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## **Assyrian Imperial Administration 680-627 BCE : A Comparison Between Babylonia and the West Under Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal**

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**ASSYRIAN IMPERIAL ADMINISTRATION**  
**680-627 BCE**

**A Comparison Between Babylonia and the West Under  
Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal**

By Iván Losada-Rodríguez

A dissertation submitted as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Arts (History) – Honours  
Edith Cowan University  
International, Cultural and Community Studies  
Faculty of Education and Arts

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## USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

## Abstract

There is a common misconception among those who are not scholars in the field that the Assyrian Empire was an aggressive one, relying simply on force, rather than reason, to assert its will over its neighbours and conquer vast territories. Granted that the Assyrian war machine was unparalleled at its apex, its rulers did not hesitate to use oaths, treaties and pacts wherever possible. Assyrian foreign policy was complex and aided Assyrian kings in conquering vast territories, not only with force, but also with words and the threat of force. In the matter of imperial administration, however, there appear variations in the policies aimed at the western states of Assyria's empire, and the policy directed at Babylon.

This dissertation aims to cast light upon those differences, and offer answers to questions that surface. Administration of conquered lands takes into account cultural and lingual proximity, as well as religious ideology. Another aim is to present the differences in Assyrian imperial administration under the kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal, and explores answers as to why these differences arise, as well as exploring whether foreign or civil policy was used. It also aims to encourage the notion that Assyria was not just a ruthless military power, but also an early empire willing to apply different methods to the creation, and administration, of its empire.

## Declaration

*I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:*

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- II. Contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or*
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Date: 12 November 2007

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Iván Losada-Rodríguez.

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### A Note on the Text

The spelling may vary throughout the text depending on circumstances. The difference between Babylon and Babylonia is the first term is used when referring to the city, and the second term when referring to the kingdom. Assur will refer to the city, whilst Aššur will refer to the deity. Assurbanipal shall be written as such, unless directly quoted from another text, in which case no changes will be made to the spelling, as will Šamaš-šumu-ukin. The same can be said for all variations of spelling that arise out of a direct quote from another author.

## Bibliographical Abbreviations

- ABC            A. K. Grayson (2000), *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*. Eisenbrauns, Indiana.
- ABL            R. F. Harper (1892), *Assyrian and Babylonian Letters Belonging to the Kouyunjik Collections of the British Museum*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- AJA            American Journal of Archaeology.
- ARAB          D. D. Luckenbill (1927), *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylon*, Vol. II, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- EA            W. Moran, (Ed.) (1992), *The Amarna Letters*. The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- JCS            Journal of Cuneiform Studies. American Schools of Oriental Research. Cambridge, Mass.
- LEA            S. W. Cole and P. Machinist (Ed.) (1998), *Letter from Priests to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal*. Helsinki University Press, Helsinki.
- SAA            State Archives of Assyria

## Introduction

-When the gods created mankind  
They gave them death  
But endless life they kept for themselves-

-(From the Epic of Gilgamesh, ca. 1700 BCE).

In his groundbreaking work on Mesopotamia, Leo Oppenheim wrote on the early rise of civilization:

Early in the fourth millennium B. C. there occurred in southwest Asia a phenomenon of lasting importance for the history of the world: the appearance in quick succession of a group of culture foci. Among them were those which were eventually to give rise to the self-contained and characteristic civilizations which we may identify by the names of the river valley that harboured them: the civilizations of the Indus Valley, Euphrates Valley, and Nile Valley.<sup>1</sup>

It is the civilization that arose in the Euphrates Valley that concerns us. This research aims at illustrating several important features of the construction and maintenance of empire, and to demonstrate the differing approaches taken by Assyria in its imperial administration. The time period under scrutiny is that when Assyria was at the height of its power, the years between 680 and 627 BCE, under the kingships of Esarhaddon and his successor, Assurbanipal. Under these two great kings, the realms of the Assyrian empire included Egypt, the Levant, Southern Anatolia, Urartu, Elam and Arabia.<sup>2</sup> Much of the Ancient Near East was at some point under the sway of Assyria, and its world system was far larger than its imperial borders, 'extending from beyond the Straights of Gibraltar to Afghanistan'.<sup>3</sup>

Assyria was able to achieve such a vast and powerful empire through shrewd administration, military prowess, and political and diplomatic planning. It is to its credit that Assyria was able to field such massive armies with capable generals at the

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<sup>1</sup> Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization*. (Chicago, 1977), pp. 31.

<sup>2</sup> See Map 1 (Appendix 1).

<sup>3</sup> Mitchell Allen (2005), "Power is in the Details: Administrative Technology and the growth of Ancient Near Eastern Cores" – in – Christopher Chase-Dunn and Eugene N. Anderson, *The Historical Evolution of World-Systems*. (New York, 2005), pp. 75.

helm and an army of bureaucrats ready to solve logistical and management problems through innovation and adaptation.

Contrary to a popular notion still widely sustained today, Assyria was not an empire solely built and maintained via force. The belligerent nature of the Assyrian state ideology and kingship is well known and no doubt accounts for many of its successes as an empire, yet Assyria was able to resort to diplomacy to expand and consolidate. As much as it relied on force, the threat of force was in many cases enough to convince unwilling states to submit to its overlordship. Pacts, treaties and loyalty oaths played an important part in establishing an Assyrian hegemony in the Ancient Near East. Notwithstanding the fact that the Assyrian empire has been immortalized in history as a pitiless and belligerent power, and that its primary means of expansion was by warfare, the 'expansion of Assyria took place less dramatically, almost imperceptibly, through political deals with foreign rulers (or would be rulers) seeking military aid, peace or favours from the Assyrian king'.<sup>4</sup>

This study will concentrate on the reigns of two Assyrian kings, that of Esarhaddon (680-669 BCE) and Assurbanipal (668-627 BCE)<sup>5</sup>. The reigns of these two kings have been chosen because the information relating to their rules is abundant, and they were the kings of Assyria at a time when it was at its apex. To be able to successfully prove that differences in foreign policy existed, several key issues will be addressed throughout the respective chapters. Assyrian reactions to certain events in its Western provinces and peripheries will be gauged, as will actions undertaken in the kingdom of Babylonia.

Such studies will reveal differing Assyrian strategies for dealing with matters regarding the administration of an empire. Another issue to be dealt with is the need to understand why this was so. If contrasting policies did exist, why is it that Babylonia was treated differently to states in Anatolia, the Levant and Egypt? The

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<sup>4</sup> Simo Parpola and Kazuko Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*. (Helsinki, 1988), pp. XXIII). – \*This collection of treaties, pacts and loyalty oaths will form one of the several pillars upon which this study is based.

<sup>5</sup> The chronology used for dating is that of Jack Sasson's four volume series on the Ancient Near East, discussed in greater detail under the subheading dealing with difficulties and sources.

answers to these questions will be found through an investigation of cultural, religious and military factors.

### **Chapter Structure**

Chapter 1 will set the background as to the rise of the Assyrian empire up to 680 BCE. It will deal with developments in the Assyrian heartland, as well as with large portions of the Ancient Near East. The Middle Assyrian kingdom and rise of the Assyrian empire at the turn of the First Millennium will be covered in this section. Assyrian dependence on Babylonian culture and religious ideology will be remarked on, with greater emphasis placed upon it in Chapter 3. The fall of the Amarna Age and the commencement of the Third Intermediate period in Egypt will be looked at as one of the factors leading to the rise of Assyria. The fall of the Hittites and Mitanni are of important nature as it was not until then that Assyria was able to assert itself as an imperial power. Chapter 1 concludes with the end of Sennacherib and the beginning of Esarhaddon's reign.

Chapter 2 concentrates on the nature of Assyrian policy towards its Western neighbours, provinces and vassals. Specific examples highlight the level of Assyrian imperial control in the Levant and Egypt and what were the hallmarks of this policy. Parpola and Watanabe's (1988) collation of treaties and loyalty oaths will provide very important first hand information into the international workings of the Assyrian empire under Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal, as will Luckenbill's (1927) collection of Assyrian and Babylonian records.

The character of Assyrian imperial administration is examined separately under the two different kings, and then compared so as to establish continuity, or not, in imperial management. The Levantine states (Judah, Israel and Phoenicia, to name a few) and Egypt will form the prime examples of Assyrian decision making in the region. Steven Holloway's research into this area will be a rich source for investigation; particularly his book *Assur is King! Assur is King! Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire*. (Leiden 2002).

Chapter 3 is aimed at asserting the disposition of Assyrian conduct towards Babylonia. It discusses why after Sennacherib's destruction of Babylon his successor,

Esarhaddon, endeavours to rebuild Babylon, and undo the workings of his predecessor. It explains how his motives highlight the variation in Assyrian policy when dealing with Babylonia and draws attention to his effort at solving the 'perennial Babylonian problem'<sup>6</sup> by installing two sons on the thrones of Assyria and Babylonia. This chapter also demonstrates that there is no other documented case of an Assyrian approach to imperial administration by using a member of the royal family in the position of administrator of a province or vassal state, and how Assurbanipal continues his father's policy of appeasement in Babylonia. Assurbanipal's re-construction of Babylon, a continuation of his father's plan, contrasts violently with the sacking of Thebes by his troops. Finally it deals with the Babylonian led insurgency against Assyria that eventually lead Assurbanipal to destroy Babylon after four years of 'civil war'.<sup>7</sup>

Chapter 4 is a comparison in administrative policies between Babylonia and the West under Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal from 680 to 627 BCE. It also aims to provide an explanation for the difference in administration policies. It underlines why cultural and religious continuity is a key factor in the relationship between Assyria and Babylonia, and how the Assyrian kings embark on an ambitious re-building plan to restore Babylon as a political manoeuvre to reverse the damage done by Sennacherib. A short conclusion ends this study.

### **Sources and Difficulties**

A culture long buried under the sands of the Middle East is always a challenge to properly investigate and research. Assyriology has been around for well over a century, and it is predominantly concerned with the study of Assyrian history, culture, religion and language, relying both on monumental archaeological remains and extensive textual information.<sup>8</sup> There are a variety of sources, both primary and secondary, to turn to.

<sup>6</sup> Oppenheim (1977). *Op Cit*, pp. 169.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* -The use of the term 'civil war' is interesting since the use of 'civil' to describe the war implies a closer relationship between Assyria and Babylon, to the extent that Babylon is considered an important part of the Assyrian world-system core. It deserves further scrutiny in Chapter 3.

<sup>8</sup> Jean Bottéro, *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning and the Gods*. (Chicago, 1992), pp. 41-42. Textual information can mean tablets and seals found within a palace or residence, or palace and wall reliefs, which are usually, painted depictions of life and the gods in Assyria.

Out of the most important of the primary sources is the State Archives of Assyria (SAA) series, a collection of textual evidence taken from Assyrian inscriptions, palace wall reliefs and imperial correspondence,<sup>9</sup> the SAA volume II, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* (1988) by Parpola and Watanabe proves to be the most fundamental. Daniel D. Luckenbill's collation of textual evidence from the Ancient Near East in *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia* (1927) is just as important, as is Kirk Grayson's *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (2000).

Secondary evidence comes in the form of several works by authors well known within the field of Assyriology, and the Ancient Near East in general. Jack Sasson's four-volume compilation of essays and research about Ancient Near East is the standard work used to deal with chronology to understand dates that can seem so disparate from researcher to researcher. Amélie Kuhrt and Marc van de Mieroop both have books extensively covering the history and development of the Ancient Near Eastern, making available a wealth of information on Assyria at the turn of the First Millennium. Likewise, the collection of essays that comprises *A Companion to the Ancient Near East*<sup>10</sup> provides several reference points towards the world that Assyria was a part of.

Special mention must be made to three authors in particular. Leo Oppenheim, Grant Frame, and Steven Holloway. Frame's book on the relationship between Assyrian and Babylonia during the years 689 to 627 BCE is indispensable to this study, as is Holloway's investigation into the Assyrian imperial machine, and the religious convictions that drove it. Leo Oppenheim's book on Mesopotamia is the core secondary reference, and one of the most seminal sources when dealing with all aspects of Mesopotamian history.

With any historical study, the disappearance of vital records and monumental structures over time presents a constant challenge, as happened when the Assyrian empire fell after Assurbanipal's death in 627 BCE. It is after the quelling of the

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<sup>9</sup> The State Archive of Assyria series is a compilation of Neo-Assyrian texts, mainly those found in the Nineveh royal palaces, and organized by genre. Funded and organized by the University of Helsinki, most of the textual information comes from tablets and inscriptions uncovered by archaeology during the early years of Assyriology. The texts are presented in both the transliterated and English translation forms. – <http://www.helsinki.fi/science/saa/saa.html>

<sup>10</sup> Daniel Snell (Ed.), *A Companion to the Ancient Near East*, (Oxford 2005).



Babylonian rebellion by Assurbanipal that Assyrian accounts become uncommon. Yet, substantial information remains for the time period 680-640 BCE as to the machinations of the Assyrian empire. This abundance of information yields, however, another problem, namely the large number of documents yet to be translated and collated. Chronology is another issue that arises in the field of Assyriology. When a new find or translation sheds new evidence on a certain topic dates can change. In many cases they do depending on the interpretation of certain authors and scholars.

## Chapter 1

### The Rise of Assyria

*You are sworn by Aššur, King of heaven and earth!*<sup>11</sup>

Chapter One establishes the context for this research topic. The two reigns under scrutiny, that of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal, were the last reigns of a glorious empire. The two kings that ruled from 680 to 627 BCE owed much to the work undertaken by their predecessors, and it is necessary to present a general history of the region, in order to better understand this era. Establishing the background allows the reader to identify the historical, social, cultural and religious context of the period. More importantly, it helps to understand the Assyrian structure of imperial administration by the time Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal come to power.

