

Inverting Assyrian Propaganda in Isaiah's Historiography

Writing the Hezekiah-Sennacherib Conflict in the Light of the Ashurbanipal-Teumman War*

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1. Introduction

Assyria was feared, admired, and hated in ancient and modern times. This contribution focuses on Isa 36–37 and its peculiar presentation of Assyria. I will investigate whether there are Assyrian texts that resemble Isaiah's version of Sennacherib's campaign as for style and rhetoric. This research shows that the Isaianic version is similar to Ashurbanipal's campaign against Elamite king Teumman. This part, being the central part of this article, will focus on extant prisms and reliefs describing Ashurbanipal's campaign. According to extant documents Teumman's defeat and his insulting messages sent to Assyria were successfully used for the "indoctrination" of ambassadors paying visit to the Assyrian king. Based on these results, I argue that Isa 36–37 is the reversal of Ashurbanipal-Teumman episode.

2. Assyria in the Books of Kings and Isaiah

Scholars for a long time have been advancing hypotheses on the relations between the Book of Isaiah and 1–2 Kings.¹ Besides obvious similarities between 2 Kgs 18–19 and Isa 36–37, there are important differences between both books. One difference concerns the number of reported Assyrian campaigns. The

* The author expresses his deep gratitude to Jonathan Tubb, who allowed him to study the Til-Tuba reliefs that are currently inaccessible to the general public and to Gabriela Vlková for her creative and critical comments.

¹ Close similarities between 2 Kgs 18–19 and Isa 36–37 caused scholarly research to focus on establishing relations between these two passages. Some scholars concluded that Isa 36–39 depended on 2 Kgs 18–20. Other scholars, however, reached an opposite conclusion, namely, that chapters 2 Kgs 18–20 were dependent on Isa 36–39. The others suggested that 2 Kgs 18–19 and Isa 36–37 drew on an independent source or on three different traditions. For a review of the opinions, see Willem A. M. BEUKEN, "The King Diseased and Healed (Isaiah 38), the King Embarrassed and Comforted (Isaiah 39): What Do These Figures Add to the King Beleagured

Books of Kings report four Assyrian invasions: 1. Tiglath-pileser III's campaigns against Northern Syria in 738–737 BCE (2 Kgs 15:19–20); 2. Tiglath-pileser III's campaigns against Syria-Palestine in 734–732 BCE (2 Kgs 15:29; 16:5–9); 3. Campaigns conducted by Shalmaneser V and Sargon II between 727–716 BCE during which Samaria became an Assyrian province (2 Kgs 17:3–6); 4. Sennacherib's campaign against Philistia and Judah in 701 BCE (2 Kgs 18–19), the last Assyrian campaign mentioned in 2 Kings.² By contrast, the Book of Isaiah mentions directly only Sennacherib's invasion in 701 BCE (Isa 36–37) and an Assyrian invasion conducted by Sargon II's high officials (Isa 20:1). Since the latter was not against Israel or Judah, but against Ashdod, it can be concluded that the Book of Isaiah explicitly refers only to one Assyrian campaign against Israel, whereas the Books of Kings refer to four campaigns.

Another difference between both books concerns a direct reference to Assyria outside Isa 36–39/2 Kgs 18–20. The term אֲשׁוּר occurs in 1–2 Kings twenty-four times referring to the Assyrian royal campaigns between 738 and 716 BCE mentioned above.³ Another two verses (2 Kgs 20:6 and 23:29) also refer to Assyrian campaigns. The former is more generic, the latter refers to the last Assyrian military conflicts in 612–605 BCE. However, Isa 1–35 employs the term אֲשׁוּר twenty-four times. However, none of these occurrences is explicitly linked with an Assyrian campaign.⁴ This omission becomes more evident when we compare Isa 7 and 2 Kgs 16. Isaiah 7:1 has an almost verbatim parallel in 2 Kgs 16:5. However, the following verses in Isa 7:2–12 omit a reference to Tiglath-pileser III's Assyrian invasion that is explicitly mentioned in 2 Kgs 16:7–9 (cf. also 2 Kgs 15:29).

Finally, whereas in the Books of Kings it is difficult to link other passages with Assyrian invasions except those mentioned above,⁵ several direct and indirect references to Assyria in Isa 1–35 allow linking the biblical text with a concrete Assyrian enterprise. Thus, J. A. Emerton suggested that Isa 1:4–9 refers to Sennacherib's campaign against Judah.⁶ In his study of Isa 19 and Assyrian royal an-

and Rescued (Isaiah 36–37),” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 86 (2010): 379–80; Idem, *Jesaja 28–39* (Freiburg: Herder, 2010), 354–58; Hugh G. M. WILLIAMSON, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah's Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 189–211.

² Cf. for example Christian FREVEL, *Geschichte Israels*, Kohlhammer Studienbücher Theologie 2 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2016), 213–63.

³ Assyrian campaigns between Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II: 2 Kgs 15:19, 20 (2×), 29; 16:7, 8, 9 (2×); 17:3, 4 (3×), 5, 6 (2×), 23, 24, 26, 27; 18:7, 9. To these references we can add 2 Kgs 16:10, 18 that refer to Tiglath-pileser III's campaign in 734–732 BC.

⁴ Cf. Isa 7:17, 18, 20; 8:4, 7; 10:5, 12, 24; 11:11, 16; 14:25; 19:23 (4×), 24, 25; 20:1, 4, 6; 23:13; 27:13; 30:31; 31:8. Moreover, the term occurs in the story on Hezekiah's illness (Isa 38:6 corresponding to 2 Kgs 20:6). In the rest of the Book of Isaiah the term occurs only Isa 52:4 as a reference to a past oppression.

⁵ The only possible link with “Assyria is the description of Jehu's dynasty that submitted to Assyria (2 Kgs 9–14).

⁶ John A. EMERTON, “The Historical Background of Isaiah 1:4–9,” *EI* 24 (1993): 34*–40*.

nals, Shawn Zelig Aster concludes that Isa 19 is a re-envisioning of the Assyrian campaign of 734 BCE, part of which was directed against Egypt.⁷ It is generally recognized that Isa 22:9–11 refers to the fortification of the city that took place during Hezekiah's period, a fortification aimed at fortifying the city against a possible Assyrian invasion.⁸ Similar direct or indirect references and allusions to Assyria can be found in other prophets, such as Hosea, Nahum, Ezekiel, Micah, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah.⁹ But among these prophets the theme of Assyria is most elaborated in First Isaiah.

All things considered, the Isaianic scribes, despite their good knowledge of Assyria, its propaganda and its military campaigns, explicitly mentioned only Sennacherib's invasion in 701 BCE omitting all other campaigns that took place before or after 701 BCE, on the one hand. On the other hand, the Book of Isaiah refers most frequently to Assyria. So why did the Isaianic scribes, who were well-acquainted with the Assyrian world, mention only one Assyrian campaign?

3. Isaiah's Version of Sennacherib's Campaign

Comparing Sennacherib's invasion in 2 Kgs 18–19 and Isa 36–37 with the Assyrian royal annals, it has been noticed that the first part as described in 2 Kgs 18:7, 14–16, but omitted in Isa 36, has some corresponding elements in Sennacherib's royal annals (see Appendix 2).¹⁰ The interpretation of Hezekiah's rebellion differs in 2 Kings and in Assyrian annals. Whereas Hezekiah's rebellion against Assyria is inserted into the context of Hezekiah's faithfulness to God and his religious reform (2 Kgs 18:1–7), the Assyrian annals depict Hezekiah as an evil and stubborn king. Sennacherib responds to Hezekiah's rebellion by a military campaign (2 Kgs 18:13; Isa 36:1). Moreover, both the Assyrian and biblical sources (2 Kgs 18:13 and Isa 36:1) agree on the Assyrian invasion of Judah, though some details are different. Finally, anticipating the destruction of Judah, Hezekiah submitted to Sennacherib and asked for the conditions of peace (2 Kgs 18:14–15, omitted in Isa 36). To assure Sennacherib of his submission, Hezekiah paid a huge tribute. While both the Assyrian annals and 2 Kgs 18:14–15 agree on the tribute, the amount and circumstances of the tribute are different in 2 Kings and the Assyrian annals.

⁷ Shawn Zelig Aster, "Isaiah 19: The 'Burden of Egypt' and Neo-Assyrian Imperial Policy," *JAOS* 135 (2015): 453.

⁸ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 19; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 333–35.

⁹ For the list of passages see Peter Machinist, "Assyria and Its Image in the First Isaiah," *JAOS* 103 (1983): 720.

¹⁰ Cf. Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 363, 377–86.

This comparison shows that the major difference between Isa 36–37 and 2 Kgs 18–19 can be observed in the introductory part, namely 2 Kgs 18:1–16 and Isa 36:1.¹¹ The differences between the introductory verses create a different narrative setting for Sennacherib's invasion in Isaiah and Kings. 2 Kings 18:1–16 presents a typical invasion pattern.¹² King Hezekiah rebelled against Assyria and Sennacherib responded to Hezekiah's rebellion with a military campaign. Hezekiah, seeing the destruction of Judah, submitted to Sennacherib, asked for the conditions of peace, and paid a tribute. This three-step pattern (rebellion–punitive campaign–conquest/submission) is a typical ANE invasion pattern that occurs not only in the Bible but also in most ANE royal inscriptions. Of particular interest is a typically Judean way of handling foreign invasions by paying a tribute or bribing another king.¹³ The examples of such patterns both in Judah and Israel show that once the king accepted the tribute, the king-invader retreated from the land (cf. 2 Kgs 15:19–20). However, Sennacherib did not retreat and on the contrary he sent his messengers urging the Jerusalemites to surrender. The angel's intervention in 2 Kgs 19:35 reestablished the just order: Sennacherib returned to his country, as he was supposed to do after Hezekiah had paid him a tribute which in fact Sennacherib himself had imposed upon Hezekiah. In sum, the Rab-shaqeh story in the MT of the Books of Kings describes the reasons why Assyria was destroyed: Sennacherib accepted the money but did not retreat. On the contrary, he continued insulting Hezekiah and his God. By appending the Rab-shaqeh episode 2 Kgs 18:17–19:37 after the annalistic account (18:1–16), the final editors created a link between the arrogant behavior of Sennacherib and Ben-Hadad.¹⁴ Such arrogant behavior ultimately brought destruction upon the Assyrian troops and Sennacherib. Moreover, the insertion of 2 Kgs 18:9–12 compares the Assyrian invasions against Hoshea (an evil king to be punished for his sins) and Hezekiah (a just king to be protected by God).

The omission of 2 Kgs 18:1–12, 14–16 in Isa 36 creates a different narrative setting for Sennacherib's invasion.¹⁵ First, the Book of Isaiah did not give any reason why Assyria invaded Judah, since there is no note about Hezekiah's

¹¹ BEUKEN, *Jesaja* 28–39, 354–57.

¹² Other minor differences are the use of singular and plural. Isa 3:3 has singular since there is only Rab-shaqeh, whereas 2 Kgs 18:18 has plural, since there are three officials. However, in Isa 37:6 the prophet Isaiah speaks about men in the plural who scorned the Lord. This can be understood as a sign that the first part Isa 36:1–3 is adjusted to a new setting, whereas Isa 37:6 reflects the Kings version.

¹³ Cf. for example 1 Kgs 15:16–21; 2 Kgs 12:18–19; 16:2–8.

¹⁴ A similar literary pattern we can find in the description of Ben-Hadad's invasion of Israel (1 Kgs 20) and in RINAP 4 33. The king of Šubria received three admonishments from Esarhaddon to extradite the runaways. But the Šubrian king refused. Once Esarhaddon in his fierce anger attacked Šubria, the Šubrian king pleaded for mercy but to no avail. His land was ruined.

¹⁵ WILDBERGER, *Isaiah* 28–39, 378.

rebellion. Assyria simply invaded and destroyed Judah. Second, Hezekiah never submitted to Assyria, nor asked for forgiveness, nor paid a tribute. Thus, the Jerusalemites and their king Hezekiah are depicted as heroes who resisted the overwhelming Assyrian military force. Consequently, the meaning of the Rab-shaqeh episode is different. In Isaiah, the Assyrian psychological pressure was aimed at urging Hezekiah to surrender so as to avoid a prolonged siege and the costly attack of a city. This was not the goal of Assyrian psychological pressure in 2 Kgs 18–19, since Hezekiah had already surrendered to Assyria. Similarly, the intervention of the angel destroying the Assyrian army had also a different nuance in the Book of Kings and Isaiah. In the Books of Kings Sennacherib is depicted as the king who did not respect the fundamental rules of war (after receiving the tribute, the invader was to withdraw), whereas in the Book of Isaiah Sennacherib became a prototype of an Assyrian king-invader. Therefore, in the Books of Kings, the angel punished an arrogant and blasphemous Sennacherib for not respecting God and the fundamental rules of war, whereas in the Book of Isaiah the angel saved the city from the clutches of a pretentious and overly self-confident invader.

