



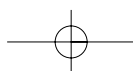
Steven W. HOLLOWAY, *Aššur is King! Aššur is King! Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire*. Culture & History of the Ancient Near East 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2002). xxxiv + 559 pp., 4 maps, 27 illustrations. EUR 104.00/US\$ 121.00 (cloth). ISBN 90-04-12328-8.

This voluminous study originated from a 1992 University of Chicago dissertation, “The Case for Assyrian Influence in Israel and Judah: Inference and Evidence,” which remained unpublished as the author became convinced that “housing a study of Neo-Assyrian religious imperialism and its Procrustean application to the historiography of the Divided Monarchy between the covers of the same book constitutes a methodological crime” (p. xx). Instead, he chose to adapt and expand his thesis over the following ten years into the present work. It is the goal of the book “to explore the means by which the Neo-Assyrian Empire exploited the religions of conquered nations and client states in the achievement of imperial domination” (p. xv). Hence, contrary to what the title of the volume suggests, Holloway’s work does not deal with religion in the heartland of Assyria (cf. p. xx) but is exclusively devoted to what he terms “the religious imperialism of the Neo-Assyrian empire.” Due to the genesis of the book, this is understandable but in my opinion still problematic as the evaluation of the Assyrian strategies employed in conquered territories calls for a comparison with the behavior “at home”. Holloway also stresses that he did not aim to write “a fresh political history of Babylonia or any other part of the Assyrian empire” (p. xx); however, the study of Assyrian imperialism is by necessity closely linked to the expansion of the Assyrian empire, and hence a concise overview of the political history of Assyria would have been a necessary foundation for Holloway’s work that would have moreover relieved the lengthy chapters two to four where whatever historical detail Holloway finds necessary to elucidate a particular case has to find its place.

The book borrows its title from a line in the so-called Middle-Assyrian Coronation Ritual (p. xv), and the author adopts without discussion the hypothesis that the so-called Coronation Hymn of Assurbanipal is the 7th century version of this 13th century text. One should bear in mind, however, that both designations are modern, that the relationship between the two texts is not at all certain, and that other ritual uses are possible as well, most importantly in the context of the New Year Festival.¹

The volume opens with a detailed critique of the *Forschungsgeschichte* of Holloway’s topic (pp. 1-79), with a long section devoted to the achievements of the pioneers of Assyriology in the 19th century (pp. 9-42); the early history of the discipline of Assyriology is of special interest to the author who also devotes an appendix to this subject, “Prelude to the Intellectual and Social Background of the First British School of Assyriology” (pp. 427-444).² In the opening chapter, the special attention which is given to the monographs of Morton Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Judah and Israel in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C.E.* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974) (pp. 53-59) and Hermann Spieckermann, *Juda unter Assur in der Sargonidenzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982) (pp. 60-64) reflects the roots of the present volume. It is curious that despite the author’s lengthy discussion of Cogan’s work he maintains that “no monograph-length study of Assyrian religious imperialism has appeared prior to the present work” (p. 64; cf. also the back cover) as he is well aware otherwise that Cogan did not restrict himself to Assyria’s dealings with Judah and Israel. The first chapter closes with what might be best described as a critical annotated bibliography of relevant studies since the late 1970s up to now (pp. 64-79).

The second chapter, with the title “Terror in the Exercise of Empire: Coercion and Conformity,” deals with violent means employed by the Assyrian empire against foreign cults (pp. 80-216). The chapter starts with an evaluation of what the author terms the “Assyrian Imperial Archive”; in fact, this is a description of the available source material³ (pp. 80-98). The crucial definitions of the ubiquitous terms “foreign cults” and “religious imperialism” follow (p. 98f.). Both this and the discussion of the sources are vital for the whole work, not just this chapter, and should have been positioned somewhere more prominently in the volume.



