

Languages, Peoples, and Power: Some Near Eastern Perspectives*



Marco Santini

Princeton University

ABSTRACT:

The paper addresses the question of multilingualism and linguistic diversity in the ancient Near East from an emic perspective, elucidating the significance of these themes in the political rhetoric of three Near Eastern rulers who evoke them in their inscriptions: Yariri of Karkamiš (early 8th century BC), Sargon II of Assyria (late 8th century BC), and Aššurbanipal of Assyria (7th century BC). I argue that in political rhetoric the themes of multilingualism and linguistic diversity served the purpose of describing the world order, mapping political power, and conceptualizing ethnicity.

KEYWORDS:

multilingualism, ethnicity, royal inscriptions, Neo-Hittite, Neo-Assyrian

1. MULTILINGUALISM AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY IN ANTIQUITY: LOOKING FOR EMIC PERSPECTIVES

The aim of this paper is to investigate ancient Near Eastern perspectives on foreign languages, linguistic diversity, and multilingualism and their historical and cultural significance. I focus on a selection of case studies from the first millennium BC, which share common features but reveal interesting differences upon closer scrutiny. I ask how the various actors involved viewed multilingualism, foreign languages, and linguistic diversity in the worlds in which they lived; what they thought of such phenomena, how they talked about them, and why they did so.

My research question stems from the need to approach the theme of linguistic interaction in antiquity — in its manifold manifestations — from an *emic* rather than *etic* perspective. This theme has received a great deal of attention and is approached from a variety of angles. Some studies focus on the various products of language contact, such as calques and loanwords, linguistic interference, code-switching, and

* This is a revised and extended version of the paper I gave at the conference *Sign, Speech, and Society in the Ancient Near East: 100 Years of Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Prague*, held at Charles University, Prague, 16–19 September 2019. I would like to thank the audience for their comments on that occasion. The present version has benefited from the observations and advice of Johannes Haubold (Princeton), Giulia Lentini (LMU Munich), and Poppy Tushingham (LMU Munich), to all of whom I express my sincere gratitude. Finally, I am grateful to Ronald Kim (Poznań) for improving my style. Needless to say, responsibility for any mistakes is my own.



translation strategies. Other studies address multilingual environments from a sociolinguistic perspective: language hierarchy, relationship between authors and audiences, and negotiation of power and identity are all issues that feature prominently in this approach to the topic. As has been variously emphasized, multilingualism and linguistic interaction play a significant role in the shaping of cultural, political, ethnic, and social identities. Also, one's ability to understand and/or speak more than one language is often, but not necessarily connected to multilingual environments: the sheer fact that several languages coexist in a given country or society does not *per se* prove that speakers living in that country or society are able to understand and/or speak more than one language, even though such environments are more likely to produce multilingual speakers. In this paper I refer to such environments as being characterized by “linguistic diversity,” whereas with “multilingualism” I refer to the actual ability of speakers to speak more than one language. All these approaches provide an *etic* perspective on the problem of linguistic interaction — that is, they represent *our* reading and interpretation of this phenomenon.¹ By contrast, it is less common to find reflections on multilingualism and linguistic diversity *as they were perceived* by those who produced the sources at our disposal — that is, attempts to provide an *emic* reading of them.

Reconstructing *emic* perspectives on multilingualism and linguistic diversity is not a trivial question, as it is crucial to the understanding of a given society's *mentalité*. An example of this approach can be found in the thought-provoking pages of Arnaldo Momigliano's *Alien Wisdom*. While investigating the attitude of the ancient Greeks towards foreign cultures, Momigliano emphasized their intrinsic lack of interest in learning foreign languages, thus elucidating the Greeks' own perspective on linguistic diversity and multilingualism. According to Momigliano, this feature distinguished them from their conquerors, the Romans. The latter's assimilating attitude towards the Greeks, which significantly included their willingness to learn the language of the conquered, fed into a specifically Roman conception of imperialism and contributed to the birth of their own literature.² This is not the venue to dis-

1 It would be pointless even to try to provide a representative list of works that engage with these problems. A combination of the various approaches, both for the Near East and the Classical world, can be appreciated e.g. in the contributions published in Briquel-Chatonnet 1996; Adams et al. 2002; Sanders 2006; Mullen and James 2012.

2 Cf. Momigliano 1975a: 1–21. Momigliano's take on the Greeks' linguistic “isolation” and its cultural implications is also exemplified in an article significantly entitled “The fault of the Greeks” (Momigliano 1975b), which appeared in the same year as *Alien Wisdom*. For the birth of Latin literature and the Greek models for its early works, see now Feeney 2016. The essence of the Romans' attitude is perhaps best condensed in the famous lines of Horace's *Epistula ad Augustum* (Hor. Ep. 2.1), esp. 156–157: *Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artis | intulit agresti Latio* (“Conquered Greece conquered her barbarian victor and brought arts in rustic Latium”) and 161–164: *serus enim Graecis admovit acumina chartis | et post Punica bella quietus quaerere coepit, | quid Sophocles et Thespis et Aeschylus utile ferrent. | temptavit quoque rem si digne vertere posset* (tr. H.R. Fairclough: “For not till late did the Roman turn his wit to Greek writings, and in the peaceful days after the Punic wars he began to ask what service Sophocles could render, and Thespis and Aeschylus. He also made essay,

cuss whether Momigliano was right or not,³ but rather to reflect on the significance of his observations. Uncovering *emic* perspectives may enable the modern historian to approach multilingualism and linguistic diversity in ancient societies not only as *Realien* to be observed from the outside, but as historical phenomena in all their human dimension, which involve a variety of actors, diverse receptions, and different perspectives in dialogue or contrast.

In this paper, I present three case studies, each focusing on testimonies left by important political actors of the first millennium BC: Yariri of Karkamiš (early 8th century BC), Sargon II of Assyria (late 8th century BC), and Aššurbanipal of Assyria (7th century BC). In order to elucidate their perspectives on multilingualism and linguistic diversity, I also draw on material from other Near Eastern cultures. In the final section of the paper, I compare these perspectives and discuss what we may learn from them in terms of *mentalité*.

2. MULTILINGUALISM FROM YARIRI'S PERSPECTIVE

For my first case study I begin with a passage from a Hieroglyphic Luwian inscription authored by Yariri, regent of Karkamiš in the early 8th century BC on behalf of Kamani, son of the previous ruler Astiruwa (KARKAMIŠ A15b, §§ 19–22):⁴

- § 19] URBS-si-ia-ti | SCRIBA-li-ia-ti zú+ra/i-wa/i-ni-ti(URBS) | SCRIBA-li-ia-ti-i a-sú+ra/i(REGIO)-wa/i-na-ti(URBS) | SCRIBA-li-ia-ti-i ta-i-ma-ni-ti-ha(URBS) SCRIBA-li-ti
- § 20 12-ha-wa/i-' | "LINGUA"-la-ti-i-na (LITUUS)u-ni-ha
- § 21 |wa/i-mu-u ta-ni-ma-si-na REGIO-ni-si-i-na-' | INFANS-ni-na | ("VIA")ha+ra/i-wa/i-ta-hi-lá/i-ti-i CUM-na ARHA(-)sa-ta (DOMINUS)na-ni-i-sa á-mi-i-sa | "LINGUA"-la-ti SUPER+ra/i-'
- § 22 ta-ni-mi-ha-wa/i-mu (*273)wa/i+ra/i-pi-na (LITUUS)u-na-nu-ta

...] in the urban writing, in the Tyrian writing, in the Assyrian writing and in the Taymanite writing, and I knew twelve languages. My lord gathered for me the son of every country by means of traveling for the sake of language, and he made me learn every tool (*vel* weapon).

whether he could reproduce [*vertere*, lit. 'turn, translate'] in worthy style.") From a typological perspective, Rome's interaction with Greek culture has a parallel in Assyria's interaction with Babylonian culture: Babylon's (the conquered) perceived cultural superiority elicited Assyria's (the conqueror) response in terms of confrontation and appropriation. For a discussion of this problem (Assyria's "Babylonian Problem"), see Machinist 1984/85.

³ See Salmeri 2006 for a critical reading of *Alien Wisdom*.

⁴ Hawkins 2000: 130–133; text revised based on *ACLT*; tr. modified (see text and notes). [See also the Addendum at the end of the paper.]



From this text we gather three pieces of information. The first, which is unfortunately fragmentary, concerns four types of writing or scripts: each of them is indicated by the noun SCRIBA-li- (*tuppallili-* “script”) and further qualified by means of an adjective. In the first case we have the “urban writing,” i.e. the hieroglyphic script used at Karkamiš,⁵ whereas in the following instances the qualifying element is an ethnic adjective: thus the “Tyrian writing,” i.e. that which we may call a “Phoenician” script;⁶ the “Assyrian writing,” i.e. the cuneiform script; and the “Taymanite writing,” the identification of which is debated — possibly an Aramaean script or (less likely?) some script used in Arabia.⁷ Due to the fragmentary state of the text, the exact interpretation of the sentence is unclear, but the most widely accepted one is suggested by the following clause, which also contains our second piece of information: after enumerating the four scripts, the regent claims knowledge of twelve languages (*lalatti-*). Therefore, the preceding clause can be reasonably interpreted, in a similar vein, as vaunting the ruler’s knowledge of those four writing systems.⁸ Finally, from the inscription we learn that, together with martial training,⁹ language training must have been an essential element of Yariri’s education. Although the exact interpretation of § 21 is also controversial,¹⁰ we infer that Yariri here recognizes his lord’s efforts in pro-

5 See an alternative reading in *ACLT*: x] (URBS)-*si-ia-ti* “Karkamisean(?)” implying loss of the toponym stem in the break before URBS, here interpreted as determinative; cf. analogously the following *a-sú+ra/i* (REGIO)-*wa/i-na-ti* (URBS). Either way we interpret this word, the sense is not affected, as the “urban” script would be indeed the “Karkamisean” script. Cf. also Starke 1997: 388.

6 For the reading *zú+ra/i-wa/i-ni-ti* (URBS) as identifying the “Tyrian” script, see now Yakubovich 2010: 66–67 n. 58 and Simon 2012 with previous lit.

7 It is possible that the adjective *Taima(n)ni(ya)-* derives from the name of the Aramaean community of the Temannû, located in upper Mesopotamia, and that the script it indicates is therefore an Aramaic one: so e.g. Starke 1997: 390–392; Hawkins 2000: 133; Rollinger 2006: 78; Niehr 2014: 2. On the Temannû, see Lipiński 2000: 109–117 and Younger 2016: 230–242. Alternatively, *Taima(n)ni(ya)-* is interpreted either as referring to the oasis of Taima in Arabia (Greenfield 1991: 180–181) or as reflecting a Semitic root meaning “south” (Younger 2016: 242): either way, in this view the script alluded to would be an Arabian one.

8 See e.g. the restored translation proposed by Starke (1997: 382–383): “[Ich konnte in 4 Schriften schreiben, und zwar] in der städtischen Schrift, in der phönizischen Schrift, in der assyrischen Schrift und in der aramäischen Schrift.”

9 For the interpretation of § 22 with (*273)*wa/i+ra/i-pi-na* (*warpi-*) meaning “tool” or “weapon,” and thus likely referring to the martial training of Yariri, see Yakubovich 2019, esp. 555.

10 The main problem lies with the interpretation of the verb *ARHA(-)sa-*. The translation offered above is based on that proposed by Hawkins (1975: 150–151), who tentatively suggests to see in *ARHA-sa-* a cognate form of Hitt. *irhai-* (see Kloekhorst 2008: 245 for the meanings “to go down the line, to circulate, to make the rounds, to treat in succession, to list, to enumerate, to conclude”). A slightly modified version is offered in Hawkins 2000: 131 (“My lord *gathered* every country’s son to me by wayfaring concerning language”). See now also Melchert 2013: 309–310 in support of *ARHA-sa-* as *irhasa-* in the sense “arrayed (for me),” comparing Empire Luwian *irhatta-* “series, row.” For alternative translations,

viding him with resources for language training from any possible source. His “lord” is likely to be identified with Astiruwa, previous ruler of Karkamiš,¹¹ who saw to it that “the son of every country” — that is, any foreigners, and thus speakers of any other language — would reach Karkamiš in order to provide such training.¹²

These lines have been interpreted as featuring the common *topos* of the “cultivated ruler” and as expressing Yariri’s qualifications for his task of regent. Thus, Yariri has been compared to the Assyrian king Aššurbanipal (668–631 BC), who emphasizes his abilities to read and decipher difficult texts in Sumerian and Akkadian (see further below), or to the Ur III king Šulgi (2094–2047 BC in the middle chronology), author of similar statements.¹³ On the other hand, Yariri’s boast is also contextualized within the framework of the regent’s international connections: in this view, his knowledge of languages and writing systems is seen as purely functional for diplomatic purposes.¹⁴ In my opinion the two interpretations are by no means mutually exclusive, as both factors play a role in Yariri’s self-portrait. In this respect, the passage can be compared to another inscription in which Yariri proudly states that, on account of his justice, the gods made his name — that is, his fame — rise to heaven and spread in foreign countries and among foreign populations (KARKAMIŠ A6, §§ 2–7):¹⁵

- § 2 *a-wa/i* [x]-<x>-zi [á]-ma-[za] [á-lá/í]-ma-[z]a || *á-mi-ia-ti-i* |IUDEX-na-ti (DEUS)TONITRUS-hu-za-sa (DEUS)SOL-wa/i-za-sa-ha (“CAELUM”)ti-pa-si | (“PES₂”)hi-nu-wa/i-ta-’
- § 3 *á-ma-za-ha-wa/i-ta á-lá/í-ma-za* DEUS-ni-zi FINES+HI-ti-i-na | (“PES₂”)hi-nu-wa/i-tá
- § 4 *wa/i-ma-lá/í* |zi-i-na (“MÍ.REGIO”)mi-za+ra/i(URBS) |AUDIRE.MI-ti-i-ta
- § 5 *zi-pa-wa/i+ra/i* |*475-la(URBS)-’ |AUDIRE+MI-ti-i-ta ||
- § 6 *zi-i-pa-wa/i-’ mu-sá-za*(URBS) *mu-sà-ka-za*(URBS) *su+ra/i-za-ha*(URBS) AUDIRE+MI-ti-i-ta
- § 7 *wa/i-ta ta-ni-mi* REX-ti SERVUS-la/i-ti-i-zi |a-ta (BONUS)wa/i-sa₅+ra/i-nu-ha

... my name because of my justice Tarhunzas and the Sun God spread out in heaven, and my name the gods spread out abroad, and on the one hand they heard

see Starke 1997: 383 (“Anlässlich von Reiseunternehmungen hatte mir mein Herr wegen der (erforderlichen) Sprachen(kenntnisse) den Sohn eines jeden Landes zur Verfügung gestellt”); Yakubovich 2012: 333 (“My lord diverted to me away from travelling the son of every country for the sake of language”); Payne 2012: 87 (“By travelling, my lord raised a son of every country for me regarding language”); Payne 2015: 137 (“Mein Herr sammelte durch Reisen für mich ein Kind aus jedem Land (ein) für Sprachzwecke”).