4. From History to Rhetoric

This comparison has shown that the Books of Kings maintained elements that brought the biblical narrative closer to the Assyrian annals, whereas the Book of Isaiah omitted these elements. Consequently, what was left in Isaiah, namely the Rab-shaqeh episode (Isa 36:2–37:38), is almost word-by-word repeated in 2 Kgs 18:17–19:37. However, this episode has no equivalent in Sennacherib's annals as for the style and the content. Even though it can be demonstrated that Sennacherib had to exercise psychological pressure upon Hezekiah, in particular, in order to free Padi, the pro-Assyrian king of Ekron who was imprisoned in Jerusalem, Sennacherib's annals do not mention it.¹⁶ Instead of harmonizing the Assyrian and biblical descriptions, let us ask a different question: Are there Assyrian inscriptions that would have a similar literary style to that of the Rab-shaqeh episode (Isa 36:2–37:38/2 Kgs 18:17–19:37)? Before presenting the Ashurbanipal-Teumman conflict let us turn our attention to the literary forms of the Assyrian annals. This brief introduction, I believe, can contextualize Isaianic description of Sennacherib's arrogance.

During the period when Judah was an Assyrian vassal, royal scribes did their best to disseminate Assyrian royal propaganda that aimed mainly at glorifying the military achievements and building activities of the kings.¹⁷ For this reason,

¹⁶ Peter DUBOVSKÝ, "Assyrians under the Walls of Jerusalem and the Confinement of Padi," *JNES* 75 (2016): 109–26.

¹⁷ Mario LIVERANI, *Assiria: La Preistoria dell'imperialismo* (Bari: Laterza, 2017), 27–34.

the Assyrian annals often simply listed royal deeds.¹⁸ However, when a campaign deserved more attention, the presentation normally followed a three-step pattern. The description normally started with a narrative introduction that presented the situation in third person. It introduced the reason for the Assyrian invasion and often it focused on the evil deeds of the enemies, their disrespecting the treaties, their barbarian behavior, etc. (Step 1). While Step 1 was described in the third person, the next step describing the reaction of the Assyrian king to the challenge presented in the introduction was in the first person singular. The focus was on the king's bravery and piety, thanks to which the king resolved the problem. At this point the scribes gladly inserted references to divine miraculous interventions, prophecies, visions, prayers, etc. (Step 2). The narrative concluded with a summary of results, in particular focusing on a tribute and booty, a new territorial division, etc. (Step 3). A model situation can be found in Esarhaddon's invasion of Babylonia (see Appendix 1).¹⁹

Isaiah's version of Sennacherib's invasion follows this three-step pattern, contrary to that in 2 Kgs 18–19. Sennacherib invaded and insulted Judah (Step 1), king Hezekiah reacted by a prayer and consulting the prophet Isaiah (Step 2), and God responded by defeating the Assyrian troops that followed Sennacherib's retreat and violent death (Step 3). This simple narrative plot has, however, a specific feature. It has an unusually long preface full of direct speeches (Isa 36:1–37:35) that Sennacherib uttered through his messengers and those of Isaiah and Hezekiah (Step 1 and 2), whereas the actual defeat (Step 3) is reduced to Isa 37:36–38. So our question can be reformulated: Is there an Assyrian writing that has a similar elaboration of this three-step pattern?

5. Ashurbanipal's defeat of Elamite king Teumman

Sennacherib's offensive messages, Hezekiah's prayer, the intervention of the prophet Isaiah and his oracles from the narrative viewpoint represent the core of Isa 36–37. Though similar topoi are not uncommon in Assyrian inscriptions,²⁰ an analysis of the Assyrian inscriptions and reliefs shows that the elements

¹⁸ Cf. RINAP 4 1 iii 39–42, 43–46, 56–58.

¹⁹ Obviously there are many exceptions to this fixed pattern. A description of subjugation without previous rebellion occur in the narratives describing the surrender of Bēl-iqīša (RINAP 4 1 iii 71–83; iv 1–16), Uppis (1 iv 32–45), the land of Patušari (1 iv 46–52), the land of Bāza (1 iv 53–77), and other cities (RINAP 3/1 17 iv 18–60). Similarly there are the submissions without a campaign such as Elam (RINAP 4 1 v 26–33) or submission due to a dream (RINAP 5 3 ii 86–91). The rebellion-submission can also be described in a very flowery diplomatic version (RINAP 4 33).

²⁰ Assyrians were very sensitive to arrogant answers and insulting messages that normally triggered the anger of the gods and kings. Thus Esarhaddon became angry because of insulting messages of Ba'alu, king of Tyre, and attack the city (RINAP 4 34:12'–18'). Cf. also the disrespect

similar to those in Isa 36:2–37:35/2 Kgs 18:17–19:34 are concentrated in the description of Ashurbanipal's campaign against Elamite king Teumman. This narrative focuses on exchanges of messages between Ashurbanipal and Teumman, Ashurbanipal's invocation of the gods, the gods' answers, and Teumman's persisting in his arrogant behavior. Since the Teumman-Ashurbanipal conflict bears many similarities with the Sennacherib-Hezekiah conflict, I will explore the similarities and differences in the following paragraphs (for the texts see Appendix 3).²¹

5.1 Historical Background of Teumman-Ashurbanipal War

Before analyzing the extant inscriptions describing the conflict between Teumman and Ashurbanipal, let me briefly present the historical background of this military clash.²² The Elamite king Urtaku (675–664 BCE) transgressed a treaty of non-aggression he had concluded with Esarhaddon (674 BCE; RINAP 4 I v 30–33; cf. also SAA IV 74:2–4) and was enticed by his general to join the anti-Assyrian coalition. Ashurbanipal quickly defeated the rebels (RINAP 5 3 iv 15–67).²³ After Urtaku's death a new Elamite king Teumman (664–653 BC) continued with anti-Assyrian policies.²⁴ He involved Elam in a series of wars that ultimately resulted in the end of the Neo-Elamite II period.²⁵ After becoming the king, Teumman wanted to eliminate the pretenders to the throne. Urtaku's sons escaped to Assyria to avoid Teumman's slaughtering of the royal family. Ashurbanipal accepted their gifts and granted them asylum. Teumman was aware that the fugitives and Ashurbanipal were ready to overthrow his kingship. Therefore, to eliminate the fugitives would mean that Teumman would become the only legitimate throne holder. "For this reason Teumman insisted on releasing Urtaku's sons – Ummanigaš, Ummanappa, and Tammaritu – and the sons of

of Aḫšēri, king of Mannea (RINAP 5 3 iii 16–20) and Sham'gammi (RIMB 2 S.0.1002.2 i 19–25). For similar divine interventions, see for example RINAP 1 28:3; 3/1 22 v 74.

²¹ The exchange of angry messages concerning the extradition of runaways are known topoi in the ANE (cf. Murshili II's annals; COS II, 87).

²² Pamela GERARDI, "Assurbanipal's Elamite Campaigns: A Literary and Political Study" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1987), 135–57; Daniel T. POTTS, *The Archaeology of Elam: Formation and Transformation of an Ancient Iranian State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 275–81; Peter DUBOVSKY, "Elam and Assyria," in *The Elamite World*, ed. Javier Álvarez-Mon, Gianpietro BASELLO, and Yasmina WICKS (New York: Routledge, 2018): 323–39.

²³ When this contribution was submitted, the printed version of RINAP 5 was not yet available. Since the preliminary version of RINAP 5 posted on ORACC website represents an improved version of *BIWA*, I will refer to RINAP 5 as posted on-line, instead of *BIWA*.

²⁴ Mathew W. WATERS, *A Survey of Neo-Elamite History*, SAAS 12 (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2000), 42–55.

²⁵ Teumman was involved in the anti-Assyrian activities even before he accessed the throne supporting the anti-Assyrian resistance in Babylonia; cf. *PNAP* 3/II, 1323.

Urtaku's brother – Kudurru and Parrû (cf. RINAP 5 3 iv 68–v 4). Ashurbanipal refused and Teumman responded with a series of angry messages. The tension between Assyria and Elam escalated before 653 BCE. Teumman and Ashurbanipal mobilized their troops. After having received the confirmation from the gods, Ashurbanipal attacked Teumman at Til-Tuba, located on the river Ulaya. Assyria defeated Elam; and Teumman was beheaded (RINAP 5 3 iv 80–vi 9). Ashurbanipal's next campaign was directed against Teumman's ally Dunanu, chief of the Gambulu tribe. The victorious Assyrian troops returned with immense booty to Nineveh and hung Teumman's head around Dunanu's neck. Teumman's messengers who carried the insolent messages to Ashurbanipal were executed. Ashurbanipal's victory transformed Elam into a fully-fledged vassal kingdom (RINAP 5 3 iv 10–vii 76). The Assyrians, however, needed a few more campaigns to eliminate the last cells of resistance in Elam. Around 645 BCE the last Elamite king Humban-haltâš III was captured and together with other rebels was brought to Nineveh.

Why was this campaign so important? After the conquest of Egypt (RINAP 5 3 i 48–ii 37), Elam remained the last kingdom opposing Assyria. The defeat of Teumman represented a decisive moment of dismantling the Elamite kingdom and conquering the universe. The defeat of the most ferocious Assyrian enemy was celebrated in writing and reliefs. The full version of Teumman's defeat has been preserved in RINAP 5 3, 4, 6, 7 (Prisms B, D, C, and Kh correspondingly).²⁶ Prism B is dated around 649 BCE²⁷ and together with D, C, Kh presented the most elaborated version of Teumman's defeat.²⁸

6. A Comparison of the Rab-shaqeh and Teumman Episodes

Prisms B, D, C, Kh and Isa 36–37 follow a three-step linear development of the plot (see Appendix 1). Both Isa 36:1 and RINAP 5 3 iv 80 start with a heading

²⁶ A partially preserved version of the longer narrative are RINAP 5 8 v 1'–12' (Prism G) corresponds to 3 v 1–15 and SAA III 31 (K 8016); the latter omits some elements mentioned in the longer version. To this list we can add a fragment mentioning Teumman, RINAP 5 18 i 2' (BM 121080 + BM 121108).

²⁷ John M. RUSSELL, *The Writing on the Wall: Studies in the Architectural Context of Late Assyrian Palace Inscriptions* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 164.

²⁸ A different version is presented in RINAP 5 16:7'–30' (1866–05–19, 0001). Later versions of Ashurbanipal's annals give only summaries of Teumman's defeat. Thus, RINAP 5 9 ii 53–66 (Prism F, dated around 646–645 BC), 5 11 iii 27–43 (Prism A dated around 643 BC), 5 59:5–6 (Nabû Inscription); cf. also Mullissu inscription RINAP 5 60:4–5, 5 63, 5 71:1–2. A late summary inscription RINAP 5 23 does not mention the defeat of Teumman but focuses on the defeat of last Elamite kings that virtually marked the end of the Elamite dynasty. The defeat of Teumman is not mentioned in any Babylonian inscriptions linked to Ashurbanipal (section RIMB 2 B.6.32).

on military campaign (exposition).²⁹ Contrary to the abbreviated versions,³⁰ the Prisms B, D, C, and Kh (RINAP 5 3, 4, 6, 7 accordingly) have a long presentation of escalating tension before the 653 BCE war. The escalating tension becomes the narrative focus of both episodes³¹ and moves the reader's attention towards the enemy's aggressive messages, their deliverers, and their senders.

6.1 Offensive Messages and Messengers

Ashurbanipal's annals and Isa 36–37 dedicated long paragraphs to messages sent by the enemy king (Teumman and Sennacherib respectively). Prism B reports Teumman's messages aimed at getting hold of fugitives (see above). The prisms reproduce Teumman's words: "I (Teumman) will not stop until I go (and) do battle with him (Ashurbanipal)" (RINAP 5 3 v 23).³² Teumman's speeches are more elaborated in 16:18'–21': "[T]eumman constantly sent me insults [sa] ying 'Send me those people!' and [a seco]nd time, saying 'I will come and wage war [ag]ainst you!'" A different content of Teumman's messages can be reconstructed 'la' [a-*ṣal-lal*] [a-*du*] É DU-*u-ni ina qab-si* NINA.KI a-*kal-[u-ni ...]* "I will not [sleep until] I have come and din[ed] in the center of Nineveh!" (SAA III 31:13'–14). Despite the fact that in Isa 36–37 over thirty percent of the narrative occupies Assyrian direct speeches (20 out of 60 verses), the goal of Sennacherib's messages was less clear since he did not say explicitly what he wanted. The only direct remark is in Isa 36:16: עשׂוּר־אֲתִי בְרִכָּה וּצְאוּ אֵלַי. The term בְּרִכָּה can be interpreted as a tribute or a peace treaty,³³ but it may describe a gesture of raised hand depicted on the reliefs as a sign of submission (Fig. 1 n. 63, 65).

