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Date

Icons of Royal Power: Viewing the Rhetoric of the Royal Psalms in the Context of Ancient Near  
Eastern Royal Art

By

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B.A., Brewton-Parker College, 2013

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An abstract of  
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the  
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2020

Abstract:

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by

Richard Anthony Purcell

This study employs Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) royal art to contextualize the literary imagery and rhetoric of the Royal Psalms (RPss). The study begins by arguing for the relevance of artistic data for interpreting the rhetoric of the RPss and noting the dearth of attention to artistic evidence in past scholarship on the RPss. The study then analyzes the rhetoric of Psalms 2, 21, 45, 72, and 110 individually in light of rhetorical themes present in ANE royal art. The study concludes with a description of the modes of rhetoric found throughout the RPss and the royal art of other ANE nations. This study engages three different methods in Hebrew Bible scholarship: iconographic-biblical exegesis, rhetorical criticism, and genre criticism as it applies to the RPss. In sum, the RPss functioned as Judah's royal icons, complex constellations of imagery that body forth a vision of reality meant to create and sustain social identities.



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**Fig. 3.29.** Detail of the Victory Stele of Naram-sin. Location: Susa. Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. Source: Photographed by Rama,

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Victory\\_stele\\_of\\_Naram\\_Sin\\_9064.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Victory_stele_of_Naram_Sin_9064.jpg).

**Figs. 3.30a–b:** Wall reliefs from Ashurnasirpal II's palace at Nimrud featuring Ashur as the winged solar disc at the king's side in images of war and triumph. Location: Northwest Palace, Nimrud. Date: 9<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Source: Meuszyński, *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen*, Tafel 2, B–3 and B–11.

**Fig. 3.31.** Wall relief featuring the Assyrian king tending the sacred tree and flanked by two genii figures. The winged sun disc of Ashur/Shamash is above the scene. Location: Ashurnasirpal II's North-West Palace, Nimrud. Date: 9<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Source: Meuszyński, *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen*, Tafel I, B–23.

**Fig. 3.32.** Reconstruction of wall relief fragments displaying the motif of the king holding the bow and libation bowl, surrounded by human and divine attendants. Location: Ashurnasirpal II's North West Palace, Room C, Nimrud. Date: 9<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Source: Meuszyński, *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen*, Tafel 4, C–6, 7, and 8.

**Fig. 3.33.** Cylinder seal of Darius portraying the king hunting lions alongside the deity. Location: Thebes. Date: 6<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: Ryan P. Bonfiglio, "Archer Imagery in Zechariah 9:11–17 in Light of Achaemenid Iconography," *JBL* 131 (2012), 516, fig. 3.

**Fig. 3.34.** Tomb façade featuring Dairus supported by representatives of the nations as he stands before Ahuramazda and the fire altar. Location: Naqsh-e Rostam. Date: 6<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Xerxes\\_tomb\\_at\\_Naqsh-e\\_Rostam\\_upper\\_register\\_\(4614878357\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Xerxes_tomb_at_Naqsh-e_Rostam_upper_register_(4614878357).jpg).

**Fig. 3.35.** Seal depicting the king preparing to smite an enemy before Amun. Location: Tell el-'Agul. Date: 1292–1190 BCE. Source: Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette*, Band 1, 525, fig. 1234.

**Fig. 4.1.** The exterior face of the golden shrine's front doors, showing panels AR 1–6. Location: Tutankhamun's tomb, Valley of Kings, Thebes. Date: 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, Plate VIII.

**Fig. 4.2.** The first scene on the shrine's front doors (AR 1). Location: Tutankhamun's tomb, Valley of Kings, Thebes. Date: 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, Plate VIII, AR 1.

**Figs. 4.3a–d.** Scenes AR 2, 4, 5, 6 from front door. Location: Tutankhamun’s tomb, Valley of Kings, Thebes. Date: 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, Plate VIII, AR 2, 4, 5, 6.

**Fig. 4.4.** Scene AR 3 from the front door. Location: Tutankhamun’s tomb, Valley of Kings, Thebes. Date: 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, Plate VIII, AR 3.

**Fig. 4.5.** Scenes AR 3 and 6 from the front doors. Location: Tutankhamun’s tomb, Valley of Kings, Thebes. Date: 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, Plate VIII, AR 3, 6.

**Figs. 4.6a–d.** Scenes CR 1–4 from the outer side of the shrine. Location: Tutankhamun’s tomb, Valley of Kings, Thebes. Date: 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, Plates XVI–XVII, CR 1–4.

**Figs. 4.7a–c.** Scenes BR 1–3 from the outer side of the golden shrine. Location: Tutankhamun’s tomb, Valley of Kings, Thebes. Date: 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, Plates XIV–XV, BR 1–3.

**Figs. 4.8a–b.** Scenes DR 1 and DR 2 from the rear outer side of the shrine. Location: Tutankhamun’s tomb, Valley of Kings, Thebes. Date: 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, Plates XVIII–XIX, DR 1–2.

**Fig. 4.9.** Interior of shrine doors. Location: Tutankhamun’s tomb, Valley of Kings, Thebes. Date: 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, Plate IX.

**Fig. 4.10.** Exterior face of the Eastern High Gate at Medinet Habu. Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Hölscher, *The Mortuary Temple of Ramses III*, pl 15.

**Fig. 4.11.** Scene from the interior program of the Eastern High Gate. Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Hölscher, *The Mortuary Temple of Ramses III*, pl 23.

**Fig. 4.12.** Interior scene of the Eastern High Gate in which embraces one princess and plays draughts with another (all actors apparently nude). Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Eastern High Gate*, pl. 640.

**Fig. 4.13.** Interior scenes on the western wall of the Eastern High Gate. Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Eastern High Gate*, pl. 654.

**Fig. 4.14.** Interior scenes depicting the king interacting with the *nfrwt*, again all nude. Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Eastern High Gate*, pl. 646.

**Fig. 4.15.** An interior scene of the Eastern High Gate that displays the king with a young prince. Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Eastern High Gate*, pl. 647.

**Fig. 4.16.** Leftmost scene of the king smiting his enemies that dominates the front of the Eastern High Gate. Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Eastern High Gate*, pl. 598.

**Fig. 4.17.** Exterior scenes on the western side of the Eastern High Gate. Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Eastern High Gate*, pl. 626.

**Fig. 4.18.** Exterior scene on the north wall of the Eastern High Gate depicting the king in triumph before Amun-Re. Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Eastern High Gate*, pl. 606.

**Fig. 4.19a–c.** Middle Assyrian Cylinder Seals depicting enthroned royal women. Location: Unprovenanced. Date: 14<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: Ornan, “The Queen in Public,” 464, fig. 7.

**Fig. 4.20.** Seal from Tell Morzan displaying the king and queen enthroned together with the royal children. Location: Tell Mozan. Date: 2300–2150 BCE. Source: Ornan, “The Queen in Public,” 464, fig. 8.

**Fig. 4.21.** Bronze fragment showing Queen Naqia and a king together in cultic activity. Location: Babylon. Date: 705–669 BCE. Source: Ornan, “The Queen in Public,” 464, fig. 1.

**Fig. 4.22.** The stele of Libbali-sharrat displaying the enthroned queen. Location: Ashur. Date: 669–631 BCE. Source: Ornan, “The Queen in Public,” 464, fig. 2.

**Fig. 4.23.** Bas-reliefs of Ashurbanipal and Libbali-sharrat banqueting in the garden from room S<sup>1</sup> of the North palace. Location: Nineveh. Date: 669–631 BCE. Source: Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, LXIII.

**Fig. 4.24.** The bas-relief depicting the king and queen banqueting together. Location: Nineveh. Date: 669–631 BCE. Source: Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, LXV.

**Fig. 4.25.** The head of Teuman in the garden banquet scene. Location: Nineveh. Date: 669–631 BCE. Source: Albenda, “Landscape Bas-Reliefs,” 29, fig. 26.

**Fig. 4.26.** Necklace hanging from Ashurbanipal’s couch in the Garden Scene. Location: Nineveh. Date: 669–631 BCE. Source: Albenda, “Landscape Bas-Reliefs,” 31, fig. 30.

**Fig. 4.27.** Weapons stacked to the right of Ashurbanipal and Libbali-sharrat in the Garden Scene. Location: Nineveh. Date: 669–631 BCE. Source: Albenda, “Landscape Bas-Reliefs,” 35, fig. 32.

**Fig. 4.28.** Reliefs from room S<sup>1</sup> depicting the Elamite surrender to Ashurbanipal. Location: Nineveh. Date: 669–631 BCE. Source: Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, LX.

**Fig. 4.29.** Reliefs from room S<sup>1</sup> showing Ashurbanipal hunting lions. Location: Nineveh. Date: 669–631 BCE. Source: Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, LVI.

**Fig. 4.30.** Unprovenanced cylinder seal from the Achaemenid period displaying a female audience scene. Location: Unprovenanced. Date: 550–330 BCE. Source: Brosius, “The Royal Audience Scene Reconsidered,” 149, fig. 13.9.

**Fig. 4.31.** Seal of a female audience scene from the Persepolis Fortification Tablets. Location: Persepolis. Date: 6<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: Lerner, “An Achaemenid Cylinder Seal,” 157, fig. 14.5.

**Fig. 4.32.** Darius in a royal audience scene from the north stairs at the Apadana. Location: Persepolis. Date: 6<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: Root, *King and Kingship*, XVII.

**Fig. 4.33.** Fragment of an ivory from Tell el-Far‘ah. Location: Tell el-Far‘ah. Date: 1650–1150 BCE. Source: Ornan, “The Queen in Public,” 468, fig. 12.

**Figs. 4.32a–c.** Ivories from a royal bedframe at Ugarit depicting the king preparing to slaughter an enemy (a), the king and queen in close embrace (b), and two princes nursing at the breasts of a winged goddess (c). Location: Ras Shamra, Ugarit. Date: 1650–1190 BCE. Schaefer, “Les fouilles de Ras Shamra-Ugarit,” pl. VII, XI, X.

**Fig. 5.1.** Thutmosis III smiting his enemies on the Seventh Pylon at Karnak. Location: Pylon VII, Temple of Amun, Karnak. Date: 1490–1436 BCE. Source: Photographed by Olaf Tausch, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Karnak\\_Tempel\\_15.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Karnak_Tempel_15.jpg).

**Fig. 5.2.** Line drawings of reliefs featuring plant and animal life from Thutmisis III’s *Akhmenu*. Location: Pylon VII, Temple of Amun, Karnak. Date: 1490–1436 BCE. Source: Beaux, *Le Cabinet de Curiosités*, pl. VII and XI.

**Fig. 5.3.** Scene of the king and queen bow-hunting fish and fowl in a garden from a chest found in Tutankhamun’s tomb. Location: Tutankhamun’s tomb, Valley of Kings, Thebes. Date: 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Cornelius, “The Garden in the Iconography of the Ancient Near East,” 222, fig. 13.

**Fig. 5.4.** Ramses II enthroned upon representations of bound foreigners upon the Abu Simbel façade. Location: Abu Simbel. Date: 1279–1212 BCE. Source: John Henry Breasted, *The 1905–1907 Breasted Expeditions to Egypt and the Sudan*, <https://oi.uchicago.edu/collections/photographic-archives/breasted-expeditions/introduction>.

**Fig. 5.5.** Ramses II prepared to smite his enemies before the deity Re-Harakhty within the temple of Abu Simbel. Location: Abu Simbel. Date: 1279–1212 BCE. Source: John Henry Breasted, *The 1905–1907 Breasted Expeditions to Egypt and the Sudan*, <https://oi.uchicago.edu/collections/photographic-archives/breasted-expeditions/introduction>.

**Fig. 5.6.** Ramses II trampling enemies as he prepares to smite another enemy with his spear. Location: Abu Simbel. Date: 1279–1212 BCE. Source: John Henry Breasted, *The 1905–1907 Breasted Expeditions to Egypt and the Sudan*, <https://oi.uchicago.edu/collections/photographic-archives/breasted-expeditions/introduction>.

**Fig. 5.7.** Ramses II kneeling amidst the branches of the *ished* tree before Re-Harakhty. Location: Abu Simbel. Date: 1279–1212 BCE. Source: John Henry Breasted, *The 1905–1907 Breasted Expeditions to Egypt and the Sudan*, <https://oi.uchicago.edu/collections/photographic-archives/breasted-expeditions/introduction>.

**Fig. 5.8.** Diagram representing the organization of the relief program of Medinet Habu. Source: O’Conner, “The Mortuary Temple of Ramses III,” 258, fig. 6.11.

**Fig. 5.9.** Outer façade of the entrance into the second court at Medinet Habu. Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Temple Proper*, pl 251.

**Fig. 5.10.** Lower two reliefs of the inner façade of the entrance into the second court at Medinet Habu. Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Temple Proper*, pl 259a–b.

**Fig. 5.11.** Blue faience depicting Re-Harakhty and the pharaoh in mirrored roles. Location: Unprovenanced. Date: 11<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: EA14556. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

**Fig. 5.12.** Relief from Room H of Ashurbanipal’s North Palace of an Assyrian king overlooking an expansive palatial garden set above reliefs of the Elamites going to battle. Location: Nineveh. Date: 669–631 BCE. Source: BM124939. © Trustees of the British Museum.

**Fig. 5.13.** Reconstruction of the north façade of the Apadana at Persepolis. Location: Persepolis. Date: 6<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: Strawn, “‘A World Under Control,’” 91, fig. 3.

**Fig. 5.14.** A wall painting from Mari showing the king authorized to rule by Ishtar in the midst of imagery of natural fertility. Location: Mari. Date: 1728–1686 BCE. Source: Keel, *Symbolism*, 143, fig. 191.

