

Propaganda, Literature, Historiography: Cracking the Code of the Assyrian Royal Inscriptions

Along with the revival of the study of Assyria – its epistolary archives, its cult, and of course, its political history and administration – our generation has witnessed a revival of publication and study of the Assyrian Royal Inscriptions (ARI). The modern manner of interdisciplinary studies, combining history, linguistics, and literary theory, has produced a new methodical approach and has posed new questions to that entire genre. Thus, almost independently, in several centres of learning, scholars have worked along similar lines of research.

Reversing the order of the three elements of my presentation, as phrased for me by Professor Parpola, I shall begin with the literary aspects of the ARI and their historiographical dimensions; I shall then proceed to their value as an expression of the royal ideology, and, finally I will discuss the parameters of the modern usage of the term “propaganda,” examine its relevance to our specific case, and will suggest a historical setting in which the term can properly, and even beneficially, be used.

From the eleventh century BCE onward, from the reign of Tiglath-pileser I, these royal texts take the form of eloquently composed war reports, arranged by year – hence the term “annals” given them by their first discoverers in the nineteenth century, a term based on the Roman genre of this name.¹ But the Roman annals did not survive, except for a few quotations in the classical authors, and these should actually be compared with the genre of Babylonian

and Assyrian chronicles² – laconic, dry, impersonal narration of events – rather than with the highly personal, eloquent and unashamedly biased Assyrian royal inscriptions. Modern scholarship was thus faced with the problem of studying and evaluating a new genre, practically unique in ancient and medieval history.³

As it happened, these inscriptions were the first texts to be discovered at the dawn of Assyriology. At that stage, they were referred to as the Monuments – which indeed they were, gigantic winged bulls or inscribed reliefs or large-sized stone stelae, each bearing inscriptions relating the achievements of a particular emperor of Assyria.

Similar compositions existed in Egypt⁴ and among the Hittites,⁵ but they were not as central to these civilizations as they were in Assyria. Indeed, not only stone monuments, but also numerous inscriptions of various shapes were uncovered in the capitals of Assyria, in the foundations of temples and royal palaces or immured in their walls.⁶ They were written on large-sized tablets, barrel-shaped clay cylinders and especially clay prisms.⁷ Obviously, not many of the clay documents were found intact; many were fragmentary and incomplete. The process of the decipherment and publication of the ARI and the evaluation of their historical content has lasted for almost a century, and definitive editions have only been appearing rather recently. This work – conducted mostly by Professor Grayson⁸ and by Professor Borger and his students⁹ – is still in progress and is drawing to its

completion. My own most recent publication of the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III belongs to this process.¹⁰

In another venue of research, the text of the royal inscription itself, rather than its contribution to our knowledge of Assyrian political history, became the object of inquiry. Of special significance in this field is the ongoing contribution of the Italian school, which examines, along semiological lines, the compositional structures and lexical-ideological conventions employed in these texts.¹¹ A similar approach, though on more pragmatic-historical lines, has been pursued in Israel.¹² Philologists and historians became attentive to the semantic nuances and variations, however slight, in the flowery phraseology of the royal inscriptions, leading them to become aware that historical events are described there through well-defined formulae and conventions. These studies have clarified the specific "codes" of the ARI in their narration of "history." Thus in our attempt to reconstruct the 'historical event,' it is no less important to understand and define the contemporary conception of that event and the linguistic conventions used to describe it.

Specific attention is now being paid to the study of the royal titles and epithets,¹³ often formulaic yet bearing the personal imprint of the king. Occasionally, the epithets are structured as hymns of self-praise: "I am king, I am lord, I am praiseworthy, I am exalted, I am important, I am magnificent, I am foremost, I am a hero, I am a warrior, I am a lion, and I am virile."¹⁴

The epithets stress the heroic qualities of the king, his prowess, valor and superhuman feats of strength. This heroic principle of royal omnipotence is the *leitmotif* in the accounts of campaigns – which comprise the main bulk of the royal inscriptions. The king traverses difficult terrain, makes way for his chariots, hacks through forbidding paths, crosses rivers and climbs mountains

steep and high; he personally combats the enemy and kills hundreds, even thousands, of warriors: "making their blood flow into the hollows and plains of the mountains"; he conquers their cities, carries off their booty and burns, razes and destroys the enemy land.¹⁵ In some battles, the enemy is so utterly decimated that no one is left to relate the magnitude of the victory (self-defeating from the point of view of media reporting).¹⁶ Such personal valor is greatly emphasized in the annals of Tiglath-pileser I, with whom this genre originates.¹⁷ Less heroic but nevertheless stirring feats are narrated by Ashurnasirpal II in his annals which describe his "calculated frightfulness":¹⁸ thousands are brutally killed, tortured, flayed, burnt alive or mutilated.¹⁹

This heroic principle or, rather, the heroic prerogative of the Assyrian monarch resurfaces almost two centuries later, in the inscriptions of Sennacherib. Together with his relentless warriors, the king crosses over dangerous cliffs and passes through mountain torrents and waterfalls, carried in his sedan chair or occasionally advancing on foot like a young gazelle in order to capture, despoil, destroy, devastate and burn the cities of his enemies.²⁰

It is in the battle of Halule in 691 BCE, between Sennacherib and the Babylonian-Elamite alliance, that the heroic depiction of the king of Assyria reaches its apogee.²¹ With literary allusions to Enuma Elish, the Babylonian epic of creation, Sennacherib likens himself to the god Marduk, who fought against the primeval sea-monster and her allies. As most convincingly shown in a recent study presented by Elnathan Weissert at the Thirty-ninth Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale in Heidelberg,²² the battle reality was purposely "transfigured into the mythic sphere" in which the Babylonians were demonized, thus allowing Sennacherib to carry out his plans for the destruction of Babylon.