Neither narrator hid their strong negative judgements. Teumman's messages were labeled *me-re-ḥe-e-ti*, pl. of *mēreḥtu* "insolence".³⁴ Prism B calls the words

²⁹ A similar heading is in Isa 20:1 (cf. also 1 Kgs 14:25; 2 Kgs 17:3; 23:29; 24:1) and in Assyrian annals the expression *ina XY ger-ri-ia* UGU "on my XYth campaign" marks the beginning of a new campaign (cf. 3 ii 38; iii 5, 16; iv 15). Even though both expressions mark the beginning of a new unit, in the Bible, it introduces a foreign invasion, whereas in the Assyrian annals it marks the beginning of a new Assyrian campaign.

³⁰ The abbreviated versions in RINAP 5 9 and 11 (Prisms F and A) presents the campaign as Ashurbanipal's fulfillment of divine will, twelve divinities are listed in Prism A and ten in Prism F. But Teumman's insolent messages are not mentioned. These abbreviated versions refer to RINAP 5 3 v 87–96.

³¹ Isa 36–37 dedicates only 3 verses out of 60 to the actual battle. Thus, 95 % of the biblical text focuses on the Rab-shaqeh episode. Similarly Prism B has only 26 lines out of 194 dedicated to the actual battle between Ashurbanipal and Teumman. Thus, 87 % of the story is not dedicated to the description of the actual war.

³² *ul ú-maš-šar a-di al-la-ku it-ti-šú*, lit. "I will not give up, till I go (*do battle*) with him." The reconstruction is based on *al-la-kam-ma 'it-ti-ka ep-pu-šá mit-ḥu-su-tu* (RINAP 5 16:20'–21'; 1866–05–19, 0001).

³³ Mordechai COGAN and Hayim TADMOR, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 11 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1988), 232.

³⁴ According to CAD 10, 21 this noun occurs in the Neo-Assyrian documents, once in

of his mouth aggressive: *qī-bit pi-i-šu er-ḫu* “utterance of his provocative speech” (RINAP 5 3 v 3). Along the same line the biblical scribes used the verb רָחַץ in piel (Isa 37:4, 17, 23, 24) meaning “to taunt,” whereas Hezekiah interprets this verb as a synonym of the verb כִּיחַ in hifil (Isa 37:4) meaning “to rebuke, to reproach.” The prophet Isaiah interprets it as a synonym of the verb רָגַח “to blaspheme” (Isa 37:6, 22). So in both cases the insult was understood not only as an offense to the king, but also to the supreme divinity (Isa 37:17, 22–23; RINAP 5 3 v 40³⁵).

The messages in either case were delivered via high officials who reported the king’s will. Teumman sent Nabû-damiq and Umbadarâ, who were LÚ.MAḪ.MEŠ šá KUR.ELAM.MA.KI “the nobles of Elam.”³⁶ Isa 36:2 refers to Rab-shaqeh who was a high Assyrian official.³⁷ In both cases the messages were delivered not only orally, but also in writing. Isaiah 37:14 explicitly mentions the letter sent by Sennacherib. Relief on Slab 6 in Room XXXIII (WA 124802) depicts Nabû-damiq and Umbadarâ holding the tablets with the messages as explained on Epigraph 27av (RINAP 5 35:8 GÍŠ.ZU.MEŠ ṣī-pir me-re-eḫ-tú “writing boards/tablets inscribed with insolent messages”). So the dialogue between Ashurbanipal-Teumman and Hezekiah-Sennacherib was mediated by means of high-ranking envoys and confirmed by letters.

Both narratives insist that the messengers brought the insulting messages repeatedly. RINAP 5 3 iv 85 reads *iš-ta-nap-pa-ra*; the verb is in Gtn durative, conveying a repeated action: “He (Teumman) repeatedly sent.” Line 5 3 iv 89 adds that Teumman sent messages monthly (*iš-ta-nap-pa-ra* ITI-šam).³⁸ Line 5 16:19’ uses the same verb (*iš-ta-nap-pa-ra*) referring the content of two messages. By the same token, Isa 36–37 report that the Assyrians repeated their message three times in three direct speeches. The second (Isa 36:13–20) and the third speeches (37:10–13) are similar. Most scholars suggest that the latter is a later addition, since it repeats the list of conquered cities and it mentions the

Esarhaddon’s annals and the rest of occurrences refer to the Teumman episode (RINAP 5 3 iv 88; v 24; vi 51; vii 44; 4 iv 60’; v 5’; vi 52; vii 49; 6 vii 28’; viii 19’; 7 v 93; vi 16’; vii 20, 36’; 8 viii 24’; 11 iv 14; 16:18’; 18 ii’ 15’; 35:8).

³⁵ Prism B (5 3 v 40) has an unclear phrase specifying Teumman’s sin against *šá ana AN.ŠAR MAN DINGIR.MEŠ AD DÜ-ki iḫ-tu-u bil-tu* “who placed a burden on (the god) Aššur, the father who created you”.

³⁶ Version CND 3 has LÚ.EDIN.MEŠ-šú “his desert policemen”. The Neo-Assyrian inscriptions often mentioned different kinds of messengers and envoys travelling between provinces/kingdoms and the Assyrian court. Messengers in the Assyrian empire were usually sent to deliver the tribute and to ask about the well-being of the king (as did Hezekiah; RINAP 3 4:58) or to stipulate a treaty with Assyria (RINAP 4 1 v 31). Cf. also “In the eponymy of Šamaš-bēla-ušur, at the time of Marduk-zākiri-šumi, king of Karduniaš (Babylonia), Marduk-bēl-ušate, his brother, rebelled against him (and) they divided up the land evenly. Marduk-zākiri-šumi sent his messenger (with a plea) for help to Shalmaneser.” (RIMA 3 102.5 iv 1–2).

³⁷ Raija MATTILA, *The King’s Magnates: A Study of the Highest Officials of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, SAAS 11 (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2000), 45–60.

³⁸ Cf. also a reconstruction of Epigraph 12 “the nobles of Teumman [king of Elam], had sent [monthly?] with insolent [messages]”; RUSSELL, *Writing on the Wall*, 160.

city of Harran conquered by the Babylonians.³⁹ In the light of this study this is not a sufficient argument for such a conclusion. Even though the city of Harran was conquered by the Babylonians, it was one of the major Assyrian strongholds. SAA I 50:4, part of a letter from an Assyrian official, mentions the emblem of the god Sin (moon god) of Harran. So the Assyrian divinities were indeed a part of the cult in Harran. Furthermore, the content of the third speech, though similar, is transmitted via letter that turned Sennacherib's offense into a legally substantiated crime. It also contains a different rhetoric aimed at the king not at "the people on the walls."⁴⁰ These facts caution the reader not to label Isa 37:10–13/2 Kgs 19:10–13 as a "later addition" too quickly on the one hand. On the other hand, the repeated messages played a crucial role in justifying Teumman's and Sennacherib's exemplary punishment. The enemy kings did not commit a mistake, but they were punished because of their assiduousness and persistence in pursuing the wrong path that ultimately brought a disaster upon their heads.

6.2 *The Reaction of the Just Kings and the Divine Reply*

Once the messages were repeatedly dispatched, both episodes focused on the reactions of the kings and divine responses. Isaiah's Hezekiah, contrary to Hezekiah in 2 Kgs 18, is more similar to Ashurbanipal. Both resisted. Ashurbanipal did not give the refugees to Teumman and Hezekiah did not "make blessing" nor "come out" to Sennacherib. Instead of negotiating with enemies, both kings turned to their gods, humbling themselves in front of their divinities. Hezekiah made a ritual gesture: he tore his clothes, dressed in sackcloth, and went up into temple twice (Isa 37:1, 14–20). Ashurbanipal also made a ritual gesture: he stood facing Ištar and knelt down at her feet. This sequence of gestures is depicted on the cultic pedestal of Tukulti-Ninurta I (VA 8146).⁴¹ The gestures emphasize the seriousness of the enemy's threat and the anxiety of the king ("I made an appeal to her divinity, while my tears were flowing" [RINAP 5 3 v 27]). Then both kings turned to gods in prayer.⁴² The texts reproduce the sophisticated rhetoric of the kings' prayers voiced in long sentences, full of digressions referring to the past and the present events and charged with divine epithets and appellatives. Both prayers share similar points: an invocation of the divinity by attributing it titles (Isa 37:16; RINAP 5 3 v 28–33), a presentation of the problem

³⁹ Nadav NA'AMAN, "New Light on Hezekiah's Second Prophetic Story (2 Kgs 19,9b–35)," *Biblica* 81 (2000): 393–402.

⁴⁰ Peter DUBOVSKÝ, *Hezekiah and the Assyrian Spies: Reconstruction of the Neo-Assyrian Intelligence Services and Its Significance for 2 Kings 18–19*, *Biblica et Orientalia* 49 (Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2006), 25–27.

⁴¹ Liane JAKOB-ROST, *Das Vorderasiatische Museum* (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 1992), Fig. 103 on p. 61.

⁴² Assyrian scribes made a nice pun through metathesis: *šu-ut me-re-eḫ-te an-ni-te šá mte-um-man iq-bu-u am-ḥur sá-qu-tú diš-tar*.

(Isa 37:17–19; RINAP 5 3 v 34–42), and an exhortation to intervene (Isa 37:20; RINAP 5 3 v 43–44).⁴³

The two episodes report the gods' reply to the kings' supplication. Because of the different nature of the divine messages, the literary styles are substantially different, but let us point out some important similarities. In order to underline the importance of the divine support, both narratives reported the content of divine messages in direct speeches. Moreover, both divinities replied through a legitimate diviner. Ashurbanipal received the confirming answer through a dream interpreter and Hezekiah through a prophet. As the insulting messages were sent to the kings repeatedly, both kings also received the messages of divine support and assurance multiple times. Hezekiah received several oracles from Isaiah (Isa 37:6–8, 21–29, 30–32, 33–35) and Ištar assured Ashurbanipal through divine signs (RINAP 5 3 v 4–15), an apparition (v 45–47), a dream (v 48–72), and other divine signs (v 88). There are also some basic similarities in the contents of the divine messages. The gods exhorted the two kings, "Don't be afraid!" (Isa 37:6; RINAP 5 3 v 46). The divine messages assured the kings that the divinities would protect the king and fight for him, foretelling the fall of the enemy. Such divine support became the basis for the punishment of the arrogant enemies.

6.3 Punishment of the Enemies

The narratives focus on the contrast Hezekiah-Sennacherib/Ashurbanipal-Teumman – one being a pious and holy king, the other being vilified as an incarnation of evil ("the image of *gallû*-demon; RINAP 5 3 iv 68) who were not able to read the divine signs (5 3 v 4–15).⁴⁴ As argued above, the enemy kings offended not only the pious kings but also their gods. Since the punishment for offenses to gods was the death penalty, both episodes report the exemplary death of the blasphemers. After the return to Nineveh Sennacherib was killed while worshipping his gods. The Assyrian sources differ in who killed Teumman and how he died. According to Prism B Ashurbanipal killed Teumman on the battlefield ("I cut off the head of Teumman" RINAP 5 3 v 93–94). Epigraph tablet 8 reads that "A wagon (pole?) pierced Teu[mman. king] of Elam." However, the reconstructed part of Epigraph 10a describes the death in general terms ("his head was cut off") and a common soldier dispatched it to Assyria (cf. my reconstruction and translation of RINAP 5 27; Appendix 3). Finally, according to

⁴³ A more detailed study can reveal a more sophisticated structure of both prayers reflecting different religious presuppositions and rituals. Thus Hezekiah turns to his God twice with imperatives and twice referring to past events those of God and those of Assyria. Prism B starts each section with the invocation of the divine attributes and also insists on Ashurbanipal's pious deeds that urge Ištar to intervene. Hezekiah's appeal in Isa 37:20b, however, has no parallel in Ashurbanipal's prayer.

⁴⁴ Zainab BAHRANI, "The King's Head," *Iraq* 66 (2004): 117.

a possible reconstruction of SAA III 31 Teumman was executed in Arbela where Ashurbanipal had his vision: “[They brought (Teumman) himself along with] his whole family in [neck-stocks before] Mullissu and the lady of [Arbela] and put him to the sword (r 8).” In both cases the death of the blasphemer was a fulfillment of either a prophecy or a dream (Isa 37:7; RINAP 5 3 v 51–72⁴⁵) and both biblical and Assyrian accounts attributed the victory to their gods.⁴⁶

Finally, both episodes recount that the enemy troops were completely eliminated leaving the reader in the battlefields filled with the dead bodies of enemies. In the Bible an angel intervened and killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers and the text continues *וישכימו בבקר והנה כלם פגרים מתים*, literally, “when they woke up early in the morning, all of them were dead bodies.”⁴⁷ Prism B employs a powerful metaphor: Ashurbanipal blocked the river with Elamite corpses and filled the plains with dead bodies (RINAP 5 3 v 87).