**Fig. 5.15.** Middle Bronze Age Seal depicting a king and goddess sustaining life before the sacred tree. Location: Palestine. Date: 1800–1550 BCE. Source: Dietrich, “Psalm 72,” fig. 4.

**Fig. 5.16.** Stamp seal showing the smiting king protecting and encouraging natural fertility. Location: Jerusalem. Date: 1800–1550 BCE. Source: Keel, *Corpus: Einleitung*, 222, Abb. 486.

**Fig. 6.1.** Scene showing the king, Sekhemrawadjkhau Sebekemsaf I, offering two cakes to the god Montu. Location: Gateway in the temple of Medamud. Date: 16<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 121, fig. 134.

**Fig. 6.2.** Relief of Ramses II accompanied by the Nekhbet vulture charging Syrians in his chariot. Location: Abu Simbel. Date: 1279–1212 BCE. Source: John Henry Breasted, *The 1905–1907 Breasted Expeditions to Egypt and the Sudan*, <https://oi.uchicago.edu/collections/photographic-archives/breasted-expeditions/introduction>.

**Fig. 6.3.** Relief of Ramses III pursuing fleeing Libyans. Location: Exterior north wall, Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *Later Historical Records of Ramses III*, pl. 70.

**Figures 6.4a and 6.4b.** Ramses III offering *Ma'at* to Amun-Re (5a) and a libation to Osiris (5b). Location: Second Court, Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Temple Proper—Part I: The Portico, the Treasury, and the Chapels Adjoining the First Hypostyle Hall with Marginal Materials from the Forecourts*, vol. V of *Medinet Habu*, OIP 83 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1957), plates 258D (fig. 5a) and 277A (fig. 5b).

**Fig. 6.5.** Ramses III in the Smiting Posture before Amun-Re on First Pylon. Location: First Pylon, Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, et al., *Later Historical Records of Ramses III*, Plate 101.

**Fig. 6.6.** A relief featuring Ramses the III prepared to strike down subdued enemies before two deities. Location: Pillar of the forecourt of the temple at Medinet Habu. Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *Later Historical Records of Ramses III*, Plate 121C.

**Fig. 6.7.** Ivory bangle depicting Thutmose IV wielding a scimitar ready to strike a captured and subdued enemy before the deity. Location: Amarna. Date: 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Keel, “Powerful Symbols of Victory,” 234, fig. 4.

**Figs. 6.8a–b.** Side A of the White Obelisk (a) and detail of register 3a (b). Location: Nimrud. Date: 11<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: Sollberger, “The White Obelisk,” Plate XLII (6.8a) and Pittman, “The White Obelisk,” 337, fig. 7 (6.8b).

**Fig. 6.9.** Reconstructed plan of Ashurnasirpal II’s throne room at the Northwest Palace at Nimrud. Source: Irene Winter, “Royal Rhetoric,” 54, fig. 2.

**Fig. 6.10.** Seal depicting the pharaoh/king offering a sacrifice or standing in a position of worship and adoration the solar deity Re-Harakhty. Location: Southern Israel-Palestine. Date: 1650–1150 BCE. Source: Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 81, fig. 94c.

**Figs. 6.11a–b.** Cylinder seals showing king as priest in cultic service before the gods. Location: 45a from Megiddo Str. II and 45b from Tell Dothan. Date: 750–587 BCE. Source: Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 289, figs. 280b and 281.

**Fig. 6.12.** Ivory inlay with the motif of the pharaoh with raised arm prepared to strike the subdued enemy. Location: Samaria. Date: 8<sup>th</sup> Century. Source: Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 263, fig. 262b.

**Fig. 6.13.** Ramesside scarab with the pharaoh poised to strike enemy before the deity Seth. Location: Bet-Shean. Date: 1650–1150 BCE. Source: Othmar Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette*, Band II, 107, fig. 23.

**Fig. 6.14.** Ramesside scarab depicting the pharaoh in the smiting posture before Amun. Location: Tell el-‘Ağul. Date: 1650–1150 BCE. Source: Keel, “Powerful Symbols of Victory,” 236.

**Fig. 6.15.** Scarab seal depicting the pharaoh preparing to smite a subdued enemy before a representation of a deity. Location: Tel Masos. Date: 1050–900 BCE. Source: Othmar Keel, Menakem Shuval, and Christoph Uehlinger, *Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel*, Band III: Die Frühe Eisenzeit, Ein Workshop, OBO 100 (Freiburg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 345, fig. 17.

**Fig. 6.16.** Phoenician silver bowl depicting the pharaoh in the smiting posture. Location: Kourion. Date: 7<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Source: Keel, “Powerful Symbols of Victory,” 236.



## Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

**1.1 Contextualizing the Royal Psalms**

The Royal Psalms (Pss 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 132, 110, 144; henceforth, RPss) have been a focal point of Psalms scholarship in particular and biblical scholarship writ large. Biblical scholars have described the RPss variously as “concerned entirely with kings,”<sup>1</sup> as focusing on “the institution of kingship itself,”<sup>2</sup> as poems that “reflect the ideas of the Israelite courts and cults,” and as “state pronouncements, liturgies of political ritual.”<sup>3</sup> For these reasons, the RPss occupy key roles in multiple scholarly discourses, from reconstructions of Israel and Judah’s histories, to theories of Syro-Palestinian religion, to theological readings of Israel’s Scripture.<sup>4</sup> The RPss stoke scholarly interest because of their striking characterizations of Judah’s monarchy and king.<sup>5</sup> These poems portray kingship with fantastic imagery and cosmic frames of reference that far outstrip the more cynical takes on the monarchy presented in the law codes, the Deuteronomistic History, or the prophetic books. The RPss present a vision of reality in which the nation and, in numerous psalms, the entire cosmos is ruled, organized, and maintained by Yahweh and his king.

Mark Hamilton, drawing on Catherine Bell, describes the suasive power of the RPss:

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<sup>1</sup> Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *An Introduction to the Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, trans. James D. Nogalski (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998), 99.

<sup>2</sup> Scott Starbuck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms: The So-Called Royal Psalms in their Ancient Near Eastern Context*, SBL Dissertation Series 172 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), 99.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Hamilton, *The Body Royal: The Social Poetics of Kingship in Ancient Israel*, Biblical Interpretation 78 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 32.

<sup>4</sup> See Starbuck, *Court Oracles*, 1–66; Randy G. Haney, *Text and Concept Analysis in Royal Psalms*, StBibLit 30 (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 9–67.

<sup>5</sup> Throughout this project, I refer to “Judah’s” royal rhetoric rather than “Israel’s” to reflect the fact that, even if any of the royal psalms originated in the Kingdom of Israel, their place in the HB is due to the Judahite Kingdom’s conscious inheritance and reuse. For a discussion of this issue, see Daniel E. Fleming, *The Legacy of Israel in Judah’s Bible: History, Politics, and the Reinscribing of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1–38.

The royal psalms do not attempt to foist improbable beliefs on an unsuspecting public... Rather, as texts of political ritual, as Catherine Bell would put it, they ‘orchestrate a cosmic framework within which the social hierarchy headed by the king is perceived as natural and right.’ Through ‘symbols and symbolic action’ they ‘depict a group of people as a coherent and ordered community based on shared values and goals,’ and they also demonstrate the legitimacy of these values and goals by establishing their iconicity with the perceived values and order of the cosmos.

This dissertation is a study of the poetic imagery and rhetoric of the RPss. Numerous studies have attended to the rhetorical emphases of Judah’s royal ideology in comparison to surrounding ancient Near Eastern (ANE) monarchies. Yet these studies draw primarily upon textual data, comparing the RPss to ANE royal ritual texts, inscriptions, or prayers.<sup>6</sup> While the RPss share many points of contact and similarity with ANE royal texts, there are also striking differences between the RPss and ANE royal texts and inscriptions, such as the anonymity of the RPss.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, scholars of the RPss have largely overlooked the dataset of ANE royal art.<sup>8</sup> Ancient Near Eastern art, and royal art in particular, provides insight into the ways the RPss worked, as ANE royal art and the RPss display similar constellations of imagery to depict kingship. Put another way, whereas ANE royal art constructs visual icons of kingship, the RPss construct

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<sup>6</sup> For examples, see John Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms* (London: SCM Press, 1976); Keith W. Whitelam, “Israelite Kingship: The Royal Ideology and its Opponents,” in *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological, and Political Perspectives*, ed. Ronald E. Clements (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 119–41; Philip Nel, “The Theology of the Royal Psalms,” *Old Testament Essays* 11 (1998): 71–92; Klaus Koch, “Königspsalmen und ihr Rituaeller Hinter Grund; Erwägungen zu Ps 89,20–38 und Ps 20,” in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, ed. Peter Flint and Patrick Miller, VTSup 99 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 9–52; Hamilton, *The Body Royal*, 32–117; Starbuck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms*, 67–102 and 205–12; Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 337–44; Collin Cornell, “Divine Aggression in Royal Psalms and Inscriptions” (Atlanta: PhD Dissertation Emory University, 2018), 114–29.

<sup>7</sup> See Starbuck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms*, 67–102.

<sup>8</sup> With the phrase “royal art,” I refer primarily to art with the king/state as author and primary subject (Winter uses the language of king as author and primary subject when defining royal rhetoric and the genre of historical narrative in Neo-Assyrian royal art, I have adopted and adapted her language; see Irene J. Winter, “Royal Rhetoric and the Development of Historical Narrative in Neo-Assyrian Reliefs,” in *On Art in the Ancient Near East*, Vol. 1: Of the First Millennium B.C.E., CHANE 34.1 [Leiden: Brill, 2010], 5). Throughout the study, I attempt to draw on ANE art that meets both of these criteria of the king/state as author and as primary subject, however, when surveying minor arts from ancient Syria-Palestine I often abandon the criteria of king/state as author. Except for cases in which the find context of Syro-Palestinian minor arts implies a royal author, the author of minor arts is more difficult to determine in comparison to the royal monumental arts of the Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Persian empires.

verbal icons of kingship.<sup>9</sup> The RPss and ANE royal art employ congruent rhetorical strategies as they depict a reality within which the king's empowerment by the nation's deity and reign over the cosmos is both natural and right.<sup>10</sup> Scholars have drawn upon ANE textual data to determine the settings and functions of the RPss. By restricting the comparative material to royal texts and inscriptions, though, past scholarship has limited the conceivable settings and functions we might imagine for these poems.<sup>11</sup>

## 1.2 Research Question: The Setting and Function of the Royal Psalms

Questions concerning the setting and function of the RPss have shaped how scholars have assessed and used the RPss since the pioneering work of Hermann Gunkel. Gunkel framed many of the interpretive discourses concerning the genre and setting(s) of the RPss. Gunkel drew upon ANE comparative data in order to determine a suitable classificatory category for the RPss and elucidate their historical settings.

### 1.2.1 The RPss as Royal Ritual Transcripts?

Gunkel discussed the Royal Psalms as one of his genres of ancient Israel's religious lyric.

Gunkel included Pss 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 101, 110, 132, 144:1–11 and 89:47–52 as RPss,

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<sup>9</sup> I draw the language of iconic structures and constellations of imagery from Joel M. LeMon, who critiques and reformulates the language and theory of William Brown (see William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002], 3–14; Joel M. LeMon, *Yahweh's Winged Form in the Psalms: Exploring Congruent Iconography and Texts*, OBO 242 [Fribourg: Academic Press and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010], 14–22). See section 1.3.2 below.

<sup>10</sup> Catherine Bell describes the function of state rituals similarly, see *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 129. See section 1.3.3 on my working definition of rhetoric and section 1.4.3 on the term rhetorical strategy.

<sup>11</sup> Recent works employing an iconographic-biblical approach, the method upon which this study is built, make similar critiques of the limited scope of the comparative material drawn on by past biblical scholarship. See Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*, trans. Timothy J. Hallett (Grand Rapids: Eisenbrauns, 1997); Brent A. Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion? Leonine Image and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*, OBO 212 (Fribourg: University Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht), 2005; LeMon, *Yahweh's Winged Form in the Psalms*; Ryan Bonfiglio, *Reading Images, Seeing Texts: Towards a Visual Hermeneutics for Biblical Studies*, OBO 280 (Fribourg: University Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2016).

contending that their unity as a group comes from the fact that “they are concerned entirely with kings.”<sup>12</sup> As the RPss are texts concerned with kings, Gunkel drew upon ANE royal texts to determine the identity and setting of the RPss. In light of his chosen comparative data, Gunkel classified the *Sitze im Leben* of the RPss as “the many celebrations that are organized by the Israelite kings” such as enthronement festivals, the transferring of the ark to Zion and temple dedication, the day when the king leaves for war, celebrations of victory, thanksgiving celebrations, and acts of atonement and intercession.<sup>13</sup> He viewed the RPss as transcripts of royal rituals “performed at some type of court festivity.”<sup>14</sup> Gunkel identified the RPss as a category based on their content (concern for kings) and shared setting within royal rituals.

Sigmund Mowinkel expanded Gunkel’s proposal that many early psalm forms and the RPss themselves had a cultic origin and ritual function.<sup>15</sup> He followed Gunkel in some of his identifications of cultic contexts.<sup>16</sup> He then went beyond Gunkel to reconstruct a yearly autumnal New Year festival focused on the enthronement of Yahweh as king with the enthronement of the human king as a component.<sup>17</sup> Since the king’s enthronement festival inaugurated the kingship, in Mowinkel’s understanding, the enthronement festival held primary place among the ritual settings of the RPss.<sup>18</sup> Like Gunkel, Mowinkel drew extensively from ANE royal texts to

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<sup>12</sup> Gunkel and Begrich, *An Introduction to the Psalms*, 99.