The self-proclamatory image of the Assyrian king as sole, supreme hero became the main signifier of the royal commemorative inscriptions. It was therefore natural that the king referred to these inscriptions as "a record of my powerful victory," "a record of my triumphs in battle," or "praise of Ashur and record of my own might."²³ Shalmaneser I in the thirteenth century, addressing a future reader of his commemorative inscriptions, already refers self-consciously to this image: "In days to come, when the temple becomes old and dilapidated, let a future prince hear of my heroic deeds and recount the praise of my prowess."²⁴

I have been emphasizing that the account of mighty royal deeds was considered to be the central topic of the ARI texts, but this is a somewhat one-sided picture. Since the king of Assyria embodied the will of his god, Ashur, every war was by definition a "holy war," which the king was commanded to wage and win, and sometimes at the completion of which he would report to his divine overlord. In the imperial ideology, it was Ashur who sent the king against the unsubmitive enemy to conquer foreign lands and constantly expand the territory of Assyria. His task was thus not unlike that of the Roman as Virgil defined it: *parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*.²⁵

The ideological-literary conventions used in the ARI appear in another, older genre of Assyrian court literature – the epics.²⁶ An eleventh-century Assyrian royal epic of Tiglath-pileser I (LKA 62) ends with the following stanza: "Let me sing of the victory of Ashur the mighty who goes out to [combat], who triumphs over the cohorts of the earth. Let the first ones hear and tell it to the later ones."²⁷

The verbs used in this and other, similar texts to denote the act of recording and spreading the praises of Ashur's victories achieved by the king of Assyria, as well as

the king's own triumphs, are *zamāru*, to sing; *dalālu*, praise; *na'ādu*, extol. All these imply a poetically phrased account, and are thus in the realm of what Maurice Bowra has described in a different context as "heroic poetry."²⁸ In the case of the ARI, however, the material is not poetry in the strict sense of the word, but rather royal reports clad in the garb of a heroic narrative of pronounced poetic qualities, employing formulaic patterns. Such patterns must hark back to a rich, well-formed, cohesive literary tradition carried by court poets.²⁹ This tradition is not particularly Assyrian in origin, but Babylonian, as attested in hymns and epics of the second millennium. The court poets of the Assyrian kings drew in their epics from a plentiful reservoir of heroic imagery, some of which may have been transmitted orally from master to disciple, like the heroic tales known to us from the Middle Ages and even from modern times.

It was in the eleventh century, at the beginning of the reign of Tiglath-pileser I, that a major change took place. A new genre, that of Royal Annals, introduced a successful blend of two current literary genres; that of the heroic epic, in which major victories of the king were related as if they had taken place in a single year, and that of the chronicle, arranged according to regnal years.³⁰ The first text to present this blend was the famous prism from Ashur,³¹ whose decipherment (by four scholars independently and simultaneously in 1856) marked the official decipherment of Assyro-Babylonian cuneiform.³² This text, narrating the military campaigns of the first five years of Tiglath-pileser I, though written in prose, is heavily loaded with poetic similes, hyperbolae, typological numbers³³ and repetitions characteristic of epic style. A unique feature of this text is that each campaign is set off by a poetic device, a rhythmic stanza of praise, and not, as in later annalistic texts, by a date expressed in terms of the

respective eponym, or the regnal year. The last stanza, "Tiglath-pileser, valiant man, armed with unrivalled bow, expert in the hunt."³⁴ introduces a new topic in the Assyrian royal annals, that of the royal hunt. The king personally kills wild bulls and elephants; he slays one hundred and twenty lions while on foot, "in wildly vigorous assault," and eight hundred more lions from his chariot.³⁵ This topic of the royal hunt will be repeated in the historical inscriptions of every one of his successors until Ashurnasirpal II in the ninth century. It will then fall out of fashion and disappear from historical writing, but will reappear in the visual medium, in numerous reliefs of Ashurbanipal, now set in a formal, even cultic setting.³⁶

Who were the authors of these royal inscriptions? Officially, they were the kings themselves, who were the sole speakers. But were the warring kings of Assyria also literary craftsmen? Surely the inscriptions were the work of royal scribes, who were trained for their specific vocation and remained anonymous. As a rule, the texts never carry the names of the scribes who wrote or copied them. However, there is one exception, a large clay tablet from the city of Ashur, containing a letter of King Sargon II addressed to the god Ashur, giving a detailed report of the king's campaign in his eighth regnal year against Urartu and adjacent lands.³⁷ The letter bears a colophon noting the name of the master scribe who most likely composed it: Nabû-shallimshunu, the chief royal scribe and the *ummânu* of Sargon, king of Assyria, son of another royal scribe from the city of Ashur. The title *ummânu*, literally "a master," designates the highest rank of a scholar of scribal art.³⁸

Another document bears on the high position of the *ummânu*. It is a fragmented list of kings found in the city of Ashur, synchronically listing names of the kings of Assyria and Babylonia and also giving the

names of the *ummânu*s of several kings of Assyria – from Adad-nerari II to Shalmaneser III, and then, after a break, from Sennacherib to Ashurbanipal.³⁹ Nearly every king had a different *ummânu*; three are listed for Sennacherib alone. Like the *ummânu* of Sargon the *ummânu*s of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal were also the chief royal scribes. Fifteen years ago I proposed to revive an old suggestion, made by Schroeder, that the *ummânu* was also responsible for drafting the royal inscriptions.⁴⁰ No new evidence has been discovered since then to support or disprove this hypothesis. Be that as it may, the writers of the royal inscriptions unquestionably were very competent masters who both mirrored and created the political attitudes of the king. Some of the documents they composed, such as the apology of Esarhaddon explaining the circumstances of his irregular succession to the throne, bear the imprint of their royal author.⁴¹ Thus, even if he was not a *homo literatus* in his own right, we are justified in accepting the king's authorship of the inscriptions that bear his name, in much the same way as we accept the authorship of speeches by modern heads of state.

Moreover, even inscriptions of a more neutral, less personal character than Esarhaddon's apology may bear the imprint of the scribe's royal master. For example, Sennacherib differed greatly from his father Sargon in matters of religious reform and practice and in his attitude towards Babylonia⁴² – and also in the content, style and character of his royal inscriptions. What immediately catches our eye is the pronounced difference between Sennacherib's titles⁴³ and those of his father,⁴⁴ reflecting their divergent ideological stances. Similarly, the inscriptions of Esarhaddon differ in many respects from those of his father Sennacherib, and even reflect the king's internal changes of attitude.⁴⁵ Since we are for

fortunate to have the state letters of Esarhaddon, edited and interpreted by Parpola,⁴⁶ we can correlate the development evident in the letters with that reflected in the inscriptions. Again, the rich corpus of the inscriptions of Ashurbanipal, the most literate of the kings of Assyria, differs sharply from that of his father Esarhaddon, and, I believe, bears his very personal imprint.

In the ninth century, a change of royal scribes and probably of attitudes, following the Babylonian campaign of Shalmaneser III in his tenth regnal year, would coincide with and explain the introduction of a new system of dating the yearly campaigns by *palû* – originally a Babylonian term⁴⁷ – rather than by the Assyrian system of eponyms, as was the practice before. The presence of Assyrian dialect in the inscriptions of Shalmaneser's predecessors, Tukulti-Ninurta II and Ashurnasirpal II,⁴⁸ accords with the fact that the same *ummânu*, Gabbilani-eresh, served under them both.