While the definition of religious imperialism as “deliberate, coercive involvement in the affairs of a foreign and subordinate polity with the intention of either manipulating the internal affairs of the foreign cult, or of imposing cultic dues and obligations consciously understood by both polities for the support of the cult(s) of the imperial polity, or both” (p. 99) is easily accepted, the definition of a foreign cult as “any cult associated with a temple or shrine located outside the Assyrian heartland” (p. 98), which then is defined as the region between Sinjar and Zagros, Assur and Šibaniba, is completely insufficient in reflecting the historical developments over the four centuries of the Neo-Assyrian empire’s existence; there is, quite contrary to the author’s statements, a profound difference between the situation at, say, the end of the 8th century in Ḫarran with its close Assyrian links from the 14th century onwards (see below) and in a still independent principality like Mušašir. A more precise definition and a limitation to the Assyrian manipulation of those cults outside the Empire and in newly integrated territories directly after the establishment of Assyrian territory would in my opinion have allowed a sharper and more instructive study of religious imperialism. As it is, no distinctions are made and hence the resulting image is sadly blurred, neither generalization nor discernment of local strategies are possible and the lack of a benchmark for appropriate religious behavior in the shape of a discussion of the treatment of cults in central Assyrian cities like Assur, Nineveh,⁴ Kalhu and Arbail, makes it impossible to evaluate the various Assyrian actions beyond the purely descriptive. The chapter continues with a section entitled “Provincial Dues for the Cult of Aššur” (pp. 100-159). However, only a small part is devoted to the discussion of the various Assyrian temple offerings (pp. 100-108); the major part of the section (pp. 109-151) is devoted to the Assyrian destruction of temples (with table 1, pp. 109-111) and of divine images⁵ (with table 2, p. 118)—both occurring relatively rarely according to the Assyrian sources—and the extremely frequent deportation of divine images⁶ (with table 3, pp. 123-144). The following section, entitled “The ‘Symbol of Aššur’” (pp. 160-177, with table 4, pp. 151-159), deals with the erection of the “weapons of Aššur” in newly conquered regions. Holloway suggests that the “weapons of Aššur” were military standards which were used in the administration of loyalty oaths⁷ (p. 176). The section is—except for the final paragraph—verbatim identical with Holloway’s article “The ^{GIS}*Kakki Aššur* and Neo-Assyrian Loyalty Oaths” in *CRRA* 45/1 (2001) 239-266 (cf. p. 160 note 254); this does not seem to serve any discernable practical purpose beyond fleshing out the author’s list of publications. A section with the title “Divine Image of the King, Prestige Politics, and Imperialism” follows (pp. 178-193), dealing with the erection of royal statues and steles and discussing the possible existence of a Neo-Assyrian *Herrscherkult*. A chapter concludes with a section entitled “Domination of Foreign Cults by Violent Means” (pp. 193-216) which presents an evaluation of the material cumulated in the preceding sections and adds a discussion of the archaeological evidence for Assyrian cults in the western part of the empire (pp. 200-216).

The third chapter bears the title “Diplomacy in the Exercise of Empire: High Finance Patronage and High Profile Manipulation” and scrutinizes evidence for acts of Assyrian magnanimity towards foreign cults (pp. 217-319). In this chapter, Holloway discusses temple building operations outside of the Assyrian heartland and connected activities such as the manufacture of divine statues. The evidence is presented in tables and for this, the small format of the book is a serious handicap: the special advantage of representing data in a table should be the clear arrangement, but all clarity is lost as these basically short tables are spread out over multiple pages, hampered even more by a multitude of lengthy footnotes. The data thus presented is then summarized and discussed. Table 5 (pp. 238-254) sums up the evidence for temple (re)constructions “outside Assyria”; the evidence for the first millennium concerns almost exclusively Babylonia and Ḫarran. Discussions of temple offerings to temples “outside of Assyria” (with table 6, pp. 261-268), and of the king’s personal involvement in cultic activities (with table 7, pp. 270-272) follow; again, the evidence from the first millennium sources concerns almost exclusively Babylonia and Ḫarran. The subsequent study of the refurbishment and restoration of captured divine images (with table 8, pp. 277-283) concerns two quite differ-

ent topics which should have been kept apart; the return of kidnapped deities should be treated together with the capture of these statues (see pp. 123-144), as both are structural elements of a popular Assyrian strategy to manipulate troublesome principalities, the taking of hostages. Although the discussion of this strategy applied to divine images is certainly not misplaced within the framework of religious imperialism, it is important to recognize the close parallels with the holding hostage of the families of political leaders.⁸ The refurbishment of divine statues for temples outside of Assyria concerns exclusively Esarhaddon's policy in Babylonia. Next, the evidence for the placement of inscriptions on objects in temples is presented (with table 9, pp. 288-291), and the evaluation of divinely sanctioned exemptions (*kidinnu*, *anduraru* etc.) follows (with table 10, pp. 293-295)—again a topic which solely concerns Ḫarran and Babylonia. After a discussion of the royal intervention in the cultic calendar (table 11, pp. 303-305; included are also *ad hoc* changes), the chapter concludes with a table enumerating 38 “miscellaneous” royal actions concerning cultic activities that could not be fitted elsewhere.