11 Cf. Hawkins 2000: 133.

12 Payne (2015: 137) suggests that Yariri had been trained as a scribe and counselor of the king and that he was then appointed as regent (also) in virtue of this education. Herboldt (2005: 98) argues that the title SCRIBA, often found in combination with other official titles in Empire seals, was also possibly used in a broader sense as a mark of literacy.

13 Cf. Hawkins 1975: 150 and Greenfield 1991: 178 with refs.

14 So e.g. Starke 1997: 387–388; cf. also Bryce 2012: 95.

15 Hawkins 2000: 123–128; text revised based on ACLT; tr. modified (see text and notes).



it (i.e. my name) in Egypt, and on the other hand they heard it in Babylon(ia), and again they heard (it) among the Musa, the Muska, and the Sura.¹⁶ And I treated favorably the subjects of every king.¹⁷

If we combine these claims, we may better appreciate the ideological significance of multilingualism in the eyes of the regent of Karkamiš. On the level of self-celebration, §§ 2–6 of KARKAMIŠ A6 unfold and qualify at length the traditional *topos* of the ruler being reputed in the East and West, launched, incidentally, at § 1 of this very inscription.¹⁸ At § 7 the text alludes to Yariri's good manners with regard to the subjects of every (foreign) king, that is, with regard to foreigners who visited Karkamiš, be they ambassadors or people who traveled there in other capacities (visitors, merchants, craftsmen, practitioners of various activities, etc.).¹⁹ Yariri's claim to an international reputation thus rests on the number, intensity, and success of his diplomatic contacts as well as on the good treatment that foreigners received in Karkamiš. It is in such situations that interlingual and intercultural communication is put to the test. We come back, then, to KARKAMIŠ A15b. Far from being purely a statement of skill-

16 The interpretation of *mu-sá-za*(URBS) *mu-sà-ka-za*(URBS) *su+ra/i-za-ha*(URBS) as plural datives (*Musanz Muskanz Suranz=ha*) with a locative meaning “in, among” (*scil.* these populations) is the most widely accepted. Starke (1997: 382–383) reads the three sequences as ethnonyms in the nom./acc. neuter plural (*Musazza Muskazza Surazza=ha*, with appurtenance suffix *-zza-*) and interprets them as used adverbially to indicate the languages of the respective populations (so “auf Lydisch, auf Phrygisch und auf Phönizisch” in his translation). However, such specific usage is unparalleled in HLuw., and the parallelism in meaning and structure of § 6 with §§ 4–5 favors the interpretation as datives (I thank Zs. Simon for discussing this question with me). Note also that in the whole passage the only country which can be identified with certainty is *Mizra-*, Egypt. For the other countries or populations different proposals have been advanced: the reader may find arguments in favor or against the various proposals in Starke 1997; Rollinger 2006; Simon 2012; Weeden 2017: 721–723. In brief, **475-la*(URBS) is most commonly interpreted as Babylon(ia) (**Babila-*), but some read it as Urartu (**Bijanila-*); the Musa have been interpreted as the Mysians or the Lydians; the Muska (Ass. *Muški*) are usually believed to be the Phrygians; and the Sura have been interpreted as Assyrians, Urartians, or Cappadocians (Starke's “Phoenicians” is no longer tenable: cf. Yakubovich 2010: 66–67 n. 58 and Simon *loc. cit.*).

17 For this translation and interpretation, see Yakubovich 2002: 201. The dative *ta-ni-mi REX-ti*, lit. “for every king,” should be understood in the framework of a split possessive construction (see details *ibid.* 192–194).

18 KARKAMIŠ A6 § 1: |EGO-*wa/i-mi-i'i-a+ra/i-ri+i-i-sa* ... (“OCCIDENS”) *i-pa-ma-ti-i* (DEUS. ORIENS) *ki-sà-ta-ma-ti-i* |PRAE-*ia* |AUDIRE+*MI-ma-ti-mi-i-sa* ... (“I am Yariri [other epithets], the one heard of from the West and the East [other epithets]”).

19 See again Yakubovich 2002: 201 for the interpretation of this clause. The alternative possibility discussed by Yakubovich (“for every king I made the subjects obedient”) seems to me unlikely due both to context and general meaning. Yakubovich notes that the term “subjects” may strictly refer to the ambassadors of the countries mentioned in the preceding clauses, but I think it can well be understood in a more general sense (hence my broader interpretation). For a classical perspective on how this kind of mobility may be understood, the reader may refer to the pages of Burkert 1992.



fulness, Yariri's multilingual training should be understood as shaping the image of the good ruler *also* in that it represents a metaphor for the ruler's ability to engage in a network of international relations, as well as, more generally, in a multiethnic and multicultural environment. In this line of reasoning, it is of little importance to verify the plausibility of Yariri's words:²⁰ our focus should be on the ruler's view of the world and on his conception of rulership as participation in international networks. Knowing the languages and the writing systems of others is key, if not to world domination, then certainly to success on the international stage.

The *topos* of the cultivated, skilled ruler as well as that of the ruler's name (i.e. fame) reaching the four quarters of the world are profoundly interconnected, and one complements the other. While it may be objected that the two *topoi* appear in two different and not necessarily related inscriptions, it is difficult to deny that this type of court rhetoric and political discourse was also carefully constructed by means of literary devices involving *variatio* and intertextuality. The result is that each inscription is, indeed, a piece of its own, but forms part of a coherent political discourse. Thus, in the light of his international reputation, the ruler's boast of linguistic competence sounds like a strong political claim: his linguistic skills are a proof of his sagacity and, at the same time, a signal of his importance on the international scene, whose communicative networks are fully in the ruler's hands.²¹ By associating an ethnonym with each of the foreign scripts he masters, and by naming individually the countries in which he enjoyed renown, Yariri draws a sort of world map of the well-connected ruler. The reception of his rule, we can probably assume, was broadly favorable: under Yariri, Karkamiš experienced one of its most prosperous and peaceful periods, which suggests that the regent successfully pursued a policy of extending networks of connectivity rather than embarking on military expansion.²² Yariri's claim in KARKAMIŠ A6 that he treated favorably the subjects of other kings makes good sense within this framework. On the other hand, the scripts mentioned in KARKAMIŠ A15b — the Tyrian (Phoenician), the Assyrian (cuneiform), and the Taymanite, especially if the latter refers to an Aramaic script — represent, together with the "urban" hieroglyphic script of Karkamiš, essentially all the main writing systems employed for official or commercial purposes in the geopolitical context in which Karkamiš was situated.²³ Finally, the same inscription emphasizes Astiruwa's

20 For such attempts cf. Greenfield 1991: 179, following suggestions by R. Stefanini and A. Millard (n. 24), and Starke 1997: 387.

21 The ideological link between the two inscriptions might suggest another interpretation for the fragmentary § 19 in A15b, whereby the series of ablatives would indicate in which scripts, meaning in the inscriptions or writings of which peoples the ruler's name was heard of, constituting therefore a claim to international reputation comparable to what we find in A6, rather than a statement of wisdom and skillfulness. There are no compelling objections to this view, but since the lexicon of language and writing in A15b seems to be coherently employed in a section that is also ideologically coherent in presenting the individual skills of the ruler and his training, I find this alternative interpretation less likely.

22 Cf. Bryce 2012: 94–97.

23 Cf. Starke 1997: 389 & 392.



efforts in gathering the “sons of every country”: this expression identifies foreigners as speakers of foreign languages, and presents this multicultural, multilingual, and multiethnic geopolitical context in a very positive light. Each “son” of a foreign country would represent their respective language in the linguistic pluralism of Karkamiš.²⁴ It is worth emphasizing that here ethnicities and languages are implicitly understood as overlapping notions: I will return to this concept while discussing my next case studies.

To conclude, let us not understate how important it was for rather small political entities like Karkamiš, in a fragmented geopolitical scenario such as that of the first half of the first millennium BC, to establish successful diplomatic relations with as many partners as possible. Historians of the Greek world in the Hellenistic and Roman periods have plenty of evidence to make similar claims for those ages: sources abound and enable them to observe in great detail the efforts put by each city-state into its own diplomatic infrastructure.²⁵ It is not far-fetched to imagine that Yariri’s inscriptions imply similar preoccupations. The lack of internal evidence for the diplomatic activity of the so-called Neo-Hittite polities should not prevent us from reaching these conclusions, especially as intense activity of the sort with regard to (late) 8th-century Anatolia is documented indirectly by Neo-Assyrian sources.²⁶ If we wish to decode the lines of KARKAMIŠ A15b in a more concrete fashion, we may hypothesize that those that Astiruwa gathered from every country for the sake of Yariri’s training also served as official interpreters or multilingual messengers. An 8th-century inscription from the Yunus cemetery of Karkamiš, which attests to the existence of a professional category of interpreters (*tara/i-ku-ma-mi-zi*),²⁷ confirms that the diplomatic infrastructure of Karkamiš included individuals working in such capacity.

3. FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY FROM SARGON II'S PERSPECTIVE

My second case study focuses on a passage from a cylinder inscription of the Assyrian king Sargon II (721–705 BC), which is widely cited as being representative of Assyrian imperial rhetoric. The context is that of the foundation of the new im-

²⁴ Cf. Hawkins 1975: 151.

²⁵ The literature on this topic is endless. For the present purposes, suffice it to mention Jones 1999 for the theme of kinship between communities as one of the most extensively employed diplomatic strategies in the Greek and Roman worlds, and Ma 2003 for the context of peer-polity interaction in which this type of diplomacy developed. For a comprehensive study of Greek diplomacy more generally, see Giovannini 2007.

²⁶ Cf. e.g. the various diplomatic networks in which the polities of central Anatolia engaged by the late 8th century (documented by SAA 1: 1), the Assyrian dealings with the king of Arpad (SAA 1: 2) and with embassies from Kummuh bringing tribute (SAA 1: 33), and so on.

²⁷ YUNUS: ed. pr. Peker 2014.

perial capital Dūr-šarru-kīn, modern Khorsabad (*RINAP* 2: Sargon II 43, 72–74; my translation):²⁸

ba-'u-lat ar-ba-'i lišānu(EME) *a-ḫi-tu at-mé-e la mit-ḫur-ti a-ši-bu-te šadê*(KUR)^e
 ù *eršet*i(KUR) *mal ir-te-'u-ú nūr*(ZÁLAG) *ilāni*(DINGIR.MEŠ) *bēl*(EN) *gim-ri | ša*
i-na zi-kir^d*a-šur bēli*(EN) *-ia i-na mé-tel ši-bir-ri-ia áš-lu-la pa-a 1-en ú-šá-áš-kin-ma*
ú-šar-ma-a qé-reb-šu | mārē(DUMU.MEŠ) *māt*(KUR) *aš-šur*^{ki} *mu-du-te i-ni ka-la-*
ma a-na šu-ḫu-uz ši-bit-te pa-laḫ ili(DINGIR) ù *šarri*(LUGAL) ^{lú}*ak-li* ^{lú}*šá-pi-ri ú-ma-*
'e-er-šú-nu-ti

Peoples of the four quarters (of the world), of foreign language and speech without correspondence, dwellers of mountain and lowland — as many as the light of the gods (i.e. Šamaš), the lord of all, shepherds — whom at the command of Assur, my lord, by the power of my scepter I carried off, (all those) I unified and settled inside it (i.e. in Dūr-šarru-kīn). Assyrians, experts in everything, I dispatched to them as overseers and superintendents in order to teach them correct behavior and reverence of the god and the king.

The conquered peoples who would settle in the new capital are described, literally, as peoples “of foreign language” (*lišānu aḫītu*) and of “speech (vel words) with no correspondence” (*atmê lā mithurti*).²⁹ The latter expression reinforces the image of linguistic “otherness” of the conquered populations, but also emphasizes the fact that the coexistence of multiple languages gives way to a scenario of confusion, lack of harmony, and impossibility of mutual understanding.³⁰ As is evident, the image evoked in this passage of foreign languages and linguistic diversity is on the whole not a positive one. Let us try to understand why this is so and what kind of mental imagery is conveyed by these themes.

28 The same passage occurs with minor variants in two more inscriptions from Khorsabad: a wall slab (*RINAP* 2: Sargon II 8, 49–53) and a human-headed bull colossus (*RINAP* 2: Sargon II 9, 92–97).

29 *CAD* s.v. *mithurtu* mng. 2; cf. Fuchs 1994: 296: “mit Sprachen ohne jede Übereinstimmung.” Alternatively, but in my opinion less likely, “uncouth speech” as per *CAD* s.v. *la* mng. 2'. As the word *mithurtu* in other instances clearly has the meaning “conflict” (*CAD* s.v. *mithurtu* mng. 1 and see further below), for this and similar passages *CAD* proposes an alternative reading *mit-ḫar-ti* with *lā mitharti* meaning “with no correspondence” but drawing on the meaning “square” of the word *mithartu* (cf. again *CAD* s.v. *mithurtu* mng. 2). However, Prof. G. Frame (pers. comm.) kindly mentions to me that *mithurtu* can still be safely interpreted in the sense of “correspondence” based on the meaning “to be of equal size, to agree with” of the Gt-stem of *maḫāru* (*mithuru*), thus fitting the context. All in all, it seems that the word *mithurtu* can express both faces of the “encounter” of opposing forces, that is, either “harmony, correspondence” or “conflict, opposition” between them. See further below for other cases.

30 Cf. Liverani 2017: 231, with the following translation of the Sargon passage: “Genti delle quattro regioni, di linguaggio alieno, dalle espressioni intraducibili.”