What can be said about the manner in which these scribes composed the ARI? Among the plethora of questions that come to mind, only a few can be mentioned here. One is the question of the primary sources of the inscriptions. It is probable that the royal scribes based their presentations of events and military campaigns on first-hand written sources enumerating captives taken and booty seized. After all, royal scribes accompanied the king on every military engagement. They are depicted on monuments from the time of Tiglath-pileser III onwards, usually in pairs: one writing in cuneiform, probably on a ledger or a wax-covered wooden board, and the other writing in an alphabetical script, probably Aramaic, on a roll of papyrus.⁴⁹

Another primary form of data from military campaigns was the "itinerary," which charted the course of the campaign in fairly terse form on a day-to-day basis. It, too, is recognizable by its peculiar style and gram-

matical forms, often employing Assyrian rather than the standard literary Babylonian dialect, and by the fluctuation between the first and the third person singular, especially with the verb "to receive" (tribute). The existence of such itineraries, especially in the inscriptions of the kings of the ninth century, Tukulti-Ninurta II, Ashurnasirpal II and Shalmaneser III, has been discussed by Grayson,⁵⁰ and Louis Levine has published a stele of Sargon II from Najafahabad in Iran,⁵¹ displaying itineraries that record many toponyms and names of vassals, attesting this genre for a later period.

At this point in our discussion of the primary and archival material, let me present a new insight into the compositional process of a royal inscription, provided by a study of the commemorative stela of Tiglath-pileser III from Iran, now restored at the Israel Museum.⁵²

This stela was erected in the course of Tiglath-pileser's ninth campaign (corresponding to his ninth *palû*). It contains a prologue of invocation to the gods, followed by the king's titles, and an epilogue with the customary blessings and curses. The rest of the text, the military narrative, falls into four parts, three of which are concerned with events of years 1-8 – that is, prior to the Iran campaign. Most of the material in this part is paralleled by the fragmentary and incomplete Calah annals, composed towards the close of Tiglath-pileser's reign. These accounts are similar but not identical, which in itself should come as no surprise: we would expect to find differences even in accounts of the same military campaigns, when they were written in retrospect at different times by different scribes. What is surprising is the inclusion in this stela of a narrative describing the very campaign during which it was written. In that portion, the text records the number of horses received as tribute from a long list of Iranian rulers, mentioned by

name and city. Evidently written in the field, its style is unadorned and ledger-like, standing in contrast to the eloquent style used in describing campaigns one through eight, composed, as it seems, from archival material. For these the scribe must have used a text prepared ahead of time to be incised on a stela as the need might arise. Indeed, the prologue almost duplicates another text of Tiglath-pileser, the rock-relief inscription from Mila Mergi in northern Iraq, describing the conquest of Ulluba in the seventh *palû* (739).⁵³ Perhaps here, too, the prologue and epilogue, prepared in advance, were carried along by the scribe, whereas the account of the campaign was itself composed on the spot. However, unlike his counterpart in Iran, the Mila Mergi scribe did not resort to a dry list of tribute bearers, but composed a narrative of the war in Ulluba employing grammatical and syntactical forms unknown from other inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser. Ulluba was incorporated into the Assyrian empire in the course of the same year, so it could be that the inscription was written immediately after the campaign by a scribe of higher quality.

At home, long after the war and throughout the king's reign, the royal scribes skilfully reworked the primary material, adapting it according to need into a lengthier or shorter account, depending on the specific requirements. Since the surface of the stone tablet and even that of the clay prism was limited, the most recent campaigns were described *in extenso* at the expense of the space allocated for earlier campaigns. Thus, abridgment and creative re-writing were obligatory requirements of the scribe's trade. Here the scribe enjoyed a freer hand to create and demonstrate his literary talent.⁵⁴

Of particular significance are the numerous variants even within a single recension of a historical text.⁵⁵ By studying the textual

variants – the additions and omissions of descriptive phrases and specific details – it has been possible to recover a glimpse of the editorial techniques used by the royal scribes: how the first record was composed from campaign notes and later edited in subsequent recensions.⁵⁶ Moreover, we are sometimes able to reconstruct more reliably the sequence of events within an account of a given campaign⁵⁷ or to discern political and ideological divergences among the competing groups at the court of Nineveh.⁵⁸

In sum, the royal scribe presenting an account of his king's campaigns was much more than a technician, a copyist of documents. He was at the same time both author and editor, exercising considerations of selection and organization, emphasising or discarding according to specific needs. A shift in political and ideological emphasis would bring about a corresponding shift in historical narration.

What can be said about the audience of the royal inscriptions?

Throughout its entire history, the kings of Mesopotamia erected stelae to commemorate their outstanding military achievements. Shamshi-Adad I of Assyria, already in the nineteenth century BCE, set up a memorial monument in the Lebanon on the Mediterranean sea-coast, a feat repeated by several kings of Assyria throughout the centuries. Most of these monuments depict the king in the typical pose of adoration, with his right hand raised aloft, before the gods, represented by their divine symbols. The inscribed text runs across the front, over and across the figure, extending to both sides and often also to the back of the stela. Placed in prominent geographical locations or at the gates and palaces of conquered cities, such monuments were clearly designated for a local audience. Thus, a gigantic stela of Esarhaddon placed in Zenjirli, in south-eastern Anatolia, was set up "for the gaze of all (future) enemies to the end of

days."⁵⁹ A stela of Sargon II, set up on top of mount Ba'il-Hurri in Cyprus,⁶⁰ beyond the western limits of the Empire, was meant to proclaim the glory of its gods and Sargon's fame for ever after.⁶¹ The epilogues to these stelae speak explicitly of their audience: a future prince who would look upon the memorial stela, read it, anoint it, and pour out libations. A list of maledictions, addressed to those who might harm the monument, ensured its expected survival. Of course, there was hardly any chance that a future ruler in the mountains of Iran or on the isle of Cyprus would be able to read the contents of the Assyrian royal stela, but this was of no concern to the royal author.

This concern for a future reader was not limited to commemorative inscriptions. It is repeated in every building inscription deposited in a temple erected or repaired by a Mesopotamian king: foundation tablets, prisms, cylinders, and even on monumental stelae set up at entrances to temples. In all these cases, the audience is a future prince who might discover the document and is requested to respect and honour the work of his remote predecessor. Yet, at the same time, prominent and more immediate audience is implied: the gods in whose temples the commemorative inscriptions were set. Thus, for example, an inscription of Sennacherib describing his renovation of the temple of the god Ashur ends with a prayer: "Thou, foundation stela of Sennacherib, king of Assyria ... speak to god Ashur the following: With the land of Ashur and the temple of Esharra, may his offspring prosper, may his sons and grandsons abide among the human race for ever and ever."⁶² Only then does the text address the future princely reader of this text, demanding of him the standard request of respect for the monument.

