two outcomes: for the city, *lušarḫiṣ* 'let it be made confident,' and for himself, *libbi ṭabu liškunanni*. This additional gloss on *libbu* √*škn* is unusual here, indicating an especially marked request, which in the context of a 'rebellious' city makes sense. The use of *libbu* √*t'b* alludes to the kind of 'ideal subjectivity' implicitly permeating the Assyrian correspondence: *libbu ša šarri lu ṭab* 'let the king's interior be good' whenever things are going well politically; 'be glad, you are servants of the king'. Here, however, the phrase is not employed in a report but is framed in an explicit request to the king, again making sense in the context of unrest being a disruption of the ideal order. Additionally, Šumaya describes a different affective outcome for the city itself: *lušarḫiṣ* 'let it be made √*rḫṣ*.' Previous translations usually elide or fudge the difference between *libbu* √*škn* and √*rḫṣ*, subsuming them both under the category of 'confidence,' but Šumaya himself makes a distinction between them here, demarcated with emphasis with *yašu* 'for me.' We can explain this by noting that *libbu* √*škn* applies only to a subject interiority already partial to Assyria—an Assyrian administrator is a paradigmatic example of this.¹⁹⁴ The rebellious city, however, does not just need to have *libbu* established: its interiority, intentions, desires are more troublesome and dangerous, and thus it needs a different, potentially stronger affective reining in, which is what √*rḫṣ* Š seems to describe here. Finally, to further ballast his request for *libbu* √*škn*, Šumaya writes:

piḫatu šarru liš'al ki libba ana šarri beliya la gummuru
Let the king ask the governor if my interior is not completely for the king my lord.

SAA 18 no. 113, rev. 18'-20'

¹⁹⁴ Another example of requesting *libbu* √*škn* directly from the king is to be found in a damaged, unattributed letter to Esarhaddon where the author writes: *šulmu ana šarri beliya lašme u minu ša šutuni šarru lišpura libbu ana urdišu liškun* 'Let me hear wellbeing for the king my lord and may the king send to me whatever there is, may he establish *libbu* for his servant' SAA 16 no. 196, obv. 6-rev. 2.

This counterfactual declaration recalls our discussion of *libbu* \sqrt{gmr} .¹⁹⁵ We noted that the injunction to exercise *libbu* \sqrt{gmr} was pervasive in imperial treaties and repeatedly asserted in letters. Šumaya requesting that *libbu* be established for him, even though his *libbu* is already completely for the king suggests that *libbu* $\sqrt{škn}$ was consequently not an operation for ensuring loyalty, but rather an affective establishment.

Building Forts, Breaking Hearts

Libbu $\sqrt{škn}$ seems primarily to have been established via communicative act, but one that was not restricted to simply sending delineated, replicated speech. More overt communicative expressions were used, such as the request for a *mar-šipri* messenger (presumably with a message). Moving even further in the direction of human movement instead of speech transmission we have Raši-il's letter to Esarhaddon, whom we might recall from chapter two as having the words of the king placed in his *libbu*.¹⁹⁶ In the same letter, he writes:

ina kutallišunu birti nikaššarma [x x x] ana libbi nušellima niši ipallaḥu ana amat šanitamma utarru u libbi ḥepu iššakkinu

In their rear we are constructing a fortress, [x x x] we are causing to go up within it; the people will be $\sqrt{plḥ}$, they will answer the other, and broken interiors will be established.

SAA 18 no. 142, obv. 16'-rev. 3, Raši-il? to Esarhaddon

Raši-il explicitly associates affective outcomes with militarisation here: a fortress is being built, and potentially supplied with troops (as Parpola reconstructs it), leading to three outcomes. Firstly, the people of the land will experience $\sqrt{plḥ}$. As discussed extensively in a subsequent section, this was a central emotion underpinning the Assyrian state, loosely tying into 'reverence,' 'fear,' 'obedience,' and was a prerequisite for participating in Assyrian subjectivity; its association here with military activity and the hegemonic threat of violence is unproblematic.

However, the remainder of the sentence is challenging. Parpola considers the phrasing of the second outcome, *ana amat šanitamma utarru*, as ungrammatical, proposing the 'very conjectural' translation 'turn to other matters' (Reynolds 2003: 113). Similarly, my rendering here is tentative, following the CAD's attestation of $\sqrt{t'r}$'s D-stem usage with *amatu* (CAD T s.v. *tāru* 10.a.1', 271). Following these previous usages has the attractive consequence of emphasising a kind of dialogicality, which parallels certain relational aspects of $\sqrt{plḥ}$ we will explore in the following

¹⁹⁵ P.77.

¹⁹⁶ P.90.

chapter. Ultimately, the meaning of this phrase remains an open question, owing to the damage of the letter and the limited discussion it has received.¹⁹⁷

We receive no clarification from Raši-il's third and final outcome: *libbi ḥepu iššakkinu* 'the broken interiors will be established'. The phrase *libbi ḥepu*, literally 'broken interior,' appears familiar to us as 'broken heart,' which is how Parpola translates it, and as a result he suggests 'the broken heart(s) will be put in place.' However, we might compare this phrase with a previous modification of *libbu* $\sqrt{\text{škn}}$, when Šumaya wrote *yašu libbi ṭabu liškunanni* 'for myself, let good interior be established.' In Šumaya's letter, *libbu* $\sqrt{\text{ṭ}b}$ was still to be established, a prefigured future by way of the precative mood. In comparison, Raši-il uses a third person plural (referring to the *niši* 'people') in what appears to be an N-stem form indicating the passive mood. Drawing this parallelism fully then means we should remove the connotation 'put in place,' indicating a 'broken heart' being repaired, and translate more in line 'broken interior will be established,' which changes the meaning of the phrase significantly. Rather than this militarisation resulting in 'reverent' people with mended hearts, it becomes a display of force, provoking $\sqrt{\text{plḥ}}$ and leading to *libbu* $\sqrt{\text{ḥp}}$ 'broken interior.' This suggests a violence done to these people's interiority, and that to create an appropriate subjectivity conducive to Assyrian interests, inculcating $\sqrt{\text{plḥ}}$, these people's *libbu* must first be broken.

Crushing, Tearing, Calming

Whilst this reinterpretation must remain conjectural due to the lack of context, the violent reconfiguration of interiority through military hegemony can be traced in other letters, a reconfiguration ultimately leading to the peaceful, desirable subjectivity alluded to already. For example in this letter to Sargon from the governor Bel-lešir, we find *libbu* being violently crushed:

adi niši akabbusuni libbu ša mati akabbusuni ḥaramamma assappara
As soon as I crushed the people and crushed the interior of the land, then I wrote.

SAA 19 no. 176, rev. 11'-13', Bel-lešir to Sargon

Our attention is drawn once again to *libbu*, which here is used in juxtaposition with *niši*, the mass noun for people; both are used in epistrophe with *akabbusuni*. Now we could interpret a literal usage

¹⁹⁷ Parpola notes that the letter entered as SAA 18 no. 142 had not been previously edited or discussed; later bibliography is sparse, to my knowledge. In her review of this volume, Dalley suggests the reading *ana amat ša nitamma* (Dalley 2006: 143) which would be '(They will answer) the word we discussed.'

for the verb \sqrt{kbs} , which has a basic meaning of ‘trample’: trampling upon people and trampling upon the interior of the land, where *libbu* is used in its locative meaning rather than a psychic one. However, an affective interpretation is justifiable here. Firstly, the use of \sqrt{kbs} to describe an affective state is found in the letter from Abi-yaqiya we encountered previously.¹⁹⁸ In that letter, they emphasised that their words were true, out of their *libbu*, and to further emphasise their desperate state, they wrote:

anaku Indabiya rab-lim ittiya ina bitiya kabsanni
I myself, Indabiya the chiliarch with me, in my house—we are crushed.¹⁹⁹

SAA 17 no. 152, rev.7-8, Abi-yaqiya *et al.* to Sargon

This description is likely not literal, instead being an evocative description of affect in line with the attention to interior state found in the rest of the letter. Correspondingly, the usage of \sqrt{kbs} in Bel-lešir’s report is potentially a similar incidence. In addition, we find *matu* described affectively in other ways throughout the letters,²⁰⁰ but there is a progression from *matu* \sqrt{kbs} through to an ideal affective state. We can see this described in an unknown official’s letter to Tiglath-pileser:

Turmuna bet šarri ipqidannini šulmu adanniš matu kabsat zar’e erruš uri isirru
[ina] ali aki issen nizza[za]ma

The city of Turmuna where the king appointed me is very well. The land is subjugated, they sow the seed, they plaster the roofs. We stand in the city as one.

SAA 19 no. 21 obv. 3-8, unassigned to Tiglath-pileser

Here, the land once again has been trampled (\sqrt{kbs}), but now is *šulmu adanniš*, very well. We have seen this phrase used, albeit formulaically, multiple times to describe individuals and here we find it applied to *matu* as well. To underline that *matu* refers to the collective inhabiting it, third-person nouns describe a bucolic work scene, followed by the image of standing in the city ‘as one’. This is

¹⁹⁸ See p.83.

¹⁹⁹ Despite the greeting declaring that this letter is spoken by five men, the voice of the letter throughout refers to itself in the first person singular.

²⁰⁰ For example, *libbi mati adanniš taba* ‘The interior of the land is good’ SAA 5 no. 132, obv.6-7; *mati gabbišu ana šarri beliya ikarrubu* ‘All the lands pray for the king my lord’ SAA 16 no. 126, rev.20; *matati gabbi ana pan šarri beliya hamu* ‘All the lands are \sqrt{hm} -positive before the king, my lord’ SAA 18 no. 14, rev.10-13, Ubaru *šakin-temi* of Babylon to Esarhaddon; *matati gabbi ana muḫḫi Aššur izirrunaši* ‘All the lands hate us due to Assyria’ no. 70, obv. 11, *šandabakku* (governor of Nippur) to Esarhaddon.

taken by Rosenzweig in her study of land-use and subjectivity in Assyria as ‘the author intentionally signal[ing] a shift in subjects’ attachments from lineage-based families to corporate, political affiliations, wrought not by brutality or bribery, but by land-use practice’ (2016: 31). Notwithstanding the brutal oppression that has taken place (\sqrt{kbs} again), this points to an idealised norm of Assyrian subjects as engaging in cultivation and construction and being serene, content, happy: in other words, an affective subjectivity as a component of the Assyrian imperial affective regime. This approval of peaceability extended through all territories of Aššur, whether directly governed, as here, or client states.²⁰¹ That the affective wellbeing of the land was a desired state is emphasised by a letter from a Babylonian official to Sennacherib, advising him on a group of Aramaeans loyal to Marduk-apla-iddina:

*šarru beli lissuḫšunutma libbi mati lu ṭab
arde ša šarri beliya la ušadlapu la kine šunu*

The king my lord should extract them so that the interior of the land may be good.
They must not disturb the servants of the king my lord. They are not reliable.

SAA 17 140, rev.9’-14’, Nabu-ušallim to Sennacherib

Here, Nabu-ušallim proposes that Sennacherib deport the Aramaeans in order to achieve $\sqrt{ṭ}b$ in the land. Clearly Nabu-ušallim, as a pro-Assyrian Babylonian, has an interested opinion regarding what a positive, sweet country would be; he has no qualms about proposing an instrument of violence be deployed by the Assyrian imperial machine in order to secure his vision of *libbi mati*. He describes the targeted Aramaeans as *la kine*, ‘not reliable,’ nuancing his conception of a good land—one that does not contain unreliable elements, and thus conforming to an Assyrian order.

Wrapping up our exploration of *libbu* $\sqrt{škn}$, let us recall Nabu-ḫamatu’a’s narrative. There, we have a chain where he speaks *dibbi ṭabuti* to a collective,²⁰² the loyalty of whom Assyria wishes to retain. By doing so, he implements *libbu* $\sqrt{škn}$ —establishing interior—and by doing that, these people’s

²⁰¹ For example, in a report to Tiglath-pileser about an unknown vassal king, the author writes *ina matišu šu dullušu eppaš massu gabbu neḫat dullašunu eppušu* ‘He is in his country; he does his work, and his whole country is peaceful, they are doing their work’ (SAA 19 no. 78, rev. 4’-rev. 6’)

²⁰² The people of the son of a certain Bel-iddina, whom Nabu-ḫamatu’a characterises as *bel-ḫiṭu šu parrišu šu [abat šarri] la išamme* ‘He is a criminal, a traitor, he does not listen to [the word of the king]’ (SAA 5 no. 210, obv. 16-rev. 1). In this context it seems his ‘people’ are not associated with the son of Bel-iddina’s misdemeanours, however.

libbus become good.²⁰³ Consequently, this suggests a model of Assyrian political practice which associates itself with the control, and maintenance, of interior state.²⁰⁴ Indeed, we can compare the sentence Nabu-ḫamatu'a utters to the people of the son of Bel-iddina with what Sargon directed Assur-šarru-ušur to write to Kilar previously, which again featured an image of calm activity. We will go into further detail regarding replication and authority in the following chapter; it suffices to observe here that this image of calm activity under the protection of the king is decontextualisable and reapplied, in its general shape, to different situations throughout the empire.

These examples have shown that *dibbi ṭabuti* and military procedures were useful strategies for teh affective management of Assyrian subjects. We have seen how these were used to establish *libbu*, but we also find them being used to elicit the affect $\sqrt{rḥṣ}$:

[*annurig*] *dibbi ṭabuti issišu niddubub* [*x x x*]
muk *ana ayale ša Larakaya* [*la nillik ana*] *ayalika ikke la nillaka*
 [*emuqi*] *ina muḫḫišu lu tallika lušarḫišu*

[Now] we have spoken good words with him,
 1.QUOT Did we [not go] to the assistance of the Larakeans? Why would we not come [to] your assistance?
 [The army] should go to him and cause him to be $\sqrt{rḥṣ}$

SAA 19 no. 87, rev. 5-8, Aššur-šallimanni to Tiglath-pileser

²⁰³ Subjects who were nervous would also request *libbu* $\sqrt{škn}$ from the king or other officials, for example SAA 16 no. 196 *šarru lišpura libbu ana ardišu liškun* 'Let the king write and let him set interior for his servant.'

²⁰⁴ Also contrast the letter SAA 19 no. 87 discussed above, where *dibbi ṭabuti* are spoken followed by the author's suggestion that Tiglath-pileser dispatch an army to the Chaldean chief of Malilatu in order to encourage him, *lušarḫišu*

šarru bela ana muḥḥi libbi šabtutu [la] irahḥuṣ
The king must not $\sqrt{rh}\dot{s}$ the interior of those held captive²⁰⁵

As we saw in Šumaya's letter to Esarhaddon,²⁰⁶ associated with *libbu* \sqrt{skn} was the affective outcome $\sqrt{rh}\dot{s}$, usually translated 'to be confident, to trust.' In that letter, $\sqrt{rh}\dot{s}$ was anticipated as an outcome of the king sending a messenger to a troubled city, and various other strategies were used to bring $\sqrt{rh}\dot{s}$ about. Firstly, the familiar *dibbi ṭabuti* was used, as in this letter from the governor of Der, advising Sargon on Babylonian strategy:

šarru beli dibbi ṭabuti issešu lidbubu šarri beli lušarḥissu basi lillika dibbi ṭabuti ana niše matišu u ana aḥḥešu liškun
The king my lord should talk good words with him, the king my lord should make him confident so that he will go and establish the good word for the people of his land and for his brothers.

SAA 15 no. 159, obv. 7'-11', Il-yada' to Sargon

Though Sargon's talk of good words to the unknown chief is not explicitly linked to $\sqrt{rh}\dot{s}$ Š here,²⁰⁷ the opposite link is made:²⁰⁸ that by Sargon making this man confident (*lušarḥissu*) this man will go and establish (*liškun*) the *dibbi ṭabuti* on his comrade. The usage of \sqrt{skn} here is telling: Sargon is to *talk* the *dibbi ṭabuti* (*lidbubu*) whereas the chief is to impose/set/establish it. This suggests a delineated degree of authorship and responsibility for the *dibbi ṭabuti*: Sargon actively talks them whereas the chief transmits them. However, the transmission itself requires an affective prerequisite, the $\sqrt{rh}\dot{s}$ that Il-yada' advises.²⁰⁹

Another letter from Babylonia sheds further light on the role of $\sqrt{rh}\dot{s}$ in the political economy of affect. The military official Aqar-Bel-lumur writes to Sargon effusively after the free submission of a rebellious chief to Assyria suzerainty:

dibbi ṭabuti it[tišunu] adabbub ṭem a[šakkanšunuti] ušarḥassunuti
I talked good words w[ith them], I e[stablished] ṭemu, I made them $\sqrt{rh}\dot{s}$.

SAA 17 no. 111, rev. 8-9, Aqar-Bel-lumur to Sargon

²⁰⁵ SAA 17 no. 40, Qišti-Marduk to Sargon

²⁰⁶ SAA 18 no. 113, discussed on p.121.

²⁰⁷ In Assyrian correspondence we usually find the suffix *-ma* linking two clauses, either as a sequential conjunction or more specifically indicating a causal relationship (Cohen's '-*ma* of sequence' (2000: 220)). No such link is made here, however.

²⁰⁸ This link is explicitly described with the conjunction *basi* 'as soon as, until.'

²⁰⁹ See also SAA 17 no. 102, rev. 4-5 *itti arde[ya x] lidbub lušarḥi[ssunuti]* 'Let him talk with [my] servants and cause [them] to be $\sqrt{rh}\dot{s}$.'

Although the tablet is damaged, Aqar-Bel-lumur's letter chains *dibbi ṭabuti*, *ṭemu* and $\sqrt{rh\dot{s}}$. As discussed in the first chapter, *ṭemu* was a temporalised, unfolding force of intention and action which animated Assyrian imperial machinery: its association here with $\sqrt{rh\dot{s}}$ suggests that to partake in Assyrian *ṭemu*-action is 'confidence-building'. Taking this together with Il-yada's letter, to be made confident ($\sqrt{rh\dot{s}} \dot{S}$) implies an affective state that is able to act on behalf of Assyrian interest, in contradistinction to acting on one's own, wilful behalf.

Further attestations of $\sqrt{rh\dot{s}}$ provide additional support for thinking of it as an enabling disposition towards pro-Assyrian activity. It is used often in letters from theatres of conflict in Babylonia, for example in a letter attributed to the Elders of the Sealand, whom we met previously:

šarru belani [x x x x x x] ša-qurrubutu iltapra[nnaši x x x]
 [um]ma *la-pan Na'id-[Marduk x x x a]na šulmiya [x x x ittal]ka [la] tapallaḥa adu [x x x ṭe]mu*
ašakkanšuma ...

ana muḥḥi amat ša šarri belini ša libbu amat ša ili la ušannu ki nirḥušu matu nu-[x x x x]-šu u maššartani nuddannin

The king our lord [...] has sen[t us a Clo]se One²¹⁰
 QUOT [...] from the presence of Na'id-[Marduk, he has com]e to greet m[e ... Do not] fear, now I
 will establish [ṭe]mu for him

Concerning the word of the king our lord which like the word of the god cannot be changed, which we trusted, we reinforced the land [x x x x] and our guard.

SAA 18 no. 89, obv. 23'-b.e. 28' + rev. 3-rev. 6, Elders of the Sealand to Esarhaddon

Though this letter is damaged, the preserved part narrates that the elders received a communication from the king (*amat ša šarri*) and that, because they trusted it (*ki nirḥušu*) they were able to enact pro-Assyrian military reinforcement. Though the king's words themselves do not survive, Reynolds restores a potential *ṭemu* $\sqrt{škn}$, which not only reinforces a link between *ṭemu* and $\sqrt{rh\dot{s}}$, but is doubly interesting when we consider the Elamite messenger and his contention over *ṭemu*.²¹¹ Both cases concern reports of the *ṭemu* of Na'id-Marduk: one by the Elamite messenger with the content *Na'id-Marduk mitu* 'Na'id-Marduk is dead'; the other a *ṭemu* established by Esarhaddon upon Na'id-Marduk, an act described by the *ša-qurbuti*. In this case, the *ṭemu*, which elicits $\sqrt{rh\dot{s}}$,

²¹⁰ The title *ša-qurbuti* is usually translated 'bodyguard' or 'confidant,' and referred to an official who was close to the royal authority.

²¹¹ See p.41.

consequently leads to a productive subjectivity advantageous to the Assyrians. In much the same way as Il-yada's and Aššur-šallimanni's letters previously, all demonstrate a 'virality' of $\sqrt{rh\mathfrak{s}}$ leading to restored pro-Assyrian active subjects, especially in a military context.

Aššur ša takluka napištašu gimilma
Aššur, spare the life of the one who \sqrt{tkl} you²¹²

Tiglath-pileser, the Biblical rendering of Tukulti-apil-Ešarra, 'My \sqrt{tkl} is in the Heir of the Ešarra'; Taklak-ana-Bel, 'I \sqrt{tkl} Bel'; Ana-Nabu-taklak 'I \sqrt{tkl} for Nabu': these are some of the names we encounter throughout this thesis. All of these men's names contain \sqrt{tkl} , which, like $\sqrt{rh\mathfrak{s}}$, falls into the semantic field of trusting and confidence. However, whilst $\sqrt{rh\mathfrak{s}}$ appears frequently in text and rarely in proper names, \sqrt{tkl} has the converse distribution, appearing rarely in daily use, being reserved for onomastics and the hefty pronouncements of the Standard Babylonian literary dialect. A glance at the uses of \sqrt{tkl} in use in the correspondence reveals three highly limited spheres. The first, echoing the onomastic use, is in praise of the gods;²¹³ the second is used to affirm personal qualities of imperial staff.²¹⁴

Finally, we find a pair of instances where \sqrt{tkl} is misplaced, just like $\sqrt{rh\mathfrak{s}}$:

*ana muḫḫi šarri beliya raḫṣaku...
la libbi ša šarri beliya la elli
Marduk-zeru-ibni ana muḫḫi Urdu-Nabu u Nadinu ki ittaku dibbiya bi'šutu idabbub
u anaku ana muḫḫi šarri beliya taklak*

I $\sqrt{rh\mathfrak{s}}$ concerning the king, my lord...
May I not go out from the interior of the king, my lord
Marduk-zeru-ibni is talking my *smelly* words as he was \sqrt{tkl} for Urdu-Nabu and Nadinu
and I am \sqrt{tkl} for the king, my lord.

SAA 13 no. 174, rev. 2 + rev. 6-10, Rašil to Esarhaddon/Assurbanipal

²¹² SAA 10 no. 365 obv. 11'-12'. The extract is damaged and *napištašu* has been restored. It can alternately be read as *Aššur ša takluka [...]* *gimilma* 'Aššur, do a favour for the one who \sqrt{tkl} you'.

²¹³ For example, SAA 10 no. 316 rev. 11; *Aššur Šamaš Bel u Nabu ša utakkilukani* 'Aššur, Šamaš, Bel and Nabu, the ones who made you \sqrt{tkl} '; cf. SAA 10 no. 333, rev. 2.

²¹⁴ SAA 10 no. 234, rev. 12-14: *Marduk-šarru-ušurma ša-qurbutu amelu taklu ummuru šu* 'Marduk-šarru-ušur the Close One, he is a \sqrt{tkl} and reliable man; no. 369 rev. 10-12: *šarru beli ša-qurbutu taklu lišpura liš'al* 'The king my lord should sent a \sqrt{tkl} Close One to inquire'; SAA 5 no. 204 obv. 15-17: *Šamaš-ukin amelu taklu ummuru ša dibbi ila'uni* 'Šamaš-ukin is \sqrt{tkl} and reliable, able in words.'

umma
QUOT

muḫḫi šarri u rab kašir ša takalata niklata ana šarri iterbunu
You \sqrt{tkl} the king and the chief tailor—intrigues have entered the king

SAA 18 no. 123, rev. 6-8, unassigned to unassigned

These instances function much like $\sqrt{rḫṣ}$, especially in Rašil's letter where *raḫṣaku* and *taklak* parallel each other. Furthermore, both of these letters convey the implication of misplaced \sqrt{tkl} : SAA 18 no. 123's unattributed speech in an unassigned letter seems to convey that the author's \sqrt{tkl} in Esarhaddon is in error due to the *niklata*; Rašil more clearly assigns misplaced \sqrt{tkl} to Marduk-zeru-ibni, who by contrast with Rašil does not \sqrt{tkl} the king. These kinds of manoeuvres and contrasts are familiar to us from how *ramanu* is deployed;²¹⁵ it seems that the unique characteristics of \sqrt{tkl} are restricted to its evocation of the weightier Standard Babylonian and onomastic usages of the semantic root, rather than any subtle distinction between \sqrt{tkl} and $\sqrt{rḫṣ}$.

²¹⁵ For which see p.101.

3.2 \sqrt{plh} as Practice and Virtue

palah ilani damaqu ullad: palah Annunaki balatu utar
 \sqrt{plh} of the gods begets beauty: \sqrt{plh} of the infernal deities returns life²¹⁶

'Before what are you \sqrt{plh} ?' Sargon has Aššur-šarru-ušur ask a client ruler requesting more territory. In the context of Sargon's letter, this question is intended to puncture the client ruler's requests and render him peaceable in the face of shifting alliances in the region: as we may recall, the powerful Phrygian king has made positive overtures towards the Assyrians, leading Sargon to believe he no longer poses a military threat.

This leading question provides a window into a central sentiment underlying the Assyrian elite's view of the political, even ontological, landscape of the Middle East during this period. Like *temu* and *libbu*, \sqrt{plh} was a force through which Assyrians engaged with the world. So, like *temu* and *libbu*, to translate it simply is to do it a disservice and produce unproductive misunderstandings. That \sqrt{plh} has a complex nature has already attracted interest, though mostly through a comparative engagement with the contemporary Hebrew experience of religious emotion (Gruber 1990). This has led to a dichotomy between translations of \sqrt{plh} as 'fear' or 'reverence',²¹⁷ a tendency to select either one or the other, and the transfer of meanings from the complex Biblical tradition. Furthermore, these connotations almost entirely charge \sqrt{plh} with a negative meaning, which are clearly not helped by the Assyrian royal inscriptions themselves promulgating an image of terrifying, overwhelming \sqrt{plh} (Liverani 2017: 142).

²¹⁶ SAA 10 no. 188, rev. 9-10, Adad-šumu-ušur to Esarhaddon

²¹⁷ The distinction between 'fear' and 'reverence' is complicated by their etymologies: 'fear' deriving from a Germanic root, and 'reverence' deriving from a Latin root *vereri* with intensifying *re-* prefix.

However, the epigraph above, taken from a letter by the king's *ašipu* Adad-šumu-ušur, illustrates the high regard in which \sqrt{plh} was held. Throughout the letters we find \sqrt{plh} upheld as a virtue, essential to an idealised Assyrian society:

palu damqu ume kenuti šanati ša mešari zunni taḥduti mili gaṣṣuti maḥiru damqu ilani salmu palaḥ ili ma'da ekurrate taḥuda ilani rabiuti ša šame u qaqqiri ina tarši šarri beliya usseluni paršamute iraqqudu šeḥrani izammuru issati šeḥerati ḥadia riša

A good reign, truthful days, years of justice, copious rains, massive floods, a good market, salubrious deities, much \sqrt{plh} of the gods, the temples are bountiful, the great gods of heaven and earth have gone up in the time of the king my lord, the old men dance, the little ones sing, the women and little ones (f.) are happy and joyful...

SAA 10 no. 226, obv. 9-18, Adad-šumu-ušur to Esarhaddon/Assurbanipal

This quotation, taken from an extremely detailed panegyric, praises the king's reign at length. Intermingled amongst song and dance is *palaḥ ili*. \sqrt{plh} then was not a paralysing fear,²¹⁸ but rather an affect entirely compatible with song and dance. Of note is that this \sqrt{plh} is not embodied: there is no subject experiencing it, but it is rather a free-floating phenomenon.

\sqrt{plh} as Royal Practice

\sqrt{plh} was not a passive affect, experienced in response to the external world, nor solely a free-floating, inchoate force. It was an active practice to be undertaken by every good Assyrian subject. This is emphasised by the fact that it was not just lowly subjects who were required to experience \sqrt{plh} towards their superiors, but that the powerful members of the royal family actively nurtured \sqrt{plh} themselves:

Ḫarranu alaka ilaniya apallaḥ
I shall come to Ḫarran and \sqrt{plh} my gods.

SAA 16 no. 5, rev. 18-19, Esarhaddon to unknown recipient

ilani ammar ša umu anni[u šarru be]li iplaḥuni ina deni ša šarri [Aššur]-bani-apli u Šamaš-šumu-ukin adanniš adanniš lizzizu
May all the gods whom the [king] my [lord] \sqrt{plh} -ed today very much very much stand at the trial of the king, [Assur]banipal and Šamaš-šumu-ukin.

SAA 10 no. 289, obv. 3-6, Urad-Gula to Esarhaddon

Tašmetu ša taplaḥišini qateki lu tašbat
May Tašmetu whom you \sqrt{plh} take your hand.

SAA 13 no. 76, obv. 6-7, Nergal-šarrani to Naqī'a

²¹⁸ Contra Gruber 1990: 417.

In these three quotations we have examples of the royal family actively performing \sqrt{plh} for their gods. The first is from a letter of Esarhaddon himself, where he describes his intentions to perform this activity on a trip to the city of Ḫarran, describing the target of the activity as *ilaniya* ‘my gods.’ The following two extracts are taken from the blessings of a scholar and priest to Esarhaddon and his mother respectively. As they were involved in cultic activities, these individuals would have played a role in supporting the \sqrt{plh} activity of the royal family, an activity which seems to have fallen into a more ‘domestic’ than ‘public’ sphere. This is hinted at by Esarhaddon specifying ‘my gods’, and by the fact that mentions of royal \sqrt{plh} in the letters are confined to dialogues with scholars and priests in the royal entourage.

A final dimension to royal \sqrt{plh} as described in the letters is the \sqrt{plh} experienced in the face of omens and cultic observances. Esarhaddon is quoted as writing to Adad-šumu-ušur:

ina muḫḫi adanni maššarti Asalluḫi ša tašpuranni [x x x x x] aptalaḫ

Regarding the period of the watch of Asalluḫi about which you wrote to me [x x x x x] I am \sqrt{plh}

SAA 10 no. 208, obv. 7-10, Adad-šumu-ušur to Esarhaddon

The *maššartu*-watch of Asalluḫi referred to the observation of celestial signs at night, which were regarded as communications from the gods (Rochberg 2016: 24). As already emphasised, \sqrt{plh} before the gods was a correct attitude for the king to express, and thus Esarhaddon’s expression of it here is not out of the ordinary. Nevertheless, scholars frequently write to the king exhorting him not to experience \sqrt{plh} regarding various omens, suggesting that \sqrt{plh} before a divine communication was not equivalent to \sqrt{plh} of the divine itself.²¹⁹ The most important takeaway from this is that the king does *not* experience \sqrt{plh} regarding what we would call earthly actors: only due to deities, communications from them, and interactions with them.²²⁰ This ostensible difference between the king and the ‘regular’ subjects of Assyria does not actually indicate an inconsistency in how \sqrt{plh} was practiced or manifest. The king in fact is merely practicing \sqrt{plh} as everyone else in the imperial

²¹⁹ E.g., SAA 10 no. 57, obv. 6.

²²⁰ In much the same regarding \sqrt{plh} as an appropriate response regarding communication from deities, we have a letter reporting a storm, which contains: *maškanate gabbu me[ḫu] ibašši uttasiḫi niši iptalḫu adanniš* ‘The storm was such all the tents were torn out, the people became very \sqrt{plh} ’ SAA 5 no. 249, obv. 8’-10’.

On first glance this just seems like these people were scared of a violent storm, but, taking the assumption that they would have viewed the storm as a communication from Adad or another wind-deity, exhibiting \sqrt{plh} as a complex response to an awesome divine communication is eminently appropriate here, as well as being a more ontologically sensitive understanding of these peoples’ emotions than a simple translation of ‘panic’ or ‘fear.’

ontology does: he practices \sqrt{plh} for his superiors in the hierarchy, a continuous hierarchy spanning humans and the divine without differentiation.

Danger of deficient \sqrt{plh}

Ultimately, the fact that \sqrt{plh} was not just a simple ‘fear’ or divine ‘reverence,’ but something actively practiced and desired by even the upper echelons of the Assyrian power hierarchy suggests that a view of the Assyrians as using military might to impose \sqrt{plh} -fear upon their subject populations is incomplete, and not how Assyrians might have understood their imperial project. To be depleted of \sqrt{plh} presented active danger to the Assyrian order in terms of reprisals from deities on the most prosaic level:

ikkarati ša zar'e irušuni akanni ana Adad [x x] la ipalluḫu ina libbi šu išatu ussanqit
The farmers who seeded the fields now do not \sqrt{plh} Adad: he caused fire to fall into its interior.

SAA 10 no. 69, obv. 13-rev. 2, Nabu-aḫḫe-eriba to Esarhaddon

The lack of \sqrt{plh} for the storm god Adad here results in violent reprisal, the destruction of a previously productive field, attributed to an incorrect subjectivity on behalf of the farmers dwelling there. The association of a lack of \sqrt{plh} with dysfunction in imperial activity is nicely demonstrated in this priest's exasperation regarding disobedient shepherds:

[šunu la] immaggur ana [ana p]irri [la] errubu [šarru] la ipalluḫu ḫalqu idullu uma assaparšunu
muk ata šarri la tapallaḫa

[They do] not agree to come in [for the tax col]lection. They do not \sqrt{plh} [the king]. They wander like fugitives. I have now written to them

1.QUOT Why do you not \sqrt{plh} the king?

SAA 13 no. 20, bottom e. 12-rev. 6, Dadi to the king

annuti [mar'e] mat Aššurma la immaggur [šarru] beli la ipalluḫu [mar'e] mat nakiri ake [ana] šarri beliya illuku
These are [sons] of the land of Aššur, and they do not consent to \sqrt{plh} the [king] my lord—how will [sons] of the foreign land go [for] the king my lord?

SAA 13 no. 19, rev. 2-rev. 6, Dadi to the king

This pair of letters explicitly associates a lack of \sqrt{plh} with the shepherds not providing their dues. What particularly stands out however is Dadi's rhetorical question, which places the lack of \sqrt{plh} on the part of Assyrians as being particularly unconscionable. This suggests that \sqrt{plh} for the king was

an essential characteristic of those *mar'e mat Aššur* 'sons of the land of Aššur.' From Dadi's perspective, a deficiency in $\sqrt{p}l\eta$ would lead to universal chaos.²²¹

²²¹ For more on this threat, see chapter six.

Flavours of Fear

As noted above, \sqrt{plh} does not neatly map onto translations of ‘fear, reverence.’ Indeed, much in the same way that English has a number of terms for this semantic field—fear and fright (Germanic), scare (Norse), terror and horror (Latin)—a number of terms were in use for this affective sphere in the Assyrian letters. Of these, \sqrt{plh} , \sqrt{grr} ,²²² and \sqrt{gld} have all been translated loosely into English with ‘fear’ and its companions. However, to the Assyrian language community, these were not synonymous terms. The use of \sqrt{plh} with \sqrt{grr} or \sqrt{gld} in the same sentence suggests there was a distinction between these terms. More importantly that \sqrt{grr} and \sqrt{gld} could *result* in a state of \sqrt{plh} , demonstrating a causal relationship not captured by synonymy.

Developing this further, it appears that \sqrt{grr} was a response to violence, coercion or intimidation.²²³ We find examples of this in a description of refugees fleeing from an Elamite army into the city of Der:

niše alpani gab[bu] iḫtabtu ammar ušeziḫbuni igdurruni ina Deri etarbuni
They plundered all the people and oxen. Those that escaped were \sqrt{grr} , and entered Der.

SAA 15 no. 118, obv. 6'-obv 9', Šamaš-bel-ušur to Sargon

This example, set in the context of the conflict between Elam and Assyria for supremacy over Babylonia, is illustrative of the simple relationship between violent acts and \sqrt{grr} . This is mirrored in two letters from kings to subjects imploring them not to be \sqrt{grr} in the face of warfare:

²²² Sometimes transcribed \sqrt{qrr} .

²²³ There are few instances of \sqrt{gld} in the corpus but it seem to have been roughly synonymous with \sqrt{grr} ; for more, see below.

Aššur-rešuwa Messenger	Argišti	Unattributed
[<i>ma</i>]	[<i>ma</i>] <i>ma</i> <i>u ma</i>	<i>issu bet ina kusse kammusa[kani] ša ana šulmeya tašpurni laššu [ina] libbi Aššur ilanikunu ina muḥḥiya illak aseme ma igdanarru[ru]</i>
	<i>ma</i> <i>m]a</i>	<i>ata tagdanarra[ra Ursama ina muḥḥi ḥape ša [matikunu] la iddibub [anakuma] la addabub...</i>
		<i>annute dibbi ša mar-šipri anniu iddibub[uni]</i>

[3.QUOTE]	[3.QUOTE]	Since I have been sitti[ng] on the throne, my wellbeing-(gift) you sent me —
	3.QUOTE	there wasn't (one)
	and 3.QUOTE	I have heard
		3.QUOTE [they] are \sqrt{grr}
	3.QUOTE	Why are you \sqrt{grr} ?
	3.QUOTE	As Rusa did not talk of the destruction of [your land, so I] am not talking...

These were the words talked by this messenger.

SAA 5 no. 95, obv. 3-11 + rev. 1-2, Aššur-rešuwa to Sargon

This letter, although inscribed on a partially damaged tablet, is an example of what is ostensibly the royal speech of Argišti, king of Urartu.²²⁴ As the multiply nested levels of speech suggest, the exchange of words described here is heavily mediated: Argišti's words pass through a messenger and through Aššur-rešuwa and his scribe. Furthermore, Argišti would almost certainly not have spoken Assyrian to the Kummeans, and so at some stage before reaching the tablet the utterances would have had to be translated.

However as a consequence of this, the letter is good evidence for an Assyrianised interpretation of the events of the conversation. The Assyrians translate the Kummeans experience of the threat of Urartian violence—*ḥape ša mati*—as \sqrt{grr} . Casting more light on this exchange is a copy of a letter sent by Tiglath-pileser to some Babylonian elites, where he writes:

²²⁴ This letter also provides another example of Assyrian attention to sources of information, the reliability of which was highly desirable, as we saw in chapter one. Rev. 1-2 helpfully frame the previous lines as being the reported speech of a messenger, which not only enables us to disentangle the nest of quotatives, but also demonstrates Aššur-rešuwa's emphasis on the close replication of *these* words. Furthermore, the careful demarcation of voices through the interpolation of quotative *ma* signifies both a heightened awareness of the need to accurately assign speaker roles, as well as an emphasis on responsibility for replicating speech. For more on this, see chapter four.

annurig anaku aqṭarbakunu Na'di-Ilu ša-qurbuti iṭṭibia
ma pal[ḫu] igdanarruru

Now then I myself am approaching you, Na'di-ilu the Close One spoke to me
 3.QUOT They are \sqrt{grr} $\sqrt{plḫ}$

SAA 19 no.1, obv. 13-b.e. 18, Tiglath-pileser to the Babylons

Here, Tiglath-pileser writes to the Babylonians to reassure them following the murder of their brothers.²²⁵ The similarities between these letters are striking, with both rulers bolstering their subjects by means of words in the face of physical attacks.

\sqrt{grr} in Conversation, \sqrt{grr} as Bodily Threat

However, \sqrt{grr} was not limited to the depredations of the battlefield. Two further letters place \sqrt{grr} in conversational contexts. The first is a description of an audience between Assurbanipal *mar-šarri* and Milki-nuri, a eunuch involved in a conspiracy against Esarhaddon:

aqṭibi ana Milki-nuri aki ša šarru beli iqbanni ina muḫḫi šepe ittagal ittagnagara aqṭibaššu
nuk sagu ina qabli ulli dameka mi-ḫi²²⁶ -[iṣ]
iqṭibi
ma lu la šarrutu ana mar-šarri [x x x x x x x x] šanati ša balṭakuni

I spoke to Milki-nuri just as the king my lord spoke to me. He looked at the feet and was continuously \sqrt{grr} . I spoke to him
 1.QUOT Remove the sash from your waist, [x x x] your blood
 He spoke
 3.QUOT Let not the kingship for the crown prince [x x x x x x x x] the years that I am alive.

SAA 16 no. 20, rev. 2'-edge 1', Assurbanipal *mar-šarri* to Esarhaddon

Though the tablet is damaged, it is clear Assurbanipal and Milki-nuri are not having a friendly conversation and that this is during or after the conspiracy was unmasked. Milki-nuri's bodily demeanour is described not only as \sqrt{grr} but also as one with downcast glance. This is the first

²²⁵ Specifically, he writes *libbakunu adanniš lu ṭabakunu* 'Let your interior be good' (rev. 11). The 'brothers' (*aḫḫe*) of the Babylonians in this case were likely not consanguines; rather, this kinship term was used to indicate a 'political' affiliation. See chapter six for more.

²²⁶ The edge of the tablet is broken off here; Luukko and van Buylaere have restored the last two signs but it is extremely conjectural and likely unwarranted (Mark Weeden *pers. comm.*).

description we have encountered so far of one subject being described as \sqrt{grr} in a directly witnessed encounter, and it is telling that Assurbanipal adds the further postural detail. This suggests that someone's \sqrt{grr} was perceptible to outside observers, and not just imputed or reported. Assurbanipal then utters orders that are mostly obscure to us,²²⁷ but the mention of blood (*dameka*) potentially hints at some kind of violence, though we cannot be sure. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the interaction between Milki-nuri and Assurbanipal is one of an extreme power differential, perhaps physical threat, and thus results in both Milki-nuri's \sqrt{grr} and his deeply hostile response.²²⁸

The direct threat to Milki-nuri's bodily integrity is complemented by a letter from a medical context, where Nabu-našir the *ašipu* reports on the health of an unnamed man of interest to Esarhaddon. Here, Nabu-našir describes being told about the patient's recovery:

<i>ma</i>	<i>ina muši ša ti[mali] irti barari[ti] širanišu ittā[ar]</i>
<i>ma</i>	<i>igdurur</i>
<i>ma</i>	<i>ašipi [x] etarbuni [x] ussanni'a igdurur [x x] la igrur</i>
<i>ma</i>	<i>umu itta[lak] širanišu i[ṭṭibušu] [u]ma [šulmu]</i>

3.QUOT	Ye[sterday] night, on the flank of the evenin[g watch] he guard[ed] his flesh
3.QUOT	He was \sqrt{grr}
3.QUOT	The <i>ašipu</i> -healers entered, he again was \sqrt{grr} ... he was not \sqrt{grr}
3.QUOT	The day arriv[ed], his flesh [became good], [n]ow [he is well].

SAA 10 no. 304, rev. 1-12, Nabu-našir to Esarhaddon

The tablet here is once again damaged, but the main point is apparent: this fellow had some ailment of the flesh which caused him to experience \sqrt{grr} . As we are already aware, nothing happened in Assyria that was not the intentional act of some divine being, and so it was with aetiologies: the flesh disease the patient is suffering in this letter was the deliberate work of a god or demon (Geller 2010: 14). Thus, this scenario is more similar to the previous instances of \sqrt{grr} we have seen, where an intentional being inflicting violence on another being leads to a \sqrt{grr} response.

²²⁷ The item of the sash may refer to a marker of office or social status, thus meaning its removal indicated demotion in standing.

²²⁸ We cannot make firm conclusions from just one tablet, but intriguingly, despite Milki-nuri's hostility he is still portrayed as addressing Assurbanipal through indirect means, maintaining social distance even as he utters the curse.

Disciplinary \sqrt{grr}

Eliciting the \sqrt{grr} response was thus the intended outcome of the rawest of Assyrian disciplinary techniques. Inculcating \sqrt{grr} was proposed as the solution to several instances of disobedience and corruption bubbling up in the Assyrian hierarchy:

amelu ša ana paḥiti ušadbibuni šiptu ina libbišu liškunu [lu]di'u ligruru [ul]a [makkuri] ša ekurrate gab[bu] paḥati upaṭ[ṭuru]

The man that incited (lit. 'caused to talk') the governor, a judgement should be established in his interior. Let them know, let them be \sqrt{grr} [el]se the governors will dissipate al[1] the [treasure] of the temples.

SAA 10 no. 369, rev. 12-17, Mar-Issar to Esarhaddon

kima šiptu ina ṭupšarri issen šarru la iškun [reḥute] la igarruru

If the king does not establish a judgement for one scribe, [the rest] will not be \sqrt{grr}

SAA 13 no. 31, rev. 1-3, Iddin-Aššur to Esarhaddon/Assurbanipal

Both these examples are from scholars associated with temples writing to the king about the misfeasance of high officials: Mar-Issar on theft, Iddin-Aššur on nonpayment of tax. The implications of this corruption are explored more fully in chapter six, but here it is evident that the *šiptu* 'judgement' is for display and deterrence. The specifics of the *šiptu* are completely elided, but if it was designed to instigate \sqrt{grr} amongst the victim's cohort then from the foregoing we can infer that it was a violent act. It is especially noticeable that in both cases the high officials are not to be the victims of the punishment, but the unspecified underlings who were said to have 'incited' them. This is almost certainly some form of scapegoating, suggestive of both the expendability of lower status individuals and the difficulty of the king inflicting punishments on high officials who might potentially oppose him. We could describe this as an 'indirected violence,' and it is one we see performed not only in the imperial hierarchy but also by Assyrian townspeople.²²⁹

Finally, there are a couple of instances where \sqrt{grr} is deliberately elicited without the threat of direct bodily violence. However, in both these cases there remains some kind of threat of social violence from the Assyrian state machine, which is particularly explicit in this first example:

²²⁹ See p.270.

šarru beli abutu [x x] liqibuniššunu issu pan galite [x x x x] ligiruru

The king my lord should [x x] the word, let it be spoken to them, let them \sqrt{grr} before deportation

SAA 5 no. 203, rev. edge 22-edge. 1, Šarru-emuranni to Sargon

Deportation in the Assyrian period was a powerful biopolitical procedure which transferred productive bodies both intellectual and manual across the entirety of the Middle East according to imperial whims.²³⁰ Just as importantly for imperial purposes was the destruction of identities bound to kin and land, which is presumably the threat that precipitates \sqrt{grr} in the above letter.²³¹

We can read a letter to Sargon from Bel-liqbi, governor of the province of Şupat in a similar light. Here, *makisu*—‘tax collectors’—have been installed in order to prevent itinerant Arabs from being sold precious iron:

issen makisu ina abulli ša Şupat issakkanu uma šaniu ina Huzaza issakanu Arbaya uşsu ina libbi la illakuni igdurru

They have placed one tax collector at the city gate of Şupat and now they have placed a second at Huzaza. The Arabs are leaving and do not come inside—they are scared.

SAA 1 no. 179, rev. 7-10, Bel-liqbi to Sargon

Though here the Arabs are not threatened physically, their response is still described as \sqrt{grr} . The installation of *makisu* appears to have been no small inconvenience, serving as grounds for active resistance to Assyrian rule in some cases.²³² Liverani suggests that the excessive tribute demands proclaimed in the royal inscriptions are symptomatic of an Assyrian strategy of ‘wearing out’ their clients (Liverani 2017: 190) and we can understand the depredations of the *makisu* in the same light. The tolls of the *makisu* would likely have been extremely heavy, the act of payment a serious privation, and the consequences of nonpayment a potential loss of freedom or life. Thus, the appearance of agents of the Assyrian extraction machine represented an assertion of Assyrian power over freedom and life and the potential to be ensnared in the violent machine, which would thus explain the suitability of \sqrt{grr} here.

²³⁰ See Liverani 2017: 191-192. The biopolitical conception of human bodies as raw resources is also found in aesthetic evidence. Bahrani’s observation that human bodies and material goods are compositionally treated the same way in the relief depicting Sennacherib’s destruction of the city of Lachish leads her to conclude that bodies and booty were conceived of as one and the same (2008: 175-181).

²³¹ Though see later in this chapter for an inversion of this.

²³² See the response of the Sidonites below and chapter six.

$\sqrt{grr} \rightarrow \sqrt{plh}$

\sqrt{grr} was thus one of the affects deliberately targeted in the suite of Assyrian governmental techniques. Not only did it stand on its own as a useful endpoint for subjects, but it was used to further shape their interiorities into becoming appropriately \sqrt{plh} beings. We find a sequenced script of actions and states that is employed repeatedly: an act of violence $\rightarrow \sqrt{grr} \rightarrow \sqrt{plh}$.²³³

For example, the Assyrian envoy to the Phoenician cities writes to Tiglath-pileser, briefly describing how he restored royal tax-collection in the city of Sidon:

*makisu ša ina muḥḥi karrani ša ina Šiduni uradduninni aptiqidi Šidunaya uktaššiduniššu
harammama Itu'aya ina Labnana assappar niše ussagariru
urkite issaparuni makisu ittaššu ina Šiduni usseribu*

The tax collector that I appointed over the trading ports that were added to me in Sidon—the Sidonites drove him away.

Subsequently, I sent the Itu'aeans to Mount Lebanon to make the people \sqrt{grr} .

Consequently, they wrote to me, took the tax collector and brought him into Sidon.

SAA 19 no. 22 obv. 14-22, Qurdi-Aššur-lamur to Tiglath-pileser

Qurdi-Aššur-lamur describes the restoration of imperial order: an act of resistance occurs against Assyrian authority,²³⁴ he sends troops to make the people \sqrt{grr} , and then the people themselves reinitiate communication with the Assyrian representative and themselves restore the *makisu*. Two things are noteworthy about this. Firstly, the specific actions taken by the Itu'aeans are not described, only the desired affective response; this completely elides whatever forms of violence were used to induce \sqrt{grr} , in stark contradistinction to Assyrian celebratory media.²³⁵ Secondly, the emphasis on the Sidonites themselves writing and restoring the *makisu* strongly correlates with the conception of an ideal Assyrian subject as one that willingly and in the completeness of their interior takes the right actions. That this 'willingness' was elicited by means of coercion was by-the-by, as violence was one of the prerogative instruments of the Assyrian empire and thus an entirely appropriate disciplinary measure.

This violent inculcation of appropriate attitudes is even more explicitly defined in a letter from the

²³³ For this script set in a wider context of procedures, see Figure 6 at the end of this chapter.

²³⁴ For more acts of resistance, see p. 267.

²³⁵ Fuchs suggests that the violence portrayed on palace wall reliefs and in royal inscriptions was foregrounded as an exemplar of the king's just and legal power, rather than as a celebration of bloodlust (2009: 113- 114).

governor of Mazamua to Sargon:

*adaggal ina pani[šunu]
ki mašin ina muḫḫiya la illikuninni assappar urdani ša šarri beliya Kibatki igtaldu niše pi patar parzilli issaknu
ki Kibatki igladuni iptalḫu issapparuni ina muḫḫiya edanu assakanšunu*

I awaited [their presence]; as it was that they did not come before me, I sent the servants of the king, my lord, to \sqrt{gld} -frighten the city of Kibatki—the people were put to the mouth of iron sword.
Since Kibatki was \sqrt{gld} , they became $\sqrt{plḫ}$ and they wrote to me, and I imposed a deadline on them.

SAA 5 no. 202 rev. 2'-right edge 16, Šarru-emuranni, governor of Mazamua, to Sargon

Here, Šarru-emuranni describes the consequences of the citizens of Kibatki failing to meet him and provide horses for the king: death. It might be argued, therefore, that the \sqrt{gld} -‘terror’ so parenthetically described was simply a stand-in for indiscriminate murder.

abatu → $\sqrt{plḫ}$

Techniques for eliciting \sqrt{grr} were thus used both as a disciplinary endpoint in themselves and as a means of inculcating the appropriate $\sqrt{plḫ}$ subjectivity. These \sqrt{grr} → $\sqrt{plḫ}$ procedures were primarily inflicted upon subject populations, whereas pure \sqrt{grr} techniques were only used to deter within the imperial hierarchy. The need for \sqrt{grr} → $\sqrt{plḫ}$ procedures within the imperial hierarchy itself was essentially obviated by the implication that, in order to be a member of the Assyrian elite, the subject already practiced the requisite $\sqrt{plḫ}$ —this is what made him suitable to be an Assyrian official in the first place.

This is borne out by correspondents’ self-ascriptions of $\sqrt{plḫ}$. The most basic self-ascription, ‘I $\sqrt{plḫ}$ the king,’ is repeated constantly.²³⁶ However, we find that the words contained within the letters themselves are conceived of as engendering $\sqrt{plḫ}$ amongst officials and their collaborators. Take for example this interaction between Ṭab-šill-Ešarra and a *qepu*:

²³⁶ E.g. SAA 17 no. 120 right edge 35-36 *šarru belini palḫanumma* ‘we $\sqrt{plḫ}$ the king’ and many others too numerous to list here.

Nabu-bel-šumati qepu ša Birat um 7 ina Libbi-ali etarba assa'alšu
muk ata akanni tallika
ma abat šarri ina muḫḫiya tattalka
ma ata bel alani gabbu illikuni ina paniya izzizzu
ma atta la tallika
 ...
ma ina muḫḫi abite annite aptalaḫ attalka

Nabu-bel-šumati the *qepu* of Birat entered Libbali on the 7th day, I asked him
 1.QUOT Why have you come now?
 3.QUOT A word of the king came to me
 3.QUOT Why is it all the city lords have come and stood before me
 3.QUOT you yourself have not come?
 ...
 3.QUOT I was \sqrt{plh} concerning this word and I came.

SAA 1 no. 84, obv. 6-rev. 2 + rev. 9-11, Ṭab-šill-Ešarra to Sargon

The sequence of events in this letter, *abat šarri* → *plh* is suggestive in its implication that *plh* is an active engagement. Ṭab-šill-Ešarra seems surprised by Nabu-bel-šumati's arrival—so much so he dispatches this letter to the king to inform him—suggesting at the very least he was not expecting it. The *qepu* explains his arrival as a response to his \sqrt{plh} , which itself was engendered by the king's speech. This shows \sqrt{plh} functioning as a motivator for action. If we think of it in its interpretation as 'fear' then that makes some sense: Nabu-bel-šumati was scared into obedience. However, this is too simplistic a viewpoint: \sqrt{plh} is a positive obedience, a motivator and something to be practiced and it seems that receiving the message here was a reinforcement of what must already have existed in his interior.

For the Assyrian officials, \sqrt{plh} was engendered both by reward and threat. We already encountered the \sqrt{grr} function of the *šiptu*-judgement above, where the infliction of *šiptu* on a 'scapegoat' would instill \sqrt{grr} in officials. However, the constant possibility of *šiptu* itself was a cause for \sqrt{plh} :

anaku issu pan šiptu ša šarru beli išpuranni
ma issen issu libbišunu etelika lu tuda ki atta ḫiṭu ina muḫḫišunu tanaššunu
aptalaḫ

I, I was \sqrt{plh} concerning *šiptu*-judgement when the king sent to me
 3.QUOT If one from within them goes from you, EMPH know that you will bear the crime concerning them

SAA 15 no. 181, rev. 7-11, Aššur-bel-u-taqin to Sargon

Here, it is not the actuality of an inflicted *šiptu* that elicits an emotional reaction from Aššur-belu-taqqin, but rather the potential for a *šiptu* to be inflicted upon him which engenders the appropriate \sqrt{plh} . Fuchs notes that the king's ability to arbitrarily order death was fundamental to his authority (2009: 82), and it seems that this also applied to his ability to order *šiptu*.

\sqrt{plh} the relationship

Our discussion of \sqrt{plh} has shown that it was ultimately a more complex 'emotion' than a simple rendering of 'fear' or 'reverence' can capture. Not only was it laudable, desired, practiced and promoted, it was inherently relational and internalised. \sqrt{plh} was a practice integral to maintaining appropriate social bonds within the Assyrian order: subjects would be bound to their superiors through practicing \sqrt{plh} for them, and these superiors would also be bound to *their* superiors, in a matryoshka-like nesting all the way up to the king's relationship with his gods. This relational, practiced aspect of \sqrt{plh} was one absent for \sqrt{grr} and \sqrt{gld} , other flavours of 'fear,' further differentiating \sqrt{plh} from simple fright and promoting it into the realm of permanent and idealised subjectivity.

The links of \sqrt{plh} were, furthermore, not one-sided relations; beings receiving \sqrt{plh} were similarly required to reciprocate this feeling-fealty in an appropriate manner. Though never explicitly specified in any kind of contractual format, these responsibilities and disbursements were noticeable by their absence:

aki ša šarru bela aptalaḥ ki mitaku ekanu liqbiru'inni

Although I have \sqrt{plh} the king my lord, when I am dead, where might they bury me?