<sup>13</sup> Gunkel and Begrich, *An Introduction to the Psalms*, 102.

<sup>14</sup> Gunkel and Begrich, *An Introduction to the Psalms*, 101.

<sup>15</sup> Sigmund Mowinkel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, vol. I (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 13–14.

<sup>16</sup> Mowinkel, *Psalmstudien*, vol. II (Amsterdam: P. Schippers, 1961), 44, 62.

<sup>17</sup> Mowinkel, however, never offered a reconstruction of the yearly enthronement festival with proposed RPss that may have played a part in it; he merely implied that the psalm’s concerned with the enthronement of the human king would also have been an aspect of the yearly Yahweh enthronement festival (see Starbuck, *Court Oracles*, 42–45).

<sup>18</sup> Mowinkel, *Psalmstudien*, vol. II, 107.

reconstruct Israelite kingship ideology, the cultic settings of the RPss, and his proposed yearly enthronement festival.<sup>19</sup>

Mowinkel's cult-historical approach and his expansion of Gunkel's proposed ritual setting of the RPss shaped proceeding Psalms scholarship, even among those who rejected his reconstructed Yahweh enthronement festival. Hans Schmidt, embracing the idea of a Yahweh enthronement festival, asserted that Pss 2, 20, 21, 89:1–3, 89:6–19, 110, and 132 all functioned as hymns sung during a ritual enthronement of the human king that occurred during this festival.<sup>20</sup> Outside of the Myth-and-Ritual School that arose out of Mowinkel's proposals, the majority of Psalms scholars have chosen to critique and modify Mowinkel's reconstructed festival while still holding to a ritual context for the RPss.<sup>21</sup> Gerhard von Rad drew from Hebrew Bible (HB) texts (e.g. 1Kgs 1:33ff and 2 Kgs 11) and Egyptian textual parallels to reconstruct an Israelite royal coronation ceremony as the *Sitz im Leben* for the RPss.<sup>22</sup> Arthur Weiser marshalled psalms along with texts from the Targumim and Qumran to propose an annual covenant festival.<sup>23</sup> According to Weiser, this multi-faceted festival included enactments of the enthronement of both Yahweh and the earthly king, and this ritual event was the original context of many of the RPss.<sup>24</sup> Hans-Joachim Kraus similarly rejected the reconstruction of Mowinkel as

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<sup>19</sup> For example, texts referencing the Babylonian *akītu* festival (see François Thureau-Dangin, *Rituels accadiens* [Paris: Leroux, 1921], 127–54; Mowinkel, *Psalmstudien*, vol. II, 78–85; Mowinkel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, vol. I, 52–60; Mowinkel, *He That Cometh: The Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism*, trans. G. W. Anderson [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005], 3–9 and 21–95).

<sup>20</sup> See Hans Schmidt, "Review Article of Sigmund Mowinkel's. *Psalmstudien. II. Das Thronbesteigungsfest Jahwaes und der Ursprung der Eschatologie*," *TLZ* 49 (1924): 78. Elmer Leslie made a similar proposal but included Pss 2, 21, 72, 101, 110, and 132 (see Elmer Leslie, *The Psalms: Translated and Interpreted in the Light of Hebrew Life and Worship* [Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1949], 55–61).

<sup>21</sup> On the Myth-and-Ritual School, see Samuel H. Hooke, ed., *Myth and Ritual: Essays on the Myth and Ritual of the Hebrews in Relation to the Cultic Pattern of the Ancient Near East* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933).

<sup>22</sup> Gerhard von Rad, "The Royal Ritual in Judah," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, ed. Gerhard von Rad (London: SCM, 1984), 222–31.

<sup>23</sup> Arthur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, trans. Herbert Hartwell, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 35–45.

<sup>24</sup> Weiser, *The Psalms*, 591.

he sought to determine whether or not the *Sitz im Leben* of the RPss was “a definite ritual act.”<sup>25</sup> Kraus drew on HB texts (e.g. 2 Sam 6–7; 1 Kgs 8:3, 1 Kgs 12:32ff; 2 Kgs 23:1–3; Ps 132) to contend that a “Royal Zion Festival,” conveying the election of Jerusalem and of David, was the ritual context for all of the RPss.<sup>26</sup> He claimed the RPss share a *Gattung* based upon their shared *Sitz im Leben* within the festival.<sup>27</sup>

The reconstructions of von Rad, Weiser, and Kraus alike have proven unsatisfactory. Yet most psalms scholars still draw on the basic ideas of Mowinkel’s all-encompassing festival<sup>28</sup> or propose vague contexts for the RPss that still assume the poems functioned as an aspect of royal rituals.<sup>29</sup> Mark Hamilton, in his recent and theoretically informed monograph on the RPss, assumes a ritual context for the poems as the foundation for his analysis: “Their [the RPss] composers apparently assumed that their claims about the monarch, created and displayed ritually, were shared by their audience.”<sup>30</sup> Later, he claims, “the procedure here is to examine each poem in detail, paying attention to the mentions of parts of the king’s body, its display, care, adornment, and movement in ritual.”<sup>31</sup> Hamilton refrains from proposing reconstructed festival contexts. Yet he assumes that the RPss were either employed in royal rituals or provide textual representations of royal rituals.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1–59: A Continental Commentary*, trans. Hilton Oswald, CC (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 56.

<sup>26</sup> Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 30–50.

<sup>27</sup> Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 56–62.

<sup>28</sup> For example, see John Eaton’s work, which builds on Mowinkel’s and expands it by drawing on HB texts and the psalms in particular (Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*).

<sup>29</sup> For examples, see Peter C. Cragie, *Psalms 1–50*, WBC 19 (Waco: Word Books, 1983), 64–65, 185, 189–90; Marvin Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, WB 20 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 222–23, 337–38, 413–18; Leslie Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, WBC 21 (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 3–5, 83–86, 204–09, 289–91; Nancy deClaisse-Walford, Rolf Jacobsen, and Beth Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 20–21; Haney, *Text and Concept Analysis*, 66–67. Starbuck succinctly describes the history of scholarship on the RPss: “The psalms commonly referred to as the ‘royal psalms’, or *Königpsalmen*, have been thought by scholars to preserve actual liturgy from the royal propagandistic cult” (Starbuck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms*, 9).

<sup>30</sup> Hamilton, *The Body Royale*, 32.

<sup>31</sup> Hamilton, *The Body Royale*, 37.

<sup>32</sup> Hamilton, *The Body Royale*, 38–46 and 60–61.

Hamilton is not alone; scholars such as Eckhart Otto and Martin Arneth have compared the RPss to royal ritual texts, such as the Coronation Hymn of Ashurbanipal (SAA III, 11).<sup>33</sup> The comparative data and theoretical models employed to interpret the RPss have limited scholarly imagination concerning the identities, settings, and functions of these poems in ancient Israel/Judah. As Hamilton indicates briefly in his monograph, though, some scholars have begun to draw upon royal inscriptions as comparative data to contextualize and interpret the RPss.<sup>34</sup>

### 1.2.2 The RPss as Royal Inscriptions?

Recent Psalms scholarship draws on royal inscriptions as comparative data for interpreting the psalms. Since Gunkel, scholars have relied upon epigraphic data to understand the psalms in a haphazard way that accesses inscriptions alongside a multitude of other text types. Harold L. Ginsberg, though, contended that public inscriptions attesting to “petition and acknowledgement” closely parallel royal and other psalm types (thanksgiving, specifically) in structure and function in a way that other ANE texts do not.<sup>35</sup> Scholars such as Patrick Miller, Yitzhak Avishur, Eckhart Otto, Mark Hamilton, and, most recently, Collin Cornell have accepted Ginsberg’s basic premise and employed ANE epigraphic data and royal inscriptions to

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<sup>33</sup> See Martin Arneth, “*Sonne der Gerechtigkeit*” *Studien zur Solarisierung der Jahwe-Religion im Lichte von Psalm 72*, BZABR 1 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000), 54–108; Eckhart Otto, “Politische Theologie in den Königpsalmen zwischen Ägypten und Assyrien: Die Herrscherlegitimation in den Psalmen 2 und 18 in ihren altorientalischen Kontexten,” in “*Mein Sohn bist du*” (*Ps 2,7*): *Studien zu den Königpsalmen*, ed. Eckhart Otto and Erich Zenger (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2002), 33–65; Eckhart Otto, “The Judean Legitimation of Royal Rulers in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context,” in *Psalms and Liturgy*, ed. Dirk Human and Carl Vos (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 131–39.

<sup>34</sup> See Hamilton, *The Body Royale*, 41–42. Hamilton explores inscriptions as comparative data more extensively in his later work (see Hamilton, “Prosperity and Kingship in Psalms and Inscriptions,” in *Literature as Politics, Politics as Literature: Essays on the Ancient Near East in Honor of Peter Machinist*, ed. David S. Vanderhooft and Abraham Winitzer [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013], 185–205). The use of royal inscriptions as data to interpret aspects of the RPss is not novel. Yet, the use of inscriptions as comparative data to contextualize the RPss, that is, understand their contexts, identities, and functions, is a fairly recent endeavor in Psalms scholarship.

<sup>35</sup> See Harold L. Ginsberg, “Psalms and Inscriptions of Petition and Acknowledgement,” in *Louis Ginsberg Jubilee Volume: English Section* (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1945), 159–71, here 169.

contextualize the form and rhetoric of the psalms in general and the RPss in particular.<sup>36</sup>

Hamilton and Cornell focus on the RPss, comparing the rhetoric of the RPss to the rhetorical practices of ANE royal inscriptions with a focus on Syro-Palestinian data.

Hamilton investigates the trope of kingship and prosperity in ANE inscriptional data and the RPss in order to illuminate the “rhetorical strategies” of these texts.<sup>37</sup> Hamilton justifies his use of first millennium royal inscriptions<sup>38</sup> as comparative data by noting parallels in terminology, structure, and function among inscriptions and the psalms in general, asserting: “the boundary between written and oral language events (‘texts’) of many genres was fluid for the simple reasons that the same scribes worked in multiple genres.”<sup>39</sup> Hamilton then compares the rhetoric of the royal inscriptions of Kilamuwa, the kings of Suḫu, Mesha of Moab, and some Neo-Assyrian inscriptions to elucidate the rhetorical program of Ps 72.<sup>40</sup> Hamilton contends that these royal inscriptions and the RPss communicate to similar audiences (divine and human public, simultaneously) as they employ shared rhetorical strategies in order to “create and

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<sup>36</sup> Patrick D. Miller, Jr., “Psalms and Inscriptions,” in *Congress Volume Vienna 1980*, ed. J. A. Emerton, VTSup 32 (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 311–32; Yitshak Avishur, “Studies of Stylistic Features Common to the Phoenician Inscriptions and the Bible,” *UF* 8 (1976): 1–22; Victor Sasson, “The Language of Rebellion in Psalm 2 and in the Plaster Texts from Deir ‘Alla,” *AUSS* 24 (1986): 147–54; Otto, “The Judean Legitimation of Royal Rulers,” 131–39; Cornell, “Divine Aggression in Royal Psalms and Inscriptions.”

<sup>37</sup> Hamilton, “Prosperity and Kingship,” 185. By rhetorical strategies, Hamilton primarily refers to “ways in which ancient Near Eastern rulers portrayed themselves...how a trope of kingly self-presentation could serve either to explain actual practices and thus legitimate rule...or to imagine an unreal but desirable situation and thus reorient legitimate rule” (“Prosperity and Kingship,” 186). I discuss how I am using the language of rhetoric, rhetorical strategy, and rhetorical function below in section 1.4.3.

<sup>38</sup> Hamilton is somewhat vague on what texts fall under the category of “royal inscriptions.” At one point, he claims, “building inscriptions, funerary steles, votary texts, and others,” as his comparative pool of first-millennium inscriptions. The majority of inscriptions that Hamilton analyzes, however, fall under the genre category of royal memorial inscriptions, as defined by Collin Cornell (“Divine Aggression in Royal Psalms and Inscriptions,” 12–14).

<sup>39</sup> Hamilton, “Prosperity and Kingship,” 190.

<sup>40</sup> Hamilton, “Prosperity and Kingship,” 190–204. By rhetorical program, Hamilton (and I) refers to a text’s comprehensive vision of reality, versus how a text pictures a singular theme or topic. For example, Hamilton focuses on how the rhetoric of abundance and prosperity figures in the RPss and ANE royal inscriptions. Yet, the texts that Hamilton analyzes do not concern themselves with abundance and prosperity alone. For example, one might analyze Ps 72’s rhetoric of prosperity and natural abundance alone, or one might consider how the psalm’s rhetoric of prosperity fits into its overall rhetorical program, that is, its presentation of the deity, king, and peoples.



enhance an agreed-upon world,” within which the nation’s people support the king and national deity to uphold a reality in which they benefit from the king’s reign.<sup>41</sup>

Cornell assumes the work of scholars such as Ginsberg, Otto, and Hamilton to justify his comparative profile of divine aggression in Syro-Palestinian royal memorial inscriptions and the RPss.<sup>42</sup> Cornell, though, frames his comparative project more clearly than past scholarship.

Cornell, like Hamilton, highlights parallels between the RPss and royal memorial inscriptions in particular, including their focus on royal identity, their brevity, their nonnarrative character, and their dual address of both human and divine audiences.<sup>43</sup> Yet Cornell notes some significant differences in the form and rhetoric of royal memorial inscriptions and the RPss as well.