Indeed, it could justifiably be argued that the gods were viewed as the primary audience of all the dedicatory-commemorative

texts, especially those which begin with an invocation to the major gods of Assyria, like the stela of Ashurnasirpal II, that of Shamshi-Adad V from Ninurta's temple at Nimrud, or the monoliths set up at Kurkh on the upper Tigris by Ashurnasirpal II and Shalmaneser III (which display no epilogue).⁶³

Similarly, commemorative stelae set up in foreign lands or stelae-shaped rock reliefs open with invocations to gods, starting with the god Ashur. The finest examples in this category are Tiglath-pileser III's stela from Iran and Sargon II's stela from Cyprus. Standing in the open in far-away lands, these monuments commemorate the achievements of the gods of Assyria performed through their emissary, the emperor, conveying the message of their might. The gods were the immediate and most obvious audience, even before the princely reader of the future who is addressed in the epilogues.

Another category of texts explicitly addressed to the gods, rather than merely invoking them in the prologue, are the reports written in the form of letters submitted by the king to the god Ashur at the completion of a major successful campaign.⁶⁴ Only a very few texts have survived in this genre, the best and most complete being Sargon's above-mentioned report of his campaign to Urartu in his eight regnal year,⁶⁵ which has a colophon bearing the name of its author, the chief royal scribe. The letter is addressed to Ashur, to "the gods and goddesses of destiny who dwell in the great temple of the city of Ashur," and to the city and its people. It is the only instance in ARI where the addressees also include the city and the people. This, coupled with the unique literary quality of this text, its attention to ethnographic detail and anecdotal material, led Leo Oppenheim to suggest that it was read in public before the free citizens of the city of Ashur, Assyria's ancient sacred capital.⁶⁶ In a posthumous publication,

Oppenheim suggested that a similar document, Esarhaddon's letter to the god reporting on his campaign against Shubria just south of Urartu, was likewise read aloud before the citizens of Ashur, this time not in order to bolster their self-pride or satisfy their worldly curiosity, but rather to warn them against any possible disloyalty or breach of their oath of allegiance to the king.⁶⁷ Oppenheim's thesis of the "wider audience" has gained recognition and is nowadays treated as fact, but it nevertheless remains only hypothetical. It could equally be argued that a much more circumscribed audience was involved, such as one of select courtiers or priests of Ashur's temple, and perhaps only the top echelon of these.

A possibility tempting to a modern person exposed to the media is that building inscriptions might have been read aloud to a large and varied contemporary audience before being placed at the foundation of the restored or newly-built edifice.⁶⁸ Autobiographical royal texts like the apology of Esarhaddon, describing his extraordinary ascension to the throne, or Ashurbanipal's report of his youth and education,⁶⁹ may also have been of no less interest to contemporaries than to the future princely reader. But there is no textual evidence that any such recitation actually took place. To be sure, a considerable proportion of the royal inscriptions reflect changes of policy or new policies, matters that were of deep concern to the governing elite in Assyria. Nevertheless, given the structure of the Assyrian monarchy and the absolute royal prerogative in all matters, the hypothesis of "public reading" is far from certain.

Moreover, the dividing line between author and audience is not clear, and it blurs altogether when we consider that the king, royal author though he was, did not, of course, compose the text by himself. Nevertheless, he must necessarily have been its first and primary audience as well as its sole

official author. We might envision a team of royal scribes, working and reworking the text of an inscription according to royal requirements. In this process, various versions would be tried and discarded. This experimental inner audience of scribes would have had to present its final version to the king or chief scribe for approval. Again, these are merely reasonable assumptions of a modern researcher; for the time being they can be no more than that.

We must ask, finally, about the relevance of the term "propaganda" to our topic. A modern textbook defines propaganda as "a deliberative and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate conditions and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist."⁷⁰ Its original sense, as first used in the "Congregation for the Propagation of Faith" established in 1622 by Pope Gregory XV, was to disseminate or promote particular ideas. Usage, however, "has rendered the term propaganda pejorative."⁷¹ This sinister connotation was typical in books on the Second World War, especially with reference to Nazi propaganda. A shift in meaning came with the studies of Harold Lasswell and others in the field of communication and political science,⁷² so that the term acquired more and more favourable overtones, until its expansion to include almost any symbolic expression of a given culture.⁷³ The inclusive signification of the term propaganda is not at all common among historians, and even less so among historians of ancient Assyria, especially as the very existence of public opinion and the public audience in Assyrian society is yet to be demonstrated.⁷⁴

I propose, then, to use the term in its more traditional and restrictive connotation. Significantly, in his seminal essay on propaganda in ancient Mesopotamia, composed for the first of the three-volume collection edited by Lasswell, Lerner and Speier,⁷⁵ J.J.

Finkelstein was critical of the common use of the term propaganda in Assyriological literature: "there is extant almost nothing at all emanating from the court chancery of any Mesopotamian ruler which we may rightfully classify as propaganda."⁷⁶ The following essay in the same volume, written by Leo Oppenheim, is notable for its complete avoidance of the use of the term propaganda. Oppenheim in his masterful essay describes the specific features of ARI as those of ceremonial writings rather than as messages meant for communication.⁷⁷

In what contexts, therefore, in the study of the ARI could we appropriately use the term propaganda?⁷⁸ I believe that we are fully justified in using the term in the context of outright political polemic. This kind of polemic is best exemplified in the ARI in the struggle between Sargon II of Assyria and the rival king of Babylonia, Marduk-apla-iddina II, better known by his garbled biblical name, Merodach-Baladan. Let me mention several dates. In 722/1, when the throne of Assyria passed to Sargon II (probably under irregular circumstances), Babylonia seceded under the Chaldean prince Merodach-Baladan, who, with the help of Elamite armies, defeated Assyria in battle and reigned as king of Babylonia for twelve years. It has been suggested⁷⁹ that a parity treaty was signed between the two countries, only to be abrogated unilaterally by Sargon, who attacked Merodach-Baladan in 710 and conquered Babylonia, thereby attaining the title of rightful king of Babylon. In his struggle with Merodach-Baladan, Sargon made a special effort to win over and obtain the goodwill of the clergy in the Babylonian temple-cities⁸⁰ and especially that of their citizens, who were the beneficiaries of extensive civic privileges (*kidin-nūtu*). In the course of these campaigns he reaffirmed these old privileges (the exemption of these cities from various kinds of taxation and from military service and cor-

vée), thereby assuring the support of the population, especially that of the city of Babylon.