SAA 18 no. 61, rev. 8-10, unassigned to Esarhaddon

Šula baru iqabbi u ziqnišu ibaqqan

umma ana mini šarru qablišu irakkasi lapanišu la iplaḥ [x]

Šula the diviner speaks, and tears at his beard

QUOT For what does the king gird his loins? He does not \sqrt{plh} before him [x]

SAA 17 no. 105, rev. 10-rev.edge 14, Aqar-Bel-lumur to Bel-ibni

In this vein, we might retranslate statements along the lines of *ana šarri beliya ki ašpuru gabaru ul amur aptalaḥ*,²³⁷ which have been interpreted as \sqrt{plh} 'fear' as a consequence of not receiving a response from the king, instead as 'I have been \sqrt{plh} , but I wrote to the king my lord and saw no

²³⁷ SAA 18 no. 60, obv. 14-rev.1, Aqar-Bel-lumur to Esarhaddon

reply.’ This flips the script on its head: rather than the correspondent becoming ‘scared’ because of no reply, he is in fact invoking his \sqrt{plh} practice to critique the king’s failure to respond.²³⁸

Aššur-šarru-ibni, a man of unknown standing tasked with managing works, writes to Sargon concerning difficulties with the governor of Arbela:

1 [me] 20 šab šarri ša ana ḥuli issi šarri la illikuni ina pan paḥiti ša Arbail la immaggurru la iddana
issu pan šarri palahku šabanišu la ušabbat

[One hundred and twenty] men of the king who did not go to the campaign with the king are in the presence of the governor of Arbela: he does not consent (\sqrt{mgr}), he does not give. I am \sqrt{plh} before the king: I will not seize his men.

SAA 1 no. 149, obv. 4-11, Aššur-šarru-ibni to Sargon

His declaration of \sqrt{plh} towards the king here enables Aššur-šarru-ibni to disclaim responsibility for taking action in this situation, deflecting the decision to Sargon instead. That \sqrt{plh} was used as a linguistic strategy here is both indicative of its role in the social distribution of authority (to be \sqrt{plh} of someone was to defer decision-making to them) and its flexibility in managing obedience. As we will see later, high officials in Assyria had more latitude to act than is usually supposed,²³⁹ suggesting that the obedience required of \sqrt{plh} relationships was pragmatic. Aššur-šarru-ibni’s emphatic declaration of it here thus shows him *using* \sqrt{plh} as a strategy to his advantage, demonstrating that \sqrt{plh} was not a one-way ‘reverence.’

Underlining the centrality of \sqrt{plh} to the Assyrian hierarchy are two final examples. The first alludes to the reciprocity inherent in the \sqrt{plh} -relation, on an even higher order level. The *ašipu* Urad-Gula laments his disfavour with the king, and writes:

puluḥtu ša ekalli urdani ša-ziqni u ša-rešani ussammid minu ina libbi aḥzaku

I have taught \sqrt{plh} of the palace to the servants, bearded and eunuch—what have I got for it?

SAA 10 no. 294, obv. 29-31, Urad-Gula to Assurbanipal

This higher-order \sqrt{plh} illustrates how the inculcation of \sqrt{plh} was perceived as a deliberate process. \sqrt{plh} did not come about passively or spontaneously, but could be taught (\sqrt{lmd}), or

²³⁸ The objection might be raised that the tense structure preterite→perfect necessitates that *aptalah* is the consequence in this sentence, the lack of an explicit conjunction between *amur* and *aptalah* leaves the temporal relation between the two ambiguous and thus open to reinterpretation like this.

²³⁹ P.258

stimulated with the techniques described above. Here, Urad-Gula expects some kind of recompense for instructing members of the imperial hierarchy in \sqrt{plh} . This expectation suggests that the scholars attached to the king played an important role in facilitating the appropriate \sqrt{plh} practices throughout the empire. We need only recall Adad-šumu-ušur's utterance regarding \sqrt{plh} of the gods,²⁴⁰ or Dadi the priest's disapproval of the Assyrian shepherds,²⁴¹ to see how matters of \sqrt{plh} exercised the experts steeped in sacred knowledge.

Finally, a damaged tablet bears a letter from an unknown author, who suggests a certain outcome to Esarhaddon regarding a problem now lost to us:

yamut[tu ina] libbi eqlišu kirešu lu kammu[su a]na mar-šarri lipluḫu

Each should st[ay in] his field, his garden, and \sqrt{plh} the son of the king

SAA 5 no. 109, obv. 6'-8', unassigned to Esarhaddon

This short suggestion associates \sqrt{plh} with the image of subjects staying in their fields, the place of their agricultural labour for the empire. This image, as we are about to see, was a fundamental endpoint of all the techniques we have explored so far, resulting in a universal, idyllic, good empire—one with \sqrt{plh} at its core.

²⁴⁰ Epigraph to p.131.

²⁴¹ See p.262.

3.3 The Good Empire

kusapika akul meka šiti libbaka lu ṭabka
Eat your crumbs, drink your water, let your interior be good

At the beginning of this chapter, we encountered a letter authored by Sargon in which he concerns himself with the emotions of his various clients. We saw how Sargon manipulated the Babylonian prelate Balassu through *libbu* $\sqrt{\text{škn}}$. We explored $\sqrt{\text{plh}}$ as a pervasive, practiced emotion that needed to be nurtured in relational chains stretching from the gods of the king down to the meanest subject; this emotion needed to be carefully managed so that, like *ṭemu*, interiors would be intersubjectively linked to the Assyrian hierarchy, and no other. Consequently, in Sargon's letter he directs the client king Kilar to no longer be $\sqrt{\text{plh}}$ before a powerful new Assyrian ally.²⁴²

In this section, we turn to the final 'endpoint' of $\sqrt{\text{plh}}$, the subjective states alluded to as outcomes of Assyrian imperial control. As we may recall from the letter of Sargon's which opened this chapter, the king directed his governor to write to Kilar 'eat your crumbs, drink your water... let your interior be good.'²⁴³ Eating, drinking—these basics are suggested to Kilar, together with a *libbu* $\sqrt{\text{ṭ}b}$, under the protection of the king. Though seeming to be an idyllic, peaceful state of affairs, Sargon's mollifying orders (and they are orders, *akul* 'eat' *šiti* 'drink' being imperatives, for more on which see the next chapter) are issued in response to Kilar's request to be assigned more territory. Sargon's words to his subject king, despite their overtly soothing tone, pointedly limit Kilar's agency and autonomy to the most restricted of scopes: the basic life activities of eating and drinking the plainest of comestibles. It is in this limited state that Kilar is expected to exhibit the *libbu* $\sqrt{\text{ṭ}b}$, a good interior. Though he remains a 'client king,' nominally in charge of an independent territory, his role is expressly to be subject to the *šilli šarri*: the shadow of the king.²⁴⁴

When we contrast the language used to address Kilar with that Nabu-ḥamatu'a uses to address some people newly subject to direct Assyrian authority, the hierarchical assignation of emotion becomes

²⁴² SAA 1 no. 1, obv. 36-41. See p.112ff.

²⁴³ SAA 1 no.1, rev. 40-41.

²⁴⁴ The notion of eating and drinking peacefully under the aegis of a social superior was well-known, such that it could be parodied; see p.222.

readily apparent. Whilst Kilar is directed simply to eat and drink (and exercise no authority), the people of the land of Bel-iddina's son are told:

muk attunu yamuttu ina betišu ina libbi eqlišu dullakunu epša libbakunu lu ṭabakunu
muk urdani ša šarri attunu

1.QUOT You, each of you in his house and in the interior of his field, do your labour, may your interior be good

1.QUOT You are servants of the king

SAA 5 no. 210, rev. 2-6, Nabu-ḫamatu'a to Sargon

Unlike Kilar the client king, the people's *libbu* √ṭ'b is predicated upon their performance of *dullu*: 'labour,' but also 'hardship, misery.'²⁴⁵ Nabu-ḫamatu'a further underlines their subjection to the king, as opposed to their protection: *urdani ša šarri attunu*. That the appropriate response to subjugation by Assyria was, for the Assyrian administrators, positive, not negative is apparent in a number of reports, some of which stretch their descriptions to breaking point:

Lahiri alani [ša a]ḫula ša batbattešunu ḫadiu [a]danniš
ma uma nuda [ak]i urdani ša šarri belini [a]ninini

Lahiru and the towns that are beyond and around it are √ḫd' very much

3.QUOT Now we know that we are servants of the king our lord

SAA 15 no. 136 obv. 8-12, Nabu-šumu-iddina to Sargon

This report, brief though it is, is marked by strong intensifiers, from *adanniš* through to the independent third-person plural pronoun in the quoted speech of the towns, which only serve to emphasise the idyllic state of affairs being described here—people experiencing joy at their subjection to the Assyrian order.

A last example on the theme of idyllic subjects comes from a rare example of a female author who also seems to occupy a prestigious station in the imperial hierarchy.²⁴⁶ Barsipitu, scion of a

²⁴⁵ CAD s.v. *dullu* 1., 2., p. 173.

²⁴⁶ This is particularly rare as this author is not a member of the Assyrian royal family, unlike, for example, Naqi'a, one of Sennacherib's wives and mother of Esarhaddon.

prestigious family of Bit-Dakkuri,²⁴⁷ writes to Sargon to inform him of her arrival in her home country, reporting on the state of the population there:

*ana šarri beli[ya] amatka Barsi[pitu] lu šulmu ana šarri [beliya]
 ina šilli ilani ša [šarri] ina šulmu ana Bit-[Dakkuru] niterub
 Ana-Nabu-[taklak] u niši mati ša Dakkuru gabbišunu ina panini iłtamu
 mimma ana šarri belini iktanarrabu
 umma enna nidu [ša šarru] belanni Bit-Dakkuru iķsuruma
 ana appi ušešu ša mar belini išpurannaši
 u nini ina šilli šarri belini ana dariš balțanu*

To the king [my] lord, your female servant Barsi[pitu], may wellbeing be for the king [my lord]
 By the protection of the gods of the [king] we have entered Bit-Dakkuri in safety
 Ana-Nabu-taklak and the people of the land of Dakkuru, all of them were \sqrt{hm} before us, they continually bless
 the king with everything

QUOT Now we know [the king] our lord has tied up Bit-Dakkuri
 and (lit. expelled for its nose) has sent us the son of our lord,
 and we will live in the protection of the king our lord forever.

SAA 17 no. 73, obv. 1-rev. 4, Barsipitu to Sargon

Unlike the previous two letters, which emphasised the people as *urdanu* 'servants', here Barsipitu portrays the people as voicing their praise for the protection of the king. This clearly has thematic links with the topic of Barsipitu's report, namely that she was able to reach her country safely in the midst of the Assyrian conflict with Chaldean tribes in Babylonia; we thus might consider the words placed in the voice of the people as being a sort of indirected praise for the king, voiced not in Barsipitu's direct speech, but placed in the mouths of her own subjects.²⁴⁸ Consequently, this would tie the emphasis on the *šilli šarri* together with what we saw in Sargon's letter to Aššur-šarru-ušur, where he had the governor emphasise the *šilli šarri* to Kilar—both Kilar and Barsipitu being nominally independent rulers under the Assyrian aegis, choosing to dwell in the royal shade.

This final letter to the king demonstrates how attempts to portray the status of imperial subjects in an idealised light could lead to absurd self-contradiction. A report from two officers opens with a fairly standardised greeting formula:

²⁴⁷ A tribal polity with lands south of Babylon.

²⁴⁸ The register of this letter is not at all dissimilar from letters sent to the king from other officials. Aside from the gendered change of *urdaka* to *amatka*, this is broadly the same as a report from any official. We can compare this to letters addressed to the *ummi šarri* 'mother of the king,' which treat the designation *ummi šarri* no differently to any other official title, and continue to refer to her in the masculine third-person, with the indirect *beliya* 'my lord' (SAA 13 nos. 76-77, SAA 18 no. 10).

*ana šarri belini aradka Nabu-šuma-lišir u Aqar-Bel-lumur [l]u šulmu ana šarri belini
[u]mma ana šarri belinyama
šulmu ana birati u emuqu ša šarri temu ša niši šulmu libbi ša šarri belini lu tabšu*

To the king our lord, your servants Nabu-šuma-lišir and Aqar-Bel-lumur EMPH wellbeing for the king our lord
QUOT to the king our lord
Wellbeing for the fortresses and troops of the king, the *temu* of the people is well, the interior of the king our lord,
let it be good

SAA 17 no. 120, obv. 1-7, Nabu-šuma-lišir and Aqar-Bel-lumur to Sennacherib²⁴⁹

Like all of Nabu-šuma-lišir and Aqar-Bel-lumur's joint letters, they take care to include a description of the *temu ša niši*. This presents an interesting challenge in translation: we could conceive of *temu ša niši* as referring to the interior attribute, thus mirroring the *libbi ša šarri*; the people's motivation, capacity, intentionality to act being well, attuned to the purposes of Assyria. Alternatively, it could be read as *temu* as completed *temu*: the report, status, news of the people is good, thus mirroring the wellbeing of the fortresses and troops. However, I would argue that its placement, sandwiched between the reports on physical military resources and the interiorised well-wishes directed to the king underlines the multiple temporality of *temu* as being described here: it is because the inchoate intentions of the people are well that the report on these people are well, and the intentions and the report cannot be cleanly separated from each other—thus, *temu*.

However, with that said, Nabu-šuma-lišir and Aqar-Bel-lumur contradict this statement later in the letter:

*aššu dullu ša nari ša Bit-Deraya ša šarru belini temu iškunnaši
unma liškiru...*
Concerning the work of the river of Bit-Deraya that the king our lord established *temu*
QUOT Let it be shut off...

ume iqtirbani u niši mala šašunu libbašunu ul paṭirma aki libbišunu ul ippušu...
the days have come and the people, as much as they are, their interior is not loose, they do not act according to their interior...

ul išemmunāšima dullu ul niṭpuš aki ša šarru ile”u lipuš
they will not listen to us, they do not do the work. Let the king do as he is able.

SAA 17 no. 120, rev. 22-23 + rev. 28-29 + rev. 31-32

²⁴⁹ Unusually, this letter is dateable to the year 693, firmly placing it in Sennacherib's reign (Parpola 2002: 560)

Again, we find a careful description of the interiority of the people, which together with the greeting formulae of these authors suggests an idiosyncratic concern with interiority over and above the majority of correspondents reporting on population groups. Yet here, they seem to contradict their description of the *temu ša niši šulmu*, through describing their defective *libbu*. Ultimately, despite the people being described in the same breath as the useful military resources of the king in a generic greeting description, in actuality they do not listen to the royal *temu* at all.²⁵⁰ The imperative to describe subjects of the empire as well, as productive and as acting *aki libbišunu* ‘according to their interior,’ this interior being one willing to perform the *dullu* of the king, was one that apparently was able to override coherent description of factuality, leading to the contradictory correspondence here.

Nabu-šuma-lišir and Aqar-Bel-lumur’s letter also illustrates the final component of a good empire: the *libbu* $\sqrt{t}b$ of the Assyrian king himself. The greeting formula, describing the wellbeing of various imperial resources and concluding with *libbu ša šarri lu tab*, or variations on it, was profligate throughout the entirety of the royal correspondence.²⁵¹ That the $\sqrt{t}b$ of the king’s interior was dependent on the status of his imperial holdings is suggestive of the effacement of the king’s ‘individuality’: his subjectivity and affectivity are dependent upon the ‘external’ imperium, rather than ‘personal’ goals, aims or desires. This is again a ‘situational affect,’ one where an emotional state does not derive from an autonomous individual and their reactions to the world, but are a joint achievement comprising act, gesture and social relationships.²⁵² We might even conceive of the Empire itself as a very large affective performance, establishing *libbu* $\sqrt{t}b$ in king, client and subject.

However, not only was the king’s affectivity dependent on the empire, but the wellbeing of the empire and its subjects was dependent on the king’s wellbeing, in a reciprocal relationship. This is reflected in standardised royal greetings, ending with the stereotypical phrase *šulmu ayaši šulmu ana Aššur libbaka lu tabka*, ‘Wellbeing is for me, wellbeing is for Assyria, your interior EMPH be

²⁵⁰ This kind of *temu* disruption across the imperial hierarchy is covered in full in chapter six.

²⁵¹ For example, in letters from officials to the king stationed in the north-east (e.g. SAA 5 no. 152 obv. 18-21), Media (SAA 15 no. 98 obv. 4-7), and Babylonia (SAA 17 no. 101 obv. 4-6; SAA 18 no. 201 obv. 5-8).

²⁵² See the above discussion on *libbu* \sqrt{gmr} , p.77.

good.²⁵³ A letter from Assurbanipal throws further light on this. In a report about the mollified threat of the Cimmerians, a tribe threatening the eastern border of Assyria. Assurbanipal appears to be describing the state of the people there when he writes:

ina libbi ilani annute ^{ʿni?¹-[x]} *ina t̄ibute ša šarri bal̄tu*

In the interior of these gods, [they are] ca[lm], they are alive in the goodness of the king

SAA 16 no. 16, obv. 3'-4', Assurbanipal *mar-šarri* to Esarhaddon

If we accept the editors' restoration of *neḥu* 'calm,' this sentence of Assurbanipal's is an unusually affect-laden one. Not only are the notional people described as calm, but this is described as caused by the gods as well as a quality of the king, *t̄ibutu*. And, if we look at Assurbanipal's preceding letter,²⁵⁴ also about the Cimmerian threat, which contains a few descriptions of the exceptional $\sqrt{pl̄ḫ}$ and \sqrt{grr} on the part of an Assyrian official,²⁵⁵ we can infer that this was a serious issue, and that therefore there was some warrant to Assurbanipal's restrained relief. Something, contained inside the gods (*ina libbi ilani*), was responsible for the wellbeing of these unknown subjects, showing that, whether thought, intention, emotion or otherwise, interior states had direct causal links with changes in the physical-political world.

²⁵³ Pirngruber suggests that this phrase appears only in limited contexts, appearing in two out of seven letters in the volume SAA 1 (Sargon's letters) and the same two out of seven in SAA 19 (Tiglath-pileser and Sargon's letters excavated at Kalḫu) (2015: 319). However, the phrase additionally appears in SAA 13 nos. 1, 4-6; SAA 16 nos. 3-5, SAA 17 nos. 2-3, which significantly increases the proportion of royal letters that contain this phrase; the beginnings of several tablets are damaged and thus we cannot be certain whether they contained this phrase. The regularity of this phrase is most noticeable in its omission in a letter written by Esarhaddon to a group he addresses as the 'non-Babylonians,' further explored p.239; Pirngruber makes a note of this omission, but it is an omission that would only have slighting force if *libbaka lu t̄abka* was routinised and consequently expected.

²⁵⁴ SAA 16 no. 15.

²⁵⁵ *paliḫ adanniš* 'he was very $\sqrt{pl̄ḫ}$ ' (SAA 16 no. 15 obv. 10); *libbi ussagriri* '(it) has frightened my interior' (ibid. rev.22').

3.4 Conclusions

From Emotions to Biopower

In this chapter we have explored the methods used in Assyrian correspondence to mould affective subjects, primarily along the poles of *libbu* manipulation and \sqrt{plh} cultivation. These two broad categories of subject and affect delineate idealised subjects within the Assyrian polity. The methods and instruments described in the correspondence to cultivate this affective self thus form a useful window into understanding the motivations behind large-scale power structures more generally. Figure 6 graphs the various techniques explored in this chapter, culminating in an idealised imperial subject. Visually, we can see a clear difference between \sqrt{grr} and other affects. The number of strategies for eliciting \sqrt{grr} were manifold, suggesting a high specificity depending on the situation. By contrast, acts resulting in *libbu* $\sqrt{\check{s}kn}$ were few, characteristic of the discursive visibility of its operation for the Assyrian elite. That is, unlike violence leading to raw fear, *libbu* $\sqrt{\check{s}kn}$ was a recognised procedure carried out through practiced methods: methods founded in communication.

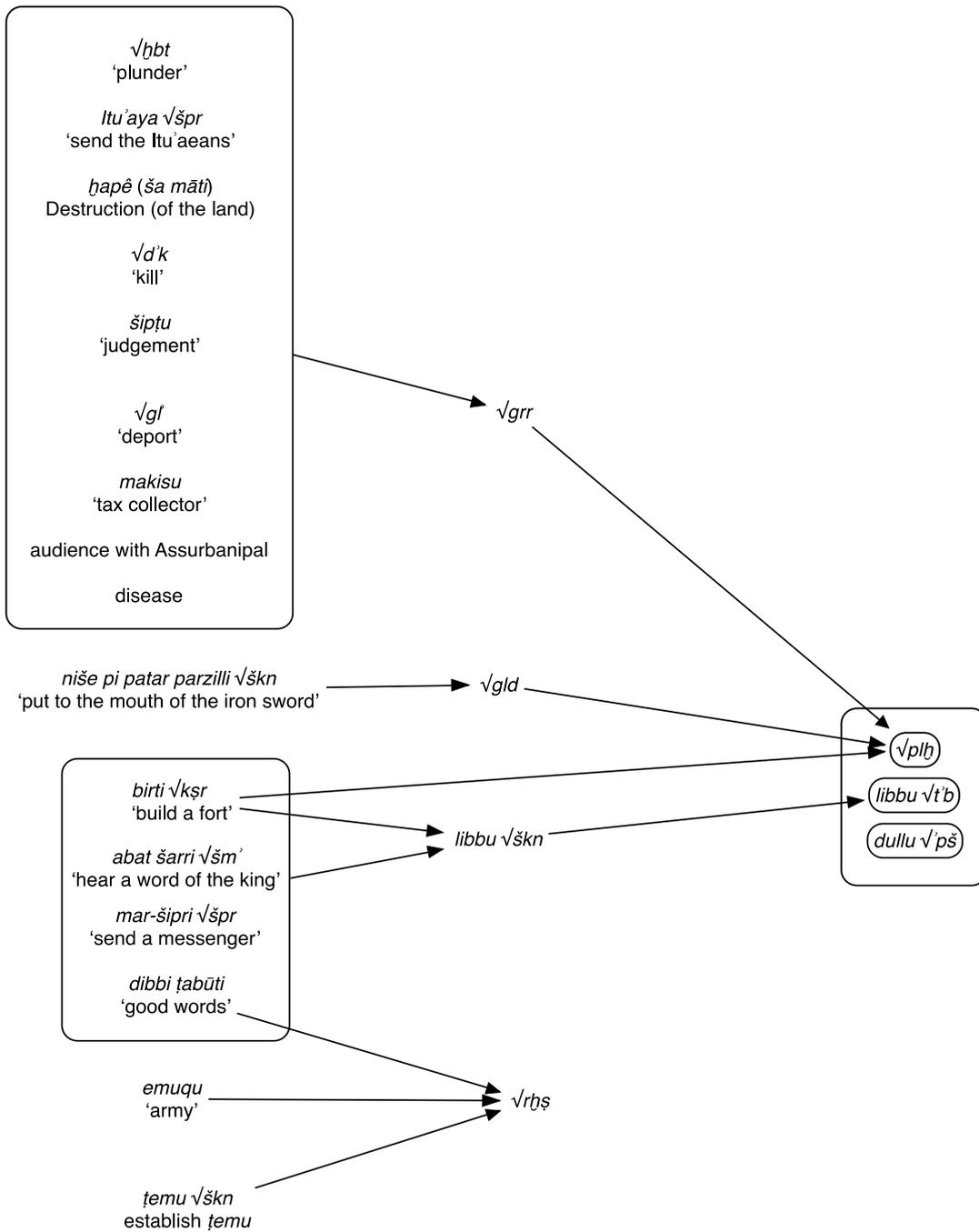


Figure 6 - Scripts of Imperial Interiority

The concepts of disciplinary techniques for the shaping of subjectivities brings us to thoughts presented by Foucault in his later lectures on governmentality. Foucault's analysis, arising from his ideas about modern rationality, defined 'governmentality' as :

... the ensemble formed by institutions, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and dispositives of security as its essential technical instrument...

... by 'governmentality' I think we should understand the process, or rather the result of the process, by which the state of justice of the Middle Ages became the administrative state in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and was gradually 'governmentalized...

2009: 108-9

Foucault derives governmentality as a concept associated specifically with the transition from the Middle Ages to modernity, arguing in another lecture that it was only by this period, with the development of the 'police,' that concern with the 'population's particular nature and character' began to manifest (Raffnsøe et al. 2016: 272). However, as the preceding chapters have shown, Assyria was indeed an ancient polity that had concerns about the subjectivity and character of its subjects and, indeed, its rulers. The array of disciplinary techniques for the establishment of *√plh*, the importance of *libbu √t'b* for both ruler and ruled, and the maintenance of pro-Assyrian subjectivity (*libbu √škn*), as well as techniques of the self alluded to previously (e.g., Adad-šumu-ušur exhorting Esarhaddon to expel bad thoughts from his *libbu*)—all of these call for an expanded concept of 'governmentality' to include the ancient Assyrian state. Further comments can be made about Assyrian 'modernity': the voluminous archives and contracts, documents like the Ḫarran census,²⁵⁶ large scale techniques like deportation and city building,²⁵⁷ the king's attention to the smallest details of work-gangs and concern with welfare and marriage²⁵⁸—these all point to a 'political culture' invested in the control of bodies on a 'biopolitical' level as well as the interior one.

This contrasts with the derivation of biopolitics as being as old as a sovereign state, a definition which Agamben derived from the concept of the sovereign and the *homo sacer* of the Roman

²⁵⁶ SAA 11 nos. 200-219.

²⁵⁷ For deportation, see the study by Oded (1979) which remains the most comprehensive analysis so far.

²⁵⁸ E.g., SAA 19 no. 18.

Republic (1998: 6). Agamben builds his analysis on the notion of the ‘state of exception,’ an opposition of bare life and the political being, upon which the sovereign power over bare life is established (1998: 8). Agamben is thus able to resituate biopolitics within a pre-modern time period, proving *contra* Foucault that power’s concern with raw life was not exclusively a phenomenon of modernity. From this, Agamben theorises an essential violence of the sovereign state, the sovereign’s ‘natural right to do anything to anyone, which now appears as the right to punish’ (1998: 106). However, it would be uncritical to adopt his *bios-zoōn* divide (which itself echoes the ‘Nature-Culture’ division relativised by Descola) to explain Assyrian biopolitics. As he says, when explicating upon the problem of constituting and constituted power posed by Antonio Negri, ‘politics is returned to its ontological position’ (1998: 44).

The ontological categories of the Assyrian Empire do not coincide with the classical, and thence modern state. The constituting power, the extralegal violence upon which the state is founded, and the constituted power, the monopoly of legitimate violence that undergirds the law, can at best only be etic interpretations. How then might we explain the techniques surveyed in this chapter, governing procedures that act upon interior subjectivities of bodies encompassed by the Assyrian state, bodies furthermore subject to the raw biological procedures of \sqrt{grr} -violence or \sqrt{gld} -deportation? What is biopolitics to a state *ante bios, ante polis*?

The nature of the Imperial Command offers some insight. *Temu*, the quotidian term that spanned intent, act and fact, was representative of both a paradoxical temporality as well as a continuity between thought and deed. The perceptible world represented both past—the accrued facts of acts—and future—the signs indexing the intent of the gods.

No matter how deterministic the future decreed by the divine was, to the human subject the future remained ambiguous and virtual, veiled by the polyvalence of the sign. Inherent in the cuneiform sign was deferral: its ‘correct reading’ remained unfixed until interpreted within its context (Van De Mieroop 2016b: 79-80). Now, we have encountered this slippage between an exterior form and internal meaning before:

ki baniti u ki la baniti [x x x] ippušu itti libbišu medaššu
Whether good, or not good... what he will do, is known to him, with his interior.

SAA 18 no. 125, obv. 21'-22', Bel-ušeziḫ to Esarhaddon

Ambiguity was common to *temu*, the cuneiform sign, the divine sign, and the human subject. The Assyrian Empire, predicated on a monopolistic link between the gods, the king, and the imperial hierarchy, consequently represented an attempt to collapse ambiguity. Concepts of 'law,' 'legitimation' and 'state' were inchoate in an order which was predicated upon directly enacting the plan of the gods, a plan at once completely fixed, yet unfolding. Thus, rather than conceiving of the Assyrian Empire as a totalitarian despotism, or solely caught in a cosmic fight against kratogenic chaos,²⁵⁹ the Empire's 'biopolitical mission' to win hearts and minds was one that took the open-ended polyautonomous subject, and sought to condition it in such a way that the multiple interpretations of a divine sign, *temu* were collapsed into a single, uniformly willed, serene Assyrian imperium. The surest security is to unify the hidden, make interior exterior and exterior interior, and close the loop.

From Biopower to Ideology

We have thus attempted to establish an 'emic' interpretation for what we observe as an ancient biopolitics antecedent to both the modern and Classical worlds, one which marshals Assyrian ontological concepts to explain some of their imperial practices.

The question of large-scale imperial practices implicates the thorny issue of 'ideology,' which this thesis has hitherto skirted around. As summarised in the introduction, 'Assyrian imperial ideology' has long been an object of interest to historians of the Ancient Middle East, with most recently the esteemed Liverani (2017) and Pongratz-Leisten (2015) offering *magnum opus* contributions.²⁶⁰ Their primary concern is with what they dub 'official ideology.' Liverani builds his study out of the pronouncements of the royal inscriptions. Pongratz-Leisten sets off 'royal ideology' as a subcategory of cultural discourse 'from a royal perspective,' which cannot be divorced from religion, which 'entirely dominated and permeated' the Mesopotamian world-view (2015: 21-23). Pongratz-Leisten almost makes the move to destabilising categories of inquiry, but doesn't quite take that step.

²⁵⁹ Pongratz-Leisten's term, which she traces from the texts of Tukulti-Ninurta I (r. ca.1233-1197) through to the Neo-Assyrian period (2015: 16). 'Cosmic order' is defined as *kittu*, which recalls our discussion of $\sqrt{k'n}$ p.35; additionally she emphasises *mitgurtu* 'concord,' from \sqrt{mgr} which I translate 'consent,' for which see p.262.

²⁶⁰ P.18.

With our newly minted ontological instruments, mined from the everyday correspondence, we can offer an ‘imperial ideology’ from the fields and offices of Assyria, helping to refine our understanding of the questions of what an Assyrian empire and its ideology are. We have already encountered an ontological paradox—the *temu*—a looping concept of intent, act, and fact that unified the Assyrian and divine, the interior and the exterior. The paradox being, despite this cyclical temporality, it was not the only temporality that existed in the Assyrian universe: the temporality of sequence, and the various autonomies of subjects with a *libbu* and *ramanu* meant that the Assyrian elite faced an extraordinarily complex and not necessarily coherent universe.

Now, Liverani rightfully asserts that Assyria take its place at a table of Empires: extractive, transcultural core-periphery forms that are driven by a mission (2017: 7-8). However, the Assyrians did not conceive of their realm in terms of empire, state, religion, or ideology. How then can we square a form that looked and acted like an Empire with the specific problems this form found itself facing? It is illuminating to return to Sheldon Pollock and his critique of uncritical theory:

...nothing compels us to believe that legitimation, or its higher-order form, ideology—two key components in the social analysis of capitalist modernity—have anything like the salience in noncapitalist nonmodernity that scholars have attributed to them.

Pollock 2006: 517

Divesting ourselves of legitimation and ideology, as Pollock suggests,²⁶¹ we find instead a colossal agglomeration of ‘culture-power.’ The cuneiform scholars, whom Pongratz-Leisten assigns a starring role in her religion-ideology complex (2015: 9), filtered Assyria not only through their ‘shadow dialogues’²⁶² but through what we could dub a ‘shadow ontology.’ The mule express enabled Aššur’s *temu* to spread far and wide: *temu* in a simple sense of ‘orders,’ but *temu* also as a looping temporality, an ontological concept.

Crucially, the Assyrian kings in all their history never deified themselves:²⁶³ they acted solely as Aššur’s vicegerent. This explicitly led to a centralisation of scribal expertise, reflected both in the patronage system binding scholars to the royal household as well as the monopoly on divination

²⁶¹ Though see p.184 for further discussion of ideology in its ‘linguistic ideology’ guise.

²⁶² For which see p.23.

²⁶³ In stark contrast to other ‘ancients,’ the Roman Emperors, Egyptian Pharaohs, or even the Akkadian ruler Naram-Sin being cases in point.

practices the kings imposed throughout their realm.²⁶⁴ This concentration of cuneiform expertise carried with it the essential epistemological entailment of the cuneiform writing system: the ambiguity and open interpretation of the cuneiform sign. This ambiguity was a potent, virtual one, one where the future was written in the past, but not fixed.

A deified king could act with certainty: his word was god. The Assyrian king was no god. His world was founded on an ontology predicated upon an interpretive gap. The Assyrian Empire, though an organisation granting immense power, prestige and riches to its elite, though promulgating in imperial accounts narratives that smack of legitimation and ideology, the right king against chaos—the Assyrian Empire, as a thought-process, sought to collapse the interpretive gap. The disjuncture between a looping *temu* that was certain and uncertain, a future *in* the past, the disjuncture between the exterior sign of faces and words, and interior words and selves—this interpretive gap gave rise to an ‘imperial system’ that integrated biopolitical procedure, pervasive ‘intelligence gathering,’ and increasingly heavy processes of extraction and control. Rather than controlling a future, or indeed caring much about subjects, the Empire was one that sought to control ambiguity in the critical link between the divine and the perceived.

²⁶⁴ This contrasts with the ‘virtual marketplace competition for power’ that existed in Syria and south Iraq during the second millennium (Richardson 2010: 252). There, the proliferation of small, competing courts meant that qualified diviners could potentially move between courts, which Richardson considers the impetus for the development of knowledge secrecy and binding diviners by oaths (2010: 253).

Intermezzo – From Ideology to Language

kunuk Aššur šar ilani bel matati ša la šunne kunuk rube rabe abi ilani ša la paqari
Seal of Aššur, king of the gods, lord of the lands—not to be changed
Seal of the great ruler, father of the gods—not to be disputed²⁶⁵

At this point in the thesis we move from the grand vistas of the ontological landscape to the scope of the spoken, the dialogues that were the ‘capillaries’ through which imperial power circulated.²⁶⁶ We have just seen that a fundamental ambiguity inhered in several essential ontological principles undergirding the Assyrian imperial phenomenon—the paradoxical unfolding-simultaneity of *temu*, the polyvalency of the cuneiform sign, and the polyautonomous human subject. The biopolitical repertoire of disciplinary techniques provided a useful, *ad-hoc* avenue for controlling the ambiguity of the subject. These strategies, though occasionally employing linguistic tools, sought primarily non-linguistic, affective outcomes.

By contrast, the *ade* was a tool that unified the ‘ideological,’ biopolitical and linguistic aspects of Assyrian control, thus offering a pathway we might take from the governmental to the conversational. The *ade* imposed by Esarhaddon upon the subjects of his empire is the best preserved, with copies extant from both the imperial capitals and the provinces. Figure 7 depicts a conserved *tuppi ade* ‘treaty tablet’ excavated at the provincial capital of Kullania. This tablet, and presumably others like it, was installed in prominent display within a temple, a position emphasising some importance (Lauinger 2011: 12):

²⁶⁵ SAA 2 no.6, obv. i-iv.

²⁶⁶ I take the capillary metaphor from Van De Mieroop 2016b: 136.

Removed for reasons of copyright

Figure 7 - ʔuppi ade Treaty Tablet from Tell Tayinat, reproduced from Lauinger 2012: 88.

We have encountered Esarhaddon’s *ade* several times already: in its strictures to enforce reporting everything you see and hear,²⁶⁷ to forbid anti-Assurbanipal words from entering your heart,²⁶⁸ to speak truly and completely with your interior.²⁶⁹ These clauses illustrate the elite concern with negating the disjuncture between interior and exterior. They also illustrate a concern with *language*—with the capacity of language to dissemble, to not reflect that of the interior—the *dababti šapti* ‘speech of the lips.’ We return to Agamben, whose restitution of ancient classical governmentality helped us to make sense of Assyrian biopower in the previous chapter. In his again Classicist archaeology, he notes that the oath

contains the memory of a more archaic stage, in which it was concerned with the very consistency of human language and the very nature of humans as “speaking animals.” The “scourge” that it had to stem was not only the unreliability of men, incapable of staying true to their word, but a weakness pertaining to language itself, the capacity of words themselves to refer to things and the ability of men to make profession of their condition as speaking beings.

Agamben 2011: 8

The oath as a fixity against the ‘weakness’ of language—a device to pin down the spoken word, as the scholars pin down the cuneiform sign, and the administrative apparatus pins down hearts and minds. This fixity is almost literally underlined by the act of sealing the tablet with the Seal of Aššur (Figure 8). Not only does the seal emphasise the absolute unchangeability of the word,²⁷⁰ but it elevates the tablet from ‘an ordinary clay tablet into a Tablet of Destinies’ (Lauinger 2013: 115).



Figure 8 - Reproduction of Sennacherib’s ‘Seal of Destinies’ from Wiseman 1958: 16

²⁶⁷ P.34.

²⁶⁸ P.73.

²⁶⁹ P.71.

²⁷⁰ We might recall the Sealand Elders describing ‘the word of the king... which like the word of the god cannot be changed’ (SAA 18 no. 89, rev. 3-5).

The *tuppi šimati* ‘Tablet of Destinies’ was, as the name implies, a cuneiform tablet upon which the destinies of all things were inscribed by the great gods. An artefact of the divine realm wielded by the chiefs of the gods, Enlil, Marduk, and now Aššur,²⁷¹ its transposition into historical time granted the Assyrian kings potent capability in establishing further links and guarantees between human and divine entities. Lauinger argues that, by sealing the *tuppi ade* with the Seal, it rendered the subordinate parties subjects to the destiny of the tablet in the same way the gods were subjected to Marduk in the Babylonian *Enuma eliš* ‘Once on High’ creation account (2013: 114-115). Finally, Lauinger draws attention to a certain temporality of action between parties in Esarhaddon’s treaty:

the contracting parties are ordered to speak of the *ade* as one which Esarhaddon “wrote” (*issaṭar*) and “established” (*issakan*) in the perfect tense but which the king “causes them to swear” (*utammanaši*) in the present tense...
(2013: 114)

This whole package—establishing relational bonds in chains underwritten by the divine, framed in a temporality of absolute establishment by authority ($\sqrt{\check{skn}}$) followed by its action by the imperial subordinate—parallels the mechanisms that emerged through examining the quotidian business of the correspondence in the prior three chapters. The Assyrian hierarchy was predicated on an almost Matryoshka-like series of $\sqrt{plḫ}$ relationships: each subordinate bound to a superior through an internalised, active and subjective emotion; the superior bound in turn to his superior, in a nested series of interior practices reaching through the king up into the divine sphere. The $\sqrt{plḫ}$ -bonds, underwritten by the divine were framed in a temporality of absolute establishment by authority (*temu* $\sqrt{\check{skn}}$) followed by its enactment by the imperial subordinate.

Like the *temu*, the *ade* utterance is caught in a loop—in this case, a perpetual recurrence, illustrated by the durative *utammanaši* ‘causes them to swear.’ This perpetual recurrence is an act of speech—the oath, which we saw was a guarantor against slippage between the exterior words of the lips, and the interior world. Cementing the bond between oath, word, interior, exterior, god, subject, tablet

²⁷¹ This sequence does not imply historical progression in the divine sphere. Rather, the chief of the gods varied depending on period and locality: in the second millennium Enlil was regarded as the divine head; in the first, Marduk was preferred in Babylon, whereas obviously Aššur was identified as the supreme god in Assyria. The promotion of Aššur in Mesopotamian cosmogony is nicely traced in Machinist 1984.

and destiny was the ritual intake of water,²⁷² mirroring the internalisation of the *ade* and thus utterly fixing the oath-takers' subjectivities within the Assyrian hierarchical system.

The *ade* thus represents a nexus, where the large-scale imperial, ontological concerns of the Assyrian elite coincided with the topography and autonomy of the subject. Mediating and binding these axes was the spoken word. The *temu* and the cuneiform sign were the domain of empire; the spoken utterance, the dialogue, the domain of subjects and relationships, and the subject of the second half of this thesis.

²⁷² Radner 2003: 166.

4 Temporality, Tablets and Text: Talk in the Time of *ṭemu*

The Mule Express, Revisited

In the thesis introduction, we saw how an Assyrian letter was an artefact produced by a chain of communicative interactions which transported utterances across large stretches of time and space, carried on a clay tablet via the mule express.²⁷³ We now focus on the interactions themselves: the ways in which the correspondence network was used to propagate the *ṭemu* across the varied modalities of mind, mouth and clay. Implicit in the political correspondence of the Assyrian empire was a cosmology and ontology fixated upon implementing the *ṭemu* of Aššur: a continual authoring of a divine script for the world. This concept of action and intention traversed the boundaries of interior and exterior selves, necessitating a political form that was equipped to dominate both. A repertoire of techniques were used to inculcate the appropriate emotions within the inhabitants of the Assyrian world: the appropriate *libbu*, the exhibition of \sqrt{plh} and $\sqrt{rhš}$.

The *ṭemu* of Aššur—manifested in the Assyrian imperial project—was not alone in having designs on shaping the world. All beings had the capacity for autonomous action, including the elite whose task it was to shape the world in accordance with the divine design.²⁷⁴ The multiple communicative events of the letters represented sites for the instantiation and reproduction of the Assyrian hierarchy and *ṭemu*-order, but also, through various linguistic strategies of citation, presentation and indirection, they allowed the self to navigate the totalising process of empire, and even afforded an opportunity to nudge its trajectory.²⁷⁵

This chapter is divided into three parts: how subjects used language to relate to the past, to the future, and to each other. In the first, we explore how speakers situated themselves in relation to the past: to *ṭemu* already unfolded, past thoughts, intents and acts now inscribed in the perceptible world. Through quotation and citation, an Assyrian speaking subject was able to situate themselves within a dialogic chain of intentional beings. This site of quotation was thus a field in which subjects

²⁷³ See p.22.

²⁷⁴ For which see p.57 on differential *ṭemu* and p.106 on autonomies.

²⁷⁵ Research into these social categories of speaking to, with and about others has been a strong current of linguistic anthropology. Brenneis' typology of indirect language use indeed posits whether any language can be completely direct (1986: 345), and see also Lempert 2012.

were able to negotiate their own agency in the face of an imperial imperative, the vehicle of *temu*, a linguistic form which foresaw only its own manifestation.

The second section delves into the imperative and the imagined futures more generally. Fractally embedded within the quotations addressed in the first section, or contained within the projected future dialogue of the letter itself (that is, the words directly owned by the 'speaker' of the letter which were transcribed by a scribe (who could also be a speaker) to be read out in a future dialogue), these future-facing forms were another field in which the *temu*-intentions of imperial subjects wrestled with each other. These linguistic styles of relating to the future were socially distributed across registers, thus reproducing a socially bound hierarchy of agency. However, despite the provisionality of precative forms,²⁷⁶ these linguistic strategies provided a space in which subordinate subjects could reassert their own agency through indirection, allusion and suggestion, reasserting their own intentionality and affectivity in the face of a totalising imperial *temu*.

Finally, we examine how these strategies of relating to past and future were employed to manage relations between subjects of the imperial state. A brief survey of the norms of the official register leads us into a case study of a small dossier of letters between two provincial imperial officials, which allows us to see how these norms were manifested and manipulated in a non-royal relationship.

Tablets and Time

Cuneiform communication could manipulate time itself. Inscription preserved an utterance by transmuting it into signs, allowing it to endure beyond a sound event. For some texts, this could result in their deliberate transmission over thousands of years, a phenomenon that historians have dubbed the 'stream of tradition.'²⁷⁷ However, the documents we are concerned with were not part of any tradition. They represented artefacts of the processes of imperial communication, localised and ephemeral: a sequence of multiple procedures.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁶ Verbal moods indicating a possible, or even hoped for future event.

²⁷⁷ Veldhuis has critiqued the metaphor of the 'stream of tradition,' arguing that it strips ancient scribes of their own personal agency when preserving, copying and revising texts (2012: 12).

²⁷⁸ For which see p.23.

Two intermediary dialogues bookended this sequence of procedures: the face-to-face dictation and inscription of the letter by the speaker to the scribe, and the decoding of the message and its performance to the recipient at the other end. As we saw in the introduction, the two ‘real-time’ events are also ‘shadow dialogues’: though necessary to the process of cuneiform correspondence, they were covert and appeared only in trace form. Correspondence norms portrayed a direct dialogue between the principal and the recipient—the animator is effaced.²⁷⁹ Thus, the interaction is socially and temporally ‘collapsed,’ mimicking a single dialogue by stitching together at least two events into a single whole. Linguistic anthropologist Richard Bauman, whose interests lie in the ethnography of speaking and verbal performance,²⁸⁰ conceptualises this more formally:

Following Judith Irvine (1996), we may say that mediation sets up implicational or indexical relationships between a sequence of dialogues. I will call the first dialogue in the sequence the source dialogue and the second and subsequent dialogue(s) in the sequence the target dialogue(s). Stated more fully, the source dialogue reaches ahead cataphorically to at least one target dialogue, involving the recontextualization of at least one utterance (which I will term the source utterance) from the source dialogue, and, reciprocally, the target dialogue reaches back anaphorically to—or presupposes—a source dialogue from which the recontextualized utterance (the target utterance) is projected into the target dialogue.

Bauman:2004: 130

What implications will this have for our understanding of Assyrian correspondence? Firstly, the cataphoric nature of a petition or command, by presupposing a future context in which it will be relevant, necessitates a certain level of political imagination, whether that be the king expecting his officials to obey his commands, or a supplicant hoping that the king might hear his pleas. Such imaginations are reflected in grammatical constructions that indicate this futurity, distributed across socially stratified speaking registers. The imperative was generally used when the target dialogue was with someone of lower status; the third-person precative if the target dialogue was with someone of higher status. This social distribution of linguistic devices for relating to the future led to an equally hierarchical distribution of the relationships of Assyrian subjects towards a future, one where those with social power envisaged act and fact, and lesser agents a shifting, indirect realm of possibilities.

²⁷⁹ For more on the typology of ‘animator,’ ‘principal’ and ‘recipient,’ see p.22.

²⁸⁰ See Bauman 2018: 10-11; the whole article offers an intellectual autobiography.

On the scale of the whole letter-utterance, we find some extraordinarily complex projected dialogues: see Šamaš-bunaya and Nabu-nammir's letter to Tiglath-pileser, or Sargon's letter cited by Mannu-ki-Ninua later in this chapter for examples. Correspondence provided a space, afforded by the inscribed nature of writing, where alternative futures could be envisioned, attitudes and affects to them explored, and consequences worked out. In the letter, the Assyrian elite could 'shape' reality through social action.

Finally, the space of Assyrian correspondence was filled with various voices, characters, entities, all speaking, making claims, ordering, begging, insulting, delivered through various forms of reported speech. The analysis of the representation of voices and dialogic speech has a rich history in sociolinguistic anthropology, which draws on Bakhtin and Vološinov's work, introduced on p.24. Not only do they emphasise the dialogic, communicative aspect of utterance-in-use as opposed to a reified structural linguistics, but their approach foregrounds the consciousness and interiority of the speaker. All verbal utterances participate in an extended chain of dialogue with each other, to the point that 'any utterance... is only a moment in the continuous process of verbal communication' (Vološinov 1973: 95). All human language is in response to another, and through its quotation it is subject to manipulation within the reporter's consciousness (Vološinov 1973: 116-117).

This has been taken up by ethnographers of communication, who were particularly interested in the representation of voices in reported speech. A narrator will have to make choices about what voices represent what, which utterances to align oneself to and distance oneself from, thus creating and negotiating subjectivity, as exemplified in Hill's expert analysis of a Mexicano peasant's narrative on the murder of his son (1995). Similar kinds of negotiation occur in Assyrian correspondence narratives, for example, with the lamination of the speaker into a past voice, the voice narrating the letter, an internal dialogue voice, and future voices, together with a wide cast of other people's thoughts and voices (including unattributed speech, such as popular proverbs). This led to the richly polyphonic utterances we are about to encounter.

4.1 Citationality, Authority and the Past

*abutu ši... ma issi kutallišu maḥiṣuni pušu lidbub u ša ina pišu maḥiṣuni ina libbi mini
lidbub*

There is a word... He who has been wounded in his back may talk with his mouth,
but he who is wounded in his mouth, how can he talk?²⁸¹

The Assyrian communicative network was predicated on the ability to project through time. To compose a message, one needed to reach into the past to establish authority for one's words, to manifest one's subjectivity in the present and manage one's relationship with interlocutors, and to imagine and shape the future with language. This artful composition was mediated by the method of transmission: rather than an unfolding face-to-face dialogue, the correspondence which comprises our evidence base was filtered through multiple consciousnesses and codes, an act of speech with one's mouth becoming a 'verbal performance' in clay (to adapt Vološinov 1973: 95). The dialogic nature of interaction through Assyrian correspondence is thus magnified and extended across time and actors, a series of source and target dialogues reaching for each other across times and minds (Bauman 2004: 130).

Consequently, Assyrian correspondence is deeply intertwined with the interior-exterior relationship pulsating throughout the documents of their empire. *Ṭemu*, the expression of the will of the gods in thought, order, faculty and event, needed to traverse dangerous boundaries. The divine *ṭemu* was to be established in the earthly realm by the Assyrian elite, yet the code in which it crossed the boundary from the heavenly to the mundane needed the heavy weight of venerable Mesopotamian scholarship practiced by Assyrian experts to even interpret. In order to understand orders from his superiors, the gods, the Assyrian king needed to have their messages read out by the scribes: the *ṭemu* central to the movements of the Assyrian state thus already had to traverse the *libbu* of a scribe in order to be translated into a form intelligible to the king. From there, the king's *ṭemu*, mediated through speech, tablet and scribe, flowed in and out of the *libbus* of the Assyrian people, manifested in the world as historical unfolding.

²⁸¹ SAA 10 no. 294, rev. 11-12, Urad-Gula to Assurbanipal

To this end it was essential that the *libbu* was conditioned towards a state compatible with the authoring of Aššur's *temu*. We reviewed the capacities and conditions for the ideal Assyrian *libbu* in chapter two, and the techniques used to guide Assyrian subjects towards this ideal were the subject of chapter three. However, despite the ideal vision of a domain of Aššur comprised solely by subjects peacefully eating bread, drinking beer and working in their houses and fields, the slaves of the king, people were messy. They could act *ki ramani*, 'according to self,' harbouring hidden words in the privacy of the *libbu*, and through acting *ki ramani* they could even come into conflict with Aššur's *temu*, and defy it.

None of this could be discerned without language: reading the signs from the gods, promulgating *temu*, reporting whatever you see and hear. The field of communication was thus a battleground upon which battles for Assyrian supremacy over territory, exterior and interior, were fought.

Propagating Power through Chains of Conversation

The thread of *temu* was implicitly woven throughout the Assyrian correspondence through the use of endless quotation linking order and act. On the one hand, these quotations served as an *aide-memoire*, reminding the recipient of the letter of its background; adopting a framework characterising the classical European letter, Pirnguber describes these couplets as a straightforward case of a '*narratio-petitio*' pairing (2015: 319-320).

On the other hand, the parallelism between these quotations and the subsequent '*petitio*' could be extreme. This generic fidelity was indeed a convention, but a convention that produced and reproduced a scheme of powerful individuals affecting the world through speech:

ana kaspi ša ina paniya ša beli išpura
umma ina qate rab kašir šubila
adu ina qate ša rab kašir ana beliya ultebila

Regarding the silver which is before me which my lord sent to me
 QUOT Send it to me in the hands of the chief tailor
 Now, I have sent it to my lord in the hands of the chief tailor.

SAA 18 no. 21, obv. 9-rev. 13, Nurea to the *sukkallu*

There is almost a one-to-one correspondence between the words attributed to the *sukkallu*, in direct speech, and the words of Nurea. The indexical transformation takes on features of status marking: the *sukkallu*, a high ranking official in the Assyrian hierarchy, uses direct address and the imperative to talk down to his subordinate; Nurea, in return, refers to the *sukkallu* indirectly, using a description of their relationship (*beliya* ‘my lord’) instead of direct second-person. Finally, the imperative *šubila* ‘send to me’ is transformed into the perfect past *ultebila* ‘I have sent,’ indicating the manifestation of the imperative.

This slavish imitation of the words of the powerful was so embedded in routine it became a conventional feature of correspondence discourse.²⁸² However, even though such replication was conventional it was certainly not an unrecognised, subconscious habit, but specifically and intentionally directed. Esarhaddon writes to Aššur-ušallim, a royal agent of unknown standing, directing him to ensure that the accurately encoded words were transmitted securely:

<i>ma</i>	<i>tupšarru issen ... issu pišu lištur ina libbi ispillurte liknuku Ahu-dur-enši rab kišir ša mar-šarri ina libbi kalli arhiš ana muḫḫiya lubila</i>
QUOT	One scribe... should write it from his mouth and seal it with the Y-shaped seal, and Aḫu-dur-enši the cohort commander of the son of the king should bring it to my presence quickly via the mule-express.

SAA 16 no. 148, rev. 9-18, Aššur-ušallim to Esarhaddon

The emphasis on high fidelity movement of words to Esarhaddon, is evident here: the king demands only one scribe transcribe words from ‘his’ mouth,²⁸³ and that this tablet be sealed with the crown prince’s seal and sent in the hands of a trusted man via exclusive roads. Thus, the utterance was, as far as possible, replicated to the utmost of Assyrian ability, hedged about with security measures to ensure its words would not be altered, changed or intercepted.²⁸⁴

²⁸² E.g., SAA 16 no. 137 obv. 8 *šalšu nissalšu*, and even Esarhaddon does it when corresponding with his mother: *ki ša ummi šarri taqbuni anaku ina pittema aqṭibi* ‘Just as the mother of the king has spoken, in the same way I have spoken’ SAA 16 no. 2, obv. 8-rev. 1. Further examples are too numerous to list here.

²⁸³ Who the *-šu* in *pišu* ‘his mouth’ refers to is unclear, as the tablet is damaged here.

²⁸⁴ That there was a concern with the changeability of the cuneiform utterance could be found in Esarhaddon’s *ade-treaty*: *šumma abutu ša Aššur-aḫu-iddina šar Aššur tennani tušannani* ‘If you change or cause to be change the word of Esarhaddon the king of Assyria’ (SAA 2 no. 6, obv. 58); see also the curses in SAA 18 no. 24, prefaced with *ša dababu anna innu* ‘The one that changes these words...’ (obv. 12’).

Nested Dialogues and Communication Diagrams

The accurate replication of utterances was paramount to the exercise of Assyrian power, as emphasised in this letter from the envoys Šamaš-bunaya and Nabu-nammir, whom Tiglath-pileser sent to acquire the fealty of the Babylonians:

ŠB and NN	Past	TP	Future TP
	ŠB/NN		

anini ki anni ana mar Babilī niqṭibi
ma *šarru ina muḥḥikunu issa[prannaši]*
ma *ina pikunu issi mar [Babilī] ki [anni ladbub]*
ma *[a]na [du]ra[ri] ša Babilī u kidinnutkunu laškun ana Babilī allaka*

We spoke with the sons of Babylon like this

3.QUOT	The king has s[en]t us before you
3.QUOT	[I shall speak] with the sons [of Babylon] with your mouths like [this]:
3.QUOT	I shall establish [the am]ne[sty o]f Babylon and your privileged status and I am coming to Babylon.

SAA 19 no. 98, obv. 11-18, Šamaš-bunaya and Nabu-nammir to Tiglath-pileser

Here, the letter-writers take great pains to describe the dialogic map underlying the assignation of responsibility for various utterances, ultimately leading to Tiglath-pileser himself. They write that they spoke *ki anni* ‘like this’, introducing their direct quoted speech in the first person (Past ŠB and NN). Then, in their speech to the Babylonian, Past ŠB and NN immediately transfer responsibility for their words to the king Tiglath-pileser (Past TP), by quoting him directly, again introduced with *ma*. We can represent the various nested speech events by way of the following diagram (Figure 9):

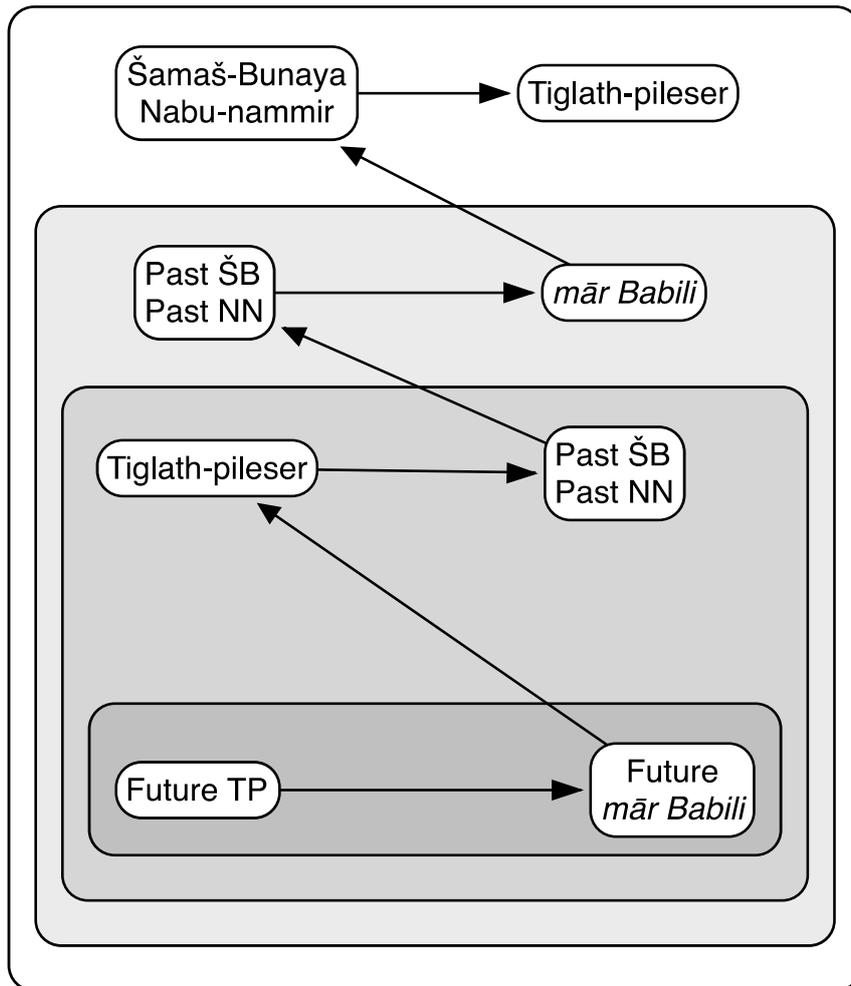


Figure 9 - Communication Diagram for SAA 19 no. 98, adapted from Haviland 2005: 92

The quoted speech of Tiglath-pileser is unfortunately damaged at a pivotal line where Past TP frames his speech. Here, Luukko reconstructs *anni ladbub*, which is a justified suggestion in this context; we have *ina pikunu* ‘in your mouths,’ and a *ma* indicating direct speech. I differ from Luukko in considering the following sentence to be another nested layer of speech. He attributes the *ma* to Past ŠB and NN’s speech layer, whereas I consider it to be a continuation of Past TP’s speech, indicating precisely *what* words he intended his envoys to speak. This is clearly indicated by the word *kiddinutkunu*, ‘your privileged status,’ which in this clause can only refer to the Babylonians he intends to speak to, marking an indexical shift from the *-kunu* in the previous clause, which referred to Past ŠB and NN.