#### **Rise of Nations**

The history of civilization in the Ancient Near East began approximately 9000 years before the Christian era when “the world’s earliest known civilizations arose and matured”.<sup>12</sup> The geographical area of what is termed the Ancient Near East comprises south-western Asia and Egypt<sup>13</sup>. It effectively groups together the region encompassed by the contemporary states of Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Turkey, Armenia, Georgia, Iraq, Iran, and parts of Saudi Arabia.<sup>14</sup>

In the Ancient Near East, primarily in Mesopotamia, the domestication of crops enabled man to inhabit a strip of fertile land, and live off it for generations, thus establishing a permanent living community:

‘The greater productivity per household that was possible if families collaborated in sowing and harvesting provided an incentive for the emergence of sedentary hamlets and villages.’<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> SAA 2:6. Parpola and Watanabe (1988).

<sup>12</sup> Bernard Knapp, *The History and Culture of Ancient Western Asia and Egypt*. (California, 1988), pp. 11.

<sup>13</sup> See Map 2 (Appendix 1).

<sup>14</sup> Knapp (1988). *Op Cit*, pp. 11.

<sup>15</sup> Fekri A. Hassan (1995) “Egypt in the Prehistory of Northeast Africa”, in Jack M. Sasson, *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East. Volume 2*, (New York, 1995), pp. 672.

New farming techniques enabled farmers to become less dependent on 'dry farming zones', and agriculture was able to advance based on new irrigation techniques.<sup>16</sup> It would not be long before powerful city states arose, and with this growth, the development of an early style of inter-kingdom relations. As the influence of certain kingdoms grew larger, and trade between these kingdoms increased on an ever-larger scale, a system of relations was formed.

The advent of trade through surplus production led to an inevitable need to create a policy dealing with foreign kingdoms so as to better take advantage of economic dealings. The practice of diplomacy would have built upon existing trade routes and the knowledge of foreign customs. In most cases it 'seems that the economic horizon stretched beyond the limits of diplomacy',<sup>17</sup> paving the way for the development of relations between states. For a trader to successfully sell their ware in a foreign state, they would have had to know the rudimentary customs of their clients. As early as 1800 BCE, during the reign of Shamshi-Adad I, there is evidence of the existence of diplomatic relations between two kingdoms, building upon previously established trade relations and routes.<sup>18</sup> However, for the next four centuries, due to an inability to successfully compete against its neighbours, Assyrian history would enter a 'dark ages'.<sup>19</sup>

The Middle Assyrian period (ca. 1400-1100 BCE)<sup>20</sup> provides a glimpse into the state that was to become the most powerful on earth. The Assyrian kings demonstrated from early on Assyria's dependence on a simplistic style of diplomacy. The particular case of Ashur-nadin-ahhe I (ca. 1440 BCE), who is known to have engaged in

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<sup>16</sup> William W. Hallo and William K. Simpson, *The Ancient Near East: A History*. (Fort Worth, 1998), pp. 26.

<sup>17</sup> Martin Wight, *Systems of States*, (Leicester, 1977), pp. 33.

<sup>18</sup> Jesper Eidem and Flemming Hojlund, 'Trade or Diplomacy? Assyria in the Eighteenth Century BC', in *World Archaeology*, Vol. 24, No 3, Ancient Trade: New Perspectives, (Feb, 1993), pp. 441-448. Assyrian trade with Dilmun is well known, but certain evidence shows that it may be more complex than that. This article deals with the translation of the word *harr ā num*, and that it may have been diplomacy, not trade, propelling relations between the two kingdoms.

<sup>19</sup> Refer to Oppenheim (1977), pp. 164-166, for a general discussion on the topic of the Assyrian dark ages, and the brief rise of Assyria in the late Second Millennium, the Middle Assyrian Period, when Assyria was freed from Mitanni overlordship.

<sup>20</sup> Amélie Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East: c. 3000-330 BC*, Volumes I-II, (London, 1995), pp. 348. The land held by the Assyrian during the middle period are the traditional lands referred to by the Neo-Assyrian kings during the Neo-Assyrian resurgence.

diplomatic approaches to the Egyptian king Tuthmosis III, stands out.<sup>21</sup> The first king of the Middle Period, Ashur-Uballit (ca. 1365-1330 BCE)<sup>22</sup> would have learnt from his predecessor that it was wise to engage in diplomatic practice. Once freedom from the Mitanni had been assured, Ashur-Uballit claimed the Assyrian throne under the title of “Great King”, and began direct diplomatic contact with the Egyptian court, undermining the Babylonians.<sup>23</sup>

This period would also leave behind the foundations upon which Assyrian foreign policy would build during the ninth century resurgence. From this period onwards we get Assyrian annexation of territories undertaken in three steps. Firstly, the political subjugation of a state brought about through the threat of force, or military manoeuvres.<sup>24</sup> The second step, a favourite of the Neo-Assyrian kings, was the imposition of non-aggression treaties, usually resigning the non-Assyrian party to ‘eternal vassalage’.<sup>25</sup> The third step was the complete domination of a territory, normally supplemented with deportations and harsh military action.<sup>26</sup>

### Age of Empires

By the end of the Second Millennium, the Middle Assyrian period had finished, and the Assyrian kingdoms were dependent on other regional powers. It was not until the turn of the First Millennium that the world’s first large empire began to take shape. Stephen Howe describes an empire as a ‘large, composite, multi-ethnic or multinational political unit, usually created by conquest, and divided between a dominant centre and subordinate, sometimes far distant, peripheries’.<sup>27</sup> The fact that the world had yet to see a large, fully functional empire was soon to be changed by a series of aggressive Assyrian kings.

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 348-349.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> John A. Brinkman (1972), ‘Foreign Relations of Babylonia from 1600 to 625 B. C.: The Documentary Evidence’, in *AJA* 76, No. 3 (July 1972), pp. 276.

<sup>24</sup> Simo Parpola (1987), ‘Neo-Assyrian Treaties from the Royal Archives of Nineveh’, in *JCS* 39 (August 1987), pp. 1 (footnote 3).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Stephen Howe, *Empire. A Very Short Introduction*, (New York, 2002), pp. 30. Intent is an important part of this definition. Imperialistic aims must exist and be justified in order to create an empire. This term will suit for the purposes of this research.

The Amarna age of inter-kingdom relations characterizes the last few centuries of the Second Millennium.<sup>28</sup> Amenhotep III, great Pharaoh of Egypt, and his successor, Akhenaten, pursued diplomatic interaction with the other members of the Great Powers Club of the age.<sup>29</sup> Assyria was quick to catch on to this practice of diplomatic relations. The Amarna period was based on the arrangement that several great powers, roughly equal in strength, were able to limit each other's power. These great kingdoms of the Ancient World were induced out of common benefit into diplomatic relations.

The age of inter-kingdom diplomacy served to weaken several states, allowing Assyria to expand and consolidate in Mesopotamia. From Akhenaten onwards, Assyria became a major player on the international scene as it became accepted as a member of the Great Powers Club, enjoying the endorsement of its actions in Mesopotamia by none other than Egypt.<sup>30</sup> By receiving Assyrian embassies, exchanging gifts, and entering into diplomatic relations with the Mesopotamian kingdom, Egypt was effectively condoning Assyrian expansionist policy.<sup>31</sup> The main obstacle for Assyria's ambitions during the Amarna Age was the kingdom of Mitanni, of which Assyria was dependent. As master diplomats, the Hittites were able to crush the kingdom of Mitanni, without jeopardising the unity of the Great Powers Club, in a series of lightning campaigns, sweeping aside their forces, and destroying Mitannian power in the region.<sup>32</sup>

The destruction of the Mitanni serves to highlight an overall weakness in the enforcement of actions that would protect those members of the Great Powers Club: the great distance between Egypt and Mesopotamia, where the Assyrian, Babylonian and Mitanni kingdoms were located. Rather than marching an Egyptian army over a

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<sup>28</sup> The Amarna Age started during the reign of Amenhotep III, ca. 1350 BCE, and lasted for over 200 years thereafter. Chronology taken from Sasson (Ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, 4 Volumes, (New York, 1995).

<sup>29</sup> The club comprised Egypt, Mitanni, the Hittites, Babylon and Assyria. For further information on the subject refer to Mario Liverani, "The Great Powers Club", in Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook, *Amarna Diplomacy*, (Baltimore, 2000).

<sup>30</sup> An example of such endorsement can be found in EA 15 in William Moran, *The Amarna Letters*, (Baltimore, 1992), when Egypt accepts Assyria as a member of the Great Powers Club. The acceptance came in the form of receiving Assyrian delegations, and the exchanges of gifts giving between Pharaoh and Assyrian king.

<sup>31</sup> EA 15.

<sup>32</sup> Trevor Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites*, (New York, 2005), pp. 161.

great distance, negotiating with the victorious parties was the easiest and most effective solution to the issue. Whilst the Hittites were a new power to be reckoned with from ca. 1350 onwards,<sup>33</sup> it was the Assyrians who had most to gain from this action. With this liberation from Mitanni dependence, Assyria was free to compete with the other powers of the Amarna Age, and enter a formative period in which, for the next few centuries, the Assyrian concept of foreign policy would be developed.<sup>34</sup>

Circa 1274 BCE, the armies of Egypt and Hattusa clashed near a city on the Orontes River in modern day Syria. After the battle it was the Hittites who remained in possession of this strategic military outpost on the borders of these two great kingdoms.<sup>35</sup> With the Egyptians no longer exerting great influence in the Northern Levant and Mesopotamia and suffering a decline in revenue income from its dependencies,<sup>36</sup> the Hittites and Assyrians became powers in themselves. The two combined forces to route and vanquish what was left of the kingdom of Mitanni, and in turn, Assyria undermined the Hittites by occupying and administering the lands formerly held by Mitanni.<sup>37</sup>

A shadow fell upon those states that bordered the Mediterranean at the turn of the First Millennium. The archaeological and textual information available to historians today, dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, shows that a major catastrophe affected the Levant, Egypt, Anatolia and the Mediterranean. A series of large-scale crop failures in the Mediterranean peripheries triggered human migrations on a massive scale throughout Anatolia and the Levant.<sup>38</sup> This large migration of people, who often attacked the territories they moved into, precipitated the end of the Hittite kingdoms. Although they received grain imports from the Egyptians,<sup>39</sup> the added

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Oppenheim (1977), *Op Cit*, pp. 165.

<sup>35</sup> Ian Shaw, *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, (New York, 2002), pp. 297-298.

<sup>36</sup> John Taylor, "The Third Intermediate Period" (1069-664 BC), (2002), in Shaw (2002), *Op Cit*, pp. 331.

<sup>37</sup> David Warburton, *Egypt and the Near East: Politics in the Bronze Age*, (Neuchatel, 2001), pp. 212

<sup>38</sup> Shaw (2002), *Op Cit*, pp. 328.

<sup>39</sup> These early empires of the world system were in fact agrarian empires, highly dependent on successful crop yields. Crop failures would produce famine and irreparable economic damage, hastening the end of any ancient empire/kingdom/state.

strain caused by such an influx of peoples was too much of a burden for the kingdom.<sup>40</sup>

This is not to say Assyria escaped unscathed from this disaster toward the end of the Bronze Age. However, over three centuries, the Assyrians were able to recover faster than any other state of the Ancient Near East and Egypt. When all the other states in the Near East and Mediterranean peripheries were staggering from the major economic and demographic change that accompanied the transition to the Iron Age (ca. 1000 BCE), the most remarkable detail about Assyria during this period in the ninth century is the vigour with which it is able to recuperate itself.<sup>41</sup>

### **The Assyrian Monolith**

The beginning of the First Millennium saw a series of belligerent Assyrian kings taking to the throne, and the centre of power of the ancient world shift away from Egypt to Mesopotamia. The Assyrian resurgence in the ninth century began with Ashurnasirpal ca. 930 BCE, and continued with the warrior king Adad-Nirari II (ca. 911-891 BCE).<sup>42</sup> The peak of the first Neo-Assyrian revival was achieved under the reigns of Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BCE) and Shalmaneser III (859-824 BCE).<sup>43</sup> Whilst the rule of Ashurnasirpal II marks the continuity, and conclusion, of Assyria in the long process of recovering its historical lands<sup>44</sup>, Shalmaneser III is the first Assyrian king to begin an entirely new process; the conquest of lands outside Assyria's traditional borders.<sup>45</sup>

The ability of these new Assyrian kings to seemingly recruit large numbers of native troops to undertake military campaigns, accompanied by a new program of recolonization,<sup>46</sup> appears to have reversed the demographic damage caused by the

<sup>40</sup> Bryce (2005), *Op Cit*, pp. 331-334.

<sup>41</sup> Paul-Alain Beaulieu (2005), "World Hegemony, 900-300 BCE", in Snell (Ed.) *A Companion to the Ancient Near East*, (Malden, 2005), pp. 49.

<sup>42</sup> Bryce (2005), *Op Cit*, pp. 347.

<sup>43</sup> Mario Liverani (2004), "Assyria in the Ninth Century: Continuity or Change?", in Frame, Grant (Ed.), *From the Upper to the Lower Sea: Studies on the History of Assyria and Babylonia in Honour of A.K. Grayson*, (Leiden, 2004), pp. 213.

<sup>44</sup> Those under Assyrian control after the largest expansion during Middle Assyrian period.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Recolonization would come in the form of resettling Assyrian natives in other parts of the kingdom peacefully, or, later on, forcefully deporting and resettling natives of conquered lands.

migrations that marked the end of the Bronze Age.<sup>47</sup> These same kings were also able to learn from the predecessors, and institute an aggressive foreign policy that suited their imperialistic aims. The next two hundred years of Assyrian history fluctuate greatly. It was not until the mid-eighth century that the Assyrian empire began to take the shape of the monolith it would become a century later. The Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 BCE) is considered to be the founder of the true Assyrian empire.

Tiglath-Pileser III was the first to do away with the large provinces and provincial power cores. He did so by splitting the provinces into smaller entities, consequently limiting the power base of the provincial governors. By doing this he developed the provincial system westward of the Euphrates, creating a large number of new provinces and vassal states.