In this political struggle, each side invoked propaganda-style claims to further its cause. In a cylinder inscription placed originally in the temple of Eanna in Uruk (biblical Erech) but found, strangely enough, in the excavations of Nimrud, Merodach-Baladan uses the following rhetoric:

At that time the great lord Marduk became angry with the land of Akkad ..., the evil enemy, the Subarian [a derogatory term for the Assyrians] ruled over the land of Akkad, until his days were fulfilled and the appointed time arrived. The great lord Marduk was appeased with the land of Akkad He looked around and saw Merodach Baladan, king of Babylon, the king who worships him ... to whom his hand pointed ... and said: "this is indeed the shepherd to gather the scattered flock." ... With the power of the great lord Marduk ... he smote the widespread host of the Subartu, smashed their weapons, ... and banished their footsteps from the land of Akkad.⁸¹

Sargon, for his part, wrote regarding the same events:

In the twelfth year my reign, Merodach-Baladan, king of the Chaldeans, broke the oaths sworn by the names of the great gods, and withheld his tribute. He brought to his side the king of Elam and all the inhabitants of the desert, and prepared for battle. For twelve years, against the will of the gods, he ruled over Babylon, the city of the lord of the gods. Marduk, the great lord, looked at the evil deeds of the Chaldean, whom he hated, and decided to deprive that one of royal sceptre and throne. Me, Sargon, the humble king, he selected truly among all the princes and made great my weapons to stop the progress of the wicked enemy, the Chaldean, from the land of Sumer and Akkad. At the command of Marduk, my lord, I gathered my camp and commanded [them] to march against the Chaldean, the wicked enemy.⁸²

This piece of rhetoric – or shall we use here the term propaganda – comes from Sargon's annals, incised upon stone slabs decorating the walls in his new capital of Dur-sharukin, Khorsabad, completed and inaugurated after the capture of Babylonia and the defeat of Merodach-Baladan. The similarity between the arguments of both protagonists is striking, and is usually attributed to the use of commonplaces in royal rhetoric. I would suggest, however, that Sargon's argument paraphrases in reverse the argumentation of Merodach-Baladan in the very cylinder inscription from Uruk found in Nimrud. Not only did Sargon plagiarize the Babylonian king's argument; he usurped the building enterprise at Eanna and removed the building-inscription that Merodach-Baladan had placed in the temple, replacing the Babylonian original with his own dedicatory cylinder, which was found and published some eighty years ago.³³ Entire passages were thus lifted intact from the Babylonian original and integrated within the newly phrased pious statements of Sargon.

To summarize, the texts we have been considering are, in general, expressions of royal political ideology. Though the king appears as their sole author, there must have been a wider circle of people responsible for their composition and execution. The royal scribes, surely, were not only instrumental in putting into writing the political ideology and policy of the monarch, but also contributed considerably to shaping it. The unseen audience of the ARI was the ever-present gods and the future princely reader. Their content also presumably had a natural and interested audience in the state elite, non-literate as well as literate. It was this corporate audience that would have understood their language, appreciated their literary value and their innovative nuances, and regarded itself as participating in the national ethos and the act which the texts

described. We may assume that, as in religious communities, this elite's bond of loyalty to the monarch would constantly have been reinforced by reiterating the royal ideology and its persuasive rhetoric.³⁴

Was this ongoing persuasion essential to the very statehood of Assyria, especially in its imperial, aggressive stage from the ninth to the seventh centuries? Can we imagine an empire functioning without royal inscriptions of the Assyrian type? The answer to the latter question is yes. Take, for example, the neo-Babylonian empire, short-lived but very effective. The neo-Babylonian emperors, especially the great conqueror Nebuchadnezzar II, left numerous royal inscriptions, mostly clay cylinders of various shapes. Their contents, however, are usually religious. The king describes his pious acts of restoring old temples or building new ones.³⁵ Never do we hear of his conquests, his relations with vassal countries, the quantity of tribute he exacted from them, and so on. Some of these were recorded in another, non-official genre, that of the detailed chronicles³⁶ which, in style and brevity, are very similar to the early annals of medieval Europe. Had we known Nebuchadnezzar II only from his royal inscriptions, he would have emerged as a pious ruler who did nothing but serve his gods. It is only from these chronicles, and of course, from the extra-Babylonian sources such as the Hebrew Bible and the Hellenistic historians, that Nebuchadnezzar emerges as one of the greatest conquerors of antiquity, ferocious, ruthless and very effective. Yet we have no evidence that he erected commemorative stelae in the conquered countries to celebrate and relate his achievements. The rubble left by the destruction of Ashkelon or Jerusalem, and probably many other cities – not to be rebuilt throughout most of the Neo-Babylonian period – served as eloquent testament of Babylonian supremacy. The only monu-

ments that Nebuchadnezzar set up were the rock inscriptions in Phoenicia,⁸⁷ where he joined the line of other great conquerors of the West who set their inscriptions in that very area. It goes without saying that Babylonia was no less literate than Assyria and that it possessed a no less literary-minded elite, but its tradition was entirely different. Like the kings of Babylonia, the Achaemenid emperors – who ruled from India to Nubia – did not feel the need to praise themselves in monuments set up in foreign lands. Their dominion was strikingly effective nonetheless.

It is only in Assyria that the royal inscription became such a symbolic element in the imperial system. Is this due to the overwhelmingly military character of the Assyrian empire, in which the royal power sought self-assertion and immediate acknowledgement? Can it be attributed to a highly developed historical consciousness? Whatever the case, we should bear in mind that it was specifically in the Assyrian empire that the literary elite of royal scribes rose to such prominence as to allow for the inclusion of the name of the chief scribe next to the king's own name in official king-lists. The works of these ancient authors, presented in the garb of royal self-praise, is a source of continuing interest for Assyriologists and other scholars, who, by joint effort, not only keep the Assyrian royal inscriptions alive but also perpetuate their fascination.

NOTES

¹ See Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* I (Stuttgart, 1894), cols. 2248-55, and W. Soltau, "Die Entstehung der *Annales maximi*," *Philologus* 55 (1895), 257-76; M. Gelzer, "Der Anfang römischer Geschichtsschreibung," *Hermes* 69 (1934), 46-55.