Cornell notes a stark difference between the RPss and royal memorial inscriptions, namely that royal memorial inscriptions are spoken in the first-person voice of an individual king. The opening line of these inscriptions introduce the particular king who presents the text’s claims.<sup>44</sup> The RPss, though, are spoken from the anonymous voice of the poet, prophet, or possibly a communal “chorus.”<sup>45</sup> As noted by Scott Starbuck, this difference in form highlights a variance in rhetorical function between the two text types.<sup>46</sup> Royal memorial inscriptions present royal identity; they immortalize the individual king who voices the inscription.<sup>47</sup> The RPss never name a specific king, speaking instead of the king and kingdom more broadly.<sup>48</sup> The RPss, then,

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<sup>41</sup> Hamilton, “Prosperity and Kingship,” 205.

<sup>42</sup> Cornell, “Divine Aggression in Royal Psalms and Inscriptions,” 9–12.

<sup>43</sup> Cornell, “Divine Aggression in Royal Psalms and Inscriptions,” 32. Cornell defines shared literary features of royal memorial inscriptions (see “Divine Aggression in Royal Psalms and Inscriptions,” 12–13). These features include being spoken in a first-person voice, beginning with the self-introduction of a named king, a narrational recounting of the king’s reign that reviews his successes in battle and domestic achievements, and a conclusion consisting of curses for those who alter or damage the inscription.

<sup>44</sup> Cornell, “Divine Aggression in Royal Psalms and Inscriptions,” 13.

<sup>45</sup> Cornell, “Divine Aggression in Royal Psalms and Inscriptions,” 33.

<sup>46</sup> Starbuck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms*, 98–102, 206–07.

<sup>47</sup> See Cornell, “Divine Aggression in Royal Psalms and Inscriptions,” 16–18; see also Earnest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1975).

<sup>48</sup> Starbuck describes the RPss as concerned with the “institution of Israelite kingship,” (Starbuck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms*, 101).

construct a picture of the ideal king and kingdom. They portray the concept of kingship itself. Another disjunction between royal memorial inscriptions and the RPss concerns their literary quality and use of imagery. Ancient Near Eastern royal inscriptions tend toward a hybrid of narrative and poetic features.<sup>49</sup> Cornell speaks of memorial inscriptions as lyric in character, functioning as utterances of a speaking subject relating an episodic narrative-poem that addresses a specific audience(s).<sup>50</sup> ANE royal inscriptions tend to lack “the giveaway properties of poetry such as dense imagery, compressed language, or metaphor,” while the RPss employ dense, interconnected images in a poetic presentation of kingship.<sup>51</sup> Royal inscriptions have proven to be a productive ground of comparison for the psalms in general and the RPss in particular. ANE art, though, shares with the RPss a tendency toward ideal representations of the king and monarchy through the use of overlapping and interconnected imagery.

### 1.2.3 The RPss as Poetic Royal Icons

The royal art produced by the kingdoms of the ANE provides a locus of data from which we might draw new comparative insights about the identity, setting, and function of the RPss. Royal art, like the RPss, employs an array of imagery to build iconic constellations that present kingship to its viewers. Many ANE kings constructed entire artistic programs to present an all-

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<sup>49</sup> Cornell, “Divine Aggression in Royal Psalms and Inscriptions,” 15–16, particularly fts. 48–51.

<sup>45</sup> Cornell, “Divine Aggression in Royal Psalms and Inscriptions,” 15–18.

<sup>51</sup> Cornell, “Divine Aggression in Royal Psalms and Inscriptions,” 17.

encompassing vision of reality with the king at its center.<sup>52</sup> Like the RPss, ANE royal art imagines ideal relationships among king, deity, the king's people and the nations.<sup>53</sup>

Psalms scholars have utilized ANE art sporadically in attempts to contextualize and interpret the RPss psalms and their rhetoric.<sup>54</sup> Irene Winter, though, has sounded a call for research that integrates texts and images as shared forms of communication and meaning-making in the ancient world. She states, "One simply cannot look at the verbal domains of information and not include the visual in the larger universe of cultural communication."<sup>55</sup> As I discuss below, biblical scholars have begun to answer Winter's call in a movement that began with Othmar Keel's investigation of ANE concepts of thought present in the Psalms and in iconography. Keel arranged iconographic data thematically in order "to see through the eyes of

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<sup>52</sup> I use the language of "artistic program" to refer to the decorative scheme of various constellations of imagery, often displayed upon various media, working together in a singular room or even within an entire royal complex (such as a temple or palace). The terminology of artistic program is employed in similar ways in works by Irene J. Winter and John M. Russell (see Irene J. Winter, "The Program of the Throneroom of Assurnasirpal II at Nimrud," in *Essays on Near Eastern Art and Archaeology in Honor of Charles Kyrle Wilkinson*, ed. P. O. Harper and H. Pittman [New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983], 15–31; John M. Russell, "The Program of the Palace of Assurnasirpal II at Nimrud: Issues in the Research and Presentation of Assyrian Art," *American Journal of Archaeology* 102 [1998]: 655–715).

<sup>53</sup> On the role of ANE art in constructing royal identities and picturing right relationships, see Julian Reade, "Ideology and Propaganda in Assyrian Art," in *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires*, ed. Mogens Trolle Larsen, Mesopotamia: Copenhagen Studies in Assyriology 7 (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1979), 330–31; Winter, "Royal Rhetoric," 42–45; Irene J. Winter, "'Seat of Kingship' / 'A Wonder to Behold': The Palace as Construct in the Ancient Near East," in *On Art in the Ancient Near East*, 358–62; Gay Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2008), 252; Edith Porada, "The Uses of Art to Convey Political Meanings in the Ancient Near East," in *Artistic Strategy and the Rhetoric of Power: Political Uses of Art from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. David Castriota (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), 15–17. On the RPss as constitutive of divine, royal, and social relationships that seek to shape their audience, see Hamilton, "Prosperity and Kingship in Psalms and Inscriptions," 185–205.

<sup>54</sup> Keel's work is basically the only broader thematic approach to interpreting the royal psalms in light of ANE iconography (see Keel, *Symbolism*, 244–306). Other approaches have generally concerned themselves with individual royal psalms; see Jean de Savignac, "Essai d'interprétation du psaume CX à l'aide de la littérature égyptienne," *Oudtestamentische Studien* 9 (1951): 107–135; Frank Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100*, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 201–20 and 399–415; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101–150*, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 11–17, 139–56, and 580–90; Klaus Koch, "Der König als Sohn Gottes in Ägypten und Israel," in *"Mein Sohn bist du"*, 1–32; Otto, "Politische Theologie in den Königspsalmen," 33–65; Otto, "The Judean Legitimation of Royal Rulers," 131–140.

<sup>55</sup> Irene J. Winter, "Art in Empire: The Royal Image and the Visual Dimensions of Assyrian Ideology," in *On Art in the Ancient Near East*, Vol. 1, 71.

the ancient Near East.”<sup>56</sup> As Keel and Uehlinger later explicated in a more systematic fashion, it is impossible to reconstruct any aspect of a culture’s worldview while limiting oneself to textual data alone.<sup>57</sup>

The majority of studies by biblical scholars employing an iconographic-biblical approach, however, use visual data to explain confusing or multivalent imagery in the HB and determine *what* is pictured by the text.<sup>58</sup> Their focus has been on the content and motifs of biblical imagery in comparison to ANE iconographic motifs.<sup>59</sup> Scholars who have drawn on artistic data to interpret the RPss apply iconographic data sporadically and often with a similar focus on *what* is pictured by the psalm.<sup>60</sup> With this study, I propose that attention to the rhetoric of ANE royal art—the suasive strategies employed in ANE artistic programs and the constructions of reality envisioned by royal art—elucidates both the pictorial content and the function of their imagery, that it, answers questions of both *what* the RPss picture and *why* they

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<sup>56</sup> Keel, *Symbolism*, 8.

<sup>57</sup> They claim, “But when attempting to reconstruct the religious system (*belief*), which is the main point of this present study, we also reject emphatically the view that it is adequate to limit oneself to working with texts. Religious concepts are expressed not only in texts but can be given a pictorial form on items found in material culture as well” (see Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel (GGG)*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998], 10). For a broader discussion of the applicability of iconographic data in reconstructing ancient symbol systems see pages 7–12.

<sup>58</sup> The iconographic-biblical method is a comparative project of seeing textual imagery through the lens of ANE iconographic imagery (see Joel M. LeMon, “Iconographic Approaches: The Iconic Structure of Psalm 17,” in *Method Matters: Essays on the Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David L. Peterson*, eds. Joel M. LeMon and Kent Harold Richards, Resources for Biblical Study 56 [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009], 150–52).

<sup>59</sup> Such studies on ANE iconography and on comparing ANE iconography and textual imagery have focused upon reading pictorial content and motifs to compare literary and artistic pictorial content. Many studies have considered “what the images were doing,” their rhetoric, but not in a fulsome way and not as an explicit part of their approach. See Keel, *Symbolism*, 7–14 and 355–56; Othmar Keel, “Iconography and the Bible,” in *ABD* 3:358–74; Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 1–17; Izak Cornelius, *The Many Faces of the Goddess: The Iconography of the Syro-Palestinian Goddesses Anat, Astarte, Qedeshet, and Asherah, c. 1500-1000 BCE*, OBO 204 (Fribourg: University Press, 2004); Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion?*, 1–22; Izaak de Hulster, *Illuminating Images: An Iconographic Method of Old Testament Exegesis with Three Case Studies from Third Isaiah* (Utrecht: Universiteit Utrecht, 2008), 21–258; Izaak de Hulster, *Iconographic Exegesis and Third Isaiah*, FAT2 36 (Tübingen; Mohr Siebeck, 2009); LeMon, *Yahweh’s Winged Form in the Psalms*, 1–25 and 187–94.

<sup>60</sup> See particularly Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 201–20 and 399–415; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 11–17, 139–56, and 580–90.

employ such imagery. A focus on the rhetorical worlds envisioned by the RPss and their rhetorical goals create a space to view the setting and function these psalms as analogous to royal icons rather than solely royal ritual texts or memorial inscriptions.

The RPss cast their visions of kingship with dense imagery and terse language. These poems imagine ideal relations of king, deity, and peoples to construct verbal icons of kingship. As concise poems that consist of hyperbolic royal imagery, the RPss construct their visions of kingship through rhetorical strategies analogous to those employed within ANE royal art. As David Castriota asserts:

Art and language appear as parallel manifestations of a deeper, unifying conceptual urge...using a common means of expression that transcends the differences of medium. If the political glorifications of ancient Near Eastern visual art can already be said to have an emphatic ideology and strategy of presentation comparable to that of contemporary literature, then they also shared its rhetoric, established rules and formats of composition that articulate the message in a consistent, intelligible, and effective way.<sup>61</sup>

For example, like the RPss, ANE royal art tends to picture the king with idealized and canonical imagery rather than personal and individualized imagery.<sup>62</sup> In fact, Winter asserts that representations of kings in ANE art are “subject to a high degree of idealization, according to norms of value rather than of visual verifiability.”<sup>63</sup> Thus, ANE royal art contextualizes the RPss and their rhetoric of kingship in ways that royal inscriptions and ritual texts do not.

### **1.3 Methodology: Employing and Extending the Iconographic-Biblical Approach**

#### **1.3.1 Past Focus in Iconographic-Biblical Interpretation**

A concern for analyzing pictorial content has dominated the study of ANE iconography and the

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<sup>61</sup> David Castriota, “Political Art and the Rhetoric of Power,” 3.

<sup>62</sup> See Winter, “Art *in* Empire,” 83–85.

<sup>63</sup> Winter, *Art in Empire*, 85. For example, in Neo-Assyrian royal art kings are always portrayed as well-muscled in order to portray the strength and power of the king, even though it is unlikely that all Neo-Assyrian kings maintained such taught physical physiques throughout their lifespans. Another idealization in both Egyptian and Neo-Assyrian royal art is that only the nation’s enemies are depicted as wounded or dying, even though in reality casualties were experienced on both sides of a conflict.

application of iconographic data to interpret biblical texts. The focus can be traced back to the work of Erwin Panofsky, who claimed that iconography is concerned with “the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to their form.”<sup>64</sup> The study of ANE iconography within the field of biblical studies has been led by Othmar Keel, who describes the task as “the study of artistic subject matter or content (as opposed to artistic techniques and styles). Iconography therefore strives to describe the appearance, development, and disappearance of certain motifs and compositions, or the substitutions of one artistic form by another.”<sup>65</sup> This approach to ANE art centers on a concern for pictorial content and the study of iconographic motifs.

In the interpretation of biblical imagery, the scholars have tended towards harnessing ANE iconographic data to determine *what* is pictured in the biblical text rather than attending to the author’s rhetorical goal(s) in using such imagery. I do not wish to slight these approaches to studying iconography proper. However, I agree with Ryan Bonfiglio’s sentiment that it is time for the field to consider ANE art from different angles.<sup>66</sup> I will employ and expand upon the iconographic-biblical method to analyze the rhetoric of ANE royal art and the RPss.

1.3.2 Approaching the Psalms: Building on Joel LeMon’s Attention to Constellations of Imagery  
Scholars practicing the iconographic-biblical approach have been concerned with determining the best ways to delimit the comparative data to the most relevant *comparanda* for interpreting the biblical text.<sup>67</sup> Joel LeMon’s methodological advancement was to focus on the comparison of

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<sup>64</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 3.

<sup>65</sup> Othmar Keel, “Iconography and the Bible,” 358.

<sup>66</sup> Bonfiglio, *Reading Images, Seeing Texts*, 225–33.