This text makes use of a common *topos* in Assyrian royal literature whereby order is restored or established anew by the action of the Assyrian king.³¹ Accordingly, the stage of disorder is the one preceding the conquest of the peoples of the four quarters, and is significantly described with emphasis on the linguistic otherness (*lišānu aḥītu*) and the contrasting speeches (*atmē lā mithḥurti*) of the various populations. It should be noted that the two concepts of “language” and “speech” are combined in this description, showing that they are understood as intrinsically related and both functional to the characterization of the various peoples. In this passage — just as in many others throughout Assyrian annalistic literature — the new order established by the king is summarized by the expression *pā ištēn ušaškin*. The idiom *pā ištēn šušunu* is based on a metaphor drawn from speech- or language-related imagery: its literal translation would approximately read “to make of one mouth.”³² In idiomatic usage, the expression means “to make agree,” “to make consent,” “to make of one mind,” “to make act in unison.”³³ In political contexts like that of the Sargon passage, where it is used to indicate the establishment of a new order after Assyrian conquest, the phrase often features as a variant of *ki ištēn bêlu*, “to rule as one, unitarily.”³⁴ The purpose of these idioms is to convey the general sense of “unification” of the conquered populations under Assyrian rule: for this reason, some authors render the expression *pā ištēn šušunu* more simply as “to unite, unify,” or, in a more technical fashion, “to impose unified command,” “to subdue to one authority,” or the like.³⁵ However, there is no marked contrast between these two main nuances: after all, from the point of view of the Assyrian king, “to unify” the conquered populations means to impede dissent — that is, uprising — among the subjects and reduce them to obedience. We can read the expression *pā ištēn ušaškin* in this way. The various languages and speeches can be seen,

31 For the binary opposition between disorder and order in Assyrian royal ideology, see Liverani 1973: 186–188 & 2017: 110–111; Machinist 1993: 84–91.

32 So e.g. Younger 1998: 224; cf. Liverani 2017: 162 “stabilire una sola bocca” for *pā ištēn šakānu*, but see below for a discussion of the idiomatic meaning.

33 See CAD s.v. *pū* A mng. 4 and s.v. *šakānu* mng. 5a (*pū* d). As can be seen from the examples cited in CAD, such nuances can also be expressed by various combinations of *pū* and *ištēn*, which together express the general idea of “agreement,” with verbs other than *šušunu* (e.g. *turru*). As an equivalent variant of *pā ištēn* we may find *pā ēda šušunu*. See further below for a similar expression (*kīma ištēn šume tuštēšer*) in a couple of bilingual hymns to Šamaš, conveying the same idea.

34 Discussion and examples in Liverani 2017: 205–206.

35 Among the various translations of this expression see e.g., RIMA 1: A.0.78.23, 83 (Tukulti-ninurta I): “bring under one command”; RIMA 2: A.0.87.1, vi 46 (Tiglath-pileser I): “subdue to one authority”; RINAP 1: Tiglath-pileser III 5, 11: “unite.” As for the Sargon Cylinder passage, see e.g. Fales 2018: 475 “amalgamate,” and cf. Liverani 2017: 162–164 for further discussion. I prefer the translation “to unite, unify” as it conveys a broader range of nuances; see further below. G. Frame in RINAP 2: Sargon II 43, 73 translates the Sargon passage “I made act in concert,” adopting the general idiomatic meaning of the expression (see above).

accordingly, as a metaphor for the dissonance and disorder that precede the Assyrian king's call to obedience and unification.³⁶

It appears thus that the ideas of consent, order, and unification overlap and are conveyed by a complex combination of language-related images, whether in concrete or abstract nuances.³⁷ The association between these ideas and this imagery is not only a device of Assyrian royal rhetoric: on the contrary, it has profound literary echoes throughout the Near East. Here I discuss three examples which share attributes with the Sargon Cylinder passage and help cast light on its language-related imagery. The first comes from Nudimmud's incantation in the Sumerian story of Enmerkar, king of Unug/Sumer, and the Lord of Aratta, which was part of a cycle originated in the Ur III period (2112–2004 BC), although its extant exemplars, especially from Nippur, mainly date to the Isin-Larsa period (2025–1763 BC).³⁸ Here the coexistence of conflicting languages is explicitly seen as a sign of disorder and disagreement (*Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, ll. 141–155 of the composite text):³⁹

On that day the lands of Šubur and Hamazi, as well as twin-tongued (eme ḥa-mun) Sumer — great mound of the power of lordship — together with Akkad — the mound that has all that is befitting — and even the land Martu, resting in green pastures, yea, the whole world of well-ruled people, will be able to speak to Enlil in one language (eme 1-am₃)! For on that day, for the debates between lords and princes and kings shall Enki, for the debates between lords and princes and kings, for the debates between lords and princes and kings, shall Enki, Lord of abundance, Lord of steadfast decisions, Lord of wisdom and knowledge in the Land, expert of the gods, chosen for wisdom, Lord of Eridug, change the tongues in their mouth, as many as he once placed there, and the speech of mankind shall be truly one (eme nam-lu₂-ulu₃ 1 i₃-me-[am₂])!

In this text the theme of linguistic diversity serves as a metaphor for disagreement, dissent, and lack of unification (and thus of order). By contrast, linguistic uniformity is a metaphor for agreement, consent, and unification (and thus order); hence the wish that the whole of humanity and the multi-tongued universe speak in a single

36 Cf. Fales 2018: 476, who sees the different “speeches” of the conquered peoples in the Sargon Cylinder as “non-homogeneous thought-patterns, which henceforth are to be annulled and blended in a unitary and uniform ideology of fealty to the new Assyrian masters.”

37 The overlapping of these notions is best seen when the *pû ištēn* metaphor is used with reference to coalitions of rebels or enemies in general: e.g. *RIMA* 1: A.0.78.1, iii 86 (Tukulti-ninurta I): *pû 1-en mi-it-ḥa-ri-iš*, “(All the land of the Šubaru) ... had united itself under one command,” meaning they united, coalesced, or acted in concert (to rebel).

38 For a historical-literary introduction to the Enmerkar and Aratta cycle, see Vanstiphout 2003: 1–15.

39 The translation provided here is that of Vanstiphout 2003: 65. For the debate on verbal tenses, see *ibid.* 93–94 n. 19.



language (Sumerian, in the ideal world of Enmerkar).⁴⁰ The structure of the passage allows the reader to disentangle the various metaphors conveyed by the theme of “language” (Sum. *e me*). In the first segment (lines 141–146: “On that day ... will be able to speak to Enlil in one language!”) the theme of language unification (line 146: *e me 1-a m₂*) rounds off a list of lands and peoples: linguistic diversity signifies population diversity, and the theme of unification should be ideologically understood not simply as linguistic unification, but also as unification of peoples and countries under Ur III “Sumer.” The text alludes to the latter by naming its provinces individually (Šubur = north, Hamazi = east, Sumer and Akkad = center, Martu = west) and by referring, collectively, to “the whole world of well-ruled people.”⁴¹ In the second segment (lines 147–155: “For on that day ... and the speech of mankind shall be truly one!”) the same image (line 155: *e me nam-lu₂-ulu₃ 1 i₃-me-[a m₂]*) expresses the wish that disagreement, conflict, and debate between lords, princes, and rulers be ended.

The link between linguistic otherness (diversity, pluralism) and the idea of conflict and dissent also lies behind some of the characteristics attributed to Šamaš, the all-knowing Sun God of justice. In a couple of bilingual hymns from Nineveh, Šamaš is credited with the ability to set in order conflicting language, where the expression is clearly a metaphor for the idea of harmonizing conflicting opinions: Sum. *e me ḥa-mun dili-gin₇ si mu-ni-ib₂-si-sa₂-e* “He sets conflicting language in order like one” (note the same expression *e me ḥa-mun* in the Enmerkar passage quoted above); Akk. *li-šá-nu mit-ḥur-ti ki-ma iš-ten šu-me tuš-te-šèr* “You put conflicting language in order as one line.”⁴² As we have seen, the Sargon Cylinder passage associates the images of language otherness with the cosmic rule (lit. “shepherdship”) of Šamaš⁴³ — an association that we also find in the “Great Hymn” to Šamaš. In this poem the all-seeing glance of the god, i.e. the light of the sun as well as the equalizing force of justice that makes everyone prostrate to him, is said to extend over all the lands of different languages, where the metaphor represents the totality of the world and alludes to population diversity: [š]a nap-ḥar mātāti (KUR.KUR) šu-ut šu-un-na-a li-ša-nu | [ti]-i-di kip-di-ši-na ki-bi-is-si-na na-aṭ-la-a-ta | [kam-s]a-nik-ka kul-lat-

⁴⁰ The idea of a unified language is further complemented later in the poem in the episode in which Enmerkar invents writing, namely cuneiform writing (lines 497–506 of the composite text): see Vanstiphout 2003: 53–54 and cf. Liverani 2017: 231–232.

⁴¹ Cf. Vanstiphout 2003: 94.

⁴² K 2860 = Schollmeyer 1912: no. 3, lines 9–10. The text is provided here according to the revised edition by J. Peterson for BLMS online (<http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/blms/corpus#P394721.6>, last accessed 28.06.2020; lines obv. 5 and 5a in this edition). I slightly depart from Peterson’s translation in rendering Sum. *ḥa-mun* and Akk. *mit-ḥur-ti* as “conflicting” instead of “conflated,” following CAD s.v. *mithurtu* mng. 1. For the two different nuances of *mithurtu* see above, n. 29. A similar expression is also found in K 4872+ = Schollmeyer 1912: no. 1, col. i, lines 79–80.

⁴³ RINAP 2: Sargon II 43, 72: *ba-’u-lat ar-ba-’i lišānu* (EME) *a-ḥi-tu at-mé-e la mit-ḥur-ti a-šibu-te šadê* (KUR) *è eršeti* (KUR) *mal ir-te-’u-ú nūr* (ZÁLAG) *ilāni* (DINGIR.MEŠ) *bēl* (EN) *gim-ri* “Peoples of the four quarters, of foreign language and speech without correspondence, dwellers of mountain and lowland — as many as the light of the gods (i.e. Šamaš), the lord of all, shepherds.”



si-na te-ni-še-e-ti | [^dša]maš(UTU) a-na nūri(ZÁLAG)-ka šu-mu-rat mit-ḥur-ti “Of all the lands of varied language, you know their plans, you scan their way. The whole of mankind bows to you, Samaš, the universe longs for your light.”⁴⁴

Finally, the very same multiplicity of levels conveyed by images of linguistic diversity is played out in a more developed fashion in the well-known story of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11.1–9):⁴⁵

¹ וַיְהִי כָּל־הָאָרֶץ שָׁפָה אֶחָד וּדְבָרִים אֶחָדִים: ² וַיְהִי בְּנִסְעָם מִקֶּדֶם וַיִּמְצְאוּ בְקֵעָה בְּאֶרֶץ שִׁנְעָר וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם: ³ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל־רֵעֵהוּ הֲבֵנָה נִלְבְּנָה לְבָנִים וְנִשְׂרָפָה לְשָׂרָפָה וַתְּהִי לָהֶם הַלְּבָנָה לְאֲבָן וְהַחֲמֶר הִיָּה לָהֶם לְחֵמֶר: ⁴ וַיֹּאמְרוּ הֲבֵנָה נִבְנֶה לָנוּ עִיר וּמִגְדָּל וְרֹאשׁוֹ בְּשָׁמַיִם וְנַעֲשֶׂה־לָנוּ שֵׁם פֶּן־נִפְּוֶץ עַל־פְּנֵי כָּל־הָאָרֶץ: ⁵ וַיֵּרָד יְהוָה לִרְאֹת אֶת־הָעִיר וְאֶת־הַמִּגְדָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּנוּ בְּנֵי הָאָדָם: ⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה הֵן עַם אֶחָד וְשָׂפָה אֶחָד כָּל־כֹּלֶם וְזֶה הַחֲלֹם לַעֲשׂוֹת וְעַתָּה לֹא־יִבָּצֵר מֵהֶם כָּל אֲשֶׁר יִזְמוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת: ⁷ הֲבֵנָה נִרְדָּה וְנִבְלָה שָׁם שְׂפָתָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ אִישׁ שֶׁפֶת רֵעֵהוּ: ⁸ וַיִּפֹּץ יְהוָה אֹתָם מִשָּׁם עַל־פְּנֵי כָּל־הָאָרֶץ וַיַּחְדְּלוּ לִבְנֹת הָעִיר: ⁹ עַל־כֵּן קָרָא שְׁמָהּ בָּבֶל כִּי־שָׁם בָּלַל יְהוָה שֶׁפֶת כָּל־הָאָרֶץ וּמִשָּׁם הִפְּצָם יְהוָה עַל־פְּנֵי כָּל־הָאָרֶץ:

¹Now the whole earth was of one speech (*šāpā ’ehāt*) and the same words (*dabārīm ’āhādīm*). ² And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. ³ And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and bitumen they had for mortar. ⁴ Then they said, “Come, let us build for ourselves a city and a tower, whose top shall be in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.” ⁵ And YHWH came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. ⁶ And YHWH said, “Behold, they are one people (*’am ’ehād*), and they have all one speech (*šāpā ’ahat*), and this is what they began to do. And now nothing will be impeded to them of all which they plan to do. ⁷ Come, let us go down and confuse (*bālal*) there their speech (*šāpātām*), so that they will not understand one the speech (*šāpā*) of the other.” ⁸ So YHWH dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. ⁹ Therefore its name was called Babel, because there YHWH confounded (*bālal*) the speech (*šāpā*) of all the earth. And from there YHWH dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

44 Lambert 1996, no. 5 ii (pp. 121–138), lines 49–52 (tr. slightly modified). For the meaning of *mithurtu* in this context as “universe” understood as “unison, harmony (of opposing forces),” see *AHW* s.v. *mithurtu* mng. 4 and above, n. 29. For the interpretation of lines 51–52, see also the translation by Falkenstein and von Soden 1953: 242: “Es jauchzen die zu die Lebenden allesamt; Schamasch, nach deinem Licht sehnt sich das Universum”; and Seux 1976: 55 with n. 30 and tr. “Devant toi [sont agenouil]lés tous les vivants, [Sha]mash, à l’unisson ils tendent à ta lumière.”

45 Here and below, biblical passages are quoted according to the critical edition of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. For the sake of simplicity, Masoretic notation has been reduced to vocalization only. Translations generally follow the English Standard Version, with some modifications. Transliteration of vocalized Hebrew in the Latin alphabet follows the conventions established by *The SBL Handbook of Style*, second edition (Atlanta 2014), § 5.1.1 (pp. 56–58).