² A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (Locust Valley, 1975); idem, "Histories and Historians in the Ancient Near East: Assyria and Babylonia," *Orien-*

talia 49 (1980), 171-81.

³ Note that in medieval historiography, the usage is reversed: 'Annals' offer a laconic sequence of annual entries, whereas 'chronicles' aspire at narratives. Cf. the comments of Hayden White: "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," *Critical Inquiry* 7 (1980), 11-12.

⁴ A. J. Spalinger, *Aspects of Military Documents of the Ancient Egyptians* (New-Haven - London, 1982), 121-233; D. B. Redford, *Pharaonic King-Lists, Annals and Day-Books* (Mississauga, Ontario, 1986), 97-126.

⁵ H. G. Güterbock, "Hittite Historiography: A Survey," in H. Tadmor - M. Weinfeld (eds.), *History, Historiography and Interpretation* (Jerusalem, 1986), 21-35, with former literature.

⁶ By their function, these were 'building' or 'commemorative' inscriptions, though only a short portion of each text - the last section, which begins with the stereotyped phrase "at that time" - is devoted to the building enterprise (For the role of the king of Assyria as a builder of temples and palaces, see Sylvie Lackenbacher, *Le Roi Bâtitteur* [Paris, 1982]). This paper is concerned with the major 'celebrative' portion of the royal inscription, which begins with the epithets of the king and then proceeds to narrate his military achievements.

⁷ See R. S. Ellis, *Foundation Deposits in Ancient Mesopotamia* (New Haven, 1968), Chapters 4, 5, 7.

⁸ A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennia BC* (The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia. Assyrian Periods [= RIMA], vol. 1; Toronto, 1986); idem, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC*, I (RIMA, vol. 2; Toronto, 1991) and II (RIMA, vol. 3; Toronto, 1996).

⁹ R. Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons, Königs von Assyrien* (Graz, 1956); idem, *Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals* (Wiesbaden, 1996); A. Fuchs, *Die Inschriften Sargons II aus Khorsabad* (Göttingen, 1994); A selective edition of Sennacherib's inscriptions is being prepared by E. Frahm.

¹⁰ H. Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III, King of Assyria* (Jerusalem, 1994).

¹¹ M. Liverani, "Memorandum on the Approach to Historiographic Texts," *Orientalia* 42 (1973), 178-94; idem, "The Ideology of Assyrian Empire," in M. T. Larsen (ed.), *Power and Propaganda* (Copenhagen, 1979), 297-318; M. Fales, "A Literary Code in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: The Case of Ashurbanipal's Egyptian Campaigns," in M. Fales (ed.), *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: New Horizons* (= *ARINH*; Roma, 1981), 169-202; R. Gelio, "La délégation envoyée par Gyges, roi de Lydie. Un cas de propagande idéologique," in *ibid.*, 203-24; C. Zaccagnini, "An Urartian Royal Inscription in the Report of Sargon's Eighth Campaign," in *ibid.*, 259-95; idem, "The Enemy in Neo-Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: 'The Ethnographic Description,'" in H.-J. Nissen - J. Renger (eds.), *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn* (= XXV RAI; Berlin, 1982), 409-24; M. Fales, "The Enemy in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: 'The Moral Judgment,'" in *ibid.*, 425-35; Simonetta Ponchia, "Analogie, metafore e similitudini nella iscrizioni reali Assire: semantica e ideologia," *Oriens Antiquus* 26 (1987), 223-55; Fales, "Narrative and Ideological Variation in the Account of Sargon's Eighth Campaign," in M. Cogan - I. Eph'al (eds.), *Ah, Assyria ... Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern*

Historiography Presented to H. Tadmor (Scripta Hierosolymitana 33; Jerusalem, 1991) 129-47.

¹² H. Tadmor, "The Campaigns of Sargon II of Assy: A Chronological-Historical Study," *JCS* 12 (1958), 22-33 (I. The Dating by *palû*); M. Cogan - H. Tadmor, "Gyges and Ashurbanipal," *Orientalia* 46 (1977) 65-95; H. Tadmor, "History and Ideology in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions," in *ARINH*, 13-34; idem, "Autobiographical Apology in the Royal Assyrian Literature," in H. Tadmor - M. Weinfeld (eds.), *History, Historiography and Interpretation* (Jerusalem, 1983), 36-57; L. D. Levine, "Preliminary Remarks to the Historical Inscriptions of Sennacherib," in *ibid.*, 58-75; M. Cogan, "Omens and Ideology in the Babylonian Inscription of Esarhaddon," in *ibid.*, 76-87; idem, "A Plaidoyer on behalf of the Royal Scribes," in *Ah, Assyria ...*, 121-28; H. Tadmor, "Sennacherib's Campaign to Judah: Historical and Historiographical Considerations," *Zion* (1985), 65-80 (Hebrew); B. Oded, *War, Peace and Empire: Justification of War in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions* (Wiesbaden, 1992).

¹³ See P. Garelli, "La conception de la royauté en Assyrie," in Fales (ed.), *ARINH*, 225-58; M. Liverani, "Critique of Variants and the Titulary of Sennacherib," *ibid.*

¹⁴ A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions* (= *ARI*), II (Wiesbaden, 1976), § 540 (Ashurnasirpal II).

¹⁵ Numerous occurrences. See, for example, Grayson, *ARI* I, § 773 (Tukulti-Ninurta I); *ARI* II, §§ 13, 16, 19, 21, 30, 38 (Tiglath-pileser I); §§ 552, 557, 565, 573 etc. (Ashurnasirpal II); and cf. *CAD* D, 786. Cf. Oded, *War, Peace and Empire*, 155-57.

¹⁶ Borger, *Asarhaddon*, 99:46.

¹⁷ Grayson, *ARI* II, § 8ff.

¹⁸ A. T. Olmstead, "The Calculated Frightfulness of Ashur nasir apal," *JAOS* 38 (1918), 209-263.

¹⁹ Grayson, *ARI* II, §§ 536ff.

²⁰ D. D. Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib* (Chicago, 1924), 36:1-12: 41:7-10.

²¹ *ibid.*, 44:67ff.

²² "Creating a Political Climate: Literary Allusions to *Enuma Eliš* in Sennacherib's Account of the Battle of Halule," in H. Hauptmann and H. Waetzold (eds.), *Assyrien im Wandel der Zeiten* (Heidelberger Studien zum Alten Orient; Heidelberg, forthcoming).