By abolishing the old border between the land of Assur and the client kingdoms of the west, Tiglath-Pileser in fact inaugurated the true imperial phase of Assyria.<sup>48</sup>

Though it is known that Tiglath-Pileser III was succeeded by his son Shalmaneser V (726-722 BCE), details concerning his reign are obscure.<sup>49</sup> It is unclear whether his successor, Sargon II, was an outsider who usurped the throne, or another of Tiglath-Pileser's sons. What is beyond doubt, however, is that Sargon II (721-705 BCE)<sup>50</sup> initiated the most successful period in Assyrian history, and the largest empire building experiment the world had yet seen.

Assyria was able to maintain such a large empire by adopting many different, and highly successful, tactics and techniques. They were the first to maintain a year-round standing army. The creation of a professional officer class dedicated to military affairs gave the Assyrians an undeniable advantage on the field of battle. Secondly they were easy to assimilate new technologies from their peripheral provinces and vassal states.<sup>51</sup> The end of the Bronze Age and the fall of the Hittite kingdom meant that many skilled labourers, fluent in the Hittite art of metal work, were absorbed into the

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<sup>47</sup> Beaulieu (2005), *Op Cit*, pp. 49.

<sup>48</sup> Liverani (2004), *Op Cit*, pp. 53.

<sup>49</sup> George Roux, *Ancient Iraq*, New Edition, (London, 1992), pp. 310.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Allen (2005), *Op Cit*.



Assyrian empire, and their skills put to work designing new weaponry for the Assyrian armies. New administrative technologies were put in place, including the use of Aramaic as a *lingua franca*, standardized weight systems and effective taxation management.<sup>52</sup>

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, was the manipulation of the local elite. For far away provinces it was easier for Assyria to support the ruling elite already in place, given that they were willing to submit to Assyrian overlordship. It effectively meant that the ruling elite were able to maintain their status as long as they were willing to pay taxes, and provide for Assyrian armies should they be campaigning in the region. The relationship was usually enforced by a treaty or loyalty oath, sometimes preceded by the sacking and destruction of a city as a show of force, as testified by the textual records left behind by the Assyrian kings themselves.

The Sargonid kings conquered all who opposed them and under their command the Assyrian empire stretched from Elam in the east to Egypt in the west, from Babylonia in the south to Carcemish in Anatolia in the north. Their world empire system extended as far Spain and encompassed much of the Mediterranean.<sup>53</sup> Sargon and his successor Sennacherib (704-681 BCE)<sup>54</sup> campaigned all the way up to the gates of Egypt and quashed countless rebellions within the provinces that made up the Assyrian empire.

### **The People of Aššur**

To understand the justification for imperial construction as undertaken by the Assyrian state, it is necessary to have a basic comprehension of the religious ideology driving the Assyrian people. Whilst in Egypt the pharaohs were seen as an incarnation of the deity, the Assyrian kings embodied what their pantheon of gods stood for. The Assyrian king was the high priest of Assur on earth, a mortal representative of the gods; ‘The Neo-Assyrian royal titularies... hammer away at the theme of the unique

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Mario Liverani (2001), “The Fall of the Assyrian Empire: Ancient and Modern Interpretations”, in Susan Alcock & Terrance D’Altroy, *et al* (Ed.), *Empires*, (Cambridge, 2001).

<sup>54</sup> Roux (1992), *Op Cit.*

proximity of the king to the divine realm and extol his god-like powers.<sup>55</sup> Though not viewed as a deity, the Assyrian king was expected to enact the cosmic order in the earthly realm, much like the Pharaoh in Egyptian ideology.

The Assyrian gods were the supreme rulers of their divine universe, and the Assyrian kings were the supreme rulers on Earth; thus resigning themselves to the cosmic order:

Intrinsic to the Assyrian perception of history was the notion of the god's absolute universal authority, a theology with theocratic significance: the gods are directly involved in the relations of states whose fate they also determine. They supervise international affairs as well as direct all human matters. War and peace are at the discretion of the gods.<sup>56</sup>

The Assyrians were quite tolerant of the religions of other cultures and they did not seek to impose their own religious views over those they conquered. They used their ideology to justify their actions in the field. If the Assyrian gods were masters in the heavens, then on earth, the Assyrians were to be masters of the four corners of the world. It was as the gods intended. In reverence of their chief deity Aššur, they called themselves subjects of Aššur, and their empire, the land of Aššur. They wrote the names of 'Assyria, the city of Assur, and the national god Aššur all as Aššur, which clearly marks the native understanding of the land as the extension of the city and god'.<sup>57</sup>

It is the provinces that constitute Assyria proper, 'if you are in Assyria, you are in a province'.<sup>58</sup> There was a much larger degree of internal management by the Assyrian ruler within the provinces. Governors were appointed by the Assyrian king, usually from one of the old ruling families of Assur, not the local ruling elite.<sup>59</sup> Since a

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<sup>55</sup> Steven W. Holloway, *Aššur is King! Aššur is King! Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, (Leiden, 2002), pp. 81.

<sup>56</sup> Bustenay Oded, *Justifications for War in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*, (Wiesbaden, 1992), pp. 11.

<sup>57</sup> Peter Machinist, "Assyrians on Assyria in the First Millennium B.C.", in Kurt Raaflaub and Elizabeth Müller-Luckner, *Anfänge Politischen Denkens in der Antike: Die Nahöstlichen Kulturen und die Griechen*, (München, 1993), pp. 81.

<sup>58</sup> John N. Postgate (1992), 'The Land of Assur and the Yoke of Assur', in *World Archaeology*, Vol. 23, No 3, Archaeology of Empires, (Feb, 1992), pp. 252.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

province was part of the internal structure of the empire, it was administered as such. Territories freshly added as provinces were said to have been returned to Assyria, 'reflecting the ideological centrality of the city of Assur, and the city-god'.<sup>60</sup>

### **Assyrian Foreign affairs**

Today's conventions on international relations, diplomacy and foreign affairs have made these fields complicated, and they do little to describe the situation present centuries before the Christian era began. The diplomatic system of the Ancient Near East during this period was a simple one. The great kings communicated with each other, cemented pacts and treaties with gifts of precious items, marriages and non-aggression pledges. Foreign policy was determined based on the wants of each king, and the ideological relationship between these kingdoms. The style of diplomacy practiced was crude, but it was 'able to achieve results. Intentions were conveyed; information was gathered; and negotiations successfully concluded.'<sup>61</sup>

Another issue to be raised is the use of the term 'international relations' when dealing with the pre-modern world. The notion of nation states is a new one, something that arises out of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Europe. The term 'international affairs' implies relations between nation states, not ancient empires. However, the term foreign affairs can be applied. Those kingdoms found in the Levant or Egypt were very different from those found in Assyria or Babylonia, in fact they were quite 'foreign' in several aspects, be it culture, social structure, ideology and architecture, just to name a few instances. When referring to the term 'foreign policy', it should be remembered that the modern day rules and laws do not apply. In the ancient world it referred to the policy adopted for dealing with foreign kingdoms and city-states on all levels, be it economic, martial, or religious. Foreign policy was justified through religious beliefs; the Assyrian kings were carrying out instructions on behalf of their gods.<sup>62</sup>

Shortly before Sargon II took over as Assyrian king, two events of considerable importance occurred which would affect Assyrian strategy and diplomacy for the next

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 251.

<sup>61</sup> Geoffrey Berridge, 'Amarna Diplomacy: A Full Fledged Diplomatic System?', in Cohen and Westbrook (2000), *Op Cit*.

<sup>62</sup> ARAB VII: IV. Text from the Zinjirli Stele. A great example of Esarhaddon justifying his actions, through religious ideology, in Egypt as a direct result of the Pharaoh Tirhaqa ignoring the established cosmic order, and rebelling not against the king of Assyria, but rather the Assyrian gods.

century, 'the interference of Egypt in Palestine and of Elam in Babylonia'.<sup>63</sup> It was Tiglath-Pileser's meddling in the Levant that brought about the hostilities between Egypt and Assyria. It meant that until the fall of the Assyrian empire, the Assyrian kings had to contend with a hostile Egypt, forever interfering in the Levant, greatly influencing Assyrian imperial policy in the region.

It is important to note the importance of the effect that Assyrian religion had upon imperial expansion and administration. The proximity in culture, religious beliefs, and to an extent the pantheon of deities of Assyria and Babylonia, affected the way Assyria would deal with Babylonia during the years 680-627 BCE. Sharing no such affinity with the west meant that Assyria could comfortably justify conquest and plunder in the name of their chief deity, Aššur.

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 310.

## Chapter 2

### Assyria and the West

*This is the treaty which Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, has concluded with you, in the presence of the great gods of heaven and earth, on behalf of Assurbanipal, the great crown prince designate, son of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, your lord, whom he has named and appointed to the crown-princeship.*<sup>64</sup>

To maintain such a large empire, it is necessary to have in place an effective system of imperial administration. This chapter seeks to present the sort of imperial policy used by Assyria to control the western states that made up the empire administered by Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal. It will further explain Near Eastern ‘foreign policy’ in terms of the relationship between Assyria and Egypt, and analyse the use of Assyrian administrative policy in Egypt, Judah and Phoenicia.

The First Millennium in the Ancient Near East presented new challenges to those kingdoms that had comprised the Great Powers Club. Babylonia had been weakened from its constant campaigning against the Hurrians and Elamites, and the Mitanni long deposed by the Hittites. The Hittites were in turn devastated by the famines and large-scale migrations that heralded the end of the Bronze Age, like many other kingdoms bordering the Mediterranean. Egypt had fallen into hard times, known historically as the Third Intermediate Period (1100-650 BCE)<sup>65</sup>, and ceased to be a real threat to Assyrian interests in the Levant by the time of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal.

#### **Two Great Powers: Assyria and Egypt**

Assyria’s rule of Egypt under Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal had no precedent; they were the only Near Eastern kings, up until then, to have ever governed over Egypt. Assyrian administrative policies in Egypt can be termed ‘foreign policy’ as Egypt lay well outside the land considered by Assyria to be the ‘Land of Aššur’.<sup>66</sup> Further, there is no documented case of an Assyrian attempt to install a member of the local elite as

<sup>64</sup> SAA 2: 6. Parpola and Watanabe (1988).

<sup>65</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt. 1100-650 BC*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Revised Edition, (Westminster 1986).

<sup>66</sup> Refer to Chapter 1 concerning the people and land of Aššur.

ruler of Egypt. There is no distinct case concerning the installation of a member of the Assyrian royal family in the entire western Near East. Up until the end of the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III (ca. 740-727 BCE) Assyria and Egypt had avoided entering into conflict with each other, largely spurred by the spirit of the Amarna period,<sup>67</sup> and the great distances between the two kingdoms. It was not until Tiglath-Pileser began to aggressively meddle in the southern Levant that the two powers commenced a period of hostile relations.<sup>68</sup>

The year 701 BCE marked a turning point in Assyrian policy toward Egypt. In that year 'Sennacherib had faced an Egyptian army supporting rebels against Assyria',<sup>69</sup> and after 20 years of relatively friendly Egyptian neutrality in Palestine,<sup>70</sup> the Egyptian king, Shebitku, sent troops to fight alongside the kings of Ekron and Judah against Assyria.<sup>71</sup> By the time of Esarhaddon's accession the relationship had soured further, and aggressive administrative policy in Syria-Levant meant that Assyria was to bring down its entire wrath on Egypt.

Most of the western kingdoms had already been invaded, annexed and re-organized into provinces and vassal states as a result of the military and diplomatic campaigns of Tiglath-Pileser III and Sargon II during the Eighth century.<sup>72</sup> Although Esarhaddon's invasion in 674 BCE was largely unsuccessful, only three years later he was able to mass another powerful army and invade again.<sup>73</sup> In 671 BCE, Esarhaddon responded to Egyptian aggression that came as a result of 'military expansion as far as Ashkelon in Philistia, under Tirhaqa, the militant pharaoh of the 25<sup>th</sup> Nubian dynasty of Egypt'.<sup>74</sup> Esarhaddon decided that Tirhaqa's actions in Ashkelon were not to be tolerated, and mobilised his armies upon receiving positive answers after querying the

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<sup>67</sup> From Akhenaten's reign onward, Assyrian action in Mesopotamia appeared to be sanctioned by Egypt. EA 15 is an interesting read concerning early Assyro-Egyptian relations.

<sup>68</sup> Kuhrt (1995), *Op Cit*, pp. 499.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>70</sup> Kitchen (1986), *Op Cit*, pp. 155. The term 'friendly' is used because the Egyptian ruler in those 20 years, Shabako, maintained a neutral stance in Palestine as Sargon II rampaged in the region. Shabako even extradited a fugitive wanted by Assyria; Iamani of Ashdod.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*. Kitchen discusses the issues of dating the reigns of Egyptian kings during this period, pp. 150-155.

<sup>72</sup> See Map 3 (Appendix 1).

<sup>73</sup> Kitchen (1986), *Op Cit*, pp. 145.

<sup>74</sup> Hayim Tadmor, "World Dominion: The Expanding Horizon of the Assyrian Empire", (1997), in L. Milano, S. de Martino *et al* (Ed.), *Landscapes. Territories, Frontiers and Horizons in the Ancient Near East*. XLIV Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale. (Venezia 1997), pp.59.

gods.<sup>75</sup> Assyrian interests in the Levant were being threatened and Esarhaddon was not about to allow this.