It should be noted that the story of the Tower of Babel and the Sargon passage indeed proceed essentially according to the same binary opposition between order and disorder,⁵¹ although the situations and the actions of the protagonists (God and the Assyrian king respectively) are reversed. According to this interpretation, further details — namely the reference to Babylon and the lines referring to the scattering of humanity — were added only in later editorial stages, as they were not part of the original reaction to Sargon’s rhetoric.⁵²

As far as I can see, this interpretation has found little support, and most scholars have persuasively argued for the literary unity of the story.⁵³ Within this framework, the significance of the complex imagery of the Tower of Babel story in fact goes well beyond the distinction between “language” and “way of speaking” as well as the dichotomies “agreement vs. disagreement” and “order vs. disorder.”⁵⁴ Indeed, while they spoke in the same way (*šāpā ’aḥat*: with “one speech”), the inhabitants of the whole earth (*kōl hā-’āreṣ*) constituted one and the same *people* (*’am ’eḥād*), whose main preoccupation was to avoid dispersal. After ceasing to speak in the same way, the world population splits and disperses over all the earth. This imagery links differentiation in the way of speaking and population dispersal, thus betraying a more general idea whereby peoples can be distinguished by the way they speak — that is, ultimately, by their languages. In other words, this is a way to conceptualize ethnicity and to distinguish among ethnicities. That being said, it is not difficult to see the reason why this story features, in the final redaction of *Genesis*, immediately after the “Table of the Nations” (Gen. 10).⁵⁵ In the Table of the Nations we are introduced to the map of the known world precisely according to a dispersal model which associates countries, ethnicities, and languages (*lāšōn* this time) within the framework of Noah’s genealogy. The association of these ideas is best made clear in Gen. 10.5, which summarizes the dispersal of the sons of Japheth: *מֵאֵלֶּה נִפְרְדוּ אִמֵי הַגּוֹיִם בְּאַרְצֵתָם אִישׁ לְלִשְׁנֹוֹ לְמִשְׁפְּחָתָם בְּגוֹיֵיהֶם* (“From these the coastland peoples spread in their lands, each by his own language, by their clans, in their nations”), and again with similar words in 10.20 and 10.31, which summarize the dispersal of the sons of Ham and Shem respectively.⁵⁶ Therefore, just as kinship terminology and myths of common descent (genealogies)

51 Cf. Glassner 2011: 19, who compares more broadly the biblical motif with the political use of the idiom *pā ištēn šuškunu/šakānu* in Assyrian royal inscriptions (see above).

52 Cf. Uehlinger 1990.

53 For detailed criticism of Uehlinger’s theory, see Day 2013: 170–178 with further literature.

54 Incidentally, as noted by Day 2013: 175, in some cases *šāpā* does have the meaning “language” (cf. Isa. 19.18, 33.19 and Ez. 3.5, 6).

55 Cf. Day 2013: 178–182 on the relation between the two passages and their different redactional history (J for Gen. 11.1–9 and mainly P for Gen. 10).

56 Glassner (2011: 18) argues that the story of the Tower of Babel was not conceived as an etiology of the theme of linguistic diversity, as the latter is already introduced in Gen. 10. However, an etiological story need not *precede* the theme it explains, and Gen. 10 is directly linked to the previous chapters (Noah’s story and his genealogy), while the story of the Tower of Babel interrupts the narrative (Gen. 11.10 resumes Noah’s genealogy with Shem’s descendants), only it does so at the most apt point. Cf. also Arnold 2008: 119 on the thematic arrangement of these chapters, with further arguments.



are a means to identify ethnic groups, language characterization also appears as one of the ways in which this tradition imagines, understands, and speaks of world geography and ethnicity. In the Table of the Nations, just as in the story of the Tower of Babel, the link between language and ethnicity, and most notably the role of linguistic characterization in defining ethnicities and locating them in world geography, are patent: in the former peoples are imagined to disperse, move, and settle in the world map according (also) to their languages, while in the latter population dispersal (that is, the formation of ethnic groups or ethnogenesis) occurs as the components of the primeval “single people” begin to speak differently from one another.⁵⁷

In these biblical narratives, the nexus language — ethnicity, with the implied dichotomy “one language = one people” vs. “many languages = many peoples,” is played out in full. Thinking of ethnic diversity in terms of linguistic diversity represents a common ground between the story of the Tower of Babel and the passage from the Sargon Cylinder. This helps us to better understand the terms in which linguistic diversity itself is dealt with in the Sargon Cylinder. To make the matter clearer, we should now turn back to Sargon’s concept of “order” and “unification,” conveyed, as we have seen, by the expression *pâ ištēn ušaškin*.

The Sargon Cylinder passage provides further elements that qualify this concept. In that text, imposing a new order over conquered peoples means also to see to it that they learn *šibittu* (“correct behavior”) and *palāḫ ili u šarri* (“to revere/fear the god and the king”). Most interestingly, instruction in these virtues is entrusted to “sons of the land of Aššur” (*mārē māṭ Aššur*): the task of these “Assyrians” is to turn the conquered peoples themselves into “Assyrians,” by teaching them the foundations of the notion of “being Assyrian.”⁵⁸ Unification and order, therefore, are established by means of a process of “Assyrianization.” This should not be understood as a sheer process of forced assimilation or acculturation, but rather as the set of strategies that enabled the Assyrian kings to assure a degree of stability to their multiethnic empire, by hindering individual ethnopolitical claims on the part of their subjects. On the practical level, this was effectively achieved with the aid of combined mass deportations,

⁵⁷ A similar association between linguistic diversity and population dispersals or migrations underpins the ethnogeographic work of Strabo. A significant case is that of Asia Minor. Here the geographer finds a mixture of peoples and languages (cf. e.g. Strab. 12.8.4 and 13.4.12) and explains it by recurring to the migratory model. Notably, he describes this situation using the word σύγχυσις “mixture, confusion,” a derivative of συγχέω “to mix, commingle, confound.” The same word is used in the *Septuaginta* to translate Hebr. *bābel* in Gen. 11.9, a choice which allowed the translators to retain the word play with the verb *bālal*, “to mix, mingle, confound” (διὰ τοῦτο ἐκλήθη τὸ ὄνομα αὐτῆς Σύγχυσις, ὅτι ἐκεῖ συνέχεεν κύριος τὰ χεῖλη πάσης τῆς γῆς “For this reason its name was called *Synchysis* [i.e. Babel], for there the Lord confounded [*synecheen*] the lips of all earth”). In other cases, Strabo presents linguistic diversity as a key marker of ethnic diversity and explains it once again as a consequence of dispersion: for example, the 70 (or 300) *ethne* of Dioskourias each speak a different language as they had been living dispersed, separate from each other (Strab. 11.2.16), and so do the 26 tribes of the Albanians (Strab. 11.4.6). For a discussion of these questions, see Salmeri 2000: 162–167 (esp. 163 with n. 20, 164) & 170–180.

⁵⁸ Cf. Machinist 1993: 95–97; Fales 2018: 475–476.



which among others served the purpose of disaggregating previous social, ethnic, and political identities by separating and remixing the conquered populations.⁵⁹ As the borders of the “Land of Aššur” (*māt Aššur*) were extended by the reconquest of territories of old and, in a later stage, by the conquest of new ones, and as masses of deportees were resettled within them,⁶⁰ Assyrian political language developed a way to conceptualize an ethnically and linguistically diverse population under the same notion of “Assyrianness.” This translates into special formulae which are very frequently found at the end of conquest and deportation accounts at least down to the period of Sargon: most notably, “to count” or metaphorically “to consider” (*manû*) deportees or conquered peoples together with the “people of Assyria” (*itti/ana amēlē/nišē māt Aššur*).⁶¹ After they had been integrated into the “Land of Aššur,” conquered populations and deportees were considered “Assyrians” in every respect: “original” Assyrians and “new” Assyrians were identical for administrative purposes, as they were all subject to the same tax obligations and other duties towards the empire.⁶²

However, not only do these formulae express political affiliation, but they should be understood also in terms of ethnicity. The phrases *amēlē/nišē māt Aššur* and *mārē māt Aššur* as well as the ethnonyms *Aššurû* (SB) or *Aššurāya* (NA) are in fact essentially equivalent and serve as markers of Assyrian ethnicity, which is itself a notion that unfolds in different nuances depending on context.⁶³ When it comes to conquest and deportation, Assyrian ethnicity markers are overarching, as they apply to all

59 For Assyrian combined deportations, see Oded 1979 and Liverani 2017: 192–194 (especially for their distinctiveness as opposed to Babylonian deportations). On ethnic and cultural diversity in the Assyrian empire, see Postgate 1989; Parpola 2004; Fales 2018; DeGrado 2019; Karlsson 2019.

60 For the concept of the “Land of Aššur” (*māt Aššur*), i.e. the “core” of Assyria with its provinces, as opposed to the “yoke of Aššur” (*nīr Aššur*), i.e. the ensemble of “client” polities and tribute bearers, see Postgate 1992 with a discussion of political and administrative implications. See also Harmanşah 2013: 72–101 for the expanding borders of the “Land of Aššur.”

61 For a discussion of these expressions, see Oded 1979: 81–91 and Fales 2018: 478–480. A similar expression is to impose taxes or corvées “as on the Assyrians” (*ki ša Aššurī*): however, as pointed out by Postgate (1992: 257), at least in certain cases this phrase may conceal nuances different from the *manû* phrases. Note that after Sargon these expressions tend to disappear from royal literature; see below for further discussion.

62 For the administrative aspects in particular, see Radner 2003: 886 & 892 and Liverani 2017: 203–208.

63 On the question of Assyrian identity, see Machinist 1993 (esp. as defined politically in terms of obedience); Parpola 2004 (with an attempt to define the traits underpinning “Assyrianness” on various levels of society); and most notably Fales 2015 & 2018: 470–485 for a thorough discussion of the nuances and contexts that characterize the use of Assyrian ethnicity markers. Here I refer to the conceptualization of Assyrian ethnicity by the Assyrian ruling class, i.e., the agents who contributed to shaping Assyrian imperial ideology. The huge degree of *actual* ethnic diversity that emerges from prosopography and administrative documentation is a different question: see e.g. Karlsson 2019 and the references above in n. 59.



the people of the “Land of Aššur” regardless of their “original” ethnicities. In this sense Assyrian ethnicity is also exclusive, as those who remain outside the “Land of Aššur” are portrayed according to a logic of binary opposition that opposes “Assyrians” to “non-Assyrians.” The latter — that is, the “others” — are presented by means of a standardized array of stereotypes that betray the ethnocentric perspective of the Assyrians.⁶⁴ Also, in figurative depictions, where more detailed renderings of ethnic and cultural diversity can be detected, distinctive marks of otherness “become Assyrianized stylistically within Assyrian arts meant to be consumed by the Assyrian court elite,” as convincingly argued by Marian Feldman.⁶⁵ Therefore, by the term “Assyrianization” we can understand as well the *conceptual* effort of the Assyrian ruling elite to forge a discourse of identity that could be extended and remodeled according to the needs of the moment.⁶⁶

Linguistic characterization is one of the elements that serves the purpose of constructing a discourse of ethnicity and otherness. It is a traditional attribute to the stereotypical portrait of the “other.” As we can see, for example, in the curse section of a *kudurru* of the 13th-century Assyrian king Adad-nirari I, the notions of “stranger” and “enemy” are explicitly associated with that of “(speaker of a) foreign language” (text and tr. RIMA 1: A.0.75.2, 44–46): *aš-šum er-re-ti ši-na-ti-na na-ka-ra | a-ḥa-a a-ia-ba le-em-na li-ša-na na-ki-ir-ta | lu-ú ma-am-ma ša-na-a ú-ma-’a-ru-ma ú-ša-ḥa-zu* “...(or) because of these curses he incites a stranger, a foreigner, a malignant enemy, (a man who speaks) another language, or anyone else (to do any of these things)...”⁶⁷ We may also note that “foreign language” is expressed here by means of the adjective *nakru*, whose meaning varies between “foreign, alien, strange” and “enemy, hostile”

64 For the Assyrian representation of the “other” in textual material, see esp. Zaccagnini 1987 and Fales 1987.

65 For a discussion of Assyrianizing style and its homogenizing force, see esp. Feldman 2014: 79–110 (quote from p. 80); for the diversification and ranking of the “others” in the figurative record, see Reade 1979: 332–335. Cf. also Gunter 2009: 17–49 for the diffusion of Assyrianizing style in the subject communities and for its interaction with local styles. DeGrado (2019) emphasizes that representations stressing ethnocultural differences feed into the Assyrian concept of universal empire, as is also the case with the Assyrian kings’ attitude to collecting and importing exotic objects, plants, animals, or the like. However, note that figurative representations of the “other” deal with populations that were *not* (yet) within the boundaries of the “Land of Aššur” and for which, therefore, differentiation from the “Assyrians” was in order (cf. Reade 1979: 332–333). All in all, I see no contradiction between all these apparently diverging tendencies, but rather the products of an intellectual effort to emphasize unity in diversity while distinguishing, at the same time, the Assyrian world from the external world. As noted by Liverani (2017: 54), a tension between curiosity about the exotic and sense of superiority characterizes the overall Assyrian attitude towards foreigners.

66 Relevant to the discourse on “Assyrianization” as a *conceptual* tool for ethnopolitical integration is also the fact that Aššur was the name of the Assyrian chief deity, that of the state as a whole, and that of its oldest capital, which was the core nucleus from which the “Land of Aššur” expanded; cf. Machinist 1986: 186.