The final speech layer then is an incredibly deeply nested voice: from Past TP's perspective, it is a voice of Future TP, coming out of the mouths of Future ŠB and NN; yet from the perspective of Past ŠB and NN, Future TP is only a more recent Past TP; from the point of view of Šamaš-bunaya and Nabu-nammir, the voices of the letter indexed by *anini*, all this is past narration, embedded in a dialogue cataphorically stretching forward to Tiglath-pileser once more.

The complexity of this utterance is managed through the economic usage of keying devices: phrases which transpose the interactions described (Goffman 1986: 45). Here, the keys move from a report to the king (the key of the tablet) to the audience with the Babylonians (*ana mar Babilī niqṭibi*), to the envoys' audience with the king (*ma*), and the imagined future utterance ([*ladbub*], plus *ma* again). However, as all these utterances are framed within the tablet representing Šamaš-bunaya's and Nabu-nammir's message to Tiglath-pileser, they form a single set of what Goffman calls *laminations*,²⁸⁵ where each rekeying adds a new layer to the framed activity of communicating this report to the king.

We have stepped through this convoluted communication diagram in detail because it aptly demonstrates the careful allocation of responsibility and voices taking place in these delicate discussions with the Babylonians. Ultimately, the final responsibility rests with the voice of the king, who is the only one the Babylonians wish to negotiate with, as Šamaš-bunaya and Nabu-nammir go on to write:

They did not consent [to open the gate for us],²⁸⁶ 'If we let you enter Babylon what can I say to the king when the king himself comes?'

SAA 19 no. 98, obv. 24-29, Šamaš-bunaya and Nabu-nammir to Tiglath-pileser

This refusal explains at least why Šamaš-bunaya and Nabu-nammir, in their account to the king, were at pains to strictly lay out the communication diagram to emphasise that, despite portraying themselves as nothing more than vessels for the king's words, the Babylonians did not view them as coterminous with the king, though the king 'spoke with their mouths.' Indeed, in the subsequent

²⁸⁵ Goffman 1986: 82.

²⁸⁶ The refusal of consent—*la immaggur* (obv. 24) here—was a key way in which the imperial *ṭemu* was resisted, and subjective autonomy reasserted. See p.262.

narrative detailing the rest of their interactions the envoys are at pains to emphasise direct quotation and replication.²⁸⁷ This careful accounting of quoted speech appears throughout the correspondence in potentially challenging exchanges:

mar-šipriya ša ina muḫḫi pahiti ša putuwa ašpuruni ittalka ki ša šarru beli išpuranni iddubaššu
ma ata aninu salmani attunu attunu biratini tušabbata

My messenger whom I sent [to] the governor who is my opposite has come back. He talked to him like the king my lord wrote to me

3.QUOT Why, when we are reconciled, do you seize our forts?

SAA 5 no. 2, obv. 7-15, Našir-Bel to Sargon

In this letter, a governor writes to Sargon describing an interaction with a correspondingly powerful individual in Urartu. Once again, in a delicate situation involving autonomous subjects, we have the king's speech being carefully replicated: the messenger speaks to the Urartian governor with words just like what the king wrote. By emphasising the citational, royal origin of the spoken utterance, the speakers in these later contexts are thus able to not only authorise their dialogue with the authority of the king,²⁸⁸ but disclaim responsibility for the outcomes of the exchange. Citing the king's speech directly thus effaced the responsibility and autonomy of the subjects along the transmission chain: they deliberately reduced themselves to mouths through which the king spoke.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁷ *dibbi ma'duti issišunu niddubub* 'we spoke many words with them' (SAA 19 no. 98 obv. 18); *ki anni niqṭibaššunu* 'we spoke to them like this' (rev. 1); *ki annimma issi mar Babili nidabbub* 'we have been talking with the sons of Babylon just like this' (rev. 6).

²⁸⁸ This authority is especially drawn upon through entextualisation processes, as reviewed by Kuipers (2013: 404). The ability to detach words from a specific context and render them repeatable, with this repetition of the authoritative words continually reauthorising the words through time. This is extensively encountered in the Assyrian ritual text, but also in contexts such as citing the 'the king's father,' as below. See also SAA 18 no. 72, obv. 12'-rev. 6 for a nice example.

²⁸⁹ The Assyrian recognition of the creative potential that could arise from this kind of verbal transmission is evident in the way in which subjects could envision future 'personae' to place words into:

ša šarru beli išpuranni
ma ina muḫḫi Ludu šupru
ma issu ekalli ina muḫḫi issa[pruni] irtu'ubuni
ma [x x x x]

Concerning that which the king my lord sent to me

3.QUOT Write to Ludu

3.QUOT They se[nt to me] from the Palace, shaking

3.QUOT [x x x x]...

SAA 15 no. 100, obv. 16-19, Mannu-ki-Ninua to Sargon

This attention to accuracy and replication was not restricted to large geopolitical contexts however, but is also found in scholarly contexts:

ina muḫḫi ṭeme ša šarru beli iškunannini dibbi gabbu ina ṭuppi assaṭar ki ša šarru beli ina pišu iqḫanni ina puti iqṭibunu salmu šu

Concerning the *ṭemu* that the king my lord established upon me, I wrote all the words on a tablet. Just as the king my lord spoke from his mouth they spoke correspondingly; it is safe.

SAA 10 no. 245, rev. 1-6, Marduk-šakin-šumi to the king

Though the specific context to this letter is obscure, Marduk-šakin-šumi's duties as the chief *ašipu* involved maintaining the spiritual wellbeing of the royal family, requiring interventions in the cosmic sphere of divine powers. His office was such that his duties were just as consequential as those of governors on the Assyrian frontier: thus we have the king speaking specific words, and Marduk-šakin-šumi emphasising the flow of those words from the king's mouth to the tablet, in his account.

The accurate replication of the words of the king and Assyrian officials was a cornerstone in transmitting and unfolding the *ṭemu* of Aššur throughout the realm. However, though integral to the perpetuation of Assyrian power, quoting the speech of the powerful was used to achieve a speaker's ends as well. For example, in a letter between two unnamed Babylonian cities, the author writes:

*šarru belani iqabbi
umma ḫubussunu la tahabbata
u attunu ana kunnutu tallakani ḫubti ultu libbi alini taḫabbata'*

The king our lord says

QUOT You will not plunder booty from them!

And you are in truth coming here and plundering booty from the interior of our city.

SAA 18 no. 72, rev. 1-6

As with Nurea and Aššur-ušallim's letters above, we have a parallelism between the cited words of the king and the speaker's own voice. However, here we have a disjuncture: the king has said one

I have indented the translation of this example to demonstrate just how heavily nested the speech is, which shows marked adeptness in conceptually managing polyphonic voices in communication to convey certain messages. An interesting aspect of this quotation is the unspecified 'they' who wrote from the Palace. This collective voice, which is described as exhibiting $\sqrt{r}b$, demonstrates the deployment of a specific affect—the somatic visual evidence of anger—to intimidate and control. This can be contrasted with similar deployments of $\sqrt{r}b$ which are directly assigned to the king, e.g., SAA 16 nos. 71, 121.

thing, but the state of affairs is in fact the opposite. Furthermore, the king is not a present party to this interaction: his past voice is being used to contrast the way things should be with the way things are, *ana kunnutu* ‘in truth.’

Here we thus have an instance in which the royal words, the *temu* of Aššur, are currently ineffective: the unnamed second party is still plundering in spite of the king’s orders. The implication here is that citing the king’s words draws on his royal authority to change the presently problematic situation. The king’s words are framed with *iqabbi* ‘he says,’ a durative form indicating a continuing process. This suggests that the transformation of the world to the royally ordered state remains an ongoing process; the king’s words are still effective and in the process of being spoken.

In a similar fashion we have a letter written to Esarhaddon citing Esarhaddon’s unfulfilled past speech, in an attempt to get the king to act upon his words. The quotation is framed in particularly florid terms:

ina pika ellu ša Šamaš u Marduk ikarrabuš indaqtu
ma bitka irappiš
enna ina šilli šarri beliya lirpiš
From your pure mouth which Šamaš and Marduk bless fell
3.QUOT Your house will increase.
Now let it increase under the shadow of the king my lord.

SAA 18 no. 60, rev. 11-right. edge. 18, Aqar-Bel-lumur to Esarhaddon

Here in a petition to the king, we have Aqar-Bel-lumur creating a parallelism between a previous royal utterance and a future state of affairs. Unlike the letters discussed previously, where the senders take pains to describe the communication diagram in great detail, Aqar-Bel-lumur instead heaps praise on the source of the words he quotes themselves, the ‘pure mouth’ blessed by the gods. The use of *indaqtu* ‘it fell’ sets up a poetic spatial relation: the speech descending upon Aqar-Bel-lumur from the height of his superior. Aqar-Bel-lumur refrains from praising the content of the words themselves—we might conjecture that it would be a bit too on the nose for him to do so—and so indirectly adds heft to Esarhaddon’s words by valorising their source in the narrative that frames them. Consequently, the following parallelism equating the past quotation with the hoped-for future (*bitka irappiš* → *lirpiš* ‘your house will increase’ → ‘may it increase’) is relatively unmarked; the phrase *ina šilli šarri* ‘in the shadow of the king’ is the only flourish and puts us in mind of the ‘ideal’ descriptions of the Assyrian world we encountered in chapter 3.

Arguing over the King's Words

Thus far, the examples we have seen of quoted speech, royal speech in particular, have straightforwardly engaged with the question of truth: the cited words are transparently taken to be accurate. Indeed, accepting the accuracy of these words not only gives them force, but recognises and reproduces royal authority through 'authorizing acts' that require the participation of the receiver (Kuipers 2013: 409).²⁹⁰ However, there are occasions in which the king's word is disputed, and in which one party must be misrepresenting it.

In both contexts the disputes are to do with contention over power and authority. The first scenario concerns Esarhaddon's programme to reestablish the city of Babylon after Sennacherib's devastation of it. The author, Zakir, describes a dispute between the Babylonians and some Sealanders, both of whom marshal royal words for their own ends:

mare ša Eṭiru Mat-Tamti [x x x...] šarru ittišunu ipteqid [x x x...] uššabbitu
umma amat šarri ši [x x x...] ana abbekunu ša nišhi iddinu binnannaši

Babilaya u Ubaru šakin ṭemi
umma ul amat šarri ši
umma šaddaqad ina Kalḫu ana muḫḫi suddunu [ša] ḫubullu labirutu ša ina šalami ša Babili [šarru k]i
tamḫura šarru libbašu ana muḫḫikunu ilteḫta
[umma] ina Babili minu šakin
umma alu ḫepu [šu
umma] anaku ultešib u duraršu altakan
[umma] annitu amatu ša ina pi šar matati belini [imquta]

The king appointed [x x x...] with him the sons of Eṭiru of the Sealand [x x x...] they seized
 QUOT It is the word of the king [x x x] Give us [x x x] which was given to your fathers as a *nišḫu*-payment.

The Babylonians and Ubaru the *establisher-of-ṭemu*
 QUOT That is not a word of the king.
 QUOT Last year in Kalḫu when you encountered the [king's] concerning the giving [of] old debts of the wellbeing of Babylon, the king, his interior jumped concerning you
 [QUOT] What is established in Babylon?
 QUOT The city was broken
 [QUOT] it was I, I resettled it and established its freedom
 [QUOT] This was the word that [fell] from the mouth of the king of the lands our lord.

SAA 10 no. 169, obv. 1-12, Zakir to Esarhaddon

Once again in this letter we have a multiplicity of nested voices, distinguished primarily by indexicality, giving rise to multiply laminated voices. The section of the tablet which bore the signs representing the Sealanders' speech is damaged, but it appears as if they do not quote the king when

²⁹⁰ This recalls our exploration of $\sqrt{\text{šm}}$ -hearing, and also presages our exploration of $\sqrt{\text{mgr}}$ 'consent' in chapter six.

they assert that it is the king's word they are implementing: the imperative *binnannaši* 'give to us' terminates with a first person plural dative, suggesting it is not the king's voice being directly quoted.

Consequently, it is all the more telling that in the speech attributed to Ubaru and the Babylonians, they specifically cite the king's direct speech to back up their argument. The royal speech itself is ostensibly unaltered, but framed with *šarru libbašu ana muḥḥikunu ilteḥṭa* 'the king, his interior jumped concerning you,' i.e. he was angry. This added commentary on the king's delivery of his words further buttresses the speakers' construction of authority: not only are they reproducing the king's words, but by portraying him as angry they implicitly place Eṭiru and friends in an abject position, as targets of royal rage. Finally, to emphasise the accuracy of the quotation, the Babylonians cite the source of the words as 'the mouth of the king of the lands, our lord.'

Similar contentions over royal speech are described in a letter we revisit from chapter two, that of Bel-ušeziḫ describing power plays in the southern Mesopotamian city of Uruk. In our previous discussion we focused on the threat of an impermeable *libbu*,²⁹¹ which made it impossible to pin down the agitator Ḫinnumu's intentions. However, Bel-ušeziḫ, in describing all that he has seen and heard, is able to quote the speech of one of Ḫinnumu's associates:

*šarru beliya lu medi Ša-Nabu-[šu x x x] ša ittišu x ki ušša' ina pan Babilaya u [Urukaya] idabbub
umma šarru ana Ḫinnumu iltapru
umma la ta[pallah] šakin ṭemuti ša Uruk attuka paniya ana mamma šanam[ma x x] ul anamdin
u ša ina muḥḥika idbubu gabbišunu ina qate[ka] ašakkan*

*u ana Aḥḥešaya maršu ša Nanaya-ušalli iqta[bi]
umma mimma mala šarru ittika u itti Urukaya idabbubu gabbi piršata*

The king my lord, let him know that Ša-Nabu-šu, who is with [Ḫinnumu] is talking, out in the open, before the Babylonians and the [Urukeans]

QUOT The king has sent to Ḫinnumu
QUOT You do not [*√plḥ*]. The *establishing-ṭemu*-post of Uruk is for you. I will not give it to anyone before me and everyone talking about you I shall place in [your] hands.

And to Aḥḥešaya, the son of Nanaya-ušalli, he spo[ke]

QUOT Whatever the king has talked with you and with the Urukeans, all of it is a lie...

SAA 18 no. 125, obv. 4'-11', Bel-ušeziḫ to Esarhaddon

²⁹¹ See p.99.

In this account, Ša-Nabu-šu has taken things one step further than the Sealanders in the previous letter: he presents the king's speech in a direct quotation (or rather, Bel-ušeziḫ has him present Esarhaddon's speech in a direct quotation). In contrast with Zakir's description of the Babylonian's attribution of the word of the king as directly witnessed in audience, derived from the royal mouth, here Ḫinnumu is described as having had the king 'send' to him. In other words, Ḫinnumu received a letter. Recall that though central to the operation of Assyrian rule, letters were considered untrustworthy for sensitive communication—the mouth of the king was the authoritative source for all utterances. Thus, the 'word of the king' being communicated in a letter, in this nested narrative, underplays the accuracy of that dialogue. In contrast, Bel-ušeziḫ's communication of Ša-Nabu-šu's speech is to be trusted: that speech is being delivered out in the open for all to hear.

Moving to Ša-Nabu-šu's words themselves, it is notable that Bel-ušeziḫ does not break up the speech with a scaffolding of quotatives—the Babylonian *umma* particle here—unlike many other quotations we have come across. Rather, he sticks with one *umma* to introduce the passage and any nested speech within it. On the one hand this could be attributed to a stylistic quirk of Bel-ušeziḫ's idiolect. None of his other letters have quotations of direct speech of quite this length, so a firm conclusion cannot be reached. On the other hand, it could be that this withdrawal of quotative interpolation is an attempt to further distance himself from the seditious speech he is quoting, a marker of tension between needing to accurately reproduce the words in order to report them to the king without associating himself with them.²⁹²

Bel-ušeziḫ continues to build his case against Ḫinnumu by reaching to ever more distant past dialogues: he quotes a letter Ḫinnumu sent to the king of Elam, and a dialogue between Ḫinnumu and Sennacherib, 'the king your father'.²⁹³ The dialogue here is relatively straightforward, with both

²⁹² Besnier's analysis of reported speech in the Nukulaelae language locates the expression of affect, and potentially parody, in certain patterns of pragmatic organisation of quoted discourse in oral interaction (1992: 174-5). He observes how the configuration of pragmatic quoting devices enables the 'reporter's voice to 'leak' onto the quote, and yields what Bakhtin... calls a *parodic stylization* of the quoted voice.' (1990: 175). In this instance, the transmutability of the utterance into cuneiform provides a space for deferral and delay (Morris 2007: 377), which allows further transformation and development of the utterance as it is textualised. Joining these insights together, we could argue that the withdrawal of the *ma* quotative is an emphatic withdrawal of leakage, specifically because the *animator* of the utterance, when it is spoken before Esarhaddon, will not be Bel-ušeziḫ at all—it will be a *bel ṭemi*. This discontinuity between the principal, the quoted speech, and the animator could thus suggest an inverted model of pragmatic distribution of quotatives as a disclaimer of responsibility to that we find in an oral interaction.

²⁹³ Rev. 8-10.

Ḫinnumu and Sennacherib’s voices framed only by \sqrt{qb} ‘speak,’ a verb with stronger connotations of authoritative speech than \sqrt{dbb} .²⁹⁴ This dearth of commentary, devoid of explicit evidential statements, further serves to create a representational style where Bel-ušezib’s role is effaced and the dialogues he wants to present to Esarhaddon, as well as their speakers, are foregrounded.

The father of the king

The voice of ‘the father of the king’ was one that was deployed intermittently by correspondents as a particularly authoritative and trustworthy augment to their arguments. In Bel-ušezib’s letter, the voice of Sennacherib was presented without comment, speaking for himself. We can contrast this with two further deployments of the royal forefather. Firstly, the *ašipu* and scholarly advisor Adad-šumu-ušur quotes a letter of Assurbanipal:

ša šarru [beli] išpuranni
ma ina pi ša abiya asseme ki qinnu kentu attununi u anaku uma uda atamar

abušu ša šarri beliya šalam Bel šu u šarru beli šalam Belma šu
ina pi ša 2 beleniya ittuqta mannu uḫḫar ušanna mannu išannan

That which the king [my lord] sent to me

3.QUOT I have heard from the mouth of my father that you are a loyal family
and now I myself know and have seen.

The father of the king, my lord, he is the image of Bel, and the king my lord, he is too the image of Bel.
This has fallen from the mouth of my two lords. Who can later repeat it? Who can rival it?

SAA 10 no. 228, obv. 14-22, Adad-šumu-ušur to Assurbanipal

Here, once again, this exchange is structured parallelistically, with the correspondent’s response mirroring that of the king’s speech he is quoting and replying to. However, unlike the examples cited previously, the parallelism here is not slavishly explicit, but rather draws on the royal speech quoted by Assurbanipal to create further analogies and relationships.

Firstly, Esarhaddon’s voice is strongly effaced in Assurbanipal’s speech: rather than his words being presented in direct speech (which would have been introduced with the quotative *ma*) we instead have an indirect description of what he said (introduced with *ki* ‘like, as, when, that’). In Assurbanipal’s speech itself, the king draws a relationship between what he has heard from his father’s mouth—an implicitly reliable source—and what he has seen and verified himself. Not only

²⁹⁴ For which see below, p.184.

does this echo the importance of first-hand experience,²⁹⁵ but it sets up a relation at least of equality between Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal (if not supercession).²⁹⁶ Adad-šumu-ušur develops this theme in his response: both the father of the king and the king are images of the god Bel, and the words Assurbanipal says fell from both their mouths (and again we have the usage of *√mqt* ‘fall,’ emphasising a superior-inferior spatiality).

The voice of the father of the king shaded into the use of past voices more generally to construct arguments and establish authority. In another letter to Esarhaddon, Bel-ušeziḫ first brings to mind the precedent of the king’s father,²⁹⁷ thus setting up the authoritative past in relation to a deficient present. Then he proceeds to cite the words attributed to Lugalkuršarri, a king styled with an antique Sumerian name,²⁹⁸ in an unfortunately damaged passage that deals with *libbu* and mouth, interior and exterior, in some way. This ancient precedent is even further compounded by citing the speech of the divine:

ilani rabuti ana Bel iqtabu
umma šušqu u šušpulu [ši] lu qatukka

Marduk ša niši atta Bel aki šimati [x x x x ta]šilatika iltem aki ša Bel maḥru [šarru bela li]puš:
šaqu šuppil u šapli [šušqi]
 The great gods spoke to Bel
 QUOT To raise high and bring low: [this] EMPH is in your hands.

You are the Marduk of the people. Bel decreed as your destiny ... your glorio[us x x x x]. As that equal to Bel, may [the king my lord a]ct:
 Bring low the high and [raise up] the low.

SAA 10 no. 112, rev. 29-33, Bel-ušeziḫ to Esarhaddon

Here, Bel-ušeziḫ quotes from *Enuma eliš*, a Babylonian epic of creation which was undergoing renewed interest in Assyria at this time (Frame 2008: 27). The intertextuality here, between the account of the appointment of Marduk to divine kingship (*Enuma eliš* tablet IV l. 8), and Bel-ušeziḫ’s exhortation to Esarhaddon to do the same, is explicit: *aki ša Bel maḥru* ‘as that equal to Bel.’ The

²⁹⁵ P.21.

²⁹⁶ In a similar vein we have a letter to Assurbanipal when he was crown prince, where the correspondent Šumaya invokes ‘the king your father’ (i.e., Esarhaddon) having seen Šumaya’s work firsthand (SAA 16 no. 34, obv. 4). This again underlines how, even though it is described in language here, the importance of sight by the powerful and the royal, overriding the mere hearing of words. See also SAA 10, no. 173, where Marduk-šumu-ušur cites the precedent of the father of the king to bolster his argument.

²⁹⁷ *šarru abuka 10 šanati ina muḥḫi šandabakkuti ultetiḫ enna ina šatti 3 šandabakki...* ‘The king your father allowed the governorship of Nippur to continue for ten years—now in one year three governors...’ SAA 10 no. 112 rev. 9-10

²⁹⁸ Rev. 20-23.

king's role, as the 'Marduk of the people,' explicitly quotes that of Marduk. However, this quotation is incomplete, as Esarhaddon is being implored to raise the low and bring down the high. Thus, we have a quotation from past authority being used not only to supplement a case or argument, but being used to reinforce a certain ontological order—that of the Assyrian king corresponding to the king of the gods—as well as being used to bring it about. Quotations of past language, then, were integral towards unfolding the future, not only in the restricted fashion of mirroring the king's speech, but also in a creative vein: Bel-ušešib, by drawing on the historical and literary past, aims to shape the future through the use of quotation.

From Citationality to Metalanguage to Language Ideology

abutu ša šarri beliya ki šade šapšuqat

The word of the king, my lord, is strait like the mountains²⁹⁹

The Assyrian consciousness of the different ways of speaking, their different purposes, features and registers, is indicative of an implicit awareness of genre and the varieties of language. Of explicitly named categories, *dibbi ṭabuti* 'good words,' *abat šarri* 'word of the king,' *mamitu* 'oath,' *ade* 'treaty' and *qibitu* 'command' are all associated with the hierarchical process of the empire. In addition, the less deliberately theorised strains of language, such as quotations from the father of the king, contribute to an emergent 'metalanguage' that classified different genres of talk that could be mobilised for particular politicised ends.

The concept of different language registers was in evidence during the Old Babylonian period, where a text describes the *lišanu* 'tongue, speech' 'of priest, shepherd, sailor and silversmith' (Veenhof 1987: 38). Though no such typology exists for the speech of the Neo-Assyrian letters, correspondents would build up polyphonic compositions not only from the quotidian utterances of other subjects, but other materials such as named scholarly compositions,³⁰⁰ collected scholarly

²⁹⁹ SAA 10 no. 294, rev. 7, Urad-Gula to Esarhaddon

³⁰⁰ E.g., SAA 8 no. 242, where the unassigned author cites a couple of omens before pre-empting the king's query about their source not being the series *Šumma-izbu*. Although the text is damaged, this letter portrays an expected royal engagement with sources and citational authority. See also Lieberman 1990: 320; Veldhuis 2010: 80 ff.

sayings,³⁰¹ proverbs,³⁰² and even statistical records.³⁰³ There was a recognition of ‘verbal art’ as useful in the quotidian realm.³⁰⁴

The most interesting implicit metalanguage emerges however in the differentiation drawn between \sqrt{dbb} and \sqrt{qb} . Both these words are generally translated ‘to speak,’ however the contexts in which they are used are subtly different. We have already encountered \sqrt{dbb} used to describe an interior dialogue.³⁰⁵ In addition to this, \sqrt{dbb} is employed in contexts with various negative connotations:

ina muḥḥi Ḥargi puagi idabbub

He is talking concerning a takeover of the land of Ḥargu

SAA 5 no. 149, rev. 2-3, unassigned to Sargon

mar-šipriya iḥti[si]

ma ata muḥḥi urdani ša šarri tadabbubu

...

issu beti la ušša muḥḥi duakiya idabbubu

He wrong[ed] my messenger

3.QUOT Why are you talking concerning the servants of the king?

...

I cannot leave the house, he is talking about killing me.

SAA 5 no. 260, obv. 4'-6' + rev. 10'-11', unassigned to Sargon

ekalli gabbi ana muḥḥiya ultedbibu

They have caused the whole palace to talk concerning me.

SAA 13 no. 185, rev. 8, Rašil to Esarhaddon/Assurbanipal

The three quotations above are all taken from accounts of fairly dark dealings, death and disorder. As a result, for each of these the editors translate \sqrt{dbb} not as ‘speaking’ but as ‘plotting,’ and the causative form as ‘turning against’ or inciting. \sqrt{qb} has no such connotations. This implicit division of work between the two verbs thus implies an untheorised hierarchy of speech, with some ‘talk’— \sqrt{qb} —more valued and authoritative than the more general and potentially dangerous \sqrt{dbb} . This

³⁰¹ Indicated by *ša pi ummani* ‘according to the expert,’ e.g. SAA 10 no.9 rev. 2. See Worthington 2012: 11 ff. for discussion.

³⁰² Utterances assigned to the ‘people,’ known as *teltu* ‘saying, proverb.’ *Teltu* were not assigned to any named subject or source, though they were sometimes described as being *ina pi niši šakin* ‘set in the mouth of the people.’ Five are preserved in the currently published correspondence. See the extended discussion of Esarhaddon’s letter to the non-Babylonians on p.239; also SAA 17 no. 27, rev. 13-15, Bel-iqiša to Sargon; SAA 10 no. 353, rev. 10-15, Mar-Issar to Esarhaddon; SAA 10 no. 198, rev. 9-14, Adad-šumu-ušur to Esarhaddon.

³⁰³ See note 21 to on p.21.

³⁰⁴ For example, SAA 5 no. 204, obv. 16-17 [*amelu*] *taklu ummuru ša dibbi ila”uni* ‘a trustworthy and select [man], capable in words’ Šarru-emuranni to Sargon; SAA 15 no. 199 rev.2-5 *kima issen issu libbišunu aki dibbi lammaduti ina libbi Darati etarbu* ‘When one from within them enters within Darati by studied words...’; SAA 5 no. 217 obv. 18 *bel lišani šu* ‘he is a master of language.’

³⁰⁵ For which see chapter two.

division is complemented by the distribution of these terms in the royal inscriptions: in their archaising and grandiloquent Standard Babylonian dialect, \sqrt{dbb} is used in infrequent and highly marked negative contexts, whereas \sqrt{qb} is used as the common verb for speech. Consequently, when transposed to the everyday Assyrian of the letters, \sqrt{qb} retains its portentous and authoritative aura; \sqrt{dbb} is extended to cover all speech, including negatively uttered words.

This general interpretation of \sqrt{dbb} as tending towards the negative and \sqrt{qb} tending towards the authoritative thus enables us to understand a somewhat mysterious letter written by Esarhaddon's chief scribe, where he comments on the quality of the royal utterance:

[ša šarru] beli išpuranni
 ma issuri issu be[t ina] betiya ispillurti iškun[uni
 ma] abite le'iti
 [ša] ki ša apkallu gamratuni [a]butu ina muḫḫi taqatabbi abutu ša ki pi šikniša ana nerakiša ina simatiša qabi'atuni
 aḫiš tapalluni tapqirtaša ibašši
 ana puluḫti la šaknata
 la annu šu le'utu ša ṭupšarruti ša ki anni uštabbaluni
 dababu lu na'id

[Concerning that which the king] my lord wrote to me
 3.QUOT Perhaps as they have install[ed] the Y-shaped cross in my house
 [3.QUOT] my word will be capable.

[Regarding] this you shall be \sqrt{qb} -speaking a [w]ord as complete as [that of] a sage—a word that is \sqrt{qb} -spoken, like its setting in the mouth, for its *neraku*, in its appropriateness, that answers another, does its refutation exist? Does it not establish \sqrt{plh} ?
 Is this not the capability of the scribal art that I am discussing in this way?
 Should the \sqrt{dbb} -talk be praised?

SAA 10 no. 30, bottom e. 15-rev. 11, Issar-šumu-ereš, chief scribe, to Esarhaddon

Interpreting this letter as a commentary on the different qualities of speaking—the *abutu*, \sqrt{dbb} and \sqrt{qb} —allows us to disentangle the rhetorical questions of the chief scribe. The first question strongly underlines the authority of \sqrt{qb} as an uttering of the king's *abutu*-words. Most importantly, whilst he sets it in a context of dialogue (*aḫiš tapalluni* 'answering another') the act of \sqrt{qb} stops this dialogue: there is no counter that can be raised against it. The royal *abutu*, delivered through \sqrt{qb} , naturally establishes \sqrt{plh} . The discipline of the scribes, *ṭupšarrutu*, ontologically undergirds the authority of the royal utterance.

The final question brings up the act of \sqrt{dbb} . The extended vowel writing (*plene* writing) *da-ba-bu-u* indicates a question, thus Issar-šumu-ereš is not saying that \sqrt{dbb} should be praised. Rather, the

rhetorical question is posited in order to further demarcate the royal \sqrt{qb} from that of general talk, \sqrt{dbb} . Though \sqrt{dbb} is available to all the people, and indeed performed by the king himself, the king's special authority to establish *temu*, by way of *abutu* \sqrt{qb} , is what makes his speech acts special, central to the Assyrian imperium.

Consequently, this loose collection of linguistic categories and genres, culminating in a social differentiation between the regular *verbum dicendi* of \sqrt{qb} and \sqrt{dbb} , leads us to a field of issues explored by linguistic anthropologists that they have dubbed 'language ideology'.³⁰⁶ This loosely refers to a set of thoughts, or even pre-reflective dispositions, that influence and guide linguistic practices; depending on their focus, ethnologists have foregrounded the structural (Silverstein) or the social and relational aspects (Irvine) of this set (Woolard 1998: 4).³⁰⁷ Helpfully, Woolard emphasises the 'piecemeal and internally contradictory' potential ideology can take (1998: 6). For our purposes here, we can note that a discursively explicit Assyrian 'language ideology' was limited to Sargon's message to an official of Ur:

*minamma ina šipirti akkadattu la tašaṭṭarma la tušebbila
kitta šipirtu ša ina libbi tašaṭṭaru ki pi agannitamma idat lu šaknat*

Why would you not write and send Akkadian in your message? Truth—the message that you have written within it is just as these words—a regulation is EMPH established!

SAA 17 no. 2 obv. 17-22, Sargon to Sin-iddina

Despite the ostensibly linguistic focus of Sargon's stricture, the emphasis here is on the union of language *and* script—the cuneiform king demands Akkadian, which must be written in the script the principles of which undergirded the imperial ontology.

The value relationships governing spoken language-in-use were more implicit and complicated, as were their interactions with the cuneifying elite. We are aware that during this period the Neo-Assyrian language substantially intermixed with the Aramaic language, but that the extent to this is lost to us due to the bias of the preserved cuneiform sources.³⁰⁸ We can but speculate whether

³⁰⁶ It might seem theoretically incoherent to reintroduce the loaded term 'ideology' after having cast it aside in the previous chapter, but I briefly retain it here as an established *terminus technici*.

³⁰⁷ We might reflect on how a linguistic ideology that corrals Akkadian words into specifically formatted dictionaries can serve to regularise, compress and destroy ambivalent, difficult-to-translate concepts, like *temu* for instance.

³⁰⁸ See discussion on p.21.

Aššur and the other Assyrian divinities could ‘speak’ in Aramaic; concluding that a language ideology that indelibly associated the word of the gods with cuneiform Akkadian is hamstrung by the fact that Aramaic cannot speak for itself. Despite this caveat, we still observe in script and speech a temporal cyclicity inherent in authoritative utterances. Both the re-citation of cuneiform texts and the recitation of the authoritative utterance of past officials suggest a principle of establishing antecedent and consequent statements together in a cyclic temporality. The speech of the powerful prefigured and configured the utterances of subordinate subjects: the ability to have others repeat your words was thus a source of power. We need only recall Nabu-ušallim’s threat to the Sealanders: *ki... qibaya la taqabba* ‘if you do not speak my speech...’ (SAA 18 no. 86 rev.13-14). Dialogues reached cataphorically backwards into both previous utterances establishing antecedent authority in a cyclic temporality of constant reutterance.³⁰⁹

Yet the cyclic temporality also faces towards the future, and it is here that we encounter the clearest social distribution of speaking strategies, and one where we find a clear differentiation of power undergirded by the principle of controlling ambiguity: the powerful, who speak the future in imperatives that foresee their own replication into culture; the subordinate, who speak in ambiguous, open precatives.

4.2 Transforming the Future

saḫittu ša šarri beli[ya] ina dababi ma’di tannammar

The desire of the king, [my] lord, will be seen through much talking³¹⁰

The communication network mediated by the letters projected a complex series of relationships across speakers and time. The importance of correspondence reporting past events, unfolded *temu*, to Assyrian officers was paramount. Consequently, the deferred dialogues of written correspondence offered a field in which subjects could create and negotiate authority and status, through artful citation, commentary and representation of past words, speakers, and events.

This relationship with the past was intertwined with an analogous relationship with the future. The letter form itself was predicated upon an imagined future dialogue, an interaction where the words

³⁰⁹ To this we might also add the Standard Babylonian ‘dialect’ itself, the register in which scribes deliberately used archaising constructions evoking the Old Babylonian dialect of the second millennium to compose monumental texts such as the royal inscriptions.

³¹⁰ SAA 16 no. 64, rev. 4-5, unassigned to Esarhaddon

inscribed upon the tablet would become effective in their intended future context. On a deeper level was the futurity embedded within the grammatical form of the language itself. A realm of political imaginary was brought into being by modal particles like *issuri* 'perhaps' or *mindema* 'maybe'. The current social context was reinscribed into the future through the appropriate use of the imperative or precative moods, reproducing forces of authority and deference.³¹¹ At the same time, these future-facing verbal acts embedded images and intentions of that future transformed, manifesting the will of their utterer as well as a social graph of subjects and agents inhabiting the imagined future.

In this section, we will first explore the projected realm of the future enforced by the imperative utterance, a 'closed' verbal form that carried *temu*, a word to be made fact. We then move to its counterpart, the precative form, and examine how the 'open' and uncertain futures that could be expressed by it interacted with the authoritative facture of the future implemented by the Assyrian state.

³¹¹ The similarities between the traditional precative case and the imperative have been remarked upon by structural linguists. In his presentation of the Old Babylonian modal system, Cohen cites Huehnergard who subsumes both the precative and the imperative under the category of 'suppletive injunctive paradigm' (Cohen 2005: 77). Cohen himself calls the set of precatives, imperatives, volitives, cohortatives, prohibitives and vetitives as the 'precativ forms', of which the individual paradigms are the 'precativ paradigms' (Cohen 2005: 78). In this thesis, I continue to distinguish between imperative forms and precative (*lu-* and *li-* prefixed) forms to maintain the emphasis on their social differentiation.

Imperatives

*anaku Aššur-aḫu-iddina šarru dannu ša qibitsu la innennu la uštamsaku amat
rubutišu... kiam aqbišuma
umma immatema talteme amat šarri dannu adi šinišu u anaku šarru dandannu adi
šalašišu ašpurakamma la tašma zikir šaptiya...*

I, Esarhaddon, mighty king, whose speech is immutable, whose princely word cannot be cast down... I spoke thus to him 'Did you ever hear the word of a mighty king twice? Yet I am an almighty king and have sent to you thrice, and you did not listen to the speech of my lips...'³¹²

The imperative was the principal linguistic device through which *temu* was communicated throughout the imperial hierarchy. The letters from superiors to inferiors we have encountered thus far demonstrate that whenever an order was to be communicated, a superior would invariably select the imperative form above all others:

šarru beli temu issaknanni
ma sisse kayyamanute muḫuru ana Dadi dini
ma sissu ša šarri muḫuru

The king my lord established *temu*
3.QUOT Receive regular horses and give them to Dadi
3.QUOT Receive the horse of the king

SAA 19 no. 91, obv. 9-11, Aššur-da'inanni, governor of Mazamua to Tiglath-pileser

In this letter, reproduced from chapter one,³¹³ the king is quoted as delivering his commands using imperative forms, demonstrating the overriding use of the imperative in the face to instruct all actions, whether passive or active. Though *dini*, 'give,' is straightforward as an activity, *muḫuru* 'receive' is an almost passive action: it is principally the case of the governor being acted upon by the giver of the horses. This hints at the strength of the imperative form, in that many verbal roots can be inflected this way, even ones that at first blush do not appear to require action. More importantly, built on this is a specific way of relating to the future practiced by the Assyrian ruling elite: as an active transformation by the elite speaker through their utterances, which cause the future state to become manifest.

³¹² RINAP 4 Esarhaddon no. 33, tablet 2 obv. I 25, 29-30

³¹³ See p.47.

The above quotation is also illustrative of how *temu* was formed of imperatives. There is no simple *verbum dicendi* framing the royal utterance; *temu* √škn is the verbal description of the king's speech act itself, with additional information attached with the *ma* quotative. Thus, in Aššur-da'inanni's quotidian conception, *temu* was commensurate with an imperative register of speech.

The imperative's suitability as a vehicle for *temu* becomes particularly visible when considering the temporalised, transformative qualities of both concepts. In his work on culture about culture ('metaculture'), Greg Urban rehabilitates the grammatical imperative from its station as the 'ugly duckling' of logical positivism:

The imperative is recognized as "not a duckling". But what kind of creature is it? ... It does not passively reflect a world that is already out there... it peers into the future, envisioning a possible world or state of affairs not yet in existence...

The utterance produced by [speaker] A has a meaning... B produces a copy of what A has already produced. However, it is a copy of a peculiar sort. B does not produce another utterance... B carries out a set of actions that results in a state of affairs... whose characteristics match those described by [speaker A's utterance].

Imperatives are... conduits of a special sort, in which movement takes place via transubstantiation, the conversion of meaning into thing-in-the-world.

Urban 2001: 145-147

Urban's discarding of the imperative reveals the protean, transcoding qualities that it shares with *temu*. As we may recall from chapter one, *temu* was a phenomenon that existed and was communicated through a variety of codes. Initially, divine *temu* was communicated through ominous signs, either passively observed or actively solicited by the royal retinue of learned men. These scholars would then interpret these signs, transcoding the divine *temu* into language.³⁴ From this point on, *temu* remained in language until the imperative was transubstantiated into a 'thing-in-the-world.' The *temu* reports described in chapter one were but evidence of this transubstantiated sign-intent-language-fact process in its complete manifestation.

Consequently, the imperative shared an essential transubstantiating component with *temu* itself, but although *temu* was communicated through imperatives, *temu* was not coterminous with imperative utterances, and imperative utterances did not have a monopoly on language that could 'peer into the future.'

³⁴ This process of transcoding divine signs was tied up with the polyvalency of the cuneiform sign system itself (Bahrani 2008). See p.62.

Modals I—Clashing Chronotopes in the Sealanders versus Nabu-ušallim

Fuzzy Future

Throughout this thesis we have encountered ways of talking about the future that left it indeterminate. Let us return to the Elders of the Sealand from chapter 1:

ki rubbušu ina mati sibatunu ana pan šar mat Aššur šupurraššuma ḥadu šarru lurabbiš

If his magnification in the land is your wish, send him to the presence of the king of Assyria, let the rejoicing king magnify him.

SAA 18 no. 86, obv. 17-21, Elders of the Sealand to Esarhaddon

Nabu-ušallim belikunu lipušuma

[*ana*] *muḥḥikunu ina mati lirbi*

u mindema taqabba

umma Na'id-Marduk

Let Nabu-ušallim be made your lord,

let him become magnified over you in the land.

And maybe you will speak

QUOT

Na'id-Marduk

SAA 18 no. 87, obv. 17'-20', [Elders of the Sealand] to Esarhaddon

In both of these examples, the speaker—the past Elders of the Sealand in the first, the past Elamite messenger in the second—describes a future state of events. However, this is a future that has not yet been foreclosed: there is no assumption that the events described are actually going to be enacted. Furthermore, embedded within the verbal form is the speakers' attitude towards the future events described. Consequently, although in these quotations the speakers construct a future, they also recognise the limited ability of themselves (or others implicated in it) to effect such a future, thus embedding their present social circumstances in an unfolding and contingent narrative. This sets apart these utterances from the imperative relation to the future, in which speakers inherently assume the future is fixed according to their utterance.³¹⁵

³¹⁵ This differentiation means that, though they are both ways of speaking about the future, subsuming both imperatives and precatives under the set of 'precative forms' as Cohen (2005) does completely collapses their social dimension. He addresses this by positing the notion of a 'directive scale,' which encompasses 'extra-linguistic factors' that determine the 'strength of the directive.' However, he also writes 'there are no formal signals for the existence of this scale' (2005: 91). This seems to me to be a flaw in his structural linguistic approach which, by divorcing grammatical forms from their social context, tends to leave translation to idiosyncratic taste. However, Cohen's study is concerned with an Old Babylonian language corpus, so his conclusions, though useful for seeing how the question of precativity has been addressed in Akkadian, are only indirectly applicable to the language as it stood one millennium later.

These examples also demonstrate the variety of attitudes that could be taken towards the imagined future, which could be multilayered, complex and ironic. Lambek's description of two kinds of classical Greek irony is apposite here:

In both instances irony realizes the limitations and ambiguity of praxis. Thought and agency run up against constraints, external ones of fate and circumstance and internal ones of ignorance, confusion, and contradiction. External and internal constraints on knowledge force us to speak with an assurance we do not have. Irony is a recognition of this fact.

2004: 5

A peculiarly Assyrian irony lies not only in the ambiguous space created by the ontology of *ṭemu*, but also the paradoxes and problems entailed by social, hierarchical circumstance. Despite the inexorable simultaneity of *ṭemu*—a sign, a word that indexes the same future act and past fact—knowledge and interpretation ensured its indeterminacy. Analogously, the interior space of the subject ensured that human intentions were indeterminate too, as were the caprices of the gods. Recognition of this fundamental uncertainty provided a field for irony, and this field was richly ploughed in social interaction. Empires predicated on divine authorship faced actual competition in geopolitical space—Assyria, Urartu, Elam, Phrygia—and Assyria faced internal contradiction within its social structures itself.³¹⁶ We see such uncertainty managed through various notional futures, stretching from a straightforwardly envisaged outcome through to implicit unrealities, impossible futures given participants' knowledge.

The simplest attitude is that assigned to the voice of the Elamite messenger: *Nabu-ušallim belikunu lipušuma [ana] muḥḥikunu ina mati lirbi* 'let Nabu-ušallim become your lord, let him become magnified over you in the land.'³¹⁷ This clearly expresses the desired future of the Elamites, yet the messenger does not adopt an imperative mood of speaking, though this would have been possible. There are several valid explanations: the messenger was demonstrating that he recognised the agency of the Sealand Elders (though this was an autonomy that would only be recognised as effective if they made the correct choice to submit to the Elamites); the messenger was reluctant to use an imperative which would fail in this context, creating an uncomfortable space with loss of

³¹⁶ Explored in chapter six.

³¹⁷ SAA 18 no. 87, obv.17'-19'.

authority;³¹⁸ the messenger was foregrounding the willing aspect of the speaker rather than a passive object. All three of these options require a complex map of present and future status positions and potential intentions, anticipating a fuzzy virtuality utterly at odds with a fixed imperative, unencumbered *temu* of an imperial order.

This fuzzy futurity could be pinned down not only through the use of precative verbal forms, but through the use of modal particles, as we see in the phrase *mindema taqabba* ‘perhaps you will speak.’ These modal particles—*issuri* and *piqtatte* in Assyrian, *mindema* in Babylonian—³¹⁹ again presented a future that was not fixed, but did not carry any connotations of its desirability, unlike the precative. Rather, by presenting a narrative of the world introduced with one of these particles, the speaker was able to set themselves in that future and respond appropriately. This procedure, again requiring a complex apprehension of others’ minds, was able to perform useful social work for the speaker, augmenting their autonomy—it enabled them to ‘speak with the mouths of another’³²⁰ without directly transgressing their autonomy. This speech strategy pervaded all the correspondence in this period: letters from subordinates to superiors, vice-versa, equal status or otherwise. Here, the Elamite messenger uses *mindema* to head off the Sealander’s attempts at resisting him, granting himself the ability to deliver his response before the Sealanders are able to speak for themselves.³²¹

Unreality

By contrast, the quoted speech of the Sealanders in SAA 18 no. 86 combines the imperative and precative forms to further emphasise their rejection of Elamite suzerainty. They open with a conditional, *ki rubbušu ina mati sibatunu* ‘if his magnification in the land is your wish,’ which starts to project an implicitly unreal future from the Sealanders’ present knowledge. The Sealanders already know that the Elamites want Nabu-ušallim’s installation, so by placing this certain

³¹⁸ For more on the potentiality and actuality of a failed imperative, failed *temu*, and the requisite responses, see p.237.

³¹⁹ By the first millennium, the differentiation in meaning between these particles appears to have been minimal, though still in force; *mindema* was exclusively preferred by Babylonian speakers, whereas *issuri* was almost universally preferred by Assyrian speakers. *Piqtatte* represents an interesting case in that it is occasionally used together with *issuri* in the same letter (SAA 15, nos. 25, 129), however this particle is only attested in seven letters in total, meaning it is difficult to make general conclusions about its usage. The various editors prefer to translate it as ‘surely’ in these contexts to differentiate it from *issuri*, though there is not enough data available to really commit to this interpretation. See p.198 later in this chapter for *issuri* and *piqtatte* in use.

³²⁰ As Tiglath-pileser does when he speaks to the Babylonians with the mouths of Šamaš-bunaya and Nabu-nammir above.

³²¹ For more on his response, see p.41.

knowledge within a conditional they already begin to destabilise established certainties, undercutting the Elamites' capacity for authoritative speech by ignoring the messengers' capacity to pronounce on their own desires.

This subtle undercut is fully delivered in the subsequent clauses, where the Sealanders address the messengers with an imperative form, *šupuraššuma* 'send him,' whilst describing the imagined response of the king with a precative form, *lurabbiš*, 'let him magnify.' This imagined future once again builds on the assumptions of shared knowledge between the Sealanders and the Elamites, and a shared model of the intentionality of the Assyrian king, whilst also reinforcing a status hierarchy through the appropriate selection of verb inflections. To begin with, the Elamites are addressed with the imperative form, which here not only serves to negate the Elamite supremacy claims, but also immediately thrusts the conversation into a parodic realm. Both the Sealanders and the Elamites are aware that a future in which the Elamites would deign to send a messenger to the Assyrian king is tremendously unlikely, given that the Elamites' intentions absolutely counter the Assyrian *temu*. Thus, the Sealanders have deliberately uttered a 'failed' imperative, one that will not in fact result in its instantiation, as we would expect from a *temu*-utterance. However, this is not a *temu*-utterance: though *šupurrašuma* is a straightforward imperative in its outward grammatical form, its interior subtext completely destabilises its exterior meaning. Rather than an imperative ordering the Elamites to send Nabu-ušallim to Esarhaddon, to which they will certainly 'not consent,' this imperative, by foregrounding what no one expects the Elamites to do, creates a multilayered, ironic temporality. The 'present' future is an ironic corruption of imperative speech: the Elamites will not listen to the Sealanders' order, and all parties know this, and so rather than demonstrating the failure of the Sealanders to assume authority over the Elamites, it parodies the hierarchical roles that are at stake. The dependent future—that is, the future predicated upon the accomplishment of the imperative—is thus shifted into a further state of implicit unreality. Thus, even in the initial stages of this utterance, the Sealanders have crafted a shifting and subversive terrain of roles, and a narrative deliberately stymied.

The second clause takes this implicit unreality and runs with it. The phrase *hadu šarru lurabbiš* 'let the rejoicing king magnify him' is another an unlikely outcome to the present Elamite-Assyrian hostilities. Despite the outlandishness of this unfolding unfuture, the precative case underlines the one constant that the Sealanders uphold in the present: the continuing authority of the Assyrian

king. For despite this future being one in which Nabu-ušallim might become the overlord of the Sealand, the desired outcome of the Elamites, it is a future granted by the open will of the Assyrian king. The Sealanders recognise the autonomy of the king's authority through employing the precative case as they normally would, the only unironic facet of this sentence.

Instead, the ironic force is supplied by the adjective *hadu*, 'rejoicing'. This adjective, and other forms derived from the root \sqrt{hd} , is an atypical occurrence in the letters and thus its appearance here is highly marked.³²² Its usage here serves to underline the royal authority in an extreme fashion, with only a couple of parallels in the corpus:

ki šarru bela hadu lišpuramma
ša šubati likmuduma
 If the king my lord rejoices, let him send to me
 that they will weave the cloth...

SAA 17 no. 11, rev. 3-6, Nabu-bel-šumate to Sargon

ana pi ša sukkalli beliya hadu lipuš
 Let him, rejoicing, do according to the mouth of (following the instructions of) the *sukkallu* my lord

SAA 17 no. 142, rev. 8-9, Nabu-ušallim³²³ to the *sukkallu*

The above quotations demonstrate that \sqrt{hd} was not only a rarity in describing precative, open-ended action, but that its usage was not necessarily tied into high-stakes events. Consequently, its deployment here, whilst at the same time accentuating the autonomy of the Assyrian king in this unreal future, further serves to create a parodic affect.³²⁴

The final temporal complication in these letters is that the above, already complex imagined futures are set in yet another imagined future, that of the letter's implicit re-utterance to Esarhaddon. This ultimate 'intended audience' for the utterance also shaped the Sealanders' narrative: from the

³²² The majority of occurrences are blessings from scholars to Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal in response to various omens, for example SAA 8 no. 387 rev. 3, Rašil the Older to the king: *šarra ma'diš lu hadi* 'The king may very much rejoice.' Cf. SAA 8 no. 435 rev. 2, 547 rev. 7; SAA 10 no. 112 obv. 18, 114 rev. 9, 121 rev. 3'-4', 185 rev. 20.

³²³ Note that this is likely *not* the same Nabu-ušallim as the one harassing the Sealanders.

³²⁴ It is striking that in the following letter, the Sealanders quote the Elamite messenger as completely disregarding their autonomy with the phrase *ina hudikunu u ina la hudikunu* 'in your joyousness or not in your joyousness' (SAA 18 no. 87, obv. 24'-25'), which may very well be a response to the Sealanders' turn of phrase. This would consequently be a creative allusion to past utterances, an allusion which takes \sqrt{hd} from a context in which it represents the untrammelled authority of the Assyrian king existing even in an ironic future imagined to scorn the Elamites, and transposes it to obliterate the autonomy of the Sealanders.

'routine' features such as the opening greeting and letterhead through to the deeply nested characters and voices. The self-presentation of the Sealanders' past utterance that they are 'subjects of the king' is not only a rejoinder to the Elamite messenger in the past, but also displays their loyalty to the king when it is narrated to him in the future. Similarly, the Sealanders' disclaimer of responsibility for their affairs, directing the Elamites to send Nabu-ušallim to the Assyrian king, further serves this multiple function.

Chronotope, Temporality, *Ṭemuporality*

I have described the Sealanders' *versus* the Elamites as a 'clash of chronotopes,' but what do I mean by this? What do we gain from thinking about this letter with such a tool?

Through this thesis so far we have encountered certain models of temporality and topography. At one extreme, the imperial *ṭemu* could be conceptualised as a loop. At the other, it was effectively a simultaneity, a paradox, where the future contained the past which contained the future in a sign signifying itself. In this temporality, biography is effaced: not for *ṭemu* are the life events of humans. Rather, the motions of the gods—never justified, never integrated into an 'ethical' system of belief—determine the procession of the world, at once capricious and understandable to those educated in *ṭupšarruti*.

This temporality was unified with a spatial, perceptible dimension on several levels. The most fundamental, and confusing, was that the events of the perceptible world *were* *ṭemu*: intention and the facted outcome of the intention were the same thing, described with the same word—this was the simultaneity of the gods, whose intents were inevitable and always inscribed in past and future. *Ṭemu* was also socially spatialised: distributed across humans in their multiple capacities for authoritative action.

Yet, other temporalities existed. The emotional world of those subject to the Assyrian *ṭemu* had a progression all of its own, acted upon by scripts which sought a linear endpoint. The imperial *ṭemu*, which not only anchored action solely in the gods and their vicegerent, the king, but also was simultaneously immanent amongst all matter and beings in the universe, did not accommodate

possibility, fiction, irony, indirection. It did not sit well with the contingencies of imperial administration.

Consequently, the temporality of *temu*—its *temu*-porality, if you will—existed alongside the open, the messy, the fuzzy. These temporalities were local and highly specific, bound to subjects, people, names and places. The conflict between the Sealanders and Nabu-ušallim is a case in point.

The *temu*-porality of Assyria exists in this episode, signalling the divinely timeless order, but it is itself parcelled up and situated in a distant world by the Sealander's localised narrative. The Elamites have their own chronotopical narrative—the succession of son after father, Nabu-ušallim after Marduk-apla-iddina. The Assyrian palace cares little for such a narrative: the Adasi kings were of singular descent and fostered by the deities, and were a special case of succession; the eunuchs and magnates were tied to the throne of *temu*, and thus the biographical succession was mostly effaced.

The mutual incompatibility of these chronotopes—the assignations of time, narrative and biography—opens up a parodic space. This space emerges in times of clash: when the fixed *temu* of the Empire, its pronouncements of bread, beer and wellbeing, clashes with a reality of different script: warfare, dissent, familial separation, which we will encounter in the next two chapters.

Modals II – Open Endedness and Hierarchy

The complex deployment of precatives and imperatives in the Sealanders' dialogue with Nabu-ušallim's Elamite patrons is an exemplary instance of the sophisticated ways in which multiple futures could be imagined and marshalled to negotiate a difficult present. Having explored this, the majority of modal and precative speech³²⁵ in the Assyrian hierarchy fell into a more routinised, generic usage. Together with the imperative genre, there is a straightforward distribution of these modes of speech corresponding to relative social status: superiors would generally use direct forms, second-person address and the imperative when addressing their subordinates, and subordinates would use third-person indirection, precatives, and modal particles when addressing their superiors.

³²⁵ That is, the particles *issuri*, *mindema* and *piqtatte*, and the precative case indexed by the *lu*- and *li*- verbal prefixes.

Not only was this distribution of registers a performance of social hierarchy, but it also served as a mechanism which controlled access to the future. The unfolding *temu* of Aššur was to flow one-way, from the godhead through a chain of transcoding and communication into the enacted *temu* perceptible in the world. The imperative was the vehicle through which the Assyrian state machine promulgated the *temu* in language, and it would receive *temu* as reports of past events, either signs solicited from the gods, or descriptions of *temus* seen and heard. In this idealised representation, there was no space for *temu* to flow backward, for a *libbu* or *ramanu* of an Assyrian subject to declare its own imperative intent in contradistinction to that of the god. Indeed, to do so was, as we have already seen,³²⁶ an abomination to the world order. The future belonged to Aššur, and no one else.