This time the Assyrian armies were successful. Esarhaddon defeated the Egyptian forces, driving them southwards, and securing, with the capture of Memphis, Assyrian control over Northern Egypt. Esarhaddon was unsparing in writing his own praise:

Esarhaddon, the great king, the mighty king, king of the universe, king of Assyria, viceroy of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of Karduniash (Babylonia), all of it (*lit.*, them), king of the kings of Musur, Paturisu and Kûsi (Lower Egypt, Upper Egypt and Ethiopia);<sup>76</sup>

The sack of Memphis was a calculated Assyrian domination ploy, an essential component of their foreign policy. A country guilty of sin against the Assyrian gods had to be made an example of. Like in modernity where military manoeuvres can be used to discourage a country from hostilities, in the ancient world the sacking of an important city made for a strong visual representation on the fate that awaited those who opposed Assyrian rule. Esarhaddon then proceeded to install various local princes as rulers, using the proven formula of utilising the local elite, so long as they swore loyalty to their Assyrian overlords, to manage a land far from the power core.<sup>77</sup>

K. A. Kitchen's study on Egypt during the Third Intermediate Period provides a listing on local Saite rulers in Egypt before, during and after Esarhaddon's second invasion.<sup>78</sup>

Esarhaddon felt no need to justify the actions of his armies in Egypt other than the standard Assyrian explanation about carrying out the gods' wishes. According to his own inscriptions, and the events that unfolded during his invasion of Egypt, Esarhaddon was only too happy to comply:

When Assur, the great lord, in order to show to the peoples the immensity of my mighty deeds, extended (*lit.*, made powerful) my kingship over the kings of the four regions (of the world), and made great my name... To rob, to plunder, to

<sup>75</sup> SAA 4. Starr (1990). SAA 4: 81-83 directly refer to Esarhaddon inquiring as to whether he should march on Ashkelon. SAA 4: 84-87 recount Esarhaddon's queries regarding military action to be taken on the Pharaoh Tirhaqa.

<sup>76</sup> ARAB VII: IV: 575. Text from the Zinjirli Stele.

<sup>77</sup> Kitchen (1986), *Op Cit*, pp. 144-146.

<sup>78</sup> Refer to Kitchen (1986), *Op Cit*, chapters 9-10.

extend the border of Assyria, they (the gods) empowered me (*lit.*, fill my hands).<sup>79</sup>

Although Assyrian control over Northern Egypt lasted for a short time, foreign policy would be the functional term here.<sup>80</sup> Egypt was a culturally different territory on the very fringes of the Assyrian empire, and the Assyrian king had to rely on the loyalty of the local princes, secured by oaths, to maintain control over the region.

Deportation was another favourite Assyrian policy that was employed in Egypt. It was common of Assyrian imperial administration to deport peoples from troublesome areas to other parts of the empire,<sup>81</sup> thus accelerating assimilation. Additionally, bringing these peoples into the inner folds of the empire made it easier to maintain control over them, as well as breaking down the sentiment that one feels for their native land, and the problems that that may cause for a foreign invader. A letter, dated during the reigns of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal, and written by the king's priests deals with the topic of providing grain for Kushites and Egyptians in the Assyrian city of Assur.<sup>82</sup> It is possible that these were in fact deportees from Assyrian campaigns in the years under Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal.

Through the diplomatic process of installing loyal princes in positions of power, and promising them that position as long as they maintained their loyalty to him, Esarhaddon was able to govern the parts of Egypt he had conquered from afar.<sup>83</sup> The stark contrast between Assyrian and Egyptian culture, ideology and society undermined any plans of an administration similar to that used in Babylonia. In 669 BCE, as Esarhaddon was once again marching on Egypt to consolidate Assyrian suzerainty, he died *en route*, leaving the resolution of the Egyptian problem up to his successor.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> ARAB VII: IV: 579. *Op Cit.*

<sup>80</sup> Based on the idea that the foreign policy of a state/country/kingdom operates on the guidelines of how it must interrelate with other states/countries/kingdoms. Foreign policy is designed to protect an entity's interests outside its borders, including those that are ideological and economic. Very true in the case of the Assyrian administration of Egypt, a kingdom well outside its traditional borders.

<sup>81</sup> The destruction and deportation of the kingdom of Israel is a clear example of the effectiveness, and devastation, of this policy.

<sup>82</sup> LEA 13.

<sup>83</sup> See Kitchen's use of Manetho's chronology from *Africanus* to sort out local Saite rulers during the years that Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal ruled Assyria, in Kitchen (1986), *Op Cit.*

<sup>84</sup> Kuhrt (1995), *Op Cit.*, pp. 499.



Shortly after ascending to the throne, Assurbanipal launched a campaign against Egypt to continue what his father had begun in 669 BCE, demonstrating his intent to maintain Assyria's aggressive foreign policy in the west. In 663 BCE they took and sacked Thebes in what was 'an event that had been totally inconceivable for over 1500 years'.<sup>85</sup> Like the sacking of Memphis, the destruction of Thebes would have been intended as a propaganda tool cautioning against rebellion. In strict continuance with his father's policy of ruling Egypt as a vassal state with rulers from the local elite, Assurbanipal set about restoring to power those princes Esarhaddon had originally relied on when he had conquered Egypt in 671 BCE.<sup>86</sup>

These kings, prefects and governors, whom my father had installed in Egypt, who had deserted their posts before the advance of Tarkû, (and) filled the plain, I reinstalled in their posts, in their (former) residences.<sup>87</sup>

### Crossroads

Syria-Palestine was the crossroads of the Ancient Near East and it represented a great 'economic and political prize. Every northern and eastern power that arose in the ancient Near East tried to penetrate and occupy Syria'.<sup>88</sup> From the early times of Egypt, to the Hittite presence in Anatolia and the Assyrians in Mesopotamia, Syria-Levant had been a sought after territory. It is not to say, however, that these kingdoms were willing agents of foreign imperialism. The region was rife with rebellions, and an effective administration policy was necessary for any outside power to maintain a stable hold over the territory. By the time that Esarhaddon ascended to the Assyrian throne on 680 BCE, most of the western kingdoms bordering the Mediterranean had been conquered and re-organized into vassal states and provinces by Tiglath-Pileser III, Shalmaneser V, Sargon II and Sennacherib.<sup>89</sup> Esarhaddon, and Assurbanipal had to maintain the successful Assyrian formula for administering Syria-Palestine so as to effectively tax the area and control trade. Keeping the local kingdoms in line was the first step to achieving this.

<sup>85</sup> Nicolas Grimal, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, (Oxford 2003), pp. 352.

<sup>86</sup> Kitchen (1986), *Op Cit*, pp. 145.

<sup>87</sup> ARAB IX: I: 771. Text from the Rassam Cylinder. Note the use of the word 'installed' as a clear indicator of heavy Assyrian interference in administering Egypt as a result of their foreign policy. This text also includes a list of rulers that Assurbanipal had installed in Egypt, providing an idea as to those installed by Esarhaddon a few years earlier.

<sup>88</sup> Knapp (1988), *Op Cit*, pp. 242.

<sup>89</sup> Marc van de Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East. Ca. 3000-323 BC*. (Oxford 2005), pp. 233-236.

### The Master Seafarers

The Phoenicians were a collection of small kingdoms spread out across the eastern Mediterranean seaboard, whose main economic lifeline was trade. Master seafarers' centuries before anyone else, the Phoenicians harboured a special place in the Ancient Near East: to control Phoenicia was to control the Mediterranean and one of the richest trade routes of the Ancient World. George Rawlinson claims that from the 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE 'the carrying trade of the world belonged mainly to Phoenicia, which communicated by land with the Persian Gulf, the Euphrates, Armenia, Cappadocia, and Anatolia, by sea with Egypt, Greece, Italy, North Africa, Gaul and Spain'.<sup>90</sup>

Under Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal, in continuance of the predecessors' policies, the Phoenicians were given a limited form of independence: 'In order to force the redistribution of trade to Assyria, Assyrian foreign policy usually aimed at control over its trading partners; yet the Phoenicians remained virtually autonomous'.<sup>91</sup> Rather than relegate the Phoenician cities to provincial status, the Assyrians granted them a form of privileged vassal status.<sup>92</sup> Carcemish, in South-Eastern Anatolia, was submitted to a similar treatment. Since it was the access point to the Anatolian metal trade for the Assyrian empire, the local elite was able to exercise a certain degree of independence. However, the Assyrian army was always ready to move and quell any anti-Assyrian influence that might threaten its control over Carcemish.<sup>93</sup>

Even so, Assyrian taxation on Phoenicia was not lenient, and the Assyrians maintained their own ports in the major Phoenician coastal cities to compete with the Phoenician ports. The Assyrians instituted a form of management known as *karum*, 'defined as the wharf or quay, Assyrian imperial trading colony, administrative centre, and the tax collecting station'.<sup>94</sup> The *karum* enabled Assyria

<sup>90</sup> George Rawlinson, *Phoenicia. History of a Civilization*, (London, 2005), pp. 9.

<sup>91</sup> Knapp (1988), *Op Cit*, pp. 245.

<sup>92</sup> Maria E. Aubet, *The Phoenicians and the West: Politics, Colonies and Trade*, (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 95.

<sup>93</sup> Susan Frankenstein, 'The Phoenicians in the Far West: A Function of Neo-Assyrian Imperialism', in Mogens Larsen, *Power and Propaganda. A Symposium on Ancient Empires. Mesopotamia. Copenhagen Studies in Assyriology Vol. VII*, (Copenhagen, 1979), pp. 271-272.

<sup>94</sup> J. Lewy, (1956), *On Some Institutions of the Old Assyrian Empire*. Hebrew Union College Annual 27, pp. 37-51.

to keep the local elite in power and out of trouble, and it allowed them to maintain control over, and limit if necessary, trade that passed through Phoenician ports.

It cannot be said, though, that the Phoenicians were openly independent and able to undermine Assyrian rule. When in 676 BCE the Phoenician kingdom of Sidon rebelled against Assyria, Esarhaddon had no qualms about marching on the city and sacking it in true Assyrian fashion.<sup>95</sup>

Abdi-milkutti, king of Sidon, who did not fear my majesty, did not heed the word of my lips, who trusted in the fearful sea and cast off my yoke, -Sidon, his garrison city, which lies in the midst of the sea... Like a fish I caught him up out of the sea and cut off his head.<sup>96</sup>

For allying with Egypt, Esarhaddon had the ruling elite beheaded for what was viewed as a grave act of insubordination.<sup>97</sup>

The destruction of Sidon was a show of Assyrian force to discourage further rebellious behaviour by other Phoenician cities. Shortly afterwards a treaty with Ba'al of Tyre was accorded with Assyria, '[The treat]y of Esarhad[don, king] of Assyria, son of [Sennacherib, likewise king of Assyria, with Baa], king of Tyre'.<sup>98</sup> The treaty, rather lenient in terms, was probably a result of a willingness to submit to Assyrian overlordship on behalf of Tyre after Assyrian actions in Sidon. This somewhat effective way of controlling anti-Assyrian insurgencies was also used in Egypt in Memphis and Thebes.

The treaty, where Esarhaddon agrees to entrust Tyre with the former lands of Sidon and respect the continuity of agreeable relations between Assyria and Tyre, proves the Assyrian inclination to use diplomacy where possible, although backed up with the very real threat of brutal retribution. Esarhaddon promises, in exchange for the acquiescence of Tyre to his rule, protection and respect of Tyre's assets.

<sup>95</sup> Hallo and Simpson (1998), *Op Cit*, pp. 138.

<sup>96</sup> ARAB VII: I: 511. Extract from the historical texts of Esarhaddon.

<sup>97</sup> Kuhrt (1995), *Op Cit*, pp. 516.

<sup>98</sup> SAA 2: 5. Parpola and Watanabe (1988).

These are the ports of trade and the trade routes which Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, [entrusted] to his servant Baal... Nobody will [do] injustice [to those] who are hired [...] and nobody will harm their ships'.<sup>99</sup>

The destruction of Sidon and the treaty with Tyre beautifully contrast Assyrian foreign policy, be it unbridled military aggression or resorting to diplomacy. A treaty was no good unless an example could be made to convince other kingdoms that action against Assyria was not in their best option.

When the Egyptian king Tirhaqa moved in on Assyrian interests in the Levant, Ba'al of Tyre betrayed the treaty that Esarhaddon had imposed on him, and obligingly sided with the Egyptians. Esarhaddon was only able to fortify the coast around Tyre and cut it off from the mainland, taking away most of its territorial holdings. As Assurbanipal marched on Egypt after Esarhaddon's death, he stopped to accept the submission of Tyre back into Assyrian rule, as a result of the mainland blockade.<sup>100</sup>

During Assurbanipal's second campaign to Egypt in 664 BCE, Ba'al once more incurred Assyrian wrath by involving himself with the Egyptians, and after the complete conquest of Egypt by his forces, the Assyrian king focused his energies on the highly unreliable monarch. Although the Assyrians did not have the naval capacity to completely besiege and capture Tyre, Assurbanipal was able to isolate them once again from the mainland. The Assyrians proceeded to conduct a limited form of siege warfare which payed off in the end. After overtures from Tyre, that included sending royal sons and daughters as hostages, the siege was lifted, and Ba'al was allowed to continue his vassalage to Assyria.<sup>101</sup>

In my third campaign I marched against Ba'li, king of Tyre, who dwells in the midst of the sea, when he did not observe my royal command and did not obey (*lit.*, listen to, hear) the word of my lips. I threw up earthworks against him, by sea and land I seized his approaches (*lit.*, ways). I pressed them sorely and made their lives miserable. I made them submit to my yoke.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.* Of course, the standard curse section follows. The curse sections of these treaties are what protect and bind the parties from the breaching of any of the clauses in the treaty. In any case, it is meant to protect Assyrian interests.

<sup>100</sup> Rawlinson, (2005), *Op Cit*, pp. 142.

<sup>101</sup> ARAB IX: I: 779. Text from the Rassam Cylinder.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

Phoenicia's significant position in the international trade scene, a position made important both by its geographical location and navigational prowess, meant that it became increasingly important for the Assyrian empire, as it expanded in the Eighth and Ninth centuries, to control the Phoenician ports and trade networks.<sup>103</sup> It is possible that this was a method adopted by Assyria to restrict Egyptian access to international trade routes and deprive it from the enormous wealth flowing through the Phoenician networks.