7. Psychological Impact of Teumman's Defeat

However appealing this comparison may seem, we can ask how a Judahite scribe could learn about Teumman's defeat so that he might have used this motif in his composition of Isa 36–37/2 Kgs 18–19. Eckart Frahm, seeing the number and type of cuneiform documents dated to the Bronze Age and the Iron Age Levant, has concluded that during the Neo-Assyrian period Syria-Palestine used Akkadian only rarely and mostly for legal and commercial purposes.⁴⁸ Consequently, it is difficult to imagine that a Judahite scribe would have read Ashurbanipal's prisms.

It has been extensively argued that vassal kings regularly sent their ambassadors with tribute to Nineveh “asking” about king's health.⁴⁹ Scholars concluded that these ambassadors were one of the main sources of information about Assyria besides the stele and other types of Assyrian propaganda.⁵⁰ While being in Nineveh

⁴⁵ A similar idea is expressed in the Epigraph 14: “I, Assurbanipal, king of Assyria, I presented the head of Teumman, king of Elam, like an offering in front of the gate inside the city. As it had been said of old by the oracle, “You will cut off the heads of your enemies, you will pour wine over them, [...]”; accordingly the gods Shamash and Adad granted this in my time: [...] I cut off the heads of my [enemies], I poured wine [over them, ...].” RUSSELL, *Writing on the Wall*, 161.

⁴⁶ Abbreviated version RINAP 5 11 iii 27–43 (Prism A dated around 643 BC) lists more divinities responsible for the fall of Elam. Similarly RINAP 5 16:7–30' (1866–05–19, 0001) and 5 63.

⁴⁷ Later interpretations of the Assyrian retreat from Jerusalem suggest that there was a bubonic or another infectious disease; for a review of these opinions see J. J. M. ROBERTS, *First Isaiah: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 471–73.

⁴⁸ His forthcoming article in *Stones, Tablets and Scrolls*, will be published by Mohr Siebeck.

⁴⁹ Cf. for example SAA I 110; XI 33; XIX 8; 159 for a review of the argument see Shawn Zelig ASTER, “Israelite Embassies in Assyria in the First Half of the Eighth Century,” *Bib* 97, no. 2 (2016).

⁵⁰ William MORROW, “Were There Neo-Assyrian Influences in Manasseh's Temple? Com-

and waiting for an audience, the ambassadors walked through the halls decorated with the masterpieces of Assyrian art. Even a few millennia later a visitor at the British museum remains astonished by the details depicting the stages of Teumman's death, the horrific and chill-inspiring scenes portraying the massacre at Til-Tuba, and Ashurbanipal's dining in his garden with Teumman's head hanging on a tree. Accompanied by a personal explanation, the Neo-Assyrian reliefs were one of the most accessible sources of information to an illiterate public.

Moreover, while taking seriously Frahm's analysis, we should note that his conclusion does not exclude the possibility that higher echelons in peripheries had a basic knowledge of Akkadian. Let us consider an example. Non-English-speaking travelers can hardly read Hopkins' poetry, yet it does not mean that they cannot understand English captions in a museum. Similarly, not every ambassador was able to read *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, but they were probably able to read basic Akkadian. In other words, the readability of Assyrian texts varied. Those most difficult to read, and consequently reserved for specialists, were the cuneiform tablets with poetic texts, commentaries, omens, rituals, etc. (Fig. 10 left). If a Judahite ambassador did not receive special training, he could hardly read these texts. More accessible texts were those written on the walls. Written in a clear script, the wall inscriptions were easier to be read. Among the annals written on walls, bulls and door sills, we can easily notice a difference between Ashurnasirpal's lengthy and complicated inscriptions (9th c. BCE; Fig. 10 middle) and Sennacherib's and Ashurbanipal's short and straightforward epigraphs (7th c. BCE; Fig. 10 right). Epigraphs carved on the reliefs served as captions to focus the visitors' attention. They were written in a clear script, in a simple and straightforward syntax, and used a limited number of cuneiform signs and words. Most of the signs appearing on the epigraphs occur also in the extant cuneiform documents unearthed in Israel and Judah.⁵¹ The scenes carved into slabs and accompanied by short epigraphs made Assyrian achievements accessible to ambassadors visiting Nineveh.⁵² In sum, contrary to the Assyrian stelae and lengthy annals carved on the walls of palaces, Ashurbanipal made Assyrian propaganda more efficient through short epigraphs and higher quality of artistic execution using the continuous narrative style.⁵³

parative Evidence from Tel-Miqne/Ekron," *CBQ* 75 (2013): 186; cf. also Peter MACHINIST, "The Rab Šaqeh at the Wall of Jerusalem: Israelite Identity in the Face of the Assyrian 'Other,'" *Hebrew studies* 41 (2000): 151–68.

⁵¹ Wayne HOROWITZ, Takayoshi OSHIMA, and Seth SANDERS, *Cuneiform in Canaan: Cuneiform Sources from the Land of Israel in Ancient Times* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2006).

⁵² The higher accessibility of epigraphic Akkadian to a general public can be seen even now. A normal student after two years of Akkadian can hardly read tablets, but he/she may read epigraphs.

⁵³ Chikako E. WATANABE, "The 'Continuous Style' in the Narrative Scheme of Assurbanipal's Reliefs," *Iraq* 66 (2004): 103–5.

The importance of the Assyrian reliefs accompanied by short epigraphs for transmitting the Assyrian ideology can be compared with medieval narrative cycles. Most medieval church attenders could hardly read the gospels in Latin or in the vernacular but they could easily understand Giotto's narrative cycle in Assisi. A few Latin words inserted into the medieval frescos enabled them to recognize evangelists, prophets, or to capture key phrases that allow the visitor to follow the narrative progression of a given cycle. Therefore, to understand the medieval theology it was not necessary to read Thomas Aquinas in Latin; it was enough to contemplate the beauty and expressive power of the fresco and decipher a few lines in Latin. Similarly, it was not necessary to read Akkadian literary compositions to get hold of the basic Assyrian ideology. It was enough to follow the narrative carved in the reliefs and to decipher a few epigraphs. Keeping in mind Ashurbanipal's effort to make his propaganda more accessible, let us investigate what Ashurbanipal wanted to transmit about Teumman on the reliefs.

7.1 *The Ashurbanipal-Teumman Conflict in the Reliefs*

J. M. Russell argued that the sculptors depicting the Teumman-Dunanu cycle had at their disposal epigraph tablets serving as a guide for carving the scenes and the epigraphs on the slabs. The epigraph tablets describing what should be on the reliefs help us to get hold of the ideology the Assyrians wanted to transmit.⁵⁴ Altogether we have ten epigraphs, thirty-four epigraph tablets, and six slabs in Room XXXIII of Southwest palace (Sennacherib's palace refurbished by Ashurbanipal) in Nineveh. Slabs 1–3 present the battle "scenes" and slabs 4–6 depict the aftermath (see Fig. 1). The Teumman-Dunanu cycle was carved also in Room I of the North Palace,⁵⁵ and probably also in Room H of the North Palace.⁵⁶

While prisms dedicated to the battle itself only a few lines, the reliefs of Room XXXIII pompously celebrated the Assyrian victory (Fig. 1). We do not have slabs before slabs 1–3 and so the observer is thrown into the midst of war chaos (Slabs 1–3).⁵⁷ The scenes are crowded with dead bodies, overthrown chariots, waving swords and charged bows.

⁵⁴ RUSSELL, *Writing on the Wall*, 187–91. For the previous edition of the epigraphs see Ernst WEIDNER, "Assyrische Beschreibungen der Kriegs-Reliefs Aššurbānplis," *Afo* 8 (1933): 175–208.

⁵⁵ Ashurbanipal lived for a certain period in Sennacherib's palace (Southwest Palace) and restored it. The restoration is dated around 650 BC. Then he restored the crown prince's palace known as North Palace; RUSSELL, *Writing on the Wall*, 154.

⁵⁶ Julian READE, "Elam and Elamites in Assyrian Sculpture," *Archaeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 9 (1976): 99–102; Oskar KÄELIN, *Ein Assyrisches Bildexperiment nach Ägyptischem Vorbild: Zu Planung und Ausführung der "Schlacht am Ulai"*, AOAT 266 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1999), 12–78.

⁵⁷ BAHRANI, "The King's Head," 116.

The jam-packed scenes on Slabs 1–3 show how Teumman’s army gradually lost the ground (Fig. 1 n. 8–11) and the registers start filling with dead bodies (n. 25–29, 32–44). In the chaos of the battle scenes the sculptor focused on Teumman who, seeing the defeat of his army, tried to escape. His chariot was overthrown and Teumman fell down from his chariots (n. 17). The wounded king was helped by his son Tammaritu and escaped to the forest (n. 18). The scene has a strong emotional charge. Tammaritu leads his father by hand. The proud king of Elam, who challenged Ashurbanipal, became weak, was bowed down and wounded. Once besieged, Tammaritu was killed with a mace, a soldier cut off Teumman’s head (n. 21), and his armor was taken as booty (n. 23). From this point forward, the celebration of the victory begins by focusing on Teumman’s head (n. 24, 30, 13). There are long lines of prisoners marching out of Elam having their faces spat on (n. 57), being forced to grind bones, and chained as dogs. These completed the horrific battle scenes (n. 1, 3, 4, 6).

Epigraphs on slabs 1–6 in Room XXXIII of the Southwest Palace “helped” the visitor to focus on the most important events that should not have been missed.⁵⁸ The war slabs (Slabs 1–3) contain four epigraphs (SWB 1–4; Epigraph 10a, 15, 7a, 6). Three epigraphs focused the attention on the destiny of Teumman. They depict Teumman’s panic first (SWB 3; Fig. 2). Wounded Teumman, who was not sane according to the royal inscriptions,⁵⁹ continued behaving in an insane way, asking to be killed by his son. The next epigraph describes the last moments of Teumman and his son (SWB 4; Fig. 2). The wounded father and the despaired son are placed in the midst of dead Elamites as the last “survivals of the battle. The same idea is conveyed in epigraph SWB 2, which centers on Teumman’s in-law begging to be killed (Fig. 3). In the context of dead bodies and fierce Assyrians, immediate death seemed to be a better option. After the defeat, the head of Teumman started its journey to Assyria in the company of humiliated Elamite prisoners (SWB 1; Fig. 4). The captions and reliefs leave no doubt about the end of a rebellious king and his family. Slabs 4–6 depict the aftermath of the war. While those who uttered insolent messages were brutally punished (SWB 5; Fig. 5), the pro-Assyrian Ummanigaš was installed on the throne (SWB 6; Fig. 6), and the insolent messages were used to spurn Urartian ambassadors to collaborate with Assyria (SWB 7; Fig. 7).

⁵⁸ The narrative starts with the presentation of the battle line between Teumman’s and Ashurbanipal’s troops, but only the inscription part has been preserved (Epigraph 33; RINAP 5 32).

⁵⁹ Line 1 of SWB 3 reads *ina mi-qiṭ ṭè-e-me* “during loss of reason” corresponds to the description of Teumman’s insanity in Prism B (RINAP 5 3 v 5–24).

7.2 What Could/Should an Ambassador Learn in Nineveh?

In the light of Assyrian propaganda inculcated into the ambassadors' minds visiting Nineveh,⁶⁰ what were the "truths" that Judahite ambassadors should/could have learned while waiting for an audience, accompanied by a guide, contemplating reliefs, and deciphering the signs of epigraphs? If we combine the Teumman-Ashurbanipal episode with the reliefs depicting the fall of Lachish,⁶¹ we can point out *topoi* that are echoed in Isa 36–37 reported in the following footnotes.⁶²

Both the Til-Tuba and Lachish reliefs center on the king who is the Lord of the universe (Fig. 7, 8)⁶³ even though the king was not directly involved in the battle.⁶⁴ The chaotic war scenes on Slabs 1–3 of Til-Tuba (Fig. 1) are in strong contrast with the peace and order after war (Slabs 4–6; Fig. 1) suggesting that the Assyrian king was dominating the chaos and establishing the order.⁶⁵ The majesty and glory⁶⁶ of the Assyrian king, his army and entourage was the center of the Assyrian propaganda. The Assyrian epigraphs, contrary to the long list of titles in the Assyrian annals, gives only two titles for an Assyrian king (king of the world and king of Assyria; MAN ŠÚ, MAN KUR *aš-šur*).⁶⁷

Another important message imparted by the epigraphs and reliefs was the sad destiny of the rebellious people and kings depicted in repeated motifs of heads of

⁶⁰ Assyrian propaganda was disseminated not only through the ambassadors, but also by means of special agents, speeches, letters, stelae, etc. Cf. Antti J. LAATO, "Assyrian Propaganda and the Falsification of History in the Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib," *VT* 45 (1995): 198–226; William R. GALLAGHER, "Assyrian Deportation Propaganda," *SAAB* 8 (1994): 57–65.