The indirected future envisioned through the precative and modal particles thus functioned in a contradictory position. These language strategies provided a space in which anyone could conceivably imagine any kind of future, one which they could disclaim responsibility for:

*Bel u Nabu ana šarri beliya liddinuma ina Elamti ša-reška šukun
amat aga ul aqbi u ul ušeḡbi*
May Bel and Nabu give to the king my lord: place your eunuch in Elam
I have not spoken this word nor caused it to be spoken.

SAA 18 no. 105, rev. 9-13, unassigned to Esarhaddon

This is yet another strongly marked example of future-imagination, consisting of a nested imperative within a precative future. The imagined future speech is extraordinarily direct—*ša-reška šukun*, a direct second-person suffix followed by the imperative—and is not introduced by the quotative particle *umma*. Instead, the only offset is the precative *liddinuma*, ‘may they give’.

The mere introduction of this kind of direct speech to the king is immediately and comprehensively disclaimed: the author emphasises that he has no responsibility for these words. In combination with the lack of *umma* indicating the quotative particle, and the verb \sqrt{ndn} ‘to give,’ this shifts the phrase *ina Elamti ša-reška šukun* away from the realm of speech, casting it as something with material properties, suitable to be described with \sqrt{ndn} . Further to this, a word that has not been said does not exist as speech. The immediate utterance of this disclaimer further underlines an

³²⁶ Refer to chapter two for the problem of subjective autonomy, and chapter six for the outright disruption of *temu*.

Assyrian hypercognition of the permeability of ‘participation frames.’ In Irvine’s comment on Hill’s description of a Mexicano woman uttering an insult, she notes that the woman immediately asks for God’s forgiveness after quoting the obscenity. This shows that ‘she does not see herself as morally neutral in this role... the danger of leakage seems, in this example, to be related to the obscenity of the quoted text’ (1996: 148). In much the same way, the phrase *ša-reška šukun*, though it is not an ‘obscenity’ as such, similarly carries with it a dangerous moral charge, so powerful it can leak out and cause the letter writer to be afflicted with responsibility for daring to speak to the king with an imperative. Thus, the extremely strong disclaimer following.

These disclaimers and modals set off possible futures and ensure they remain provisional. We have found them most often used by subordinates addressing superiors; superiors addressing subordinates speak in an imperative style, with its attendant replicative qualities and associations with *temu*. Though not prescriptive, these conventions point to a socially distributed array of futures, mediated by grammar and linked to social status. We can usefully compare this to the distribution of emotional styles observed by Irvine in Wolof society (1995: 254). There, high status nobles adopted a detached ‘*sangfroid*’ demeanour, hiring low status griots to indirectly express emotion on their behalf (1995: 256). The differences in speaking style were thus theorised as *waxu géér* ‘noble speech’ and *waxu gewel* ‘griot speech’ (1995: 255). Similarly, we observe a socially determined distribution of grammatical relations to the future within the Assyrian hierarchy. Though not explicitly theorised as different speech styles,³²⁷ these multiple relationships to the future provided a useful discursive space within the Assyrian hierarchy. Radner observes that the inherent ambiguity of divination ‘facilitated open dialogue that was far less restricted by hierarchy and court protocol’ (2011: 373). This can be generalised to speaking styles, where the precative and modal space, presenting possible futures and uttered by those in subordinate positions, did important imaginative work in a hierarchy where a superior’s authority was predicated upon the direct and unambiguous replication of divine *temu* through the transmutation of imperatives.

³²⁷ Though see discussion of \sqrt{qb} and \sqrt{dbb} above.

4.3 Words to Wiggle With: Playing with Protocol

Permeating the correspondence we have encountered so far have been the normative strategies used for communicating with others. That is, a correspondent may want to communicate something (e.g., ‘Ḫinnumu is stirring up trouble in Uruk’), but in order to encode this in a letter for future recitation, the content must be formatted in an utterance conditioned by the social norms of status and communication. Correspondents needed to be acutely aware of their position in the social hierarchy, the position of their interlocutor, and the relationship between them, in order to ‘say’ things correctly in a letter.

The vast majority of the letters we have seen so far have been addressed to the king of Assyria, and possess commonalities in register that demarcate a way of speaking that combines citationality, modals and precatives to generate a safe indirection space.³²⁸ The distribution of the indirect ways of speaking—precatives and modal particles instead of the second-person and imperatives—was so ingrained in Neo-Assyrian that one Assyriologist has deduced the convention into a grammatical rule.³²⁹

The dramatic contrast between the tone of letters between the Assyrian king and his officials, and the Assyrian king and his scholarly advisors, is readily apparent in translation, as Radner puts it:

The diction of the officials' letters... is straightforward... there is no place in their letters for the wheedling, coaxing and pleading which is commonplace in those passages of the scholars' letters that do not concern their professional assessments.

2015: 67

³²⁸ Examples of third person precatives we have encountered so far include:

SAA 1 no. 124, Kišir-Aššur to Sargon, especially obv. 10-13

SAA 5 no. 227, Šamaš-bel-ušur to Sargon, rev. 10-15

SAA 10 no. 198, Adad-šumu-ušur to Esarhaddon

SAA 10 no. 290, Urad-Gula to Esarhaddon, rev. 1'-3'

SAA 15 no. 15, Issar-duri to Sargon: third person + precative case

SAA 18 no. 87, Elders of the Sealand to Esarhaddon

SAA 18 no. 88, Men of Na'id-Marduk to Esarhaddon + *abika*

Similarly, counterfactuals include,

SAA 1 no. 124 obv. 9, Kišir-Aššur to Sargon,

SAA 16 no. 78, obv. 6 - 7, Mannu-ki-Libbali to Esarhaddon

³²⁹ See Hämeen-Anttila 2000: 112.

As most of the letters from Nineveh and Nimrud are from officials to Tiglath-pileser, Sargon and Sennacherib, and from scholars to Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal, current understandings of the varieties of communication in relationship remains limited mostly to these categories. However, some preserved letters do represent correspondence between state officials directly, or even private individuals designated by name and kinship terminology rather than by office. In this final section of the chapter, we explore correspondence between state officials in light of the relationship-establishing language devices explored above, before moving on to explore relationships defined by kinship terminology in the next chapter.

The Indirect Third Person

Generating social structure throughout the body of a letter, the indexical configuration of an utterance implicitly encoded shared understandings of the statuses of self and other, as well as providing the means for subtle negotiations of status on this. One of the key locations in which the hierarchical relations of the empire were reproduced and negotiated was the greeting formula that formed the 'letterhead' of a piece of Assyrian correspondence. The blessing at the beginning of a letter is customary, but in itself is forward facing: it looks forward to the time that the letter is going to be read out, and it expresses the wish of the letters' sender for the wellbeing of the other. It is a site where the relationship between self and other is immediately negotiated, and, through its formulaic dimensions, repeats and reinforces the ideals of the Empire. The simple status differentiation of the opening greeting in exchanges with the king has already received ample commentary (Radner 2015: 67); here, we concern ourselves with the ways the greeting was deployed in other official relationships. Though it was customary to open the Assyrian letter with a conventional greeting formula,³³⁰ this genre of speech expression also provided a site for creative renegotiation and expression of relationships.³³¹

³³⁰ Luukko provides a detailed analysis of the variations in greeting formulae in the letters of state officials to their superiors (2012).

³³¹ Duranti draws attention to how greetings can convey important propositional content through an examination of Samoan expressions (1997), emphasising how understanding greetings solely as speech acts of 'recognition' or 'acknowledgements' is arbitrarily limiting (1997: 89). See p.239 for an example of a particularly creative modification of the seemingly 'formulaic' royal greeting.

To demonstrate, we can observe the similarities and differences between greetings to a king from a subordinate, and greetings in analogous relationships. The below letterhead is typical of those from officials to the king:

*ana šarri beliya urdaka Šarru-emuranni lu šulmu ana šarri beliya
šulmu ana ašappi ša šarri beliya šulmu ana urdani ša šarri beliya*

To the king my lord, your servant Šarru-emuranni. May wellbeing for the king my lord.
Wellbeing is for the pack-animals of the king my lord; wellbeing is for the servants of the king, my lord.

SAA 5 no. 47, obv. 1-7, Šarru-emuranni to Sargon

Here, Sargon is addressed by office (*šarru*) and relation to Šarru-emuranni (*beliya* ‘my lord’). Šarru-emuranni describes himself as *urdaka* ‘your servant,’ the only occurrence of the second-person in this passage, and the question arises as to why the second-person suffix is used here. On the one hand, the usage of the second-person eliminates all ambiguity arising from indirection and firmly expresses the relationship; on the other hand, greeting formulae were highly stereotyped and subject to minimal variation, and thus this usage may simply be generic and unremarkable. The form *urdišu* also appears in correspondence to the king, but like *urdaka*, appears mostly in generic phrases, indicating a certain amount of interchangeability. Letters from one official to another of higher rank also exhibited similar construction:

*ana tuššar ekalli beliya urdaka Bel-abu’a lu šulmu ana beliya
šulmu ina beti adanniš šulmu ina Libbi-ali
ina betika nussakil*

To the palace scribe, my lord, your servant Bel-abu’a. May wellbeing be for my lord.
Wellbeing is much in the house, wellbeing is for Libbali.
We have done feeding in your house.

SAA 19 no. 14, obv. 1-7, Bel-abu’a to the Palace Scribe

Here again we have reference to office and the overlord-servant relationship; we also have a disparity between third-person and some second-person address (*urdaka* and *betika*). Ultimately, these sparse indexical shifts, as well as those isolated throughout the rest of the corpus, seem not to mark anything. In contrast, sustained indexical shifts to the second-person, accompanied by a corresponding change in verb inflection, strongly suggest a change in tone towards one’s superior. We might cast our minds back to Ariḫu writing to Nabu-duri-ušur demanding *temu* in chapter

one,³³² where he shifted from third person forms to second person forms, including a shift from precative to imperative relations to the future.

On the part of the kings writing to their subordinates, we saw that they generally adopted a free, almost conversational register, marked by such features as direct second-person address and the use of imperative forms to issue orders.³³³ However, markedly heightened affectivity obtained in Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal's letters to their expert entourage, especially their healers; by contrast, the letters of all five kings were generally businesslike when discussing the running of the empire, with the notable exceptions analysed previously.³³⁴

Conversely, the letters of subordinates to the Assyrian kings were characterised by what we might call a respectful register, heavily marked by use of the third-person to refer to the king, and the use of the 'fuzzy future' forms we explored above, which maintained the king's untrammelled scope of action. In certain instances, these norms were transgressed and the king addressed directly,³³⁵ but these exhortations and commands also failed to violate the king's agency, generally being things that he would have done or be expected to do anyway.

The letters from Nabu-duri-ušur to the governor of Der provides us an insight into the ways in which administrative, hierarchical power relationships reproduced the affective imperatives of the Assyrian empire. More importantly, they demonstrate the possibilities of difference and variance in such a relationship, in particular a close association manifesting in respect for the gods of one's superior, colourful animal language and, more tellingly, the restriction of *temu* to themselves only. There is no reason to assume that the relationship between Nabu-duri-ušur and his governor was exceptional (except insofar as it has been archaeologically preserved). Such variance in interpersonal relationships must have been prevalent throughout the Assyrian hierarchy.

³³² P.49.

³³³ This includes features such as suffixed 2nd person pronouns (*-ka*) and 2nd person inflected verb forms (e.g., *tašpuranni* 'you sent to me').

³³⁴ For example, SAA 1 no. 1, where Sargon seems to convey excitement about the friendly overtures of the Phrygian king Midas through the use of intensifiers *tariš adanniš* 'it is extremely correct' and a self-description of himself as happy.

³³⁵ E.g., SAA 10 no. 185, discussed p.221; see also SAA 1 no. 134, SAA 10 no. 112, SAA 13 no. 190.

Dossier—Protocol and Play: Nabu-duri-ušur and the governor of Der

The four letters making up the correspondence of Nabu-duri-ušur with his superior were excavated with the rest of the royal correspondence at Nineveh, despite not being directly addressed to a member of the resident court there.³³⁶ Fuchs and Parpola reconstruct the historical context in which these letters were written (2001 p. xxiii), namely a conflict between the Assyrians and their eastern neighbours the Elamites, centred on the border town of Der. We could assume therefore this state of affairs—an absent governor during a time of warfare—was a fairly unusual circumstance that permeated the affect and tone of these letters.

Though few, Nabu-duri-ušur's letters provide insights into how administrators negotiated the affective and interior aspects of their duties on the ground. The loose repertoire of Assyrian missions we saw in chapter three is replicated in Nabu-duri-ušur's correspondence: the maintenance of wellbeing in one's bailiwick being tied up with the *libbu* $\sqrt{t}b$ and the importance of $\sqrt{r}h\$. Correspondingly, the linguistic strategies generating hierarchy through distance, indirection and loose futurity saturate Nabu-duri-ušur's idiolect. However, this small group of letters also provides important correctives to these norms and models. Most importantly, we find a small but interesting manipulation of the *temu* feedback loop arcing through the network of imperial power. This is set within the context of some unique communicative features in Nabu-duri-ušur's relationship with his superior, pointing to uniquely strong affective links between the pair.$

To begin with, the content of Nabu-duri-ušur's letters exhibit the typical characteristics of an imperial power relationship. His reports to the governor on the status of the province tie together the affective state of the official in charge with the wellbeing of the province:

šulmu a[danniš] libbi Deri [adanniš] ṭab libbi [x x x] ša paḥiti beliya lu ṭab

There is [much] wellbeing, the interior of Der is [very] good [x x x] the interior of the governor, my lord, EMPH be good.

SAA 15 no. 129, rev. 19-21, Nabu-duri-ušur to Šamaš-bel-ušur

This mirrors almost precisely the kinds of exhortations we see governors write to the king,³³⁷ and shows not only the delegation of political responsibility for the wellbeing of physical territory, but

³³⁶ SAA 15 nos. 129-131, 133.

³³⁷ See p.148.

also the delegation of affective responsibility: the deputy governor informs the governor of the wellbeing of his province, thus providing the scope for the governor's interior to be good; governors inform the king of the wellbeing of their provinces, thus providing the scope for the king's interior to be good. In effect we can envisage this as a series of enclosing circles, with the $\sqrt{t}b$ of the governor of Der directly tied to the wellbeing of his official responsibilities, and the wellbeing of the Assyrian king tied to the wellbeing of *his* official responsibilities, i.e., all Assyrian territory enclosing all provinces ensconced in a *libbu* $\sqrt{t}b$ empire of situational affect. We can also envision this as a series of analogical relationships: the relationship of the governors and their province with the king is replicated at lower levels of responsibility.³³⁸

The mention of $\sqrt{r}h\mathfrak{s}$ also recalls our discussion of this emotion in chapter three, loosely translated 'confident' but having connotations over and above the similar *libbu* $\sqrt{\mathfrak{s}kn}$ in that it promotes the capacity to act autonomously on behalf of Assyrian interests, particularly in a potentially violent military sphere. In a damaged passage from another letter, Nabu-duri-ušur quotes his superior:

ša beli išpur[anni
ma] adu [bet] nillakanni
ma [x x x x lu] raḥṣaka issu pan [šarri lu palḥa]ka
ilaneka šumma adanniš [la raḥṣakuni]

Concerning that which my lord sent [to me]
 3.QUOT un[til] we come to you
 3.QUOT [x x x x EMPH] you be $\sqrt{r}h\mathfrak{s}$ [EMPH] you [be $\sqrt{pl}h$ of the king]
 Your gods, if [I were not] very [$\sqrt{r}h\mathfrak{s}$]

SAA 15 no. 129, rev. 5-8

Despite the breaks here, the word *raḥṣaka* is decipherable, and that it has a second-person suffix is evidence that it can be attributed to the quoted passage of the governor's speech; Fuchs and Parpola reconstruct it being repeated in the first-person in the breakage in the subsequent line, a restoration that makes sense given what we know about the configuration of subordinates speech by the antecedent speech of their superiors. The exhortation to be $\sqrt{r}h\mathfrak{s}$ is until the arrival of the governor

³³⁸ In Descola's typology of ontologies, he uses the metaphor of a 'trellis' to indicate the analogical interlinking of nodes in an 'analogical' collective, with all its relationalities inhering within it (2013: 204).

himself, yet another example of how the movement of military units and powerful officials was used to elicit specific affective outcomes for certain Assyrian subjects.³³⁹

Nabu-duri-ušur's register exhibits characteristics that are typical of that of subordinates corresponding with superiors in the status hierarchy, as discussed in chapter four: a fairly terse greeting formula,³⁴⁰ the use of third person address, the precative mood and modal devices like *issuri* 'perhaps,' so as not to impinge on his superior directly:

uma annurig ana beliya assapra minu [ša] pan beliya maḥiruni lepuš
Now I am sending to my lord, may he do whatever that is before my lord.

SAA 15 no. 131, rev. 3-6

The language here suggests an analogical replication of the relationship between the Assyrian king and his subordinates. Ponchia has argued that these kinds of formulae were not 'empty' but functioned as communicative signals regarding a (royal) ideology of decision making (1989: 116-117 ff.). Consequently, we might suggest that the relationship deputy governor → governor mirrors that of subordinate → king, with repeatedly delegated responsibilities descending throughout the chain of command, tied up with the distribution of Aššur's *temu*.

Finally, the conventions governing the genre of Assyrian political letters shapes not only Nabu-duri-ušur's register but the overall structure of his letters as well. Despite the damage to the tablet, the letter SAA 15 no. 129 is possibly the best demonstration of this pattern, consisting of repeated mentions of *ša beli išpuranni* 'regarding what my lord sent to me,' a quotation in the past tense, followed by a response in the present-future tense.

However, the difference between Nabu-duri-ušur's responses to his superior, and those we typically find in letters to the king, is striking. As we saw earlier in this chapter, a prevalent characteristic in letters to the king was the parallelistic quotation of reported speech. An author's response could almost entirely be in the quoted words of their interlocutor, transposed to the author's own voice.³⁴¹

³³⁹ For *vrḥš*, see p.127.

³⁴⁰ SAA 15 nos. 129, obv. 1-3 (damaged); 131, obv. 1-5; 133, obv. 1-3.

³⁴¹ P.171.

Nabu-duri-ušur however exhibits a confident latitude in his responses, uncharacteristic of those corresponding with the king:

reš ešiditu la ašši
muk ana beliya lušebila
piqtatti beli adu umati 5 6 beli šumma ana mat Aššur šumma ana mat nakir beli illak
 I did not raise provisions
 1.QUOT I may send (them) to my lord
 Maybe, my lord, until five, six days, my lord, my lord will go either to Assyria or to the land of the enemy.
 SAA 15 no. 129, rev. 12-15

Though the prefatory quotation of the governors' words is broken, the response here, with its self-quotation of internal dialogue indexed by *muk*, is of a piece with the verbose and detailed discourse of the scholars: indeed, this kind of narrative openness is prevalent throughout Nabu-duri-usur's correspondence with his superior.

This parallels descriptions of how inner thoughts were presented to the king by subordinates as justification for actions. However, we find further justification following the modal particle *piqtatte*. If we are not to attribute the repetitions of *beli* 'my lord' to scribal failure, then they may be construed as emphatic, furthering the 'pleading' aspect of this section.

Most curiously however, we find statements in a further military report which suggest that Nabu-duri-ušur is sending reports both to his immediate superior, the governor, as well as the royal court, and that these reports could differ depending on circumstances:

temu ša egertu ša issi Bel-emuranni ina ekalli ušebiluni u ša egerti anniti issen šu
 The *temu* of the letter that I sent with Bel-emuranni to the Palace and this letter, it is one.
 SAA 15 no. 131 rev. 7-12

issurru beli iqabbi
ma aki annimma [ina ekalli] tassapra
ma issurru Bit-Ḫa'ir [nusa]ḫḫara
ma mannu ina libbi nipaqqidi
 [ma x x x x]-pur anaku ina libbi [x anni]tu
 [ude]ša [ana] beliya assapra

Perhaps my lord will say
 3.QUOT Did you write [to the palace] like this
 3.QUOT Perhaps we shall [ret]ake Bit-Ha'ir
 3.QUOT who should we appoint there?
 I wrote [on]ly to my lord.

right. edge 21-edge 4

Here we see that a letter was sent to both the Palace and the governor, and that these had differing content:³⁴² in part the report about past testimony is said to have been accurately transmitted to the Palace, whereas the *petitio* to the governor requesting a decision regarding an appointment in Bit-Ha'ir is claimed to be 'for his eyes only.' We can posit multiple reasons for this: firstly that the recapture of Assyrian territory is a hopeful outcome and thus Nabu-duri-uṣur surmises that Šamaš-belu-uṣur does not want the Palace to get its hopes up—or its expectations unduly raised. Additionally, it may be the case that such a decision is not for the Palace staff to decide: Šamaš-belu-uṣur and Nabu-duri-uṣur want to retain autonomy for that decision themselves. Thus questioning the Palace about it might mean that someone there would arrogate the choice for themselves, resulting in unwanted interference in provincial affairs. Now such a surmise is speculation, but consider the speech Nabu-duri-uṣur quotes himself as saying earlier in the letter:

[<i>muk</i>	<i>Bit</i>]- <i>Ha'ir</i> <i>ša</i> <i>šarri</i> [<i>šutu</i>]
1.QUOT	Bit-Ha'ir, it is of the king.

SAA 15 no. 131 bottom edge 22-rev. 23

Whilst this is a relatively uncontroversial statement on Assyrian territorial integrity, with Nabu-duri-uṣur proclaiming Bit-Ha'ir as a possession of the Assyrian king, it is interesting to contemplate this together with the reconstructed exhortation '√*plḥ* the king' voiced by Šamaš-belu-uṣur to his subordinate in the letter SAA 15 no. 129. It may be that these repeated proclamations regarding the king's authority and the need to respect him offset this pair's guarded, mutually loyal autonomy.

There are certain features of Nabu-duri-uṣur's correspondence with Šamaš-belu-uṣur that provide hints as to the idiosyncratic working relationship specific to these two men, in contrast to the regularised, generic language that characterises most letters to the king. Most of our evidence for this comes from the sadly fragmentary SAA 15 no. 129, mentioned already, where Nabu-duri-uṣur is reporting on the movements of the enemy king of Elam. In that letter, Nabu-duri-uṣur makes a counterfactual statement about something 'by the gods' of his superior, which is both a highly marked emphasis as well as a possibly intimate one: he is not exhorting the gods of Assyria or the gods of the king, which other correspondents use to mark out their words as especially truthful.

³⁴² I take Fuchs and Parpola's reconstruction of *ina ekalli* 'to the Palace' to be accurate considering the context.

Perhaps also explained by this camaraderie, we find some unusual or out of place language used to describe people in the letter SAA 15 no. 129. Firstly, Nabu-duri-ušur describes an audience he had with a member of his staff:

[Aššur-reman]ni rab peth[al]li šani [x x x x x] urdu ša [beliya] kalbu a[x x x x x ina paniya] ittalka
 [Aššur-reman]ni, chief of the cav[al]ry of the deputy, a servant of [my lord], a dog, came [into my presence]

rev. 21-23

Correspondents' use of *kalbu* 'dog' to describe themselves to the king was a popular device to emphasise a dependent relationship.³⁴³ However, this is the only use of *kalbu* in the correspondence to describe a named third person. What this means we can only guess at, but it might be elucidated by a second unusual statement later in the text:

[x x x x x ana] ekalli beli išappar ammar ina šupuriya errabuni ana [beliya addan]
 My lord will send [x x x x x to] the Palace; [I will give to my lord] all who enter my claws.

edge 4

This is again a unique instance in the Assyrian letter corpus of this terminology. *Šupru* in reference to humans usually means 'fingernail,' and appears frequently in reference to fingernail impressions as authenticatory marks in Assyrian contracts; otherwise, it appears in reference to work done on the claws on decorative animal or bird statues.³⁴⁴ Thus, the use of it in this context to refer to a first-person human is astonishing; it does not appear in any contemporary figurative or poetic language either.

What are we to make of these animal descriptions then? It appears that Nabu-duri-ušur felt free to describe himself metonymically as an animal with claws, with its connotation of eagles and lions, and to liken a member of his staff to a dog, when communicating with Šamaš-bel-ušur, and this, coupled with the other peculiar markers of this relationship, may bespeak to what sorts of register changes take place in less formal, but still official, relationships.

³⁴³ See p.242.

³⁴⁴ For example, SAA 1 no. 51, obv. 5.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we shifted our focus from using the correspondence to explore ontological concepts of interiority, temporality and physicality, and the attendant large-scale imperial strategies for dealing with them, to the utterances of the letters themselves. These complex projected utterances implicated teams of subjects—speaker, author, animator, scribe—in the propagation of an imperial *temu*. This place was one of the locations in which the imperial subject was reproduced, through the effacement of personal agency and creativity by citational practices that propagated power through quotation of the words of the powerful. Yet, the correspondence dialogues also offered a place in which these constraints could be navigated. Ultimately, this meant the correspondence evinced somewhat different temporalities to the looping-simultaneous *temu*-porality at the core of imperial ontology.

This temporality was effectively linear, to different degrees depending on the social status of the subject speaker. Subordinates—those who cited the words of the powerful, and spoke in precatives and modals—situated themselves particularly as subjects with a specific biography moving through time. The past was fixed through historical citation, from whence derived authority, but the future was a realm of open possibilities.

By contrast, those speaking from powerful positions found themselves more heavily influenced by a *temu*-polarity. Though they derived authority through citationality of the past in the same way as subordinates, the imperativity of their future facing utterances was both a locus of power and a potentially dangerous liability. The imperative foresaw its own replication as *temu*-fact. The possibility remained, however, that this would fail, a possibility that might lead to a crisis of authority; we will explore this in the final chapter.

We can thus conceptualise the social distribution of speaking styles as a social distribution of temporalities, of imagination, expressed in the multiple chronotopes found in letter narratives. These different temporalities existed alongside each other, and indeed a single speaking subject could inhabit different temporalities in different utterance frames. We might consider Ana-Nabu-taklak, an Assyrian official we meet in the next chapter, who writes letters typical of a

subordinate to Sargon and the *sukkallu*,³⁴⁵ but adopts a more direct, ironic and affective register towards his *ahu* ‘brother’ Gadiya’.³⁴⁶ We even find multiple chronotopic positions adopted in a single letter: lightly evinced in Ariḫu’s letter demanding *temu*,³⁴⁷ extremely so in the Sealand Elders’ letters. This multiplicity of temporalities, varying across context, status and occasion, is entirely quotidian and intuitive—such polytemporality is indeed cross-culturally universal (Irvine 2004: 107).

Ultimately, this demonstrates a sophisticated command of narrative and temporality from Assyrian correspondents ensconced within the imperial machine. Despite the strictures surrounding *temu*—a future-past loop demanding complete dedication of the interior, $\sqrt{t'b}$ and \sqrt{plh} subjects, plain speaking and true talking—speakers were able to devise complex narrative fields, laminated selves, carefully assigned responsibilities and citationally augmented authorities to further their agency in a communication system geared towards the implementation of the divine imperative. In the next chapter, we move even further away from the rigidity of a *temu* inflected correspondence, showing how kinship relationality afforded different subjectivities and chronotopes even within a cuneiform imperium.

³⁴⁵ SAA 17 nos. 64-72.

³⁴⁶ See p.222.

³⁴⁷ P.49.

5 Kingship Against Kinship: A Contrasting Scheme of Self and Relation

*la mar'u bel ali ša [Qunbuna] anaku unzarḫu urdu ša šarri beliya anaku
šarru beli ina Qunbuna iptaqdanni minu ša ammaruni ša ašammuni ina pan šarri
beliya aqabbi*

I am not the son of the city lord [of Qunbuna]—I am the house-born slave, the servant of the king, my lord. The king my lord entrusted me in Qunbuna; whatever I see and hear, I speak it before the king, my lord.³⁴⁸

In the previous chapters, we established an ontological principle foundational to Assyrian imperialism—*temu*—and the terrains it traversed: interiors (*libbu*) terraformed by governmental, disciplinary practices. We then saw how the subjects making up the nodes in this network used linguistic strategies to negotiate with, reproduce and manipulate *temu*. The *temu* of Aššur was total: it demanded the complete dedication of self (*libbu √gmr*), and integration into the hierarchical system that propagated it.

In this chapter and the next, we turn to relationships defined outside this hierarchical system. We begin with relationships defined by kinship terminology. The tyranny of the evidence is such that we do not possess very many letters that operate at the level of the family—fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters—from the eighth and seventh centuries; a symptom partially of the palatially dominated archives, and of the cuneiform-alphabetic divide. However, the limited, ambiguous evidence of the Assyrian letters suggests that the Assyrian concept of ‘family,’ or more specifically kinship, does not coincide with modern Western notions of family per se. A disparate collection of private letters, which for some reason ended up in the archives at Nineveh and Kalḫu, are addressed to *abu* or *aḫu*; father or brother. Whilst these could refer to direct, ‘familial’ connections, they also indicated a wider conception of these kinship relations, either status-based or a more informal, affective kind of association.

³⁴⁸ SAA 5 no. 243, obv. 4-10, Šarru-emuranni to Sargon

We will explore the tension between empire and kinship in roughly two parts. In the first, we focus on the Adasi family, the royal family of Assyria from whence derived its kings. There, we see how intimacy and affective gesture are eclipsed by the generic communicative practices of officialdom over biographic time. We contrast this with two other overlaps between kinship and empire: an official in correspondence with his brother, and a mother yearning for her son, both ensconced within the privations of imperial society. In the second part, we explore letters that define relationships exclusively through kinship terminology. These provide an insight into a different structure of values and feelings than that inherent in the political correspondence: variant notions of *temu* and the dedication of the self. This demonstrates that the picture we get of a totalising imperial value hierarchy—the total circulation and interpenetration of the *temu* of Aššur—is partial; the Assyrian empire, despite its stated aims, failed to displace pre-existing modes of kinship relationality.

5.1 Family and Empire

šar Uri maršu iħabbilšuma maru ħabil abišu Šamaš ikaššassuma ina kiħulli abišu imat mar-šarri ana šarruti la zakru kussa iħabbat

The king of Ur: his son will wrong him; Šamaš will catch the son who wronged his father, and in the mourning-place of his father he will die. A son who has not been named for kingship will take the throne.

SAA 8 no. 4, obv. 5-7, Issar-šumu-ereš to Esarhaddon

ina mati kalama kittu itammu mar itti abišu kittu itamme salim kiššati

In all lands they will speak the truth; the son will speak the truth with his father: peace in the universe

SAA 8 no. 40, obv. 2'-4', Nabu-aḫḫe-eriba to Esarhaddon

The epigraphs above, taken from the scholarly reports of astrologers to the king, are quotations of ancient omen predictions that has been transmitted across an intertextual replication chain for centuries. Their citation in the letters demonstrates the interpenetration of ancient valuations of kinship in a contemporary Assyrian context: readings of possible futures derived centuries before the letters themselves. They represent two extremes: parricide, fratricide and irregular succession versus universal peace, the son speaking the truth with his father. Both convey a dread of internecine strife.

This 'voice of the past' was only one of the authorities that commented on the values of kinship as they interacted with kingship, and consequently the new 'imperial' form the Assyrian state practiced. Set in the core of the empire was the royal family itself, membership of which enabled men to stake claims to the throne. This family, commensurate with the institution of the Assyrian kingship, practiced ways of relating to each other that reflected their identification with the Assyrian Empire itself.

In this section, we first examine the ways in which the communicative relations comprising the Assyrian royal family were transformed by the practices of imperial institutions. The highly official register belies an alternative discourse we find embedded in the correspondence between Esarhaddon and his scholars, which demonstrates a moving affect quite unlike the staid business of politics the interfamilial correspondence exhibits. Finally, we shift to two letters of potentially private provenance, which show kinship relations affected by contact with the Empire, showing the interpenetration of empire tropes into a domestic sphere.

The Royal Family

The one family for which we possess more than a handful of evidence about from the Assyrian period is, unsurprisingly, the family that produced the kings of Assyria. Since the seventeenth century, male members of the Adasi family were eligible for accession to the Assyrian throne (Frahm 2017c: 6); as no principle of primogeniture obtained, incumbent kings were free to select their own successors, which frequently led to bloody succession wars. Obviously, this family was exceptional in its makeup, being one of the richest and most powerful in the region, and consequently unlikely to be representative.³⁴⁹

By 672, the royal family was fairly extensive, as Figure 9 below shows. Although Esarhaddon had at least eighteen children, the correspondence of only three survives: Assurbanipal, Šamaš-šumu-ukin, and Šamaš-metu-uballit. The former pair had the highest positions in the land as the king's nominated successors. In this role, both men theoretically co-managed the empire, though in reality

³⁴⁹ Data on kinship in other classes and sectors of society is patchy; Galil's hefty analysis of the H̄arran census and other administrative documents is the best synthesis of this information (2007).

much more power was delegated to Assurbanipal; conversely, it seems that Šamaš-metu-uballit's purview was exclusively limited to the inner world of the royal court as opposed to imperial politics (Luukko & van Buylaere 2002 p. xxvii-xxviii).

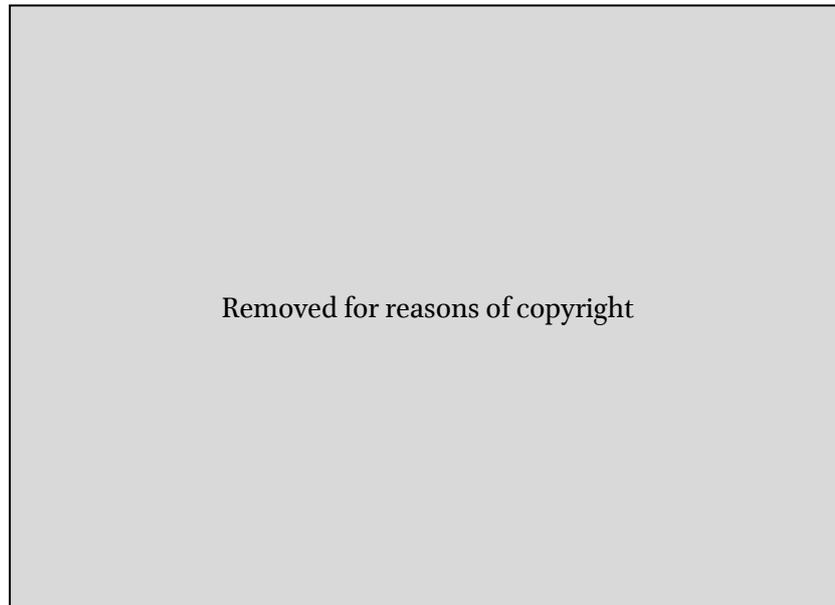


Figure 10 - The Assyrian Royal Family, from Radner 2017

The data for the Assyrian royal family shows one that has thoroughly assimilated with the relationship conventions of the imperial hierarchy. Though kinship terms are used, such as *mar-šarri* or *ummi šarri*, not only are they defined in relation to the king, the terms act as terms of office rather than indexing a personal relationship. There is no reciprocity of terminology, with the typical third-person indirection suffusing the communicative relationship. We can observe this most obviously in the letters sent to Esarhaddon by his three sons, Assurbanipal, Šamaš-šumu-ukin and Šamaš-metu-uballit.³⁵⁰ At first glance, the letters of all three are highly formalised, following established Assyrian letter writing practice.³⁵¹ All three sons shared similar greetings with minor

³⁵⁰ The data for previous father-son royal relationships is patchier but much the same. For example we have encountered several of Sennacherib's letters to his father throughout the thesis, such as his *temu* compilation discussed in chapter 1. These letters differ in no way from the letters between of royal officials to the king: quotations of the royal speech show Sargon speaking in imperatives, as we would expect, e.g., SAA 19 158, obv. 10-11; SAA 1 no. 39, obv. 6'. When addressing his father, Sennacherib uses a precative register, e.g., SAA 1 no. 33, obv. 15ff; rev 2. ff. just as subordinates do with their superiors. Similarly, Ululayu (the future Shalmaneser V) communicates his desire to see have an audience with the king just as others subordinate officials do, which suggests that he received no special treatment within the administration just because of his filiation when it came to this procedure (SAA 19 no. 8 rev. 13ff.).

³⁵¹ Standard devices and procedures are discussed in chapter four, especially from p.201.

variations. None of the three make direct mention of their filial connection: the only time it is referred to is when they are quoting others.³⁵² Despite this, there are hints in this formality as to a status hierarchy amongst the brothers. Though Assurbanipal's letters never vary in their introductory formula, one broken letter of Šamaš-šumu-ukin contains an extended blessing,³⁵³ and the blessings of Šamaš-meṭu-uballiṭ are occasionally intensified.³⁵⁴ Luukko suggests this could be due to the artistry of different scribes transcribing the dictation, but it is possible that such variation on the part of the two lesser princes is an attempt to increase the intensity of the blessing, whilst maintaining the decorum of generic convention: a generic convention structuring relationships between officials in an empire rather than members of a family.

That this status hierarchical schema was the prime lens through which the brothers linguistically practiced their correspondence relationship with their father is further emphasised by the topics of the letters themselves. These suggest that Esarhaddon's three sons possessed differing amounts of power, and thus had different power relationships with the king.

Whilst Assurbanipal discusses threats to royal security, indicating he occupied an important position, his brother Šamaš-meṭu-uballiṭ needs to ask permission to get the wheel of his chariot repaired. Further to this, Šamaš-meṭu-uballiṭ's requests follow the standard practice of adopting the precative:

uma šarri beliya ṭemu liškun dullu ina muḫḫi lepušu

Now may the king establish *ṭemu* that they might perform the work.

SAA 16 no. 25, obv .12-rev.3, Šamaš-meṭu-uballiṭ to Esarhaddon

As we saw in chapter four, ways of speaking about the future were socially distributed. It is noticeable, therefore, that in the extant letters of Šamaš-šumu-ukin and Assurbanipal, there is no occasion for a precative to be employed. Indeed, Assurbanipal describes action he takes outright to reject an audience (SAA 16 no. 20), demonstrative of the authority and latitude he no doubt

³⁵² E.g., SAA 16 no. 21, rev. 8.

³⁵³ SAA 16 no. 23, obv. 1-8.

³⁵⁴ Compare *Nabu u Marduk ana šarri beliya likrubu* (SAA 16 no. 25 obv. 4-5) with *Nabu u Marduk ana šarri beliya adanniš adanniš likrubu* (SAA 16 no. 26, obv. 4-7), with the insertion of the duplicated intensifier *adanniš* 'greatly.'

exercised. Šamaš-metu-uballiṭ, on the other hand, needed to approach the king to have *temu* established: despite his filiation, as an official this prince's authority was just as restricted and dependent upon the king as any other official. In addition, there appears to be an inverse correlation between the status of a son and the floridness of his blessings, and that this was also dependent on context: Assurbanipal provides a standard terse blessing, but Šamaš-metu-uballiṭ varies his, intensifying his address to the king when the life of a maid is at stake.

In contrast to this variability in the status of his sons is the status of Esarhaddon's mother, Naqi'a, one of Sennacherib's wives. We do not have any direct letters from her, however we have already seen that when she functions as a state official being addressed by members of the imperial hierarchy her gender is entirely effaced and she takes on the indexical position of *beliya* 'my lord.' This is indicative of a curious parallelism hinted at in a letter from Esarhaddon to his mother, the only one currently published:

*abat šarri ana ummi šarri šulmu ayaši lu šulmu ana ummi šarri
ina muḥḥi urdi ša Amuše ša tašpurinni ki sa ummi šarri taqbuni anaku ina pittema aqtibi
de'iq adanniš ki ša taqbini*

Word of the king to the mother of the king, wellbeing is for me. EMPH wellbeing for the mother of the king.
Concerning the servant of Amos that you wrote to me about, as the mother of the king spoke, I spake accordingly.
It is very beautiful, as you spoke.

SAA 16 no. 2, obv.1-rev.3, Esarhaddon to Naqi'a

In chapter four, we established that the accurate replication of words was an essential procedure for the propagation of imperial power.³⁵⁵ The utterances of subordinates were colonised by the words of their superiors, the autonomy of their subjects effaced in order to deliver the royal message. Yet here, we have Esarhaddon himself describing how he accurately replicated his mother's utterance: the authoritative words spoken with *√qb*.³⁵⁶ Though this is only a single data point, it serves to further puncture the 'absolute will' of the Assyrian king by showing him willingly take direction from other human beings.³⁵⁷ Situated in the various manipulations of the king's speech

³⁵⁵ P.171.

³⁵⁶ Words from this semantic root tended to denote accurate or powerful speaking, see p.184.

³⁵⁷ Obviously, it was essential the king take direction from Aššur the god and the other deities.

available to subordinates through *issuri*-expressions,³⁵⁸ and the limitation of the king's authority in the face of the magnates,³⁵⁹ a collaborative, quotative imperial hegemony seems to emerge.

Royal Family Feeling

libbi mariš adanniš ša ina šeheriya annie libbi išpiluni ake nepuš

My interior is very sick, how did we act that my interior has fallen for this, my little one?³⁶⁰

The terseness of the communications between royal family members starkly contrasts with the letters the king receives from his scholars. These letters describe kinship relations charged with intimacy and feeling. The epigraph to this chapter is the strongest statement of feeling towards a royal family member we find in the corpus, cited by Adad-šumu-ušur in a response to Esarhaddon. The king's use of *šeheriya*, 'my little one',³⁶¹ instead of a kinship term such as *maru* is a point of interest: the possessive suffix establishes an ownership and intimacy; *šeheru* is potentially a term of endearment in this context, but we cannot be certain. The affective language Esarhaddon uses is obviously strong: the intensifier *adanniš* together with two profoundly negative descriptions of his interior state. This quoted utterance of the king is the only direct evidence we have of strong feeling expressed in the first person voice between royal family members (in contradistinction to those expressions between 'private' kin discussed at the end of this chapter).

Despite this, there are several descriptions of a royal family filled with feeling in the letters of various scholars to their imperial patron. Several of these are oblique elaborations on wishes for the long life of the patriarch, for example:

ša piqitte ša Belet-parši šarru beli mar mar'išu ina burkešu lintuḥu paršumate ina ziqnišunu lemur

May the king lift the son of the sons of the charge of (the goddess) Belet-parši into his lap, may he see grey hairs (lit. 'old men') in their beards

SAA 10 no.301, rev. 1-9, Nabu-našir to Esarhaddon³⁶²

³⁵⁸ See p.198.

³⁵⁹ See p.258ff.

³⁶⁰ SAA 10 no. 187, obv.7-10, Adad-šumu-ušur to Esarhaddon

³⁶¹ *š/hr* possessed a neutral connotation, as opposed to *√qll*, which carried negative and potentially insulting aspects, p.248.

³⁶² See also SAA 10 no. 70, rev. 12-14: *mar mar'išu šarru beli ina burkišu lintuḥ* 'May the king lift the son of his sons in his lap' (Nabu-aḥḥe-eriba to Esarhaddon).

The wish expressed in Nabu-našir's statement is twofold: not only does it encode a wish for the king to live long enough to lift his great grandsons into his lap,³⁶³ but it also describes a familial scenario where close physical association with the bodies of kin is viewed in a positive light. This is a stark contrast to the formalised discourse we find between the mature family members who adopt the roles of *mar-šarri* or *ummi šarri* within the official hierarchy. Here, the envisaged scenario appears to be confined to a domestic sphere of unspecified location, most likely quarters within a palace, mostly invisible to the rest of the imperial hierarchy.³⁶⁴

In contrast, the wishes Nabu-aḥḥe-eriba sends to Esarhaddon concerning the adult Šamaš-šumu-ukin, appointed *mar-šarri Babili*, are terse:

nemaššu šarru beli lemur

May the king see his prosperity

SAA 10 no. 73 rev. 3-4, Nabu-aḥḥe-eriba to Esarhaddon

This is, to us, much less tender, as befits a mature royal scion— one who cannot easily be lifted up into the royal lap, and who was unlikely to run around in Esarhaddon's sweet shadow. Such statements regarding mature sons are much less frequent and effusive than those regarding the king's kids; what explanation could be advanced for this? We turn to a final example of this kind of royal familial feeling—an extended panegyric from Adad-šumu-ušur—which concerns the royal succession. Contrasting this with ideas of families set against each other, the dangers of internecine strife, it becomes apparent that the maturing of a royal man into the imperial system formed both potential successor and potential personal threat. A man, eligible for the kingship, if his murder of the reigning king and seizure of power was successful, was clearly marked out for this by the *ṭemu* of the gods.

³⁶³ The term *piqittu ša* {Divine Name|Palace Name} specifically refers to a royal baby that has been deposited for care in a temple or a palace (Parpola 1971: 110).

³⁶⁴ In a similar fashion, Adad-šumu-ušur writes of playful royal children to Esarhaddon in SAA 10 no. 207: *šunu leluni ina šilli ṭabu danqi ša šarri beliya lidulu nemelšunu šarri beli lemur mar mar'ešunu ki annimma ina pan šarri beliya lidulu* 'May they (the king's sons Aššur-mukin-paleya and Sin-per'u-ukin) come up and may they run around in the good and beautiful shadow of the king my lord; let the king my lord see their prosperity, may the sons of their sons run around before the king just like this' (rev. 2-8). The verb $\sqrt{d'l}$, used to describe children idyllically playing here, was considered in a negative sense when applied to mature men working within the Assyrian state; see p.242.

The Promotion of Assurbanipal in the Royal Family

Many pages ago, we found ourselves with Adad-šumu-ušur in the year 672, caught up in the unprecedented dual succession arrangements of Esarhaddon's sons, Assurbanipal to the Assyrian throne and Šamaš-šumu-ukin to the throne of Babylon.³⁶⁵ We were concerned with the establishment of the treaty regulation 'do not conceal whatever you see and hear.' Now, we turn to the domestic, emotional experience of this exceptional event.

mar'e Aššur etamru libbašunu iptāšḫu

*ma šarru belini ina šarrani mar'eka ṭabtu ana Aššur epuš*³⁶⁶

The sons of Assyria saw, and their interiors relaxed

3.QUOT The king our lord with the kings your sons has done a goodness for Assyria

SAA 10 no. 185 rev.13-16

mar'eka annute damqute dugul libbaka lu ḫaddi

See these beautiful sons of yours, may your interior rejoice.

SAA 10 no. 185 rev. 19-20

The first unusual thing we can observe is that the first example uses an imperative form of the verb, *dugul*, rather than the usual precativ. We can assume that this is both due to the festive nature of the letter, which contains several imperatives addressed to the king throughout,³⁶⁷ and due to the fact that these are probably uncontroversial suggestions that do not jeopardise or contravene the power relationship between Adad-šumu-ušur and Esarhaddon. By contrast, the second example returns to the suggestive precativ, creating distance once more as the exorcist offers therapeutic advice to his king.

Distance is also created affectively, with both positivity (*√ḫd* 'rejoice') and negativity (*la dunqi* 'not good') attributed to the *libbu* of the king, rather than the king's self directly. In several other examples in the letters *√ḫd* is used transitively with the king as agent,³⁶⁸ indicating that its use here combined with *libbu* is probably a choice, conscious or not, to create separation between

³⁶⁵ P.34.

³⁶⁶ I differ from the editor by taking *e-pu-uš* as the 3rd person preterite form instead of an imperative.

³⁶⁷ e.g., *šukun* 'place' (bottom edge 27); *qarrib* 'make close' (rev. 1).

³⁶⁸ E.g., *šarru lu ḫadi* 'The king may rejoice' (SAA 10 no. 114, rev. 9); *šarru ma'diš lu ḫadi* 'The king may be very happy' (SAA 8 no. 387, rev. 3); *ḫadiš šarri aki ša ile"u lipuš* 'The king may happily do as he is able' (SAA 10 no. 111, rev. 26-28).

Esarhaddon and the attributed affect. This affect is further intensified using a D-stem form, so even though the suggestion is for intense happiness, this is hived off to the *libbu*, thus generating a careful distance.

Why then, in this letter, does Adad-šumu-ušur address the king so directly, with such florid talk about practically everybody's emotions? The subject matter is telling, namely that in his praise for Assurbanipal and Šamaš-šumu-ukin's good treatment, Adad-šumu-ušur exhorts the king to treat his (the king's) other sons the same way (obv. 22-rev. 1). The links between Adad-šumu-ušur's family and the royal family were very old by this time, stretching back to the ninth century (Šašková 2010: 116). Therefore, the stability of the royal line must have been of great importance to the scholar in order to maintain his own family's fortunes, and thus the decision about the succession must have raised his spirits.

Beer and Bread: Commensality and Citationality

Now, we turn to two letters set in the overlap between the imperial hierarchy and kinship-defined relationships, with both authors conceptualising relationships through commensality, a cross-cultural characteristic of kinship relationality (Carsten 2000: 22; Sahlins 2011: 4). Both correspondents are strikingly affected by their experience with the Empire: the first, a Babylonian who works as an official within the hierarchy, writes a note to his *aḫu* 'brother' where he evokes images of the ideal empire to express his unhappiness:

tuppi Nabu-taklak ana Gaddi'a aḫušu lu šulmu ana aḫiya
ša aḫiya išpur
umma libbaka lu ṭabka
minu ṭub libbiya nakru ana taršini madak[tu] nadi muši u umi ša šelti nul[tašbat]
u ultu paniku[nu] mamma ana ḫamatiya ul illika
minma libba ul ṭa[bi]
kitti at[tuka] libbaka ṭab[ka] ina bit bele[ka] ašbata aklu takkal u šikari pan ṭabi ina [bit beleka] tašatti

Tablet of Nabu-taklak to Gadiya' his brother, EMPH wellbeing for my brother

As to that which my brother wrote

QUOT Your interior EMPH be good

How is my interior good? The enemy has pitched camp against us, day and night we [assemble] for combat, and from your presence none of you has come to my help

Whatever, my interior is not go[od]

Truth, yo[urs], your interior is good, you sit in the house of [your] lord, you eat bread and drink beer before goodness in [the house of your lord]

SAA 17 no. 63, obv. 1-rev. 5, Nabu-taklak to Gadiya'

Nabu-taklak's juxtaposition of the imperial ideal—eating bread, drinking beer in the house of your lord³⁶⁹—with the threatening situation he is ensconced in illustrates how this fixture was seen in an informally defined exchange. Notably, the eating bread, drinking beer, being good is not evoked in a cynical way, but rather in implicit desire. For Nabu-taklak, the promises and benefices of the empire, serene commensality under the aegis of an Assyrian superior, were conditions that truly resulted in a good interior—at least, as opposed to living in the shadow of an enemy's weapons. Nevertheless, though Nabu-taklak regards the imperial ideal in a positive light, the actual distribution of roles here is one which gives him pause. He aggressively flings back the quoted speech of his brother, switching to second-person address hedged about with intensifying devices, *kitti, mimma* for example. This juxtaposition of two present realities is a powerful expression of non-lexical, situational affect, where the experience of being on the war-front, despite being part of the imperial project, is one deeply undesired by the author.

The influence of empire on kinship relations also comes into play in the following letter, though in far more ambivalent action. The unknown author writes a penitent epistle to her seemingly long-lost child, kindling pathos even twenty-five centuries later:

*ina ti[liti] ša pi niši [šakin
umma] ana ume anne ummu turabbima maratima*
In a saying situated in the mouths of the people
QUOT From this day the mother raised, and the daughters

*ina panati taqabbi
umma anaku idi ki baḷḷati*
Previously you spake
QUOT I know that you are alive

u enna šarri bela remanu šu ina panika ultešanni atta : tatamranni tidi : ki baḷḷaku
And now the king my lord, he is merciful, he has caused me to go out into your presence, you have seen me, you know I am alive.

mina aklu ekalu la belešu
Why eat bread that is not of his masters?

u anaku umandi ki annakru attanakka
I myself recognise that I have become an enemy: I gave you away.

³⁶⁹ The phrase *{bit/bet} beli* has sometimes been rendered 'government department,' but Luukko and van Buylaere rightly critique this and instead favour an 'informal,' 'intimate' interpretation (Luukko & van Buylaere 2002 p.xli-xlii).

mina ina šulmekunu takalla ittiku[nu] ilten qa aklu lukul
What do you eat for your wellbeing? Let me eat one *qa*-measure of bread with you.

amur ša šarri bela remanu šu ina šibuti [x x x] [x x x] ana [x x x]
See that the king my lord, he is merciful. In old age [...]

mar-šiprika lumur
May I see your messenger!

SAA 18 no. 117, obv. 1'-e. 1, unassigned to unknown

This evocative letter more clearly elucidates kinship-defined values than Nabu-taklak's. In particular, the author emphasises commensality, asking after the recipient's sustenance, requesting a meal together, and rhetorically critiquing non-kinship-defined relations through a bready frame. This exchange is, sadly, situated in a difficult domestic history. The king is specified as the direct cause of this exchange, enabling communication between mother and son through his mercy. However, the author also describes that she gave her son away, though no reason is provided. This suggests that, for whatever reason, the mother giving away her son was a socially recognised act, one which she appears in this letter to accept, but regret. There is thus a tension here between the social norm that decree it is right for a mother to raise her children (as voiced in the *tiltu*-proverb in the mouth of the people), the circumstances that caused and condoned the mother giving her child up, and the 'mercy' of the king now re-enabling communication between the two. Another letter describes a man selling his children, then secretly messaging them to run away and return to him,³⁷⁰ implying that parents who found themselves in financial distress might legitimately, but reluctantly sell off their human resources.³⁷¹ The tension thus arises in that it is the very society presided over by the merciful king that necessitated this mother to be parted from her child in the first place, illustrating indirectly the damaging effect of the Empire on this particular kinship relation.

³⁷⁰ SAA 15 no. 74.

³⁷¹ We might imagine this financial stress to be caused by crushing debt, or less charitably by profligate spending or the like.

5.2 *Ramanu* For Self and Kin: Evidence for Non-Imperial Relationships

As befits an archive of tablets excavated from the citadels of the Assyrian capital cities, the vast majority of the Assyrian state correspondence implicates members of the Assyrian ruling elite, whether as authors or recipients of the letters. The terms of address in the letters we have already seen were most frequently official positions, with those communicating to superiors being particularly self-effacing in the use of {*urdaka*|*aradka*} ‘your servant/slave.’ The ruling hierarchy of Assyria was thus produced and reinforced through these customary genre conventions, a politic *politesse*.

However, a number of letters within the correspondence define relationships through the use of kinship terminology: *abu* ‘father,’ *ummu* ‘mother,’ *aḥu* ‘brother,’ *aḥatu* ‘sister.’ Though sometimes office and kinship is intermingled,³⁷² the letters examined in this section entirely exclude official markers. However, we do not yet know what an Assyrian kinship relation entailed. In the royal family at least, kinship was effaced in the political correspondence, with relationships defined almost as office. Though the evidence available to us from the palace archives is limited, we are fortunate to have preserved a number of letters where kinship terminology is *exclusively* used. Though sparse, these letters share commonalities which suggest that a relationship defined by kinship was more than just a matter of terminology.

We find a reciprocity, even transactionality, inherent in the various kinship relations. On the one hand, there is a certain amount of materiality: in a letter to his brother, a certain Kina refers to an ostrich egg he was tasked to acquire:

pel lurmi ša aḥuya išpura Bel u Nabu lu idu ki ina Nippur ibaššu

The ostrich egg that my brother wrote to me—Bel and Nabu EMPH know whether one exists in Nippur.

SAA 17 no. 147, rev. 4'-8', Kina to his brother Nergal-našir

³⁷² For example, see SAA 18 no.98 for a letter between a certain Šamaš-[x x] to his father the *šakin-temi*, or SAA 16 no. 1, where Esarhaddon refers to the king of Elam as *aḥu* ‘brother.’ The practice of naming ‘political’ relationships with kinship terms had long precedent in the ancient Middle East—see Podany 2010.

The language here is emphatic, rhetorically swearing by two Babylonian gods and thus counterfactually implying that, in fact, there are no ostrich eggs. We can conjecture that this kind of material exchange was one dimension of a kinship relationship. Here there appears to be no implication of benefit on the part of either Kina (who has failed to acquire the egg) or his brother—or, at least, in Kina’s indirect quotation of his brother’s words he does not supply any information as to what either of them would get out of the egg exchange. Being able to acquire goods and things seemed to be inherent in performing a kinship relation: thus, Kina’s emphatic invocation of Bel and Nabu.³⁷³

Keeping Up with the Kin

This imperative to exchange was not limited to physical goods, but seemed to be a foundational aspect of the communicative relationship. The importance of responsive communication is emphasised in these exhortations from the snubbed:

3, 4 šipreti ki ašpurakka gabaru ul amur

Of the three, four messages that I have sent, I have not seen an answer

SAA 18 no. 97, obv. 5-8, Bel-aḫa-iddin to his father Iddin-aḫi

ana mini mala aga umu mar-šiprika la amur

For what have I not seen your messenger until now?

SAA 19 no. 144, obv. 8-10, Data to her brother Šumu-iddina

šulumgu ḫussamma šupur

Be mindful of your health and write

SAA 17 no. 147, rev. 2'-3', Kina to his brother Nergal-našir

la aḫaya atta

minu ša ṭemuni aḫuwa lišpur

Are you not my brother?

Whatever is *ṭemu*, let my brother write.

SAA 5 no. 81, rev. 3-5, Aššur-zeru-ibni to his brother Nergal-eṭir

³⁷³ This can be compared to the concept of *abbutu* which appeared in the official correspondence. This term, derived from *abu* 'father' and modified with the abstracting *-ut-* suffix, loosely denotes the qualities of fatherhood, and was most frequently associated with the *sukkallu*, one of the king's most senior officials. See SAA 17 no. 77, obv. 1-7, rev.8'-right edge. 19 for an example of the association between material exchange and *abbutu*. Cf. also the portrayal of the *sukkallu* and his *abbutu*, p.255.