In spite of everything, Phoenicia was never comfortable under Assyrian overlordship, and, after countless participation in rebellions, Assurbanipal felt the need to turn such major cities, like Tyre in 640 BCE, into Assyrian provinces. Assyrian imperial policy in Phoenicia ended up damaging Phoenicia's Mediterranean interests, and by the time that the Assyrian empire fell, the Phoenicians were forced to compete with ever more powerful Greek states to control the Mediterranean trade routes, eventually losing out.<sup>104</sup>

### **The Promised Land, and the Southern Levant**

Israel and Judah were an oddity in the Ancient Near East, a monotheistic society surrounded by polytheistic powers. War had separated the two bands of tribes that comprised the north and south, Israel and Judah respectively. Shalmaneser V laid waste to most of Israel during his reign, besieging the capital for three years, and leaving it to his successor, Sargon II, to convert it into the province of Samaria.<sup>105</sup>

From the time of Sargon II, Israelite Samaria underwent a period of mass deportation and heavy taxation. The northern kingdom as an Israelite state ceased to exist. Instead it was populated with people belonging to the upper classes of Syria, Babylon, and later Arabia.<sup>106</sup> In an act that was typically Assyrian as part of their religious imperialism policy, religious symbols from Israel were also removed.<sup>107</sup> Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal discontinued the policy of deportation that the other Sargonid kings

<sup>103</sup> Aubet, (2001), *Op Cit*, pp. 55.

<sup>104</sup> Roux (1992), *Op Cit*, pp. 336.

<sup>105</sup> Van de Mieroop (2005), *Op Cit*, pp. 235.

<sup>106</sup> B. S. J. Isserlin, *The Israelites*, (Minneapolis, 2001), pp. 86-88. For further reading into the deportation of foreign religious symbols by the Assyrians as a practice of religious imperialism and foreign policy, consult Holloway (2002), *Op Cit*.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

had carried out,<sup>108</sup> probably because there was not much left of the native population to deport.

Judah was a different matter entirely. After Tiglath-Pileser III had rampaged along the Syrian coast, it had been incorporated into the empire as a vassal kingdom.<sup>109</sup> In 671 BCE Sennacherib campaigned against Hezekiah,<sup>110</sup> the ruler of Judah, and laid siege to Jerusalem, though Judah was spared the fate that befell Israel. The Assyrians, content with the victory at Lacish in the same year of the invasion and the seizure of large amounts of booty raised the siege on Jerusalem. The Judean king, now accepting Assyrian overlordship, reigned for another 15 years.<sup>111</sup>

Sennacherib's successors were much more content to follow a foreign policy line that was less belligerent, and were able to rely on the loyalty of Judah as a vassal kingdom, whose ruler seemed to realise that the Assyrian war apparatus was too much to deal with. Esarhaddon was able to launch his second invasion of Egypt, in 671 BCE, with the support, or at the least the neutrality, of Judah.<sup>112</sup> Assurbanipal claims that when he launches his first campaign against Egypt, Manasseh of Judah offered the Assyrian armies safe passage, as well as gifts to the Assyrian king.

In the course of my campaign... Minsê (Manasseh), king of Iaudi (Judah)... in all 22 kings of the seacoast, of the midst of the sea and of the dry land, vassals of mine, brought their rich (*lit.*, heavy) gifts [before me] and kissed my feet. Those kings], together with their forces....<sup>113</sup>

Both Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal dealt with Manasseh, and gave him a sort of favoured vassal status in the Levant,<sup>114</sup> though it was a change in Judean policy, not Assyrian, that allowed for this. After the Lacish siege, and the envelopment of Jerusalem by Sennacherib's forces, Hezekiah and his successor no doubt realised that

<sup>108</sup> Hallo and Simpson (1998), *Op Cit*, pp. 139.

<sup>109</sup> Van de Mierop (2005), *Op Cit*, pp. 135.

<sup>110</sup> Israel Finkelstein and Neil A. Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, (New York, 2001), pp. 259-264.

<sup>111</sup> Hallo and Simpson (1998), *Op Cit*, pp. 138.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 138-139.

<sup>113</sup> ARAB: IX: III: 876. This inscription also mentions many other kings, loyal to Assyria, who provided aide and neutrality as Assurbanipal's armies marched on Egypt.

<sup>114</sup> Finkelstein and Silberman (2001), *Op Cit*, pp. 264-265.

with the Assyrian empire at its zenith, it was better to ally themselves to the Assyrians, rather than suffer the same fate as Israel.

Assyria's policy in Judea, and much of Southern Palestine for that matter, had clear goals. Of the vassal states in the southernmost portion of Assyria's Levantine Empire, we can clearly distinguish Ekron, Ashdod, Askelon, Gaza and Judah lying in the buffer region between the Assyrian empire and the Egyptian kingdom.<sup>115</sup> This region, including Judah, were not turned into provinces so that it could serve as a defensive zone against Egyptian military action. Since Judah was not a province and therefore not an extension of Assyria, Assyrian policy dealing with the vassal state falls under the category of foreign policy.

It is remarkable the amount of foresight shown by the Assyrian kings in maintaining this system of buffer vassal states in southern Palestine. If this region had been turned into provinces an Egyptian invasion would have been an attack on an Assyrian province, and hence on Assyria proper, and dealt with great severity, but it would have also incurred losses on the garrison troops stationed in the area. It would have also been seen as a weakening of Assyrian power in its own provinces. By keeping the local elite in power and maintaining the system of vassal states, any Egyptian attack would be blunted before it hit the Assyrian provinces. Even in the case of the vassal state allying itself with Egypt, the pressure of the attack would have to be shouldered by that same state, so by the time it spilled over into the Assyrian provinces, the impact would have been reduced.<sup>116</sup>

Buffer states serve important purposes in ancient times. A state that normally lay between two or more rival powers was normally tolerated or even encouraged by its powerful neighbours, since it could provide a limited form of security.<sup>117</sup> Judah, under Assyrian overlordship, was a buffer state against Egyptian actions in Palestine. Under this reasoning, we can understand why Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal were content to maintain the arrangement that Sennacherib had left behind after he had dealt with

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<sup>115</sup> Refer to Map 3, Appendix 1.

<sup>116</sup> For an extended explanation of this tactic of using buffer states as a policy against Egyptian military action, refer to Benedikt Otzen (1979), 'Israel Under the Assyrians', in Larsen (1979), *Op Cit*, pp. 256-258.

<sup>117</sup> Bradley J. Parker, *The Northern Frontier of Assyria as a Case Study in Imperial Dynamics*, (Helsinki 2001), pp. 251.

Hezekiah.<sup>118</sup> It was much more to Assyria's advantage to protect and maintain a foreign vassal, as long as taxes were paid, and have that same vassal blunt potential attacks by Egypt.

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<sup>118</sup> Otzen (1979), *Op Cit*, pp. 258.



### Chapter 3

## Assyria and Babylonia

*In the accession year of Shamash-shum-ukin, in Iyyar, Bel and the gods of Akkad came out of the city of Ashur, in Iyyar on the 24<sup>th</sup> they entered Babylon.*<sup>119</sup>

It is hard to imagine undertaking a study of the Assyrian Empire without encountering Babylonia, especially during the Neo-Assyrian period. Babylonia commanded a special place in the Assyrian mindset. Assyrian culture had been richly influenced by Babylonia, as had its religion. This chapter highlights the closeness between these two great kingdoms of the Ancient World, and the fact that Babylonia was offered special treatment during the years that Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal were on the throne. The chapter will focus more on Esarhaddon's reign than Assurbanipal's since under Esarhaddon we find the most drastic reversal in Babylonian policy. Assurbanipal continues his father's policies up until the anti-Assyrian rebellion that started in Babylonia.

### **The Babylonian Connection**

Assyria and Babylonia share a history so similar and intertwined that it would not be conceivable to undertake a detailed study of one without touching on the other. The fortunes of Babylonia at the hands of the resurgent Assyrians fluctuated violently. Under Sennacherib the city was besieged, conquered, sacked and levelled. In a great show of religious imperialism, the Assyrians removed the statue of Marduk, the chief deity of the city, leaving Babylon without its protector.<sup>120</sup> However, Sennacherib's actions were by no means the norm. Up until the destruction of the city in 689 BCE at the hands of a victorious Assyrian army on the first day of the month Kislîmu,<sup>121</sup> the Assyrian kings had treated the important Babylonian cities with respect. Sennacherib, hardened after so many years of war against the Babylonians and angered by the capture of his son and the subsequent delivery of the Assyrian prince to the Elamites, broke with this tradition.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>119</sup> BM 86379. "A Chronicle of the Years B.C. 680-625" in Sidney Smith, *Babylonian Historical Texts*, (Hildesheim, 1975), pp. 25.

<sup>120</sup> Grant Frame, *Babylonia 689-627 B.C. A Political History*, (Leiden, 1992), pp. 52-53.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 1.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 69.

The two kingdoms shared several comparable features, such as a similar language, religion and cultural background.<sup>123</sup> By around 1510 BCE, Assyria's southern frontier with Babylonia was consolidated when a treaty between the two states was agreed upon. Another treaty between the two kingdoms was concluded just before 1400 BCE.<sup>124</sup> Towards the end of the Second Millennium, as a result of the Amarna Age diplomatic system,<sup>125</sup> and Assyria's ability to free itself from the Mitanni yoke, the two states began an expanded period of direct contact that would last for over six centuries. As the Hittite presence in Southern Mesopotamia also waned, Assyrian intervention in Babylonia increased.

It appears that during the early Amarna period, Assyria may have been politically dependent on Babylonia. In a piece of correspondence from the Amarna Letters cache, the Babylonian King, Burna-Buriash II, complains to the Pharaoh, Amenhotep IV, that 'his subjects' are being received without his permission by the Egyptian court.<sup>126</sup> The subjects that the Babylonian ruler refers to are the Assyrians.<sup>127</sup> This may be why there is such heavy resistance to Assyrian rule in Babylonia: since they had once ruled the Assyrians, being conquered in turn by their onetime subjects was not a pleasant prospect.

During Ashur-Uballit's reign, there is already heavy interference from Assyria in Babylonian internal affairs when the Assyrian monarch oversaw the removal of an anti-Assyrian king, instead replacing him with one whose sentiments towards Assyria were more amicable.<sup>128</sup> From the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I (ca. 1243-1207) it is known that the Assyrians entered and sacked Babylon, including the removal of the Marduk statue from Babylon, thus presenting the Babylonians with their first taste of

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<sup>123</sup> Amélie Kuhrt, 'Usurpation, Conquest and Ceremonial: From Babylon to Persia', in David Cannadine and Simon Price (Ed.), *Rituals of Royalty. Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies*, (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 28-29.

<sup>124</sup> John A. Brinkman (1972), 'Foreign Relations of Babylonia from 1600 to 625 B. C.: The Documentary Evidence', in *AJA* 76, No. 3 (July 1972), pp. 274-275.

<sup>125</sup> Discussed in Chapter 1.

<sup>126</sup> EA 9.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.* See also Brinkman (1972), *Op Cit*, pp. 275.

<sup>128</sup> Brinkman (1972), *Op Cit*, pp. 276.

Assyrian rule.<sup>129</sup> It may have also presented Assyria with new perceptions on theology, and influenced Assyria's own pantheon of deities. With help from Assyria's perpetual enemy, the Elamite kingdoms in Iran, Babylon was able to affirm its domination over Assyria, placing a puppet king on the Assyrian throne in 1192 BCE.<sup>130</sup> The next five centuries would be a continual struggle between Assyria and Babylonia, where more often than not Assyria would try to assert itself over its southern neighbour, and Babylonia would keep resisting and causing trouble.

### **Esarhaddon and Babylonia**

Under Sennacherib's successor, Babylonia was to receive another drastic reversal in policy, a change as radical as the one it underwent under Sennacherib himself. Esarhaddon was 'simply returning to Assyria's normal policy towards Babylon up until Sennacherib's destruction of Babylon after the rebellion of 694-689'.<sup>131</sup> Shortly after ascending to the throne of Assyria, Esarhaddon set upon an ambitious plan to rebuild Babylon in a heartened attempt at reconciling the Babylonians to Assyrian overlordship. The single greatest threat to conciliation was the fact that the once great city of Babylon was in ruins. Esarhaddon, who had great respect for Babylonian scholarship and culture, was endeavouring to win Babylonian support with respectable actions and deeds.<sup>132</sup>

The physical reconstruction of Babylon was the first step in Esarhaddon's reconciliation policy with Babylonia. It is important to note that Esarhaddon's actions toward Babylonia were unique in Assyrian imperial policy during his reign. No other victim of Assyrian conquest and destruction received the sort of attention toward reconstruction and resettlement as Babylon did.<sup>133</sup> This is where Assyrian imperial administrative policy, relating to Babylonia, contrasts so differently with Assyrian imperial policy in the West. Esarhaddon made it a clear objective of his time on the throne to rebuild Babylon:

<sup>129</sup> Joan Oates, *Babylon*. Revised Edition, (London, 1994), pp. 93-94. Also Brinkman (1972), *Op Cit*, pp. 276.

<sup>130</sup> Brinkman (1972), *Op Cit*, pp. 277.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>133</sup> It should be noted that it was not just the city of Babylon that received this special treatment, but rather several Babylonian cities, especially quite a few in Southern Babylonia, like Ur and Uruk. See Brinkman (1979) 'Babylonia Under the Assyrian Empire 745-627 BCE', in Larsen (1979), *Op Cit*, pp. 223-250. Also Holloway (1992), *Op Cit*.

Esagila, the temple of the gods, together with its shrines, Babylon the city under feudal protection, Imgur-Bêl, its wall, Nimitti-Bêl, its outer wall, from their foundations to their turrets, I built anew, I enlarged, I raised aloft, I made magnificent.<sup>134</sup>

The material rebuilding of Babylon was not the only issue to be resolved. Sennacherib, officially or ad hoc, had stripped the Babylonian citizenry of the civic rights that they were entitled to as privileged members of the monolithic Assyrian empire. Esarhaddon swiftly set about reinstating the favoured status that Babylon had enjoyed, thus attempting to win over support from Babylonia's ruling aristocracy.<sup>135</sup> This attempt wasn't solely restricted to the restoration of civic rights; it also espoused cultic patronage,<sup>136</sup> which meant the rebuilding and refurbishing of temples, and the restitution of divine statues and images. Esarhaddon stated:

The images of the great gods I restored and had them replaced in their shrines to adorn them forever. Their offerings, which had ceased (to be brought), I re-established. The sons of Babylon who had been brought to servitude... I gathered together and accounted them for Babylonians. Their clientship I established anew.<sup>137</sup>

The question now arises as to why Esarhaddon was so devoted to the restoration of Babylon considering the endless amount of trouble it had caused Assyria in the past. It is known that Esarhaddon was a great admirer of Babylonian culture, and respected the deep roots that united both Assyria and Babylonia.<sup>138</sup> Several Babylonian gods, Marduk above all, were important members of the Assyrian pantheon, and the long lasting Assyrian cultural dependence on Babylonia should also be noted.