²³ The key terms for the records of royal deeds are *litu* (pl. *litātu*) and *danānu*, might/victory, appearing mostly as a hendiadys, *kiššātu*, might, *qurdu*, valor (*CAD* K, 462^a; L, 222; Q, 318^b), and compound forms *litāt qurdiya*, *tanatti kiššūtiya* and the like (for *tanattu*, praise, see *AHW*, 1318^b). See also the material listed under *musarū*, an inscription (*CAD* M/II, 232-33), *narū* a monument, said also of a stone tablet (*N/I*, 366-67) and *šalmu*, lit. 'image'; a stela or a relief (*S*, 81-83).

²⁴ *RIMA*, vol. I, A.O.77.1, II, 158-62; cf. Grayson, *ARI* I, § 538. The key terms are: *epšēt qurdiya* and *tanatti lē'ūtiya*.

²⁵ See recently Oded, *War, Peace and Empire*, Chapters I, IX and pp. 169-75.

²⁶ Two of the most complete specimens of the extant epics of Assyrian kings are: a relatively well-preserved epic and masterful piece of royal propaganda describing a battle waged by Tukulti-Ninurta I against another king of Babylonia, edited by Peter Machinist (*The Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I. A Study in Middle Assyrian Literature*

[Yale University dissertation, 1978]; Foster, *Before the Muses*, I, 209-29), and a heroic poem celebrating a particular campaign of Tiglath-pileser I (*LKA* 63), edited recently by Joan Goodnick Westenholz and Victor Hurowitz ("LKA 63: A Heroic Poem in Celebration of Tiglath-pileser I's Muṣru-Qumanu Campaign," *JCS* 42 [1990], 1-49).

²⁷ Joan Goodnick Westenholz in Marianna E. Vogelzang and Herman L. J. Vanstiphout (eds.), *Mesopotamian Oral Literature. Oral or Aural?* (Lewiston, 1993), 146; B. Foster, *Before the Muses*, I (Bethesda, 1993), 249.

²⁸ *Heroic Poetry* (London, 1952, reprinted 1964).

²⁹ Compare the role of the poets at the court of Shulgi: J. Klein, "Royal Hymn of Shulgi, King of Ur," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 71/7 (1981), 21. According to B. Alster, J. Black and Joan Westenholz, the hymns of Shulgi were the product of collaboration between scribes and (possibly illiterate) singers. See Vogelzang and Vanstiphout (eds.), *Mesopotamian Oral Literature*, 45-50, 51-55, 145-48.

³⁰ See Tadmor in *ARINH*, 17.

³¹ Grayson, *ARI* II, §§ 8-63.

³² H. Rawlinson, F. Talbot, E. Hincks and J. Oppert, "The Inscription of Tiglath-pileser I, King of Assyria," *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* (Old Series) 18 (1857), 150-219.

³³ See most recently: M. De Odorico, *The Use of Numbers and Quantifications in the Assyrian Royal Inscriptions* (State Archives of Assyria Studies, III; Helsinki, 1995), 160-61.

³⁴ Grayson, *ARI*, II, § 42.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, § 45.

³⁶ As argued by E. Weissert in his paper: "Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph in a Prism of Ashurbanipal," (this volume, pp. 339-58).

³⁷ F. Thureau-Dangin, *Une relation de la huitième campagne de Sargon* (Paris, 1912).

³⁸ S. Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal, Part I, A: Introduction and Appendices* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1971), 6-10.

³⁹ A. K. Grayson, "Königslisten und Chroniken," *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* (= *RIA*), IV (1980-83), 119-20; For the section from Sennacherib to Ashurbanipal, see Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian Scholars. Part II: Commentary and Appendices* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1983), 448-49.

⁴⁰ Tadmor, in Fales (ed.) *ARINH*, 31-2.

⁴¹ Tadmor, in *History, Historiography and Interpretation*, 38-45.

⁴² Tadmor, "The Sin of Sargon," *Eretz Israel* V (1958), 150-63 (Hebrew; summarized in *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin* (= *SAAB*) 3 [1988], 28-31).

⁴³ Luckenbill, *Sennacherib*, 48:1-3; and see Liverani in *ARINH*, 225-58.

⁴⁴ See the titles in a text for 716/715: H. Winckler, *Die Keilschrifttexte Sargons*, I (Leipzig, 1889), 168:1-4, and an entirely new set of titles coined after the conquest of Babylonia: Fuchs, *Sargon*, 75:1-5; 190:1 - 192:12 and *passim*.

⁴⁵ See B. Landsberger, *Brief des Bischofs von Esagila an König Asarhaddon* (Amsterdam, 1965), 14-27; J. A. Brinkman, "Through A Glass Darkly: Esarhaddon's Retrospects on the Downfall of Babylon," *JAOS* 103 (1983), 35-42; Cogan, below n. 58; and more recently

Barbara N. Porter, *Images, Power, Politics: Figurative Aspects of Esarhaddon's Babylonian Policy* (Philadelphia, 1993), 75ff.

⁴⁶ *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars* (SAA X; Helsinki, 1993).

⁴⁷ Tadmor, "The Campaigns of Sargon II of Assur," *JCS* 12 (1958), 29, notes 59-60.

⁴⁸ K. Deller, "Assyrisches Sprachgut der Tukulti-Ninurta II," *Orientalia* 26 (1957) 268-72; "Zur sprachlichen Einordnung der Inschriften Aššurnasirpals II," *ibid.*, 144-56.

⁴⁹ D. J. Wiseman, "Assyrian Writing Boards," *Iraq* 17 (1955), 3-13.

⁵⁰ Grayson, "Assyria and Babylonia," *Orientalia* 49 (1980), 165-66.

⁵¹ L. D. Levine, *Two Neo-Assyrian Stelae from Iran* (Royal Ontario Museum, Art and Archaeology, Occasional Paper 23; Toronto, 1972), 41-45.

⁵² Tadmor and Levine, in Tadmor, *Tiglath-pileser III*, 94-110; 260-64.

⁵³ J. N. Postgate, "The Inscription of Tiglath-pileser III at Mila Mergi," *Sumer* 29 (1973), 47-59; Tadmor, *Tiglath-pileser III*, 110-16.

⁵⁴ Cf. Liverani, "Critique of Variants" (above, note 13), 230.

⁵⁵ See e.g. M. Cogan, "Ashurbanipal's Prism F: Notes on Scribal Techniques and Editorial Practices," *JCS* 29 (1977), 97-107.