67 Cf. CAD s.v. *lišānu* mng. 4c.

with a significant overlapping of notions.⁶⁸ However, the conceptual effort of Assyrianization may cast further light on the derogatory terms in which foreign languages and linguistic diversity are viewed in the Sargon Cylinder passage. Sargon unifies (that is, he “Assyrianizes”) a multiethnic, multilingual, and multicultural population not only, on the practical level, by inserting them into the Assyrian political infrastructure, but also, on the ideological level, by subsuming them under an Assyrian ethnic identity. The idea of linguistic diversity stands in contrast to this newly forged identity: in the ethnocentric way in which the Assyrian world is imagined by this kind of political discourse, coexistence of multiple languages and diverse speeches represents exactly the opposite of ethnocentrism — that is, coexistence of multiple ethnic identities, and thus dissent, lack of unification, and disorder, according to the usual overlapping ideas. The Sargon Cylinder passage and the story of the Tower of Babel make recourse to similar ranges of language-based imagery, and in doing so they betray similar ways of conceptualizing ethnic diversity. However, due to its ethnocentrism, the Assyrian tradition uses images of foreign languages and linguistic diversity only as a means to establish a binary opposition of ethnicity (Assyrian vs. non-Assyrian); in contrast to the far more complex biblical imagery, or to Yariri’s naming of the three foreign scripts by means of ethnic designations, this Assyrian tradition displays no genuine attempt at mapping language and ethnic diversity.⁶⁹

It is important to emphasize that Assyrianization as defined above is a way of *thinking* rather than a way of *acting*. Beside its administrative and political implications, I understand it as the way in which Assyrian political language conceptualized the conquered populations under a new identity. Similarly, foreign languages and the idea of linguistic diversity are ways to conceptualize what lies *before* Assyrianization thus intended and stands in contrast to it. On the other hand, it must be remarked that the Assyrians never tried in practice to impose any form of linguistic unification in the empire, which, being *in fact* multiethnic, was also multilingual.⁷⁰ Akkadian as the official language of the empire notwithstanding,⁷¹ we know quite well that the Assyrian administration did make extensive recourse to the Aramaic

68 See CAD s.v. *nakru* mng. 1 (adjectival and substantival use “foreign, alien, strange, hostile”) and 2 (substantival use, usually in the singular, “enemy, foe”); cf. also s.v. *nakāru* (G: “to become hostile, to be or become an enemy, to be an alien,” etc.) and *nakrūtu* (“enmity, hostility”). More broadly, similar images, including linguistic “strangeness,” apply to Babylonian and Assyrian representations of nomads and mountaineers, i.e. those categories of people who were considered to be remote from (and “other” than) urban civilization; see on this topic Machinist 1986: 188–191.

69 A prominent exception is of course the “ethnic” conceptualization of the Aramaic language and script, which emerges, however, in administrative documents rather than in political discourse; see Fales 2018: 470 with n. 100.

70 As Beaulieu (2006: 188) brilliantly puts it, “Assyria was faced with the paradoxical fact that, as the empire expanded and more and more people were made Assyrian, the conquered people were making Assyria less and less Assyrian culturally and linguistically.”

71 In fact, a distinction in usage can be established between Assyrian and Babylonian (esp. in its literary form called “Standard Babylonian,” the language of Assyrian royal inscriptions): see Radner 2011: 386–387, 389–390 with lit.



language and papyrus scrolls, as is testified by archival documentation and by relief slabs from Assyrian palaces. It also seems that by the 8th century Aramaic was the everyday language of a number of Assyrian scribes, and there is evidence that an Aramaic scribal tradition was in circulation.⁷² Some official correspondence of the time of Sargon, however, betrays tension between “official” (“traditional”) regulations (to write in Akkadian) and that which must have become common practice (to write in Aramaic).⁷³ Also, Sargon himself was by no means unaware of the strategic importance of interpreters, as is shown by a letter addressed to him by one of his officials.⁷⁴ Therefore, the idea that linguistic pluralism is in conflict with the ethnocentric Assyrian world established by the Assyrian king must be understood as part of an ideological discourse, without trying to superimpose on it actual political and administrative practice.⁷⁵

Are these Assyrian perspectives on foreign languages and linguistic diversity part of an immutable *forma mentis*? In order to attempt an answer to this question I turn to my last case study, which brings us to the Annals of Aššurbanipal and to this king’s relations with a foreign polity, Lydia.

72 On all these aspects, see Beaulieu 2006: 187–192; Fales 2007; Radner 2011 with further lit. For the iconography, see among others the “scribe” relief slabs from the palace of Tiglath-pileser III at Kalhu and from the Northwest palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh, catalogue nos. resp. BM 118882 and BM 124956.

73 See e.g. SAA 17: 2, obv. 15–22 (tr. slightly modified): [um-ma] ‘ki’-[i pān(IGI)] ‘šarri(LUGAL)’ maḥ-ru ina libbi(ŠĀ) si-ip-ri | kur-ár-ma’-[a-a lu]-‘us’-pi-ir-ma a-na šarri(LUGAL) | ‘lu’-še-bi-la mi-nam-ma ina ši-pir-ti | ak-ka-da-at-tu la ta-šaṭ-ṭar-ma | la tu-šeb-bi-la kit-ta ši-pir-tu | šá ina libbi(ŠĀ)^{bi} ta-šaṭ-ṭa-ru ki-i pi-i a-gan-ni-tim-ma i-da-at | lu-ú šak-na-at (“[As to what you wrote]: ‘If it is acceptable to the king, let me pen (*sepēru*) and send my message to the king in Aram[aic]’ — why would you not write (*šaṭāru*) and send me messages in Akkadian? Really, the message which you write in it must be in this very manner — this is a fixed regulation!”). Cf. the comments on this passage in Beaulieu 2006: 189 and Radner 2011: 389–390. Note also the implied contrast in writing modalities and media as betrayed by the opposition between the verbs *sepēru* and *šaṭāru*, i.e. “penning” on perishable leather sheets or papyrus scrolls as opposed to “incising” on durable clay tablets. However, clay tablets were also used for Aramaic; see Fales 1986 and Radner 2011: 390–392.

74 SAA 5: 217, obv. 16–18, rev. 1–4 (text and tr.): ^{md}kù-baba(KĀ)-il(DINGIR)-a-‘a’ | šarru(LUGAL) bēlu(EN) ú-da | bēl(EN)-li-šá-ni šú-u || ina ^{uu}ti-ik-ri-iš | a-sap-ár-šu šu-ú | ṭe-mu an-ni-ú iḫ-tar-ša | iq-ṭi-ba-a-na-a-ši (“The king, my lord, knows that Kubaba-ila’i masters the language. I sent him to Tikriš, and he gave us this detailed report.”)

75 As is suggested by Liverani (2017: 233–239), the only element in Assyrian imperial practice that one may want to understand as being underpinned by such ideology is the tendency to rename conquered cities and occasionally also foreign officials with Assyrian names (see examples therein). After all, the Sargon Cylinder does not mention Assyrian (or more generally Akkadian) proficiency among the “real” foundations of “being Assyrian,” *šibittu* (“correct behavior”) and *palāḫ ili u šarri* (“to revere/fear the god and the king”), which include to the subjects’ duties and fiscal obligations towards the empire (see above).

4. FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY FROM AŠŠURBANIPAL'S PERSPECTIVE



Aššurbanipal (668–631 BC) is known for his efforts to present himself as a cultivated ruler and an expert in various crafts and skills, among which the ability to read, write, and decipher difficult texts in Akkadian and Sumerian features prominently.⁷⁶ While this claim testifies to his attention to the languages of his own cultural and religious tradition, a passage of his Annals reporting the arrival at court of an embassy sent by Gyges of Lydia gives us a glimpse of his perspective on foreign languages and cultures. The Assyrian story of Gyges features in various versions of the Annals of Aššurbanipal and was reworked and updated for more than twenty years. Its final plot, based on the version of Prism A, one of the latest and the most extensive, can be summarized as follows: Gyges sends a message to Aššurbanipal reporting that the god Aššur had urged him in a dream to submit to the Assyrian king in order to confront the threat from the Cimmerians; he thus submits to Aššurbanipal and is able to defeat his enemies; after rejecting Assyrian overlordship a few years later, he dies at the hands of the Cimmerians as the effect of a divine curse that Aššurbanipal had invoked on him.⁷⁷

The earliest version of this story — which does not include Gyges's defection and death, as it predates them — is preserved in Nineveh Prism E, dated around 666/5 BC.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ These pieces of information are best known from the so-called "Aššurbanipal's School Days Inscription" (K 2694 + K 3050): see Novotny 2014: no. 18, i 14–23 (introd. pp. xvi–xvii, text p. 77, tr. p. 96).

⁷⁷ The story was first included in the two recensions of Prism E, called E₁ and E₂ and dated to 666/5 and 665/4 BC respectively, both preserved in a very fragmentary state (*RINAP* 5/1: Aššurbanipal 1, vi 1'–31'; 2, vi 14–vii 3') and presenting substantial differences from one another. It was then condensed into a shorter version and included in a text that preserves the most extensive account of Aššurbanipal's campaigns in Egypt (of 667 and 664 BC) as well as of the restoration of the Šin Temple at Harran; this text is known from two complementing manuscripts (K 228 + K 3081 + K 3084 and K 2675 respectively), called HT = "Harran Tablets" and LET = "Large Egyptian Tablets" (Novotny 2014 no. 20, rev. 29–27: introd. p. xxv, text p. 83, tr. p. 102; cf. Borger 1996: 175–176). The nucleus of the story (Gyges dreams of Aššur, submits to Aššurbanipal, and defeats the Cimmerians) was reproduced in essentially the same way in Prisms B, D, C, Kh, and F (resp. *RINAP* 5/1: Aššurbanipal 3, ii 86b–iii 4; 4, ii 61'–72'; 6, iv 1'–7' [missing lines at the beginning]; 7, iii 17''–30''; and 9, ii 10–20), which cover the period 649/8 (B) to 645 BC (F). The story was then substantially reworked and included, with the addition of Gyges's defection and death and his son's resubmission to Assyria, in the Annals of Prism A (*RINAP* 5/1: Aššurbanipal 11, ii 95–125), dated around 644–642 BC. Finally, the inscription of the Ištar Temple of Nineveh (IIT), dated ca. 638 BC, again reports only the essential elements of the story (as in Prism B, etc.) in a very condensed fashion (*RINAP* 5/1: Aššurbanipal 23, 86b–89). For a discussion of the various versions and reworking stages of the story, see Cogan and Tadmor 1977; Gelio 1981; Fuchs 2010: 420–421; Cogan 2014: 73–75.

⁷⁸ On the two recensions of Prism E (E₁ and E₂) and their chronology, see Cogan and Tadmor 1977: 66–74 and now Novotny and Jeffers in *RINAP* 5/1, pp. 16, 18 with n. 112, 37–39 (E₁), 42–44 (E₂). These are the first recensions of the Annals of Aššurbanipal and feature pecu-



This version narrates in very peculiar terms the moment when the Lydian messenger sent by Gyges first approached Assyria. The passage reports the dismay with which the Assyrian officials reacted to the arrival of the Lydian ambassador, and the subsequent difficulties in diplomatic communication at court due to the Assyrians' ignorance of the Lydian language (RINAP 5/1: Aššurbanipal 1, vi 1'–13'; tr. slightly modified):

[^{hú}mār(A)] ṣipri(KIN)-šú ID' [...] | ṛa-na šá'-a-al šul-ṛmì'-ia ṛiṭ'-ḥa-a | a-na mi-šir māti(KUR)-ia nišē(UN.MEŠ) māti(KUR)-ia i-mu-ru-šu-ma | man-nu-me-e at-ta a-ḥu-u iq-bu-šú | ša ma-ti-ma ^{lú}rakbû(RA.GABA)^ú-ku-un | da-rag-gu la iš-ku-na a-na ki-sur-ri-ni | a-na Ninu'a(NINA)^{ki} āl(URU) be-lu-ti-ia [x x (x)] | ú-bi-lu-ni-šú ina maḥ-ri-ia | lišānāt(EME.MEŠ) ši-it ^dšamši(UTU)^{si} e-reb ^dšamši(UTU)^{si} | ša Aššur(AN.ŠĀR) ú-ma-al-lu-u qa-tu-u-a | be-el lišāni(EME)-šú ul ib-ši-ma | ṛlišān(EME)-šú' na-ak-rat-ma | la i-šem-mu-ú at-mu-šú

[...] his [mes]senger [...] to inquire about my well-being a[pp]roached the border of my land. The people of my land saw him and said to him: “Who are you, stranger? A mounted messenger of yours has never taken the road to our territory.” They brought him to Nineveh, my capital city, [...], before me. (Among all the languages (from) sunrise (to) sunset with which the god Aššur has filled my hands, there was no master of his language. [H]is language was alien and they could not understand his speech.

Despite damage to the text, from the following lines it transpires that the affair succeeded only thanks to someone whom the Lydians brought along in their embassy, likely an interpreter (text and tr. RINAP 5/1: Aššurbanipal 1, vi 14'–31'):

ul-tu mi-šir māti(KUR)-šú | [...] ṛit'-ti-šú ú-bi-ṛlam-ma' | [... ú-šā-an-na?]-ṛa' da-ṛbab'-šú | [... ki-a-am' iq]-ṛbi' ardu(ARAD) pa-ṛliḥ'-ka | [...] ṛú-tul'-ma | [... i]-ṛna'-ṛta-al | [...] x-ta-a-te | [...] ṛšak'-na-at-ma | [...] -hu-ú | [...] x na-pi-iḥ-ma | [... na]-ṛmir'-tú šak-na-at | [...] -ṛUŠ' šarri(LUGAL)-šá | [...] -ṛri' nam-ri | [...] x qé-reb-šá | [...] bēl(EN) mātāte(KUR.KUR) ilu(DINGIR)^u-a | [...] ṛi'-zi-za-am-ma | [...] ṛiq'-ba-a | [...] x (lacuna)

He brought [a ...] with him from the border of his land, and [... he reported] his spe[e]ch to me, [..., he sai]d [the following]: “The servant who rev[e]res you, [...] laid down and saw [...] ... [... was es]tablished and [...] ... [...] rose and [... li]ght appeared. [...] its king [...] bright [...] inside it [... (The god) Aššur], the lord of the lands, my god, [...] stood and [...] he said to me (lacuna)

Among all the preserved versions of the Gyges story, that of Prism E₁ is unique as it is the only one that narrates at length the arrival of the Lydian messenger at court

liarities that would be lost in later versions, including lengthy prologues with details on the king's education, which are otherwise best preserved in the School Days Inscription (cf. RINAP 5/1, Introduction, pp. 3–4, 13).



and the failed attempts at communicating with him.⁷⁹ Alongside this specific episode, the length of the narrative as is reconstructed for Prisms E₁ and E₂⁸⁰ and the theme of the dream, which underpins all versions, are all features that betray the singularity of the story, which must have enjoyed some importance in the rhetorical strategy of the court. It has been pointed out that its essential elements, and the narrative of its first version in particular, emphasize the fact that the Lydian king first approached Assyria on his own initiative and voluntarily submitted to the Assyrian king, thereby recognizing the latter's superiority.⁸¹ Accordingly, some scholars maintain that the tone of the passage in Prism E₁, with regard to the "alien" language of the ambassador, is dismissive — consistent with the Assyrian attitude towards foreign languages that emerges, in particular, from the Sargon Cylinder passage discussed above in §3. This view implies that it would be pointless for the conquerors (the Assyrians) to learn the incomprehensible languages of harmless peoples at the borders of the empire (such as the Lydians) so as to be able to communicate with them: they had no interest in it nor need thereof. Rather, it is those who come to seek aid that should learn how to do so: after all, in this case the initiative was the Lydians', and they were the ones attempting to seek an alliance with the Assyrians.⁸²