These quotations all stem from instances in which it appears the communicative relationship has been disrupted in some way. They put us in mind of the emotive pleas to the kings from petitioners and scholars, exhorting responses.³⁷⁴ Here there is no regular pattern to the demand: each of the four authors uses a different strategy to communicate their appraisal of their correspondent's deficiency: Bel-aḫa-iddin, a simple statement; Data, a question; Kina, two imperatives; Aššur-zeru-ibni, a counterfactual question and a precative. The diversity of device hints at the specificity and idiosyncrasy of the relationships between these people, and helps us move away from conceptions of Assyrian letter-writing genre and ideology as highly conventional, monolithic and restricted.

The different priorities of a kinship relationship further throw into relief the specifically imperial aspects of the state correspondence, as they contrasted with 'family values.' These values passively conflicted with the overriding imperatives of Assyrian interiority described above. Most noticeable is the transposition of duties that would ideally be performed for Aššur instead being dedicated to kinship aims, best exemplified by this letter from a certain Bel-upaq to his father:

*tuppi Bel-upaq ana Kuna abišu
 lu šulum ana abiya umussu Nabu u Nanaya ana balaṭi napšati ša abiya ušalli
 u ilku ana Ezida ana muḫḫi abiya kunnak
 Mar-Biti ana muḫḫika ki aš'alu adannu ša šulum adi ud.4.kám iṣṣabta
 ana mimma kalamu mala teppušu šulum ramanka ḫussu*

A tablet of Bel-upaq to Kuna his father. EMPH wellbeing for my father. I daily pray to Nabu and Nanaya for the life and breath of my father, and I constantly do *ilku* for Ezida concerning my father. When I asked Mar-Biti about you, he fixed the period of your wellbeing until the fourth day. Be mindful of the wellbeing of your *ramanu* concerning whatever, anything whatsoever that you do.

SAA 18 no. 64, obv. 1-rev. 6, Bel-upaq to his father Kuna

Of interest here are the opening and closing statements, concerning *ilku* and *ramanu*. We have already encountered the onerous *ilku*, the labour imposed upon those subject to the Assyrian yoke—here it is the Ezida temple, dedicated to the god Nabu and located in the city of Borsippa. The *ilku* of Aššur, we may recall, was an emotive and contentious topic, grounds for $\sqrt{p}ll$, and the

³⁷⁴ E.g. SAA 1 no. 154 rev. 5-8; 13 no. 83 rev. 9'-10'; 15 no. 288, obv. 8-10.

subject of keenly sought after exceptions.³⁷⁵ Here, however, Bel-upaq mentions *ilku* in the opening greeting, linking his performance of it together with the customary blessings and well-wishes towards an interlocutor. This inclusion, clarified with *ana muḥḥi abiya* ‘concerning my father,’ suggests that either Bel-upaq is performing the *ilku* duty originally allotted to his father Kuna, or that Bel-upaq’s performance of the *ilku* is implicated in his father’s wellbeing in some way. Ultimately, the *ilku* element, commented on not with \sqrt{plh} or complaint, suggests that the duty was borne with grace.

Indeed, the letter is entirely concerned with Kuna’s *šulmu* ‘wellbeing,’ a point underlined by Bel-upaq’s exhortation in closing: whatever you do, *šulum ramanka ḥussu* ‘be mindful of the wellbeing of your *ramanu*.’ The imperative immediately stands out here, moving us away from the indirect proprieties of deferential address and towards a straightforward direct register. In concert with the indirect address in the opening greeting, this imperative does not suggest a superior-subordinate relationship; rather, this fluctuating, loose register, shifting between direct and indirect address is characteristic of letters using kinship terminology, suggesting a less codified, more informal relationship.

The imperative, to be mindful of the *šulmu* of the *ramanu*, is striking in light of the assumptions embedded in the imperial correspondence. As we saw in chapter three, the exhortation *lu šulmu* was bound up with the smooth operation of empire, in close association with *libbu* $\sqrt{t'b}$.³⁷⁶ Here, however, the responsibility for one’s own *šulmu* rests with oneself, hence the imperative invocation to *ḥussu*, ‘be mindful.’ We have seen this invocation in another kinship context, when Kina write to his brother *šulumgu ḥussa-ma*. It seems that, for the subjects encompassed by Aššur’s dominion, those who did not partake in the imperial hierarchy did not pay much heed to the *šulmu*-wellbeing it provided. Rather than mention the benefices of Aššur at any point, the imperative allocates responsibility to the individual, and Bel-upaq underlines this by saying *šulum ramanka* ‘the wellbeing of your self.’ In contrast with the imperial values that set the subject’s *ramanu*-self against the *temu* of the gods,³⁷⁷ we have an implicit ideology emphasising self-care and self-responsibility emerging in the routine language of informal interaction that these letters exemplify.

³⁷⁵ For \sqrt{plh} of *ilku* see chapter three, discussion of SAA 1 no. 183; for reference to exceptions, see SAA 1 no. 99, rev. 2’ ff.

³⁷⁶ See p.148ff.

³⁷⁷ See p.101.

This dedication of the self to kin instead of country comes through most consistently in an unattributed letter from the reign of Tiglath-pileser:

ʿša aḥuw¹[a] ʿišpura¹
[umma] uni ṭuppi tamuru [x x x] ana irti šarri ela
illaka

ul ša qatiya gabbi ša qati aḥiya šu
matati gabbi idu ki ramna ana muḥḥi aḥiya
amur ki aḥuwa ana dunqiya u ana banitiya qepu
ʿThat which¹[m]ʿy brother sent to me¹
[QUOT]: The day you see my tablet [x x x] ascend to the side of the king.
Is he coming?

There is nothing that is of my hands that is of the hands of my brother.
All the lands know that my self is for my brother.
See that my brother is for my goodness and my beauty.

SAA 19 no. 202, obv. 5-13, unattributed to his brother, unattributed

Though the opening of this letter (obv. 1-4) is broken, we can clearly see from this passage the author's emphatic devotion to his brother. This is communicated not through expressions of emotional language but the language of exchange and material property: the counterfactual 'nothing of my hands is of the hands of my brother,' and the equation *ramna* is for my brother, my brother is for my *dunqu* and *banitu*. This reciprocity of exchange is further underlined by the next sentence, which focuses on exchange of communication in detail:

Nabu-le'i ilten umu adi paniya aḥuwa lišpuramma ittišu ludbubma ṭema u dibbiya liḥamma ana aḥiya liqbi
turti amat ša aḥiya lišmema
One day let my brother send Nabu-le'i before me, and may I talk with him, may he take my *ṭemu* and my words and speak them to my brother.
Let me hear in response the word of my brother.

SAA 19 no. 202, obv. 13-rev. 2, unattributed to his brother, unattributed

Here, just as in the royal correspondence, we have an emphasis on the exchange of words, with carefully delineated steps: a named messenger in audience, talking (\sqrt{dbb}), the physical taking (\sqrt{lq}) of *dibbu*-words (\sqrt{dbb}) to be spoken (\sqrt{qb}) to the brother, and words (*amatu*) to be returned which will be listened to ($\sqrt{šm}$). This attention towards the mechanisms and process of verbal exchange

is similar in some ways to the concerns expressed in imperial correspondence: a documented process of transmitting words, with named proxies and allocation of verbal responsibility.³⁷⁸ However, in the political sphere emphasis was placed on primarily on the secure transmission of messages or royal speech; in this kinship-based context, the reciprocity of conversation is the salient point.

Most interestingly, at once of a piece with imperial values and at odds with it is the attendance of *temu* here. Whilst we cannot really be sure whether the unknown author is part of the imperial hierarchy or not, his emphasis on his self-dedication to his brother throughout the letter is suggestive. The *temu* here—*tema* ‘my *temu*’—is likely one that does not originate from Aššur and the gods, in descent throughout the imperial hierarchy, expressed as the Assyrian imperial form. Instead, it is the *temu* of the self, one not necessarily *opposed* to the Assyrian order and which consequently must be disciplined through the instruments of imperial interiority management, but one that exists for its own interests. Instead of an intentional loop of an empire, we find an implicit model of *temu* exchange between kinship relations. The divine *temu* was a mighty thing, decreed by the great gods, immanent through all matter in the world and an imperative to be read and transmuted by the Empire. The *temu* of kin, on the other hand, was something communicated and shared—unlike the imperial *temu*, it took possessive suffixes; it was not $\sqrt{\text{škn}}$, but an open thing, ‘whatever is *temu*, let my brother write.’ This is a radically different conception of *temu* than the imperial one, one occupying the same ambiguous space, but not the same vast scale.

This contrast between an imperial scale of ontology and a domestic scale is further exemplified by the dedication of self to those defined through the terms of kinship. And indeed, in our discussion of the desirability of communicative exchange in kinship above, we saw Aššur-zeru-ibni associate brotherhood with the communication of *temu*.³⁷⁹ In both letters, the correspondents define their relationship through kinship terminology, yet both letters also exist in the shadow of the imperial machine. Aššur-zeru-ibni’s letter concerns a governor and the chief eunuch; the unattributed SAA 19 no. 202 mentions the king himself in a broken passage. The implication then is that this quasi-kinship ethical model—dedication of *ramanu* to kin, exchange of *temu*—was able to coexist and

³⁷⁸ For more on this see p.173.

³⁷⁹ E.g. SAA 5 no. 81, rev. 3-5. See also SAA 18 no. 96, obv. 4 (damaged).

and three brothers. This evokes the ways in which officials were representative nodes able to report on the wellbeing of their provinces. Both relationships evince a collapse of subjectivities into the report of a single voice: the voices of the many subjects of Assyrian authority into the authoritative voice of the official situated over them; the voices of Iddin-aḫi's children subsumed by the voice of their father.

Letter–Dancing Data and The Death of Lady Gaga

ina nipiḫ libbika la taklaka

Do not trust in the blazing of your interior!

Even though the model of the self in kinship relation stood in juxtaposition with the model coursing through the imperial hierarchy, the values of self in kinship were not at all static, but shaped by microhistorical context, as the next letter shows. Of the correspondence preserved in the Assyrian citadels, this letter, sent by the woman Data, is special. As we have seen, female voices are exceedingly rare in the corpus—Barsipitu's letter to Sargon, and a second kinship letter are the only other significant examples we have. As we have seen, Barsipitu's letter shares the same register as letters from male officials. By contrast, Data's letter is much more affectively charged, as we would expect—she reports on the death of a family member:

*tuppi Data ana Šumu-iddin aḫišu
Mulliltu u Ištar Babili šulum mati ša aḫiya liqba'
umussu Mulliltu u Ištar Babili ana balaṭi napšati ša aḫiya ušalla*

Tablet of Data to Šumu-iddin his(!) brother
May Mulliltu and Ištar of Babylon speak the wellbeing of the land of my brother.
I pray daily to Mulliltu and Ištar of Babylon for the life and health of my brother.

obv. 1-8

*ammīni mala aḡa umu mar-šiprika la amur enna ki balṭatu idatika miṭeti luramma lurqud
Gaga mitat u aḡuku daliḫ alkamma amuršu
ki nakutti altaprakka ḥanṭiš kuldu
Mulliltu u Ištar Babili lu ida' ki umussu itti duluḫtiya
[ina] nipiḫ libbika la taklaka ilu*

Why have I not seen your messenger until this day? Now if you are alive, let me disregard your deficient idiosyncrasies and dance.
Gaga—she is dead and your brother is upset. Come and see him.
I have written to you due to desperation. Reach here quickly.
Mulliltu and Ištar of Babylon EMPH know that day after day is with my trouble.
Do not trust [in] the blazing of your interior. God!

obv. 8-rev 9

Šulluma šulum ša Šumu-iddina aḥušu iša'al

Šulluma asks about the wellbeing of Šumu-iddina his brother.

rev. 9-rev. 12

SAA 19 no. 144, Data to her brother Šumu-iddin

This letter unifies a number of correspondence tropes we have seen throughout this thesis, whilst exhibiting some unique devices seen in neither the officials nor the scholars correspondence. Firstly, commentary on the communicative relationship is offered: criticism of the correspondent's neglect in keeping in contact ('why have I not seen your messenger until this day?'), and a justification for this particular missive—*nakuttu*—offered above and beyond the family death. These phrases appear in more or less the same forms as the official correspondence.³⁸³ Taken together with other features that indicate unthinking adherence to the generic norms of letter writing,³⁸⁴ we can perhaps observe a 'shadow dialogue' between a distraught Data and a formal scribe.³⁸⁵ Though visible only in trace, this represents another interaction between social spheres, relations, cultures: a domestic, private world of enclosed families, and the cuneiform culture of the learned scribes, arrogated and monopolised by the Assyrian state.

Nevertheless, through the 'scribal filter' we can still hear Data's voice, distinct from the dry tone of state correspondence, and the performed affect of the scholarly letters. Firstly, although there are a few instances where third-person indirection is used, Data generally speaks to Šumu-iddina in the direct second-person address, using imperatives, emphasising their equal status. Data reproaches Šumu-iddina with a question, before indirectly criticising his *idati-ka*. In his edition of the letter, Luukko considers this to 'more likely' be a plural form of *ittu*, a word meaning 'ominous sign.' This is again suggestive of a concept usually associated with the Empire—translating the *temu* of the gods from their encoding in ominous phenomena—but here transposed into an interpersonal, rather than international, relation. It is not entirely clear what Data means by this. However, a

³⁸³ Similarly, Data's exhortation *ḥanṭiš kuldu* 'reach here quickly' corresponds to that written by the sheikhs of Tubliaš in their letter to an Assyrian cohort commander: *ḥanṭiš kuldanu kuldanu* 'reach here quickly, reach here' SAA 17 no. 150, right edge 10-11.

³⁸⁴ Primarily, a typical opening blessing, and an opening letterhead with an incorrect 3rd person masculine possessive for the addressee: *aḥušu* 'his brother' as opposed to *aḥuša* 'her brother.'

³⁸⁵ For more on the 'shadow dialogue,' see p.23.

physiognomic tradition that read human qualities from bodily characteristics in analogy with cuneiform signs existed in this period (Frahm 2010: 114 ff). We might imagine that this scholarly tradition was symptomatic of wider analogical understandings of character and appearance, an exterior-interior correspondence beyond what we developed in chapter two. However, firm evidence for that is not to be found here.

Nevertheless, Data moves on to precavely sees herself dancing in this released future—*lurqud*. This immediately brings to mind the old men dancing in Adad-šumu-ušur's fantasia of the ideal imperium.³⁸⁶ In his panegyric evocation, the *ašipu*'s vision is sustained and suffused by \sqrt{plh} , the emotional chains of an imperial subjective network. No such \sqrt{plh} is found with dancing Data.

Finally, we have the very unusual statement [*ina*] *nipiḥ libbika la taklaka* 'do not trust in the blaze of your interior,' followed by the isolated interjection *ilu*, 'god.' This phrase is a colourful departure from the *libbu* language we have hitherto been used to. As we established previously, in this world of kinship relationality there is an increased emphasis on self-care and reciprocal dedication, indicated by *ramanu*, imperatives and the importance of kinship exchange (of words and goods). Here Data specifically exhorts her brother to *not* trust (\sqrt{tkl}) in the 'blaze of his interior,' suggesting that she would prefer him to \sqrt{tkl} in something else instead. This attitude towards *libbu* is evocative of that held by imperial officialdom towards *ramanu*, and potentially implies that, within kinship relationality, too much concern with self was just as bad as too much *ramanu* within an imperial hierarchy. As for *nipiḥ libbika*, this colourful description recalls Nabu-duri-ušur's claws as a creative, unexpected description of a human body. Though it would be erroneous to infer that a 'blazing interior' might reflect something like a fiery, wayward spirit, we can at least conclude that these kinds of creative constructions were able to be used in less formal communicative relationships. Correspondingly, the selves presented in more official imperial letters were constrained by implicit decorum.

³⁸⁶ P.132.

Conclusion—Family, Irony and Internecine Struggle

mar abašu idak aḫu aḫašu idak

A son will kill his father, a brother will kill his brother³⁸⁷

In this chapter, we sought to move away from the imperially-determined facts, acts, intents and subjects of the first four chapters, through an examination of kinship values. These emergent priorities included the importance of mutual care, commensality and reciprocity in communication and gift. Relationships defined by these values were practiced in the same society, even by the same people, as the hierarchical relationships of the Assyrian empire. The interactions between these different roles led to some ominous syntheses.

On the one hand, the disjuncture between empire and domesticity could be bridged by affective expression. Nabu-taklak, envious of his *aḫu* Gadiya', quotes the promises of comfort offered by the shadow of the king, ironically reflecting on his own dire situation. Data and the unnamed mother more straightforwardly express their grief. Such intensity also figured at larger scales of geopolitical import: Balassu, whom we encountered in chapter three, demands to be deported in lieu of becoming an enemy of his sister's son;³⁸⁸ the people of Urartu ask one of their lords in horror 'why have you done like [this]? You killed the sister of your brother and the son of [your] brother!'³⁸⁹ We need only recall how Nabu-ušallim desired the throne of the Sealand, in opposition to his brother Na'id-Marduk, to see how easily the temptations of power overrode the mutuality of care. Such internecine strife is amply captured in the menacing omens of the eclipse in the above epigraph.

On the other hand, subjects might throw their lot in with the rewards of imperial service, disdaining their old kin for a place in the hierarchy of power. We saw in the epigraph to this chapter how Šarru-emuranni effaced his kinship relation entirely: instead of deriving his position and authority as city-lord of Qunbuna from his kinship relation with his father, he outright denies this relation in order to valorise how he was appointed to the position by the king of Assyria. Though kinship relations endured throughout the Assyrian empire, it is apparent that the imperial form sought to efface this kind of relationship whenever it could potentially come into conflict with imperial aims.

³⁸⁷ SAA 8 no. 384, rev. 1, Rašil the older to Esarhaddon

³⁸⁸ SAA 19 no. 87, obv. 10'-bottom edge 14'.

³⁸⁹ SAA 5 no. 108, rev. 18-21.

This is best exemplified in the case of some of the highest officials in the Assyrian empire, the eunuchs. These men were severed both from their family and from the organs that enabled them to engender a family, and resituated within the imperial 'household' (N'Shea 2016: 219). These beings were thus able to serve the Assyrian royal family across gender contexts, whilst being divorced from any other kind of relationality. By concentrating power in these subjects, instead of fully fledged male family members who might become potential rivals for the throne, the Neo-Assyrian rulers theoretically secured the position of their dynasty against potentially dissenting magnates, who are discussed in the next chapter.³⁹⁰

³⁹⁰ The ultimate effectiveness of this strategy was disputable: Tiglath-pileser himself took power in a coup, Tiglath-pileser's successor was ousted in a coup, Sennacherib was murdered by his son leading to a succession war, and for all of Esarhaddon's treaties and strictures, his sons Assurbanipal and Šamaš-šumu-ukin engaged in a war against each other anyway. The collapse of the Assyrian dynasty in light of this profound instability at the apex is not unsurprising.

6 *Ṭemu* Overturned: Consent and Conflict

annute minu ša ibaššuni ša laššuni ki aḥe'is laššu la išammuni

These—as to whatever there is that exists or that does not exist, from amongst them
not a single one listens to me!³⁹¹

The propagation of the *ṭemu* of Aššur across the universe was ultimately predicated upon absolute dominion. This was a dominion physical and psychical: the divine plan of the gods needed to traverse imperial territory and interior territory, so both were required to be completely dedicated to the cause. The Assyrian elite had a repertoire of techniques to discipline and direct the interiorities of their subjects towards this end. Nevertheless, despite the totalising impulse propelling the imperial machine, subjects had strategies at their disposal for self-expression without transgression, allowing for some leeway.³⁹²

To assume that this imperial ontology achieved its universal aims would be a mistake. In the previous chapter, we saw that imperial values stood in tension with relationship practices defined by kinship. Rather than valorising the Assyrian hierarchy and subjecting oneself to it, kinship relationality appeared to entail a more autonomous self engaged in affectively salient exchange. Though the priorities of kinship relationality were at odds with dedication to Aššur, the two value systems commingled and coexisted. In this chapter, we explore active contradictions and antagonisms occurring in the imperial inner theatre, tying together many of the themes of the previous chapters. Firstly, we examine how the Assyrian elite ontologically interpreted their enemies within day-to-day interaction: how procedures of dehumanisation, insult and denigration transformed and inverted the positive hierarchical relationships and speaking subjectivities that comprised the ideal empire. We then investigate accounts where Assyrian officials were confronted with active opposition, whether from their subjects, or from their own colleagues. Occupying the same ambiguous, interpretive space of slippage, irony and uncertainty, these encounters reveal the potential autonomy—the *√mgr*-consent—that existed within the subject, and the need for an empire to thus police and control this inner theatre.

³⁹¹ SAA 5 no. 118, rev. 3-7, Gabbu-ana-Aššur to Sargon

³⁹² See chapter 4.

6.1 Dehumanisation

zer-ḫalgati šunu mamiti ša ili u ade ul idu

They are the “Seed-of-the-Lost”, who know not treaty nor oath by the god.³⁹³

Stripping subjects of the right to speak was the most straightforward device for deauthorising and dehumanising those who could or would not be integrated into the Assyrian order. This could be done in the most literal sense:

ša ana šarri beliya isluni lišanšu issu ḫarurtišu lišduduni

The one who lied to the king my lord—let them pull out his tongue from his throat

SAA 1 no. 205, obv. 9-11, Zeru-ibni to Sargon

However, it was more often the case that the inability to speak was considered an inherent attribute of those alien to the Assyrian order, rather than a literal state occasioned by physical punishment. The astrologer Bel-ušeziḫ, in the epigraph to this section, explicitly associates alien characteristics with those who are unable to speak in responsible ways, which were such an essential component of Assyrian authority.³⁹⁴ The *zer-ḫalgati*, literally ‘Seed-of-the-Lost’ have been variously glossed as ‘nomads’³⁹⁵ or ‘barbarians.’³⁹⁶ By being fundamentally unable to speak the binding *ade*-treaty,³⁹⁷ which guaranteed a unity of interior and word marshalled towards Aššur, these beings could not fully participate in the Assyrian world-order.³⁹⁸ The subjectivity of these beings was thus constructed as incompatible, even in the context of Bel-ušeziḫ’s claim where the ‘barbarian’ Cimmerians have spoken cooperatively with Assyrian forces. Thus, the disjuncture between their words and reality was rendered opaque—Bel-ušeziḫ speculates whatever they say is *piršatu*, ‘lie’—transforming the meaning of ‘barbarian’ from its Greek origin. Though the speech may be rendered intelligible to Assyrian ears, the people uttering it cannot imbue the words with any recognisable authorial responsibility, they cannot speak whatever they see and hear,³⁹⁹ and thus cannot participate in any

³⁹³ SAA 10 no. 111, obv. 15-16, Bel-ušeziḫ to Esarhaddon

³⁹⁴ Amply demonstrated by the complex speech strategies and detailed assignment of responsibility we explored in chapter four.

³⁹⁵ CDA s.v. *ḫalqu(m)* ‘j/NB *zer ḫalgati*’

³⁹⁶ Parpola’s translation.

³⁹⁷ For which see p.161.

³⁹⁸ The term *zer-ḫalgati* was effectively synonymous with the term *Umman-manda*, which denoted an enemy horde equated with the forces of chaos (Güterbock 1934: 73 note 4).

³⁹⁹ Which was an essential obligation of the Assyrian subject, as we saw in chapter one.

kind of *temu*-defined relationship. It is at this conjuncture of speech, subjectivity and authority that we find antagonistic relations constructed and portrayed.

The Hand of Criminals: Dehumanising and Deauthorising

As we have seen, certain key characteristics make up the authority of the Assyrian state machine: the *temu*-flow from god to king to hierarchy; the ability to speak this *temu* correctly and truthfully; the appropriately configured topology of interior and exterior to transmit *temu* back and forth without interference from other *temu*-subjectivities, especially the self. However, this idealised image was situated in a historical world and the members of the Assyrian elite were forced to confront elements who did not subscribe to their priorities.

In a letter to a group of subjects described only as the ‘non-Babylonians’ (*la Babili*), Esarhaddon confronts subjects who, according to him, have no place within his ontological scheme. His letter demonstrates how this incompatibility was reconciled:

[a]mat šarri ana la Babilaya šulmu ayaši

The word of the king to the non-Babylonians. Wellbeing is for me.

ina telte ša pi niši šakin

umma kalbu ša paḥḥari ina libbi utuni ki irubu ana libbi paḥḥari unambaḥ

In a saying in the mouth of the people

QUOT The potter's dog, having entered the interior of the kiln, barks at the potter from within.

enna attunu ki la pi ilima ramankunu ana Babilaya tutterra

Now you have turned your *ramanu* into Babylonians, against the word of the god

u dibbi la dibbi ša attunu u belkunu tetepuša ana muḥḥi ardeya šaknatunu

and words that are not words, which you and your lord are confecting, you situate against my servants.

ina teltimma ša pi šakin

umma sinniltu ḥaṭitu ina babi bit-dayyani paša alla ša mutiša dan

In another saying in the mouth of the people

QUOT A criminal woman, her mouth is stronger at the gate of the judge's house than that of her husband.

ṭuppu šarati u meḥanatikunu ša tašpurani ina kunukkiša ki utteru ultebilakkunuši

The tablet of wind and blustering you sent to me, I am sending back to you in its seal.

mindema taqabba

umma mina utirannaši

Perhaps you will speak

QUOT Why has he returned it to us?

ultu Babilayu ardeya u ra'imaniya išparuni ki aptu altaši enna ṭabat ina rete bele ḥiṭṭi ša ilu [x x x x x x x] lulsi

When the Babylonians, my servants and my lovers, wrote to me, I opened it and read it out. Now is it good that I should read from the hands of criminals that the god [x x x x x x]

SAA 18 no. 1, obv. 1-rev. 4, Esarhaddon to the ‘non-Babylonians’

Esarhaddon's strategies for derogating his enemies are mostly straightforward inversions of the principles underpinning the authority of Aššur, with some delightful idiosyncrasies. Opening the letter, the Assyrian king subverts the standard norms of politeness in his opening greeting: he modifies the otherwise generic royal greeting, dispensing with the customary *libbaka lu ṭabka* 'your interior may be good,' as a result of the Assyrian king's wellness. Thus, even at the outset Esarhaddon divorces his interlocutors from the affective schema appropriate to legitimate inhabitants of the Assyrian realm;⁴⁰⁰ a primary locus for the reproduction of the Assyrian hierarchy through politeness is thus transformed into an opportunity for abuse.⁴⁰¹

The rest of the letter is composed of a commentary on authorised and unauthorised speaking. Following this creative greeting, Esarhaddon bolsters his authority with a move to a doubly voiced utterance, the quotation of a *telte*-saying attributed to an inchoate, timeless 'people,' but also being spoken by the king's voice.⁴⁰² This creates a kind of hypostasis between the king and his subjects: by quoting the words of the people, Esarhaddon imbues them with authority as an effect of using those words to buttress his own; this syncretic utterance thus defines a relation of the king and his people on the one side, and the 'non-Babylonians' on the other. Along similar lines Esarhaddon describes his communications with the Babylonians as demonstrating a typical relation, describing them as *ardeya* 'my servants,' in line with usual terminology. His further description of them as *ra'imaniya* is deeply unusual: *√r'm*, 'love,' is rarely attested in the correspondence, especially so when describing a subject relation with the king and his administration.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰⁰ See p.148.

⁴⁰¹ Indeed, Parkin singles out the greeting as being a powerful position from which to disrupt social norms precisely because of their routinised aspect, which supercharges the creativity involved in refashioning the meaning due to the "surprise element" (1980: 48).

⁴⁰² We might also compare this to Irvine's experience of being indirectly insulted during her fieldwork in Senegal (1992: 109-10). There, after she denied a request to borrow a radio, a local informant uttered 'When somebody asks for trousers, their owner puts them on.' This 'epigrammatic... irreproachable' quotation of ancient words has striking similarities with Esarhaddon's impressionistic deployment of proverbs, which obliquely insult rather than making direct links.

⁴⁰³ This affect is infrequently attested in the corpus, even amongst the affectively flourishing letters of the scholars. It is most often used by royal interlocutors to describe the relationship between the king and his gods, e.g., *ina pika ellu ša Marduk u Zarpanitu iramu alte me* 'I heard from your pure mouth that Marduk and Zarpanitu love' (SAA 18 no. 61, obv. 5-7); SAA 13 nos. 56ff., the greeting formula of Urdu-Nabu. Apart from this instance, subjects displaying *√r'm* for the king in the earthly realm are few: Adad-šumu-ušur himself only indirectly alludes to the concept: *mannu bel ṭabti la iram* 'Who does not love a (lit.) lord of goodness?' (SAA 10 no. 198, rev. 10).

This sharply contrasts with the ways in which the speech and acts of the non-Babylonians are portrayed. Firstly, this group is defined as a negation, the *la Babili*. Though this term might refer to one of the many ‘tribal’ Aramaean or Chaldean groups ‘moving around Babylon’ during this period, and whom the Assyrian state alternately favoured or disdained (Fales 2011: 110). By defining his interlocutors exclusively with this negation Esarhaddon strips them of any positive identity. Indeed, it is likely that the construct *la Babili* is Esarhaddon quoting his interlocutors, whom he accuses of declaring themselves Babylonians: thus, he has taken the self-description of these people, quoted it in its negation and revoiced it in his authoritative voice.⁴⁰⁴

An authoritative Assyrian voice set against *dibbi la dibbi*—‘words that are not words.’ This denigration is one that, in concert with stripping the non-Babylonians of a positive identity, strips them of the ability to communicate. In concert with this is Esarhaddon’s description of his interlocutors’ letter as *šarati u mehanatikunu* ‘your wind and blustering,’ a trope used to describe meaningless vanity, usually in the face of righteous divine power (Finn 2017: 27 ff.). Underlining the theme of meaningless noise, we have the analogies introduced by the content of the *telte-*quotations: the non-Babylonians utterances are likened to the voice of a criminal woman and a dog barking (*kalbu... unambaḥ*). Not only are the non-Babylonians stripped of positive identity, but their voices are perceived as equivalent to a dog’s bark: a sound that cannot carry linguistic meaning, cannot carry *ṭemu*, cannot engage in the Assyrian universe as an intentional actor.

Finally, the wilful agency of the non-Babylonians is indirectly slated, as the king writes *attunu ki la pi ilima ramankunu ana Babilaya tutterra* ‘you have turned your *ramanu* into Babylonians against the mouth of the gods’. This once again taps into the idea of the *ramanu* as almost exclusively an inappropriate self-will,⁴⁰⁵ and once again sets it against a model of authoritative speech: the most authoritative of speech in fact, that of the gods.

⁴⁰⁴ We can think of this not only as appropriation, but as re-naming. The power to ‘name’ was cosmologically paramount (*šumu, nabu*): pre-existence was nameless, human beings were defined by their names (Radner 2005: 15-16). Esarhaddon thus appropriates to himself the power to name these people, stripping them of the ability to self-identify, and arrogating to himself the ability to define what a Babylonian is.

⁴⁰⁵ See p.101.

Animals, relationships and insults

aki kalbi asabbu adu'alla
Like a dog, I wander and roam

In the previous discussion, we saw that Esarhaddon, in his invective against the 'non-Babylonians', juxtaposes their actions with that of a 'dog, having entered the potter's kiln.'⁴⁰⁶ In this proverbial micronarrative, it is clear that the non-Babylonians are to be construed as the dog, though Esarhaddon leaves this only as indirect implication.⁴⁰⁷ The choice to insinuate rather than directly express is symptomatic of a complicated relationship between insults, animals and humans within the correspondence, and the field of insulting language more generally. The vast majority of insulting language directed at others takes the form of questioning their capability to speak; by contrast, self-abnegation takes the form of animal description and the ascription of other physical or mental characteristics. This difference serves to underscore the profound importance attached to communicativity: one could be a dog, drunkard,⁴⁰⁸ or dead body, but without the capability of speech, one could not enter into human relation.

As we saw in Esarhaddon's letter, he stripped the non-Babylonians of their capacity for effective, intelligible speech through the devices of wind, storms and barking like a dog. More often than not, however, the canine metaphor was self-ascribed, indicating that the device possessed a more ambiguous role. Rather than describing a position of absolute abjection, to take the position of a dog seems to have alluded to a master-servant relationship. This is described in several letters:

issu dababi anni u ikribi annuti ša šarru beli ana kalbišu ana urdišu u paršume ša betišu išpuruni u ikrubuni
From these speakings and these blessings which the king my lord sent and thus blessed for his dog, for his servant and the old man of his house...

SAA 10 no. 218, obv. 11-bottom edge 17, Adad-šumu-ušur *ašipu* to Esarhaddon or Assurbanipal

anaku Bel-ušeziḫ aradka kalabka u paliḫka
I am Bel-ušeziḫ, your servant, your dog and one who does *√plḫ* for you.

SAA 10 no. 109, obv. 7', Bel-ušeziḫ astrologer to Esarhaddon⁴⁰⁹

anaku uradsu kalbušu u paliḫšu

⁴⁰⁶ SAA 18 no. 1, obv. 5-7 and see above

⁴⁰⁷ There is a certain amount of irony to the fact that adopting an animal role does not seem to have been a vector of 'dehumanisation.' This can be contrasted with the description of the Babylonians as *gallu*-demons in Sennacherib's inscriptions. For more on this see Weissert 1997: 193.

⁴⁰⁸ SAA 1 no. 154, bottom edge. 9; SAA 16 no. 115 rev. 5, no. 34 obv. 9

⁴⁰⁹ See also SAA 18 no. 125 obv. 18'

I am his servant, his dog and one who does his \sqrt{plh}

SAA 16 no. 29 obv. 11, Mardi to Esarhaddon

The takeaway from these three doggy descriptions is that *kalbu* carries a pronominal suffix indexing the king, indicating that, as a dog, the speaker still has a relationship with the king. Ultimately, the letters are quiet with respect to what this would entail. The above quotations suggest that there was a close association with being a practitioner of \sqrt{plh} for the king; similarly, a letter from Adad-šumu-ušur associates *kalbu* with \sqrt{krb} ‘bless, pray.’⁴¹⁰ Adad-šumu-ušur’s scribal training likely meant he was aware of the paronomastic interplay between \sqrt{krb} and *klb*; this kind of analogical operation was an important construct in cuneiform epistemology (Van De Mieroop 2016b: 126) and thus its likely deliberate use here is further evidence for the emphasis on the relational aspects of the canine metaphor.

In addition, a passage from a damaged letter by the *ašipu* Nabu-našir situates the relationship of a dog and its shepherd within a context which includes a servant who practices *libbu* \sqrt{gmr} towards his superiors.⁴¹¹ All these examples thus associate subjective, interior-transforming practices (\sqrt{plh} , \sqrt{krb} , *libbu* \sqrt{gmr}) with the act of canine self-abjection, practices which condition the interior with respect to another being to whom that interior is in relation.

Combined with Esarhaddon’s description of the potter’s dog (despite that canine’s foolishness), we may speculate that a dog *in relationship with a master* was representative of loyalty and thus laudable. This is further buttressed by such a relationship being advertised in one of Sennacherib’s royal inscriptions, where he describes installing a certain Bel-ibni as client king in Babylon, condescendingly referring to him as having ‘grown up like a young puppy in my palace.’⁴¹² This praiseworthy dimension of caninicity consequently provides an explanation as to why Esarhaddon did not simply fling the accusation that the non-Babylonians were ‘dogs’ to go along with his proverb: his letter was working to negate a relationship. Even a recognition of the non-Babylonians as dogs would serve to establish a relationship between master and servant, one which Esarhaddon, denying the subjectivity of the non-Babylonians, would not seek to emphasise.

⁴¹⁰ SAA 10 no. 198, obv. 10-11: *anaku kalbu karib šarri belišu* ‘I am a dog, precant of the king my lord.’

⁴¹¹ SAA 10 no. 307, obv. 8-12.

⁴¹² *Bel-ibni mar rab-bani per’i Šuanna ša kima mirani šaḥri qereb ekalliya irbu* [*ana šarruti mat Šumeri*] *u Akkadi aštakan elišun* ‘Bel-ibni, son of a nobleman, scion of Šuanna, who grew up like a small puppy within my palace, I placed over them [for the kingship of the land of Sumer] and Akkad’ (RINAP 3/1 Sennacherib 1 l.54); see also Frame 2008: 26 for historical background.

Despite this ostensibly positive dimension to taking up puppyhood, there remained an important negative aspect to the canine station that served to render it an ambiguous, potentially abject position. There are a couple of instances where dogs are explicitly associated with negative outcomes:

ki kalbi ina sinqi ina bubuti ša kusapi lu la amu'at

May I not die like a dog in thirst and hunger for scraps

SAA 16 no. 31 rev. 3'-5', Kudurru son of Šamaš-ibni to Esarhaddon

Babili gabbi iptalhu

umma

ana qate kalbani muššurani

Babylon, all of it *√plh*-fears,

QUOT

We have been abandoned into the hands of the dogs.

SAA 17 no. 21 rev. 3-5, Bel-iqiša to the *sukkallu*, reign of Sargon

Both these examples are highly specific: the first is part of a fairly straightforward petition to the king; the second, a more complex petition to the *sukkallu*. Despite their specificity, both of these examples imply canine association was not an enviable position.⁴⁴³ The first brings out the dependence of a dog on their master for their physical wellbeing and basic needs. More interestingly, the second, through its implication that being abandoned into 'the hands of the dogs' is a bad thing, implies that dogs are unsuited to a position of authority.⁴⁴⁴ This evokes an implicit principle of appropriate societal stations, bringing to mind Adad-šumu-ušur's disclaiming *temu* in an administrative sphere.⁴⁴⁵

Underlining this position is how the position of dogs is characterised in accordance with the purposeful *temu* principle of directed action. In several letters and petitions, individuals liken their undesirable situation to the aimless wanderings of canines:

ata ina bubutu ša kusapi amu'at aki kalbi asabbu adu'alla

la betu la amtu la urdu

aki ša šarri beli idagğalannini gamrak

Why am I dying in need of scraps? Like a dog, I wag my tail and wander about.

No house, no servant-woman, no manservant,

The king my lord regards me like this—I am finished!

SAA 13 no. 190, rev. 19-rev. edge 24, Šamaš-šumu-lešir to Esarhaddon/Assurbanipal

⁴⁴³ This ambiguity is further befuddled by the fact that dogs were associated with the healing goddess Gula since ancient times. During the second millennium her temple in the city of Isin housed dogs and was known as the 'House of Dog' (Sum. e₂.ur.gi₇.ra); in the Neo-Assyrian period, canine healing imagery was found on cylinder seals and alluded to in ritual texts. See Chikako Watanabe 2017: 690-693 ff.

⁴⁴⁴ At least, of authority over the city of Babylon.

⁴⁴⁵ See p.57.

This letter, from an Assyrian official of unknown standing tasked with cultic duties, concludes his letter to the king with a particularly florid plea for a royal audience. Embedded in his petition is a telling simile, where he describes himself as a dog ‘wandering about’. By setting this in the situation of his royal summons, and noting that, although the king has summoned him he has not yet had an audience with him, he thus emphasises that he is disengaged and idle, at a loose end. Thus, he exploits the ambiguity of a canine-master relationship—he portrays himself as completely loyal, as being of inferior station to the king, and at the same time is able to critique the king for leaving him unattended. This portrayal, though encoded in a fairly unassuming simile, thus packs in a substantial meta-context regarding domestics, ethics, action and transaction. The relationship of servant with king is as dog to master, the dog uncritical and devoted; the dog is devoid of autonomous means of subsistence, and without his master will die from lack of food; without direction from his master, the dog is purposeless and acts without intention. And, as we saw in chapter one, to be without intention was to be without *ṭemu*; to be without *ṭemu* was undesirable at best⁴¹⁶ and a marker of senselessness at worst.⁴¹⁷ Crowning this is the conclusion that, in return for this canine loyalty, the master must disburse his requisite patronal duties: scraps (*kusapi*) for the stomach and instruction (*ṭemu*) for the mind. Being provided with direction and peaceably undertaking the work assigned was an ethical foundation of the Assyrian state, and deviation from this relation led to disaffection on both sides. We already saw this from the subordinate’s side with Ariḫu’s letter to Nabu-duri-uṣur. There, Ariḫu expressed his disaffection through a shift from indirect to direct register, thus acting upon the relationship-making process directly, collapsing the social gulf between him and his superior. In the above example, a similar lack of direction is lamented, but through analogy and simile: by adopting the ambiguous relationship of the dog loyal to its master, Šamaš-šumu-lešir was able to critique the king through indirect means.

Finally, these pup portrayals could be composed together with other tropes of disorder, from the silent superior,⁴¹⁸ the *la ṣmgr* ‘dissenting’ deputy governor,⁴¹⁹ to overturned *ṭemu*.⁴²⁰ We will

⁴¹⁶ P.49.

⁴¹⁷ P.70.

⁴¹⁸ E.g., SAA 15 no. 288 obv.4-6, Aššur-rešuwa to a deputy governor

⁴¹⁹ Ibid. obv. 8-10.

⁴²⁰ SAA 16 no. 32, rev. 5-12, see p.264.

encounter these these increasingly serious straits in the course of this chapter, but for now we turn to a final example of abusive animalia.

This particularly marked example of animal insult is found juxtaposed with the rare deployment of direct, untranslated speech in a non-Akkadian language. In a letter to Sargon, the governor of Tušhan presents several quotations of an exchange he had with an individual whom Lanfranchi and Parpola suggest is the king of Šubria⁴²¹ (referred to as *Šubriaya* ‘the Šubrian’). In these quotes we find evidence of what is possibly the Šubrian language:

assaparaš[šu]
[n]uk *ata abati muru ša Urarta[ya] issu pan ilani la palhaka*

I sent to him
1.QUOT Why are you not *√plh* before the gods, *abati*, calf of the Urartian?

SAA 5 no. 35 obv. 30-32, Ša-Aššur-dubbu to Sargon

egirtu ina muhhiya issapar
ma tebal ada
ma šabanikunu ašapparakka

He sent a reply tablet to my presence
3.QUOT *tebal ada*
3.QUOT I will send you your men.

ibid. rev. 10-12

Here we see both Ša-Aššur-dubbu and the Šubrian king presented as speaking in what is believed to be the Hurrian language (Lanfranchi & Parpola 1990: 29; Radner 2012: 244). Now, we may wonder at this codeswitching: why is it that Ša-Aššur-dubbu has quoted this Hurrian exchange in a letter to the king, who presumably had no interest in Hurrian, only the Assyrian précis? Does this change of language carry any ideological significance? Ša-Aššur-dubbu’s message to the Šubrian, calling him a ‘calf of the Urartian’ (*muru ša Urartaya*), is almost certainly intended to belittle or insult. In several instances we find Assyrian kings being metaphorically described as *muru*; their patrons are, however, deities, speaking through oracular utterances.⁴²² Thus the analogy thus seems to be one of dependency: Assyrian kings are dependent on the gods, whereas the Šubrian is only cared for by the

⁴²¹ Šubria was one of the buffer states separating Assyria and Urartu, in the headwater region of the Tigris (Radner 2012: 260)

⁴²² E.g. SAA 9 no. 1, obv. 29; no. 2 iv. 20’; no. 5, 3; no. 7 rev. 11

king of Urartu. A legitimate and desirable relationship is thus reconfigured to serve as a demeaning insult, one further emphasised by the cross-cultural frequency with which animal insults are to be found (Irvine 1992: 108). That this bovine insult is reported twice in this letter, once in Hurrian (abati) and once in Assyrian (*muru*), further marks this out. It may very well be that, with Ša-Aššur-dubbu speaking to the Šubrian in Hurrian whilst criticising him, that recording his response again in Hurrian further emphasises his baseness: linking Hurrian with insult in the letter, then having the king of Šubria speak in that language. By having this language inscribed into the letter for its projected future dictation to Sargon, Ša-Aššur-dubbu perhaps intended to transpose this baseness right into the royal presence, sonically evoking an abject realm on the Assyrian border and emphasising the differential in the implicit language ideologies.

To conclude, a key theme underlying this scornful menagerie was that, despite the abasement involved in identifying self or other in animal terms, these animals were all domesticated. In her study on Mesopotamian animal symbolism, Watanabe emphasises the importance of domestication processes to Mesopotamian narrative practices, associating them closely with Assyrian imperialism (2002: 153-4). This association carried with it notions of integration and control: thus, despite the abusive aspects of animal metaphor, humans who adopted it or regarded others with it did not necessarily exile the described from hierarchical society. This operation was reserved solely for the unspeaking.

Diminution

In contrast to animalistic speech as a derogatory strategy, diminutive descriptions were exclusively used in a negative sense, rather than occupying an ambiguous, relationally interpreted position. This was particularly associated with the root \sqrt{qll} , which contrasted with the more neutral $\sqrt{\dot{s}hr}$ which we encountered in royal family relationships.⁴²³ Illustrating this, we can return to Ša-Aššur-dubbu's correspondence. There, we find a nice example of insult being directed at the Assyrians from without the empire, the Urařian governor of the city of Pulua, who condescends to his counterpart:

pa ĥutu ŝa Pulua ŝa putuwa issabar
ma ata mar-ŝipri ŝa aĥiya qalli [la illi]ka
ma ilu ina paniŝu erraba

The governor of Pulua opposite me has written,
3.QUOT Why has the messenger of my lesser brother [not come]?
3.QUOT Is a god visiting him?

SAA 5 no. 33, right. edge 16-edge 1, Ša-Aššur-dubbu to Sargon

The use of kinship terms here is quite unusual. As we saw in the previous chapter, *aĥu* 'brother' frequently appears, alone, to refer to an interlocutor of equal status. Here it is uniquely qualified by *qallu*, which Parpola here translates as 'little' but carries a more insulting connotation, having a secondary meaning of 'slave.' If we interpret this as a deliberate insult then, we get the impression that the Urařian governor has deliberately slighted his Assyrian counterpart (or at least, has been portrayed as doing so in this letter). Furthermore, by offering the suggestion in rhetorical question form that Ša-Aššur-dubbu has not attended the Urařian governor's audience because of a divine visit, the Urařian governor has positioned himself as directly below the gods in a hierarchy of duties. Thus, he creates a mocking hierarchy, where he aggrandises himself and denigrates the Assyrian governor and, indirectly, the Assyrian king.

This is doubly interesting in light of the multiple layers of transmutation this utterance must have passed through to reach the Assyrian court in this form. The governor of Pulua is given an Assyrian title, *paĥutu*, and is quoted as speaking in the Assyrian language. We can surmise that at some point a translation process occurred from the Urařian language to Assyrian, possibly during the creation

⁴²³ P.219.

of the Urartian governor's message, if he maintained an Assyrian cuneiform scribe in his entourage specifically to compose messages in his name.⁴²⁴ Consequently we have a translation of insults in that the 'belittling' aspect in the Urartian governor's speech must have been interpreted, translated, adduced at some point.

From the geopolitical sphere to a domestic sphere, we have a certain Bel-iqiša writing to Esarhaddon about some issues provisioning horses but, in a grimly amusing contrast, the subtext of which is a murder plot against him, he mentions that a scribe 'established my *√qll*:

*issi Nabu-[x x] ṭupšarru ša rab-beti addab[ub]
 muk ki[ssutu pa]nitu ana sisse din
 qulaleya issakan u iqabbia
 ma anaku issu betanni apparaska
 u issu bet šarru beli ina bet beleya ipqiddannini ina muḥḥi memmeni ina bet beleya la šaltak
 u issi ṭupšarru ša qateya addububu ina muḥḥi du[a]ki[ya] idabbub bet beleya gabbi ikterik šapluš issakan šulmanate
 uzzazi idukanni*

I talk with Nabu-[...] the scribe of the major-domo

1.QUOT Give the [pr]evious fo[dder] to the horses

He has established my belittlement and speaks to me

3.QUOT I, I will cut you off from the inner quarters

And since the king my lord appointed me in the household of my lord, concerning whatever is in the household of my lord, I have no control

And I was talking with the scribe at my hand, he talks concerning [my] kil[l]ing—he has wrapped up the house of my lords and placed it under him, he divides up gifts for my killing.

SAA 16 no. 112, obv. 10-rev. 14, Bel-iqiša to Esarhaddon

Rendering people as *√qll*, unlike the threatening context of murder alluded to above, also appears to have been a fairly tame disciplinary procedure:

*Urdu-Nabu egertu ana Bel-eṭir ana Šamaš-zeru-iqiša issapra
 ma masennu ša illikanni
 ma ša la šarri ittalka
 ma ina muḥḥi piya qallilaššu*

Urdu-Nabu sent a letter to Bel-eṭir and Šamaš-zeru-iqiša

3.QUOT The treasurer that came here

3.QUOT that came without the king,

3.QUOT by my mouth, belittle him

SAA 16 no. 21, rev. 9-13, Šamaš-šumu-ukin *mar-šarri Babili* to Esarhaddon

⁴²⁴ Analogous to the duties of Babylonian scribes at the Assyrian court (Pimgruber 2014: 1).

At first glance, this seems to be a simple imperative from a senior scholar to berate a junior for acting without the authority of the king. However, it is set in the context of a report describing some serious sedition which undoes the *temu* of the king, discussed in further detail below.

6.2 Sound, Silence, Speech

Storm and Winds, Bluster and Bloviation

itti šarru idabbuba sulle u surrati išissu meḥu u panassu šaru

He who talks deceit and lies with the king—his foundation is a storm, his front is wind⁴²⁵

Utterly depriving entities of the ability to speak—and thus stripping them completely of their ability to become subjects in the Assyrian cosmic hierarchy—was an extreme form of antagonism and nonrecognition. A less extreme operation, which avoided the complete dehumanisation of the described being, was to describe their utterances as meaningless. This was accomplished with a variety of terms. As we saw in Esarhaddon’s letter to the non-Babylonians, he describes their letter as *ṭuppu šarati u meḥanatikunu* ‘your tablet of wind and bluster.’⁴²⁶ This metaphorical move, transposing meaningful language into the field of sonic aimlessness, was a typical manoeuvre attested throughout cuneiform literature, as amply accounted for in Finn’s study (2017: 27 ff. and throughout). Furthermore, unlike the descriptive practices used to dehumanise or demean, these terms were applied to the acts and habits of speaking subjects enclosed within the Assyrian order. Unlike *kalbu*, however, these terms were mostly employed to describe the words of others:

dibbi ša nišiya piḥati idi ki šarati išeṭtu mindema ana beliya lu ana mimma ana muḥḥiya išapparuni piḥatu la iqapšunuti

The words of my people: the governor knows that they are spreading winds. Perhaps they might write to my lord about a thing that concerns me or about me—the governor must not believe them.

SAA 17 no. 164, rev. 1’-6’, Šuzubu to an unnamed *piḥatu*-governor

enna mašennu ki ipturuš šaratišuma ul umaššar nisaḥu unassaḥu u ana šabe ipaššar umma ṭema ana ekalli la ikaššadma

Now when the treasurer released him, he did not forsake his winds but continued to tax the tax and releasing for men

QUOT My *ṭemu* will not reach the palace

SAA 18 no. 102, rev. 5’-9’, unassigned to Naqī’a,

These examples demonstrate the two occasions where *šaru* is employed to denigrate the utterances of others. The first is attributed to a man who names himself Šuzubu—potentially to be equated

⁴²⁵ SAA 10 no. 29, rev. 8-right edge. 11, Issar-šumu-ereš to Esarhaddon

⁴²⁶ SAA 18 no. 1, obv. 16.

with Mušeziḫ-Marduk, who proclaimed himself king of Babylon in opposition to Sennacherib.⁴²⁷ In his letter, he denigrates the unspecified utterances of his people, further qualifying it with the modal particle *mindema*,⁴²⁸ which introduces an uncertain future containing further unspecified utterances, resulting in heavy indirection. We might again recall Esarhaddon's attitude to the non-Babylonians *šarati u meḫanati*—he did not even have that letter recited to him. Thus, in both these instances we have the words of a collectively defined group not only being stripped of their meaning but immediately dismissed.

The second example above is consequently somewhat unusual in describing a single, named subject,⁴²⁹ though it does not report a specific utterance. Instead, the author chooses to quote words not framed by a *verbum dicendi*, suggesting that they are private, even interior words. How the author came by these words is not revealed, but the subject is described as certain his *ṭemu* will not reach the Palace. This again indicates that the *ṭemu* of Aššur was not alone, and required the Assyrian hierarchy to manifest it in the world: a seditious, stormy being like Aplaya could tax illicit tax, and have his *ṭemu* (underlined with an unusual possessive suffix) manifest without waylay.

Unword Words

Carrying a similar function to *šaru u meḫu*, but without that phrase's intertextual echoes, was the simple description *dibbi la dibbi* 'words that are not words'. Unlike wind and storms, 'word that are not words' are paradoxical: they have a capacity for being words in form, but something about them makes them 'not words'; they are able to be uttered, by being associated with a verb such as \sqrt{dbb} , but they lose their meaning.

The number of instances of words-not-words is only three. The first demonstrates the usage of the phrase in a decidedly non-official context: a land dispute within the family of a client ruler:

⁴²⁷ Frame 2008: 26. If the author of this letter is indeed to be identified with the Babylonian ruler, then this presents an interesting dynamic in that in this letter Šuzubu is denouncing his own people, and in Sennacherib's royal inscription account of the battle of Ḫalule, he describes these same people as *gallu* demons (Weissert 1997: 193). It is in this same passage, furthermore, that these people ally with the Elamite king Ḫumban-menanu *ša la išu ṭemu u milki* 'who does not have *ṭemu* or counsel' (RINAP 3/1 Sennacherib 22 col v 33-34).

⁴²⁸ See p.198.

⁴²⁹ Presumably Aplaya son of Nadinu, mentioned in obv. 8 of the letter. He appears to be the only subject under discussion, though the damaged tablet means we cannot be certain the topic has not changed by rev. 6'.

Se'-lukidi mar aḥ abišu ša Gir-[Dadi] [i]ttalka [iqṭibia] ...

ma kum šarru issu Dur-Yakini isaḥḥurani ušagalnašini Giri-Dadi dibbi la dibbi idubbubu nakuttu rašši

Se'-lukidi, the son of the brother of the father of Giri-[Dadi] has come, [he spoke to me] ...

3.QUOT lest the king should return from Dur-Yakin and cause us to be deported; Giri-Dadi spoke words which were not words, he had trembling

SAA 1 no. 190, obv. 16-18 + rev. 4'-9', Nabu-pašir to Sargon

Here, the description *dibbi la dibbi* is used by Se'-lukidi to empty Giri-Dadi's words of meaning after they were uttered: in effect deauthorising those words after the fact. This revocation is a kind of disclaimer of responsibility—a 'he didn't mean it' move—with Se'-lukidi's concerns about the effect of Giri-Dadi's words explicitly attested: he does not want to be deported.⁴³⁰

Finally, we have *dibbi la dibbi* being used as an attempt to negate words spoken to a *ša-qurbuti*:

[ša-qurbu]tu ša šarru bela iš[pura]

umma dinka lipuš

ana [x x x] ki illiku la dibbi ittišu iddabbu mimma mala bašu dina ul ipuš

The Close One that the king my lord sent to me,

QUOT Make your case

for [x x x] that he came, they spoke not-words with him, whatever exists, my case he did not do.

SAA 18 no. 9, rev. 2'-7', unassigned to Esarhaddon

We can compare this with a letter attributed to Šuma-iddin, where another Close One is involved in ascertaining a case.⁴³¹ There, the speaker uses *amat la amat* (rev. 13') instead of *dibbi la dibbi*, and this is additionally associated with outright untruth (*la kitti*, rev. 7'). Unlike describing speech as *šaru* or *meḥu* then, it seems that describing speech as 'words not words' applied to utterances that were understood as meaningful language at some point. It would be inappropriate to describe Assyrian officials like the *ša-qurbuti* as actively listening to blustering; instead, by emphasising the paradoxical words that appear as words, but are *not* in fact words, subjects who describe the utterances of others in this way do not inadvertently insult those who listened to these unword words—anyone might have been taken in by these noises that merely sounded meaningful.

⁴³⁰ Deportation, \sqrt{gl} , being a generally awful fate, for which see chapter three

⁴³¹ SAA 13 no. 179.