Losing Babylonia would have been unthinkable for Esarhaddon, as it would have been construed as a sign of Assyrian weakness by the other kingdoms, vassals and

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<sup>134</sup> ARAB VIII: I: 646. Text from the 'Black Stone', relating to Esarhaddon's building inscriptions concerning the rebuilding of Babylon. Esagila was the temple dedicated to Marduk, patron deity of Babylon, that Sennacherib had gone to so much trouble to destroy. It is to be seen as a strong sign of religious patronage.

<sup>135</sup> Holloway (2002), *Op Cit*, pp. 302.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> ARAB VIII: I: 646. Text from the 'Black Stone', relating to Esarhaddon's building inscriptions concerning the rebuilding of Babylon.

<sup>138</sup> Frame (1992), *Op Cit*, pp. 69-71.

provinces under the administration of the great empire.<sup>139</sup> Babylonia was to Assyria's south, and the control of Babylonian territories allowed for a geographically important zone, between the southern fringes of the Assyrian empire and the Elamite kings, to be properly guarded. On the other hand, Babylonia had been a problem for many an Assyrian king, and it is likely that Esarhaddon, as a practical ruler, was trying to keep Babylonia 'quiet with the carrot instead of the stick'.<sup>140</sup> Holloway offers the best explanation:

Within the first year of his accession to the throne, Esarhaddon embarked on an ambitious, shrewd, and effective foreign policy aimed at Babylonian conciliation through high profile building works and a nuanced self-image propaganda initiative.<sup>141</sup>

Whatever his reasons for paying such preference to this form of imperial administration in Babylonia, it is clear that such a favoured position existed. The greatest indicator of this is the succession treaty that Esarhaddon had composed concerning his sons Assurbanipal and Šamaš-šumu-ukin, concluded in 672 BCE.<sup>142</sup> The treaty set out in precise details all the necessary information concerning his succession. What is most interesting about the treaty, which was enforced in front of representatives from all over the Assyrian empire, is that it deals specifically with the issue of Babylonia, and is a unique attempt by Esarhaddon to deal with the 'perennial Babylonian problem'.<sup>143</sup>

In the past, more often than not, the Assyria Empire had been rocked by wars at the end of a king's reign, and Babylonia, or Elamite opportunists utilising Babylonia as a platform,<sup>144</sup> had used the occasion to break away, seize territories and generally cause trouble. By establishing one son on the Assyrian throne, Assurbanipal, and the other on the Babylonian throne, Šamaš-šumu-ukin, Esarhaddon hoped to avert the chaos

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<sup>139</sup> Frame (1992), *Op Cit*, pp. 69.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 69.

<sup>141</sup> Holloway (2002), *Op Cit*, pp. 77.

<sup>142</sup> Parpola and Watanabe (1988), *Op Cit*, pp. XIXX).

<sup>143</sup> Oppenheim (1977), *Op Cit*, pp. 169.

<sup>144</sup> Or even Chaldean tribes living in Babylonia's marshlands. One example is the tribe of Bit-Yakin, most famous for producing the Babylonian king Merodach-Baladan.

and disorder that regnal change usually brought to the Assyrian empire. This policy proved to be quite successful for the first 17 years of Assurbanipal's reign.<sup>145</sup>

The important feature of this treaty is that the Assyrians installed a member of the royal family, an heir to be precise, on the throne of Babylonia in a serious attempt to bind Assyria and Babylonia into a pacific relationship. It explicitly implies a concerned attempt at maintaining a blood bond between Assyria and Babylonia.

(This is) the treaty which Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, has concluded with you, in the presence of the great gods of heaven and earth, on behalf of Assurbanipal, the great crown prince designate, son of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, your lord, whom he has named and appointed to the crown-princeship.<sup>146</sup>

When considering the level of success that Esarhaddon enjoyed, in respect to his Babylonian policy, during his lifetime, it is important to note the state of Assyro-Babylonian affairs since the thirteenth century BCE. For the six centuries that passed until Tiglath-Pileser III takes the Babylonian throne, in the eighth century,<sup>147</sup> Assyria had been campaigning against Babylonia, both on the offensive and defensive. In no point is there acceptance of Assyrian rule in Babylonia, manifesting itself in countless rebellions, invasions and sackings.

This issue reaches its climax during the rule of Sennacherib, and ends with the total destruction of Babylon. Esarhaddon has the choice to keep Babylon destroyed and weak, or rebuilding it. The short-term success that this policy enjoyed is demonstrated by the fact that for most of Esarhaddon's reign, and 17 years after it, there is no major uprising recorded in Babylon.<sup>148</sup> Yet the long-term consequence of this policy would be the destruction of the Assyrian empire following the death of Assurbanipal.

<sup>145</sup> Shortly after Esarhaddon's death, the queen dowager, Zakutu, imposed a loyalty pact on the Assyrian nation at large, including the royal family and ruling aristocracy. Esarhaddon's succession treaty and this loyalty pact helped maintain the internal stability of the empire until the Šamaš-šumu-ukin rebellion. It is ironic that it was Assurbanipal's brother, the most prominent party of those held liable by the pact, who was to ultimately violate the terms of the contracting document. SAA 2: 8. Parpola and Watanabe, (1988).

<sup>146</sup> SAA 2: 6. From Esarhaddon's succession treaty. Parpola and Watanabe (1988).

<sup>147</sup> Barbara N. Porter, *Images Power and Politics. Figurative Aspects of Esarhaddon's Babylonian Policy*, (Philadelphia 1993), pp. 3.

<sup>148</sup> Three seemingly minor incidents are recorded, that on the whole do not drastically alter the situation. Refer to Porter (1993), *Op Cit*, pp. 5-6.

### Assurbanipal, Šamaš-šumu-ukin and Babylonia

Due to Esarhaddon's prudent future planning concerning the issue of his succession, Assurbanipal's accession to the throne of Assyria, and Šamaš-šumu-ukin to that of Babylonia, went relatively smoothly. Shortly after his accession, Assurbanipal set about completing his father's invasion of Egypt.<sup>149</sup> He also claims that in keeping to his predecessor's policy in Babylonia, and no doubt fulfilling Esarhaddon's succession treaty, he installed Šamaš-šumu-ukin onto the Babylonian throne to maintain Assyro-Babylonian unity: 'Shamash-shum-ukîn, my full brother, I appointed to the kingship of Babylon'.<sup>150</sup> Assurbanipal continued the rebuilding of Babylon, and kept to Esarhaddon's policy of patronage to the Babylonian cults, especially that of the chief deity of the city, Marduk.<sup>151</sup> During his reign he commissioned many new building projects in Babylon, continued the work on the Temple of Esagila, and established Babylon's privileged position within the empire.<sup>152</sup>

When Assurbanipal appointed Šamaš-šumu-ukin to the throne of Babylonia, he allowed his brother to take the statue of Marduk back to the temple-complex of Esagila.<sup>153</sup> Even though Esarhaddon had decreed that the temple devoted to Marduk be rebuilt and replenished, he had not been able to complete the move of Marduk back to the city before he died, leaving the job up to his successors. As Assurbanipal explains:

During my reign the great lord, Marduk, entered Babylon amid rejoicing, and in Esagila took up his eternal abode. The regular offerings of Esagila and the gods of Babylon I provided for. The feudal protection of Babylon I maintained, -that the strong may not injure the weak.<sup>154</sup>

<sup>149</sup> Esarhaddon had died *en route*. See Chapter 2.

<sup>150</sup> ARAB XI: I:954. Text from the Babylonian-Borsippa Dedicatory Texts.

<sup>151</sup> ARAB XI: I. *Op Cit.*

<sup>152</sup> Frame (1992), pp. 110-113. Also ARAB XI: I. Texts from the Babylon-Borsippa Dedicatory texts. It appears to have been standard for the Assyrian king to re-establish Babylon's privileged citizen rights upon accession.

<sup>153</sup> ABC: IV: 33-36.

<sup>154</sup> ARAB: XI: I: 957. *Op Cit.*

This monumental event was important in winning Babylonian support for the new king and his Assyrian overlord.<sup>155</sup> For twenty years Marduk had been absent from Babylon, and the important New Year's festival had not been performed.<sup>156</sup> There is little doubt that the sight of a new Babylonian king, returning with the statue of Marduk, would have been largely welcomed in Babylon after the 'kingless years'.<sup>157</sup> The power of imagery here highlights the importance that the Assyrian monarch attached to Babylonian affairs, and can be added to the already large list of actions undertaken during the years 680-627 BCE that demonstrate the unique position that Babylonia held within the Assyrian empire.

There is no change here in Assurbanipal's attitude toward Babylonia since he followed his father's Babylonian policies. The fact that two siblings sat on the Assyrian and Babylonian thrones contributed to amicable relations between the two great kingdoms. Babylonia was able to enjoy a period of prosperity during the years 680-627 BCE. The rebuilding of Babylon by Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal would eventually lead to that kingdom's ability to take over the administration of the empire created by the Neo-Assyrian kings after the fall of Assyria following the death of Assurbanipal.

Like all Assyrian monarchs, Assurbanipal was reluctant to delegate authority, even to his own brother.<sup>158</sup> Assurbanipal's disinclination to entrust authority in his sibling, even in matters relating to Babylonia's internal affairs, came to be an acute problem.<sup>159</sup> Even when Šamaš-šumu-ukin was technically the direct superior of the Babylonian provincial governors, these same governors were permitted to report directly to Assurbanipal, sidestepping the chain of command.<sup>160</sup> Though Šamaš-šumu-ukin was unhappy with what can only be viewed as the undermining of his authority,

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<sup>155</sup> The fact that Šamaš-šumu-ukin also had to swear an oath of loyalty to Assurbanipal implies that he too was a subordinate to his brother, and that his rule was not independent of the Assyrian monarch.

<sup>156</sup> ABC: 31-33. Also Brinkman (1979), pp. 104-105.

<sup>157</sup> See Frame (1992), *Op Cit*, pp. 52-63.

<sup>158</sup> Frame (1992), *Op Cit*, pp. 107-110, 223.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 223.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid*.



an issue that he made clear to his brother,<sup>161</sup> there is little he could have done to change the situation other than open rebellion.<sup>162</sup>

Fifteen years into Assurbanipal's reign, Assyrian and Babylonian relations, partially due to Assurbanipal's incessant meddling in all things Babylonian, were put under stress. In an attempt to show that Babylonia was still favoured by Assyria, Assurbanipal had the ceremonial bed of Marduk returned to Babylon in 654.<sup>163</sup> Nevertheless, when rebellion broke out in 652 BCE, Assurbanipal was ruthless in putting down the anti-Assyrian coalition. After four years of warfare, Assyrian troops once again victoriously entered Babylon after a protracted siege of the city.<sup>164</sup>

This time the victory was bittersweet. Assyria's enemies had been decisively defeated, but four years of civil war had exhausted the power of the Assyrian armies, depleted her treasury, and once again Babylonia was the centre of Assyrian problems. Even so, part of the reason that the anti-Assyrian coalition was unable to defeat the armies of Assyria, aside from the brute might of the Assyrian armed forces, was the fact that they were unable to garner total support. What is more, many Babylonian cities opted to co-operate with Assyria, in a clear indication of the short-term success of Assyria's imperial policy in Babylonia. After the Šamaš-šumu-ukin rebellion, there exist no records of any major military campaigns undertaken by the Assyrians, even though the empire was to last for another three decades.<sup>165</sup>

### **Imperial Policy in Babylonia: Civil or Foreign?**

The case for the classification of imperial administration in Babylonia is difficult due to its unique position within the Assyrian empire. A case can be argued for the term 'civil' to be used when referring to what sort of policy was applied to Babylonia. Cultural and lingual proximity support this argument. Assurbanipal's brother sat on the throne of Babylonia, and that by receiving such privileged rights under the

<sup>161</sup> ABL 426. A letter from Šamaš-šumu-ukin to his brother requesting that he be able to deal with his own subordinates.

<sup>162</sup> Which eventually did happen when Šamaš-šumu-ukin headed a powerful anti-Assyrian coalition against his brother. Assurbanipal's constant meddling in Babylonian affairs may have contributed to Šamaš-šumu-ukin's ill feelings to the Assyrian king. See Frame (1992), *Op Cit*, pp. 223.

<sup>163</sup> Frame (1992), *Op Cit*, pp. 129. The ceremonial bed was taken during Sennacherib's campaign and it became the ceremonial bed used by Assur.

<sup>164</sup> Oppenheim (1977), *Op Cit*, pp. 169-170.

<sup>165</sup> Brinkman (1979), *Op Cit*, pp. 233.

Assyrians, Babylonia cannot be considered a vassal state, but more likely an extension of the Assyrian heartland. Also, when Assyria went to war, it was two brothers at the helms of opposing armies. Two brothers going to war against each other would argue the case for the term 'civil war' when referring to the Babylonian rebellion.<sup>166</sup> Another line of reasoning can be found in the willingness of the Assyrian king to assume the kingship of Babylonia, as was the case for Esarhaddon.

The style of administration in Babylonia was also different to the extent that Assurbanipal was concerned, and willing to meddle, with the state of Babylonian internal affairs. No other kingdom of the Assyrian empire receives such a treatment bordering on micro-management.<sup>167</sup> The depth of Assyrian control on Babylonian internal affairs is reminiscent of Assyrian provincial administration, and a province is considered to be an extension of Assyria proper.