⁷⁹ The text of the second recension of the Annals, preserved in Prism E₂ (RINAP 5/1: Aššurbanipal 2, vi 14–vii 3'), is extremely fragmentary and does not allow any secure conclusion as regards the way the narrative unfolds, but the Gyges episode seems to appear there in a quite different fashion as opposed to E₁. Note also that in the various versions of the Gyges tale two different terms are used to indicate the Lydian ambassador. At the beginning of the excerpt in E₁ (vi 1') the new RINAP 5/1 edition reads [lúA] rKIN-šú' = mār šiprišu, "his (i.e. Gyges's) messenger," whereas the Assyrians address him as lúRA.GA-BA-ú-ku-un = rakkûkun, "a rider of yours" (vi 5'). As seen above, in this version the message of the first ambassador is not understood and is presumably reported by yet another individual. In the fragmentary column vi of Prism E₂ there is little chance to guess how the ambassador was introduced; however, the message seems to have been reported successfully, and in vii 2' a mār šipri is mentioned. By contrast, in all the following, shorter versions (except for Prism A) we find only the rakkû, who is said to have been sent to inquire about the "well being" of the king (ana ša'al šulmiya). Prism A combines the two elements and presents both a rakkû and a mār šipri, apparently with two different tasks: the former inquires, as usual, about the king's "well being" (RINAP 5/1: Aššurbanipal 11, ii 100–101: u₄-mu šuttu(MÁŠ.GI₆) an-ni-tú e-mu-ru lú₄rak-bu-šú iš-pu-ra | a-na šá-'a-al šul-mi-ia "On the (very) day he saw this dream, he sent his mounted messenger to inquire about my well-being"), while the latter reports the message (ibid., ii 101–102: šuttu(MÁŠ.GI₆) an-ni-tú šá e-mu-ru | ina qātī(ŠU.II) lú₄mār(A) šipri(KIN)-šú iš-pur-am-ma ú-šá-an-na-a ia-a-ti "As for this dream that he had seen, he sent (a message about it) by the hands of a messenger of his and he reported (it) to me"). On the intertextuality between the various versions, especially between Prism A and the E₂ recension, see Cogan and Tadmor 1977: 77–78.

⁸⁰ According to the reconstruction proposed in RINAP 5/1 (pp. 39 and 43 respectively), the Gyges episode could have covered roughly from the upper half of column vi to the upper half of column vii of both Prisms E₁ and E₂.

⁸¹ See esp. Gelio 1981.

⁸² For this line of thought, see Fuchs 2010: 410–415; Liverani 2017: 232–233.



The common interpretation of the curious episode narrated in Prism E₁ rests, as far as I can tell, on the assumption that the Assyrian view of foreign languages and language diversity as well as the opposition between Assyria and the rest of the world would always be consistent. But does the Aššurbanipal passage fully match the supposed Assyrian *forma mentis* as to these issues, in the way it emerges from the Sargon Cylinder? It seems to me that the common interpretations of the episode as simply conveying a sense of dismissiveness towards foreign languages do not actually do justice to its implications. In fact, this piece of narrative offers a peculiar perspective on language otherness and diversity, which, while tailored in part to a certain Assyrian *forma mentis*, does depart from it with interesting nuances. Let us try then to examine the Prism E₁ passage more closely and uncover its narrative strategies.

The Lydian envoy is described as a “stranger” (*aḥû*), whose transit into Assyria was a complete novelty. The text conveys here a tone of dismay, which does not, however, come fully into its own until the end of the episode. The emphasis is on the initial failure of diplomatic communication at court, inviting us to regard this event as something unusual, unexpected, and not devoid of implications. The narrator’s attention to the episode is evident from the way he expands narrative time. He follows the Lydian embassy step by step, from the messenger approaching the border of the land, to the inquiries of the Assyrians, to the transfer to Nineveh before the king. At this point, the narrator lingers on the arrival of the Lydian messenger at the Assyrian court, pointing out that communication with him is impossible due to lack of mutual linguistic intelligibility. Finally, he goes on with the story by alluding to an interpreter or bilingual messenger whom the Lydians brought along with them. The point at which communication fails, however, is emphasized almost to excess. Three elements are pointed out: nobody with knowledge of Lydian (*bēl lišānišu*, an “interpreter”⁸³) could be found among all the languages that Aššur placed at Aššurbanipal’s disposal from sunrise to sunset (*lišānāt šit šamši erēb šamši ša Aššur um-allû qātū’a*); “his language was alien” (*lišānšu nakratma*); “they could not understand his speech” (*lā išemmu atmūšu*). By emphasizing the difficulties of communicating with the Lydian envoy, the text clearly remarks on the absence of Lydia within the horizon of the “Assyrian” world and locates it outside its borders. Indeed, the first contact with the stranger happens at the borders of the empire, and it is here that the Lydian envoy is identified as a stranger, an outsider (*aḥû*). This condition is further emphasized by the term that qualifies the language of the messenger: once again, it is *nakrat* “foreign, alien,” with the usual overlap with the notion of “hostile, enemy” as we have seen earlier. This lexicon is in line with the *clichés* about foreigners that we have examined in the previous section. But why so much emphasis on the king’s dismay at the Lydian’s incomprehensible words?

It seems to me that the narrative does not suggest that Aššurbanipal is blithely dismissive of his interlocutor. To understand the significance of this passage, it should first be remarked that by the time of Aššurbanipal the traditional *clichés* that underpin the representation of the “stranger” had undergone some modifications. As has been variously noted, the texts of the last Assyrian kings betray shifts in perceptions

83 Cf. CAD s.v. *lišānu* in *bēl lišāni*.



of the external world as well as of the relation between Assyrians and non-Assyrians. After the age of Sargon, for example, the motif of “unification” under the “Assyrian” identity (“to count [the conquered peoples] among the Assyrians” or the like) tends to disappear from annalistic literature and becomes increasingly replaced with expressions that emphasize subjection and the difference in status of conquered peoples and deportees (e.g. “to count [the conquered peoples] as booty/captives”).⁸⁴ As Peter Machinist has put it, in the period when the empire was at its greatest expansion and had to face ever increasing degrees of diversity on all levels of society, such changes in political language may represent an ideological effort “to clarify boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’ precisely because the boundaries were dissolving.”⁸⁵ On the other hand, the same texts tend to depict enemies according to a new range of stereotypes: they are increasingly represented as quite volatile entities that could too easily escape the control of the Assyrian kings, often appearing as animals fleeing to foreign countries or inaccessible places,⁸⁶ escaping both human and divine punishment. In a number of cases the Assyrian king plays no direct role in the defeat of enemy kings, but it turns out that they are eliminated by divine wrath, external evil, or some unexplainable death. All this, as has been argued, was probably due to a general change in perceptions of the external world brought about by the need to manage a larger political entity than ever before.⁸⁷

It can be suggested that similar perceptions underlie the composition of the Gyges story in its various editorial stages. The first encounter between the Assyrians and the Lydians is characterized by the peculiar situation in which the “stranger” approaches Assyria; this time, he cannot be counted among the conquered peoples, nor is he an enemy *tout court*, nor a tribute bearer controllable by force. Rather, he has come to seek the Assyrian alliance on his own initiative. The need to emphasize his otherness — by means of the alienness of his language — should be regarded, then, as functional to the overall message of the passage: because they entered the Assyrian world spontaneously and their permanence in it was bound to their adherence to a loyalty pact, the Lydians are viewed with a mixed feeling of superiority and diffidence.⁸⁸ On the one hand, the spontaneous deference of a foreign king highlights

⁸⁴ See the discussion in Oded 1979: 89–91, with refinements in Machinist 1993: 93–95. As shown by Machinist, this must be seen as a tendency and not as a rule.

⁸⁵ Cf. Machinist 1993: 94; see also Beaulieu’s observation quoted above in n. 70.

⁸⁶ See esp. the expression “they [*scil.* enemy, recalcitrant rulers] flew away alone like bats (living) in crevices to inaccessible place(s)” (*ki-ma su-tin-ni ni-gi-iš-ši e-diš ip-par-šu a-šar la’a-a-ri*) in the Annals of Sennacherib: RINAP 3/1 (text and tr.) Sennacherib 16 i 25–26; 17 i 20–21; 22 i 18–19; 23 i 16–17; 24 i 17–18.

⁸⁷ For these considerations on the representation of the enemies in late texts, see Liverani 2017: 138–141.

⁸⁸ On this line of reasoning, as noted by Liverani (2017: 206–207) we may mention that in his loyalty oath to the Medes, Esarhaddon emphasizes ethnopolitical distinctions to indicate those that could cause uprising, distinguishing “Assyrians” (*Aššurāya*) from “peoples subject to Assyria” (*dāgil pāni ša māt Aššur*) and “Assyrians” (*mār māt Aššur*) from “foreigners” (*mār māti šanītimma*) respectively; see SAA 2: 6, 162–164 (the so-called “Esarhaddon’s Succession Treaty”).



Assyria's self-perceived superiority at the center of the world: the emphasis on the ethnolinguistic alienness of the Assyrians' interlocutors certainly adds to this self-perception, especially insofar as Gyges was the king of a remote country whose rulers had never approached Assyria before. On the other hand, the Lydians' ethnolinguistic alienness may have been purposefully overemphasized since the stability of the relations between them and the Assyrians ultimately depended on the trustworthiness of the former's king. In other words, such emphasis aims to establish a boundary between the Lydians and the Assyrians.

This mixed feeling of superiority and diffidence underlies the editorial history of the Gyges episode. The multiple modifications of the story in later versions of the Annals betray the court's preoccupation with selecting the elements that were most worth emphasizing for the sake of political rhetoric. After one year, apparently the need was felt to reshape the narrative according to other parameters. Although we cannot be sure that observations on the foreign language of the ambassador fell in the lacunae of the text, from the fragmentary lines of Prism E₂ (*RINAP* 5/1: Aššurbanipal 2, vi 14–vii 3') it seems that in this version emphasis is placed on the speech of the Lydian envoy, who apparently reports at length the content of Gyges's dream — that is, the god Aššur prompting the Lydian king to submit voluntarily. Later versions (HT and Prisms B, D, C, Kh, and F) are much shorter and consistently select only the essential elements: Gyges dreams of Aššur, submits to Aššurbanipal, and then he becomes able to defeat the Cimmerians.

The most elaborate version at our disposal, preserved in a late version of the Annals (Prism A = *RINAP* 5/1: Aššurbanipal 11, ii 95–125), finally gives an idea of the political concerns that the Lydian king's erratic behavior inspired. In this version the story is significantly remodeled, and at this point (i.e., between 644 and 642 BC⁸⁹) we learn that Gyges had interrupted the dispatch of friendly gifts to Aššurbanipal and sent his forces to aid the Egyptian king Psammetichus I, who had freed himself from the Assyrian yoke. Then, Gyges died by the hands of the Cimmerians and his son (Ardys) took his place on the throne and resubmitted to Assyria. This text wants us to believe that all these events happened in a cause-effect relation. Consistently with the new range of stereotypes of the period, Gyges's death is presented as the effect of the curse that Aššurbanipal had called upon him by praying to Aššur and Ištar; the Assyrian king's curse, in turn, was triggered by the fact that Gyges had aided the Egyptians!⁹⁰ Whatever the exact chronology of all these events may be,⁹¹ it is impor-

⁸⁹ Cf. *RINAP* 5/1, Introduction, pp. 32–33 and notes *ad loc.*, p. 222 for this time frame.

⁹⁰ On the peculiarities of the episode in Prism A as opposed to the previous versions, see Cogan 2014: 73–75, 81. On the sense of emotional instability conveyed by certain elements in Prism A, see Gelio 1981: 222–223.

⁹¹ Following the Classical tradition, Gyges's death has long been dated to 652 BC, while now, drawing on the chronology of Aššurbanipal's Annals, some scholars date it between 645 and 644/3 BC (or also 643/2), as Prisms B, D, C, Kh, and F, which cover the period from ca. 649/8 to 645 BC, make no mention of it. For this chronology, see esp. Spalinger 1978 with discussion of previous chronologies; cf. also more recently Dale 2015: 158–161; Wallace 2016: 176 with n. 35. According to Cogan and Tadmor (1977: 78–79 with n. 25), if Gyges



tant to note that what is presented as the defection of Gyges from Assyria to Egypt was almost certainly silenced in Assyrian royal rhetoric for a few years, and then made explicit only when Assyria could claim some sort of compensation. In Prism A, this compensation is twofold: on the one hand, Gyges has died, and his death is reinterpreted as the effect of a divine curse; on the other hand, his son submitted anew to Aššurbanipal, and this could be understood as a due (re)acknowledgment of Assyrian superiority after the previous pact was unduly broken.⁹² Finally, in the very condensed version of the Ištar Temple inscription (ca. 638 BC) the only aspect of the whole story on which it was deemed worth focusing is, once again, the fact that Gyges, some thirty years earlier, had submitted voluntarily to Aššurbanipal — in line with the general spirit of the text.⁹³

In this framework of shifting perceptions of the erratic external world, the way in which Prism E₁ alludes to the traditionally ethnocentric Assyrianized world, one unitarily ruled by the Assyrian king in which Lydia has for the first time appeared, is all the more remarkable: *lišānāt šit šamši ereb šamši ša Aššur umallū qātū'a* “the languages from sunrise to sunset with which the god Aššur has filled my hands.” Of course, it is easy to imagine that this expression may refer concretely to official interpreters or multilingual speakers present at court, but translations that render it in this way miss the metaphorical force of the image and the figurative use of the word *lišānu*.⁹⁴ Rather, the metaphor suggests that the Assyrian world itself is imagined here as an ensemble of many “languages”: according to the multivalence of the world *lišānu* and the use of language imagery to conceptualize ethnicity, this means nothing else than an ensemble of many “populations, nationalities.” On the other hand, if translating *lišānātu* as “populations, nationalities” captures the meaning of the metaphor,

had died earlier one might suppose that the Assyrians would have interpreted his death in terms of divine punishment already in previous versions of the Annals, as before dying he had defected from them. However, Cogan and Tadmor take Prism B as a landmark, and not the following versions, as the latter strictly depend on B and may simply repeat the episode in a formulaic fashion. As in their chronology Prism B was completed in 650 BC, they argue that Gyges’s death is unlikely to have predated 650. For the new dating of the Prisms according to the *RINAP 5/1* edition see above, n. 77. Gyges’s military aid to Psammetichus is traditionally dated between the late 660s and the early 650s (maximum time span 664–657), and the episode has often been connected to the employment of Ionian and Carian mercenaries by Psammetichus in his attempts to reunify Egypt (as is narrated in *Hdt.* 2.152, *Diod.* 1.66.8–10, 12 and *Polyaen. Strat.* 7.3); see e.g. Spalinger 1978: 402–403; Younis 2003; Räthel 2011.