The Silent Subject

Mirroring the conceptions of meaningless, stormy noise is the concept of the silent subject. Unlike words described as meaningless noise, as *šaru* or *meḥu*, subjects described as $\sqrt{q'l}$ ‘silent’ are conceived of as lacking agency. In some contexts, this could be highly desirable, as when the Urartians are defeated by the Cimmerians:

[*ina muḥḥi*] *Urartaya assa'alšu*
ma *Urartaya [rabiutišu ana] Gimir bet illikuni*
 [*ma* *x x*] *issu pan šarri beliya palḥu adanniš*
 [*ma* *a*] *ki issati irubu iqullu*
 [*ma* *ina*] *birat ša šarri beliya memeni [la x x x]*
ma *šulmu adanniš*

I interrogated him concerning the Urartians

3.QUOT The Urartian [and his magnates were defeated] on their expedition [against] the Cimmerians
 [3.QUOT] they are very $\sqrt{plḥ}$ before the king my lord
 [3.QUOT] they shake and are silent like women
 [3.QUOT] nobody [x x x] the forts of the king my lord
 3.QUOT there is very much wellbeing

SAA 1 no. 32, obv. 10-16, Sennacherib *mar-šarri* to Sargon

Sennacherib reports a most desirable state of affairs for the Assyrians. The Urartians have suffered a defeat in battle, not against the Assyrians but another foe, with a result that now they have $\sqrt{plḥ}$ towards the Assyrian king.⁴³² Yet, in addition to this, they are described with the somatic depiction of shaking ($\sqrt{r'b}$), staying silent ($\sqrt{q'l}$), like women. As we would expect, the state of $\sqrt{plḥ}$ before the king is associated with wellbeing (*šulmu*), yet these additional glosses are illuminating. Rather than exhibiting the performative affect of those subjects counted as Assyrians—doing their work in *libbu* $\sqrt{t'b}$ as subjects of the king—they are instead rendered as transfixed. $\sqrt{r'b}$, an ambiguous somatic description of shaking, requires further interpretation in context to translate it into something like ‘fear’ or ‘anger.’ There are instances of the king exhibiting $\sqrt{r'b}$ in contexts in which he cannot be associated with practicing $\sqrt{plḥ}$;⁴³³ there, the king is actively speaking, whereas here, the Urartians are silent and $\sqrt{plḥ}$. Though the relevant verb is not preserved, the allusion to nobody being able to act against the king’s forts further suggests that an ideal outcome for $\sqrt{plḥ}$ is the powerlessness of

⁴³² Sennacherib pointedly omits any mention of the Urartian attitude towards the Cimmerians. We might expect that the Urartians would be fearful before the Cimmerians rather than spontaneously becoming $\sqrt{plḥ}$ before the Assyrian king.

⁴³³ See for example SAA 16 nos. 71, 121.

√q'l, of silence, such that the Urartians' recognised capacity to act intentionally is thoroughly negated. This is relational √plh: for subjects of Assyria, √plh entailed song and dance;⁴³⁴ for the Urartians, powerless silence.

Silence of the Assyrians

The idea of √q'l-silence as a sign of weakness or powerlessness was also one that found use by correspondents within the Assyrian state. An episode of aggression appears between two high officials within the empire, the governor Taklak-ana-Bel and the *sukkallu*. Despite the respectful language universally accorded to the *sukkallu*, which Taklak-ana-Bel appears to use, the governor switches to a direct register in which he embeds an accusation of √q'l. Parpola reconstructs the greeting formula, before proceeding to a well-preserved narrative section, describing the murder of a certain Baḥianu by the criminal Bel-lu-balaṭ. The letter concludes:

*issu pan zakke gabbu issena alpani ittaḥar niše mati gabbu ina muḥḥi isset šepišunu izzazzu
ata qalaka dababu anniu ina ekalli šašme
adu atta ina muḥḥi [x x x] ana ḥiṭṭi la taša[kkan]ni illaka
adu taš[muni] [be]li libbateya i[malla]*

From before all the exempts he (Bel-lu-balaṭ) has received oxen, one from each; all the people of the land stand upon a single foot.

Why are you silent? Make this talking heard in the Palace.

Whilst you concerning [x x x] you do not place me at fault.

Until you [make it heard], my lo[rd] will be [filled with] rage of me.

SAA 1 no. 244, rev. 9-18, Taklak-ana-Bel, governor of Naṣibin, to the *sukkallu*

This shift to second-person address is highly marked. For comparison, a letter sent to the *sukkallu* from a Babylonian administrator, Bel-iqiša, is less harsh in tone:

*ammeni Babilu iḥḥapi u beli sakit
Šamaš u Marduk ana abbut ša Aššur iltaknuka šarru šukpidma lillikamma Babilu ana Marduk luzakki šumkunu ana
dara[ti] ina Esagil u Ezida [liškun]*

Why is Babylon being destroyed, and my lord is silent?

Šamaš and Marduk have placed you as a father of Assyria — make the king plan to come here and exempt Babylon for Marduk, [establish] your name for ever in Esagil and Ezida.

SAA 17 no. 21, rev. 11-16, Bel-iqiša to the *sukkallu*

⁴³⁴ P.132.

We can see that, despite both correspondents shifting to address the *sukkallu* directly in the second person, Taklak-ana-Bel's tone can be characterised as markedly more aggressive. Firstly, whilst both correspondents describe the *sukkallu* as silent, Bel-iqiša still uses the third-person to address him, and also uses the form *sakit*, whereas Taklak-ana-Bel refers to him directly with a second-person suffix, and uses $\sqrt{q'l}$. Additionally, both use imperatives to address the *sukkallu*, *šašme* 'make heard' and *šukpid* 'make plan.' However, Taklak-ana-Bel continues to use second person address throughout, even using a prohibitive *la taša[kkan]ni*, actively restricting the agency of the *sukkallu* by telling him what he must not do. Finally there is the mention of *libbateya* 'rage at me.' The use of *libbatu* in the correspondence is limited, appearing only one other time in a damaged context.⁴³⁵ The context is damaged here as well—all we know is that the rage is being directed at Taklak-ana-Bel, as the agent has been lost.

This friction extended even to the highest reaches of the imperial hierarchy: a client king writes to Sennacherib *mar-šarri* directly accusing him of $\sqrt{q'l}$.⁴³⁶ If we take these together with Ariḫu's exasperation at his silent subordinates,⁴³⁷ we see that $\sqrt{q'l}$ within Assyria is indicative of hierarchical dysfunction. For again, despite the demands of smooth *temu*, ambiguity dissolved and subjectivities secure, problems and pushback permeated Assyria at all levels. In the next section, we explore this pushback within the hierarchy itself, before concluding with how the non-elite under the Assyrian yoke threw off the *temu* allotted to them.

⁴³⁵ See SAA 13 no. 182, obv. 9'. Generally, somatic descriptions are used to describe an anger response, such as the 'jumping interior' (*libbu $\sqrt{šht}$*) or 'shaking' (*$\sqrt{r'b}$*).

⁴³⁶ SAA 1 no. 29, rev. 12-17, Sennacherib *mar-šarri* to Sargon.

⁴³⁷ *bel piqittate qalu* 'the officials are silent' SAA 1 no. 220, rev. 1.

6.3 Dissent and Discontent in the Assyrian Hierarchy

The absolute denigration of extra-Assyrian elements, the denial of their ability to speak, to interface with the truth, and thus participate in the process of *temu*-making—these techniques of delegitimisation could not be applied wholesale and unmodified to those within the Assyrian hierarchy itself. As outlined in chapter one, this hierarchy justified itself as enacting the *temu* of Aššur and the great gods, the gods of the king. The members of the political elite—the *šarru*-‘king,’ *rabiuti*-‘magnates,’ *paḥutu*-‘governors,’ *šaknu*-‘prefects,’ *šakin-temi*-‘establishers of *temu*’—all of them derived their authority in a hierarchical chain linking god, king, and subordinates. However, competition and antagonism between these men was rife, spanning succession wars at the apex of the empire to disputes over sheep. In a universe where all things were authored by the gods, the paradoxical nature of the imperial authority turned against itself presented both practical and ontological problems. For practically, men such as the *rabiuti*, in possession of their own armies and power bases, represented a real threat to the incumbent king, especially as royal family men were valid contenders for the throne.⁴³⁸ These men could not be easily ‘punished’—raising their ire might pose a threat to the current king, and exterminating them, as Esarhaddon did after the conspiracy against him, would deprive the Empire of a significant section of its ruling class and lead to disruption (Radner 2003: 174-5). Consequently, the strategies for dealing with dissent at high levels of the hierarchy were indirect, as we saw in chapter three;⁴³⁹ other times, disobedience was tolerated, as we are about to see.

⁴³⁸ Tiglath-pileser and Sargon themselves occupied high state roles before usurping the thrones of Aššur-nerari (V) and Shalmaneser (V) respectively.

⁴³⁹ P.140.

Magnates Do Whatever

ša šarru belini išpurannašini
ma ana rabiuti ṭemu assakan
ma denkunu eppušu
nittitzi ina panišunu la immaggur denu ša bet belešunu la epušu

That which the king sent to us

3.QUOT I have established *ṭemu* upon the magnates

3.QUOT they will render justice for you.

We have stood in their presence, but they have not consented to render a decision for the household of their lord.

SAA 16 no. 41, obv. 9-bottom edge 16, Nabu-tukulti, Nabu-šumu-lešir, Mutakkil-Adad to

Esarhaddon

In the previous chapters we have seen how the nexus of concepts centred on *ṭemu*—intention, speech, action, authority—was central to the unfolding of the Assyrian imperial project. Disruption to this was cause for distress, as witnessed by Ariḫu’s snippy, aggressive register shift.⁴⁴⁰ In that letter, Ariḫu bemoaned a lack of *ṭemu* from his superiors—nonfeasance, rather than malfeasance as it were. Nevertheless, this alludes to a problem endemic to the Assyrian hierarchical system: instability, dispute, opposition and antagonism within the relationships of the individuals ensconced in the imperial mission itself. This low-level antagonism represented just as much a threat to the reliable unfolding of *ṭemu* as the outright opposition faced by the Assyrian king in his wars, and was a dangerous undercurrent that could erupt into full rebellion from within the Assyrian hierarchy itself (amply documented in Radner 2016). In other words, rather than forming a monolithic machine, the visible actors of the Assyrian ruling elite were in almost constant competition with each other, for resources, favour and power.

The epigraph to this section, a damaged petition sent by three men of unknown standing, clearly shows that it was possible to conceive of the *ṭemu* being unfulfilled by royal officials. The authors deploy a defective mirroring of the king’s speech, directly quoting Esarhaddon before describing the outcome in the negative: the *rabiuti*-magnates *la immaggur* ‘do not consent’ to instantiate the *ṭemu* the king has imposed.

Though this description originates in a ‘petition’ letter to the king, in which the authors explicitly seek to have wrongs redressed, we find it mentioned that *rabiuti*-magnates also withheld their consent (*√mgr*) in letters not specifically appealing to the king about official misfeasance. A letter

⁴⁴⁰ P.49.

from Nabu-aḫu-ušur to Sargon again explicitly underlines how the king's *ṭemu* is disregarded by the great ones serving under him:

ina bet šarru beli ina muḫḫi rabiuti išpurannini ammar šarru beli ṭemu iškunannini gabbu addubbaššunu
The king my lord sent me to where the magnates are. Whatever *ṭemu* the king my lord established, I talked all of it to them.

SAA 5 no. 226, obv. 4-9, Nabu-aḫu-ušur to Sargon

ina muḫḫi rabiuti ša šarru beli iqbuni
ma 50 pethallu ina panišunu likliu
ma reḫte sissešunu ina muḫḫiya lillikuni
aqṭibaššunu la immagguru
ma illuku ina šiddi ḫuli imuttu
ma issini illakuni

Concerning the magnates about whom the king spake
3.QUOT They may hold fifty riding horses in their presence
3.QUOT the remainder of the horses should come to me
I spake thus to them but they did not consent
3.QUOT They will go and die on the side of the road
3.QUOT they will come with us

rev. 12-17

The scenario depicted here punctures the image of the well-oiled Assyrian machine. We may recall the multiplicity of pleas to the king from individuals high and low hoping to secure the dispatch of a *ša-qurbuti*, ‘Close One’ of the king, in order for this envoy to be an avatar of the royal personage: the trusted eyes and ears of the Assyrian ruler.⁴⁴¹ Here, we meet one such *ša-qurbuti*, Nabu-aḫu-ušur, who, in his account of his doings, specifically underlines how he replicates the *ṭemu* established by the king.

Yet the magnates do not *√mgr*, they do not consent to the *ṭemu* Sargon has established. The construction of this refusal is telling. The magnates are not at any point described as *la √šm*, not hearing, which we find used to describe disobedience on the part of subordinates.⁴⁴² Instead, active

⁴⁴¹ For example, we find this situation turned on its head when an Assyrian official of unknown standing writes to Esarhaddon reporting that his orders were rejected:

ana muḫḫi ummanu ša-rešani u šabe ḫalqutu ša Šamaš-ibni ša ina pan Nabu-ušallim ša šarru beli išpura ki aqbaššu ul imangurma ul inamdina umma ša la unqu šarri u ša la ša-qurbute ul anamdakka

‘Regarding the runaway scholars, eunuchs and troops of Šamaš-ibni who are in the presence of Nabu-ušallim, I spoke unto him as the king my lord sent to me but he did not consent, he did not give,

QUOT. I will not give them to you without a sealed document of the king and without a *ša-qurbuti*’ (SAA 18 no. 56 obv. 8-13, Ninurta-a[ha-...] to Esarhaddon)

⁴⁴² See p.267.

communication is emphasised, with Nabu-aḥu-ušur pointedly replicating the king's speech and the magnates replying in direct speech qualifying *la immagguru*. However, obviating the possibility of dangerous transgression and providing the scope for the magnates' lack of \sqrt{mgr} is Sargon's quoted speech itself: his directions are couched in the precative mood, not the imperative.

This is extremely unusual: it is a stereotypical feature of the royal register that imperatives are used throughout to communicate the king's will. Why then does he use precative constructions here? It could be argued that the precative is being used to signal permission rather than order: the magnates are permitted to retain fifty riding-horses, and the remainder are to be dispatched to Sargon. Furthermore, the sentence is phrased in such a way that there is no direct agent to whom an imperative command could be directed. However, the same desired state of affairs could easily have been communicated imperatively, and thus the indirection here, though unremarkable at first glance, is extraordinary when attributed to the mouth of the Assyrian ruler.

It seems then that Sargon's use of the precative is what enabled this flexibility in acceding to *temu* to pass without disaster. The situation of the highest officials of Assyria directly disobeying a royal command would have been alarming,⁴⁴³ yet here they do not consent to follow Sargon's directions. The question remains—why *did* Sargon couch these orders precatively in the first place? Did he intend to permit the magnates the scope to make their own decisions here? Or did he anticipate that the magnates would disregard what he had to say, and thus phrased his words indirectly so as to save face on his part? The first possibility maintains a status quo interpretation of the word of the Assyrian king as all-powerful. The second scenario begets a far more interesting and subtle conception of imperial power dynamics. The 'constructed' nature of the absolute Assyrian kingship, perpetuated by elite 'buy-in,' has been an increasingly favoured historical interpretation (Lanfranchi 1997; Parker 2011), yet the degree to which this was recognised internally by the Assyrian elites themselves has been uncertain. The quietly antagonistic interplay of intentions here—the seemingly faulty *temu* $\sqrt{škn}$, Sargon's indirected precatives delivered through his *ša-qurbuti*, the magnates' *la* \sqrt{mgr} —portray a situation where all parties were aware of their agency, and were able

⁴⁴³ As Radner describes in her account of the uprising against Esarhaddon, men in powerful positions within the Assyrian hierarchy were significant assets to both the reigning king, and any contestants should they arise (2016: 53)

to use specific linguistic strategies to navigate through this social complexity without the event descending into outright ‘insubordination.’⁴⁴⁴

√*grr*: Deterrence and the Aššur Temple

The Assyrian recognition of the actuality of disobedience and disorder within the ranks is something we have already encountered. In our discussion of disciplinary √*grr*,⁴⁴⁵ we encountered two letters from Assyrian scholars recommending to the king that *šiptu* ‘judgement, punishment’ be exacted upon some scribes and subordinates to deter their superiors. The first, from Mar-Issar, Esarhaddon’s personal agent in Babylonia, advises the king to deter his governors from appropriating temple treasure:

amelu ša ana paḥiti ušadbibuni šiptu ina libbišu liškunu [lu]di’u ligruru [ul]a [makkuri] ša ekurrate gab[bu] paḥati upaḥ[ḫuru]

The man that incited (lit. ‘caused to speak) the governor, a judgement should be established in his interior. Let them know, let them be √*grr* [el]se the governors will dissipate al[1] the [treasure] of the temples.

SAA 10 no. 369, rev. 12-17, Mar-Issar to Esarhaddon

The second letter, also dealing with malfeasant governors, is more interesting, as it demonstrates the ability to which the Assyrian magnates could actively resist one of their most important duties:

*ma? šarri lu ḫasis aki baḥlu ina muḫḫi ilanika [išak]kanuni
kima šiptu ina ḫupšarri issen šarri la iškun [reḫute] la igarruru
[x x x+x] anniu [kima] šaknu ḫamussu [la] naša ina bet ilanika [la] iddin rabiuti reḫute ina šašu idaggulšu baḥlu
išakkunu ina bet ilanika*

3. QUOT The king should remember that they have [imp]osed the stoppage

If the king does not establish a judgement for one scribe, [the rest] will not be √*grr*

[x x x +x] this [if] a prefect does [not] bring in the one-fifth tax and does [not] give it to your temple, the remaining magnates will see this, they will impose a stoppage on your temples.

SAA 13 no. 31, rev. 1-3, Iddin-Aššur to Esarhaddon/Assurbanipal

⁴⁴⁴ There are other instances within the correspondence of the *rabiuti* being described as lax in following royal orders. In the letter SAA 1 no. 143, Ilu-iqbi writes to Sargon stating that the magnates have not acted on the king’s imperative order *batqu dina* ‘provide replacement’ (rev. 3-4): *rabiuti la immaggurru la iddanunaši* ‘the magnates do not consent, they do not give to us’ (rev. 10-11).

Regarding the sheep offerings of the Aššur Temple, Esarhaddon asks of Akkullanu *mannu ina rabiuti ša la immagguruni la iddinuni* ‘who of the magnates are there that do not consent and do not give’ (SAA 10 no. 96, obv. 6 8). The governors of Rašappa and Arzuḫina are included in the group of *rabiuti*; in another letter, these provinces are described as having not consented to give the sheep offering for two years (*immere maddatti la immaggur la iddunu*, SAA 13 no. 21, rev. 9-10, attr. Dadi to Esarhaddon).

⁴⁴⁵ P.140.

The provision of the Aššur temple was one of the central tenets of the Assyrian Empire and the foundation of the kingship, yet here we find that it was conceivable that the magnates could be induced to stop this crucial impost at the drop of a hat.⁴⁴⁶ Taking the foregoing examples in mind, it seems clear that despite the apparent stability of the Assyrian hierarchical system and its divinely ordained imperative, wilfulness, resistance and disobedience was possible at all levels. Furthermore, when it came to the magnates and other extremely high ranking Assyrian officials, their acts were pointedly *not* described with the language of lies, rebellion, disorder as the invective we find for those outside the hierarchy. Finally, the tension between the different elite institutions—the royal Palace, the magnates, the temples—is resolved not through outright rebellion,⁴⁴⁷ but through a punitive procedure that destroys the magnates’ resources: human resources. Thus, a potentially explosive political situation is defused by transferring punishment onto those with less prestige and power to threaten the king.

la √mgr: Dissent

annuti [mar'e] mat Aššurma la immaggur [šarru] beli la ipalluḫu [mar'e] mat nakiri ake [ana] šarri beliya illuku
 These are [sons] of the land of Aššur, and they do not consent to *√plḫi* the [king] my lord—how will [sons] of the foreign land go [for] the king my lord?

SAA 13 no. 19, rev. 2-6, Dadi to Esarhaddon

To the catalogue of subjective attributes and relational attitudes beings had with Assyria we add yet another higher-order emotion, that of *√mgr*, usually translated ‘to agree’ or ‘to consent’. These English translations already embed some of the complexity of this state: ‘agree’ being derived from *ad-* ‘to’ + *gratus* ‘pleasing’ and ‘consent’ from *con-* ‘together’ + *sentire* ‘feel’.⁴⁴⁸ In other words, what we might consider to be deliberative, rational or individualised remains charged with implicit intersubjective meaning. In a recent examination of the concept, the philosopher John Kleinig distinguishes between the phenomenon’s ‘state of mind’ aspect and its communicative aspect, echoing previous scholars who dubbed it a performance of ‘moral magic’ (2010: 9-10).

⁴⁴⁶ SAA 13 nos. 8-11 show that this essential provision did indeed stop on several occasions.

⁴⁴⁷ Though even this could be contested: Tiglath-pileser and Sargon took the throne in *coups d'état*, Sennacherib was murdered by a son passed over for the throne, a rebellion of the magnates occurred in Esarhaddon’s reign, leading to the extraordinary event of their extermination, and Assurbanipal fought a civil war with his elder brother who was appointed to throne of Babylon.

⁴⁴⁸ OED s.v. ‘consent’

Here, \sqrt{mgr} is clearly situated in a communicative context, existing within a dialogue of *temu* and action; more often than not, a dialogue of *temu* frustrated. The majority of appearances of \sqrt{mgr} constructions are negated, arising in contests about authority.

We have already encountered the ability of the *rabiuti*, the group of ‘magnates’ forming the highest echelons of the Assyrian leadership, to express their lack of \sqrt{mgr} through direct contravention of royal *temu* or simply through inaction or noncompliance. This scope for dissent was not limited to the great ones of Assyria alone, but is found in reference to several governors in relation to royal orders. We will take three examples from narratives about the surfeit of disputes between governors regarding the implementation of royal orders. The first, taken from a letter attributed to the governor of Damascus, informs the king of problems raising food supplies:

*šarru beli [temu issakan]
 ma paḫati [gabbu] kusapi kissutu issu alani [madbar] issikunu intuḫu
 ma Adad-isse’a Bel-lešir ana Abu-lešir lušakilu*

*la immaggur la išammi
 ata innute
 ma alani ina madbar ša paḫati gabbišunu alani ina libbi aḫiši pa-nu-gu*

The king my lord [established *temu*]
 3.QUOT [All] governors should raise food and fodder from the villages [of the desert] with you
 3.QUOT Adad-isse’a and Bel-lešir should feed Abu-lešir

They do not consent, they do not listen,
 Why our
 3.QUOT villages in the desert should all be of the governors? The towns are *pa-nu-gu* within each other.

SAA 1 no. 172, obv. 3-12, Bel-duri, governor of Damascus to Sargon

Though there are some uncertainties with this letter,⁴⁴⁹ the principal thrust is easily discernible: two governors do not \sqrt{mgr} instructions that Bel-duri has received from the king. It is noticeable that once again we meet the precative form of orders uttered in the king’s voice, and a subsequent lack of \sqrt{mgr} , just as we saw with the magnates. In addition to this we have \sqrt{mgr} used in hendiadys with *la išammi*, ‘they do not hear,’ harking back to our discussion in chapter one about the importance of hearing—and in this case, the functionality of hearing as an active process from which one can

⁴⁴⁹ *temu issakan* is reconstructed; *pa-nu-gu* is completely unknown, though Luukko suggests reading it *šú-nu sal-ḫmu* ‘they are at peace’ (2013b: 6).

withdraw one's participation. To resolve the situation, Bel-duri requests that Sargon send the words *alanišunu ša madbar lišturu* 'let them write down the desert villages.'⁴⁵⁰ Though this is an advantageous strategy for Bel-duri, enabling him to palm off the responsibility for getting the other governors to obey to the king, it does present an interesting problem. According to the narrative in this letter, it was Sargon who imposed the [*temu*] in the first place, and now it is being suggested that, in light of this [*temu*] not being followed, he do little more than repeat it. Once again, this suggests a surprising lack of royal latitude in dealing with disobedience at the upper layers of the imperial hierarchy. Bel-duri does not suggest the king inculcate *√grr* through any kind of disciplinary act, nor take any other action save for sending written instructions once more. On the one hand, this might simply be indicative of Bel-duri carefully not overstepping his bounds as to what he might suggest to the king. On the other hand, that scholars could suggest harsh disciplinary acts and Bel-duri the governor does not suggests a particularly interesting dynamic.⁴⁵¹ Bel-duri does not suggest that Sargon enact disciplinary reprisal against Adad-isše'a and Abu-lešir because, in the end, they were all part of the same political elite, one that cooperated with the kingship but guarded its own autonomy. To suggest Sargon discipline the other governors directly would be to set a dangerous precedent for the royal authority, one that would have backfired on Bel-duri and his fellows. For the scholars, who often found themselves victims of gubernatorial caprice,⁴⁵² asking for the king to enact reprisal on their social superiors was perfectly acceptable.

The *Temu*, Overturned

Continuing the theme of disputes between officials regarding royal orders, these next two letters draw together most of the threads of this thesis. The imperative to report all you see and hear,⁴⁵³ enshrined in the *ade*,⁴⁵⁴ the establishment of *temu*,⁴⁵⁵ the danger of *ramanu*,⁴⁵⁶ the authority of antecedent words,⁴⁵⁷ and the iniquity of unintentionality,⁴⁵⁸ all these intersect in these grim narratives.

⁴⁵⁰ Obv. 13-14

⁴⁵¹ For Mar-Issar and Iddin-Aššur suggesting indirect, violent reprisal against governors and magnates, see p.261.

⁴⁵² For example, SAA 10 nos. 163-4, 167, 173.

⁴⁵³ P.34.

⁴⁵⁴ P.34.

⁴⁵⁵ P.46.

⁴⁵⁶ P.101.

⁴⁵⁷ P.171.

⁴⁵⁸ P.242.

The first is from Nabu-zer-ketti-lešir, who describes the acts of an uncertain, seemingly powerful operative, whom he describes in no uncertain terms:

*dababu ša šarri la išme eni ša paḥati idaggal
anina šarru beli denu ša abika epušuni ṭemu iškununi uma annurig ussabalkitu
u anaku issu libbi bet abiya gabbu ki kalbi asabbu'*

He does not hear the talking of the king, he sees the eyes of the governors.
Now, king my lord, the decision your father made, the *ṭemu* he established, now, now they have overturned it,
and I, out of all the house of my father, am bounding about like a dog.

SAA 16 no.32, rev. 5-12, Nabu-zer-ketti-lešir to Esarhaddon

Much of this is familiar to us as the language of dissent—not hearing the talking of the king being equivalent to disobedience. Of interest is the emphasis placed on the governors and their eyes, suggesting that the overarching power of the king is being ignored in favour of local magnates instead. Overriding this all is the forceful description of the *ṭemu* overturned, decried with *uma annurig*, ‘now, now,’ dragging the timeless temporality of *ṭemu* and the antecedent authority of Assyrian ancestors into a corrupt and disordered present moment.

In similar fashion, a letter from Šamaš-šumu-ukin *mar-šarri* of Babylon quotes some residents of Babylon and Borsippa. Horrifyingly, they report that illicit astrology and haruspicy is taking place, in cooperation with Elamite collaborators:

[PNs] *egertu issapruni*
ma ade šarru ina muḥḥika isseni issakan
ma mini ša tašammani ana belikunu taqabbi'a
ma uma Bel-eṭir Šamaš-zeru-iqiša ṭemu ša šarru iškunušanuni urtammi'u ša ramanišunu eppuš

[PNs] sent a letter to me

3.QUOT The king established the *ade* with us concerning you

3.QUOT Speak to your lord whatever you hear

3.QUOT Now Bel-eṭir and Šamaš-zeru-iqiša have untied the *ṭemu* of the king, they do that of their *ramanu*

SAA 16 no. 21, obv. 8-15, Šamaš-šumu-ukin *mar-šarri Babili* to Esarhaddon

Here, instead of ‘overturned,’ the informants describe the *ṭemu* as ‘untied, loosened.’ This language inverts terms used by more ancient covenants, such as the *riksu*-‘bond’ (Lauinger 2013: 100), and evokes the binding together of universe by means of cosmic cables, {*markas|rikis*} *šame u erṣeti* ‘bond of heaven and earth’ or *rikis matati* ‘bond of the lands’ (George 1986: 138-9). These cosmic

bonds were associated with control over the universe—the Tablet of Destinies, as well as being the connection that allowed communication between the divine and earthly realms (Noegel 2010: 144). The loosening of *temu* here, then, linked with the unauthorised divinations of traitorous *tupšarrus*, is thus a potentially catastrophic loss of control. The order to tell ‘whatever you see and hear’ was thus not some idle dystopian intelligence state, but a constant vigilance against the dissolution of *temu* itself.

6.4 They do not consent, they do not listen! Popular Unrest

Docile Servants or Rebellious Riffraff? The People of Assyria

As we saw in chapter three, the Assyrian elite were only really concerned with the majority of the subordinate population as a docile workforce—‘do your work and be glad, you are servants of the king’. The voice of these people in their own right is generally invisible in the historical record for a number of reasons: archaeological excavations have tended to focus on palatial mounds rather than the lower town where the majority of the population lived; cuneiform scribes were themselves part of an intellectual elite, and producing a document would necessarily entail interacting with them; most of the population spoke the Aramaic language, and thus if this were recorded it would have been on biodegradable parchment in ink, now lost to us. Consequently, we can only detect these people through the traces left through the eyes of their Assyrian overlords.

Nevertheless, as the evidence of this chapter so far has revealed, the idealised image of the docile mass of subjects overseen by the delegates of the king, the king the delegate of the gods, enacting their *temu* through a completely devoted interior and self-negated *ramanu*—the reality was a roiling, violent and precarious land of Assyria tied together by the weakest bonds of \sqrt{mgr} -consent amongst the elite and \sqrt{plh} as a whole. Just as the magnates and the governors could conceivably withdraw \sqrt{mgr} and act against the gods of the king, so too there was a space for the silent majority to rise up and assert themselves.⁴⁵⁹

Communication Breakdown: *la* \sqrt{sm}

The effectiveness of Assyrian administration was underwritten by the power of language. The importance of speech, *abat šarri* ‘the king’s word,’ and trustworthy, accurate statements suffuses the correspondence; the tablets of the correspondence being vehicles for transmitting the desires and intents of the ruling elite. Implicit in this model is the cooperation of the ruled masses: they are required to listen to the words in order to obey: to \sqrt{sm} . This becomes explicit in failed cases, where Assyrian authority falls on deaf ears:

⁴⁵⁹ I refrain from using ‘class’ as it implies a specific economic relationship and sociopolitical context which remains ambiguous in the correspondence—see Galil 2007: 1-3 for more.

*annurig anaku ana Ħinzani allak taĥumu ſa ukallamuſanuni urammu ettiqu uſſatappulu iĥabbutu
ana rab-dayaliya ſa apaqqiduni laſſu la iſamme'u*

Now then I myself will go to the land of Ħinzanu; they (the Arabs) will leave over the border I showed them, proceed downstream and plunder; to the chief scout which I appointed, there is not—they do not listen.

SAA 1 no. 82, rev. 1-8 , Ṭab-ſill-Eſarra to Sargon

In this letter, a group of Arabs in the Ħindanu region are plundering nearby towns for food, despite Sargon's attempts to provide suitable grazing ground for them; the governor of the Aſſur province describes how his attempts to communicate with them have failed. A certain frustration is evident in both the chain of third-person verbs (*urammu, ettiqu, uſſatappulu, iĥabbutu*) and particularly in the consecutive negative particles *laſſu la*. We might recall Ariĥu's complaints to Nabu-duri-uſur regarding his disobedient staff, and the change in register which seemed to communicate frustration there.⁴⁶⁰ Clearly, Assyrian magnates were neither used to disobedience, nor well equipped to express their emotions directly.

This conception of a failure of authority as a breakdown in communication, in which responsibility is laid on those receiving the orders rather than those giving it, is amusingly illustrated in a letter to the king from Taklak-ana-Bel. He reports on his attempts to communicate with some infantry, who resist the Assyrian draft by repeatedly running away:

*uma ſakanſunu ina muĥĥiſunu aſſapar
nuk alkani laſurkunu ina libbi ummi luſeridkunu tilli laddinakkunu
laſſu la iſme'u la illikuni ana ſakniſunu iĥtaſ'u*

*Lapsia iqabbuniſſu ina ſepe ſadu ina libbi attalak rab beti ina muĥĥiſunu aſſapra
nuk alkani iſſikunu ladbub
ittabbu iĥtalqu memmeni ina libbi la ikſud
ina pan ſarri beliya ina Ninua aqĥibi
nuk laſſu la iſammi'u ſabani la iddunu*

Now I sent their prefect to them

1.QUOT Come, let me review you, let me take you down into the mother, let me give you equipment

It was not, they did not listen, they did not come, they assaulted their prefect.

Lapsiya they call it, at the foot of the mountain, I went there and sent the major-domo to them

1.QUOT Come, let me speak with you

⁴⁶⁰ Ariĥu shifts from the indirect third person to uttering imperatives at his superior, a sure sign of a collapse in social distance. See p.49.

They got up and they fled, he did not reach anyone there
I spoke before the king in Nineveh
1. QUOT It was not, they do not listen, they do not give the troops

SAA 1 no. 240 obv. 4'-rev. 1, Taklak-ana-Bel to Sargon

As with Ṭab-šill-Ešarra's letter, there is a certain artfulness in this frustrated response to disobedience. First, he sends words through their *šaknu*-‘prefect,’ words introduced with the first person quotative denoting that Taklak-ana-Bel owns these utterances. This first utterance describes what is probably a normal summons. This is stymied by the violent response of these people: they exhibit the standard negation of obedience, *la √šm*’, and they assault the Assyrian *šaknu*.⁴⁶¹ Second, he sends word again, this time via a higher official, the *rab-bitī*, who conveys that Taklak-ana-Bel just wants to talk. Happily for him, he is not assaulted, because there is no one there to assault him. His putative audience have employed a common strategy of resistance to imperial interference, *√hlq*—they have run away.

Did you ever hear the word of a mighty king twice?⁴⁶² Though only a mighty king's representative, Taklak-ana-Bel presages the words of Assyria's future ruler, in that after this second attempt he no longer pursues communication with these fugitives; now he goes straight to the presence of the king. Thus, this third speech event creates a chain of escalating frames, culminating in the royal audience and a request for his personal intervention (via *ša-qurbuti*).

Both Ṭab-šill-Ešarra and Taklak-ana-Bel respond to their discomfitures with a certain amount of grace, communicating frustration either through a well structured narrative or through short swift chains of verbal forms. The unnamed correspondent of the below letter describes the personal consequences of disobedience succinctly:

ana ayaši uttannišuni [ina] muḥḥi ša qabaššununi la imaggurru la išammuni

They have caused weakness for me; with regards whatever is said to them, they do not agree, they do not listen to me.

SAA 1 no. 260, rev. 13-17

⁴⁶¹ That this is not subject to explicit reprisal hints at the possibility that low-level officials were routinely subject to violence, as were all the Assyrians who were not the *crème-de-la-crème*, as we shall see subsequently. That this *šaknu* was a low-level official is suggested by the suffix *-šunu*, associating him with this specific group of people and thus placing him in a highly localised and thus restricted context.

⁴⁶² P.190.

The typical markers of disobedience—*√mgr la √šm'*—result in the correspondent's weakness. Weakness, *√nš*, makes only infrequent appearances in the correspondence corpus, which makes its appearance all the more remarkable here. It is noticeable that the correspondent does not describe *himself* as weak, nor does he describe the disobedient individuals as weakening him directly. Rather, the construct mirrors that of the standard royal greeting—*šulmu ayasi*, 'wellbeing is for me'.

Hostility and Skull Crushers

kayamanu girutu ina muḫḫi maššarti [x] la ašiaṭa

There is constant hostility but I do not neglect the guard⁴⁶³

In the previous chapter, we observed the perseverance of kinship relationality, despite the totalising *ṭemu* of the Assyrian imperial scheme. This demonstrates that enacting the *ṭemu* of the gods of the king was a duty not universally salient for most people. This was fine, for the most part, as long as the people were peaceful and did their work. Nevertheless, the relationship between the rulers and the ruled was never one of affection, and we find instances of simmering tensions. Three examples across varying societal context suggest the kinds of conflicts that could arise:

u[rasi ša] aḫišunu ina muḫḫi dulli iškun[uni a]na 2 ume idabbubu
[m]a dullu anniu ina pan Bel maḫir adanniš
ma umati ša šarri irriku
ḫadiu adanniš
nuk qibani minu šu
la immagguru la iqabbuni

The br[ick masons who] set their arms to work on the second day were talking
 3.QUOT This work is very acceptable before Bel
 3.QUOT The days of the king will be long
 They were very happy
 1.QUOT Speak to me—what is it?
 They did not consent, they did not speak to me.

SAA 5 no. 294, obv. 1'-8', unassigned to Sargon

Illustrating resistance once again is *la √mgr*, but here the context is quite peculiar. On the surface, the description of the brick-masons' speech seems to represent state that, at least, does not conflict with the subjectivity expected of an Assyrian worker: they laud their work and the long life of the

⁴⁶³ SAA 1 no. 176, rev. 40 - rev. edge 42, Adda-ḫati, governor of Hamath, to Sargon

king, and they are \sqrt{hd} . However, their lack of consent when the letter's speaker (clearly a member of the Assyrian elite) asks them what is going on indicates that this is not something that can be interpreted quite so straightforwardly. I would argue that the depiction here, of the workers being \sqrt{hd} , is an unexpected excess. At most, the people are exhorted to be good of interior (*libbu* $\sqrt{t'b}$) when subjected to the Assyrian order; compounding the irony is that they are \sqrt{hd} whilst performing *dullu*, translated 'work' but with a synonymous meaning of 'misery, hardship'. Furthermore, if we recall Nabu-taklak, who wrote to his brother *aklu takkal u šikari... tašatti* 'you eat bread and drink beer,' we see that quoting the words of imperial *ideology* to convey irony was certainly possible. Thus, here, we can take the nominally ideological statements uttered by the workers in an ironic fashion, which would explain their lack of consent in telling their elite supervisor, and alludes to a wider scope for ironic and parodic interpretation of the earnest values of the Assyrian kingship.⁴⁶⁴

Stepping up the hostility is the governor of Nineveh, who voices an unusually violent threat to some donkey sellers:

ra'yi atanati ina pan ekalli ina pan neribi izzazzuni ḥalluputi iddanuni
uma la immagguru la izzazzu
ma paḥutu ina pan Ninua iqṭibannaši
ma ina libbi ekalli atamarkunu gulgullatunu umarraqa
ma ša-qurbuti ina muḥḥini lillika [x] lubilannaši
ma šumma laššu la nillak

The donkey-mare herders used to stand before the palace, at the entrance, selling covered donkeys.

Now they do not consent, they do not stand,

3.QUOT The governor spoke to us in front of Nineveh
 3.QUOT I see you inside the palace—I will crush your skulls
 3.QUOT Let a Close One come [x] let him bring us there
 3.QUOT If it is not, we will not go

SAA 16 no. 88, obv. 7-18, Nabu-zero-ušur to Esarhaddon

⁴⁶⁴ In another sense, both these ideological statements can be construed as intertextual borrowings from the generic repertoire of the Assyrian imperial ideology. In their original context, their replication and repetition effaces the 'intertextual gap,' to draw on (1992: 149). The agents of empire, the administrators and scholars, own the words as if they were their own inventions, word set in their interior. Here, however, the intertextual borrowings are re-'keyed' (Briggs & Bauman 1992: 152): the 'intertextual gap' is foregrounded, mirroring the gap of a social gulf, and the gap between the surface and underlying meanings of the recontextualised utterance.

This small vignette of city life in the capital alludes to the potentiality of violence permeating Assyrian society in general. The governor of Nineveh, though a royal appointee deriving his authority from the king and the king's gods, appears to remain free to exercise arbitrary violence within his domain. Countering this is the cohort of officials who directly report to the king, the *ša-qurbuti* 'Close Ones.' As we have seen, these subjects functioned as the eyes, ears, and direct delegates of the royal personage, and were often deployed in situations of uncertain *temu* or misuses of the royal authority granted to state officials. The donkey-mare herders here, upon being threatened with violence, consequently seek to mobilise their access to royal authority and withdraw their consent (*la √mgr*) to set up shop in front of the palace if this is not granted to them.

Thus, we find a complicated set of intentionalities playing off against each other, despite the apparently straightforward power relations. The governor of Nineveh exercises his authority, derived from the king, through violent threat; the mare sellers exercise their ability to speak a request for a *ša-qurbuti* to resist the governor's authority through the agency of another superior. Yet the *ša-qurbuti*'s authority also derives from the king. Thus, we have two agents of the king being played off against one another by seemingly powerless individuals who the governor feels free to threaten death to without consequence. This has two essential implications for the nature of the Assyrian state. First, this serves to underline the latent tension between its different parts. As we saw above, a *ša-qurbuti*, as envoy of the king, could be powerless to change the actions of the *rabiuti*, and consequently asserted the royal authority only in an indirect, precative way to save the royal face. The imagery of the unfolding *temu*, the smoothly proceeding intents of the gods being manifested by the Assyrian state machine, falls apart in the minor details. *Temu* is fractured and opposed by *ramanus*, withdrawn *√mgr*, and Assyrian divine authority turned against itself. This thus provided a space, in the constant conflict within the Assyrian system, for the majority of the subordinate population to exist and direct the course of their lives within the interstices of *temu*'s failure.

Secondly, the fault-lines and latent tensions between different parts of the Assyrian state may have in fact provided it with much needed slack, through the operation of indirect violence that diffused responsibility for coercive acts and potentially rendered it hard to single out specific officials as perpetrators of cruelty. The 'right of appeal' to the Assyrian king necessarily implied that he was an

upholder of justice. Coupled with the fact that he would have been exceedingly remote to the vast majority of the population, with instead his visible delegates enacting his orders, and we get a situation where blame for injustice would end up being apportioned locally, instead of being directed at royal orders—the *temu* $\sqrt{škn}$.⁴⁶⁵ Consequently, by setting up these internal contradictions, this phenomenon ended up buttressing the Assyrian kingship directly, by reinforcing the image of the just king.⁴⁶⁶

This final example of conflict explicitly demarcates a hostile division between state officials, benefices of imperial patronage, and the population more generally. As described in chapter three, the ideal state of the empire was one where all beings enacted their socially appropriate work assignments (*dullu*) in the goodness of their interior (*libbu* $\sqrt{t'b}$). Furthermore, these duties were socially distributed: certain men were lucky enough to simply have to eat and drink under the protection of the king, whereas others were exhorted to do work in house and field.

This distribution of tasks hints at a proto-structure of ‘classes’, groups of subjects defined primarily by their economic station. This is underscored by the so-called ‘tax exemptions,’ variously *zakutu* ‘purity,’ *anduraru*, or *kidinnutu*. These prized privileges were earnestly fought for,⁴⁶⁷ and represented a withdrawal of the universal impositions of the Assyrian imperium.⁴⁶⁸ In the below letter from the astrologer Nabu-iqiša, he and his compatriots have been exempted from physical labour so that they can pursue scholarly labour on behalf of the king.⁴⁶⁹ However, the townspeople⁴⁷⁰ have other ideas:

⁴⁶⁵ We find this exact situation, complaints against taxes being directed at local officials instead of the king who imposed them, in Mar-Issar’s letter discussed below.

⁴⁶⁶ The concept of a distant king who cared for his people but had corrupt staff is also found in the context of the French Revolution. It was only Louis XVI’s attempted flight abroad that revealed his true anti-popular sentiments. I am grateful to Mr. Edwin Clifford-Coupe for pointing out this parallel and suggesting the advantages of attributing violence to delegates for keeping a clean royal image (pers. comm.).

⁴⁶⁷ See e.g., SAA 16 no. 96; 17 nos. 21, 23, 145; 18 no. 124.

⁴⁶⁸ Information regarding *zakutu*-status itself provided a locus for certain kinds of resistance. In SAA 19 no. 39, obv. 10-13, rev. 19 Šarru-emuranni, deputy governor of Isana, describes a situation where various fieldowners argue they are \sqrt{zk} and thus not subject to corn tax: they consequently do not consent (*la immaggur*) to give the tax. Šarru-emuranni requests those who claim they are \sqrt{zk} produce the relevant authentication from the king; meanwhile, he has installed Itu’eans in that location. We may recall the Itu’eans from chapter three, where they caused the Sidonites to be \sqrt{grr} .

⁴⁶⁹ This is invariably one of the reasons why membership of the royal entourage was so desirable: the ‘ease’ of intellectual labour, fulfilling one’s training, was preferable to the default station of being subject to imperial callup and hard labour, the *dullu*-misery.

⁴⁷⁰ The town is uncertain. Though Nabu-iqiša identified himself as ‘of Borsippa,’ he probably was not based there. A Review Palace (*ekal mašarti*) was being built in his present town, thus it was potentially one of the Assyrian capitals, possibly Nineveh or Kalḫu.

šarru zakutani iltakan enna adu itti aḥḥeya ina ekal mašarti bit-qati eppuš
u mare ali ša anaku ittišunu šarru ušašbitanni ikkara idduku
u yaši usammu'inni
umma ilku ittini alik
itti aḥḥeya dullu eppuš

The king established our exemption, now, I am building a storeroom (lit. 'House of Hands') with my brothers in the Review Palace
and the sons of the town that I with them the king made me take, they killed my farmers
and they harass me
QUOT Go for *ilku* with us
With my brothers I would do work...

SAA 8 no. 296, obv. 7-rev. 5, Nabu-iqiša to Esarhaddon

A universe of coercion is inscribed here. There is hostility between the *mare ali* and the astrologers assigned to the king. Yet these townspeople are themselves coerced by the imperial obligation to undertake corvée work. As vulnerable participants in the imperial framework, without soldiers or armies to command, the astrologers resident in this town potentially represented an 'easy target'.⁴⁷¹ Yet, just as with the imperial *√grr* techniques described in chapter three, the violence here is indirected: just as the magnates' underlings were to be punished, here it is the farmers assigned to the scholars who have been slaughtered. The status of the farmers assigned to Nabu-iqiša is not clear from this letter alone; in his exhaustive analysis of Assyrian contracts and administrative data, Galil suggests that people bound to land were potentially tenants instead of slaves (2007: 343-344), but either way it was likely that as a result of being assigned to the exempt scholars the farmers too were exempted from the *ilku*. This would certainly not endear them to the townspeople. So, instead of attacking a prestigious target, members of the royal entourage, the murderers instead attack the farmers, with whom they seem to have no relation of solidarity. The parallels with imperial *√grr* discipline are clear; underlying them both is an 'indirected violence' designed to coerce a third party through display, with the direct targets of the violence little more than bodies.

⁴⁷¹ For a similar scenario see SAA 10 no. 143, where the scribes of Kilizi write to the king stating they cannot keep the *mašartu* of the king because they are required to go to the *ilku*. Unlike Nabu-iqiša's letter however, the scribes make no mention of an exemption, which seems to be the particular cause for violence here.

Resisting the *ilku*

The interrelations between \sqrt{grr} , \sqrt{plh} , *ilku* and violence are underscored by a letter from the Assyrian administrator of the recently conquered city of Carchemish:

*uma niše ilak šarri belišu[nu] iptalhu [iddubbu]
ma ata urhu ana urhi u[kāššadu]naši
issen ana [issen] iḫtanalli[qu] ina nagie [x] ša Arpadda ana aḫula nari uššubu issu maši šarru beli [ma]tu ḫanniti
ubaʾuni*

Now the people \sqrt{plh} the *ilku*-duty of the king, their lord [and said]
3.QUOT Why, month after month, do they [*persecute*] us?
One by [one] they keep escaping and settle in the region of Arpad beyond the River, as if the king my lord were seeking (to settle) this [land].

SAA 1 no. 183, obv. 12'-18', unassigned to Sargon

This account demonstrates an alternative response to the *ilku* from those on the periphery of the still-swelling Assyrian empire. Upon the integration of Carchemish into the Assyrian order, the inhabitants of that territory were counted 'as Assyrians'—they were subject to conscription and labour as servants of the Assyrian king (Liverani 2017: 187). With respect to that the citizens of Carchemish evince the correct subjective attitude, \sqrt{plh} , but then the narrative takes a sharp turn; they are in fact fleeing their newly imposed obligations. Such resistance to the demands of the Assyrian elite was in fact endemic: many letters describe the loss of subjects,⁴⁷² who either escape into the interstices of the imperial network, or seek refuge in territories outside direct imperial rule.⁴⁷³ The reported speech within this letter is one of the very few examples we have of Assyrian subjects protesting against the operation of imperial biopower upon them.⁴⁷⁴ The tablet is sadly damaged right in the middle of this quotation so we cannot be sure about the verb, which Parpola reconstructs as a form of $\sqrt{kšd}$ and translates 'persecute'. Furthermore, we must be aware of the 'scribal filter' which overlays this partial utterance: the inhabitants of Carchemish probably spoke

⁴⁷² For example, in SAA 19 no. 171 Bel-duri describes two losses, both of whom were 'caused to flee' (*ussahliqu*, the Š causative form of \sqrt{hlq}) by members of their *kalzu* 'community.' One of these servants was provided by the king, the other serving for the debt of his wife's previous husband. See also SAA 1 no. 179 rev. 14-18, where workers flee from *dullu*; SAA 5 no. 48 obv.12, no. 52; SAA 15 no. 223; SAA 17 no. 29; SAA 18 no. 6, for further examples.

⁴⁷³ SAA 5 no. 52 is another example of this, reporting how Ḫu-Tešub, king of Šubria, grants fields and houses to those *issu pan dulli šarri iḫalliquni* 'who flee the work of the king' (rev. 3-4). These lost workers are recorded upon a clay tablet for delivery to the king.

⁴⁷⁴ A second is described in Mar-Issar's letter which we explore below; a third is potentially described in Gabbu-ana-Aššur's letter below, but with caveats.

Aramaic, which was translated into Neo-Assyrian for inscription. The voice of the people then remains distorted through an elite prism.

Nevertheless, we can squeeze some further understandings of popular resistance from this letter. There is a repetitious rhythm to the \sqrt{hlq} : the quoted voice of the people utters *urhu ana urhi* ‘month after month’; the voice of the official parallels this with *issen ana [issen]* ‘one after another.’ Though we cannot be sure whose speech is influencing whose, an ironic reciprocity seems to arise from these utterances, where the frustrated official’s narrative and the tired plaint of the subjects’ indirectly quote each other, echoing the citationality explored earlier.⁴⁷⁵ The irony is only further emphasised by the official’s simile, comparing the fugitives’ acts to the dispatch of advance scouts of the king ‘seeking to (settle) this [land].’

The people running away from the duties allotted to them by the *temu* of Aššur, though continual, was problematic and thus provoked a response from the state machine. Documents on clay tablets and wooden writing boards catalogued and enumerated the available labouring subjects.⁴⁷⁶ This permitted easier control of the human resources managed by the imperial elite, but some extreme situations could still arise:

Ḫalzi-atbaraya gabbišunu ma'da ḫalqu ina libbi matati gabbu šunu

ša-bet-kudin daliḫ

ma ḫulu karim

The Ḫalziatbareans, all of them, many have run away, they are within all the lands.

The mule stable attendant is troubled

3.QUOT The path is blocked

SAA 5 no. 79 obv. 9-15, Aššur-beluda²in to Sargon

Here, an official, probably the governor of the province of Ḫalziatbar, describes the response of the mule stable attendant to the loss of his workforce: *daliḫ* ‘he is troubled.’ The governor himself seems to be mostly unfazed, and simply requests that the king issues relevant orders for replacement labourers. Thus, we might wonder why the mule stable attendant was so mixed up. Based on what we know already about the penalties for disobedient magnates and governors—the infliction of *šiptu* punishment on their underlings to inspire \sqrt{grr} on their superiors—I would propose that the

⁴⁷⁵ See p.170.

⁴⁷⁶ For documentation on clay tablets, see SAA 5 no. 52, already mentioned in note 473 above; see e.g. SAA 1 no. 128 obv. 18 for an example of writing boards.

mule stable attendant is fully aware of the potential for indirected violence to fall upon him. That the threat of violent punishment was pervasive is clear from the letters of Sargon himself:

mannu ša immarkuni ana zaqipi qabsi betišu išakkunu
Whoever is late will be placed upon stakes within his house.

SAA 1 no. 22, rev. 10-12, Sargon to unassigned

Though Radner suggests that this be interpreted as merely a figure of speech (2015: 63), whether figure or speech or actual threat, the image of violence and death is strongly conjured up here as a consequence of failing to meet royal standards. The low officials of the empire are trapped in a vice: clamped between the hostility and disobedience of their subjects, who resist the *ilku* and *dullu* imposed on them by the imperial *temu*, and the punishments of the king, who needs to keep his magnates and governors in line.

Refusing the *dullu*

Summarising many of the issues we have just discussed is a letter from Gabbu-ana-Aššur, the palace herald and thus a man of very high office.

ana šarri beliya urdaka Gabbu-ana-Aššur
askuppati aladlammu ina muḥḥiya karri niši mati memmeni la immaggur ana dulliya la u[ššuni]
ma šabani[ka] anine
la isamm[uni] anaku [x x]
annute minu ša ibaššuni ša laššuni ki aḥe'iš laššu la išammuni

To the king my lord, your servant Gabbu-ana-Aššur.

Stone thresholds and bull colossi are laid upon me. The people of the country, whoever, they do not consent and they do not g[o out] for my work:

3.QUOT Are we [your] men?

They do not lis[ten to me]—am I [...]?

These—as to whatever there is that exists or that does not exist, from amongst them not a single one listens to me

SAA 5 no. 118, Gabbu-ana-Aššur to Sargon

As is usual for him, Gabbu-ana-Aššur opens his letter to Sargon quite tersely, omitting any sort of customary blessing. He then describes the situation, laconically noting his work assignment, before launching into a verbose report on his recalcitrant workers. This passage piques our interest for two reasons. Firstly, the detail in Gabbu-ana-Aššur's report is itself further evidence that disobedience was something frustrating, worth complaining about: most of the letter body is devoted to it.

Emphatic language is used to underline his powerlessness: *minu ša ibaššuni ša laššuni* ‘whatever there is, whatever there isn’t,’ an unusually florid epistrophe, describes the scope of the people’s disobedience, an infinite scope.

Secondly, we have another instance of the voice of people expressing disobedience, this time specifically tied to *la immaggur* + verb with the *ma* quotative. Though the 2nd person suffix *-ka* is not legible on the tablet, if we take the editors’ suggestion at face value then we have a striking instance of direct address across power differentials being described: literally everyone there is disrespecting the Palace Herald! Due to his lofty office, Gabbu-ana-Aššur would have been untouchable by violent sanctions or the like for being unable to complete the *dullu* assigned to him; thus, he is able to give full vent to his own frustration without apology. Consequently, although he includes the direct speech of the people, this quotation was invariably highly selective— we unfortunately cannot conclude that these men were ‘giving lip’ to a servant of Aššur.

More specific instances of labour withdrawal appear to have been focused on soldiers refusing to fight for the Assyrians. This could be restricted to simply being reassigned to another commander, such as here, where it also shows the importance of commensality:

ša šabani ša inqatuninni irtaksu la imma[ggur] kusapi ina paneya ana akali
They have bound the men that fell to me, they do not con[sent] to eat bread with me

SAA 15 no. 43, obv. 2’-bottom edge 6’, Nabu-bel-ka”in to Sargon⁴⁷⁷

This point is, finally, brought home by an interesting request from Taklak-ana-Bel, who actually asks the king to do some shaking at disobedient shepherds:

[uma] annurig šarri beliya [assapra šummu] ana ħuru memmeni dul[lum uramma] šarru beli lir’ubašunu dul[lum lepušu]
Now then I am [writing to] the king my lord, [if ever after] anyone leaves their work the king my lord should shake at them so [they will do their wo]rk.

SAA 1 no. 235, rev. 1’-4’, Taklak-ana-Bel to Sargon

⁴⁷⁷ See also SAA 1 no. 155, obv. 4-8.

Obviously in this situation we do not expect that anyone intended Sargon to literally go up to these shepherds and shake his body.⁴⁷⁸ Rather, the emotional expression of the king was a tool that could be invoked to punish disobedience, if a governor or other such ruling official simply could not muster the control. Considering that Sargon himself wrote in his letter to Mannu-ki-Ninua that he should say the Palace expressed $\sqrt{r'b}$,⁴⁷⁹ it seems that simply the description of the king exhibiting anger was expected to incite terror, without it being necessarily the case that the king *was* shaking with fury. This in turn continues to underline the propensity of performative affect (as the scholars perform in their letters, so does the king) and a surprising fluidity in modulating inward-outward states in the service of the State.⁴⁸⁰

Mass Unrest: *bartu* and *killu*

The foregoing instances of disobedience and dissent in the face of the Assyrian order, characterised by the withdrawal of \sqrt{mgr} and \sqrt{sm} , all encompass ultimately small-scale, isolated acts of resistance. Whether the drip-drip of labourers fleeing one by one, or bands of townspeople taking flight, the conception of a corporate action does not seem to have figured into these scenarios, and the Assyrian elite consequently express frustration, if anything.

In stark contrast to this are two examples, from the north and south of empire, which allude to greater levels of popular unrest. The first is brief, and returns us to the account of Ša-Aššur-dubbu, the ‘inferior brother’ of the Urařian governor of Pulua. In his missive to Sargon, the slightly slighted official writes:

issurri bartu memmeni mařřartu uda'ana issu pan barti palhaku

Perhaps there will be some rebellion. I am strengthening the guard. I am \sqrt{plh} before rebellion.

SAA 5 no. 33, rev. 13'-15', Ša-Aššur-dubbu to Sargon

Unfortunately, there is no space to give *bartu* and the concept of ‘rebellion’ a proper treatment here,⁴⁸¹ but Ša-Aššur-dubbu’s declaration that he is \sqrt{plh} before it is striking. As delineated back in

⁴⁷⁸ Not everyone requested such strong royal intervention when dealing with *la mgr*. See SAA 19 no. 221 obv.3-rev. 2'.

⁴⁷⁹ For which see note 289 to p.176.

⁴⁸⁰ We may recall Sargon requesting Rařiř-Dadi to make enquiries to Iyaze *ina ramanka* ‘according to your *ramanu*,’ despite the devaluation of *ramanu* action in the hierarchical community. See p.104.