The fourth and final chapter is entitled “Analysis of the Exercise of Empire: The Organs of Assyrian Imperialism and Regional Strategies” and is devoted to the study of the mechanics of Assyrian religious imperialism (pp. 320-425). Here, after a discussion of the “agents of Assyrian religious imperialism”, that is, temple functionaries and provincial governors (pp. 320-338), Holloway focuses on what he terms “cultic patronage.” After briefly discussing the evidence for the Assyrian kings' activities in connection with cult centers in Syria, the Levant and Anatolia⁹ (pp. 338-343), the author turns exclusively to Babylonia (pp. 343-388) and Ḫarran (pp. 388-425). This may be understandable due to the comparatively rich sources on Assyrian religious activities in these two regions—as the data collection in the preceding chapter have shown, material on other regions hardly exists. However, as interesting as the fate of Ḫarran is, this city is a problematic choice in the context of the author's research agenda; in my opinion, it should not have been included at all among the homes of “foreign cults”. The city¹⁰ had been part of the Assyrian Empire during the Middle-Assyrian period (cf. p. 393f.) and was lost to the Assyrians in the mid-11th century. In the 9th century, during the first wave of expansion of what is today called the Neo-Assyrian Empire the city was reclaimed and remained Assyrian until the ultimate fall of the Empire; the last Assyrian king, Aššur-uballit II, ascended the throne in Ḫarran after Assur was lost. There can be no doubt that in the late 8th and 7th century, at the time when the special role of Ḫarran and its principal deity, the moon-god Sîn, becomes apparent within Assyrian royal ideology, the city was considered thoroughly Assyrian. Already in the reign of Adad-nerari III, Sîn of Ḫarran was called a “great god of Assyria.”¹¹ Ḫarran hence can hardly serve as a model case for Assyria's religious policy in newly conquered territory. The case of Babylonia is likewise not a representative one for Assyrian religious imperialism; the history of Assyria and Babylonia has always been closely connected and at least since the time that the Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I also ruled as king over Babylonia in the 13th century the idea that one king should preside over both countries existed in Assyrian royal ideology. The religious conduct of the Assyrian kings after the reclaiming of Babylonia by Tiglath-pileser III, especially in the city of Babylon, hence cannot be judged without the context of the ongoing changes in the cult at Assur.¹²

The volume closes with an appendix (see above), a bibliography (pp. 445-501) and exhaustive indices of authors cited (pp. 503-512), of divine names (pp. 513-515), of personal names (pp. 516-520), of place names (pp. 521-528), of general subjects (pp. 529-538), of temple names (p. 539) and of text citations (pp. 540-559; all texts are, somewhat unusually, indexed three times: according to museum number, text publication and edition).

The book is accompanied by four useful maps which show all mentioned toponyms (provided they can be identified); what is, however, sorely missing is a map or a series of maps representing the political organization of the Near East during the Neo-Assyrian period. The author deems that the “peripheral holdings moved in and out of Assyrian control with dis-

maying regularity” (p. 81); the attempt to visualize Assyrian expansion would have proven him wrong in this impression.¹³ 27 figures illustrate relevant scenes from Assyrian palace decoration on reliefs, gates and bricks and pertinent objects such as divine statues, royal steles and seals; due to the author’s special interest on the early history of the discipline, photos of Rawlinson, Talbot, Sayce are also included.

Holloway’s style is easily readable and often entertaining. He freely uses modern concepts and images as comparisons with the situation during the Neo-Assyrian period, be it Ronald Reagan’s and the Assyrian kings’ reliance on astrologers (p. 83), the building activities conducted in Chicago under the mayor Richard M. Daley which serve to illustrate the interest of Mesopotamian rulers in the construction of public buildings (p. 217f.) or the comparison between the May Day Parades in Soviet Moscow and the American National Republican Convention with Ancient Near Eastern divine processions (p. 236) and between “the advertising juggernaut in the modern world” with public spectacles in Assyria (p. 193), be it that the propaganda of Stalinist Soviet Union and Maoist China are used to describe the intellectual context of Assyrian inscriptions and reliefs (p. 93) or that the Assyrian strategy to win over the local elites is likened to the Marshall Plan (back cover). However, although they allow the reader to develop relatively clear notions about Holloway’s personal world view and preferences, these comparisons are not always fitting, and to link Assyrian rock reliefs¹⁴ with Mount Rushmore (p. 401) is definitely misleading. In contrast with royal steles, which were set up in gates and at temples, these reliefs are installed in places where the attention of passers-by was not at all guaranteed; moreover, the rather small reliefs are executed in very low relief that makes it often impossible to even see them unless the position of the sun is exactly right.