Two other factors contribute to the idea of 'civil' policy: the civic rights reinstated by Esarhaddon, and the freedom from taxation on Babylonia's religious centres. Esarhaddon offers the peoples of Babylon civic rights similar to those held by native Assyrians, in a calculated move to benefit from Babylonian goodwill. Freedom from taxation was a benefit enjoyed by those living in Assyrian religious, but not administrative, centres. When Esarhaddon offered the city of Babylon similar civic rights to those available to native Assyrians, freedom from taxation for cult centres, in particular the city of Babylon, was also implied.<sup>168</sup>

#### Chapter 4

<sup>166</sup> In fact several authors on the subject of Assyrian history have labelled it a 'civil war', most notably Oppenheim, (1977), pp. 169.

<sup>167</sup> Frame (1992), *Op Cit*, pp. 131.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 75.

## Comparison: Differences and Similarities?

*Who under the protection of Assur, Sin, Samash, Naû, Marduk, Ishtar of Nineveh, Istar if Arbela, the great gods his lords, made his way from the rising to the setting sun, having no rival.*<sup>169</sup>

The preceding chapters have provided an account of Assyrian imperial administration policies in several areas of its empire, under the kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal. This chapter will exclusively aim at highlighting the main differences in Assyrian policy towards its western empire, and that used in its administration of Babylonia. The differences in Assyrian imperial policy make us question the Assyrian reasoning behind their choices. Assyrian theology demanded its warrior kings to carve out a great empire and imitate the rule of Aššur and the other Assyrian gods in the heavens. Conquest, devastation and merciless destruction, though never wanton, were necessary to expand Assyria's empire into the Levantine states, especially to protect its interests against attacks and advances from the other world power, Egypt.

Why were Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal so different in their manner of conduct in Babylonia as compared to the west? Would it not have been easier to leave it destroyed and unpopulated, an empty buffer state unable to create any sort of significant rebellion that would have threatened Assyrian sovereignty? Was conciliation applicable to Babylonia only?

### Differences: The Bureaucratic Structure

Babylonia sustained a favoured position in the planning of Assyrian imperial administration in the conquered territories, a fact that is quite blatant for all to see. The most important indicator to this is the installation of an Assyrian prince on the Babylonian throne, a royal heir to be precise, and the elder sibling of the crown prince. Esarhaddon was no fool, he was trying to pre-empt future Babylonian insurgencies by installing two brothers on the thrones of Assyria and Babylonia and using that as a platform for conciliation.

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<sup>169</sup> ARAB VII: II: 527.

Nowhere in Assyria's western empire do we see a member of the Assyrian royal family sent off to directly rule over a province or vassal state. The installation of Šamaš-šumu-ukin on the Babylonian throne was unique. Esarhaddon was able to not only end Babylon's 'kingless' years but also find in Assurbanipal a suitable heir, willing to carry out his wishes for Babylonia. Assurbanipal, fulfilling his father's testament, sets his elder brother upon the throne of Babylonia, and allows for the statue of Marduk to be returned. These acts of patronage by the Assyrian kings are visible only in Babylonia. There are no known records to this date that illustrate any sort of Assyrian attempt at restoring destroyed kingdoms in Egypt or the Levant.

The level of management of Babylonian internal affairs, including economic, military and administrative dealings, by the Assyrian king is not mirrored elsewhere in the empire. In Egypt and Judah the level of control is quite superficial, limited mainly to the selection of local rulers in the Egyptian case. The situation in Tyre is similar excluding the appointment, as part of the treaty between Ba'al and Esarhaddon,<sup>170</sup> of Assyrian representatives to help the king of Tyre in matters relating to the Phoenician ports, undermining Ba'al's authority in port affairs.<sup>171</sup> It is an indicator as to who wielded the real power in Babylonia. The answer in this case is Assurbanipal since Šamaš-šumu-ukin had no military forces under his control, and it was Assurbanipal who held the final authority in all things concerning Babylonian foreign and internal affairs and defence.<sup>172</sup>

In Egypt, Esarhaddon ruled the kingdom by way of utilising the local elite as a means of control. Rather than abolishing the effective administrative structure the Egyptians had in place, Esarhaddon was able to apply a formula successfully proven in the other corners of his empire. Without sending a member of the Assyrian royal family, Esarhaddon installed into offices several members of the local elite, who pledged their loyalty to Assyria:

Over all of Egypt I appointed anew kings, viceroys, governors, commandants, overseers and scribes. Offerings and dues I established for Assur and the great

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<sup>170</sup> SAA 2: 5. Parpola and Watanabe (1988).

<sup>171</sup> Aubet, (2001), *Op Cit*, pp. 59.

<sup>172</sup> Frame (1992), *Op Cit*, 113-114.

gods for all time, my royal tribute and tax, yearly without ceasing, I imposed upon them.<sup>173</sup>

Esarhaddon was able to install local kings into power and was willing to promise them assistance if their position was challenged as long as the taxes flowed into Assyrian coffers, and trade was exploited by merchants loyal to Assyria. Assurbanipal was able to offer that same protection. When re-conquering the kingdom in 664-663 BCE he re-installed the original rulers that his father had put in place.

In Judah the different situation was dealt with accordingly. Since Sennacherib had already inflicted severe punishment on the Israelite kingdoms, including the ruin of Israel, the kings Hezekiah and Manasseh of Judah were willing ally themselves with Assyria. They readily accepted Assyrian overlordship to protect their land against further ravages. There was no need to meddle with the local ruling structure, so Assyria left it largely unchanged, preferring this vassal kingdom to remain nominally independent, and continue to function in the role of buffer state.

In Phoenicia, no doubt both Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal would have liked to have made some changes in the ruling structure of Tyre. When Sidon fell, Esarhaddon entrusted those lands that once belonged to the city into the hands of Ba'al of Tyre. Ba'al was quick to forget his loyalty to the man who had installed him on the throne of Tyre, and was a participant in several insurrections that troubled the Assyrians in the Levant. Unfortunately for both Assyrian rulers, the island fortress was beyond conquering by their armies. Ba'al of Tyre was able to get away with many an indiscretion due to the geographical situation of his city. He was able to maintain his position as king of Tyre by quick political manoeuvring, and offering peace settlements. Had Tyre been on the mainland it is conceivable that the city would have suffered a similar fate to that which befell Sidon.

The Assyrian kings were content to allow the local kings to remain on the throne; they did not need the upheaval that usually followed the downfall of a king in the ancient world. Assyrian ideology meant they had to go out and conquer an empire for their gods, but not impose their religion on other cultures, or depose the kings that upheld

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<sup>173</sup> ARAB VII: IV: 580.

them. Acts of religious imperialism are only present when a king has ‘sinned’ against the Assyrians,<sup>174</sup> and can no longer offer his gods, nor the Assyrian gods, the protection and respect they so rightly deserve.<sup>175</sup>

### **Differences: Destruction, Rebuilding, and the Power of Imagery**

The destruction of Babylon at the hands of Sennacherib was by no means the normal manner for the Assyrian’s to deal with Babylonia. Esarhaddon, by rebuilding Babylon, was reverting to the more common practice of not destroying Babylon after each war against it, and offering royal patronage to the city so important to Assyrian culture. The rebuilding of Babylon would have come at a steep cost. Esarhaddon spared no expenses to ensure Babylon once again became a proud and powerful city.<sup>176</sup> Assurbanipal did much the same.

In direct contrast, no effort was spared to reduce Memphis and Thebes in Egypt, and Sidon in Phoenicia, to rubble for grave acts of insubordination and dissent, nor are there any inscriptions that deal with an attempt by the Assyrian monarchs to rebuild these cities. Sidon’s destruction was a warning to the other Phoenician cities to not entertain fantasies about direct disobedience against Assyria. The sacking of Memphis by Esarhaddon’s armies served the same purpose, and it would have been a powerful admonition toward the pharaoh, Tirhaqa, to not come back. Though it was standard practice of the victorious army to loot and sack a city, these actions were no doubt useful propaganda for the Assyrian kings, and they would proudly boast of their vengeful nature. On the conquest of Memphis, Esarhaddon wrote, ‘Memphis, his royal city, in half a day, with mines, tunnels, assaults, I besieged, I captured, I destroyed, I devastated, I burned with fire’.<sup>177</sup>

The power of imagery in the Assyrian management of their empire is not to be taken lightly. Two examples can be looked at to highlight the differences found in image

<sup>174</sup> As in failed to pay taxes or tribute.

<sup>175</sup> R. J. van der Spek (1993), ‘Assyriology and History. A Comparative Study of War and Empire in Assyria, Athens and Rome’, in Mark E. Cohen, Daniel Snell and David Weisberg (Ed.), *The Tablet and the Scroll. Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William W. Hallo*, (Maryland 1993), pp. 264.

<sup>176</sup> In ARAB, we find the text from Prism number 78,223, housed at the British Museum, in which Esarhaddon lists materials used to rebuild Babylon and Esagila. These materials include lapis lazuli, gold, silver, marble and cedar, all very expensive. ARAB VIII: I: 648-657.

<sup>177</sup> ARAB VII: IV: 580.

representation in Babylonia, versus that found in the western portion of the Assyrian empire.<sup>178</sup> The first one is the Zinjirli stele, set up in Northern Syria, in which we find a triumphant Esarhaddon, a cup for pouring libations to the gods in one hand, and a mace in the other. Kneeling at his feet are Tirhaqa of Egypt and Ba'al of Tyre, both leashed to a rope that is held by Esarhaddon. What this image is meant to portray is not in discussion, what is surprising is the aggressiveness of it, no doubt used to impress upon the western states the omnipotence of Assyrian imperial power.

The second image is much different, and it is one from the time of Assurbanipal. It shows the Assyrian king actively engaging in rebuilding activities in Babylon. In this image, Assurbanipal is carrying the weight of a basket laden with building materials upon his shoulders. This is an attempt to cast the Assyrian king in a positive image, that of benevolent overlord, actively contributing to Babylon's reconstruction. Though both the Zinjirli stele and the image of Assurbanipal are similar in the fact that they serve to represent an image of the king as supreme ruler, the way they go about doing so is much different. One instils fear and awe, the other respect and admiration.

### **Differences: Social and Religious**

The return of the Marduk statue by Assurbanipal, in the hands of Šamaš-šumu-ukin, is a powerful public display of cultic patronage, a culmination of the hard work undertaken by Esarhaddon to try to appease Babylonian sentiments. Esarhaddon had begun the rebuilding of the Esagila temple complex, which Assurbanipal would continue after his father's death. It was not Assyrian policy, nor part of their religious ideology, to convert lands that they had conquered to the Assyrian faith. Whilst religious imperialism was a standard practice to morally weaken the enemy, and punish a city for resisting Assyrian rule, it was not fed by a desire to proselytise. We find no other case of religious patronage similar to what happened in Babylon, and some of the other important Babylonian cities, like Ur and Uruk.

When Esarhaddon decides to rebuild Babylon, it is obvious that the displaced population must be allowed to return to their city. A reversal of the Assyrian

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<sup>178</sup> An example of both images can be found in Appendix 2.

deportation policy is effected. Contrasting Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal's actions in Egypt, the original inhabitants of Babylon are allowed to return from forced exile. Not only that, but the Assyrian kings decide to restore full civic rights back to the population of the city of Babylon. Rights similar to those enjoyed by the Assyrian population in the core Assyrian cities. Where else in the Assyrian empire is another example of civic patronage available? The answer, to put it simply, is nowhere. It was exclusive to Babylonia.

### Why?

The questions that arise to this variation in policy are difficult to answer. It is clear that a special relationship existed between Assyria and Babylonia, and that Esarhaddon held great respect for Babylonian culture, and that Assurbanipal respected his father's ambitions. Assyrian ideology stated that it was their divine duty, as entrusted to them by the gods, to go out and conquer lands in the name of Assur. Conquering those kingdoms that composed its western empire fulfilled this divine duty. These were distant lands composed of foreign peoples, with different ideologies and cultural backgrounds. To ravage these lands not only weakened the enemies of the empire, but it served to bring in many riches, and satisfy the belligerent gods of the Assyrian pantheon, 'the Assyrian domination is sanctioned by the gods, and thus opposition to the subjugation is sin'.<sup>179</sup>

There is also the idea that conquest is not just advantageous because of the immediate material advantage,<sup>180</sup> but it also serves to legitimise a ruler's position on the throne.<sup>181</sup> This is especially the case for the Assyrian warrior kings. Conquering the western states through force, rather than persuasion, was always an acceptable option for the Assyrian kings, who used war to justify their position as executor of Aššur's will on earth.

The long and complex history that Assyria shared with Babylonia made this idea of conquest through force less palpable, though not totally undesirable.<sup>182</sup> Both

<sup>179</sup> Van der Spek (1993), *Op Cit*, pp. 265.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 270. The material advantage is that encompassed by the traditional looting of war booty.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>182</sup> Many times in their complex relationship Assyria had turned its armies on Babylon as a result of rebellion, or direct attack.



Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal, though ruthless leaders when the situation deemed it necessary, were learned leaders, and held respect for Babylonian culture, religion and academia. It was also clear that many of Assyria's traditions, and some of its gods, were directly influenced by Babylonia. How were these kings to justify an aggressive move against a people so similar to their own? War with Babylonia was 'hampered by extra susceptibilities, and needed extra ideological foundation'.<sup>183</sup> Esarhaddon preferred not to, and instead was willing to conquer Babylonia via diplomacy. His rebuilding of the city, the re-instatement of their civil rights and his cultural patronage of the city were just as effective in maintaining Babylonia pacified as having a large army camped outside ready to enter the city at the first hint of rebellion, leaving these armies free to be concentrated elsewhere.<sup>184</sup>

Another reason for the material rebuilding of Babylon is similar to the reason attached to the Assyrian preservation of the vassal state system in the southern Levant. The Elamite kingdoms, in modern day Iran, were forever causing the Assyrians grief by, more often than not, instigating rebellions against Assyria in Babylonia. To have a strong Babylonian ally, loyal and united under the Assyrian cause, it could act in a role similar to a buffer state against Elam, and serve as a safe platform to launch future campaigns eastwards. Though Assyria was much more involved in Babylonian internal affairs than in its vassal buffer states, to maintain a strong Assyrian presence that was positively viewed and actively accepted Babylonia, may have been a deterrent against Elamite machinations.