<sup>67</sup> See Keel, *Symbolism*, 7–14 and 355–56; Othmar Keel, *Jahwe-Visionen und Siegelkunst: Eine neue Deutung der Majestätsschilderungen in Jes 6, Ez 1 und 10 und Sach 4* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1977); Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God*, 1–17; Keel, “Iconography and the Bible,” *ABD* 3:358–74; Martin Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven*, OBO 169 [Fribourg: University Press; Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999]; Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion?*, 1–22; de Hulster, *Iconographic Exegesis and Third Isaiah*, 1–118; LeMon, *Yahweh’s Winged Form*, 1–25 and 187–94.

congruent constellations of imagery, that is, considering the entire constellation of a text's literary imagery in order to compare it to congruent constellations of imagery upon ANE artifacts.<sup>68</sup> Scholars of the Fribourg School have pursued a focus on imagistic content in both textual and pictorial images, however, much to the neglect of comparing the rhetoric of imagery in ANE art and biblical texts.<sup>69</sup>

I plan to build on LeMon's method by attending to the rhetoric of both textual and pictorial constellations of imagery. That is, I will also analyze rhetorical congruence rather than congruence of pictorial content alone. Such an approach opens up the comparative project to material throughout the ANE that may share a rhetorical strategy with the biblical text(s) being studied without the need for proving genetic connections or direct influence.<sup>70</sup> We can open the discussion to correlations in rhetoric in light of a shared ANE context. Attention to both artistic content and rhetoric yields generative comparisons for understanding the literary imagery and rhetoric of the RPss.

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<sup>68</sup> See William Brown on the language of a psalm consisting of "constellations of images" that make up an "iconic structure" (Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 3–14). I use the language in light of Joel LeMon's critique of how Brown employs this language to describe biblical poetry and LeMon's helpful reformulation of how we might work to map a psalm's constellation of literary imagery to trace its iconic structure for productive comparative work (see *Yahweh's Winged Form*, 14–22). LeMon draws upon Keel's critique of biblical scholars for their "fragmentation" of the ANE art work they study, using only portions of a relief or wall painting to illustrate an idea rather than attending to the entire constellation of a piece's interconnected imagery and the idea it portrays (see Keel, "Iconography and the Bible," 367–69). LeMon logically takes this concept a step further, contending that scholars should be careful not to fragment the constellations of literary imagery within the biblical texts; rather, they should work to compare entire constellations of literary imagery to complete constellations of iconographical imagery, resulting in a more fruitful comparative project.

<sup>69</sup> See section 1.3.1 and footnote 67 above.

<sup>70</sup> A concern that has loomed large in recent iconographic approaches. LeMon's method delimits the comparative endeavor to textual and iconographic material from relevant chronological and geographical contexts in order to account for the connection and correlation of the two different sources of imagery. The connections in chronology and geography simultaneously provide impetus to employ to iconographic material (see LeMon, *Yahweh's Winged Form*, 22–25; see also Othmar Keel, *The Song of Songs*, CC [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994], 27–28). I should note, however, that a recent revival of work takes up the phenomenological spirit of Keel's *Symbolism* and moves away from a strict need to prove close proximity in time and place. For examples, see Brent Strawn, "The Iconography of Fear: *yir'at Yhwh* (יראת יהוה) in Artistic Perspective," in *Image, Text, Exegesis: Iconographic Interpretation and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Izaak de Hulster and Joel M. LeMon, LHBOTS 588 (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 91–134; Mark Justin Walker, "The Power of Images: The Poetics of Violence in Lamentations 2 and Ancient Near Eastern Art," (Atlanta: PhD Dissertation Emory University, 2019), particularly 1–35.

### 1.3.3 Attending to Rhetorical Function

The comparison of the rhetoric of pictorial and textual imagery presents a fruitful direction for the field of iconographic-biblical exegesis to explore. Many scholars have begun to examine ways in which we might analyze the rhetoric of ANE iconography. For some, this work appears in an explicit discussion of rhetoric.<sup>71</sup> For others, the concern for rhetoric seems to be more implicit.<sup>72</sup> This project builds on recent studies by demonstrating how a consideration of rhetoric shifts the iconographic-biblical method. By “rhetoric” I refer to communication for the purpose of shaping identity and action. So, this study considers how ANE pictorial and textual imagery attempts to persuade an audience to take up particular identities and practices. As a fundamentally comparative project, the introduction of ANE royal imagery will assist in contextualizing Judah’s distinctive royal rhetoric as modeled in the RPss. Rhetorical theory proper provides a foundation for understanding a constellation of images as rhetoric.

### 1.4 Defining Rhetoric and Past Precedents

Rhetoric as a category of critical study presents some problems, as usage of the term over the centuries in a wide range of discourses has invested it with ambiguity. I will briefly overview

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<sup>71</sup> For more recent explicit considerations, see Margaret Cool Root, *The King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art: Essays on the Creation of an Iconography of Empire*, Acta Iranica Vol. IX (Leiden: Brill, 1979); Zainab Bahrani, *Women of Babylon: Gender and Representation in Mesopotamia* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Bahrani, *The Graven Image: Representation in Babylonia and Assyria* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2016); Irene J. Winter, *On Art in the Ancient Near East*, 1–183; Brent Strawn, “‘A World Under Control’: Isaiah 60 and the Apadana Reliefs from Persepolis,” in *Approaching Yehud: New Approaches to the Study of the Persian Period*, ed. Jon L. Berquist, Semeia Studies 50 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 85–116; Bonfiglio, *Reading Images, Seeing Texts*.

<sup>72</sup> For examples of more implicit considerations of the rhetoric of ANE artistic imagery, see Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion?*, 283–89; Strawn, “The Iconography of Fear,” 124–29; Strawn, “‘With a Strong Hand and an Outstretched Arm’: On the Meaning(s) of the Exodus Tradition(s),” in *Iconographic Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: An Introduction to Its Method and Practice*, ed. Izaak de Hulster, Brent A. Strawn, Ryan P. Bonfiglio (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2015), 113–15; LeMon, *Yahweh’s Winged Form*, 188–89; LeMon, “Yahweh’s Hand and the Iconography of the Blow in Psalms 81:14–16,” *JBL* 132 (2013): 882; LeMon, “‘The Hezekiah Seal,’ Judahite Iconography, and Yahweh’s Winged Form in Psalms 61 and 63,” *HBAI*, forthcoming.



how the language of rhetoric has been used in the past before explaining my reasons for using the terminology. I will then define how I view rhetoric and key rhetorical critical terms. Finally, I will consider how the study of rhetoric might apply to art and be considered critically across art and text.

#### 1.4.1 A (Very) Brief History of Rhetorical Theory

The study of rhetoric has always been coupled with the study of language. Carol Newsom succinctly defines rhetoric as “the art of using language effectively and persuasively.”<sup>73</sup> Norms for the art of persuasion exist in all cultures, negotiated and shaped by cultural patterns and frameworks.<sup>74</sup> Yet the study of rhetoric as characterized by the Western discourse of rhetorical criticism began with the ancient Greeks. The study of rhetoric began as a study of techniques of argument and persuasion fit for shaping truth in a community setting as a part of an ideal democratic society.<sup>75</sup>

Throughout its history, two basic ways of conceiving of rhetoric have dominated the study and practice of rhetoric: rhetoric as rational argumentation and rhetoric as stylistics and eloquence.<sup>76</sup> Both of these traditions of thinking about and teaching rhetoric have co-existed throughout Western history. Yet, in aftermath of the Renaissance period, with the rise of science and rationalism as models for articulating truth, the field of rhetoric was largely confined to the study of stylistics. Rhetoric took on a negative pejoration as philosophers opposed logical reasoning to rhetoric as a strategy of persuasion through style, gimmicks, and the manipulation

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<sup>73</sup> Carol A. Newsom, “Rhetorical Criticism and the Reading of the Qumran Scrolls,” in *Rhetoric and Hermeneutics: Approaches to Text, Tradition and Social Construction in Biblical and Second Temple Literature*, ed. Carol A. Newsom, FAT 130 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 83.

<sup>74</sup> See Carol S. Lipsen and Roberta A. Binkley, eds., *Rhetoric Before and Beyond the Greeks* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004).

<sup>75</sup> See Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, “General Introduction,” in *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, ed. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg (Boston: Bedford Books, 1990), 1–3.

<sup>76</sup> Newsom, “Rhetorical Criticism,” 83–84. See also Thomas M. Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

of emotions rather than the presentation of rational arguments.<sup>77</sup> The study of rhetoric largely died out in the eighteenth century, until its revival and reconceptualization as a topic of study in twentieth century.<sup>78</sup>

Though the proper field and usage of rhetoric is still hotly debated, a new wave of scholarship has broadened the study of rhetoric and persuasion to an analysis of “how language use is related to the construction of knowledge and culture.”<sup>79</sup> Rhetoric is now often understood as an aspect of creating, shaping, and maintaining worldviews, that is, the cultural symbolic frameworks employed in making meaning of our experiences.<sup>80</sup> The study of rhetoric attends to how human realms of discourse and communication shape individual and communal identities, belief systems, and actions.<sup>81</sup> The work of Kenneth Burke helpfully illustrates how rhetorical theory and criticism has been reconceptualized. His model of rhetoric provides a generative starting point for analyzing poetic and visual rhetoric.

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<sup>77</sup> See Bizzell and Herzberg, “General Introduction,” 9–12.

<sup>78</sup> See Newsom, “Rhetorical Criticism,” 84–85.

<sup>79</sup> Newsom, “Rhetorical Criticism,” 85; see also Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1969).

<sup>80</sup> This reframing of rhetoric is grounded in 20<sup>th</sup> century advances in linguistics, the social sciences, and cultural anthropology; conversely, these disciplines have drawn upon the framework of rhetorical criticism to analyze and explain specific linguistic and cultural systems (see Newsom, “Rhetorical Criticism,” 85).

<sup>81</sup> See the varied approaches to conceptualizing and studying rhetoric in John L. Lucaites, Celeste M. Condit, and Sally Caudill, eds., *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory: A Reader* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1999). Raphael Demos’s articulation of the process of persuasion provides an early example of the now standard way of a conceiving of rhetoric as more than rational argumentation (see Raphael Demos, “On Persuasion,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 29 [1932]: 225–32).<sup>81</sup> He points out that belief is not simply a logic, as if evidence provided then leads to a rational conclusion that the logical mind necessarily accepts as fact. Those who disagree on an issue are not necessarily rational/irrational or logical/illogical. People who hold to one stance or belief and then later change it often do not do so because new data is available or because they move from irrational to rational, but rather because, “There was implicit in his mind some general framework of ideas, outlook, criteria, and this has been replaced by another...strict reasoning is therefore seen to be neither strict, nor binding upon all; it operates upon a vague background of ideas not explicitly demonstrable but coming rather as an individual growth” (Demos, “On Persuasion,” 225). Recent work in cognitive theory upholds Demos’s basic framing of rhetoric and cognition, providing a robust framework for making sense of how cultural systems and cognitive processes are intertwined. On how cultural discourses and modes of displaying and communicating knowledge (so, linguistic, but also visual and material aspects of culture) shape and inform our mental frameworks and curate the symbolic and cognitive patterns that we employ to make sense of the world, see Bradd Shore, *Culture in Mind: Cognition, Culture, and the Problem of Meaning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

### 1.4.2 Why the Language of Rhetoric?

Kenneth Burke recasts rhetoric, no longer viewing persuasion as its sole function and goal.<sup>82</sup> He contends that identification is a foundational aspect of rhetoric, that identification and persuasion are necessarily intertwined. That is, one persuades by establishing and delimiting identifications with an audience; persuasion moves an audience to accept particular identities. Identification and persuasion flow into one another.<sup>83</sup> Burke asserts, “You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his.”<sup>84</sup> His claim is not far from Aristotle’s inclusion of identification, knowing one’s audience and working with it, as a part of rhetorical persuasion.<sup>85</sup> One could argue that Burke simply emphasizes the place and function of identification in rhetoric. I think, however, that Burke contends for a correlation of identification and rhetoric that goes beyond the idea of identification as simply a tool of persuasion.

For Burke, the complex situatedness of individuals in different symbol systems and contexts, paired with the drive to achieve higher status and identity within a social system, marks the complex nature and process(es) of identification and identity building. Identity construction is an individual and social process, as the individual interprets experiences through social symbolic systems. Rhetoric is the practice of relating to others from a particular identity and worldview. Rhetoric highlights and employs connections of identity with and distinction from others to persuade, drawing upon an individual’s attempt to identify with others and obtain a place in a social system.<sup>86</sup> As rhetoric is an integral aspect of the connection of individual and

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<sup>82</sup> My understanding of Burke’s conception of rhetoric draws primarily from Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

<sup>83</sup> Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, xiii-xv and 55.

<sup>84</sup> Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives*, 55.

<sup>85</sup> For example, see Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, trans. John Henry Freese, Loeb Classical Library 193 (London: William Heinemann, 1926), book II, chapter I, 169–71.

<sup>86</sup> Kenneth Burke, “Rhetoric—Old and New,” *The Journal of General Education* 5 (1951): 203.

group identities, Burke stresses that rhetoric attends to both identification and divisions of classification, since identification may only take place in the spaces created by division. Both individual and group identities are created over and against others. Rhetoric operates in the space of identification and division.<sup>87</sup>

Burke recasts rhetoric as the negotiation of identities and identifications and thus a basic function of symbol-using humans. Burke then characterizes rhetorical persuasion as the process of forming a subject—shaping an attitude or outlook—rather than solely motivating particular actions through persuasive commands.<sup>88</sup> This account of rhetoric is not simply verbal but material, reflected in explicit claims and in actions, shared assumptions, and visual programs, what Burke refers to as a “rhetoric of human relations in general.”<sup>89</sup> For Burke, rhetoric is tied up with the creation and maintenance of worldview, and so Burke views rhetoric as an attempt to shape the worldview of others through the extension and shaping of shared identifications. Distilling Burke, rhetoric then seems to be the persuasive activity of building, connecting, and maintaining identity or identities on various different levels of human interaction, both implicit and explicit, conscious and unconscious.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives*, 22–25.