Holloway’s book offers a wealth of data on various religious activities conducted by Assyrian kings in the first millennium BC, and thanks to the tables and the exhaustive indices, this data can be easily located within the extensive volume. Besides tackling the difficult topics of Assyrian imperialism and religious practice, Holloway’s work is valuable for those interested in the Assyrian attempts to dominate Babylonia, in the history of Ḫarran and in the origins of the discipline of Assyriology.

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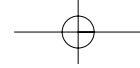
¹ Cf. Karen Radner, *Die neuassyrischen Texte aus Tall Šēḫ Ḫamad*. Berichte der Ausgrabung Tall Šēḫ Ḫamad/Dür-Katlimmu 6 (Berlin: Reimer, 2002) 18 note 196.

² The author has in the meantime published two more articles on this topic: “The Quest for Sargon, Pul and Tiglath-Pileser in the Nineteenth Century.” In *Mesopotamia and the Bible. Comparative Explorations*, ed. Mark W. Chavalas and Kyler Lawson Younger, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002) 68-87; “Biblical Assyria and Other Anxieties in the British Empire.” *Journal of Religion & Society* 3 (2001) (electronic publication only; see <http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/2001/2001-12.html>).

³ A good description and evaluation of the available Neo-Assyrian text material is the book of Frederick Mario Fales, *L'impero assira. Storia e amministrazione (IX-VII secolo a.C.)* (Rome: Laterza, 2001).

⁴ On this topic see E. Frahm, “Sanherib und die Tempel von Kuyunjik.” In *tikip santakki mala bašmu . . . Festschrift für Rykle Borger zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*. Cuneiform Monographs 10, ed. Stefan M. Maul (Groningen: Styx, 1998) 107-121.

⁵ In this context, the author raises the topic of rape and cites an Assyrian relief as the sole depiction of such an incident. However, even this scene, albeit illustrating two Assyrian soldiers’ violence against a person, does not show a rape; see Karen Radner, “How did the Neo-Assyrian



King Perceive his Land and its Resources?" in *Rainfall and Agriculture in Northern Mesopotamia*, ed. Remko M. Jas (Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 2000) 234 note 8.

⁶ The deportations of divine images during the reign of Tiglath-pileser III. were recently discussed by Christoph Uehlinger, "Hanun von Gaza und seine Gottheiten auf Orthostatenreliefs Tiglatpilesers III." In *Kein Land für sich allein. Studien zum Kulturkontakt in Kanaan, Israel/Palästina und Ebir-nâri für Manfred Weippert zum 65. Geburtstag*. Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 186, ed. Ulrich Hübner and Ernst Axel Knauf (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002) 112-115.

⁷ The Assyrian term is *adê*; regrettably, the work of Hans-Ulrich Steymans, *Deuteronomium 28 und die adê zur Thronfolgeregelung Asarhaddons. Segen und Fluch im Alten Orient*. Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 145 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995) was not used.

⁸ On this topic see Stefan Zawadski, "Hostages in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions." In Karel Van Lerberghe/Antoon Schoors (Hg.), *Immigration and Emigration within the Ancient Near East. Festschrift E. Lipiński*. Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 65 (Leuven: Peeters, 1995) 449-458.

⁹ On the cult of the weather-god of Kumme see now Walter Mayer, "Die Stadt Kumme als überregionales religiöses Zentrum." In *Ex Mesopotamia et Syria Lux. Festschrift für Manfred Dietrich zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*. Alter Orient und Altes Testament 281, ed. Oswald Loretz/Kai A. Metzler/Hanspeter Schaudig (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2002) 329-358.

¹⁰ John Nicholas Postgate's contribution "Ḫarrān" in *RIA* 4 (1972-75) 122-125 should be added to the references.

¹¹ As Holloway also mentions (p. 402).

¹² On this topic see now Galo W. Vera Chamaza, *Die Omnipotenz Aššurs. Entwicklungen in der Aššur-Theologie unter den Sargoniden Sargon II., Sanherib und Asarhaddon*. Alter Orient und Altes Testament 295 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2002).

¹³ Most useful in this respect is the map given in Mario Liverani, *Antico Oriente. Storia società economia* (Rome: Laterza, 1988) 793 fig. 145.

¹⁴ On this topic see most recently Florian Janoscha Kreppner, "Public Spaces in Nature: the Case of the Neo-Assyrian Rock Reliefs." *Altorientalische Forschungen* 29 (2002) 367-383.