- 92 Cf. Cogan 2014: 74–75, with the remark that the terminology used in Prism A to describe Gyges’s violation of the pact recalls that of treaty curses.
- 93 Voluntary submission of foreign rulers plays an important role in the inscription of the Ištar Temple (*RINAP 5/1*: Aššurbanipal 23); the majority of foreign rulers mentioned in the military narrative of this text (lines 82–161) are featured as submitting to Aššurbanipal on their own initiative (cf. the comments in *RINAP 5/1 ad loc.*, p. 305).
- 94 Cf. *CAD s.v. lišānu* mng. 4c for *lišānu* meaning “speaker of a foreign language.” For such attempts, see e.g. Liverani 2017: 233 (“Le lingue (cioè gli interpreti) dell’Oriente e dell’Occidente”).



the profound significance of the language imagery employed in the passage is lost.⁹⁵ Here, the common binary opposition of Assyrian vs. non-Assyrian — which is also conveyed by means of language imagery, as we saw with the Sargon Cylinder — is reworked and accompanied by the explicit conceptualization of the Assyrian empire itself as a multiethnic and multilingual world — a world which, however, does not include (yet) the Lydian “other.” Most importantly, Aššurbanipal does not dismiss foreign languages as utterly incomprehensible and alien — *lā mithurti*, as Sargon would put it. On the contrary, the passage implies that foreign languages *can* be mastered by the ruling power: when it is not so, it is a matter of surprise, as this means that something still escapes the king’s control. Therefore, the king’s dismay when communication with the Lydian envoy fails is part of a coherent picture: difference in language is still a way to conceptualize foreignness and otherness, but the inclusion of the “others” and thus the possibility of controlling them is now metaphorically understood as the ability to master *their* language. Prism E₁ plays with the twofold notion conveyed by the word *lišānu* in its literal and metaphorical meanings, and it would not be appropriate to distinguish neatly between one level and the other. Rather, it seems that only the multiplicity of reading levels can fully do justice to the complex rhetoric of the text: differently from the Sargon Cylinder, the notions of language otherness and diversity here play a twofold role, identifying what lies *outside* the empire and at the same time describing and conceptualizing what is *inside* it.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS: PERSPECTIVES COMPARED

In this paper I have examined different ancient Near Eastern perspectives on foreign languages, linguistic diversity, and multilingualism, all of which betray the use of these themes in political discourse as a way to conceptualize and speak of power and peoples. I now conclude with some comparative observations.

As I argued earlier, the episode narrated in Aššurbanipal’s Prism E₁ offers a peculiar Assyrian view of language diversity and pluralism that partially departs from other Assyrian perspectives, such as that which underlies the Sargon Cylinder. On the other hand, while understanding knowledge of languages as a metaphor for mastering the world, the Aššurbanipal passage also brings us back to the link between language and diplomacy — a link that we first observed in the inscriptions of Yariri. Yariri boasts about his own linguistic competence in foreign languages and writing systems and thus draws a map of his international relations and political horizon. Not so differently, Aššurbanipal shows us the god Aššur filling his hands with a number of languages from sunrise to sunset, which metaphorically represent the populations he rules but also the communicative means at his disposal. The crucial difference between the two rulers is one of perspective. Yariri is the ruler of a rela-

⁹⁵ Thus e.g. Zaccagnini 1987: 415: “(Of) the nations of East and West that Aššur had granted me.” For all these reasons I think that the translation offered in *RINAP* 5/1 is preferable: “(Among all) the languages (from) sunrise (to) sunset, which (the god) Aššur had placed at my disposal.”



tively small polity and refers to a network of friendly interlocutors; Aššurbanipal is the king of a vast empire and alludes to interlocutors under his control. While both of them evoke images of linguistic diversity, their aims are different: Yariri locates his prestige as a multilingual ruler within the network of his international partners; Aššurbanipal emphasizes control over foreign populations, within the horizon of an Assyrianized — yet multicultural — world. Yariri is preoccupied with reaching as many partners as possible, and his gaze is oriented outwards; Aššurbanipal, conversely, looks at what is *inside* his own world and is concerned by what lies *outside* it, whence his mixed feeling of superiority and diffidence towards speakers of a language that is not (or not yet) included in Aššur's gift. With regard to these aspects, Yariri's self-portrait finds a much closer counterpart in Aššurbanipal's portrait of the Lydians: as we have seen, it is the Lydians that eventually employ a bilingual messenger in their embassy in order for the mission to be accomplished.

In spite of the structural differences between the two, both Yariri and Aššurbanipal attach ideological significance to linguistic diversity and multilingualism. In the case of Aššurbanipal, this contrasts with the attitude towards foreign languages and linguistic diversity that can be observed in texts of the previous Assyrian kings. This is even clearer if we look at other contexts in which the most significant and evocative image of the Prism E₁ passage is employed — that is, the world of the empire metaphorically described as the “languages from sunrise to sunset” that the god placed in the king's hands. A similar imagery, which significantly emphasizes the diversity of cultures and languages of the subject world, features in the Babylonian version of several Achaemenid royal inscriptions. Achaemenid kings often present themselves in Old Persian as *xšāyaθiya dahyūnām vispazanānām* “king of the lands of all ethnicities,” or *xšāyaθiya dahyūnām paruzanānām*, “king of the lands of many ethnicities.”⁹⁶ The corresponding Babylonian versions almost consistently render this concept by using language-based imagery, such as *šar mātāte ša napḥar lišānu gabbi* “king of the lands of the totality of all languages,” where again we should metaphorically understand “ethnicities, nationalities.”⁹⁷ Similarly, some Achaemenid Babylonian inscriptions refer to the extension of the empire as *mātāte šanītima*⁹⁸ *lišānu šanītu* “the other lands and the other languages.”⁹⁹ These passages, just like Aššurbanipal's Prism E₁,

⁹⁶ Cf. Schmitt 2014 s.v. *paruzana*-“mit vielen Stämmen” (p. 229), *vispazana*-“mit allen Stämmen” (p. 280). Both adjectives are *Possessivkomposita* built on a reconstructed stem **zana*-“Stamm, Geschlecht, Art” (*ibid.*, p. 294). The word “ethnicities” seems to me preferable to render the concept in English (instead of “races”).

⁹⁷ The quote is from Dar. NRa § 2 (Weissbach 1911: 87). Examples of this sort can be found in various inscriptions of Darius, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes I; see the material cited in Haubold 2007: 50 n. 16.

⁹⁸ Sic, expected *šanāti* (for *šaniātu*, f.pl. of *šanītu*).

⁹⁹ Quote from Dar. Pers. g §§ 1 and 2 (Weissbach 1911: 85). As suggested by Greenfield (1991: 181–182), one may compare these examples with the way in which language diversity marks the concept of ethnic diversity in the Persian milieu of the biblical book of *Esther* (1.22, 3.12, and 8.9). However, all this is much more than a “clear awareness” of the multiplicity of nationalities in the Achaemenid empire, as Greenfield puts it.



make full use of the array of metaphors concealed in the word *lišānu* and give us a glimpse of the profound implications of language imagery in political discourse. On the other hand, we can easily remark on how different was the Persians' attitude towards multiculturalism as opposed to the Assyrians'. This also involves the way in which language was used for celebratory purposes: while we know of no bilingual Assyrian royal inscription, multilingualism is at the basis of the Achaemenid celebratory apparatus. In their homeland, the Achaemenids had their royal inscriptions engraved in multiple translations, while occasionally they erected celebratory stelae throughout the empire in the local languages.¹⁰⁰ Also, the Persians seem to have been fully versed in assimilating and manipulating foreign literary traditions.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, it is still remarkable that an attentive reading of the Gyges episode in Prism E₁ points to an unusual view on multilingualism and linguistic diversity already in the framework of the Assyrian empire — thereby showing once more that Assyrian perceptions of the world were anything but monolithic.

ADDENDUM

In a recently published volume titled *A History of Hittite Literacy: Writing and Reading in Late Bronze-Age Anatolia (1650–1200 BC)* (Cambridge 2020), pp. 341–374, Theo van den Hout revises the current interpretation of the Anatolian hieroglyphic sign *326 (SCRIBA). Instead of viewing it as a logogram for “scribe” and related concepts (“script, writing” etc.), he reinterprets the sign as a chair or a stool “symbolizing the concept of a higher office with royal affiliation” (p. 371), proposing to transcribe it as SELLA. This reinterpretation comes with a revision of the meaning of the noun SCRIBA-li- (i.e. *326-li-) in KARKAMIŠ A15b, § 19 (pp. 364–365): van den Hout proposes “royal representative,” based on a meaning “belonging to the throne,” suggested by the derivational suffix *iya-* (see e.g. *zú+ra/i-wa/i-ni-ti*(URBS) |*326-li-*ia-ti*). His revised translation of the passage reads: “[I mingled with/received gifts from *vel sim.*] royal representatives from the City, royal representatives from Tyre(?), royal representatives from Assur, and royal representatives from Taiman...” Unfortunately van

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Liverani 2017: 240. For Achaemenid multilingual inscriptions and their visual rhetoric, see Finn 2011. For the Persians' attitude to foreign languages, see Haubold 2007: 50 with Hdt. 4.87 on Darius erecting a stela in the Greek language at the Bosphorus. A partially different question is the *communication* and the *dissemination* of imperial rhetoric among the subjects. As is well known, Aramaic versions of Achaemenid inscriptions were diffused throughout the empire (see Greenfield and Porten 1982 for Darius's Behistun inscription); Machinist (1993: 97–102) suggests that something similar may also have happened in the Assyrian empire, or at least that verbal communication of imperial rhetoric to the subjects may have been in Aramaic. Cases such as the Assyro-Aramaic bilingual of Tell Fekheriye (Abou-Assaf et al. 1982) and the trilingual (Assyrian-Luwian-Aramaic) inscriptions on portal lions from Arslantaş/Ĥadattu (Hawkins 2000: 246–248; Galter 2007; Röllig 2009) are also a different question, as these are not celebratory texts stemming from the royal court.

¹⁰¹ On this topic see Haubold 2007, with particular reference to the Greeks.

den Hout's book came to my attention when this paper had already been submitted, too late for his proposal to be discussed adequately here. Should his new interpretation of *326 be accepted, the revised meaning of KARKAMIŠ A15b, § 19 would still be consistent with the significance of §§ 19–22 and of Yariri's self-presentation as has been detailed in this paper.



ABBREVIATIONS

- ACLT = Yakubovich, I. (2015–) *Annotated Corpus of Luwian Texts*, <http://web-corpora.net/LuwianCorpus/search/> (last accessed 30.05.2020).
- AHw = von Soden, W. (1965–1974) *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- BLMS = Peterson, J. — Vacín, L., eds. (2014–) *Bilinguals in Late Mesopotamian Scholarship*, <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/blms> (last accessed 28.06.2020).
- CAD = Gelb, I. J. et al. (1956–2010) *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
- HALOT = Koehler, L. — Baumgartner, W. — Stamm, J. J. (1994–2000) *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Leiden: Brill.
- RIMA 1 = Grayson, A. K. (1987) *Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennia BC (to 1115 BC)* [The Royal inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods 1], Toronto — Buffalo — London: University of Toronto Press.
- RIMA 2 = Grayson, A. K. (1991) *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC I (1114–859 BC)* [The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods 2], Toronto — Buffalo — London: University of Toronto Press.
- RINAP 2 = Frame, G. (2021) *The Royal Inscriptions of Sargon II, King of Assyria (721–705 BC)* [The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period 2], University Park (PA): Eisenbrauns.
- RINAP 3/1 = Grayson, A. K. — Novotny, J. R. (2012) *The Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib, King of Assyria (704–681 BC)*, Part 1 [The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period 3/1], Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.
- RINAP 5/1 = Novotny, J. R. — Jeffers, J. (2018) *The Royal Inscriptions of Ashurbanipal (668–631 BC), Aššur-etel-ilāni (630–627 BC), and Sîn-šarra-iškun (626–612 BC), Kings of Assyria*, Part 1 [The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period 5/1], Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.
- SAA 1 = Parpola, S. (1987) *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part I: Letters from Assyria and the West* [State Archives of Assyria 1], Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- SAA 2 = Parpola, S. — Watanabe, K. (1988) *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* [State Archives of Assyria 2], Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- SAA 5 = Lanfranchi, G. B. — Parpola, S. (1990) *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part II: Letters from the Northern and Northeastern Provinces* [State Archives of Assyria 5], Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.
- SAA 17 = Dietrich, M. (2003) *The Babylonian Correspondence of Sargon and Sennacherib* [State Archives of Assyria 17], Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abou-Assaf, A. — Bordreuil, P. — Millard, A.-R. (1982) *La statue de Tell Fekherye et son inscription bilingue assyro-araméenne*, Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations.
- Adams, J. N. — Janse, M. — Swain, S., eds. (2002) *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and the Written Text*, Oxford — New York: Oxford University Press.
- Arnold, B. T. (2008) *Genesis*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Beaulieu, P.-A. (2006) Official and vernacular languages: The shifting sands of imperial and cultural identities in first-millennium B.C. Mesopotamia, in: S. L. Sanders (ed.), *Margins of Writing, Origins of Cultures* [Oriental Institute Seminars 2], Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 187–216.
- Borger, R. (1996) *Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals: die Prismenklassen A, B, C = K, D, E, F, G, H, J und T sowie andere Inschriften*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Briquel-Chatonnet, F., ed. (1996) *Mosaïque de langues, mosaïque culturelle: le bilinguisme dans le Proche-Orient ancien. Actes de la table-ronde du 18 novembre 1995 organisée par l'URA 1062 "Études sémitiques"*, Paris: Maisonneuve.
- Bryce, T. (2012) *The World of the Neo-Hittite Kingdoms: A Political and Military History*, Oxford — New York: Oxford University Press.
- Burkert, W. (1992) *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age*, Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.
- Cogan, M. (2014) The author of Ashurbanipal Prism A (Rassam): An inquiry into his plan and purpose, with a note on his persona, in: *Oriente* 49, 69–83.
- Cogan, M. — Tadmor, H. (1977) Gyges and Ashurbanipal: A study in literary transmission, in: *Orientalia* NS 46/1, 65–85.
- Dale, A. (2015) WALWET and KUKALIM: Lydian coin legends, dynastic succession, and the chronology of Mermnad kings, in: *Kadmos* 54/1–2, 151–166.
- Day, J. (2013) *From Creation to Babel: Studies in Genesis 1–11* [Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament studies 592], London — New York: Bloomsbury.
- DeGrado, J. (2019) King of the four quarters: Diversity as a rhetorical strategy of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, in: *Iraq* 81, 107–125.
- Fales, F. M. (1986) *Aramaic Epigraphs on Clay Tablets of the Neo-Assyrian Period* [Studi Semitici 2], Roma: Università degli Studi "La Sapienza".
- (1987) The enemy in Assyrian royal inscriptions: "The moral judgement", in: H. J. Nissen — J. Renger (eds.), *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn: politische und kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen im alten Vorderasien vom 4. bis 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* [Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient 1], Berlin: Reimer, 425–435.
- (2007) Multilingualism on multiple media in the Neo-Assyrian period: A review of the evidence, in: *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin* 16, 95–122.
- (2015) Ethnicity in the Neo-Assyrian Empire: A view from the nisbe (II): "Assyrians", in: M. Biga — J. Córdoba — C. del Cerro — E. Torres (eds.), *Homenaje a Mario Liverani, fundador de una ciencia nueva — Omaggio a Mario Liverani, fondatore di una nuova scienza* [ISIMU 11–12], Madrid: UA Ediciones, 183–204.
- (2018) The composition and structure of the Neo-Assyrian Empire: Ethnicity, language and identities, in: S. Fink — R. Rollinger (eds.), *Conceptualizing Past, Present and Future. Proceedings of the Ninth Symposium of the Melammu Project Held in Helsinki / Tartu, May 18–24, 2015* [Melammu Symposia 9], Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 443–494.
- Falkenstein, A. — von Soden, W. (1953) *Sumerische und akkadische Hymnen und Gebete*, Zürich — Stuttgart: Artemis.
- Feeney, D. (2016) *Beyond Greek: The Beginnings of Latin Literature*, Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.