<sup>88</sup> Though rhetoric does also encompass attempts to persuade an audience to attend to particular actions (see Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives*, 50).

<sup>89</sup> Burke emphasizes that rhetoric is more than simply verbal, as Aristotle claimed; he points to Machivelli’s *The Prince* as an exemplar of “administrative rhetoric,” an attempt to produce an effect upon an audience. So, the actions of the head of state, not necessarily the words, are also rhetorical and seek to affect action in an audience (see Burke, “Rhetoric—Old and New,” 207).

<sup>90</sup> Burke, “Rhetoric—Old and New,” 202–09. Fredric Jameson proposes that Burke’s understanding of literature and (performed) language as a symbolic act is helpful for moving the field of literary studies towards ideological analysis, a recognition of the context of a text and the interaction between the text and context, and away from readings that isolate a text from any context or ignore this interaction. Yet, Jameson critiques Burke’s use of the term “literary strategy” and his use of the language of purpose. Jameson argues that Burke’s use of this terminology, both in theory and in practice, are often more focused, as new criticism often was, on the inner workings and stated purpose of a literary work rather than historical message or purpose. Despite his critique, Jameson thinks that Burke’s method, his dramatism, is extremely useful for analyzing ideologies in their historical contexts as long as the user purposefully contextualizes the method within history and does not simply analyze the literary work on its own. See Fredric Jameson, “The Symbolic Inference; Or, Kenneth Burke and Ideological Analysis,” *Critical Inquiry* 4/3 (1978): 507–23.

As for the study of visual rhetoric, Burke contends that any program of connected imagery draws from a symbolic context. So, imagery employs identifiers with an audience also familiar with said context.<sup>91</sup> He considers the use of imagery as an aspect of identification and persuasion. Burke claims:

Insofar as a poet's images are organically related, there is a formal principle behind them. The images could be said to *body forth* this principle. The principle itself could, by a properly discerning critic, be named in terms of *ideas* (or one basic idea with modifiers). Thus, the imagery could be said to convey an invisible, intangible idea in terms of visible, tangible things.<sup>92</sup>

For Burke, symbolic imagery and rhetorical ideology cannot be separated. Images, whether directly or indirectly, serve as conveyors of ideas. Connected imagery embodies a worldview.<sup>93</sup> Though Burke is concerned with verbal imagery, his understanding of how imagery functions rhetorically can inform an interpretation of artistic imagery. Artistic imagery also draws from specific symbolic contexts to embody an ideological message. Specific instantiations of art each cast representations of the world in their own way and for their own goals.<sup>94</sup> Recent moves in the field of rhetorical theory explore the concept of visual rhetoric, examining how the study of visual rhetoric might reshape the classical focus upon discourse within rhetorical theory.<sup>95</sup> In a recent collection of essays that explore the concept of visual rhetoric, Sonja Foss insists: "Recent work in rhetoric has taken a pictorial turn."<sup>96</sup> Scholars of visual rhetoric insist that fully fledged considerations of visual rhetoric should draw on pictorial content, artistic form, and the function

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<sup>91</sup> Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 86–8.

<sup>92</sup> Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 86, italics original.

<sup>93</sup> Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives*, 88.

<sup>94</sup> On art as a medium of communication and the need for attention to artistic rhetorical strategy, see Castriota, "Political Art and the Rhetoric of Power," 1–3. For a defense of the categorization of images as representations, see W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 4–7.

<sup>95</sup> See Sonja K. Foss, "Framing the Study of Visual Rhetoric: Toward a Transformation of Rhetorical Theory," in *Defining Visual Rhetorics*, ed. Charles A. Hill and Marguerite Helmers (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004): 303–13.

<sup>96</sup> Foss, "Framing the Study of Visual Rhetoric," 303.

of imagery in order to analyze visual imagery as a form of communication.<sup>97</sup>

### 1.4.3 Defining Rhetoric: Key Terms and Ways of Approaching Rhetoric

In this project, I understand rhetoric broadly as “an interpretive understanding of this world; it articulates and thus makes explicit something about how people are faring in their everyday relationship with things and others and how they might think and act in order to understand better and perhaps improve a particular situation.”<sup>98</sup> With Burke, I classify rhetoric as the acts of both persuasion and identification; rhetoric presents a view of reality that is meant to foster individual and communal identities and actions. Rhetoric is rooted, entangled even, in a socio-historical reality. Carol Newsom observes that “attention to rhetoric, however, allows one to see how situations and discourse are inextricably intermingled within texts.”<sup>99</sup> She draws on Burke, who notes that every text is “a strategy for encompassing a situation,” in that every text is “the answer or rejoinder to assertions current in the situation in which it arose.”<sup>100</sup> Rhetoric then is the

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<sup>97</sup> Foss, “Framing the Study of Visual Rhetoric,” 304–5 and 307–9. For an example of attention to the “nature” of an artifact, that is the distinguishing features (components, qualities, and characteristics—such as form or style) of the artifact and the concepts or ideas these features display, as an aspect of its rhetoric, see Diane S. Hope, “Gendered Environments: Gender and the Natural World in the Rhetoric of Advertising,” in *Defining Visual Rhetorics*, 155–78; Irene J. Winter, “*Le Palais imaginaire*: Scale and Meaning in the Iconography of Neo-Assyrian Cylinder Seals,” in *On Art in the Ancient Near East*, Vol. 1, 109–162. For examples of studies that consider the function and/or purpose of visual symbols when attending to an artifact’s rhetoric, see Janis L. Edwards, “Echoes of Camelot: How Images Construct Cultural Memory Through Rhetorical Framing,” in *Defining Visual Rhetorics*, 179–194; Greg Dickinson and Casey Malone Maugh, “Placing Visual Rhetoric: Finding Material Comfort in Wild Oats Market,” in *Defining Visual Rhetorics*, 259–76; as well as Andrea Kaston Tange, “Envisioning Domesticity, Locating Identity: Constructing the Victorian Middle Class Through Images of Home,” in *Defining Visual Rhetorics*, 303–14; Irene J. Winter, “Sex, Rhetoric, and the Public Monument: The Alluring Body of Narim-Sîn of Agade,” in *Sexuality in Ancient Art: Near East, Egypt, Greece and Italy*, ed. Natalie Kampen and Bettine Ann Bergmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 11–26; Winter, “Royal Rhetoric,” 3–70; Winter, “Art in Empire,” 71–108; Winter, “Ornament and the ‘Rhetoric of Abundance’ in Assyria,” in *On Art in the Ancient Near East*, Vol. 1, 163–83.

<sup>98</sup> Walter Jost and Michael Hyde, “Rhetoric and Hermeneutics: Places Along the Way,” in *Rhetoric and Hermeneutics in Our Time: A Reader*, ed. Walter Jost and Michael Hyde, Yale Studies in Hermeneutics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 7.

<sup>99</sup> Newsom, “Preface,” in *Rhetoric and Hermeneutics*, vii.

<sup>100</sup> See Newsom, “Preface,” vii; Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973), 109.

act of communicating claims about the world and our identity and right action within it in response to socio-historical realities.<sup>101</sup>

Rhetoric encompasses many aspects of a communicative event, including strategy, function, and the encompassing vision of reality presented. Strategy is the means by which an object or text employs imagery and language to shape its message. Rhetorical strategy may include the form of an image or genre of a text, the arrangement of constellations of imagery or verbal stylistics, and the shapes, colors, and syntax of visual and verbal images.<sup>102</sup> Function refers to the purpose of an object or text, that is, the goal of a particular rhetorical strategy. Rhetorical function is the goal(s) of verbal or visual communication in response to a socio-historical setting and for a specific audience. Function concerns what a text, object, or utterance *does* in its setting and the pattern it employs for action, and thus questions of rhetorical function also concern questions of genre classification as texts and objects participate in genres to create meaning.<sup>103</sup>

For Newsom, “Rhetoric is a way of worldmaking.”<sup>104</sup> Texts, images, and aspects of material culture “construct a symbolic world that makes claims about the nature of reality, constructs highly desirable symbolic objects, invites readers [or more broadly, an audience] to

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<sup>101</sup> As Newsom asserts, “All texts make claims about the nature of reality. They do this not only through their explicit arguments but also by means of their genres, their metaphors, their strategically chosen vocabulary, and much more. Some texts model new ways of being in the world and even attempt to restructure our very sense of self. Rhetoric thus has a socially constructive force that we can uncover by attending to the hermeneutical dimensions of the text” (Newsom, “Preface,” vii).

<sup>102</sup> On the use of the term “strategy” to describe the way ANE visual art employed “established rules and formats of composition that articulate the messages in a consistent, intelligible, and effective way,” that is, the messages of royal ideology, see Castriota, “Political Art and the Rhetoric of Power,” 3.

<sup>103</sup> That is, texts participate in genres rather than belong; they *do* something rather than exist as a genre for the sake of identity (see Newsom, “Spying out the Land: A Report from Genology,” in *Rhetoric and Hermeneutics*, 56–57; Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982]; Jacques Derrida, “The Law of Genre,” in *Modern Genre Theory*, ed. David Duff [Harlow, Essex: Longman, 2000], 219–31). Muilenburg viewed rhetorical criticism as the extension of form criticism, with rhetorical criticism focused on how a specific historical utterance uses ideal types/genres to communicate (see James Muilenburg, “Form Criticism and Beyond,” *JBL* 88 [1969]: 1–18).

<sup>104</sup> Newsom, “The Rhetoric of Jewish Apocalyptic Literature,” in *Rhetoric and Hermeneutics*, 68.

identify with its representative figures and values, and oftentimes envisions a social world in which identification and division are sharply figured.”<sup>105</sup> For this reason, I will observe, describe, and compare the rhetorical worlds—the depictions of reality—modeled by the RPss and various ANE royal artistic programs through the lens of rhetorical criticism.<sup>106</sup>

#### 1.4.4 The Rhetoric of ANE Art and the Royal Psalms

Rhetoric has classically been tied to language as a way of shaping suasive speech and depicting a worldview in discourse, both in classical studies of rhetoric and among the work of biblical scholars who employ rhetorical criticism.<sup>107</sup> Drawing on recent turns to the investigation of persuasion in material and visual cultures though, I view rhetoric as Thomas Rickert does: “as enmeshed with and within its surroundings, which amounts to saying that rhetoric is ontological, being emergent from and wedded to the world, to the world’s being.”<sup>108</sup> That is, language does

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<sup>105</sup> Newsom, “The Rhetoric of Jewish Apocalyptic Literature,” 69. See also Castriota, who claims, “No less than language, art is a medium of communication, and its narrative, symbolic, and allegorical capacities are as real and effective as those of any verbal or literary creation” (Castriota, “Political Art and the Rhetoric of Power,” 3).

<sup>106</sup> Rhetoricians debate whether or not rhetorical criticism is properly a method or not. Multiple biblical scholars seeking to apply rhetorical criticism to biblical texts have constructed methods and procedures, to the point that some view their work as “scientific” inquiry (for a general move towards shaping rhetorical criticism into a methodological approach, see Phyllis Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1994]; George Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* [Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984]; Vernon K. Robbins attempts to model a “scientific” approach in *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-rhetorical Interpretation* [Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996], 132). Such approaches, though, often rigidize the analysis of rhetoric. They tend to focus primarily on literary stylistic features as something that can be repeated in a methodological form or to draw on classical, Aristotelian categories of rhetoric. The former devolves the study of rhetoric to categorization and application of stylistic features, and the latter applies a particularized cultural framework anachronistically to other cultures. I prefer to employ rhetorical criticism as a “critical practice,” a stance towards communicative acts with a set of questions that serve as productive for investigating the settings, audiences, rhetorical strategies, and functions of a text or object. On the rhetoric as critical practice, see Raymie E. McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis,” in *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory: A Reader*, ed. John L. Lucaites, Celeste M. Condit, and Sally Caudill (New York: The Guilford Press, 1999), 450–52. Also see the discussions on method vs. criticism as well as rhetorical analysis and questions of rhetorical situation, rhetorical problem, genre, types of rhetoric, argumentation, and formal features in Newsom, “The Rhetoric of Jewish Apocalyptic Literature,” 68–71 and Newsom, “Rhetorical Criticism and the Reading of the Qumran Scrolls,” 86–95.

<sup>107</sup> See Bizzell and Herzberg, “General Introduction,” 1–15; Newsom, *Rhetoric and Hermeneutics*, vii–107, particularly 67–107.

<sup>108</sup> Thomas Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric: The Attunements of Rhetorical Being* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), 159. Rickert continues: “Affect, or persuadability, already inheres, both materially and meaningfully, and is therefore prior to rhetoric. It is the condition of possibility for rhetoric’s emergence. And while



not shape our worldviews or persuade and manipulate our identities alone. The material world and its organization, what we see, feel, and experience in our everyday lives, informs how we interpret reality.<sup>109</sup>

The mind and our interpretive frameworks for making sense of the world are literally embodied, and so the frames of reference we have for processing, constructing, and perceiving information depend on verbal, visual, and material representations.<sup>110</sup> Artistic imagery projects a world both in what it assumes and what it relates through images, colors, shapes, and medium.<sup>111</sup> Beyond linguistic and pictorial media, space and architecture itself present and shape identities.<sup>112</sup> Brad Shor explains:

Cultural knowledge is not accurately characterized as a timeless and fixed stock of received models. The instituted models, which are public forms of culture [i.e. verbal/written discourses, material culture, ritual and economic practices, etc.], and the cognitive models, which are their instantiations in the mind, are both historically contingent artifacts. Though they are often perceived as timeless and ahistoric forms (by

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world, as I have been using it, includes both matter and meaning, we still must attend to the way the material dimension is not just important but integral for rhetoric, just as discourse, sociality, and human exigence are traditionally held to be integral for it" (Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric*, 159). See also Castriota, ed., *Artistic Strategy and the Rhetoric of Power: Political Uses of Art from Antiquity to the Present*; Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987); David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), particularly 436–40; Shore, *Culture in Mind*; Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); Mark Turner, *The Origin of Ideas: Blending, Creativity, and the Human Spark* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Hill and Helmers, eds., *Defining Visual Rhetorics*; David Morgan, *The Sacred Gaze: Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), specifically 25–47; Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 8–13.