⁶¹ It is reasonable to assume that a Judahite ambassador would see the Lachish reliefs, first, in order to demonstrate the consequences of the Judahite lack of loyalty. Second, both the Lachish and Teumman-Dunanu cycles were in the Southwest Palace in Nineveh, Room XXXVI and XXXIII respectively.

⁶² The ideology transmitted by Assyria through reliefs is echoed, in particular, in Isa 37:22–27; besides major commentaries see also Dominic RUDMAN, "Is the Rabshakeh Also among the Prophets? A Rhetorical Study of 2 Kings XVIII 17–35," *VT* 50 (2000): 100–10; Peter DUBOVSKÝ, "Assyrian Downfall through Isaiah's Eyes (2 Kings 15–23): The Historiography of Representation," *Bib* 89 (2008): 1–16; Michael D. PRESS, "'Where Are the Gods of Hamath?' (2 Kings 18.34 // Isaiah 36.19): The Use of Foreign Deities in the Rabshakeh's Speech," *JSOT* 40 (2015): 201–23.

⁶³ The Lachish reliefs are organized according to two movements: panels 5–11 move the narrative from the left to right and panels 16–13 depict the movement from right to the left. Both narratives meet on panels 11–13 presenting the king with two epigraphs. The king is the center of the world, around him rotates the kingdoms, the enemies are defeated, flayed, killed and bowed down in front of the king. This message is the center of Assyrian speeches rejected in Hezekiah's prayer and in Isaiah's prophecy in Isa 36–37.

⁶⁴ Thus the Assyrian king sent his high officials to negotiate and fight against Jerusalem (cf. Isa 36:2).

⁶⁵ A similar message on the superiority of the Assyrian army and the new lifestyle was transmitted in two Assyrian speeches (Isa 36:4–10; 13–20).

⁶⁶ A similar idea is underlined in the Hebrew *בחייל כבוד* (Isa 36:2).

⁶⁷ Similarly, Isa 36:4 attributes two titles to an Assyrian king "the great king, the king of Assyria," even though the former does not correspond to the title in the epigraphs.

beheaded enemies heaped up in front of the king and his entourage, on the one hand (Fig. 8, 9);⁶⁸ on the other hand, the Assyrian kings showed mercy and favor to those who were loyal to Assyria (Fig. 3, 6).⁶⁹

Finally, the Assyrian reliefs and epigraphs also transmitted an idea that no local kingdom could resist the overwhelming Assyrian army⁷⁰ whose main strength was in cavalry⁷¹ and in siege machines approaching the city upon a ramp, archers and shield-bearers (Fig. 9; cf. BSP 1; RINAP 5 32).⁷²

The war scenes and ideology so far presented occur on most of the Assyrian reliefs. However, slabs 4 and 6 and the epigraphs of Til-Tuba contain a unique aspect of this military encounter: the insulting messages and their deliverers that also were the center of the lengthy introduction in Prism B and Isa 36–37. Epigraph SWB 7 describes what happened with the messages and messengers (RINAP 5 35; Fig. 7). When the ambassadors of the Urartian king Rusa III came to Nineveh, Ashurbanipal made the Elamites Nabû-damiq and Umbadarâ, who brought the insulting messages from Teumman to Ashurbanipal, stand in front of the Urartian ambassadors holding the tablets with Teumman's insults (RINAP 5 3 iv 88–89). The seriousness of the insulting messages is highlighted by epigraph SWB 5 (RINAP 5 36; Fig. 5) indicating that this blasphemy was severely punished: "I (Ashurbanipal) tore out their (messengers') tongue(s) and flayed them."⁷³ The message to be transmitted in the reliefs is drafted on an epigraph tablet: "nobles of Teumman ... filled with anger against their lord, I (Ashurbanipal) detained them. They saw ... the head of Teumman ... [Umbadarâ] tore his beard, [Nabû-damiq] stabbed himself."⁷⁴ Later on when Ashurbanipal decorated Room I of his North Palace, the reliefs and epigraph conveyed the same message: Teumman's

⁶⁸ Cf. Assyrian propaganda: "the people sitting on the wall, who are doomed with you to eat their own dung and drink their own urine" (Isa 36:12).

⁶⁹ Cf. Assyrian propaganda: "See, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, destroying them utterly. Shall you be delivered? Have the gods of the nations delivered them, the nations that my predecessors destroyed, Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Telassar? Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, the king of Hena, or the king of Ivvah?" (Isa 37:11–13) A similar idea is applied to gods: "Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand?" (Isa 36:19) Cf. Tiglath-pileser III's reliefs in H. TADMOR, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III, King of Assyria: Critical Edition, with Introductions, Translations and Commentary*, ATH 5 (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1994). Cf. also "Who among all the gods of these countries have saved their countries out of my hand, that the LORD should save Jerusalem out of my hand?" (Isa 36:20)

⁷⁰ Cf. Assyrian propaganda: "How then can you repulse a single captain among the least of my master's servants" (Isa 36:9).

⁷¹ Cf. Assyrian propaganda: "Come now, make a wager with my master the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders on them." (Isa 36:8)

⁷² Cf. Isaiah's prophecy: "He shall not come into this city, shoot an arrow there, come before it with a shield, or cast up a siege ramp against it." (Isa 37:33)

⁷³ RUSSELL, *Writing on the Wall*, 160, 163, 180.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 160.

messenger Itunî, who carried insulting messages, committed suicide (NB 1; RINAP 5 29).

The impact of Teumman's defeat was used even later in Neo-Assyrian PSY-OPS: when Ashurbanipal asked the elders of Elam to send him Nabû-bel-šumati he reminded the Elamites about the defeat of Teumman.⁷⁵ The episode did not fall into oblivion even after the fall of Assyria and resonated in Elamite memory for a long time.⁷⁶

7.3 Implications

Elam was a known power for a biblical audience.⁷⁷ As argued above, the Assyrian victory over Teumman constituted the turning point in Elamite-Assyrian relations. Elam was defeated and despite a few years of fierce resistance it finally fell under Assyrian control. So the battle at Til-Tuba represented the beginning of the fall of Elam, the last nucleus of anti-Assyrian resistance. It made the Assyrian king the ruler of the universe. The Assyrians did their best to ensure that an ambassador coming to Assyria for a regular visit would easily learn about this historical achievement. Through the reliefs and epigraphs even a foreigner could learn about the insulting messages and messengers sent by Teumman, about the fierce battle at Til-Tuba, about the defeat of the Elamite army, about the decapitation of Teumman and the execution of his courtiers, and finally about the sad end of the ambassadors carrying Teumman's message. This visual representation could have been easily filled-in with stories taken from the annals. The reliefs became an unequivocal message not only for the enemy king but also for his ambassadors who carried his messages. They could easily finish as Teumman and his envoys.

In sum, seeing the importance of Teumman's defeat and its use for dealing with foreign ambassadors it can be rightly concluded that the Judahite ambassadors coming regularly to Ashurbanipal and inquiring about his health were informed about this important historical event. Looking at the reliefs, deciphering short epigraphs, and maybe accompanied by a guide acquainted with royal annals, Judahite ambassadors had enough information about the battle and its meaning for world politics. They also learned about the insults sent repeatedly by Teumman to Ashurbanipal, and even about the end of the messengers carrying the insulting messages.

⁷⁵ Matthew W. WATERS, "A Letter from Ashurbanipal to the Elders of Elam (Bm 132980)," *JCS* 54 (2002): 82.

⁷⁶ For references see *RIA* 13, 616.

⁷⁷ Peter DUBOVSKÝ, "Elam and the Bible," in *The Elamite World*, eds. Javier ÁLVAREZ-MON, Gian Pietro BASELLO, and Yasmina WICKS (New York: Routledge, 2018): 27–40.

8. Assyria in Isaiah

So far, we have reached some important conclusions. The scribes standing behind the Book of Isaiah, despite their acquaintance with Assyria, explicitly mentioned only Sennacherib's campaign. Its presentation differed from that in Sennacherib's royal annals. Approaching this difference from a literary genre viewpoint, I have suggested that the presentation of Assyria in Isa 36–37 is similar to Ashurbanipal's presentation of Teumman and the defeat of Elam. The Teumman-Ashurbanipal conflict was the only one in the Neo-Assyrian world that highlighted the insulting messages sent by the Elamite king. To complete this picture it is also important to notice the international significance of this campaign. After the conquest of Egypt, Elam was the last kingdom opposing Assyria. Once Elam fell into Assyrian hands, the whole known world was at Ashurbanipal's feet. This message was transmitted both via written sources and visual media. The impact of Teumman's defeat was successfully used in Assyrian PSYOPS and resonated in Elam for a few centuries so that even a Judahite ambassador could have learned about it. Leaning upon these conclusions, we can investigate the meaning of Teumman's defeat for Isa 36–37.

8.1 *Reversal Technique: Hezekiah-Ashurbanipal, Sennacherib-Teumman*

Scholars focusing on the study of Assyrian strata in Isaiah concentrated their efforts on the identification of historical events that stood behind the narratives of the Book of Isaiah. Thus, several studies explored the historical background of the Syro-Ephraimite war, the fall of Samaria, Sargon II's conquest of Ashqelon, Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem, etc. In doing this, these studies have tried to match the passages of Isaiah with historical periods and events. These studies also showed that the Isaianic scribes were well-versed in Assyrian history, its successes, and even its ideology and terminology. Building upon these conclusions, more recent studies have concentrated on Isaiah's specific use of Assyrian material and the rhetorical and narrative devices that Isaianic scribes used when referring directly or indirectly to Assyria.

M. Chan, S. Aster, P. Machinist, and others pointed out a reversal technique in Isa 10 and 19. Thus, P. Machinist concluded that "Isa 10:5–15 picks up the genre and language of the Assyrian royal inscriptional tradition and turns it upside-down. In the process, it also inverts the ideology encoded in and transmitted by the inscriptions."⁷⁸ Or in the words of M. Chan, "an Assyrian theme

⁷⁸ Peter MACHINIST, "Ah, Assyria ... ' (Isaiah 10:5 ff.): Isaiah's Assyrian Polemic Revisited," in *Not Only History: Proceedings of the Conference in Honor of Mario Liverani Held in Sapienza-Università Di Roma, Dipartimento di Scienze dell'antichità, 20–21 April 2009*, eds. Gilda BARTOLONI, Maria Giovanna BIGA, and Armando BRAMANTI (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 207.

is taken and attributed to the Lord and thus Assyria is put down. The king of Assyria is stripped of his title and becomes a servant of the Lord."⁷⁹ In his exploration of Isa 19, S. Aster concluded that "Isa. 19:1 subverts the image of the god Ashur riding on a cloud ahead of his army to describe YHWH doing the same act, causing the same results."⁸⁰

Applying this technique to Isa 36–37 and its links with Ashurbanipal's campaign against Teumman, the following proposal can be advanced.⁸¹ Following the principle of the reversal technique Elam became a symbol of Assyria and Sennacherib assumed Teumman's traits in Isa 36–37. Teumman and Sennacherib sent their insulting messages to Ashurbanipal and Hezekiah respectively. These messages not only humiliated the just kings, but also their gods. In both cases the messages were sent repeatedly. As Elam collapsed because of its arrogance and hubris, so did Assyria. Both blasphemers Sennacherib and Teumman were executed and their troops annihilated. Moreover, the just king Hezekiah becomes similar to Ashurbanipal. Neither complied with enemy's request, and instead of compromising with the arrogant enemies, they turned to their gods. The narratives report their prayers and the answer of their gods. The divinities promised their chosen kings help and the punishment of the enemies is interpreted as a fulfilment of divine oracles. As Elam represented by Teumman was the kingdom resisting the supremacy of the Assyrian gods, so Assyria represented by Sennacherib was the empire resisting YHWH's supremacy.⁸² After the punishment of Elam peace and order was re-established instead of chaos and confusion as depicted on Slabs 1–3, 4–6. Similarly, after the defeat of Sennacherib and Isa 38–39, a new rhetoric starts in Isa 40. Based on these similarities it may be concluded that Judahite scribes reversed the roles: Assyria in Isa 36–37 becomes similar to Elam as represented in Ashurbanipal-Teumman episode. Sennacherib became a reversal of Teumman and Hezekiah becomes a reversal of Ashurbanipal. Not only heroes but also ideologies were turned upside-down: Elamite arrogance is attributed to Assyria and Ashurbanipal's piety was attributed to Hezekiah.

8.2 *The Historiography of Representation*

Besides the reversal technique that turned Assyrian achievements and ideology upside down, the biblical scribes employed another technique when describing

⁷⁹ Michael CHAN, "Rhetorical Reversal and Usurpation: Isaiah 10:5–34 and the Use of Neo-Assyrian Royal Idiom in the Construction of an Anti-Assyrian Theology," *JBL* 128 (2009): 717–33.