⁴⁸¹ Examples of *bartu* in the correspondence are few, however. A broken letter describes a failed rebellion (SAA 1 no.8 rev. 10) and another letter describes the association of *bartu* with the perils of interiority as described in chapter two: they will do *bartu... ina libbi irtihis ... řa raminiřu* (SAA 16 no. 60, CT 53 107 obv. 8'-11'). The English term ‘rebellion’ itself

chapter three, \sqrt{plh} does not stand for any simple fear but a complex relation between subjects, actively practiced. Drawing on those conclusions, and noting that *bartu* itself derives from $\sqrt{b'r}$, a semantic root meaning ‘stir up revolt,’ we can develop the notion that this declaration of \sqrt{plh} was in fact a positive relation to the potentiality of massed popular subjectivities that could act *inaramani* against the Assyrian order. Integrating this with the idea of the *temu* and the understanding that all events in the temporal sphere are fulfillments of the divine *temu*, we can further extend our understanding to paradoxically incorporate the instrument of rebellion itself as an enactment of *temu*, set against the authority of the Assyrian king and state which is invalidated by the very presence of it. Consequently, *bartu* here can potentially be construed not as a purely negative rebellion, but as a sort of ‘popular will,’ composed of the disparate subjectivities of the people, and authored by *temu*. Ša-Aššur-dubbu’s \sqrt{plh} before it is thus an appropriate response to this potential risk, rather than a declaration of simple fear. These associations are further alluded to by the concept of the *maššartu* ‘guard,’ which we have also seen in reference to scholarly activity on behalf of the king. Though we might conceive of it as military installation in the one sense, and cosmic monitoring in the other, we can try and push for a more unified understanding of cosmic and societal threat as expressions of the same *temu*, and thus the *maššartu* as a single sphere of action upholding the Assyrian order.

Finally, we turn to one sympathetic voice in support of the exploited. Mar-Issar, the personal envoy of Esarhaddon who supervised restoration works in Babylonia, writes a report to the king:

issurri šakin-temi Babilī ana šarri beliya išappara
ma mar'e Babilī ina kurbani iše'uni
silate šina ina tekiti ša ana šakin-temani iqbuni
ma reš mugirrikunu išša
šarpu ma'du ina muḥḥi mar'e Babilī Barsip u Kute utussiku ittaḥru
mar'e Babilī muškenute ša memmenišunu laššuni killu issaknu ibtiki'u
 Perhaps the establisher-of-*temu* of Babylon writes to the king my lord
 3.QUOT The sons of Babylon threw clods at me
 This is a lie. In the unfairness of the establishers-of-*temu* they said
 3.QUOT Raise up your chariots
 They assigned and received much silver-tax from the sons of Babylon, Borsippa and Cutha
 The sons of Babylon, *meschinos*⁴⁸² that have nothing, established a lament and wept

SAA 10 no. 348, bottom edge 23-rev.12

derives from a notion of war redeclared, Latin *re-bellum* (OED *s.v.* rebellion); *bartu* encodes no such meaning, though it does possess a verbal derivation from $\sqrt{b'r}$, emphasising its nature as an activity, a thing done, as rebellion is.

⁴⁸² This Italian word for ‘wretch’ is in direct descent from the Akkadian *muškenu* so is particularly apposite to employ here.

Mar-Issar's narrative here notably shifts responsibility for the documented disruption away from the people and onto the *šakin-temis*, members of the imperial hierarchy. At the same time, it offers up valuable evidence for popular unrest. On the first point, this seems to be the closest direct criticism of Assyrian policy from a member of the elite within the corpus: Mar-Issar lays the blame on the order the *šakin-temi* ineptly enacted, described with *tekitu*, 'complaint, injustice.' Such an order would have come from the *šakin-temi*'s superiors, the highest Assyrian elite, even Esarhaddon himself. By contrast, he describes the Babylonians as wretched people with no possessions, who weep and wail. Though we are in no doubt as to where the scholar's sympathy lies, it is noticeable that the people are reduced to noise—they are not offered words or a space to speak for themselves. Despite his sympathy, Mar-Issar, as a member of the privileged cultural elite, still regards the population as little more than an emotional mass of bodies to be managed. It is the failure of the *šakin-temi* to enact the king's orders, to ensure the ideal *libbu* $\sqrt{t'b}$, and thence lying about it, that is the worst thing, not the powerlessness of the people.

Conclusion—From \sqrt{mgr} to Autonomy

Mar-Issar's haughty pity towards the voiceless, wailing Babylonians brings us to the final question of this thesis: for all the devices and dehumanisations, the wiggling with words and the totality of *temu*, to what extent were those subjected to the Assyrian order able to exert autonomy against it? The majority of this section has turned on the question of disobedience towards the Assyrian order as represented through \sqrt{mgr} , a semantic domain which points to a concept loosely covered by subjectivity and affect. Inherent in \sqrt{mgr} was a concept of dialogue and response: something needed to be posited in order for a subject to express \sqrt{mgr} or its negation towards it. \sqrt{mgr} also carried aspects of will and autonomy, in that it could not be directly controlled by an imperial force: in this respect, it reflected the Assyrian relation to *libbu*, though there were no techniques to elicit or inculcate \sqrt{mgr} directly.

What we do have, and what brings \sqrt{mgr} into relief, are the instances where it defines an autonomy of political will. The Succession Treaty of Esarhaddon, from which we have derived many strictures attempting to police the interiority of Assyrian subjects throughout this thesis, explicitly details the

ability to withdraw \sqrt{mgr} from a king of Assyria, in this case a king viewed by the treaty as an illegitimate usurper:

šumma memmeni ina muḫḫi Aššur-aḫu-iddina šar Aššur siḫu bartu etapaš ina kussie šarrutišu ittušib

šumma ana šarrutišu taḫadduani la tašabbataniššuni la tadukašuni

šumma ammar šabatišu duakišu la mašakunu ana šarrutišu tamaggurani

tamitu ša urdanuti tatammaniššuni

ina muḫḫišu la tabbalkatani

ina gammurti libbikunu qarabu issišu la tuppašani

If: someone were to incite rebellion and revolt against Assurbanipal and sit on the throne of his kingship

if: you rejoice in his kingship, and do not seize him and do not kill him

if: you are able to seize him and kill him, but consent to his kingship, utter an oath of servitude, and do not overturn him, and do not perform battle with him in the completeness of your interior...

SAA 2 no. 6, obv. 302-311

We might wonder whether Aššur-nerari and Shalmaneser (V) would have benefited from this commandment when they were usurped by Tiglath-pileser and Sargon respectively. As we know, Tiglath-pileser and Sargon managed to establish themselves successfully, despite stealing their thrones from their 'legitimate' occupants.⁴⁸³ As we know, the imperial ontology of *temu* meant that whatever came to pass, even if resulted in calamity for Assyria, was explicable as the decree of the gods, and thus, by dint of their success, Tiglath-pileser and Sargon were in fact the legitimate occupants of the throne *all along*. Yet in Esarhaddon's treaty we find a safeguard against such coups, a safeguard that turns particularly on how these subjects of Assyria respond to these new rulers: *šarrutišu* \sqrt{mgr} 'consent to his kingship' and *šarrutišu* \sqrt{hd} 'rejoice in his kingship.'

There is a tension here that a cuneiform ontology struggles to reconcile: all subjects possess an inaccessible interiority and a wilful *ramanu* that needs to be dedicated fully for Assyria, demonstrating that subjects in isolation or *en masse* might go against 'Assyrian interests.' However, this going against Assyrian interests, if effective, needs to be explained as acting *for* Assyrian interests, as in the coups of Tiglath-pileser and Sargon. Acting against the god's *temu*, and the *temu* of Aššur, is *also* acting in accord with the divine decree. Consequently, for a reigning Assyrian king, to win the *libbus* and *ramanus* of one's empowered subjects was paramount in order to not have *temu* potentially turn against you. It is in this lacuna, this ambiguity space, this inner theatre of

⁴⁸³ Sargon's throne name has been interpreted as the overcompensatory *Šarru-kenu* 'True King,' though *Šarru-ukin* 'the king established truth' is also valid. See Chamaza 1992: 31 for further discussion and bibliography.

empire, that the potential for self-direction against the imposition of *temu*, the duty of *dullu*, and *libbu* \sqrt{gmr} was possible.

Conclusions

In this dissertation, I have attempted to explore the inner theatre of operations of the Assyrian Empire: the ways in which this ancient polity recognised, conceptualised and commandeered the hearts and minds of those it encompassed. We began by deconstructing the word *temu*, revealing it to be an ontological concept, a junction between exterior Empire and interior Intentionality, between future and past, and human and divine. Its mundane, frequent use throughout the correspondence underlined the contemporary currency of this concept, suggesting that *temu* and the concepts implicated in it were a critical component of Assyrian imperialism.

Following the thread of this thesis, we then explored the Assyrian interior itself, the *libbu*, which formed part of the Assyrian subject, together with the named self, and the *ramanu*. This partially permeable, tripartite subject was a salient model in imperial Assyrian society, as shown in the subsequent chapter which showed how many Assyrian acts were geared towards cultivating an ideal interiority. This ideal interiority was relational—founded on chains of \sqrt{plh} , the respectful, positive ‘fear’ binding subjects together in a kind of exchange relationship—and situational, with subjects carrying out tasks appropriate to their status, being content in the shadow of the king. We then paused to consider how an imperial ontology predicated on *temu* might have resulted in such a biopolitically inclined state *avant la lettre*. By considering the simultaneity of *temu* together with the polyvalence of the cuneiform sign, a key principle of Mesopotamian epistemology, I suggested that a unifying theme of *temu* and interiority was ambiguity. Divining the *temu* of the gods was always subject to interpretation, people’s interiors were not accessible and were potential threats to the Assyrian supremacy. This ambiguity needed to be resolved to annul the danger to the Assyrian king, resulting in the Palace’s monopoly on divination, extensive *temu*-fact gathering, and biopolitical repertoire. Drawing these themes together, we saw the *tuppi ade*, ‘treaty tablet’ of Esarhaddon, sealed with the seal of Aššur ‘not to be changed,’ demanding true words, words completely of the interior. This concern with the interior, but also the ambiguity of language, was the jumping off point for the next chapter, on the spoken language of the Assyrians as captured in the correspondence.

There, we took up the thread of *temu*, temporality, and the speaking subject. For, despite the looping, even simultaneous *temu*-porality, speaking subjects still situated themselves in a linear, dialogical space. This was socially variable. Though all subjects had recourse to citing the authoritative words of the powerful, uttered in past dialogues, self-presentation and relation to the future were governed by one's status role in the official hierarchy. Those who took the superior role in a dialogue used unambiguous language—direct linguistic devices: second-person address, and imperative statements—paralleling the *temu*-poral looping-simultaneity. Subordination entailed ambiguity, openness, imagination—third-person indirect address was preferred, and the future was left uncertain, marked out by precative verbal forms and modal particles—mirroring the interpretive openness of the (cuneiform or ominous) sign. Most importantly, a single subject could switch between these two roles, according to their different relationships, or even within a single utterance. This shows, even within the rigidly defined imperial hierarchy, a lability of subject position, where ambiguity could be exploited: effaced to exert authority, or ratcheted up to create ironic and unstable images imagining a parodic unreality.

The closing chapters show the *temu*-imperial complex—with its ambiguity controlling procedures in divination, action, interior subjects and speech—was only one ontological assemblage in the Middle East of the first millennium. Though detectable only in trace encounters with the Assyrian elite's cuneiform-power machine, kinship relationships evinced a somewhat different evaluation of the subject, fortified by mutual concern with each others' *ramanu* and *temu*, as well as a different patterning of affects in which the critical \sqrt{plh} was completely absent. Finally, we explored the ways in which the Assyrian elite conceptualised and coped with challenges to the *temu*-order. Dehumanisation strategies focused on depriving subjects of meaningful speech, either through silence or through hearing their vocalisations as the sound of storming, blustering, or *dibbi la dibbi* 'words not words.' More overt opposition was characterised in terms of *la* \sqrt{sm} 'not hearing.' This was often found in concert with *la* \sqrt{mgr} , 'not consenting,' which implied an active, even emotional process of assent-building was required between the elite and their subjects. Together, these discourses captured and classified the autonomous, ambiguous wilfulness of subjects of all statuses in the Assyrian universe, from the meanest peon to the mightiest magnate. This allowed the Assyrian elites to express and tolerate the contradictions and failures in the *temu* established by the

king and his gods, suggesting that the absolute power of the king was recognised to be contingent, on indeed allowing a measure of latitude and ambiguity despite the desire for centralised control.

This investigation into an empire's inner theatre has shown that, by attempting to divest ourselves of a philologically informed language ideology and opening ourselves up to the unintuitive and the strange, we can create new concepts and categories for understanding world making processes above the level of states and nations. The Assyrian Empire, having tended to fall under the radar of comparative historians, is becoming increasingly visible as a worthy 'case study' into imperialism (Liverani 2017: 8-9). Here, I have attempted to go further. Imperialism, empire, and other '-isms' and '-logies' are analytical tools predicated upon a European academic and ontological tradition, presupposing political, economic or religious rationalities, categories and distributions. Though this thesis served as only an initial attempt to move away from our historically conditioned concepts in our analysis of an ancient empire, the attempt to use ephemeral correspondence to reconstruct terms by which the Assyrian elites understood their own world has created new knowledge about what human society might be. It enables us to posit the higher-order comparative question as to what ways of existing in the world give rise to things like power and thoughts of domination in the first place.

The reconstitution of temporality (*temu*-porality) and 'thingness' articulates with a number of debates in wider fields. *Temu*'s ontological affordances, the looping, even simultaneous assignment of future and past, even its union of temporal process with physical matter, echo ideas posited centuries later. Take Deleuze's understanding of 'virtuality,' a thick present expressing the past, pregnant with the future (May 2005: 70), or the ontological uncertainty entailed by quantum-level indeterminacy in Western physics.⁴⁸⁴ Bakhtin's 'chronotope' itself was inspired by Einstein's bleeding-edge interpretation of time as a fourth dimension integrated with space (Bakhtin 1981: 84). By associating the everyday exigencies of Assyrian rule with contemporary concepts of time and subjectivity, we re-establish the importance of implicit ontologies in the practice of culture-power.

⁴⁸⁴ Exemplified by Heisenberg's 'Uncertainty Principle,' which eliminates the possibility of a detached observer. The problematisation of 'exact science' reflects well the different ontological underpinnings that informed the cuneiform sciences' interpretive ambiguity (Rochberg 2016: 278).

It is not necessarily a given that a 'state' should follow a linear, teleological temporality, or be concerned only with the economic potential of its subjects.

The advantages of an anthropological approach to Assyrian material are clear. Remaining open about basic schemata such as temporality and intentionality enabled us to develop *temu*, \sqrt{plh} and \sqrt{mgr} concepts, to name a few. Furthermore, the close concern of linguistic anthropologists with the non-lexical encoding of meaning and affect helped us to reveal the complex maps of quotation and responsibility, the non-lexical encoding of affect, and the subtle changes in grammatical stance that signalled deference, uncertainty and assertiveness in places we wouldn't expect in a rigidly defined hierarchical system.

To conclude, the ideas advanced in this thesis offer new directions in the study of the Assyrian empire, historical and ethnographic theory and methodologies more generally. Firstly, throughout this thesis I have alluded to the importance of cuneiform epistemology and theories of the sign which are strongly implicated in practice of Assyrian imperial government, but did not explore these links systematically. Rochberg's complementary work (2016) mobilising the ontological turn in Mesopotamian science illustrates not only how the research questions taken up in this thesis can apply to other genres of cuneiform texts, but also how similar conclusions can be reached independently, demonstrating the strength of this approach. A strengthening and synthesis of the dialogue between everyday and specialised ontologies presents a valuable avenue for research.

In a similar vein, in this thesis I have chosen to focus primarily on the correspondence excavated from the royal palaces at Nineveh and Kalḫu. Notwithstanding the continually unfolding publication of new letters, space considerations meant omitting other fascinating and thematically relevant texts such as the oracle queries ('will he who can see it, see it? will he who can hear it, hear it?'), the prophecies ('mankind is deceitful!'), the royal inscriptions (already very well studied, but not with this theoretical approach) or even cuneiform contracts (the shift in legal terminology from ownership of people to subjects \sqrt{plh} their owners suggests a historical development of \sqrt{plh} beyond the monopoly of the imperial hierarchy). A further necessary omission occurs especially in chapter two, where a detailed examination of affective lexical terminology beyond \sqrt{plh} , *libbu* $\sqrt{\check{s}kn}$ or $\sqrt{t}b$ would further enhance our understanding of the historical idiosyncrasy of the Assyrian subject.

Finally, by showing how linguistic anthropological approaches can be usefully integrated with historical sources, this thesis reaffirms the methodological techniques honed in the ethnography of speaking and demonstrates how they can be applied to a radically different set of 'transcripts.' Consequently, not only does the thesis open up an entire historical period to a discipline previously distant from it, but also demonstrates that historical documents can be used to partially reconstruct interactive practice despite the impossibility of participant observation. Through this successful integration of linguistic methods with historical sources, we have uncovered valuable new insights which advance our historical understanding of the Middle East, superstate processes, time, and the human subject's place in the world, underlining the importance of attending to an empire's inner theatre.

Bibliography

- AGAMBEN, G. 1998. *Homo Sacer* (trans D. Heller-Roazen). Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- AGAMBEN, G. 2011. *The Sacrament of Language* (trans A. Kotsko). Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- APPADURAI, A. 1990. Topographies of the self: praise and emotion in Hindu India. In *Language and the politics of emotion* (eds L. Abu-Lughod & C. A. Lutz, 92–112. Cambridge.
- Assyrian Empire Builders* n.d. *Assyrian Empire Builders* (available on-line: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk>, accessed 12 August 2018).
- assyrian-empire-builders.kmz n.d. assyrian-empire-builders.kmz. *Assyrian Empire Builders* (available on-line: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sargon/downloads/assyrian-empire-builders.kmz>, accessed 13 August 2018).
- BAHRANI, Z. 2008. *Rituals of war*. New York: Zone Books.
- BAKER, H. D. 2017. Addenda/corrigenda to fascicle 1/II (1999): Names beginning with D (ed H. D. Baker). *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire online* (available on-line: <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/pnao/updatesbyletter/d/>, accessed 13 August 2018).
- BAKER, H. D. 2018a. Addenda/corrigenda to fascicle 1/I (1998): Names beginning with A. *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire online* (available on-line: <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/pnao/updatesbyletter/a/>, accessed 13 August 2018a).
- BAKER, H. D. 2018b. Addenda/corrigenda to fascicle 1/II (1999): Names beginning with B. *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire online* (available on-line: <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/pnao/updatesbyletter/b/>, accessed 13 August 2018b).
- BAKER, H. D. (ed) 2000. *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, Vol. 2, part I, H-K*. Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.
- BAKER, H. D. (ed) 2001. *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, Vol. 2, part II, L-N*. Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.
- BAKER, H. D. (ed) 2002. *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, Vol. 3, part I, P-Ş*. Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.
- BAKER, H. D. (ed) 2011. *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, Vol. 3, part II, Š-Z*. Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.
- BAKHTIN, M. M. 1981. Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel. In *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (ed) M. Holquist, 84–258. (Notes toward a Historical Poetics). Austin: University of Texas Press.

- BARJAMOVIC, G. 2012. The Mesopotamian Empires. In *Oxford Handbook of the Ancient State in the Ancient Near East and the Mediterranean* (eds) P. F. Bang & W. Scheidel, 120–160. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- BAUMAN, R. 2004. *A World of Others' Words. Cross Cultural Perspectives on Intertextuality*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- BAUMAN, R. 2018. Others' Words, Others' Voices: The Making of a Linguistic Anthropologist. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 47.
- BESNIER, N. 1990. Language And Affect. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19, 419–451.
- BESNIER, N. 1992. Reported Speech and Affect on Nukulaelae Atoll. In *Responsibility and Evidence in Oral Discourse* (eds) J. T. Irvine & J. H. Hill, 161–181. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- BIGGS, R. D., J. A. BRINKMAN, M. CIVIL, ET AL. (eds) 1956-2010. *The Assyrian dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
- BLACK, J. A., A. R. GEORGE & J. N. POSTGATE (eds) 2000. *Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*. (2nd edition). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- BLOCH, M. 2016. Imagination from the Outside and from the Inside. *Current anthropology* 57, S80–S87.
- BLOCH, M. L. B. 1973. Introduction. In *The royal touch: sacred monarchy and scrofula in England and France*, 1–8. London: Routledge.
- BLOMMAERT, J. 2015. Chronotopes, Scales, and Complexity in the Study of Language in Society. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 44, 105–116.
- BOIS, DU, J. W. 1987. Meaning Without Intention: Lessons from Divination. *IPrA Papers in Pragmatics* 1, 80–122.
- BORGER, R. 2004. *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon*. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.
- BRENNEIS, D. L. 1986. Shared territory: Audience, indirection and meaning. *Text - Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Discourse* 6, 339–347.
- BRENNEIS, D. L. 1995. 'Caught in the web of words:' Performing theory in a Fiji Indian community. In *Everyday Conceptions of Emotion* (eds) J. A. Russell, J. M. Fernández-Dols, A. S. R. Manstead & J. C. Wellenkamp, 241–250. Dordrecht; Boston; London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- BRIGGS, C. L. & R. BAUMAN 1992. Genre, Intertextuality, and Social Power. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 2, 131–172.
- CAMPBELL, R. B. 2009. Toward a Networks and Boundaries Approach to Early Complex Polities. *Current anthropology* 50, 821–848.

- CARSTEN, J. 2000. Introduction: cultures of relatedness. In *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship* (ed) J. Carsten, 1–36. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- CHAMAZA, G. W. V. 1992. Sargon II's Ascent to the Throne: The Political Situation. *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin* VI, 21–33.
- CHARPIN, D. 2010. *Reading and writing in Babylon* (trans J. M. Todd). Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press.
- COHEN, E. 2000. Akkadian *-ma* in diachronic perspective. *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie* 90, 207–226.
- COHEN, E. 2005. *The Modal System of Old Babylonian*. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns.
- COLE, S. W. & P. MACHINIST 1998. *Letters from Priests to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal*, vol. 10 (eds S. W. Cole & P. Machinist). Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- DALLEY, S. 2006. Reynolds, Frances: The Babylonian Correspondence of Esarhaddon. (State Archives of Assyria 18). Helsinki: Univ. Press, 2003. XLII, 230 pp.: ill. 9 × 25,5 cm. ISBN 951-570-567-3 (Paperback), 951-570-568-1 (Hardbound). Price \$ 48.00/61.00. *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie* 96, 142–144.
- DANZIGER, E. 2017. Toward an anthropology of intersubjectivity. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7, 451–455.
- DASSOW, VON, E. 1999. On Writing the History of Southern Mesopotamia. *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie* 89, 227–246.
- DESCOLA, P. 2013. *Beyond nature and culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- DIETRICH, M. 2003. *The Babylonian Correspondence of Sargon and Sennacherib*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- DOUGLAS, M. 1966. *Purity and Danger*. London and New York: Routledge.
- DURANTI, A. 1997. Universal and Culture-Specific Properties of Greetings. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 7, 63–97.
- DURANTI, A. 2008. Further Reflections on Reading Other Minds. *Anthropological Quarterly* 81, 483–494.
- DURANTI, A. 2015. *The Anthropology of Intentions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- DURANTI, A. 2017. In and Out of intersubjective attunement. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7, 475–483.
- EVANS-PRITCHARD, E. E. 1976. The notion of witchcraft explains unfortunate events. In *Witchcraft oracles and magic among the azande*, 18–32. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- FALES, F. M. 2007. Multilingualism on Multiple Media in the Neo-Assyrian Period: A Review of the Evidence. *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin* XVI, 95–122.
- FALES, F. M. 2009. ‘To speak kindly to him/them’ as item of Assyrian political discourse, vol. 106. In *Of God(s), Trees, Kings, and Scholars. Neo-Assyrian and Related studies in Honour of Simo Parpola* (eds) M. Luukko, S. Svärd & R. A. Mattila, 27–39. (Studia Orientalia). Finnish Oriental Society.
- FALES, F. M. 2011. Moving around Babylon: On the Aramean and Chaldean Presence in Southern Mesopotamia. In *Babylon: Wissenskultur in Orient und Okzident* (eds) E. Cancik-Kirschbaum, M. van Ess & J. Marzahn, 91–112. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- FERNANDEZ, J. W. & M. T. HUBER 2001. Introduction: The Anthropology of Irony. In *Irony in action* (eds) J. W. Fernandez & M. T. Huber, p. Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press.
- FINCKE, J. C. 2017. Assyrian Scholarship and Scribal Culture in Kalḫu and Nineveh. In *A Companion to Assyria* (ed) E. Frahm, 378–397. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- FINN, J. 2017. *Much Ado about Marduk*. Boston/Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- FOSTER, B. R. 2014. Aspekte des Menschseins im Alten Mesopotamien. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 134, 315–318.
- FOUCAULT, M. 2009. *Society, Territory, Population* (ed M. Senellart; trans G. Burchel). Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- FRAHM, E. 2010. Reading the Tablet, the Exta and the Body: the Hermeneutics of Cuneiform Signs in Babylonian and Assyrian Text Commentaries and Divinatory Texts. In *Divination and Interpretation of Signs in the Ancient World* (ed) A. Annus, 93–141. Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
- FRAHM, E. 2011. Keeping Company with Men of Learning: The King as Scholar. In *Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture* (eds) K. Radner & E. Robson, 508–532. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- FRAHM, E. 2014. Family Matters: Psychohistorical Reflections on Sennacherib and His Times. In *Sennacherib at the Gates of Jerusalem* (eds) I. Kalimi & S. Richardson, 163–222. Brill.
- FRAHM, E. 2017a. List of Assyrian Kings. In *A Companion to Assyria* (ed) E. Frahm, 613–616. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- FRAHM, E. 2017b. The Neo-Assyrian Period (ca. 1000-609 BCE). In *A Companion to Assyria* (ed) E. Frahm, 161–208. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- FRAHM, E. (ed) 2017c. *A Companion to Assyria*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- FRAME, G. 2008. Babylon: Assyria’s Problem and Assyria’s Prize. *Canadian Society of Mesopotamian Studies Journal* 3, 21–31.

- FUCHS, A. 2009. Waren die Assyrer grausam? In *Extreme Formen von Gewalt in Bild und Text des Altertums* (ed) M. Zimmerman, 65–119. (Münchner Studien zur Alten Welt). München: Herbert Utz.
- FUCHS, A. & S. PARPOLA 2001. *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part III. Letters from Babylonia and the Eastern Provinces*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- GALIL, G. 2007. *The Lower Stratum Families in the Neo-Assyrian Period*. Leiden, Boston: Brill.
- GALLAGHER, S. 2017. The narrative sense of others. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7, 467–473.
- GELLER, M. J. 2010. *Ancient Babylonian Medicine*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- GEORGE, A. R. 1986. Sennacherib and the Tablet of Destinies. *Iraq* 48, 133–146.
- GOFFMAN, E. 1986. *Frame Analysis*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- GRAYSON, A. K. & J. NOVOTNY 2012. *The Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib, King of Assyria (704-681 BC), Part I*, vol. 1. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns.
- GRUBER, M. I. 1990. Fear, Anxiety and Reverence in Akkadian, Biblical Hebrew and Other North-West Semitic Languages. *Vetus Testamentum* 40, 411–422.
- GÜTERBOCK, H.-G. 1934. Die historische Tradition und ihre literarische Gestaltung bei Babyloniern und Hethitern bis 1200. *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie* 42, 1–91.
- HAERI, N. 2017. Unbundling sincerity: Language, mediation, and interiority in comparative perspective. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7, 123–138.
- HAVILAND, J. B. 1996. Text from Talk in Tzotzil. In *Natural Histories of Discourse* (eds) M. Silverstein & G. Urban, 45–81. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- HAVILAND, J. B. 2005. “Whorish Old Man” and “One (Animal) Gentleman”: The Intertextual Construction of Enemies and Selves. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 15, 81–94.
- HÄMEEN-ANTTILA, J. 2000. *A Sketch of Neo-Assyrian Grammar*. Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.
- HILL, J. H. 1995. The voices of Don Gabriel: Responsibility and self in a modern Mexicano narrative. In *The Dialogic Emergence of Culture* (ed) D. Tedlock, 97–147. Indiana: University of Indiana Press.
- HILL, J. H. & J. T. IRVINE 1992. Introduction. In *Responsibility and Evidence in Oral Discourse* (eds) J. T. Irvine & J. H. Hill, 1–23. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- HOLBRAAD, M. & M. A. PEDERSEN 2017. *The Ontological Turn*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- HOLLOWAY, S. W. 2002. *Aššur is king! Aššur is king!: religion in the exercise of power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire*. Leiden: Brill.

- HOUSTON, S. D. 2004. The Archaeology of Communication Technologies. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33, 223–250.
- HUEHNERGARD, J. 1983. Asseverative *la and Hypothetical *lu/law in Semitic. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103, 569–26.
- HUNGER, H. 1992. *Astrological Reports to Assyrian Kings*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- IRVINE, J. T. 1992. Insult and Responsibility: Verbal Abuse in a Wolof Village. In *Responsibility and Evidence in Oral Discourse* (eds) J. T. Irvine & J. H. Hill, 105–134. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- IRVINE, J. T. 1995. A Sociolinguistic Approach to Emotion Concepts in a Sengalese Community. In *Everyday Conceptions of Emotion* (eds) J. A. Russell, J. M. Fernández-Dols, A. S. R. Manstead & J. C. Wellenkamp, 251–265. Dordrecht; Boston; London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- IRVINE, J. T. 1996. Shadow conversations: the indeterminacy of participant roles. In *Natural Histories of Discourse* (eds) M. Silverstein & G. Urban, 131–159. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- IRVINE, J. T. 2004. Say When: Temporalities in Language Ideology. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 14, 99–109.
- JAKOBSON, R. 1959. On linguistic aspects of translation. In *On translation* (eds) A. Fang & R. A. Brower, 232–239.
- JASTROW, M. 1912. The Liver as the Seat of the Soul. In *Studies in the history of religions* (eds) D. G. Lyon & G. F. Moore, 143–168. New York: Macmillan.
- k_and_p.kmz n.d. k_and_p.kmz. *Knowledge and Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (available on-line: http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/saao/knpp/downloads/k_and_p.kmz, accessed 13 August 2018).
- KARLSSON, M. 2016. *Relations of Power in Early Neo-Assyrian State Ideology*. Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG.
- KEANE, W. 2002. Sincerity, 'Modernity,' and the Protestants. *Cultural Anthropology* 17, 65–92.
- KEANE, W. 2008. Others, Other Minds, and Others' Theories of Other Minds: An Afterword on the Psychology and Politics of Opacity Claims. *Anthropological Quarterly* 81, 473–482.
- KLEINIG, J. 2010. The Nature of Consent. In *The Ethics of Consent* (eds) F. G. Miller & A. Wertheimer, 3–24. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Knowledge and Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* n.d. *Knowledge and Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (available on-line: <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu>, accessed 13 August 2018).
- KUIPERS, J. 1992. Obligations to the word: ritual speech, performance, and responsibility among the Weyewa. In *Responsibility and Evidence in Oral Discourse* (eds) J. T. Irvine & J. H. Hill, 88–104. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- KUIPERS, J. 2013. Evidence and Authority in Ethnographic and Linguistic Perspective*. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42, 399–413.
- LAMBEK, M. 2004. Introduction. In *Illness and Irony: On the Ambiguity of Suffering in Culture* (eds) M. Lambek & P. Antze. (Irony and Illness—Recognition and Refusal). New York, Oxford: Berghahn.
- LANFRANCHI, G. B. 1997. Consensus to Empire: Some Aspects of Sargon II's Foreign Policy. In *Assyrien im Wandel der Zeiten* (eds) H. Waetzoldt & H. Hauptmann, 81–87. (Heidelberger Studien zum Alten Orient). Heidelberg: Heidelberger Orientverlag.
- LANFRANCHI, G. B. & S. PARPOLA 1990. *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part II. Letters from the Northern and Northeastern Provinces*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- LARSEN, M. T. 2001. Affect and Emotion. In *Veenhof anniversary volume : studies presented to Klaas R. Veenhof on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday* (ed) W. H. van Soldt, 275–286. (Uitgaven van het Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te İstanbul). Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten.
- LAUINGER, J. 2011. Some Preliminary Thoughts on the Tablet Collection in Building XVI. *Canadian Society of Mesopotamian Studies Journal* 6, 5–14.
- LAUINGER, J. 2012. Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty at Tell Tayinat: Text and Commentary. *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 64, 87–123.
- LAUINGER, J. 2013. The Neo-Assyrian *ade*: Treaty, Oath, or Something Else? *Journal for Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Law* 99–116.
- LEICHTY, E. V. 2011. *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria (680-669 BC)*. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns.
- LEMPERT, M. 2012. Indirectness. In *The Handbook of Intercultural Discourse and Communication* (eds) C. B. Paulston, S. F. Kiesling & E. S. Rangel, 180–204. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- LIEBERMAN, S. 1990. Canonical and Official Cuneiform Texts: Toward an Understanding of Assurbanipal's Personal Tablet Collection, vol. 37. In *Lingering over words : studies in ancient Near Eastern literature in honor of William L. Moran* (eds) T. I. Abusch, J. Huehnergard & P. Steinkeller, 305–336. (Harvard Semitic studies). Atlanta: Scholars Press.
- LIPTON, P. 1998. The Epistemology of Testimony. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 29, 1–31.
- LIVERANI, M. 1979. The Ideology of the Assyrian Empire. In *Power and Propaganda. A Symposium on Ancient Empires* (ed) M. T. Larsen. (Mesopotamia. Copenhagen Studies in Assyriology). Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag.
- LIVERANI, M. 2017. *Assyria: the imperial mission* (trans A. Trameri & J. Valk). Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns.

- LIVINGSTONE, A. 1989. *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- LUUKKO, M. 2012. On standardisation and variation in the introductory formulae of Neo-Assyrian letters. *Iraq* 74, 28–45.
- LUUKKO, M. 2013a. *The Correspondence of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II from Calah*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- LUUKKO, M. 2013b. Updates to *Nimrud Letters* editions previously published in the *State Archives of Assyria* series. *Assyrian Empire Builders* 1–10 (available on-line: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sargon/downloads/saa19_updates.pdf, accessed 12 August 2018b).
- LUUKKO, M. & G. VAN BUYLAERE 2002. *The Political Correspondence of Esarhaddon*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- MACHINIST, P. 1984. The Assyrians and their Babylonian Problem: Some Reflections. *Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin Jahrbuch* 353–364.
- MANNHEIM, B. & K. V. VLEET 1998. The Dialogics of Southern Quechua Narrative. *American Anthropologist* 100, 326–346.
- MAY, T. 2005. *Gilles Deleuze: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- MORRIS, R. C. 2007. Legacies of Derrida: Anthropology. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 36, 355–389.
- N'SHEA, O. 2016. Royal Eunuchs and Elite Masculinity in the Neo-Assyrian Empire. *Near Eastern Archaeology* 79, 214–221.
- NISSINEN, M. 2000. Spoken, Written, Quoted and Invented: Orality and Writtenness in Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy. In *Writings and Speech in Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy* (eds) E. Ben Zvi & M. H. Floyd, 235–272. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.
- NISSINEN, M. 2003. Fear Not: A Study on an Ancient Near Eastern Phrase. In *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-first Century* (eds) E. Ben Zvi & M. A. Sweeney, 122–161. Grand Rapids Michigan, Cambridge.
- NOEGEL, S. B. 2010. 'Sign, Sign, Everywhere A Sign': Script, Power, and Interpretation in the Ancient Near East. In *Divination and Interpretation of Signs in the Ancient World* (ed) A. Annus, 143–162. Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
- OLMSTEAD, A. T. 1918. The Calculated Frightfulness of Ashur Nasir Apal. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 38, 209–263.
- OSSENDRIJVER, M. 2016. Conceptions of the Body in Mesopotamian Cosmology and Astral Science, 1–10.
- Oxford English Dictionary* n.d. *Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford University Press (available on-line: <http://www.oed.com>).

- PANDIAN, A. 2010. Interior horizons: an ethical space of selfhood in South India. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 16, 64–83.
- PARKER, B. J. 2011. The Construction and Performance of Kingship in the Neo-Assyrian Empire. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 67, 357–386.
- PARKER, B. J. 2014. Power, Hegemony, and the Use of Force in the Neo Assyrian Empire. *Understanding Hegemonic Practices of the Early Assyrian Empire. Essays Dedicated to Frans Wiggermann* 283–293.
- PARKIN, D. 1980. The Creativity of Abuse. *Man* 15, 45–64.
- PARPOLA, S. 1971. *Letters from Assyrian scholars to the kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal. Part IIA: introduction and appendices*. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.
- PARPOLA, S. 1987. *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part I. Letters from Assyria and the West*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- PARPOLA, S. 1993. *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- PARPOLA, S. 1997. The Man without a Scribe and the Question of Literacy in the Assyrian Empire. In *Ana šadi Labnani lu allik: Beiträge zu altorientalischen und mittelmeerischen Kulturen : Festschrift für Wolfgang Röllig* (eds) H. Kühne, P. Xella & B. Pongratz-Leisten, 315–324. (Alter Orient und Altes Testament). Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.
- PARPOLA, S. 2002. A Letter to Sennacherib Referring to the Conquest of Bit-Ha'iri and Other Events of the Year 693, vol. 281. In *Ex Mesopotamia et Syria Lux. Festschrift für Manfred Dietrich* (eds) O. Loretz, K. A. Metzler & H. Schaudig, 559–580. (Alter Orient und Altes Testament). Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.
- PARPOLA, S. & K. WATANABE 1988. *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- PHILIPS, S. U. 1992. Evidentiary Standards for American Trials: Just the Facts. In *Responsibility and Evidence in Oral Discourse* (eds) J. T. Irvine & J. H. Hill. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- PILLEN, A. 2017. A Space That Will Never Be Filled: Sharp Communication and the Simultaneity of Opposites. *Current anthropology* 58, 718–738.
- PIRngrUBER, R. 2014. 'The king paid no heed to any of the words we sent before' - The communication between the early Sargonids and Babylonian notables.
- PIRngrUBER, R. 2015. šulmu jaši libbaka lu ṭabka. The Interaction between the Neo-Assyrian King and the Outside World. In *Mesopotamia in the Ancient World. Impact, Continuities, Parallels* (eds) R. Rollinger & E. van Dongen, 317–330. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.
- PLAMPER, J. 2015. *The History of Emotions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- PODANY, A. H. 2010. *Brotherhood of kings: how international relations shaped the ancient Near East*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- POLLOCK, S. I. 2006. *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- PONCHIA, S. 1989. Royal Decisions and Courtiers' Compliance: On Some Formulae in Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Letters. *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin* 3, 115–128.
- PONGRATZ-LEISTEN, B. 2015. *Religion and Ideology in Assyria*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- RADNER, K. (ed) 1998. *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, Vol. 1, part I, A*. Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.
- RADNER, K. (ed) 1999. *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, Vol. 1, part II, B-G*. Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.
- RADNER, K. 2003. The Trials of Esarhaddon: The Conspiracy of 670 BC, vol. 6. In *Assur und sein Umland* (eds) P. A. Miglus & J. M. Cordoba, 165–184. (Isimu: Revista sobre Oriente Próximo y Egipto en la antigüedad). Madrid: Servicio de Publicaciones Universidad Autónoma de Madrid.
- RADNER, K. 2005. *Die Macht des Namens*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- RADNER, K. 2011. Royal decision-making: kings, magnates and scholars. In *Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture* (eds) K. Radner & E. Robson, 358–379. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- RADNER, K. 2012. Between a rock and a hard place: Mušāšir, Kumme, Ukku and Šubria - the buffer states between Assyria and Urartū. In *Biainili-Urartu. The Proceedings of the Symposium held in Munich 12-14 October 2007* (eds) S. Kroll, C. Gruber, U. Hellwag, M. Roaf & P. Zimansky, 243–264. Peeters.
- RADNER, K. 2014. An Imperial Communication Network. In *State Correspondence in the Ancient World*, 64–93. Oxford University Press.
- RADNER, K. 2015. Royal Pen Pals: The kings of Assyria in Correspondence with Officials, Clients and Total Strangers (8th and 7th Centuries BC). In *Official Epistolography and the Language(s) of Power* (eds) S. Procházka, L. Reinfandt & S. Tost. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- RADNER, K. 2016. Revolts in the Assyrian Empire: Succession Wars, Rebellions Against a False King and Independence Movements. In *Revolt and Resistance in the Ancient Classical World and the Near East* (eds) J. J. Collins & J. G. Manning, 41–57.
- RADNER, K. 2017. The royal family: queen, crown prince, eunuchs and others. *Knowledge and Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (available on-line: <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/saao/knpp/essentials/royalfamily/>, accessed 15 August 2018).

- RAFFNSØE, S., M. GUDMAND-HØYER & M. S. THANING 2016. *Michel Foucault: A Research Companion*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- REDDY, W. M. 2001. *The Navigation of Feeling. A Framework for the History of Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- REINER, E. 1960. Fortune-Telling in Mesopotamia. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 19, 23–35.
- REYNOLDS, F. 2003. *The Babylonian Correspondence of Esarhaddon*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- RICHARDSON, S. 2010. On Seeing and Believing: Liver Divination and the Era of Warring States (II). In *Divination and Interpretation of Signs in the Ancient World* (ed) A. Annus, 225–266. Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
- ROBBINS, J. 2004. *Becoming Sinners*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.
- ROBBINS, J. 2008. On Not Knowing Other Minds: Confession, Intention, and Linguistic Exchange in a Papua New Guinea Community. *Anthropological Quarterly* 81, 421–429.
- ROBBINS, J. & A. RUMSEY 2008. Introduction: Cultural and Linguistic Anthropology and the Opacity of Other Minds. *Anthropological Quarterly* 81, 407–420.
- ROCHBERG, F. 2010. *In the Path of the Moon*. Leiden, Boston: Brill.
- ROCHBERG, F. 2016. *Before Nature: Cuneiform Knowledge and the History of Science*. Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press.
- ROSENZWEIG, M. S. 2016. Cultivating subjects in the Neo-Assyrian empire. *Journal of Social Archaeology* 16, 307–334.
- RUMSEY, A. 2008. Confession, Anger and Cross-Cultural Articulation in Papua New Guinea. *Anthropological Quarterly* 81, 455–472.
- RUTHERFORD, D. 2016. Affect Theory and the Empirical. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 45, 285–300.
- SAHLINS, M. 2011. What kinship is (part one). *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 17, 2–19.
- SAHLINS, M. 2017. The original political society. In *On Kings*, 23–64. Chicago: Hau.
- SCHIEFFELIN, B. B. 2008. Speaking Only Your Own Mind: Reflections on Talk, Gossip and Intentionality in Bosavi (PNG). *Anthropological Quarterly* 81, 431–441.
- SCHMANDT-BESSERAT, D. 1995. Record keeping before writing, vol. 4. In *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (ed) J. M. Sasson, 2097–2106. New York: Scribner.
- SODEN, VON, W. 1995. *Grundrisse der Akkadischen Grammatik*. Roma: Istituto Pontificio Biblico.

- STASCH, R. 2008. Knowing Minds is a Matter of Authority: Political Dimensions of Opacity Statements in Korowai Moral Psychology. *Anthropological Quarterly* 81, 443–453.
- STEINERT, U. 2012. *Aspekte des Menschseins im Alten Mesopotamien: eine Studie zu Person und Identität im 2. und 1. Jt. v. Chr.* Leiden: Brill.
- ŠAŠKOVÁ, K. 2010. Adad-šumu-ušur and his Family in the Service of Assyrian Kings. In *Who Was King? Who Was Not King? The Rulers and the Ruled in the Ancient Near East* (eds) P. Charvát & P. M. Vlčková, 113–132. Prague: Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic.
- TADMOR, H. & S. YAMADA 2012. *The Royal Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III (744-727 BC) and Shalmaneser V (726-722 BC), Kings of Assyria.* Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns.
- TAMBIAH, S. J. 1968. The Magical Power of Words. *Man* 3, 175–208.
- THOMASON, A. K. 2016. The Sense-scapes of Neo-Assyrian Capital Cities: Royal Authority and Bodily Experience. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 26, 243–264.
- URBAN, G. 1996. Entextualization, replication, and power. In *Natural Histories of Discourse* (eds) M. Silverstein & G. Urban, 21–44. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- URBAN, G. 2001. *Metaculture.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- URBAN, G. 2017. Cultural Replication: The Source of Monological and Dialogical Models of Culture. In *The Monologic Imagination* (eds) M. Tomlinson & J. Millie, 19–46. New York: Oxford University Press.
- VAN DE MIEROOP, M. 1997. On Writing a History of the Ancient Near East. *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 54, 285–305.
- VAN DE MIEROOP, M. 2013. Recent Trends in the Study of Ancient Near Eastern History: Some Reflections. *Journal of Ancient History* 1, 83–98.
- VAN DE MIEROOP, M. 2016a. The Madness of King Rusa: the psychology of despair in eighth century Assyria. *Journal of Ancient History* 4, 16–39.
- VAN DE MIEROOP, M. 2016b. *Philosophy before the Greeks.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- VEENHOF, K. R. 1987. 'Dying Tablets' and 'Hungry Silver': Elements of Figurative Language in Akkadian Commercial Terminology. In *Figurative Language in the Ancient Near East* (eds) M. Mindlin, M. J. Geller & J. E. Wansbrough, 38–68. London: School of Oriental and African Studies.
- VELDHUIS, N. 2010. The Theory of Knowledge and the Practice of Celestial Divination. In *Divination and Interpretation of Signs in the Ancient World* (ed) A. Annus, 77–91. Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

- VELDHUIS, N. 2012. Domesticizing Babylonian Scribal Culture in Assyria: Transformation by Preservation. In *Theory and Practice of Knowledge Transfer. Studies in School Education in the Ancient Near East and Beyond*. (eds) W. S. van Egmond & W. H. van Soldt, 11–24. Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten.
- VOLOŠINOV, V. N. 1973. *Marxism and the philosophy of language* (trans L. Matejka & I. R. Titunik). New York and London: Seminar Press.
- WATANABE, C. 2002. *Animal Symbolism in Mesopotamia*. Institut für Orientalistik der Universität Wien.
- WATANABE, C. 2017. Association of the Dog with Healing Power in Mesopotamia. In *At the Dawn of History* (eds) Y. Heffron, A. Stone & M. Worthington, 689–698.
- WEISSERT, E. 1997. Creating a Political Climate: Literary Allusions to Enuma Elish in Sennacherib's Account of the Battle of Halule. In *Assyrien im Wandel der Zeiten* (eds) H. Waetzoldt & H. Hauptmann, 191–202. Heidelberg: Heidelberger Orientverlag.
- WESTBROOK, R. 2005. Patronage in the Ancient Near East. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 48, 210–233.
- WILCE, J. M. 2009. *Language and Emotion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- WISEMAN, D. J. 1958. The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon. *Iraq* 20, 1–99.
- WOOLARD, K. A. 1998. Introduction: Language Ideology as a Field of Inquiry. In *Language Ideologies* (eds) B. B. Schieffelin, K. A. Woolard & P. V. Kroskrity, 3–50. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- WORTHINGTON, M. 2010. Medicine, Comedy, Power and their Interconnections in Babylonia and Assyria. *Le Journal de Médecins Cunéiformes* 15, 25–39.
- WORTHINGTON, M. 2012. *Principles of Akkadian Textual Criticism*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- YAMADA, S. 2008. Qurdi-Assur-lamur: His Letters and Career. In *Treasures on Camels' Humps: Historical and Literary Studies from the Ancient Near East Presented to Israel Eph'al* (eds) M. Cogan & D. Kahn, 296–311. Jerusalem: Magnes Press.

Appendices

Place Names

The geographical information used in this list and in figure 1 was derived from the websites Assyrian Empire Builders (*Assyrian Empire Builders* n.d.) and Knowledge and Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire (*Knowledge and Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* n.d.). Figure 1 was created using ArcGIS® software by Esri. ArcGIS® and ArcMap™ are the intellectual property of Esri and are used herein under licence. Copyright © Esri. All rights reserved. For more information about Esri® software please visit www.esri.com. The Keyhole Markup Language files which contain the placemark data used to construct Figure 1 are *assyrian-empire-builders.kmz* n.d. from *Assyrian Empire Builders* n.d. and *k_and_p.kmz* n.d. from *Knowledge and Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* n.d..

Amedi Modern Diyarbakır; Upper Tigris province. Governed by Naṣ̣ir-Bel in the eighth century.	have been dubbed the ‘Babylonian Problem’ (Frame 2008; Machinist 1984).
Arbela Modern Erbil; one of the principal cities of Assyria.	Barḫalza Assyrian province. During the reign of Esarhaddon, its governor fails to provide the requisite offerings for the Aššur Temple, and is also caught up in legal proceedings.
Arpad Probably modern Tell Rifat; site of multiple battles between Assyrian and Urartian forces, and finally annexed by Tiglath-pileser in 740 (Frahm 2017: 177), becoming an Assyrian province.	Birat City of unknown location
Arrapḫa Modern Kirkuk; governed by Issar-duri during Sargon’s rule.	Borsippa Modern Birs Nimrud. Babylonian city in which an Ezida temple dedicated to the god Nabu was located.
Arzuḫina Town and province on the Lower Zab. Governed by Šamaš-bel-uṣur in 710, before he transferred to Der.	Carchemish Extremely rich city annexed by Sargon in 717. Its inhabitants, tired of the <i>ilku</i> , fled to Arpad.
Assur Modern Qalaat Sherqat; also known as Libbali (var. Libbi-ali) the ‘Inner City’ of Assyria. Location of the temple of the god Aššur, the Ešarra ‘House of the Universe.’ As a result the residence of many cultic officials. An Ezida temple dedicated to the god Nabu was also located here, of the same name as the temple in Borsippa.	Cutha Modern Tell Ibrahim; city in Babylonia that was overtaxed by the <i>šakin-temis</i> under Esarhaddon.
Babylon Modern Hillah. Ancient and highly prestigious city, occasionally subject to Assyrian suzerainty, though never ruled as an imperial province. The peculiar strategies adopted by the Assyrian rulers towards this city	Damascus City conquered by Tiglath-pileser in 732.
	Darati Town in Babylonia
	Der Modern Tell Aqar; City located in Babylonia, near Elam. Šamaš-bel-uṣur and Nabu-duri-uṣur governed this city.
	Dur-Šarruken Modern Khorsabad; Royal foundation of Sargon built as his new capital and governed by

Kiṣir-Aššur. After Sargon's death on the battlefield in 705, the city was abandoned as the royal capital, though it retained provincial status.

Dur-Atanate Town in Mazamua, precise location unknown

Dur-Šarrukku Town and province in northeastern Babylonia not to be confused with Dur-Šarruken. Governed by Il-yada' in the eighth century.

Elam Kingdom in Iran which vied with Assyria for supremacy in Babylonia. Its agents attempted to install Nabu-ušallim on the throne of the Sealand, displacing the Assyrian candidate Na'id-Marduk.

Ellipi Mountain kingdom north of Elam, ruled by Daltâ

Esagil Temple of Marduk in Babylon

Ešarra See Assur

Hamath Modern Hama; client kingdom under Tiglath-pileser that subsequently rebelled at Sargon's accession and was annexed in 720. Governed by Adda-ḫati, who complained of 'constant hostility.'

Ḫalziatbar Modern Jabal Jabisah; Assyrian province located in modern Syria; governed by Aššur-belu-da''in in Sargon's reign.

Ḫargu Zagros mountain state. The deputy of the Palace Herald under Sargon is reported to have talked about acquiring it, eliciting complaint from its ruler

Ḫarran Modern Harran, classical Carrhae; important Assyrian city in the west, site of an important temple to

Sin. Governed by Nabu-pašir in Sargon's reign. Esarhaddon travelled there to *√plh* his gods. Upon its capture in 609 the Assyrian empire came to a final end.

Ḫindanu City and province on the middle Euphrates.

Inner City See Assur

Itu'u Modern Hit; town and province on the middle Euphrates, origin of the Itu'eans who were experts in *√grr*

Kalḫu Modern Nimrud; royal capital of Assyria beginning with Assurnasirpal II, before Sargon established his city of Dur-Šarruken. It remained an important city.

Kar-Šarrukin Also known as Ḫarḫar, possibly near modern Malayer; city in the Zagros, governed by Nabu-belu-ka''in until he was succeeded by Mannu-ki-Ninua in 708

Kilizi Modern Qasr Shamamok; town where a contingent of scribes was based during Esarhaddon's reign.

Kullania Modern Tell Tayinat; provincial capital and location where a copy of Esarhaddon's *tuppi adê* was excavated

Kumme Kingdom sandwiched between Assyria and Urartu.

Lachish Modern Tel Lachish; city in ancient Judah whose destruction was depicted on reliefs in Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh

Laḫiru Possibly modern Eski Kifri; province that apparently experienced extreme joy upon the appointment of an Assyrian official

Laqê Province located on the river Ḫabur

Libbali See Assur

Malak Modern location unknown; town on the border of Elam, near Der

Mazamua Modern Suleimaniya; province in the Zagros. Governed by Aššur-daʾinanni in Tiglath-pileser's reign, succeeded by Adad-isše'a, with Nabu-ḫamatu'a serving as a deputy. Nabu-aḫu-ušur the *ša-qurbuti* 'Close One' operated here.

Našibin Modern Nusaybin; city and province. Governed by Taklak-ana-Bel in Sargon's reign.

Nemed-Laguda Town in Babylonia, location not known.

Nineveh Modern Mosul; ancient and important city that became the royal capital of Assyria under Sennacherib. Location of the palace archives in which the royal correspondence was discovered. Destroyed in 612.

Nippur Modern Nuffar; city in Babylonia, associated with an ancient head of the gods, Enlil. Its governors took the title of *šandabakku*.

Phrygia Assyrian *Muški*, kingdom located in modern Turkey. Its capital of Gordion is located at the modern site of Yassihüyük. During Sargon's reign, its king, Midas, was initially hostile but then sought rapprochement.

Pulua Modern Palu; city in Urartu, its governor insulted Ša-Aššur-dubbu

Que Also Ḫilakku, classical Cilicia, near modern Adana; province governed by Aššur-šarru-ušur in Sargon's reign

Qunbuna City in Mazamua, precise location unknown

Rašappa Assyrian province between the Tigris and Euphrates; governed by Zeru-ibni during Sargon's reign

Samaria Province and city of the same name; conquered by Shalmaneser V in 722. Ariḫu complains that without *tēmu*, the corn tax cannot be raised.

Sealand Marshy region at the head of the Gulf

Sidon Phoenician trading city, a client state under Tiglath-pileser, supervised by Qurdi-Aššur-lamur. Eventually annexed by Esarhaddon in 677.

Šubria Buffer kingdom located at the source of the Tigris. Ruled by Ḫu-Tešub, a client of Sargon.

Šupat Assyrian province in southern Syria

Til-Barsip Modern Tell Ahmar; Assyrian provincial capital.

Til-turi City in northern Syria

Tubliaš Modern Nahr eṭ-Ṭib; region in Babylonia. The sheikhs of this area write to Sargon concerning the land's possible fall to the Elamites

Turmuna Location unknown. Its roofs were plastered in the reign of Tiglath-pileser.

Tyre Modern Šur; Phoenician trading city that fell under the Assyrian sphere of influence and was under the supervision of Qurdi-Aššur-lamur during Tiglath-pileser's reign

Ṭurušpa Capital of Urarṭu.

Ur Modern Tell Muqayyar; ancient southern Babylonian city.

Urarṭu Known as Bianili to its inhabitants, this kingdom was a rival to Assyria during the eighth century, though direct warfare was difficult due to the mountainous terrain between the two states. Faced threats from Cimmerian riders.

Uruk Modern Warka; first attested city. During the Neo-Assyrian period, the site of power plays by the agitator Ḫinnumu.

Prosopographical Index

This brief index of names is intended only as a guide to where these people appear within the body of the thesis, as well as providing etymologies and normalised vowel lengths. For additional background, the reader is advised to consult the Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire entry indicated, supplemented by online updates. Names followed by a number indicate that name's entry in the PNA index.

Abbreviations

PNA 1/I	Radner 1998
PNA 1/II	Radner 1999
PNA 2/I	Baker 2000
PNA 2/II	Baker 2001
PNA 3/I	Baker 2002
PNA 3/II	Baker 2011
PNAo A	Baker 2018a
PNAo B	Baker 2018b
PNAo D	Baker 2017

Abi-yaqar 'The father is esteemed'; Puqudean sheikh who acts according to his *ramanu*, plotting revenge in the time of Sargon.

See p.103

Appears SAA 17 no.152, rev. 1, 11-12, 14

PNA 1/I s.v. **Abi-iaqar** 1, p.10

Abu-lešir 'May the father prosper'; man of unknown status active around Hamath during the reign of Sargon, mentioned in a letter where he is to be fed by the king's orders.

See p. 263

Appears SAA 1 no. 172, obv. 8, rev. 26

PNA 1/I s.v. **Abu-lēšir** 3, p.18

Abi-yaqiya West Semitic, possibly Aramaic 'The father is guarding'; An Assyrian client, sheikh in the Tubliaš region during the reign of Sargon. Writes to the king from his house, where he is *√kbs*-crushed, reporting on the *ramanu*-seeking behaviour of Abi-yaqar. He emphasises his words are true, out of his interior.