<sup>109</sup> As George Lakoff claims, "Human reason is not an instantiation of transcendental reason; it grows out of the nature of the organism and all that contributes to its individual and collective experience: its genetic inheritance, the nature of the environment it lives in, the way it functions in the environment, the nature of its social functions, and the like," (George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Tell Us About the Mind* [Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987], xv).

<sup>110</sup> See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980); Johnson, *The Body in the Mind*.

<sup>111</sup> See Castriota, "Political Art and the Rhetoric of Power," 3

<sup>112</sup> For example, the design of ancient temples was both based on and informative of conceptions of the cosmos. Ancient temples shaped how those who viewed and inhabited the temples conceived of the cosmos (see John Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011]); David O'Connor, "The Mortuary Temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu," in *Ramesses III: The Life and Times of Egypt's Last Hero*, ed. Eric H. Cline and David O'Connor [Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2012], 209–270).

natives as well as anthropologists), cognitive models and foundational schemas are always subject to continual renegotiation in their performance or nonperformance.<sup>113</sup>

Rhetoric is the art and act of “continual renegotiation” of the cultural and thus cognitive frameworks that humans employ to conceptualize and interpret their experiences in the world. Narratives, myths, poems, rituals, visual and material objects re-present reality, shaping knowledge and belief in their attempts to “make the arguable seem to be natural, to turn positions into premises.”<sup>114</sup>

Thus, despite the fact that the study of rhetoric has often been limited to rational argument, the comparison of the rhetorical imagery of the RPss and ANE royal art represents a new angle for studying the rhetoric and function of the Psalms. ANE art evokes an understanding of the world and one’s place within it, as Zainab Bahrani explains, “Art, like myth and the narratives of history, gives meaning to our existence and orders our world.”<sup>115</sup> As Margaret Cool Root’s study of Achaemenid royal art demonstrates, ANE royal art functioned as rhetoric in that it “was intended to project, in a variety of representational contexts, a specific set of consistently imposed images of power and hierarchical order,” through which the sovereign presented “the image of kingship which he himself wished to be surrounded by and to identity with, as well as the image with which he wished to be identified by others.”<sup>116</sup> Winter contends that in the ANE, kingdoms employed text and art together as “two powerful and reinforcing statements, linguistic and visual, that both carry the same message” in order to create royal rhetoric.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Shore, *Culture in Mind*, 371.

<sup>114</sup> Bizzell and Herzberg, “General Introduction,” 15.

<sup>115</sup> Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 8.

<sup>116</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 1–2.

<sup>117</sup> Winter, “Royal Rhetoric,” 30–31.

In like manner, as poems the psalms employ poetic language and dense literary imagery in order to persuade.<sup>118</sup> The RPss are examples of royal poetry that convey their rhetoric not through logical argumentation but through evocative metaphors, literary imagery, and tropes. The RPss then make evident a reality rather than giving evidence for discerning the world in a particular way; as Newsom notes, “Giving evidence through arguments addresses the level of *beliefs*...making evident through vivid evocation addresses the more fundamental level of the *grounds* that underlie beliefs.”<sup>119</sup> The rhetoric of the RPss and ANE royal art is one that assumes and evokes proper sets of relationships among the king, deities, and the peoples of the earth in order to persuade an audience to identify themselves within the world as presented in both poetry and art.<sup>120</sup> Newsom draws on the distinction between argumentative and evocative rhetoric to classify the rhetoric of Jewish apocalyptic texts specifically as “epiphanic rhetoric,” a distinct type of evocative rhetoric.<sup>121</sup> By means of inductive analysis and comparison with ANE royal art, I intend to identify the kind of rhetoric employed by the RPss.

## 1.5 Mapping the Study

### 1.5.1 Contributions to Methodological Discourses

This study then draws on the imagery of ANE royal art to contextualize the literary imagery and rhetoric of the RPss. This chapter has made the argument for the relevance of drawing on artistic

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<sup>118</sup> See Jonathan Culler on the rhetoric of poetry (Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1997], 71). For arguments on removing the distinction often drawn between rhetoric and poetics and studying the rhetoric of poetry, see Craig Hamilton, “A Cognitive Rhetoric of Poetry and Emily Dickinson,” *Language and Literature* 14 (2005): 279–94; Ruth Webb, “Poetry and Rhetoric,” in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic World 330 B.C.–A.D. 400*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 339–45; Wendy Olmstead, “The Uses of Rhetoric: Indeterminacy in Legal Reasoning, Practical Thinking, and the Interpretation of Literary Figures,” in *Rhetoric and Hermeneutics in Our Time*, 245–50.

<sup>119</sup> Newsom, “Rhetorical Criticism,” 93, italics original. See also Stanly Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?* (New York: Scribner, 1969), 71; Jost and Hyde, “Rhetoric and Hermeneutics,” 17–24.

<sup>120</sup> According to Raphael Demos, “Evocation is the process by which vividness is conveyed; it is the presentation of a viewpoint in such a manner that it becomes real for the public...in fact, an argument has much less persuasive force than the vivid evocation of an experience” (Demos, “On Persuasion,” 229).

<sup>121</sup> Newsom, “The Rhetoric of Jewish Apocalyptic Literature,” 73.

data to interpret the rhetoric of the RPss by highlighting the parity in psalmic and artistic rhetorics. The study engages with and builds on three areas of discourse in Hebrew Bible scholarship: iconographic-biblical exegesis, genre criticism, and studies of RPss.

#### *1.5.1.1 Iconographic-Biblical Exegesis: Analyzing the Rhetorical Function of Imagery*

The study is iconographic-biblical in its approach in that I largely draw upon artistic imagery in order to explicate the imagery and rhetoric of the RPss. Though I will draw on ANE royal inscriptions and textual data as well, the focus is upon how artistic material might round out an understanding of the rhetoric and ideology of the RPss. I employ the iconographic-biblical method and build upon it, as the method has primarily been used to attend to and compare pictorial content—*what* is pictured. I expand the iconographic-biblical approach by analyzing both the pictorial content and rhetoric of ANE royal art in an effort to compare the rhetorical worlds created by various examples of royal art and the RPss.

#### *1.5.1.2 Genre and Function: Considering What These Texts Do*

The study draws upon and adds to classical form-critical scholarship in its attention to the settings and functions of the RPss that I analyze. While the primary focus of the study is not form-critical as I do not attempt to reconstruct ideal generic types, I do consider how the rhetoric of individual RPss sheds light on questions of the texts' settings and functions in ancient Palestine. Rather than attempting to classify these texts, I attend to the rhetorical function of the texts—what the texts *do*—and what generic conventions they draw on to construct their rhetoric.<sup>122</sup> Attending to genre through the lens of rhetorical function, I propose that the RPss

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<sup>122</sup> Following Newsom's lead, I intend to consider "genre in relation to a text's rhetorical orientation so that rather than referring to texts as belonging to genres one might think of texts as participating in them, invoking them, gesturing to them, playing in and out of them, and in so doing, continually changing them" (Newsom, "Spying Out

employ an iconic rhetoric and function as royal icons analogously to royal art throughout the ANE.

### *1.5.1.3 Royal Psalms Studies: Contextualizing the Royal Psalms*

The study engages discourses concerning the RPss in biblical scholarship by drawing on new data to further contextualize an interpretation of the RPss: ANE royal art. Past studies that interpret or utilize the RPss have primarily related these poems to ANE royal texts and inscriptions. I instead look at the RPss in a drastically different way than most psalm scholars have. I consider the RPss as icons, complex constellations of imagery that body forth a vision of reality meant to create and sustain social identities. I am not reading the psalms as narratives or epics, but as complex, interconnected set pieces of literary imagery. I attempt to *see* the RPss, rather than only *read* them. By framing and interpreting the RPss with ANE royal art as comparative data, I open up new ways of understanding their rhetorical function in ancient Judah.

## 1.5.2 The Framework

Chapters 2–6 analyze rhetorical themes present in ANE royal art to contextualize individual RPss. Chapter 2 investigates the theme of the subjugation of all nations to the king in Psalm 2. Chapter 3 considers the theme of blending royal and divine identities in Psalm 21. Chapter 4 reflects on the combination of royal ideology and violence with royal intimacy in Psalm 45, while chapter 5 surveys how imagery of universal subjugation, royal justice, and prosperity forms a coherent constellation in Psalm 72. Chapter 6 takes up the theme and issue of the king’s dual martial and priestly roles as presented in Psalm 110. Each of these chapters provide insight

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the Land,” 57). I investigate how the RPss participate in communicative forms and patterns similar to those employed within ANE royal art.

into the ways the RPss worked by analyzing how the psalms present literary imagery and employ rhetorical themes in patterns that are congruent with royal art in the ANE. In each chapter, I will consider how ANE royal art illuminates the rhetoric of the RPss, even as I attend to classical exegetical and interpretive issues in each psalm. My choice of RPss is based on two primary factors: (1) their literary imagery and its productivity for comparison with ANE artistic imagery; and (2) their textual and interpretive issues that might be productively revisited with artistic data as a new line of evidence.

As chapters 2–6 focus on similarities among ANE royal rhetorics and select only a handful of the RPss, the final chapter concludes by sketching how cultures of the ANE employed the rhetorical themes outlined in chs. 2–6 with various emphases and inflections. So, the exegetical chapters (chs. 2–6) will draw upon ANE royal art in order to better view and understand the royal rhetoric of Pss 2, 21, 45, 72, and 110 individually. Chapter 7 then analyzes how the rhetorical themes investigated in previous chapters are employed in distinct ways throughout the RPss and the royal art of other ANE nations before concluding with a reflection on the results of the study.<sup>123</sup> In brief, I conclude that the RPss and ANE royal art share in an iconic rhetoric. I propose the category of iconic rhetoric to encompass imagistic and visual rhetorics. This category of rhetoric is distinct from the classical categories of judicial, deliberative, or epideictic rhetoric.<sup>124</sup> In light of the rhetorical strategies and goals that the RPss share with ANE royal art, I contend that the RPss functioned as Judah’s royal icons.

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<sup>123</sup> Attending to similarities and differences is a key part of the comparative project. In the past, difference has often been underemphasized in the name of drawing parallels, and yet, one must be careful not to overemphasize difference to polemically idealize one tradition over another. See Jonathan Z. Smith, “In Comparison a Magic Dwells,” in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*, ed. Jonathan Z. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 19–35; Brent Strawn, “Comparative Approaches: History, Theory, and the Image of God,” in *Method Matters*, 117–42.

<sup>124</sup> I am following Newsom, who makes a similar move when she proposes the category of “epiphanic rhetoric” to describe the type of rhetoric that “characterizes the apocalypses” (Newsom, “The Rhetoric of Jewish Apocalyptic Literature,” 72–73).

## Chapter 2

## PSALM 2: THE RHETORIC OF ROYAL SUBJUGATION

Psalm 2 depicts the subjugation and submission of all nations to Yahweh's king. Scholars have long turned to other ANE texts to contextualize this theme of subjugation.<sup>1</sup> Those studies that have employed iconography have not been comprehensive. When scholars have turned to iconographic material, it has been to contextualize the legitimation of the king in vv. 7–9.<sup>2</sup> The iconographic material, however, can be instructive for interpreting much more than these verses. The psalm consists of a constellation of imagery depicting the enthroned deity, the divinely chosen king, and subjugated foreign kings.

Scholars differ as to whether such imagery of universal reign situates the psalm's historical context and genre in the monarchic period, the post-exilic period, or some compromise position between these two options.<sup>3</sup> After overviewing past proposals concerning the psalm's genre, ideology, and historical context, I will survey ANE royal art in order to demonstrate that

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<sup>1</sup> Gerald Cooke, "The Israelite King as Son of God," *ZAW* 73 (1961): 202–25; von Rad, "The Royal Ritual in Judah," 222–31; Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I: 1–50* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 8–14; Pierre Auffret, *The Literary Structure of Psalm 2*, JSOTSup 3 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1977); Cragie, *Psalms 1–50*, 62–69; Sasson, "The Language of Rebellion in Psalm 2," 147–54; Bob Becking, "Wie Töpfe sollst du sie Zerschmeißen? Mesopotamische Parallelen zu Psalm 2,9b," *ZAW* 102 (1990): 59–79; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 123–35; Starbuck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms*, 67–102 and 161–67; Koch, "Der König als Sohn Gottes," 1–32; Cornell, "Divine Aggression in Royal Psalms and Inscriptions," 97–114.

<sup>2</sup> See Keel, *Symbolism*, 247–68; Koch, "Der König als Sohn Gottes," 1–32; Otto, "Politische Theologie in den Königspsalmen zwischen Ägypten und Assyrien," 33–65; Otto, "The Judean Legitimation of Royal Rulers," 131–40.