⁸⁰ ASTER, "Isaiah 19: The 'Burden of Egypt' and Neo-Assyrian Imperial Policy," 468.

⁸¹ This conclusion should not be interpreted as the chronological priority of Isa 36–37 over 2 Kgs 18–19.

⁸² Shawn Zelig ASTER, "The Image of Assyria in Isaiah 2:5–22: The Campaign Motif Reversed," *JAOS* 127 (2007): 255–57.

Assyria in the Book of Isaiah. According to 2 Kgs 19:35–37/Isa 37:36–38, the angel of the Lord destroyed the Assyrian camp and Sennacherib returned to Nineveh where he was assassinated. After these events, Assyria practically disappears from the narrative landscape of the Books of Isaiah and Kings. Historically speaking it did not disappear. After Sennacherib's invasion, Assyria prospered. Sennacherib conducted campaigns against Babylonia. His successor Esarhaddon conquered Egypt; and Ashurbanipal, after consolidating his power in Egypt and Babylonia, conquered Elam. Assyria did not disappear from the world map as presented in the Bible; on the contrary, Ashurbanipal turned Assyria into the first empire controlling the entire ANE.⁸³ I have argued that the distortion of historical facts was intentional and this literary technique is known as a historiography of representation.⁸⁴ This technique is responsible for the distortion of the Assyrian portrait in such a way that it is focused on the religious causes underlying the fall of Assyria described in Isa 36–37/2 Kgs 18–19. What really matters in this historiographic technique is why Assyria collapsed and not when and how it happened, namely, Assyrian hubris.

A similar technique was employed in Assyrian annals. Assyrian campaigns were often depicted as the final victory, even though it was not always true. Similarly, according to the annals the defeat of Teumman, the most ferocious Elamite adversary, was the decisive step in Assyria conquering the universe and the Assyrian scribes presented it as the end of Elam. However, after the 653 BCE battle the Assyrians needed almost ten years to defeat Elam. Thus, Teumman's story telescoped not only the fall of Elam that indeed took place ten years later but also the fall of the entire universe that bowed to Ashurbanipal's feet.

8.3 *A Meaning of Sennacherib's Campaign in the Book of Isaiah*

Based on this analysis, I believe that chapters Isa 36–37 are not a useless appendix attached to Isa 1–35, but these two chapters provide an important clue for the interpretation of the Assyria strata in Isaiah.⁸⁵ This conclusion would further confirm Hugh Williamson's conclusion that Isa 36–37 "were written by someone who was familiar with the earlier Isaianic tradition."⁸⁶ Several scholars have

⁸³ Cf. RINAP 5 23, an inscription dated to the very end of Ashurbanipal's reign that presents how the entire world was under Ashurbanipal's control.

⁸⁴ Peter DUBOVSKÝ, "Assyrian Downfall through Isaiah's Eyes," 1–16.

⁸⁵ EIDEVALL for example distinguishes three stages in the formation of the Assyria strata. The first Assyria stratum "Loyalty and Mimicry" does not openly criticize Assyria such as texts Isa 8:1–4; 17:1–9; 28:1–4 (debated 7:1–9). These texts describe the destruction of Damascus and Samaria that took place during Tiglath-pileser III's campaigns in 734–731 BC. The second stage is "From Mimicry to Mockery"; and the third stage is called Propagandist phase; cf. Göran EIDEVALL, "Propagandistic Constructions of Empires in the Book of Isaiah," in *Divination, Politics, and Ancient Near Eastern Empires*, ed. Alan LENZI and Jonathan STÖCKL (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014): 109–28.

⁸⁶ WILLIAMSON, *Book Called Isaiah*, 193–94.

already noticed close links between Isa 36–37 and the rest of the first Isaiah and pointed out that these two chapters create an interpretative frame for the Isaianic prophecies concerning Assyria.⁸⁷ Besides the fulfillment of the Assyria strata in Isa 1–35, these two chapters also create a link with chapters that follow.⁸⁸

In the light of the analysis offered in this paper, we can add new elements to previous scholarly conclusions. The analysis of the narrative in Isa 36–37 pointed out that this story skillfully used the reversal technique that turned the most important Assyrian victory against Elam upside down. Combining the historiography of representation with the reversal technique Assyria-Elam/Judah-Assyria we can explain why all Assyrian campaigns were telescoped in the Book of Isaiah into Sennacherib's campaign against Judah. All Assyrian campaigns against Israel and Judah were telescoped by the Isaianic scribes into Sennacherib's campaign against Jerusalem.⁸⁹ As the defeat of Teumman symbolically represented the submission of the entire universe to Assyria, so the defeat of Sennacherib became the proof of YHWH's supremacy over the world. In sum, Isa 36–37 became the decisive argument that YHWH was the Lord of history.

9. Synthesis

The theoretical model standing behind this paper is a cultural memory study as presented by A. Berlejung.⁹⁰ The goal was not to prove the historicity of Assyrian speeches, but to demonstrate how Assyria was imagined and remembered. This study showed that Judahite ambassadors forced to pay a visit to Assyria learned about the Assyrian victory over its arch-enemy Elam. This victory was used to indoctrinate the ambassadors as documented by reliefs and epigraphs. However,

⁸⁷ It is beyond the limits of this paper to explore the inter- and inner-textual links within the Book of Isaiah. Let us offer connections that have been already suggested: Isa 2 [ASTER, "The Image of Assyria in Isaiah 2:5–22": 249–78]; Isa 10 [Marvin A. SWEENEY, "Sargon's Threat against Jerusalem in Isaiah 10,27–32," *Bib* 75 (1994): 457–70; Willem BEUKEN, "Lebanon with Its Majesty Shall Fall. A Shoot Shall Come Forth from the Stump of Jesse' (Isa 10:34–11:1): Interfacing the Story of Assyria and the Image of Israel's Future in Isaiah 10–11," in *The New Things Eschatology in Old Testament Prophecy: Festschrift for Henk Leene*, ed. Janer W. DYK (Maastricht: Shaker, 2002): 17–33]; Isa 11 [Dan'el KAHN, "Egypt and Assyria in Isaiah 11:11–16," *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 12 (2016): 9–20]; Isa 27 [J. Todd HIBBARD, "Isaiah XXVII 7 and Intertextual Discourse About 'Striking' in the Book of Isaiah," *VT* 55 (2005): 461–76]; Isa 28 [Nathan MASTNJAK, "Judah's Covenant with Assyria in Isaiah 28," *VT* 64 (2014): 465–83; Christopher B. HAYS, "The Covenant with Mut: A New Interpretation of Isaiah 28:1–22," *VT* 60 (2010): 212–40].

⁸⁸ BEUKEN, *Jesaja* 28–39, 371.

⁸⁹ Similarly the anti-Assyrian resistance was concentrated into Teumman, the image of demons.

⁹⁰ Angelika BERLEJUNG, "Erinnerungen an Assyrien in Nahum 2,4–3,19," in *Die Unwiderstehliche Wahrheit: Studien zur Alttestamentlichen Prophetie*, ed. Rüdiger LUX and Ernst-Joachim WASCHKE (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2006), 323–56.

the creativity of the oppressed people should not be underestimated. As demonstrated by several scholars, the Judahite scribes imaginatively used a reversal technique to undermine Assyrian ideology. By doing so, Assyrian ideology was turned upside down. The Judahite scribes reversed the most important Assyrian victory as a “rod” and “club” against Assyria (cf. Isa 10:5). Assyria became Elam, Teumman became Sennacherib, and Ashurbanipal became Hezekiah. The scribes presented Sennacherib’s campaign against Jerusalem as the representation in which all Assyrian campaigns and the resistance of any small kingdom against mighty aggressors were telescoped. This presentation of Assyria was subsequently elaborated and reshaped by biblical redactors and editors. When inserted into the Books of Kings and Isaiah the story assumed a new function given to the story by means of the narrative introductions (2 Kgs 18:1–6; Isa 36:1). While 2 Kgs 18–19 represents the Sennacherib-Hezekiah conflict as the violation of the fundamental war rules similar to Ben-Hadad, Isaiah telescoped in the Sennacherib-Hezekiah war heroic resistance against arrogant invaders. Isaianic scribes editing the final texts of the Book of Isaiah used the Sennacherib-Hezekiah episode as the interpretative key for the Assyria strata in Isa 1–35.⁹¹ These new narratives had their “life” independently from the original episode reversing Teumman-Ashurbanipal war. Thus, Persian and Hellenistic biblical scribes (2 Chr 32; 2 Macc 15; *Ant.* 10) still used Hezekiah-Sennacherib conflict but adapted it to a new situation. As a result, Sennacherib’s invasion of Judah and Hezekiah’s resistance became a prototype of the just war.⁹² This continuous reworking of Assyria did not stop and the Assyrian oppression of Israel became a continuous source of inspiration for the generations to come starting with the Roman aggressors up to the different kinds of oppression experienced nowadays.

⁹¹ The discussion of this topic is beyond the goal of this paper (cf. footnote 1), but the author inclines to think that the first revision of the story was in 2 Kings 18–19 that was later adopted by the Isaianic scribes to provide the interpretative tool for chapters Isa 1–35.

⁹² Daniel C. TIMMER, “Nahum’s Representation of and Response to Neo-Assyria: Imperialism as a Multifaceted Point of Contact in Nahum,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 24 (2014): 357.

Appendix 1 (Three-step literary pattern)

<i>RINAP 4 1 ii 40–64</i>	<i>Similar pattern</i>
<p>Introduction At that time, Nabû-zêr-kitti-lišir, son of Marduk-apla-iddina (II) (Merodach-baladan), governor of the Sealand, who did not keep his treaty nor remember the agreement of Assyria, forgot the good relations of my father. During the disturbance(s) in Assyria, he mustered his army and his camp, besieged Ningal-iddin, the governor of Ur, a servant who was loyal to me, and cut off his escape route. After the gods Aššur, Šamaš, Bêl and Nabû, Ištar of Nineveh, (and) Ištar of Arbela joyously seated me, Esarhaddon, on the throne of my father and handed over to me the lordship of the lands, he was not respectful, did not stop (his evil deeds), and would not leave my servant alone. Moreover, he did not send his messenger before me and did not ask after the well-being of my kingship.</p>	<p>Sennacherib (RINAP 3/1):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – against (1; a shorter version 4:5–20) – against Philistia and Judah (4:32–60) – against Kirûa, the city ruler of Illubru (17 iv 61–91) – against the land of Katmuḫu (17 v 1–22) – against Mušēzib-Marduk of Babylon (22 v 17–vi 35) <p>Esarhaddon (RINAP 4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – against Abdi-milkûti of Sidon (1 ii 65–iii 19) – against Sanda-uari of Kundi and Sissû (1 iii 20–38) – against Uabu who rebelled against pro-Assyrian Iata', king of Arabs (1 iv 17–31) – general summary including submission of some kings (1 iv 78–v 52) – against Ba'al of Tyre and Egypt (34 6'–r. 19; 54)
<p>Resolution I heard of his evil deeds (while) in Nineveh; my heart became angry and my liver was inflamed. I sent my officials, the governors on the border of his land, against him. Furthermore, he, Nabû-zêr-kitti-lišir, the rebel, the traitor, heard of the approach of my army and fled like a fox to the land Elam. Because of the oath of the great gods which he had transgressed, the gods Aššur, Sîn, Šamaš, Bêl, and Nabû imposed a grievous punishment on him and they killed him with the sword in the midst of the land Elam.</p>	<p>Ashurbanipal (RINAP 5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – against Taharqa of Egypt (3 i 48–ii 5) – against Tunatamon of Egypt (3 ii 5–37) – against Ba'alu, king of Tyre (3 ii 38–62) – against Aḫšeri, king of Mannea (3 iii 16–79) – against Iauta', king of Qedar (3 vii 77–viii 31) – against Šamaš-šuma-ukîn (11 iii 70–109)
<p>Conclusion Na'id-Marduk, his brother, saw the deeds that they had done to his brother in Elam, fled from the land Elam, came to Assyria to serve me, and beseeched my lordship. I made the entire Sealand, the domain of his brother, subject to him. (Now) he comes yearly, without ceasing, to Nineveh with his heavy audience gift and kisses my feet.</p>	

Appendix 2 (A Comparison of 2 Kgs 18; Isa 36 and Sennacherib's annals)