⁵⁶ See L. D. Levine, "Manuscripts, Texts, and the Study of the Neo-Assyrian Royal Inscriptions," in Fales (ed.), *ARINH*, 49-70; J. Renger, "Neuassyrische Königsinschriften als Genre der Keilschriftliteratur - Zum Stil und zur Kompositionstechnik der Inschriften Sargons II von Assyrien," in K. Hecker - W. Sommerfeld (eds.), *Keilschriftliche Literaturen* (XXXII RAI; Berlin, 1986), 109-28; Pamela Gerardi, *Assurbanipal's Elamite Campaigns: A Literary and Political Study* (University of Pennsylvania, Ph. D. Dissertation, 1987); idem, "The Arab Campaigns of Aššurbanipal: Scribal Reconstruction of the Past," *SAAB* 6 (1992), 67-103.

⁵⁷ E.g., Levine, "Preliminary Remarks on the Historical Inscriptions of Sennacherib," in *History, Historiography and Interpretation*, 70-74. See also A. Spalinger, "Assurbanipal and Egypt: A Source Study," *JAOS* 94 (1974), 316-28.

⁵⁸ See Cogan, "Omens and Ideology in the Babylonian Inscription of Esarhaddon," in *History, Historiography and Interpretation*, 76-85.

⁵⁹ Borger, *Asarhaddon*, 99:52-53: *ana tabrât kiššat nâ-kiri ana šât ūmî*.

⁶⁰ For this reading of the toponym, see now Tadmor, "Some Notes on the Stele of Sargon II from Cyprus," *Eretz-Israel* 25 (1996), 286-89 (English summary, p. 99*).

⁶¹ Winckler, *Sargon*, 174-85.

⁶² Luckenbill, *Sennacherib*, 146:30-32.

⁶³ Accessible in Grayson, *ARI* II, §§ 615ff, 629ff; D. D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia* (= *AR*; Chicago, 1926-27), I, §§ 594ff, 713ff.

⁶⁴ R. Borger, "Gottesbrief," *RIA* III, 575-76.

⁶⁵ See above, n. 37.

⁶⁶ "The City of Assur in 714 B.C.," *JNES* 19 (1960), 133-47.

⁶⁷ "Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Empires," in H.

Lasswell, et al., *Propaganda and Communication in World History*, I (Honolulu, 1979), 124-35.

⁶⁸ See Barbara N. Porter, *Images, Power, Politics*, 112-13.

⁶⁹ R. Campbell Thompson, *The Prisms of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal* (London, 1931), 9-13; M. Streck, *Assurbanipal* (Vorderasiatische Bibliothek 7; Leipzig, 1916), II, 252-58; Th. Bauer, *Das Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals* (Leipzig, 1933), 82-89.

⁷⁰ G. S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (Beverly Hills, 1986), 16.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁷² H. D. Lasswell et al., *Language of Politics: Studies in Quantitative Semantics* (New York, 1949).

⁷³ See e.g., B. L. Smith, "Propaganda" in *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 12 (New York, 1958), 579-89 (with bibliography); K. Robins et al., in J. Hawthorn (ed.), *Propaganda, Persuasion and Polemic* (London, 1987), 7-11.

⁷⁴ See P. Garelli, "La propaganda royale assyrienne," *Akkadica* 27 (1982), 16ff; M. Liverani, *Prestige and Interest* (Padova, 1992), 28.

⁷⁵ *Propaganda and Communication in World History*, I-III (Honolulu, 1979-1981).

⁷⁶ Vol. I, 64.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁷⁸ We can safely use the term "propaganda" in the context of the psychological warfare practiced by the Assyrians, exemplified at its best by two texts: (a) the speech addressed by Rabshake, the chief cupbearer of Sennacherib, to Hezekiah, and to the people of Judah, as reported in II Kings 18:19-25, 28-35 and (b) a letter from the reign of Tiglath-pileser III, recording the address of an Assyrian envoy to the people of Babylon (H. W. F. Saggs, "The Nimrud Letters, 1952-Part I," *Iraq* 17 [1955], 23-24, 47-48). In both cases the rebellious capitals were surrounded by Assyrian troops. A pictorial representation of psychological warfare in a relief of Sargon II has been noted by Y. Yadin: *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands* (Jerusalem - Ramat-Gan, 1963), 320, 425; cf. also H. Tadmor, "On the Role of Aramaic in the Assyrian Empire," *Bulletin of the Middle Eastern Culture Center in Japan* V (Wiesbaden, 1991), 421-22.

⁷⁹ See Tadmor - Landsberger - Parpola, "The Sin of Sargon and Sennacherib's Last Will," *SAAB* 3 (1989), 49.

⁸⁰ As it is indicated by Sargon's new titles: Fuchs, *Sargon*, 32:4-5; 75:3-4 (cf. I. M. Diakonoff, "A Babylonian Political Pamphlet from about 700 B.C.," in *Studies Landsberger*, 348).

⁸¹ C. J. Gadd, "Inscribed Barrel Cylinder of Marduk-apla-iddina II," *Iraq* 15 (1953), 123-24:8-17.

⁸² Fuchs, *Sargon*, 135:254 - 137:263.

⁸³ A. T. Clay, *Yale Babylonian Texts*, I (New Haven, 1915), No. 38.

⁸⁴ Of special significance in this context are the recent studies of the Assyrian palace reliefs as an expression of royal ideology: Julian Reade, "Ideology and Propaganda," in Larsen (ed.), *Power and Propaganda*, 329-43 and Irene Winter, "Royal Rhetoric and the Development of Historical Narrative in Neo-Babylonian Reliefs," *Studies in Visual Communication* 7/2 (1981), 2-38; "The Program of the throne room of Ashurnasirpal II," in P. O. Harper - H. Pittman (eds.), *Essays on Near Eastern Art and Archaeology in Honor of C. K. Wilkinson* (New

York, 1983), 15-31; and "Art in Empire," in this volume pp. 359-81. John Malcolm Russell addressed the question of the function of the epigraphs on the palace reliefs in his Ph. D. dissertation and later in his book: *Sennacherib's Palace Without Rival at Nineveh* (Chicago, 1991), 22-33. Russell points out that those who frequented the palace (pp. 238-239) must have been influenced not only by the reliefs but also by the inscriptions, though many of them, surely, were unable to read them. In this connection, see further the important observations of P. Machinist ("Assyria and its Image in the First Isaiah," *JAOS* 103 [1983], 729-30), discussing the impact of the Assyrian imperial ideology upon conquered lands and client kingdoms.

⁸⁵ See P.-R. Berger, *Die neubabylonischen Königsinschriften* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1973), 236-318.

⁸⁶ Grayson, *Chronicles*, 99-102.

⁸⁷ F. H. Weissbach, *Die Inschriften Nebuchadnezzars II in Wâdi Brisa und am Nahr el-Kalb* (Leipzig, 1906).