See p.103, p.124

Letter SAA 17 no. 152

PNA 1/I s.v. **Abi-iaqia** 1, p.11

Adad-isse'a 'Adad is with me'; name shared by at least two men. In this thesis, Adad-isse'a appears once, acting as an official in western Assyria. He is mentioned in a letter by Bel-duri where he does not obey royal orders. This name is also shared by a governor of Mazamua during the reign of Sargon; this governor was potentially also governor of Til-Barsip, and consequently may be the same Adad-isse'a mentioned in Bel-duri's letter.

See p. 263

Appears SAA 1 no. 172, obv. 7

PNA 1/I s.v. **Adad-isse'a** 3, p.26

Adad-šumu-ušur ‘Adad, protect the name’; King’s exorcist in the reign of Esarhaddon, father of Urad-Gula, brother of Nabu-zeru-lešir. Frequent correspondent of Esarhaddon who personally dealt with the physical and spiritual health of the king. In his letters to the king he exhibits particularly florid praise, and employs self-abnegatory devices such as declaring a lack of *tēmu* and describing himself as a dog—both devices that serve to reinscribe power hierarchies whilst not really being excessively self abusive.

He offers encouragement to the king upon the royal appointment of Assurbanipal and Šamaš-šumu-ukin as crown princes of Assyria and Babylonia respectively. In this letter, he advises Esarhaddon to banish negative internal dialogues.

See p. 31, p. 34, pp.57-58, p.79ff., p.90, p.97, pp.132-133, p.182, p.219, p.221ff., p.242-244
Letters SAA 10 no. 185, no. 197, no. 191, no. 198, no. 218

PNA 1/I s.v. **Adad-sumu-ušur** 5, p.38

Adda-ḫati Canaanite ‘Adda is a smiter’; Governor of Hamath in the reign of Sargon. Surrounded by constant hostility.

See note 463 to p.270
Letter SAA 1 no. 176

PNA 1/I s.v. **Adda-ḫati** 2, p.45

Aḫu-dur-enši ‘The brother is a protective wall for the weak’; *rab-kišir* ‘cohort commander’ during the reign of Esarhaddon. The king orders a letter to be sent via the mule express, couriered by Aḫu-dur-enši.

See p.172
Appears SAA 16 no. 148, rev. 14

PNA 1/I, s.v. **Aḫu-dūr-enši** 1, p.72

Akkullanu Meaning unknown; priest of the Aššur Temple, astrologer in the service of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal. Emphasises that his words are true, derived from his *libbu*, asks questions according to his

ramanu, and advises Esarhaddon not to place incorrect omens in the royal *libbu*.

See note 106 to p.68, p.84, p.86, p.90, p.104, note 444 to p.261

Letters SAA 8 no. 101 SAA 10 no. 90, no. 97, no. 99
PNA 1/I s.v. **Akkullanu** 1, p.95

Ana-Nabu-taklak ‘In Nabu I trust’; Assyrian official of uncertain status active in Babylonia during Sargon’s reign. Writes a letter under the name Nabu-taklak to his *aḫu* ‘brother’ Gadiya’ about how he is unwell on the battlefield whilst Gadiya’ drinks beer in the house of his lord. Mentioned in a letter of Barsipitu about the collective happiness of Babylonia.

See p.150, 222

Letter SAA 17 no.63

Appears SAA 17 no. 73, obv. 6

PNA 1/I, s.v. **Ana-Nabû-taklāk**, p.110; PNA 2/II s.v.

Nabû-taklāk 4, p.893, PNAo 1/I, s.v. **Ana-Nabû-taklāk**

Aplaya hypocoristic from *aplu* ‘son’ or *Apil-Ea* ‘Son of Ea’; Mentioned in an unassigned letter where he is denigrated as a *paḫḫuzu* ‘liar’ and *šaršaranu* ‘traitor.’ The letter is damaged, but continues to describe a man who continues to speak hot air and believes his *tēmu* won’t reach the Palace.

See p.251-2

Appears SAA 18 no. 102, obv. 8’

PNA 1/I s.v. **Aplāia** or **Apil-Aia** 34, p.118

Aqar-Bel-lumur ‘May I see the preciousness of Bel’; Name shared by two men who are likely not the same. The first was a military official active in Babylonia during the eighth century. He performs important duties for the Assyrians, such as talking *dibbi ṭabuti* ‘good words,’ establishing *tēmu*, and making people *√rhš*. Co-authors a letter to Sennacherib with Nabu-šuma-lišir, where they report the *libbu* of the people is good.

See p.127, p.145, p.151ff., note 99 to p.61
Letters SAA 17 no. 105, no. 111 with *Nabu-šuma-lišir* SAA 17 no. 120

PNA 1/I s.v. *Aqār-Bēl-lūmur* 1, p. 121

Babylonian active during Esarhaddon's reign. Writes a message to the king asking for his sponsorship, quoting a previous promise that fell from the king's pure mouth. He is \sqrt{plh} because he received no reply to any of his previous letters.

See p. 178, note 237 to p.145

Letter SAA 18 no. 60

PNA 1/I s.v. *Aqār-Bēl-lūmur* 3, p. 122

Argišti Meaning unknown; Argisti II was king of Urartu, reigning contemporaneously with Sargon. In a report from Aššur-rešuwa to Sargon, an informant describes this king's speech reassuring the Kummeans that he isn't going to destroy them.

See p.137

Appears SAA 5 no. 95 (unnamed)

PNA 1/I s.v. *Argišti* 2, p. 130

Ariḫu Meaning unknown; Official stationed in Laqê during Sargon's reign. Gets annoyed that his superior doesn't provide any *ṭemu*, making his subordinates indolent and quiet.

See p.49ff.

Letter SAA 1 no. 220

PNA 1/I s.v. *Ariḫu* 1, p. 131

Ariye Meaning unknown; king of Kumme during the reign of Sargon. Sends *ṭemu* to Sennacherib.

See p.46

Letter SAA 1 no. 29, obv. 22.

PNA 1/I s.v. *Arije*, p.131

Aššur-rešuwa Intelligence agent based in Kumme during Sargon's reign. Reports on Argišti directly to Sargon, and also reports to Sennacherib *mar-šarri*.

See p.30, p.137, note 418 to p.245

Letter SAA 5 no.95

Appears SAA 1 no. 29 obv. 23, rev. 11

PNA 1/I s.v. *Aššūr-rēšūwa* 2, p. 212

Aššur-beluda 'Aššur, strengthen the lord'; possibly the governor of Ḫalziatbar in the reign of Sargon. He reports on the Ḫalziatbareans running away under him, causing the mule stable attendant to be disturbed.

See p.276

Letter SAA 5 no. 79

PNA 1/I s.v. *Aššūr-bēlu-da* 'in, p.172

Aššur-belutaqqin 'Aššur, safeguard the lord'; perhaps a governor of a region near Babylonia during Sargon's reign. Is \sqrt{plh} of Sargon's *šiptu*-judgement should he lose any bodies from a shipment of people to the king.

See p.144-5

Letter SAA 15 no. 181

PNA 1/I s.v. *Aššūr-bēlu-taqqin* 7, p.173

Aššur-belušur 'Aššur, protect the lord'; Assyrian official, perhaps a governor, active in the Diyala during the reign of Sargon. Establishes *ṭemu* for Assyria.

See note 72 to p.47

Letter SAA 15 no. 60

PNA 1/I s.v. *Aššūr-bēlu-ušur* 10, p.174

Aššur-da 'inanni 'Aššur, strengthen me'; eunuch and governor of Mazamua during Tiglath-pileser's reign. The king established *ṭemu* on him to provide horses to Dadi

See p.47-8, p.190-1

Letters SAA 19 no. 91

PNA 1/I s.v. *Aššūr-da* 'inanni 4, p.177

Aššur-ila'i 'Aššur is my god'; Military official active in the eighth century. Writes to Tiglath-pileser requesting *ṭēmu*.

See note 75 to p.48

Letter SAA 19 no. 49

PNA 1/I s.v. **Aššur-ila'i** 3, p.188

Aššur-šallimanni 'Aššur, keep me safe'; governor of Arrapha during Tiglath-pileser's reign. He writes about the *dibbi ṭabuti* he spoke to Balassu, and requests the king dispatch troops to make him *√rhš*.

See p.126

Letter SAA 19 87

Aššur-šarru-ibni 'Aššur has created the king'; Construction manager who complains to the king that the governor of Arbela *la √mgr* 'does not consent' to grant him the subjects needed to do his work. Unable to act because he is *√plh* before the king.

See p.146

Letter SAA 1 no. 149

PNA 1/I s.v. **Aššur-šarru-ibni** 1, p.218

Aššur-šarru-ušur 'Aššur, protect the king'; Governor of Que in the reign of Sargon. The king writes a letter to him, preserved in draft form, dealing with a bundle of interiority management topics.

See p.112ff.

Appears SAA 1 no.1

PNA 1/I s.v. **Aššur-šarru-ušur**

Aššur-ušallim 'Aššur has kept safe'; Royal agent operating in the reign of Esarhaddon. Sends a letter to the king and quotes twenty-seven lines of a royal message in his letter. In this quotation, Esarhaddon emphasises the importance of secure transmission of letters.

See p.172, note 19 to p.21

Letter SAA 16 no. 148

PNA 1/I s.v. **Aššur-ukin** 2, p. 228

PNAo 1/I s.v. **Aššur-ušallim**

Aššur-zeru-ibni 'Aššur has created offspring'; High official of uncertain status active in northern Assyria during the reign of Sargon. Writes to Nergal-eṭir concerning a case against the governor of Ḫalziatbar, requesting his *aḫu* 'brother's *ṭēmu*

See p.30, p.226, p.230

Letter SAA 5 no. 81

Baḫianu Aramaic 'The Desired One'; Witness to the depredations of Bel-lu-balaṭ, and killed by him on the hill of Kawkab. Taklak-ana-Bel writes to the *sukkallu* angrily stating he had no fault in the matter.

See p.255

Appears SAA 1 no. 244, obv. 4, 7, 11.

PNA 1/II s.v. **Baḫianu** 3, p.252

Balasî Meaning unknown. Åkerman and Radner in PNA suggest it is a hypocoristic of *balātu* 'life' or a hypocoristic of Aramaic *blš* 'search'; astrologer and *ummānu* 'expert' of Assurbanipal active during Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal's reigns. Jointly authors a letter with Nabu-aḫḫe-eriba to Esarhaddon, concerned about the king's *ramānu* after the royal mouth did not eat and was short of mood.

See p.75

Letter with *Nabu-aḫḫe-eriba* SAA 10 no. 43

PNA 1/II s.v. **Balasî** 3, p.254

Balassu 'His life'; Leader of the Bit-Dakkuri tribe during the eighth century. Allies with Assyria but would rather be deported than become an enemy to a family member.

Potentially appears in a letter of Sargon's to his governor in Que. The reconstruction is uncertain, but if the proposal that SAA 1 rev. 28 DUMU.UŠ—SU[M] is to be read as *Apla-iddina*, thence interpreted as a variant of *Marduk-apla-iddina* (Luukko 2013: 3), then that section of the letter would have a consistent Babylonian theme and thus the identification of that *Balassu* with the leader of Bit-Dakkuri would be possible.

See p.113-5, p.148, p.235

Appears SAA 1 no. 1, rev. 19, SAA 19 no. 87 obv. 10'

PNA 1/II s.v. **Balassu** 1, 7, p.256

Barsipitu ‘The woman from Borsippa’; Babylonian lady of high station who writes directly to Sargon describing her safe and joyous return to Bit-Dakkuri

See p.149-150

Letter SAA 17 no. 73

PNA 1/II s.v. **Barsipitu** 1, p.271

Bel-abu’a ‘Bel is my father’; Official active in the eighth century who goes shopping for belts for the Palace Scribe.

See p.99, p.203

Letter SAA 19 no. 14

PNA 1/II s.v. **Bēl-abū’a**, p.279

PNAo B s.v. **Bēl-abū’a**

Bel-aḥa-iddin ‘Bel has given a brother’; Babylonian active in the seventh century. Write to his father Iddin-aḥi requesting a response to this letters.

See p.226ff.

Letter SAA 18 no. 97

PNA 1/II s.v. **Bēl-aḥu-iddina** 20, p.283

Bel-duri ‘Bel is my wall’; governor of Damascus during Sargon’s reign. Complains that Adad-isše’a and Bel-lešir *la ṣmgr* ‘do not consent’ and *la ṣšm* ‘do not listen’ to the royal *ṭemu*. A favourite of Sargon’s holding huge estates.

See p.263-4

Letter SAA 1 no. 172

Bel-ibni ‘Bel has created’; name shared by at least two men, who may potentially be the same person, though PNA states it is ‘impossible’ to know. A man by this name receives a letter from Aqar-Bel-lumur, reporting on the state of Šula the diviner’s beard. This man may be identical with the Bel-ibni appointed king of Babylon by Sennacherib, a ‘puppet king’ who grew up like a puppy in the Assyrian palace; his reign lasted 702-700.

See p.145, note 412 to p.243

Appears SAA 17 no. 105, obv.2, RINAP 3 Sennacherib 1 l.54

PNA 1/II s.v. **Bēl-ibni** 8, 9

Bel-iddina ‘Bel has given’; Does not appear directly in the letters, but his son causes problems for Nabu-ḥamatu’a, governor of Mazamua in Sargon’s reign. This son is described as a liar and criminal mastermind.

See p.116, p. 125

Appears SAA 5 no. 210, obv. 11, 15

PNA 1/II s.v. **Bēl-iddina** 6, p.311

Bel-iqiša ‘Bel has granted’; Name shared by at least three men. The first appears in the reign of Sargon, occupying the prelate’s office of the Esagil and Ezida temples. A letter to the *sukkallu* petitioning for the king to come to Babylon is assigned to Bel-iqiša due to similarities in style, ductus and greeting formula (Dietrich 2003 p.xxiii). In this letter, Bel-iqiša notes the *sukkallu*’s duty of *abbūtu* ‘fatherhood,’ and pleads that Babylon not go into the hands of the dogs.

See p.244, p.255-6

Letter SAA 17 no. 21

PNA 1/II s.v. **Bēl-iqīša** 3, p.315

High official active during the seventh century. Is threatened by a scribe who belittles him and also plans to kill him.

See p.249

Letter SAA 16 112

PNA 1/II s.v. **Bēl-iqīša** 10, p.316

Leader of the Gambulu during the seventh century. Esarhaddon proudly mentions in his inscriptions that this man paid tribute to him according to his own *ṭemu*.

See p.53

Appears RINAP 4 Esarhaddon 1 col. iii 71

PNA 1/II s.v. **Bēl-iqīša** 7, p.315

Bel-lešir 'Bel, may he prosper'; Governor of a western province under Sargon. He crushes people and the interior of the land, but refuses to share food with Bel-duri.

See p.123, p.263

Letter SAA 19 no. 176

Appears SAA 1 no. 172, obv. 7.

PNA 1/II s.v. **Bēl-lešir** 5, p.321

Bel-liqbi 'May Bel command'; Governor of Šupat in the reign of Sargon. When accused of being a profiteer, he emphasises his loyalty by stating he's installed *mākisu* 'tax collectors' who cause the local Arabs to be \sqrt{grr} .

See p.101, p.141

Letters SAA 1 no. 179

PNA I/1 s.v. **Bēl-liqbi**, p. 322

Bel-lu-balaṭ 'May the lord live'; Criminal official pursued by Taklak-ana-Bel in Sargon's reign. Taklak-ana-Bel reports to the *sukkallu* this scoundrel murdered a certain Baḫianu, summoned to the *sukkallu's* presence as a witness to Bel-lu-balaṭ's crimes. In other crimes, he taxed the tax exempt.

See p.255

Appears SAA 1 no. 244 obv. 5, 21, rev. 4

PNA 1/II s.v. **Bēlu-lū-balaṭ** 5, p.335

Bel-upaq Abbreviation of *Ana-Bel-upaq* 'For Bel I wait'; Borsippean active during Esarhaddon's reign. He writes well wishes to his father Kuna, and advises him to care for his *ramanu*.

See p. 74, p.227-8

Letter SAA 18 no. 64

PNA 1/II s.v. **Bēl-upāq** p.336

Bel-ušezib 'Bel has saved'; Nippurean scholar working in Nineveh during Sennacherib and Esarhaddon's reigns. During Sennacherib's reign, he was around the city of Uruk during the tenure of Ḫinnumu as *šakin-temi* there. Consequently, in Esarhaddon's reign, he reports on the extensive seditious activities occurring there. Advocating for his home city, he writes to Esarhaddon saying the *temu* of the gods changed and that the king should consequently implement

beneficent tax policies. In other foreign policy advice, he suggests that the Cimmerians cannot swear the *ade* treaty, as they are the 'Seed-of-the-Lost'

See p.100-101, p.180-184, p.242, note 159 to p.97

Letters SAA 10 no. 110, no. 111, SAA 18 no. 124, no. 125

PNA 1/II s.v. **Bēl-ušēzib** 1, p.338

Dadi Semitic 'My favourite'; Name of two men featuring in the Assyrian correspondence. The first is briefly mentioned in a quoted royal order of Tiglath-pileser in a letter from Aššur-da"inni.

See p.48, p.190

Appears SAA 19 no. 91, obv. 11

PNAo D s.v. **Dādī**

High official based in the Aššur Temple during the reign of Esarhaddon. Writes to the king reporting on shepherds who do not \sqrt{plh} the king, asking, if these citizens of Assyria do not \sqrt{plh} , how will enemies behave?

See p.134, p.262, note 444 to p.261

Letters SAA 13 no. 19, no.2, no.21

PNA 1/II s.v. **Dādī** 11, p.361

Dalta Meaning and origin unknown; King of the land of Ellipi during the eighth century, attested 737-713. Mentioned in a report by Nabu-bel-ka"in to Sargon as having his *ramanu* swear an oath for the king, but burning five towns instead.

See p.102

Appears SAA 19 no. 192, obv. 8

PNA 1/II s.v. **Daltā** p.373

Data Meaning unknown, though Luukko proposes reading *Šuttā*, hypocoristic from *šuttu* 'dream'; Writes a letter to her brother Šumu-iddin concerning a death in the family.

See p.232ff.

Letter SAA 19 no. 144

PNA 1/II s.v. **Datā** p.381

Gabbu-ana-Aššur 'All belongs to Aššur'; high official, the palace herald, during the reign of Sargon. Despite his lofty status, the people of the country disrespect and don't listen to him. Exasperated, he writes a letter to Sargon.

See p.277

Letter SAA 5 no. 118

PNA 1/I s.v. **Gabbu-ana-Aššūr** 1, p.413

Gadiya' West Semitic hypocoristic from *Gadd* 'Good fortune'; Receives a letter from Ana-Nabu-taklak where the latter upbraids him for asking after his wellbeing when he is sitting in the shadow of the enemy's sword. By contrast, the lucky Gadiya' is relaxing, eating bread and drinking beer.

See p.222ff.

Appears SAA 17 no. 63, obv. 2

PNA 1/II s.v. **Gaddī**, p.417

Gagâ Meaning unknown, possibly derived from *gagu* 'necklace'; Babylonian woman. Her death upsets the brother of Data and Šumu-iddin.

See p.232

Appears SAA 19 no. 144, obv. 13.

PNA 1/II s.v. **Gagâ**, p.418

Giri-Dadi Canaanite 'Client of Dadi'; Quarrels with his cousin Se'-lukidi, accused of speaking unword words. The governor of Ḫarran during the reign of Sargon bundles the disputants and ships them to the Palace to be dealt with.

See p.252-3

Appears SAA 1 no. 190 obv. 12, rev.7', 10'

PNA 1/II s.v. **Gīr-Dādi**, p.425

Ḫinnumu Akkadian name of unknown meaning; *šākin-ṭēmi* of Uruk during Sennacherib's reign. Bel-ušeziḫ reports on this man's intrigues to gain power in Uruk during Esarhaddon's rule. Ḫinnumu's impermeable interior represents a threatening mystery, as no one knows what his motives are.

See p.101, p.180-181

Appears SAA 18 no. 125, obv. 3', 6', 11', 13', 23', rev. 9, 15.

PNA 2/I s.v. **Ḫinnumu**, p.473

Ḫu-Tešub Ḫurrian name containing the divine element Teššub; ruler of Šubria during the reign of Sargon. Appears in a letter of Ša-Aššur-dubbu's as the 'Šubrian.' The Assyrian governor insults him in the Ḫurrian language, calling him an *abati*-calf who doesn't fear the gods. Also appears in a letter of Aššur-dur-paniya, who describes him harbouring fugitive workers from Assyria who are subsequently apprehended and delivered up to the king.

See p.246-7, note 467 to p.275

Appears SAA 5 no. 35, obv. 17; no. 52 obv. 14, rev. 9.

PNA 2/I s.v. **Ḫu-Teššub**, p.483

Iddin-Aššur 'Aššur has given'; Official of uncertain status probably stationed at the city of Aššur during the seventh century. Suggests a *šiptu*-judgement be imposed on a scribe in retribution for the province of Barḫalza failing to supply offerings for the Aššur temple.

See p.140, p.261

Letter SAA 13 no. 31

PNA 2/I s.v. **Iddin-Aššur** 6, p.504

Iddin-Ea 'Ea has given'; Priest at the Ninurta temple in Kalḫu during the seventh century. Writes a letter to the king accusing Urdu-Nabu, priest in the temple of Nabu next door, of appropriating fields for his own *ramanu*.

See p.101

Letter SAA 13 126

PNA 2/I s.v. **Iddināia** or **Iddin-Aia** 8, p.503

Il-yada' Aramaic 'God has known'; Assyrian official, governor of Der in 724 and possibly governor of Dur-Šarrukku at a later date in the eighth century. He requests Sargon talk *dibbi ṭabuti* with a potential ally such that $\sqrt{r/ḫ}$ will virally spread throughout the country.

See p.127-9

Letter SAA 15 no. 159

PNA 2/I s.v. **Il-iada'** 1, p.515

Inurta-bel-ušur 'Ninurta, protect the lord'; Official of uncertain station working in north-west Assyria in the eighth century. Establishes *ṭemu*.

See note 72 to p.47

Letter SAA 19 no. 33

PNA 2/I s.v. **Inūrta-bēlu-ušur** 5, p.548

Issar-duri 'Ištar is my wall'; Governor of Arrapha during Sargon's reign. Caught up in an appeal against his *ṭemu*, Issar-duri requests the king to see the truth.

See p.40, note 99 to p.61

Letters SAA 15 no. 1, no.15

PNA 2/I s.v. **Issār-dūrī** 9, p.569

Issar-šumu-ereš 'Ištar has desired a name'; *rab tuṣšarri* 'chief scribe' during Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal's reigns. Succeeded his father, Nabu-zeru-lešir. Of the many letters and reports he wrote to the king, two appear in thesis: in an astrological report he advises the king not to talk with his interior about a sickness. Then, he opines about the quality of language in a letter to Esarhaddon.

See p.87, p.186

Letters SAA 8 no. 1, SAA 10 no. 30

PNA 2/I s.v. **Issār-šumu-ēreš** 3, p.577

Kilar Anatolian name of unknown meaning; Client ruler in the northwest of Assyria. Sargon tells his governor Aššur-šarru-ušur that he has no reason to be \sqrt{plh} before the newly peaceful Midas, and consequently his request for more territory is to be denied. He is expected to eat, drink, and be of *libbu* $\sqrt{t'b}$ in Sargon's shadow.

See p.113-4, p.126, p.148-150

Appears SAA 1 no. 1 obv. 31, 33

PNA 2/I s.v. **Kilar**, p.616

Kina Hypocoristic; Babylonian 'temple-enterer' from the town of Nemed-Laguda tasked with finding an ostrich egg by his brother Nergal-našir. Reports that no ostrich eggs were to be found in Nippur. Demands his ill brother get healthy and write to him.

See p.225-6

Letter SAA 17 no.147

PNA 2/I s.v. **Kinâ** 2, p.617

Kiṣir-Aššur 'Host of Aššur'; Governor of Dur-Šarruken during Sargon's reign. Sargon accuses him of stealing houses. Kiṣir-Aššur denies this and asks the king to send a eunuch to witness the truth and report it to the king.

See p.37ff.

Letter SAA 1 no. 124

PNA 2/I s.v. **Kiṣir-Aššūr** 7 p.621

Kudurru 'Son, heir'; Man of uncertain status who does not want to die like a dog.

See p.244

Letter SAA 16 no. 31

PNA 2/I s.v. **Kudurru** 12, p.633

Kuna Hypocoristic based on $\sqrt{k'n}$, 'true, firm'; father of Bel-upaq. Seemingly too ill to perform *ilku* for Ezida, his son performs it in his stead, and wishes wellbeing for his father's *ramanu*.

See p.227

Appears SAA 18 no. 64, obv. 2

PNA 2/I s.v. **Kunâ** 5, p.637

Mannu-ki-Adad 'Who is like Adad?'; high official of uncertain status active during Sargon's reign. The king accuses him of building up a private army, and wonders whether he ever talked with his interior about what he would do when he was eventually found out.

See p.85, note 172 to p.102

Appears SAA 1 no. 11, obv. 1

PNA 2/II s.v. **Mannu-kī-Adad** 7, p.681

Mannu-ki-Libbali 'Who is like the Inner City?'; Official of uncertain status active during Esarhaddon's reign. The king orders him to tell the truth, to which he asks how he could possibly speak dishonestly?

See pp.37-9

Letter SAA 16 no. 78

PNA 2/II s.v. **Mannu-ki-Libbāli** 2, p.693

Mannu-ki-Ninua 'Who is like Nineveh?' Governor of Kar-Šarrukin from 708. Responds to a letter of Sargon's where the king tells him to describe a shaking, angry Palace to a local ruler.

See note 289 to p.176

Letter SAA 15 no. 100

PNA 2/II s.v. **Mannu-ki-Ninua** 2, p.695

Mardi 'My successor'; A dog who is \sqrt{plh} of crown prince Assurbanipal. Appeals to Esarhaddon to have the governor of Barḫalza return his property.

See p.243

Letter SAA 16 no. 29

PNA 2/II s.v. **Mardī** 10, p.704

Marduk-apla-iddina 'Marduk has given an heir', Biblical 'Merodach-baladan'; eighth-century King of the Sealand, erstwhile King of Babylon in the years 721-710 and 703, and perennial thorn in the Assyrian side. Though we do not encounter him directly in this thesis, his sons Na'id-Marduk and Nabu-ušallim contend for supremacy in their father's land during Esarhaddon's reign.

PNA 2/II s.v. **Marduk-apla-iddina**, p.705

Marduk-šakin-šumi 'Marduk is the establisher of the name'; prestigious scholar of the seventh century who rose to the position of chief $\bar{a}\dot{s}ipu$ in Assurbanipal's reign, attested from 673-660. He talks with his interior concerning a lunar observation. In another letter, he emphasises the $\bar{t}emu$ of the king was preserved safely on a tablet, written by the $\bar{a}\dot{s}ipu$ himself.

See p.88, p.177

Letters SAA 10 no. 240, no. 245

PNA 2/II s.v. **Marduk-šākin-šumi** 2, p.722

Mar-Issar 'Son of Ištar'; Scholar and 'special agent' of Esarhaddon who oversaw the restoration of Babylonia. As part of his business in Babylonia, he reports on riots that occurred there due to some 'unfair' orders causing the local $\dot{s}akin-\bar{t}emi$ to levy excessive taxes. He sympathises with the wretched Babylonians. In another letter, he assuredly does not sympathise with the governor of Dur-Šarrukku, who takes provisions from a temple, parenthetically advising the king to punish one of the governor's underlings to inspire \sqrt{grr} .

See p.140, p.261, p.280ff., note 185 to p.115, note 302 to p.185

Letters SAA 10 no. 348, no. 369

PNA 2/II s.v. **Mār-Issār** 18, p.739

Midas Phrygian name of unknown meaning; Powerful Anatolian king who was in indirect conflict with Sargon from 718 to 709. Makes peace and sends tribute to Sargon in 709. Mentioned in a draft letter of Sargon's to Aššur-šarru-ušur, where the king describes himself as rejoicing because of Midas' conciliatory approach.

See p.34, pp.112-3, p.120

Appears SAA 1 no. 1, obv. 3, 24; as *Muškaya* 'the Phrygian' obv. 4, 9, 12-13, 37-38, rev.4

PNA 2/II s.v. **Mitā** 1, p.755

Milki-nuri 'The king is my light'; Eunuch of the queen during the seventh century. Involved in a conspiracy against Esarhaddon which was crushed, with many of the high officials involved executed. He appears in a letter of Assurbanipal to king Esarhaddon his father, \sqrt{grr} about losing his office.

See pp.138-9

Appears SAA 16 20, rev. 2'

PNA 2/II s.v. **Milki-nūri** 1, p.752

Mutakkil-Adad 'The one who inspires trust is Adad'; 'Nabu is my trust'; Man of uncertain status who co-authors a petition to Esarhaddon with Nabu-tukulti and Nabu-šumu-lešir describing the magnates not

consenting to render justice despite a *temu* of the king directing them to do so.

See p.258

Letter SAA 16 no. 41

PNA 2/II s.v. **Mutakkil-Adad 1**, p.782

Nabu-abu-da”in ‘Nabu, strengthen the father’; Cook from Nineveh working in a temple during the seventh century. Is beaten to death after confessing the theft of a golden statue of the god Erra.

See p.36ff.

Appears SAA 13 no. 157, b.e 24, rev. 5

PNA 2/II s.v. **Nabû-abu-da”in**, p.792

Nabu-aḥḥe-eriba ‘Nabu has replaced the brothers’; astrologer working in Nineveh during the reigns of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal. Wrote a letter to Esarhaddon explaining that Adad’s lightning strike was because the local farmers did not $\sqrt{plḥ}$ that god. Jointly authors a letter with Balasi to Esarhaddon, concerned about the king’s *ramanu* after the royal mouth did not eat and was short of mood.

See p.75, p.87, p.134, p.214

Letters SAA 8 no. 40, SAA 10 no. 69, no. 70, no.73 with *Balasi* SAA 10 no. 43

PNA 2/II s.v. **Nabû-aḥḥe-eriba 6**, p.794

Nabu-aḥu-ušur ‘Nabu, protect the brother’; *ša-qurbuti* ‘Close One’ operating in Mazamua during Sargon’s reign. Carries a message to Šarru-emuranni with words to be placed in the mouth of a trustworthy man, able in words. Writes to Sargon about his mission to the magnates to speak the king’s precatively voiced orders, to which the magnates did not consent.

See p.259

Letter SAA 5 no. 226

Appears SAA 5 no. 204, 7, 12

PNA 2/II s.v. **Nabû-aḥu-ušur 1**, p.801

Nabu-ašared ‘Nabu is foremost’; Aesthetically inclined priest at the Aššur Temple during the reign of Esarhaddon, who complained of some bad statue design choices and dissented to have anything to do with them.

See p.103

Letter SAA 13 no. 34

PNA 2/II s.v. **Nabû-ašarēd 5**, p.806

Nabu-bel-ka”in ‘Nabu, establish the lord’; High official during the reign of Sargon. First attested working in the Diyala region until 710, when he became governor of the city of Kar-Šarrukin until 708.

During his tenure in the Diyala, he writes to Sargon about military movements around Der, which were motivated by a soldier whose *libbu* spoke to him. In another letter, he writes a seriously affected letter to the king, who accuses him of *la ṣm*’.

As governor of Kar-Šarrukin, he reports on the client ruler Daltâ and his *ramanu*. He further reports on various *la ṣmgr* intransigencies, where some men fail to break bread with him. More seriously, an Assyrian sponsored installation of a client ruler fails when the locals assert their autonomy and dissent to be ruled by the Assyrian candidate.

See pp.86-7, p.102, p.278, note 146 to p.92

Letters from the Diyala SAA 15 no. 30, no. 37, no. 43

Letters as governor of Kar-Šarrukin SAA 15 no. 85, SAA 19 no. 192

PNA 2/II, s.v. **Nabû-bēlu-ka”in 1**, p.815

Nabu-bel-šumate ‘Nabu is the lord of names’, official of uncertain status active in Babylonia. Writes to the king using a rare precative future construction ‘if the king rejoices...’. In this imagined future, the king is rejoicing due to cloth weaving.

See p.196

Letter SAA 17 no. 11

PNA 2/II, s.v. **Nabû-bēl-šumāti 3**, p.810

Nabu-bel-šumati 'Nabu is the lord of names'; *qepu* delegate of the city of Birat who surprised Ṭab-šill-Ešarra when he turned up in Aššur after receiving a \sqrt{plh} -inducing letter from Sargon

See p.144

Appears SAA 1 no.84 obv. 6

PNA 2/II, s.v. **Nabû-bêl-šumāti** 1, p.810

Nabu-duri-ušur 'Nabu, protect the wall'; Name shared by two officials, or possibly the same official, though PNA keeps the two separate. Nabu-duri-ušur 1 worked on the northern frontier of Assyria, and received a grumpy letter from Ariḫu who had been requesting *temu* for two years.

See p.49

Appears SAA 1 no. 220 obv. 1

PNA 2/II s.v. **Nabû-dûru-ušur** 1, p.823

Nabu-duri-ušur 2 (who may have been identical with Nabu-duri-ušur one at a later stage in his career) was the deputy governor of Der, and corresponded with his direct superior Šamaš-bel-ušur when the senior governor was away from his province.

See p.204, p.205ff.

Letters SAA 15 129, 131

PNA 2/II s.v. **Nabû-dûru-ušur** 2, p.824

Nabu-ḫamatu'a 'Nabu is my rescue'; Deputy governor of Mazamua during the reign of Sargon. Writes a letter to the king where he talks of speaking *dibbi ṭabuti* leading to *libbu* $\sqrt{škn}$, and describes a tenet of Assyrian ideology: work and be glad, you are servants of the king.

See p.116, p.125, p.148

Letter SAA 5 no. 210

PNA 2/II, s.v. **Nabû-ḫamātū'a** 1, p.833

Nabu-iqbi 'Nabu has spoken'; astrologer identifying himself as from Cutha who worked in an unspecified location during the reign of Assurbanipal. Writes to the

king about people of single *temu* 'plotting' (\sqrt{ptq}) with their *libbu*

See p.31, p.53

Letter SAA 18 no. 132

Nabu-iqiša 'Nabu has granted'; astrologer identifying himself as from Borsippa who worked in an unspecified location during the reign of Esarhaddon. Gets caught up in some 'class warfare' when the local townspeople kill his farmers and try to enlist him into corvée work.

See pp.273-4

Letter SAA 8 no. 296

Nabu-nammir 'Nabu, make bright'; Official of unknown standing operating in Babylonia during Tiglath-pileser's reign. Co-authors a letter with Šamaš-bunaya about failed negotiations with the Babylonians. Tiglath-pileser wanted to use his mouth to speak to the Babylonians directly, but the Babylonian's weren't convinced.

See p.173ff.,

Letter SAA 19 no. 98

PNA 2/II, s.v. **Nabû-nammir** 2, p.855

Nabu-našir 'Nabu is the protector'; *āšipu* working in Nineveh as part of Esarhaddon's entourage. Wrote letters to Esarhaddon where he told the truth about a royal baby, reported on somebody being \sqrt{grr} about their flesh, and was a dog whose *libbu* is \sqrt{gmr} .

See p.38, p.139, p.243

Letters SAA 10 302, 304, 307

PNA 2/II, s.v. **Nabû-nāšir** 16, p.856

Nabu-pašir 'Nabu is the one who releases'; Probably the governor of Ḫarran during the reign of Sargon. Reports on a dispute between Se'-lukidi and Giri-Dadi, the city lord of Til-turi, where Se'-lukidi describes his cousin's words that are not words.

See p.253

Letter SAA 1 no. 190

PNA 2/II, s.v. **Nabû-pāšir** 1, p.858

Nabu-šallim-aḫḫe 'Nabu, keep safe the brothers'; Temple official of unknown standing active during the seventh century. Investigates the theft of a golden statue, aggressively interrogating Nabu-zer-ketti-lešir.

See p.36

Appears SAA 13 no. 157 obv. 4', 7', 17'-18'

PNA 2/II s.v. **Nabû-šallim-aḫḫē** 7, p.869

Nabu-šuma-lišir 'Nabu, may the name prosper'; Official of uncertain status working in Babylonia during Sargon's reign. Wrote letters with Aqar-Bel-lumur, one of which stated the *ṭēmu* of the land was well, before contradicting themselves by saying the people were disobedient.

See pp.151-2

Letter SAA 17 no. 120

PNA 2/II, s.v. **Nabû-šumu-lēšir** 3, p.890

Nabu-šumu-iddina 'Nabu has given the name'; *rab birti* 'fortress chief' in the province of Laḫiru during the reign of Sargon. Reports on the extreme, emphatic joy experienced by the province upon the appointment of an Assyrian official.

See p.149

Letter SAA 15 no. 136

PNA 2/II s.v. **Nabû-šumu-iddina** 7, p.884

Nabu-šumu-lešir 'Nabu, may the name prosper'; Man of uncertain status who co-authors a petition to Esarhaddon with Nabu-tukulti and Mutakkil-Adad describing the magnates not consenting to render justice despite a *ṭēmu* of the king directing them to do so.

See p.258

Letter SAA 16 no. 41

PNA 2/II s.v. **Nabû-šumu-lēšir** 8, p.891

Nabu-tabni-ušur 'Nabu, you have created—protect'; Scholar active in the seventh century who laments to the king about his broken interior.

See p.97

Letter SAA 10 no. 334

PNA 2/II, s.v. **Nabû-tabni-ušur** 2, p.893

Nabu-tukulti 'Nabu is my trust'; Man of uncertain status who co-authors a petition to Esarhaddon with Nabu-šumu-lešir and Mutakkil-Adad describing the magnates not consenting to render justice despite a *ṭēmu* of the king directing them to do so.

See p.258

Letter SAA 16 no. 41

PNA 2/II s.v. **Nabû-tukulti** 2, p.898

Nabu-ušallim 'Nabu has kept in good health'; name shared by three men. The first, active during the reign of Sennacherib, was a Babylonian who wrote letters to the king and *sukkallu*. He asks Sennacherib to tear out some Aramaeans from Babylonia so the land's *libbu lu* $\sqrt{t}b$. Dietrich suggests that SAA 17 no. 142 is to be attributed to him, joined to no. 141; in no. 142, the author uses \sqrt{hd} to refer to the *sukkallu*'s autonomous scope of action.

See p.125, p.196

Letter SAA 17 no. 140, no. 142

PNA 2/II s.v. **Nabû-ušallim** 4, p.903

The second Nabu-ušallim, the son of Marduk-apla-iddina, was a perennial thorn in the side of the Sealanders, who accepted Assyrian suzerainty under Na'id-Marduk. Though he did not send any letters himself, he is mentioned as threatening to destroy the Sealanders' land and houses if they do not speak for him.

See p.41ff., p.192ff.

Appears SAA 18 no. 87, obv.10', 17', 25', rev. 3

PNA 2/II s.v. **Nabû-ušallim** 10, p.903

The third is mentioned in a footnote in this paper. The son of Balassu, Esarhaddon installs him as ruler of Bit-Dakkuri. He refuses to listen to the orders of the

king without a sealed document and *ša-qurbuti* 'Close One' to authenticate them.

See note 441 to p.259

Appears SAA 18 no. 56, obv. 10

PNA 2/II s.v. **Nabû-ušallim** 11, p.903

Nabu-zero-lešir 'Nabu, let the seed prosper'; *rab tuššarri* 'chief scribe' during the reign of Esarhaddon, brother of Adad-šumu-ušur and father of his successor Issar-šumu-ereš. Writes a letter to the *rab ekalli* 'Palace Chief' which was basically just a list of data.

See note 21 to p.21

Letter SAA 16 no. 50

Nabu-zero-ušur 'Nabu, protect the seed'; scribe of the *ša-pān-ekalli* 'Palace Supervisor' during the reign of Esarhaddon. Reports on the governor of Nineveh threatening to crush the skulls of some donkey sellers.

See p.271

Letter SAA 16 no. 88

PNA 2/II, s.v. **Nabû-zēru-ušur** 3, p.912

Nabu-zer-ketti-lešir 'Nabu, let the seed of truth prosper'; Name shared by two men in the Assyrian hierarchy during the seventh century;

Nabu-zer-ketti-lešir 4, *ša-muḫḫi-ḫuluḫḫi* 'overseer of write frit' writes a letter to Esarhaddon lamenting overturned *temu* and canine lamentation.

See p.21, p.265

Letter SAA 16 no. 32

PNA 2/II, s.v. **Nabû-zēr-kitti-lišir** 4, p.906

Nabu-zer-ketti-lešir 5, worked in a temple at Nineveh and was accused by Nabu-šallim-aḫḫe of stealing a golden statue and lying about it, the ultimate consequence of this crime being 'dying in untruth.'

See p.36

Appears SAA 13 no. 157 obv. 16'

PNA 2/II, s.v. **Nabû-zēr-kitti-lišir** 4, p.906

Nadin-Aššur See Iddin-Aššur

Naqī'a Aramaic 'Pure'; queen (lit. 'Palace Woman') of Sennacherib, mother of Esarhaddon. Rendered into Akkadian as **Zakutu**. Attested 712-669. During Esarhaddon's reign referred to with the title *ummi šarri* 'mother of the king.'

See p.132, p.218, p.251

Appears SAA 13 no. 76, obv. 1, 3, 10, rev. 9; no. 102 (restored)

PNA 2/II, s.v. **Naqī'a**, p.929

Nashir-Bel 'Turn [to me] Bel' or 'Favourable attention of Bel'; Governor of Amedi during the reign of Sargon. Reports on his interactions with a powerful Urartian.

See p.176

Letter SAA 5 no. 2

PNA 2/II, s.v. **Nashir-Bel** or **Nashur-Bel** 3, p. 932

Na'di-ilu 'Exalted is the god'; Name shared by two high ranking men in the Assyrian hierarchy during the eighth century:

Na'di-ilu 2, *ša-qurbuti* 'Close One' during the reign of Tiglath-pileser. Writes to the king about the Babylonians experiencing \sqrt{grr} and \sqrt{plh} .

See p.138

Appears SAA 19 no. 1, obv. 16

PNA 2/II, s.v. **Na'di-ilu**, **Na'id-ilu** 2, p.916

Na'di-ilu 5, *rab šaqe* 'Chief Cupbearer' during the reign of Sargon. Co-authors a letter with Ṭab-šill-Ešarra quoting a royal letter establishing *temu*.

See p.49

Letter with Ṭab-šill-Ešarra SAA 1 no. 98

PNA 2/II, s.v. **Na'di-ilu**, **Na'id-ilu** 5, p.916

Na'id-Marduk 'Marduk is praised'; Son of Marduk-apla-iddina, Assyrian sponsored ruler of the Sealand potentially from 680-673. Whilst he does not appear directly in this thesis, the Elders of the Sealand

were deeply loyal to him, as were his men. His brother, Nabu-ušallim, was sponsored by the Elamites, and together they menaced the Sealand with invasion, threats and *ṭēmu*.

His men write a letter to Esarhaddon, suggesting that Sennacherib was thinking or not thinking of Na'id-Marduk when he declared he wanted for nothing in all of the lands.

See p.41ff., p.77ff., p.128

Appears SAA 18 no.86, obv. 15; no. 87, obv. 13', 20'-23'; no. 88, obv. 3, rev 17'-18'

PNA 2/II, s.v. Na'di-Marduk, Na'id-Marduk 2, p.918

Nergal-eṭir 'Nergal has saved'; Official of uncertain status who was active on the eastern frontier of Assyria during the reign of Sargon. Receives a letter from his *aḫu* 'brother' Aššur-zeru-ibni about a case against the governor of Ḫalziatbar.

See p.30, p.226

Appears SAA 5 no. 81, obv. 2

Nergal-našir 'Nergal protects'; Asks his brother Kinâ for an ostrich egg, but didn't get one.

See p.225

Appears SAA 17 no. 147 obv. 2

PNA 2/II, s.v. Nergal-nāšir 5, p.951

Nergal-šarrani 'Nergal is our king'; priest appointed to the Nabu temple in Kalḫu during the reign of Esarhaddon. He writes to Naqī'a blessing her and describing how she is *√plḫi* of the goddess Tašmetu.

See p.132

Letter SAA 13 no.76

PNA 2/II, s.v. Nergal-šarrāni 3, p.953

Nurea Hypocoristic from *Nūru* 'Light' or *Nūr-Aia* 'Light of Ea'; Babylonian who sends silver to the *sukkallu* in the reign of Esarhaddon

See p.171

Letter SAA 18 no. 21

PNA 2/II, s.v. Nūrāia or Nūr-Aia 12, p.968

Pulu 'Cornerstone'; lamentation priest appointed to the Nabu temple in Kalḫu. Accused of acting according to his interior in an unassigned letter.

See p.100

Appears SAA 13 no. 134, obv. 5'

Qurdi-Aššur-lamur 'May I see the heroism of Aššur'; Governor of Šimirra during the reign of Tiglath-pileser, and additionally *rab-kari* 'quay master' (Yamada 2008: 310). He reports on the Phoenician cities: Tyre is good, acting according to their interior; the Sidonites expel the Assyrian tax collector and Itu'eans are sent in to establish *√grr*.

See p.99, p.142

Letter SAA 19 no. 22

PNA 3/I, s.v. Qurdi-Aššur-lāmur, p.1021

Rašil 'He has a god'; Name of at least two Babylonian scholars, one who refers to himself as Raši-il the 'older,' the other as Rašil son of Nurzanu. Prosopographers have found it difficult to disambiguate between the two; Rašil the older fully identifies himself in reports, but the letters cannot be disambiguated. In a report, Rašil the older requests the king to guard the guard of the *ramānu*.

One of the two expresses *√rhṣ* and *√tkl* towards Esarhaddon/Assurbanipal, in the face of slanderous *smelly words* and talking in the Palace.

Reynolds attributes a letter with damaged greeting to one of these Rašils (2003: 112), where he writes of the king's words penetrating his interior twice, thrice.

See p.74, p.129, p.185

Report SAA 8 no. 387

Letters SAA 13 no. 174, no. 185; SAA 18 no. 142

PNA 3/I, s.v. Raši-ili 2, 3, 2-3, p.1034

Se'-lukidi West Semitic 'Se' conquers'; Quarrels with his cousin Giri-Dadi, whom he describes as uttering unword words. The governor of Ḫarran bundles the disputants and ships them to the Palace to be dealt with.

See pp.253

Appears SAA 1 no. 190 obv. 16, rev. 11'

PNA 3/I s.v. **Sē'-lūkidi**, p.1102

Sin-iddina 'Sin has given'; Official of uncertain status stationed in the city of Ur. Is shot down by Sargon when he asks to be permitted to write letters in Aramaic.

See p.187

Letter SAA 17 no. 2

PNA 3/I, s.v. **Sin-iddina** 5, p.1134

Šamaš-abu-ušur 'Šamaš, protect the father'; Reports on the movements of Marduk-apla-iddina to an Assyrian governor. Transgresses communication conventions by addressing his superior with an imperative, ordering him to return his *temu* to the palace.

See note 78 to p.50

Letter SAA 15 no. 186

PNA 3/II, s.v. **Šamaš-abu-ušur** 3, p.1189

Šamaš-bel-ušur 'Šamaš, protect the lord'; Governor of Arzuḫina in 710 and later appointed governor of Der. During his tenure at Arzuḫina, he writes to Sargon asking him to *temu* *√škn* regarding the organisation of the mule express. At Der, reports to Sargon about the Elamites attacking the town of Malak, with *√grr* refugees fleeing to Der. When away from Der, engages in correspondence with his deputy, Nabu-duri-ušur.

See p.48, p.136, p.205ff.

Letters SAA 5 no. 227, SAA 15 no. 118

Appears SAA 15 nos. 129-131, 133

PNA 3/II, s.v. **Šamaš-bēlu-ušur** 4, p.1193

Šamaš-bunaya Hypocoristic 'Šamaš—My features'; Official of unknown standing operating in Babylonia during Tiglath-pileser's reign. Co-authors a letter with Nabu-nammir about failed negotiations with the

Babylonians. Tiglath-pileser wanted to use his mouth to speak to the Babylonians directly, but the Babylonian's weren't convinced.

See p.173ff.

Letter SAA 19 no. 98

PNA 3/II, s.v. **Šamaš-būnā'ī** 1, p.1195

Šamaš-šumu-lešir 'Šamaš, may the name prosper'; Official of unknown status active in the province of the *rab-šaqe* during the reign of Esarhaddon or Assurbanipal. Writes a florid letter to the king where he laments wandering about like a dog.

See p.244

Letter SAA 13 no. 190

PNA 3/II, s.v. **Šamaš-šumu-lešir**, p.1214

Šarru-emuranni 'The king has chosen me'; Governor of Mazamua during the reign of Sargon. Asks Sargon to do something (not extant) which will result in *√grr* of deportation being exhibited by some Babylonians.

See p.141, p.203, note 304 to p.185

Letters SAA 5 no. 47, no. 203, no. 204

PNA 3/II, s.v. **Šarru-ēmuranni** 4, p.1234

City lord of Qunbuna during Sargon's reign. Denigrates his kinship ties as a source of authority, instead emphasising his relationship to the king.

See p.213

Letter SAA 5 no. 243

PNA 3/II, s.v. **Šarru-ēmuranni** 7, p.1236

Ša-Aššur-dubbu 'Speak of Aššur'; Governor of Tušḫan during the reign of Sargon. Accuses the client king of Šubria of not being *√plḫ* before Sargon, and instead being a 'calf of the Urartian'. He is *√plḫ* before *bartu*-rebellion in his province.

See p.246, p.248ff., p.279ff.

Letters SAA 5 no. 33, no. 35

PNA 3/II, s.v. **Ša-Aššūr-dubbu** 1, p.1179

Ša-Nabu-šu 'To Nabu he belongs'; Babylonian mentioned in a report by Bel-ušeziḫ to Esarhaddon. In it, he is described as talking publicly about Ḫinnumu's promotion to *šakin-temi* and claiming Esarhaddon talks lies.

See p.180ff.

Appears SAA 18 no. 125, obv. 4'

PNA 3/II, s.v. **Ša-Nabû-šû** 4, p.1227

Šumaya Hypocoristic of *Šumu* 'Name' or *Šumu-Ea* 'Name of Ea'; Babylonian of uncertain official status acting in the Gambulu region during Esarhaddon's reign. Asks Esarhaddon to send a messenger to $\sqrt{r}h\check{s}$ the city and *libbu* $\sqrt{t}b \sqrt{\check{s}kn}$ for himself.

See p.121, p.183

Letter SAA 18 no. 113

PNA 3/II, s.v. **Šumaia** 12, p.1282

Šuma-iddin 'He has given a name'; *šatammu* temple administrator or high prelate of the Esagil during Esarhaddon's reign. Informs the king of Chaldean who does not $\sqrt{pl}h$ the king and acts according to his *ramanu*. An additional letter concerning temple affairs is attributed to him where he reports on *amat la amat* 'words that are not words' being uttered during the investigation of a case by a *ša-qurbuti*.

See p.104, p.253

Letters SAA 13 no. 178, no. 179, no. 181

PNA 3/II, s.v. **Šumu-iddina** 5, p.1292

Šumu-iddin 'He has given a name'; Brother of Data, and receives a letter from her informing him of the death of a certain Lady Gaga. Luukko suggests he was an official active in Kalḫu during the reign of Tiglath-pileser

See p.232ff.

Appears SAA 19 no. 144 obv. 2.

PNA 3/II, s.v. **Šumu-iddina** 1, p.1292

Šuzubu Hypocoristic of Mušeziḫ-Marduk 'The one who saves is Marduk'; Dietrich suggests the author of

SAA 17 no. 164 is to be equated with Mušeziḫ-Marduk (Dietrich 2003: 145). Leader of Bit-Dakkuri and briefly loyal to the Assyrian governor of Laḫiru before rebelling in 700 and becoming king of Babylon in 692 and coming into conflict with Sennacherib.

See p.251

Letter SAA 17 no. 164

PNA 3/II, s.v. **Šūzubu** 3, p.1297

Taklak-ana-Bel 'I trust in Bel'; Governor of Našibin during Sargon's reign. Writes a letter to the *sukkallu* after the ambush and murder of a criminal witness. Taklak-ana-Bel accuses the *sukkallu* of \sqrt{ql} ' and shifts to second person address.

See p.255, p.268, p.278

Letter SAA 1 nos. 235, 240, 244

PNA 3/II, s.v. **Taklāk-ana-Bēl** 1, p.1304

Teumman Hypocoristic of Tepti-Ḫumban-Inšušinak 'Lord Ḫumban is Inšušinak'; brother of several Elamite kings. During Esarhaddon's reign, menaced the Sealand Elders by attempting to install Nabu-ušallim over them. Becomes king of Elam during Assurbanipal's reign.

See p.41

Appears SAA 18 no. 86, obv. 8

PNA 3/II, s.v. **Teumman**, p.1323

Ṭab-šil-Ešarra 'Good is the protection of Ešarra'; Governor of Aššur. Writes a letter to the king, complaining about Arabs who are *la šm*'. Co-authors a letter with Na'di-ilu 5 quoting a royal letter establishing *ṭemu*, and reports on Nabu-bel-šumati arriving at Aššur.

See p.49, p.143, p.269

Letters SAA 1 no.82, no. 84, no.98

PNA 3/II, s.v. **Ṭab-šil-Ešarra** 1, p.1342

Ubaru 'Client'; *šakin-temi* of Babylon during Esarhaddon's reign. Writes a letter to Esarhaddon describing the \sqrt{hm} -positivity of 'all the lands' under

the king's aegis. Appears in a letter of Zakir's, where the astrologer describes Ubaru's argument with some unlawful tax extractors.

See p.179, note 200 to p.124

Letter SAA 18 no. 14

Appears SAA 10 no. 169 obv. 5

PNA 3/II, s.v. **Ubāru**, p.1356

Upaq-Šamaš 'I am attentive to Šamaš'; official on the northern frontier during Sargon's reign who reports [te]mu he has heard to the king.

See p. 40

Letter SAA 5 no. 162

PNA 3/II, **Upāqa(-ana)-Šamaš**, p.1389

Urad-Ea 'Servant of Ea'; Chief lamentation priest of Sin of Ḫarran and Esarhaddon. Co-authors a letter with Adad-šumu-ušur establishing a *temu* for a ritual performance.

See note 72 to p.47

Letter SAA 10 no. 212

PNA 3/II, **Urdu-Aia, Urdu-Ea** 5, p.1396

Urad-Gula 'Servant of Gula'; *ašipu* in the reign of Esarhaddon, son of Adad-šumu-ušur. Asks the king to *temu* \sqrt{skn} regarding some rites which do not occasion him talking with his interior. Later falls into disgrace with the king and is the subject of several petitions from his father to the king on his behalf. Writes an affectively heavy letter where he likens a letter from the king to an only son, heaps up the sickness of his interior, and complains he has taught \sqrt{plli} of the palace to imperial servants and got nothing for it.

See p.25, p.48, p.97, p.132, p.146

Letters SAA 10 no. 290, no. 294

PNA 3/II, **Urdu-Gula** 6, p.1402

Urad-Nanaya 'Servant of Nanaya'; Chief physician for Esarhaddon from 671. Writes a letter to Esarhaddon responding to the king's question about the physician's concern with his *ramānu*.

See p.105

Letter SAA 10 no. 320

PNA 3/II s.v. **Urdu-Nanāia** 2, p.1411

Urdu-ahḫešu 'Servant of his brothers'; High official of unknown office operating in Babylonia c.669-667. Reports on the sheep sales of shepherds, who claim the sheep they sacrifice is of their *ramanu*.

See note 171 to p.102

Letter SAA 13 no. 172

PNA 3/II s.v. **Urdu-ahḫešu** 7, p.1395

Urdu-Nabu 'Servant of Nabu'; Priest of the Nabu temple at Kalḫu during Esarhaddon's reign. Writes to the king because he is sick, quoting advice to revivify his *ramanu*. Accused by Iddin-Ea, priest in the temple of Ninurta next door, of appropriating fields for his own *ramanu*.

See p.75, p.101, note 403 to p.240

Letter SAA 13 no. 66

Appears SAA 13 126 rev. 7'

PNA 3/II s.v. **Urdu-Nabû** 5, p.1408

Zakir 'Name-giver'; Babylonian astrologer who wrote reports and letters to Esarhaddon. Embroiled in a dispute with the agitator Šillaya, whom he accuses of taking his property away and threatening him with death. Writes a letter to Esarhaddon describing unlawful taxation of Babylon, featuring multiply nested speech frames and citational devices.

See p.179, note 159 to p.97

Letter SAA 10 no. 169

PNA 3/II s.v. **Zākiru** 4, p.1431

Zeru-ibni 'He has created the seed'; governor of Rašappa during Sargon's reign. Suggests Sargon pull out the tongue of a man who lied to the king.

See p.238

Letter SAA 1 no. 205

PNA 3/II s.v. **Zēru-ibni** 3, p.1443

Zineni Elamite official who sends a messenger to the Sealand Elders seeking the installation of Nabu-ušallim.

See p.41

Appears SAA 18 no. 86 obv.9

PNA 3/II s.v. **Zinēni**, p.144