	<i>Kings</i>	<i>Isaiah</i>	<i>Assyrian annals</i>
Hezekiah's rebellion	<p>^{18:7} The LORD was with him; wherever he went, he prospered. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him.</p> <p>⁸ He attacked the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city.</p>	OMITTED	<p>Different variants:</p> <p>(As for) Hezekiah of the land of Judah, who had not submitted to my yoke. (RINAP 3/1 22 iii 18–19)</p> <p>“I ruined the wide district of the recalcitrant (and) strong (<i>šep-šu mit-ru</i>) Judah (and) I make Hezekiah, its king, bow down at my feet.” (RINAP 3/2 44:20b–22a)</p> <p>“I ruined the wide district of Judah, an obstinate force, (and) I made Hezekiah, its king, bow down at my feet.” (RINAP 3/2 222:20)</p>
Assyrian reaction – military invasion	<p>^{18:13} In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, King Sennacherib of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them.</p>	<p>^{36:1} In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, King Sennacherib of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them.</p>	<p>I surrounded (and) conquered forty-six of his fortified walled cities and small(er) settlements in their environs, which were without number, (50) by having ramps trodden down and battering rams brought up, the assault of foot soldiers, sapping, breaching, and siege engines. I brought out of them 200,150 people, young (and) old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, oxen, and sheep and goats, which were without number, and I counted (them) as booty. (RINAP 3 4:49)</p>
Surrender and payment	<p>¹⁴ King Hezekiah of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, “I have done wrong; withdraw from me; whatever you impose on me I will bear.” The king of Assyria demanded of King Hezekiah of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.</p>	OMITTED	<p>As for him, Hezekiah, fear of my lordly brilliance overwhelmed him and, after my (departure), he had the auxiliary forces (and) his elite troops whom he had brought inside to strengthen the city Jerusalem, his royal city, and who had provided support, (along with) 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, choice antimony, large blocks of ..., ivory beds, armchairs of ivory, elephant hide(s), elephant ivory, ebony, box-</p>

¹⁵ Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king's house. ¹⁶ At that time Hezekiah stripped the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD, and from the doorposts that King Hezekiah of Judah had overlaid and gave it to the king of Assyria.

wood, garments with multi-colored trim, linen garments, blue-purple wool, red-purple wool, utensils of bronze, iron, copper, tin, (and) iron, chariots, shields, lances, armor, iron belt-daggers, bows and *ussu*-arrows, equipment, (and) implements of war, (all of) which were without number, together with his daughters, his palace women, male singers, (and) female singers brought into Nineveh, my capital city, and he sent a mounted messenger of his to me to deliver (this) payment and to do obeisance. (RINAP 3 4:55)

Rab-shaqeh's speeches

^{18:17} The king of Assyria sent the Tartan, the Rabsaris, and the Rabshakeh with a great army from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. [...] ¹⁹ The Rabshakeh said to them, "Say to Hezekiah: Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: On what do you base this confidence of yours? ...

^{36:2} The king of Assyria sent the Rabshakeh from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem, with a great army. [...] ⁴ The Rabshakeh said to them, "Say to Hezekiah: Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: On what do you base this confidence of yours? ...

No equivalent

Appendix 3 (Ashurbanipal-Teumman episode)

PRISM B (RINAP 5 3)

(iv 68) Afterwards, Teumman, the (very) image of a gallû-demon, sat on the throne of Urtaku. He constantly sought out evil (ways) to kill the children of Urtaku (and) the children of Ummanaldašu (Ḫumban-ḫaltaš II), the brother of Urtaku. Ummanigaš, Ummanappa, (and) Tammaritu – the sons of Urtaku, the king of the land Elam – Kudurru (and) Parrû – the sons of Ummanaldašu (Ḫumban-ḫaltaš II), (iv 75) the king who came before Urtaku – together with sixty members of the royal (family), countless archers, (and) nobles of the land Elam fled to me before Teumman's slaughtering and grasped the feet of my royal majesty.

(iv 80) On my seventh campaign, I marched against Teumman, the king of the land Elam who had regularly sent his envoys to me concerning Ummanigaš, Ummanappa, (and) Tammaritu – the sons of Urtaku, the king of the land Elam – (and) Kudurru (and) Parrû – the sons of Ummanaldašu (Ḫumban-ḫaltaš II), the brother of Urtaku, (former) king of the land Elam – (asking me) to send (back) those people who had fled to me and grasped my feet. I did not grant him their extradition. Concerning the aforementioned, he sent insults monthly by the hands of Umbadarâ and Nabû-damiq. (v 1) Inside the land Elam, he was bragging in the midst of his troops. I trusted in the goddess Ištar, who had encouraged me. I did not comply with the utterance(s) of his provocative speech (lit. "mouth"). I did not give him those fugitives.

(v 4b) Teumman constantly sought out evil (deeds), (but) the god Sîn (also) sought out inauspicious omens for him. In the month Du'ûzu (IV), an eclipse (of the moon) lasted longer than the third watch of the night, until daylight, the god Šamaš saw it, and it lasted like this the entire day, (thus signifying) the end of the reign of the king of the land Elam (and) the destruction of his land.

(v 10) "The Fruit" (the god Sîn) revealed to me his decision, which cannot be changed. At that time, a mishap befell him: His lip became paralyzed, his eyes turned back, and a seizure had taken place inside him. He was not ashamed by these measures that (the god) Aššur and the goddess Ištar had taken against him, (and) he mustered his troops.

(v 16) During the month Abu (V) – the month of the heliacal rising of the Bow Star, the festival of the honored queen, the daughter of the god Enlil (the goddess Ištar) – to revere her great divinity, I resided in the city Arbela, the city that her heart loves, (v 20) (when) they reported to me news concerning an Elamite attack, which he (Teumman) had started against me without divine approval, saying: "Teumman, whose judgement the goddess Ištar had clouded (lit. 'altered'), spoke as follows, saying: 'I will not stop until I go (and) do battle with him.'"

(v 24b) On account of these insolent words (v 25) that Teumman had spoken, I made an appeal to the sublime goddess Ištar. I stood before her, knelt down at her feet, (and) made an appeal to her divinity, while my tears were flowing, saying:

(v 28b) "O Divine Lady of the city Arbela! I, Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria, the creation of your hands whom (the god) Aššur – the father who had engendered you – requires, whose name he has called to restore sanctuaries, to successfully complete their rituals, to protect their secret(s), (and) to please their hearts: I am assiduous towards your places (of worship). I have come to revere your divinity (and) successfully complete your rituals. However, he, Teumman, the king of the land Elam who does not respect the gods, is fully prepared to fight with my troops."

(v 36) "You, the divine lady of ladies, the goddess of war, the lady of battle, the advisor of the gods – her ancestors – the one who speaks good thing(s) about me before (the god) Aššur – the father who had engendered you – (so that) at the glance of his pure eyes he desired me to be king – with regard to Teumman, the king of the land Elam who placed a burden on (the god) Aššur – the king of the gods, the father who had engendered you – he mustered his troops, prepared for battle, (and) sharpened his weapons in order to march to Assyria."

(v 43) "You, the heroic one of the gods, drive him away like a ... in the thick of battle and (then) raise a storm, an evil wind, against him."

(v 45b) The goddess Ištar heard my sorrowful plight and said to me "Fear not!" She gave me confidence, (saying): "Because of your entreaties, which you directed towards me, (and because) your eyes were filled with tear(s), I had mercy (on you)."

(v 48b) During the course of the night that I had appealed to her, a dream interpreter lay down and saw a dream. He woke up and (then) reported to me the night vision that the goddess Ištar had shown him, saying:

(v 51b) "The goddess Ištar who resides in the city Arbela entered and she had quivers hanging on the right and left. She was holding a bow at her side (and) she was unsheathing a sharp sword that (was ready) to do battle. You (Ashurbanipal) stood before her (v 55) (and) she was speaking to you like (your own) birth-mother. The goddess Ištar, the sublime one of the gods, called out to you, instructing you, saying: 'You are looking forward to waging war (and) I myself am about to set out towards my destination (the battlefield).' You (then) said to her, saying: (v 60) 'Let me go with you, wherever you go, O Lady of Ladies!' She replied to you, saying: 'You will stay in the place where you are (currently) residing. Eat food, drink wine, make music, (and) revere my divinity. In the meantime, I will go (and) accomplish this task, (thus) I will let (you) achieve (v 65) your heart's desire. Your face will not become pale, your feet will not tremble, you will not wipe off your sweat in the thick of battle.' She took you into her sweet embrace and protected your entire body. Fire flared up in front of her. She went off furiously outside. She directed her attention towards Teumman, the king of the land Elam with whom she was *angr[y]*."

(v 73) In the month Ulūlu (VI), "the work of the goddesses," the festival of the exalted (god) Aššur, the month of the god Šin, the light of heaven and netherworld, I trusted in the decision of (v 75) the bright divine light (Šin) and the message of the goddess Ištar, my lady, which cannot be changed. I mustered my battle troops, warriors who dart about in the thick of battle by the command of the deities Aššur, Šin, and Ištar. I set out on the path against Teumman, the king of the land Elam, and took the direct road.

(v 79b) Before me, Teumman, the king of the land Elam, set up camp in the city Bit-Imbî. He heard about the entry of my royal majesty into (the city) Dêr and fear took hold of him. Teumman became frightened, turned around, (and) entered the city Susa. In order to save his (own) life, he distributed silver (and) gold to the people of his land. He redeployed his allies, who march at his side, to his front and amassed (them) before me. He established the Ulāya River as his defensive position and kept (me from) the watering places.

(v 87) By the command of the gods Aššur (and) Marduk, the great gods, my lords, who had encouraged me through auspicious omens, dream(s), *egirru*-oracle(s), (and) message(s) from ecstasies, I brought about their defeat inside (the city) Til-Tuba. I blocked up the Ulāya River with their corpses (and) filled the plain of the city Susa with their bodies like *baltu*-plant(s) and *ašāgu*-plant(s). By the command of the gods Aššur (and) Marduk, the great gods, my lords, in the midst of his troops, I cut off the head of Teumman, the king

of the land Elam. The brilliance of (the god) Aššur and the goddess Ištar overwhelmed the land Elam and they (the Elamites) bowed down to my yoke.

(v 97) I placed Ummanigaš (Ḫumban-nikas II), who had fled to me (and) had grasped my feet, on his (Teumman's) throne. I installed Tammaritu, his third brother, as king in the city Ḫidalu. (With) the chariots, wagons, horses, mules, harness-broken (steeds), (and) equipment suited for war (vi 5) that I captured between the city Susa and the Ulāya River with the support of (the god) Aššur (and) the goddess Ištar, the great gods, my lords, by the command of (the god) Aššur and the great gods, my lords, I joyfully came out of the land Elam and salvation was established for my entire army.

PRISM G (RINAP 5 8)

(7') [Afterwards], Teumman, the (very) image of a gallû-demon, sat on the [throne of] Urtaku. He constantly sought out ev[i]l (ways) [to] kill the children of Urtaku (and) the children of Um[manaldašu (Ḫumban-ḫaltaš II). (10') Um]manigaš, Ummanappa, (and) Tammarit[u – the son]s of Urtaku, the king of the land Elam – [Kudu]rru (and) Parrû – the sons of Ummanald[āšu (Ḫumban-ḫaltaš II), the king] who came before Urtaku – together with sixty members of [the royal (family)], count[less] archers, (and) nobles of the land Elam, (15') [who had] fled to me before Teumman's slaughtering and who had grasped the feet of m[y] royal majesty – [rega]rding these people, (these) fugitives, [T]eumman constantly sent me insults [sa]ying “Send me those people!” and [a seco]nd time, saying “I will come and wage war [ag]ainst you!”

PRISM A (RINAP 5 11)

(iii 27) On my fifth campaign, I took the direct road to the land Elam. By the command of the deities Aššur, Šin, Šamaš, Adad, Bēl (Marduk), Nabû, (iii 30) Ištar of Nineveh, Šarrat-Kidmuri, Ištar of Arbela, Ninurta, Nergal, (and) Nusku, in the month Ulûlu (VI) – “the work of the goddesses,” the month of the king of the gods, (the god) Aššur, the father of the gods, the god Nunnamir – like the assault of a fierce storm, (iii 35) I covered the land Elam in its entirety. I cut off the head of Teumman, their presumptuous king who had plotted evil (deeds). I slew his warriors without number. I captured his fighting men alive. (iii 40) I filled the plain of the city Susa with their bodies like *baltu*-plant(s) and *ašāgu*-plant(s). I made the Ulāya River flow with their blood; I dyed its water red like a red-dyed wool.

(iii 44) I took Ummanigaš (Ḫumban-nikas II), a son of Urtaku – a (former) king of the land Elam – who had fled to me from Teumman to Assyria (and) had grasped my feet, with me to the land Elam (and) I placed him on Teumman's throne. I installed Tammaritu, his third brother who had fled to me with him, as king in the city Ḫidalu.

(iii 50) After I had made the weapons of (the god) Aššur and the goddess Ištar prevail over the land Elam (and) had continually established mighty victories, on my return march, I set out towards Dunānu, a Gambulian who had put his trust in the land Elam. I conquered the city Ša-pî-Bēl, a city upon which the land Gambulu relied. (iii 55) I entered that city (and) slaughtered its people like lambs. (As for) Dunānu (and) Samgunu, the ones who had disturbed the exercise of my kingship, (iii 60) I clamped (their) hands and feet in iron manacles (and) handcuffs (and) iron fetters. (As for) the rest of the sons of Bēl-iqīša, his family, the seed of his father's house, as many as there were, Nabû-na'id (and) Bēl-ētir, sons of Nabû-šuma-ēreš, the šandabakku (governor of Nippur), and the

bones of the father who had engendered them (Nabû-šuma-êreš), (iii 65) I carried (them) off together with auxiliary forces, rebels, the people of the land Gambulu, oxen, sheep and goats, donkeys, horses, (and) mules out of the land Gambulu to Assyria. (As for) Ša-pi-Bēl, the city upon which he (Dunānu) relied, I destroyed, demolished, (and) dissolved (it) with water.