- Feldman, M. H. (2014) *Communities of Style: Portable Luxury Arts, Identity, and Collective Memory in the Iron Age Levant*, Chicago — London: University of Chicago Press.
- Finn, J. (2011) Gods, kings, men: Trilingual inscriptions and symbolic visualizations in the Achaemenid Empire, in: *Ars Orientalis* 41, 219–275.
- Fuchs, A. (1994) *Die Inschriften Sargons II. aus Khorsabad*, Göttingen: Cuvillier.
- . (2010) Gyges, Assurbanipal und Dugdammê/Lygdamis: Absurde Kontakte zwischen Anatolien und Ninive, in: R. Rollinger — B. Gutler — M. Lang — I. Madreiter (eds.), *Interkulturalität in der Alten Welt: Vorderasien, Hellas, Ägypten und die vielfältigen Ebenen des Kontakts* [Philippika 34], Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 409–427.
- Galter, H. D. (2007) Die Torlöwen von Arslan Tash, in: M. Köhbach — S. Procházka — G. J. Selz — R. Lohlker (eds.), *Festschrift für Hermann Hunger zum 65. Geburtstag gewidmet von seinen Freunden, Kollegen und Schülern* [WZKM 97], Wien: Institut für Orientalistik, 193–211.
- Gelio, R. (1981) La délégation envoyée par Gygès, roi de Lydie: un cas de propagande idéologique, in: F. M. Fales (ed.), *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: New Horizons in Literary, Ideological, and Historical Analysis. Papers of a Symposium Held in Cetona (Siena), June 26–28, 1980* [Orientis Antiqui Collectio 17], Roma: Istituto per l'Oriente, 203–224.
- Giovannini, A. (2007) *Les relations entre états dans la Grèce antique: du temps d'Homère à l'intervention romaine (ca. 700–200 av. J.-C.)* [Historia, Einzelschriften 193], Stuttgart: Steiner.
- Glassner, J.-J. (2011) Autour de l'épisode babélien: lettrés hébreux et lettrés babyloniens, influences ou polémiques?, in: *Semitica et Classica* 4, 17–22.
- Greenfield, J. C. (1991) Of scribes, scripts, and languages, in: C. Baurain — C. Bonnet — V. Krings (eds.), *Phoinikeia grammata. Lire et écrire en Méditerranée. Acts du Colloque de Liège, 15–18 Novembre 1989*. Namur: Société des Études Classiques, 173–185.
- Greenfield, J. C. — Porten, B. (1982) *The Bisitun Inscription of Darius the Great: Aramaic Version* [Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, Part I: Inscriptions of Ancient Iran, Vol. 5: The Aramaic Versions of the Achaemenian Inscriptions: Texts, I.] London: Humphries.
- Gunter, A. C. (2009) *Greek Art and the Orient*, Cambridge — New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Harmansah, Ö. (2013) *Cities and the Shaping of Memory in the Ancient Near East*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Haubold, J. H. (2007) Xerxes' Homer, in: E. Bridges — E. Hall — P. J. Rhodes (eds.), *Cultural Responses to the Persian Wars: Antiquity to the Third Millennium*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 47–63.
- Hawkins, J. D. (1975) The negatives in Hieroglyphic Luwian, in: *Anatolian Studies* 25, 119–156.
- . (2000) *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions. Volume I: Inscriptions of the Iron Age* [Studies in Indo-European Language and Culture, NS 8], Berlin — New York: de Gruyter.
- Herbordt, S. (2005) *Die Prinzen- und Beamteniegel der hethitischen Grossreichszeit auf Tonbullien aus dem Nişantepe-Archiv in Hattusa, mit Kommentaren zu den Siegelinschriften und Hieroglyphen von J. David Hawkins* [BoHa 19], Mainz am Rhein: von Zabern.
- Jones, C. P. (1999) *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World* [Revealing Antiquity 12], Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.
- Karlsson, M. (2019) Multiculturalism and the Neo-Assyrian Empire, in: *Res Antiquae* 16, 109–118.
- Kloekhorst, A. (2008) *Etymological Dictionary of the Hittite Inherited Lexicon* [LIEEDS 5], Leiden — Boston: Brill.
- Lambert, W. G. (1996) *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.
- Lipiński, E. (2000) *The Aramaeans: Their Ancient History, Culture, Religion* [Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 100], Leuven — Sterling (VA): Peeters.
- Liverani, M. (2017) *Assiria: la preistoria dell'imperialismo*, Roma — Bari: Laterza.



- (1973) Memorandum on the approach to historiographic texts, in: *Orientalia NS 42*, 178–194.
- Ma, J. (2003) Peer polity interaction in the Hellenistic Age, in: *Past & Present 180*, 9–39.
- Machinist, P. (1984/85) The Assyrians and their Babylonian problem: Some reflections, in: *Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, Jahrbuch 1984/85*, 353–364.
- (1986) On self-consciousness in Mesopotamia, in: S. N. Eisenstadt (ed.), *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 183–202.
- (1993) Assyrians on Assyria in the first millennium B.C., in: K. A. Raaflaub (ed.), *Anfänge politischen Denkens in der Antike: Die nahöstlichen Kulturen und die Griechen* [Schriften des Historischen Kollegs 24], München: Oldenbourg, 77–104.
- Melchert, H. C. (2013) Hittite and Hieroglyphic Luvian *arha* ‘away’: Common inheritance or borrowing?, in: *Journal of Language Contact* 6/2, 300–312.
- Momigliano, A. (1975a) *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization*, Cambridge — New York: Cambridge University Press.
- (1975b) The fault of the Greeks, in: *Daedalus* 104/2, 9–19.
- Mullen, A. — James, P., eds. (2012) *Multilingualism in the Graeco-Roman Worlds*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Niehr, H. (2014) Introduction, in: H. Niehr (ed.), *The Aramaeans in Ancient Syria* [HdO 1/106], Leiden — Boston: Brill, 1–9.
- Novotny, J. R. (2014) *Selected Royal Inscriptions of Assurbanipal: L3, L4, LET, Prism I, Prism T, and Related Texts* [State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts 10], Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.
- Oded, B. (1979) *Mass Deportations and Deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, Wiesbaden: Reichert.
- Parpola, S. (2004) National and ethnic identity in the Neo-Assyrian Empire and Assyrian identity in post-empire times, in: *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 18/2, 5–22.
- Payne, A. (2012) *Iron Age Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions* [Writings from the Ancient World 29], Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.
- (2015) *Schrift und Schriftlichkeit: die anatolische Hieroglyphenschrift*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Peker, H. (2014) A funerary stele from Yunus (Karkemish), in: *Orientalia NS 83/2*, 189–193.
- Postgate, J. N. (1989) Ancient Assyria — A multi-racial state in: *ARAM* 1/1, 1–10.
- (1992) The land of Assur and the yoke of Assur, in: *World Archaeology* 23/3, 247–263.
- Radner, K. (2003) Neo-Assyrian period, in: R. Westbrook (ed.), *A History of Ancient Near Eastern Law* [HdO 1/72], Leiden — Boston: Brill, 884–910.
- (2011) Schreiberkonventionen im Assyrischen Reich: Sprachen und Schriftsysteme, in: J. Renger (ed.), *Assur — Gott, Stadt und Land. 5. Internationales Colloquium der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft, 18.–21. Februar 2004 in Berlin*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 385–403.
- Räthel, M. (2011) Gyges, Assurbanipal und Psammetich I.: Bündnispartner und Rivalen. Ein Blick auf die griechischen und altorientalischen Quellen, in: *Kemet* 3, 24–26.
- Reade, J. E. (1979) Ideology and propaganda in Assyrian art, in: M. T. Larsen (ed.), *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires* [Mesopotamia 7], Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 329–343.
- Röllig, W. (2009) Die Inschriften des Ninurta-bēlu-ušur, Statthalters von Kār-Salmānu-ašarēd. Teil I, in: M. Luukko — S. Parpola (eds.), *Of God(s), Trees, Kings, and Scholars: Neo-Assyrian and Related Studies in Honour of Simo Parpola* [Studia Orientalia 106], Helsinki: Societas Orientalis Fennica, 265–278.
- Rollinger, R. (2006) Assyrios, Syrios, Syros und Leukosyros, in: *Die Welt des Orients* 36, 72–82.
- Salmeri, G. (2000) Regioni, popoli e lingue epicorie d’Asia Minore nella Geografia di Strabone, in: A. M. Biraschi — G. Salmeri (eds.), *Strabone e l’Asia Minore*, Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 157–188.
- (2006) «Alien Wisdom», in: L. Polverini (ed.), *Arnaldo Momigliano nella storiografia del Novecento* [Storia e Letteratura 224], Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 149–179.

- Sanders, S. L., ed. (2006) *Margins of Writing, Origins of Cultures* [Oriental Institute Seminars 2], Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
- Schmitt, R. (2014) *Wörterbuch der altpersischen Königsinschriften*, Wiesbaden: Reichert.
- Schollmeyer, A. (1912) *Sumerisch-babylonische Hymnen und Gebete an Šamaš*, Paderborn: Schöningh.
- Seux, M.-J. (1976) *Hymnes et prières aux dieux de Babylonie et d'Assyrie*, Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf.
- Simon, Z. (2012) Where is the land of Sura of the Hieroglyphic Luwian inscription KARKAMIŠ A4b and why were Cappadocians called Syrians by Greeks?, in: *Altorientalische Forschungen* 39/1, 167–180.
- Spalinger, A.J. (1978) The date of the death of Gyges and its historical implications, in: *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 98/4, 400–409.
- Starke, F. (1997) Sprachen und Schriften in Karkamis, in: B. Pongratz-Leisten — H. Kühne — P. Xella (eds.), *Ana šadī Labnāni lū allik: Beiträge zu altorientalischen und mittelmeeischen Kulturen. Festschrift für Wolfgang Röllig* [AOAT 247], Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker — Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 381–395.
- Uehlinger, C. (1990) *Weltreich und «eine Rede». Eine neue Deutung der sogenannten Turmbauerzählung (Gen 11, 1–9)*, Freiburg (Schweiz): Universitätsverlag — Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Vanstiphout, H. L. J. (2003) *Epics of Sumerian Kings: The Matter of Aratta* [Writings from the Ancient World 20], Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.
- Wallace, R. W. (2016) Redating Croesus: Herodotean chronologies, and the dates of the earliest coinages, in: *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 136, 168–181.
- Weeden, M. (2017) Tabal and the limits of Assyrian imperialism, in: Y. Heffron — A. Stone — M. Worthington (eds.), *At the Dawn of History. Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of J. N. Postgate*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 721–737.
- Weissbach, F. H. (1911) *Die Keilinschriften der Achämeniden*, Leipzig: Hinrichs.
- Yakubovich, I. (2002) *Nugae Iuvicae*, in: V. Shevoroshkin — P. J. Sidwell (eds.), *Anatolian Languages*, Canberra: Association for the History of Language, 189–209.
- . (2010) *Sociolinguistics of the Luwian Language*, Leiden: Brill.
- . (2012) The reading of Luwian ARHA and related problems, in: *Altorientalische Forschungen* 39/2, 321–339.
- . (2019) The mighty weapon of Tarhunt, in: P. S. Avetisyan — R. Dan — Y. H. Grekyan (eds.), *Over the Mountains and Far Away: Studies in Near Eastern History and Archaeology Presented to Mirjo Salvini on the Occasion of His 80th Birthday*, Oxford: Archaeopress, 544–559.
- Younger, K. L., Jr. (1998) The deportations of the Israelites, in: *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117/2, 201–227.
- . (2016) *A Political History of the Arameans: From their Origins to the End of their Politics*, Atlanta: SBL Press.
- Younis, S. A. (2003) Psamtik I and Gyges: A secret alliance, in: Z. Hawass (ed.), *Egyptology at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century. Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Egyptologists, Cairo, 2000*, Volume 2: *History, Religion*, Cairo — New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 582–586.
- Zaccagnini, C. (1987) The enemy in the Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions: The “ethnographic” description, in: H. J. Nissen — J. Renger (eds.), *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn: Politische und kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen im alten Vorderasien vom 4. bis 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* [Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient 1], Berlin: Reimer, 409–424.