Assurbanipal continues on the work started by his father through more cultural patronage, including the rebuilding of the Esagila temple complex, and allowing the Marduk statue to be returned when his brother ascends to the Babylonian throne. He also continues his predecessor's policy of materially rebuilding the city. Assurbanipal is forced into war against Babylonia because an anti-Assyrian coalition, at the head of which is his own brother, openly declares its intentions. The Assyrians, not willing to show any weakness, crush the rebellion in four years, and once again march into Babylon. This was not to be the final chapter in the relationship between Assyria and Babylonia.

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<sup>183</sup> Van der Spek (1993), *Op Cit*, pp. 267.

<sup>184</sup> Frame (1992), *Op Cit*, pp. 71.

## Conclusion

*They marched along the back of the Tigris. [...] they encamped against Nineveh. From the month Sivan until the month Ab for three [months-...]... they subjected the city to a heavy siege.<sup>185</sup>*

Even though the Assyrians practiced differing imperial policies in different parts of its empire, the empire collapsed by overextending itself and incorporating too many foreign elements into its army. In 640 BCE Assyria held in its grip the four corners of the Ancient World. By 612 BCE, Nineveh, the administrative capital of the empire, had fallen to the Medes. In less than three decades, it would lay in ruins, forever consigned to history, and never to rise again.

Through the employment of many techniques, the Assyrian empire was able to amass an expanse of territory so large that much of the civilized world was under its thumb. The Assyrian warrior kings were able to assemble colossal armies, and convert them into a force so formidable, so well trained, and so advanced in weaponry and strategy, that they were able to conquer all who opposed them. These cunning kings did not just rely on military muscle to build their empire however; they employed other methods, such as the imposition of treaties and non-aggression pacts. They found that it was almost as useful to employ diplomatic methods into their experiment in empire building, and more often than not it proved to be more cost effective than marching an army to level a city. That said, it must not be forgotten that the Assyrians only looked out for themselves and any treaty or pact was backed up by a very real threat of violent action.

Maintaining and effectively running an empire is just as important as conquering it, and for this purpose the resourceful Assyrians employed different policies for imperial administration. From 680 to 627 BCE, when their empire was at its hubris, the kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal employed dissimilar administrative policies in different parts of their empire.

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<sup>185</sup> ABC, Chronicle 3. Detailing the fall of Nineveh.

The first Near Eastern power to conquer Egypt, the Assyrian experience in this rich land was new, but they managed to apply a policy that had been proved in other parts of their empire. The manipulation of the local elite meant that Assyria was able to effectively use the governing structure in place, appointing kings or rulers loyal to the Assyrian cause, offering protection to the local elite should they come under foreign invasion, or see their position of power challenged by local elements. It was a useful foreign policy for dealing with a land so far from its own. One could argue that they were pioneers in the art of what is now known as diplomacy and international relations.

In Phoenicia, the situation was different due to a geographical reason. Though Sidon had been razed for resisting Assyrian imperialism, Ba'al of Tyre was able to get away with many insubordinate acts due to Tyre's position as an island fortress, one that the powerful Assyrian army was unable to reach. Had Tyre been part of the mainland, it is probable that the Assyrian army would have repeated what they had done with Sidon. It was a mixture of diplomacy and military action that kept Tyre pacified and paying its share of tribute, until Assurbanipal had it converted into another province. Ba'al, although quite disloyal at times, was a local ruler installed by Esarhaddon, and maintained by Assurbanipal. As was the case with Egypt, a local ruler was used by the Assyrians to manage Tyre's territories.

In Judah we once again see a different situation. Both Hezekiah and Manasseh were willing to accept Assyrian overlordship, fearful of suffering a fate similar to that of Israel before it was turned into the Assyrian province of Samaria. The destruction of Israel, and the deportation of its population proved to be a powerful warning to Judah to not entertain hopes of rebellion. They maintained their neutrality as Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal campaigned in Egypt, and the two Assyrian rulers were willing to let this important buffer state maintain nominal independence. The Assyrian policy in Judah, and some other southern Levantine kingdoms, can be considered a foreign policy aimed at effective defence. Measures taken to ensure these states were kept as vassal buffer kingdoms, meaning that they were Assyria's first line of defence should a powerful force attack the Assyrian empire through the Levant.

On the other hand, the imperial administration policy that Assyria adopted in Babylonia could not have been more unlike. Esarhaddon sought to rebuild Babylon after its destruction at the hands of Sennacherib, and, for many reasons, he was willing to pay Babylon serious patronage in all areas. The city was rebuilt at great cost to the Assyrian treasury and even the Esagila temple complex was restored. The civic rights of Babylon were re-instated, and a serious attempt at reconciling the two neighbouring kingdoms was made when Esarhaddon placed two of his sons, Assurbanipal and Šamaš-šumu-ukin, on the thrones of Assyria and Babylon respectively.

Assurbanipal was thrust upon the Assyrian throne to continue his father's policy of appeasement in Babylonia. He continued public works, and when he had his brother installed on the throne of Babylonia, he made sure the statue of Marduk was returned. Kidnapped by Sennacherib in an act of religious imperialism, the return of Marduk enabled the proud Babylonians to enact their New Year's festival, and once again enjoy the protection of their city's chief deity.

Furthermore, the use of positive imagery by the Assyrian kings in Babylonia fostered the idea that they were benevolent rulers with Babylonia's best interests at heart. This research corroborated that this contrasted with the sort of imagery found concerning Assyria's management of the western portion of its empire. Here, the Assyrian kings portrayed themselves as vengeful rulers, ready to bring hardships onto those who opposed Assyrian rule. The Zinjirli Stele, found in Syria, is a perfect example. Unusually aggressive in its presentation, it showcased Esarhaddon as a powerful overlord, willing to resort to violence to maintain the stability of his empire. It is in stark contrast to the image of a benevolent Assurbanipal actively contributing to the rebuilding of Babylon.

The reasons for such an abrupt change in policy are many. The Assyrian pantheon included Assyrian gods, and Marduk was an important deity for the Assyrians. Babylonia and Assyria also shared a long, rich and deeply intertwined history. Since the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century BCE they had been in a state of constant contact. Many times during their long history, one would dominate another, and assimilation of

culture, religion, bureaucracy and language was possible, thus by the time Esarhaddon took power, there were many similarities. It is quite reasonable to believe that the Assyrians were unable to apply, or at least justify, such a belligerent policy with a culture so similar to their own.

At the same time, Assyrian kings used conquest, in the name of Aššur, as a means to legitimise their reigns. In the name of the Assyrian gods they were meant to subjugate all those who challenged Assyrian attempts at re-enacting the established cosmic order. Whilst Babylonia, as previously discussed, created a problem, the Levantine states and Egypt did not. Undoubtedly, the destruction of Thebes, Memphis and Sidon served as warning to those who harboured rebellious attitudes toward their Assyrian overlords.

Finally, this research confirmed that even though by the mid 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE, the enemies of Assyria lay prostrate, conquered and devastated, the demise of the Assyrian empire was not to be avoided. Like an ageing star, the Assyrian empire had grown to untold size and magnificence, and imploded as a result of over extension.

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## Appendix One



Map: The Neo-Assyrian Empire

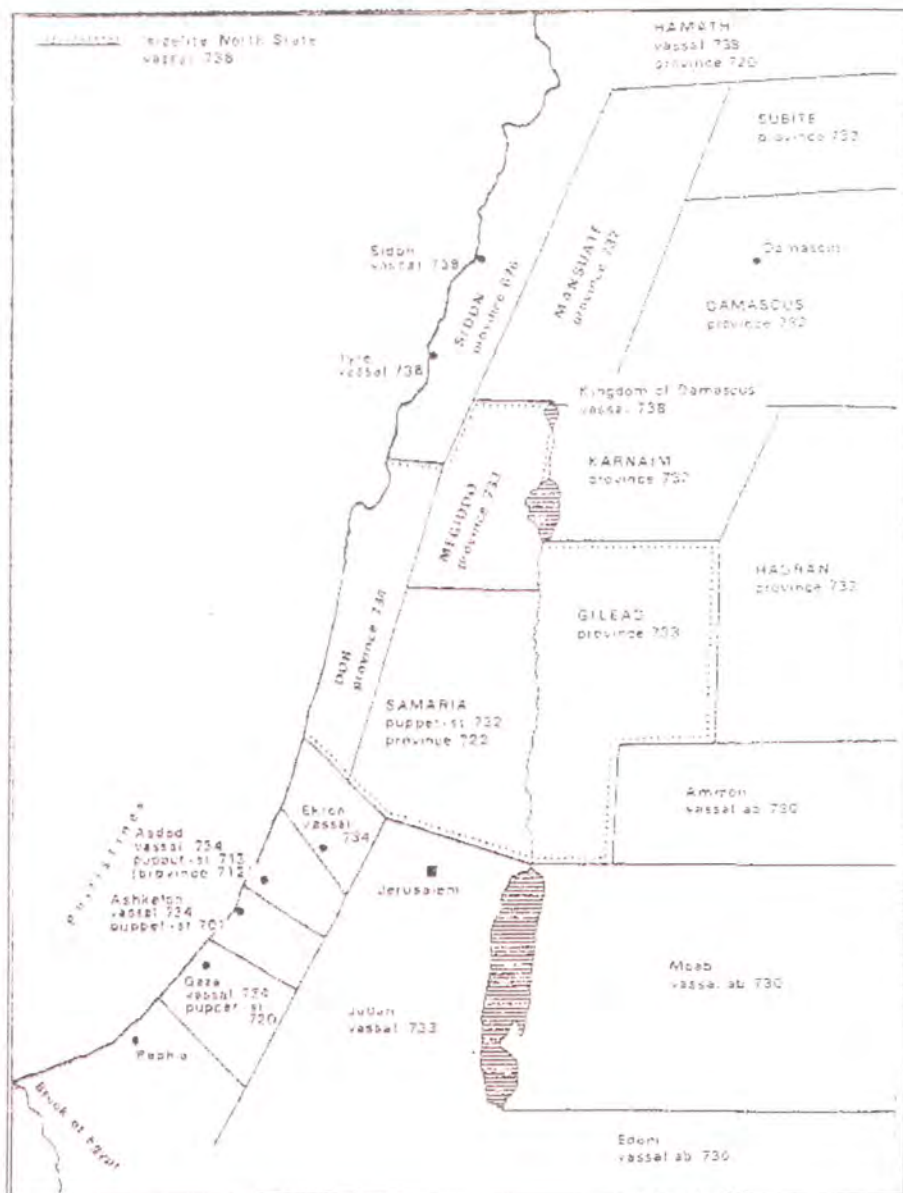
Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Map\\_of\\_Assyria.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Map_of_Assyria.png)



Map 2: The Ancient Near East

Source: Sasson, Jack M. (1995), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. Vols. 1-4.

Simon & Schuster MacMillan. New York.



Map 3: The Western Provinces

Source: Otzen, Benedikt (1979), 'Israel Under the Assyrians', in Larsen, Mogens T. (Ed.), *Power and Propaganda. A Symposium on Ancient Empires*, (Copenhagen 1979), pp. 252.

Appendix Two



The Zinjirli Stele, found in the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin (VA 2708).





Stela of Assurbanipal from Borsippa (BM 90865).

<i>King's name</i>	<i>Regnal dates</i>
Aššur-rabi I	
Aššur-nadin-ahhe I	
Enlil-našir I	1432-1427
Aššur-nirari II	1426-1420
Aššur-bel-nišešu	1419-1411
Aššur-riim-nišešu	1410-1403
Aššur-nadin-ahhe II	1402-1393
Eriša-Adad I	1392-1366
Aššur-uballiš I	1365-1330
Enlil-nirari	1329-1320
Arik-den-ili	1319-1308
Adad-nirari I	1307-1275
Šalmaneser I	1274-1245
Tukulti-Ninurta I	1244-1208
Aššur-nadin-apli	1207-1204
Aššur-nirari III	1203-1198
Enlil-kudurri-ušur	1197-1193
Ninurta-apil-Ekur	1192-1180
Aššur-dan I	1179-1134
Ninurta-tukulti-Aššur	
Mutakkil-Nusku	
Aššur-reš-iši I	1133-1116
Tiglath-Pileser I	1115-1077
Ašarid-apli-Ekur	1076-1075
Aššur-bel-kala	1074-1057
Eriša-Adad II	1056-1055
Šamši-Adad IV	1054-1051
Aššurnasirpal I	1050-1032
Šalmaneser II	1031-1020
Aššur-nirari IV	1019-1014
Aššur-rabi II	1013-973
Aššur-reš-iši II	972-968
Tiglath-Pileser II	967-935
Aššur-dan II	934-912
Adad-nirari II	911-891
Tukulti-Ninurta II	890-884
Aššurnasirpal II	883-859
Šalmaneser III	858-824
Šamši-Adad V	823-811
Adad-nirari III	810-783
Šalmaneser IV	782-773
Aššur-dan III	772-755
Aššur-nirari V	754-745
Tiglath-Pileser III	744-727
Šalmaneser V	726-722
Sargon II	721-705
Sennacherib	704-681
Esarhaddon	680-669
Assurbanipal	668-627
Aššur-etel-itani	626-624?
Sin-šumu-lišir	
Sin-šar-iškun	-612
Aššur-uballiš II	611-609

### Chronology of Assyrian Kings

Source: Postgate, John N. (1992), 'The Land of Assur and the Yoke of Assur', in *World Archaeology*, Vol. 23, No 3, Archaeology of Empires. (Feb, 1992), pp. 248.