Epigraphs in the Southwest Palace, Room XXXIII

BSP 1; Epigraph 33 (RINAP 5 32)

The defeat of the troops of Teumman, the king of [the land Elam], which Ashurbanipal, [great king, strong king], king of the world, king of Assyria, [had brought about] (by inflicting) countless (losses) at (the city) Til-Tūba, (and during which) he had cast down the corpses of [his (Teumman's)] w[arriors].

Epigraph 31 (RINAP 5 31)

[Battle line of Ashurbanipal, king of A]ssyria, the one who established the de[feat of the land Elam].

SWB 1; Epigraph 10a (RINAP 5 27) author's reconstruction and translation

SAG.DU^mte-um-[*man* MAN KUR.ELAM.MA.KI] ša ina MURUB₄ tam-'ha'-[*ri ik-ki-su-ma*] a-ḥu-ru-u ERIM.ḪI.A-ia a-na pu-'us'-[*su-rat*] ḥa-de-e ú-šah^h-ma-tu a-na KUR 'AN'.[ŠÁR. KI]

The head of Teum[man, the king of the land Elam], which was cut off in the midst of bat[tle] [and] a common soldier of my troops dispatched (it) quickly to As[syria] to (give me) the good ne[ws].

SWB 2; Epigraph 15 (RINAP 5 28)

Ur[t]aku, an in-law of Teumman who had been struck by an a[rro]w (but) had not (yet) died, called out to an Assyrian to c[ut of]f his (Urtaku's) own head, saying "Come here (and) cut off (my) head. Carry (it) before the king, your lord, and obtain fame."

SWB 3; Epigraph 7a (RINAP 5 25)

Teumman, <who>, during a loss of (all) reason, said to his son: "Shoot the bow!"

SWB 4; Epigraph 6 (RINAP 5 26)

Teumman, the king of the land Elam who had been struck during a mighty battle (and) whose hand Tammaritu, his eldest son, had grasped – they fled in order to save his (Teumman's) life (and) slipped into the forest. With the support of (the god) Aššur and goddess Ištar, I killed them. I cut off their head(s) in front of one another.

SWB 5; Epigraph 28 (RINAP 5 36)

(PN₁ and PN₂) uttered grievous blasphemies against (the god) Aššur, the god who created me. I tore out their tongue(s) and) flayed them.

SWB 6 (RINAP 5 33)

The fugitive [U]mmanigaš (Ḫumban-nikas II), a servant who had grasped my feet. When I gave the command (lit. “at the working of my mouth”) in (the midst of) celebration, a eunuch of mine whom [I had] sent (with him) ushered (him) in[to] the land Madaktu and the city Susa and placed him on the throne of Teu[mman, whom] I [had def]eated.

SWB 7; Epigraph 27av (RINAP 5 35)

I, Ashurbanipal, king of the world, king of Assyria, [who] through the support of (the god) Aššur and the goddess Ištar, my lords, conquered my [enemies] (and) achieved my heart's desire. Rusa, the king of the land Urarṭu, heard about the mi[gh]t of (the god) Ašš[ur], my [lo]rd, and fear of my royal majesty overwhelmed him and he (then) sent his envoys to me in Arbela, to inquire about my well-being. I made Nabû-damiq (and) Umbadarâ, envoys of the land Elam, stand before them with writing boards (inscribed with) insolent m[es]sages.

SWB 8; Epigraph 17a (RINAP 5 34)

The city (lit. “land”) Madaktu

Epigraphs in the North Palace, Room I

NB 1; Epigraph 16 (RINAP 5 29)

Itunî, a eunuch of Teumman, the king of the land Elam, whom he (Teumman) insolently sent again and again before me, saw my mighty battle array and, with his iron belt-dagger, cut with his own hand (his) bow, the emblem of his strength.

NB 2; Epigraph 28a (RINAP 5 37)

The city of Arbela

Appendix 4 Reliefs

Fig. 1: Teumman-Dunanu cycle; Slab 1–3, 4–6 (AOAT 266; Übersicht 1, 2).

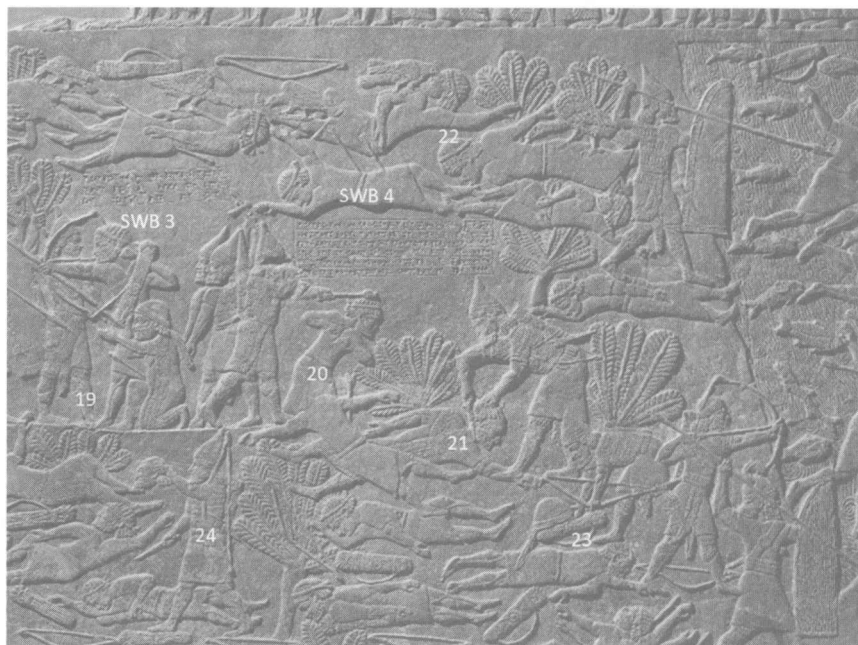


Fig. 2: Teumman and his son (SWB 3; RINAP 5 25) and death of Teumman (SWB 4; RINAP 5 26); 19: Bowed and despaired Teumman with his son; 20: Execution of Teumman's son; 21: Execution of Teumman; 22: Dead Elamites; 23: Teumman's weapons taken as a booty; 24: Head of Teumman. (The British Museum, photo author)



Fig. 3: The death of Urtaku, an in-law of Teumman (SWB 2; RINAP 5 28); 17: Teumman fell from his chariot; 18: Wounded Teumman escaped held by Tammaritu; 29: Urtaku begging to be killed 30: Dead Elamites; 38: Dead Elamites; 39: Assyrians shooting Elamites; 40: Assyrians killing Elamites. (The British Museum, photo author)

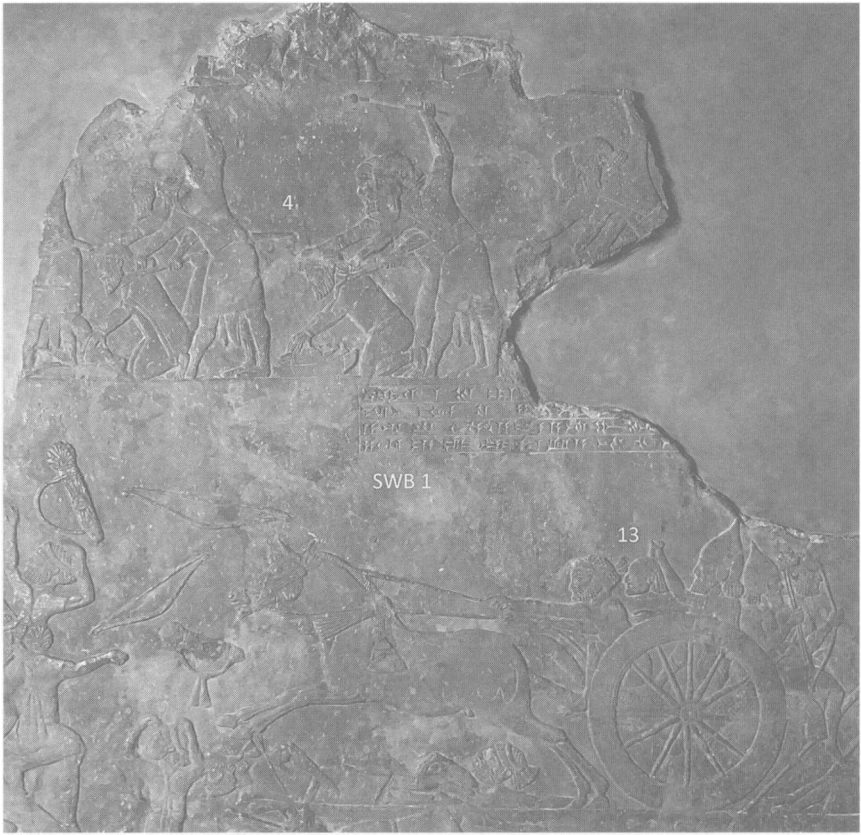


Fig. 4: The head of Teumman (SWB 1, RINAP 5 27); 4: Elamite prisoners humiliated; 13: Teumman's head. (The British Museum, photo author)

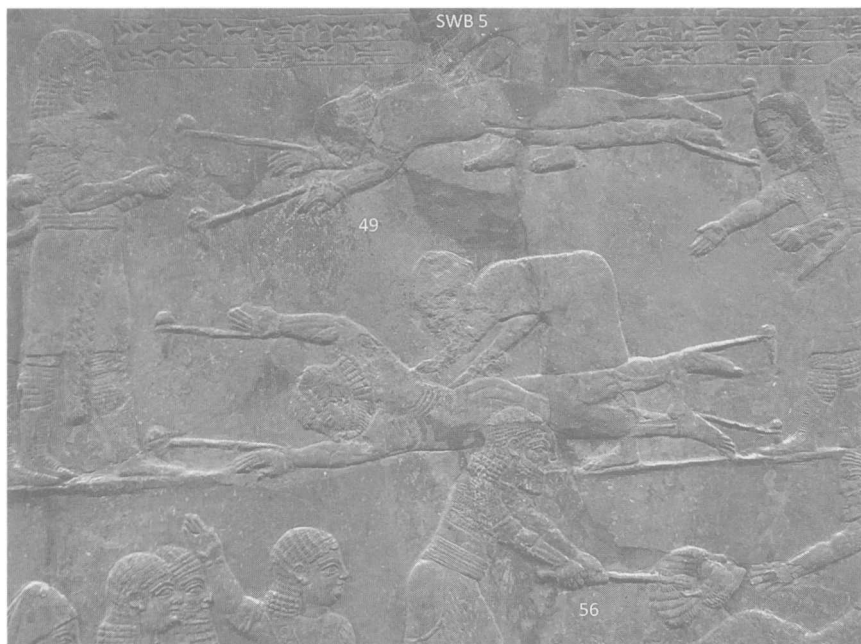


Fig. 5: The punishment of those who insulted gods (SWB 5; RINAP 5 36); 49 and 56 Elamites flayed. (The British Museum, photo author)



Fig. 6: The installation of faithful Ummanigaš to the throne (SWB 6; RINAP 5 26); 63: Elamites prostrating and kneeling in front of the new king; 64: Ummanigaš presented to the Elamites; 65: Elamites accepting the new king. (The British Museum, photo author)



Fig. 7: Rusa's ambassadors (SWB 7; RINAP 5 35); 60: Observing the tablets brought by Nabû-damiq (and) Umbadarâ and the tablets with Teumman's insulting messages. (The British Museum, photo author)



Fig. 8: Sennacherib reviewing the booty taken from Lachish (Southwest Palace Nineveh, Room XXXVI): Inscription 1: Sennacherib, king of the world, king of Assyria, sat in a *nēmedu*-throne and the booty of Lachish passed in review before him; Inscription 2: Tent of Sennacherib, king of Assyria. (The British Museum, photo author)



Fig. 9: The Assyrian attack of Lachish (Southwest Palace Nineveh, Room XXXVI, panel 7): Assyrian siege engines and ramps, the deportation and impalement of the enemies. (The British Museum, photo author)



Fig. 10: Left: Ritual tablet K 9439; Middle: Ashurnasirpal's Standard Inscription (9th c. BC, Nimrud, Northwest Palace, Room F, Panel 3); Right: Ashurbanipal's epigraph (7th c. BC, Nineveh, Southwest Palace, Room XXXII, Panel 2). (The British Museum, photo author)

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