<sup>3</sup> For scholars who date the psalm to the monarchic period based on parallels with the Davidic and Solomonic kingdom described in Samuel–Kings, see Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 126–28; Geoffrey W. Grogan, *Psalms, Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 44. Others date the psalm to the post-exilic period because of the proposed idealistic nature of the psalm's imagery; see Erhard Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 1 with an Introduction to Cultic Poetry*, FOTL 14 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 48–9; Frank L. Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Die Psalmen I: 1–50*, NEchtB 28 (Würzburg: Echter, 1993), 50–51; Richard Press, "Jahwe und sein Gesalbter," *TZ* 13 (1957): 321–34. Eckhart Otto fillets the psalm into different layers of imagery and proposes different historical contexts for each layer; see Eckart Otto, "Politische Theologie in den Königspsalmen," 33–65.

imagery of the submission of the nations is a standard aspect of ANE royal artistic rhetoric.<sup>4</sup> I will argue that the images of submission in Psalm 2 cohere with motifs that occur in ANE royal art in the depiction of foreign kings and nations. After surveying the theme in royal art from across the ANE, I will attend to how artistic data re-frames the major historical-critical, text-critical, and form-critical questions concerning the psalm.

## 2.1 Psalm 2 Overview

### 2.1.1 Psalm 2 Translation

- 1 Why do the nations gather tumultuously,<sup>5</sup> the peoples murmur in vain<sup>6</sup>?
- 2 [Why do]<sup>7</sup> the kings of the land take their stand, the princes conspire<sup>8</sup> together, against the Lord and against his anointed one?<sup>9</sup>
- 3 “Let us tear away their fetters, let us cast off their ropes<sup>10</sup> from us.”

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<sup>4</sup> Eckhart Otto notes that the submission of the nations is a standard ANE rhetorical trope in terms of textual/epigraphic data. He attempts to date the use of the trope in Ps 2 to the Neo-Assyrian period as an aspect of Neo-Assyrian royal rhetoric in particular, “Politische Theologie in den Königspsalmen,” 44–51. Wilson notes that the royal ideology reflected in the submission of foreign kings to Judah’s king need not be taken literally as a necessary historical context for the psalm (Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1*, NIV Application Commentary [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002], 109).

<sup>5</sup> Dahood reads רגש as “forgather” rather than “rage,” primarily based on its parallel with  $\sqrt{swd}$  (or  $\sqrt{ysd}$ , but Dahood reads  $\sqrt{swd}$ ) in v. 2b (Dahood, *Psalms 1–50*, 7). Though the argument from parallelism is not strong, he goes on to cite two other occurrences of the noun forms for these roots (רגש and סוד) in parallel, Pss 55:15 and 64:3. In both of these instances, the root רגש seems to refer to a gathering, group, or throng. Cragie (*Psalms 1–50*, 62) and Goldingay (John Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41*, BCOTWP [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006], 92) both translate רגש similarly, apparently based on the meaning of its noun form. Briggs provides a similar reading, “Why do nations consent together,” claiming that “rage” and variations on rage do not fit the context and do not reflect the root’s usage in the HB (Charles Augustus Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, *The Books of Psalms*, vol. I, ICC [New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1906], 14).

<sup>6</sup> I understand the noun ריק to be functioning as an adverbial accusative here, modifying the verb הגה. Dahood renders ריק as “troops” rather than “vainly, vanity” based upon verbal parallels, even though there are no other occurrences of the noun in his proposed verbal stem (Dahood, *Psalms 1*, 7).

<sup>7</sup> Understanding the למה as gapped and assumed in v. 2. See A. A. Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, vol. 1, NCB Commentary (Grand Rapids; London: Eerdmans; Morgan & Scott, 1972), 65.

<sup>8</sup> The MT seems to assume a root from *ysd* here and in Ps 33:14. See *HALOT*, “II-יסד,” 417 and *CDCH*, “II-יסד,” 155, which both propose a second meaning for the root *ysd* as, “to conspire” in order to account for Pss 2 and 33. Yet, it is also possible that the root should be understood as *swd*, “give council, take council.” Either way, the basic meaning of the verb remains the same.

<sup>9</sup> LXX includes διαψαλμα at the end of this line (*selah*). Hans Bardtke (*BHS*) proposes that the final clause (על־יהוה ועל־משִׁיחוֹ) is most likely a gloss, but this is not based on textual evidence.

<sup>10</sup> LXX has “yoke (ζυγόν).” Many commentators seem confused at the imagery of rope or bonds. Multiple commentators argue that the imagery implies a yoke (Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41*, 98–9; Bruce Waltke and James Houston with Erica Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010], 165–66; Dahood, *Psalms 1: 1–50*, 9; Cragie, *Psalms 1–50*, 63; Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 66). Some even prefer the LXX’s reading of “yoke” and so emend the text of v. 3 to yoke (see Hermann Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*,



- 4 The one seated in the heavens laughs, the Lord<sup>11</sup> ridicules them.  
 5 Then he will speak to them in his anger, and in his wrath he will terrify<sup>12</sup> them.  
 6 “Now I myself have installed<sup>13</sup> my king<sup>14</sup> upon Zion, my<sup>15</sup> holy mountain.”  
 7 “Let me declare the Lord’s statute:<sup>16</sup>  
 He said to me, ‘You are my son, I myself have begotten you today.  
 8 Ask of me, and I will grant<sup>17</sup> the nations as your inheritance,  
 the ends of the earth as your property.  
 9 You will shepherd<sup>18</sup> them with an iron rod, you will shatter them like a potter’s vessel.  
 10 Now, O kings, act wisely, listen to reason, O judges<sup>19</sup> of the earth.

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HZAT [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1926), 11; Hans Schmidt, *Die Psalmen*, HZAT [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1934], 3; H. H. Rowley, “The Text and Structure of Psalm 2,” *JTS* 42 [1941]: 148; Julian Morgenstern, “גִּשְׁקוֹ בַר,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 32 [1942]: 379).

<sup>11</sup> Some Targumic manuscripts have יהוה rather than יהוה.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the root *bhl*, see James VanderKam, “*BHL* in Ps 2:5 and Its Etymology,” *CBQ* 39 (1977): 245–50. VanderKam maintains the traditional renderings of vv. 5a and 6 (rejecting Dahood’s translation of v. 5a and accepting the MT’s pointing of v. 6), but he problematizes the widely-accepted translation of v. 5b and the verb *√bhl* for two primary reasons: First, he does not believe “terrify” fits the context well; he claims, “the idea that he should terrify his foes, while certainly possible, seems not altogether appropriate,” and “it does not supply a semantic parallel for *yedabber*” (VanderKam, “*BHL* in Ps 2:5,” 247). To solve this issue, Vanderkam first points to other Semitic parallels to propose an original meaning of “to speak passionately” for the Semitic root *bhl*. He claims this root was modified with different, adjacent meanings in various Semitic languages. He thus retranslates v. 5b as “and in his fury he will berate them” (VanderKam, “*BHL* in Ps 2:5,” 248). He suggests that this understanding of the root *bhl* provides a more sensible etymology for the root than those previously proposed.

<sup>13</sup> MT points *√nsk* as a third masculine singular *Qal* perfect verb. Though a first person *Niphal* גִּשְׁקֵי “I was poured out, exalted” is also possible (see *HALOT*, “I-גִּשְׁקֵי,” 703). LXX renders the verb as a passive, κατεσταθην “I was established.” The basic meaning of the *nsk*-I root is “to pour out” (*CDCH*, “I-גִּשְׁקֵי,” 275). The root may be functioning here in a metaphorical way so that the concept of “pour out” is transferred to the idea of pouring out and setting up or establishing (see Franz Delitzsch, *Psalms*, Vol. 5, Commentary on the Old Testament in 10 Volumes, trans. James Martin [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975], 94; Clines understands this as a unique use of the *Qal nsk*-I root meaning, “consecrate [with a libation], install king,” *CDCH*, “I-גִּשְׁקֵי,” 275). Goldingay, following *BDB*, reads the נִסְכָּתִי of v. 6 as “I installed,” from a *nsk*-III root (Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41*, 92; Starbuck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms*, 164–65; Wilson, *Psalms—Volume 1*, 111). A root of נָסַךְ meaning “to appoint, install (as leader)” does make sense in light of the noun נָסִיךְ, “ruler, prince.” Dahood (*Psalms I*, 10) follows the LXX in reading v. 6 from the third person (king speaking) rather than the first person (the deity speaking). He understands the verb to be from *√nrj*, “anointed,” rather than נָסַךְ.

<sup>14</sup> LXX has a 3ms pronoun rather than a 1cs suffix: ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ “by him.”

<sup>15</sup> LXX has a 3ms genitive pronoun αὐτοῦ, “his.”

<sup>16</sup> Syriac has 1cs suffix reading, “my statute.”

<sup>17</sup> LXX adds second-person singular dative pronoun, resulting in, “I will give to you.”

<sup>18</sup> MT points this as a root from the Aramaic רַעַע “to break,” but the LXX and Syriac traditions render this as if the root is from the Hebrew רָעָה “to shepherd.” Briggs supports the Hebrew reading (*The Book of Psalms*, 11–13). Goldingay does not deny the possibility of the Hebrew reading and even suggests the purposeful ambiguity of the word choice (*Psalms 1–41*, 93 and 101). Gerhard Wilhelmi claims that the contrastive but also complementary (in terms of promise/threat) readings of “shepherd/smash” makes more poetic sense than the dual “smash/smash to pieces.” He contends that in Egypt the king’s scepter/crook was a sign of both protection and shepherding the people and of threat and divine authorization to royal power. He points out that in Mesopotamian sources, the king’s role as shepherd is a prominent one. Further, Wilhelmi notes that the reference to the “iron staff” raises an incongruity that is resolved in the parallel line—the staff/scepter that shepherds may also be used to shatter rebellious nations (Wilhelmi, “Der Hirt mit dem eisernen Szepter,” *VT* 27 [1977]: 196–204).

<sup>19</sup> LXX adds πάντες, “all,” before אַרְיָן שְׁפָטֵי.

- 11 Serve the Lord with fear,<sup>20</sup> cry out<sup>21</sup> with trembling  
 12 Submit<sup>22</sup> to the son,<sup>23</sup> lest he become angry and you should be destroyed upon the path.<sup>24</sup>  
 For his anger is kindled quickly—Blessed are all who seek refuge in him!

### 2.1.2 Excursus: Psalm 2's Textual *Crux Interpretum*

Verses 11b–12a of Psalm 2 have long troubled translators. Early LXX manuscripts render the Hebrew of 12a: δράξασθε παιδείας (“Seize instruction”). Though it is conceivable that the LXX translators were working with a different Hebrew *Vorlage*, the translation is likely an attempt to make sense of the Hebrew reflected in the MT.<sup>25</sup> The LXX's rendering is similar to the Targum's: קבלו אולפנא (“receive instruction”), which suggests they followed a similar line of

<sup>20</sup> Some mss have בשמחה “with joy.”

<sup>21</sup> The root is generally translated as, “to shout in exultation, rejoice,” possibly as a sort of Canaanite cultic term, though the stem also seems to imply shouting or wailing in fear/pain in some contexts, such as Hos 10:5 (see *HALOT*, “גיל,” 189). Dahood contends that גיל reflects a root meaning “to live” rather than “to rejoice, shout” (*Psalms I*, 13; “Value of Ugaritic for Textual Criticism,” *Biblica* 40 [1959]: 168–70). Carsten Vang supports the standard translation of “rejoice” by pointing to the usage of גיל in Ps 97:1 and Ps 149:2 (“Ps 2, 11–12—A New Look at an Old *Crux Interpretum*,” *SJOT* 9 [1995]: 177). Vang notes that the combination of rejoicing with fear is not unknown to Israel's experience of the divine, and even though the phrase in v. 11b is unattested in the OT, so is the particular phrasing of v. 11a. Vang goes on to propose that v. 11a–b serves as a parallel to vv. 1–3. Rather than throwing off their bonds, the foreign kings are called to serve the Lord with fear; rather than making noise conspiring or gathering together, they are called to cry out with trembling in their submission to Yahweh (Vang, “Ps 2, 11–12,” 177). A. A. Macintosh, after surveying rabbinic discussions of the verb, the usage of the verb in Hosea 10:5 and Job 3:22, and linguistic cognates, argues for a translation of גילו ברעה as “show distress with trembling” (“A Consideration of the Problems Presented by Psalm II. 11 and 12,” *JTS* 27 [1976]: 2–4).

<sup>22</sup> *Piel* 3mp imperative from גשק, often translated “to kiss,” though other translations are tenable (*HALOT*, “גשק,” 730–31). See below for a defense of my translation.

<sup>23</sup> I am following the MT with the Aramaic בן, “son,” also used in Prov 31:2. Delitzsch claims that the turn from Yahweh back to the king again here at the end of the psalm makes sense in light of the Psalm's overall focus on the pair, Yahweh and his king (*Psalms*, 98–99). Cragie also supports this option, discussing the interaction of Hebrew and Aramaic in the pre-exilic period (*Psalms I–50*, 64). The word could also be the Hebrew בָּר, “open country/field,” as in Job 39:4 (see *HALOT*, “IV-בר,” 153; Paul Haupt, “The Poetic Form of the First Psalm,” *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 19 [1903]: 134–35; Moses Buttenwieser, *The Psalms* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938], 791–94; Vincenz Zapletal, *Alttestamentliches* [Freiburg: Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1903], 131–36; Willy Staerk, *Lyrik (Psalmen, Hoheslied, und Verwandtes)*, 2nd ed. [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1920], 248–49; Stefan Olafsson, “The *Crux Interpretum* in Ps 2,12,” *SJOT* 9 [1995]: 185–99). Another possibility is the Hebrew בָּר, “pure” (*HALOT*, “II-בר,” 153). In fact, Goldingay [*Psalms I–41*, 93] understands the phrase as a command to “submit sincerely,” whereas Henri Cazelles, drawing on Ugaritic parallels, understands בר as a royal epithet calling for the leaders to “Baisez le Pur” (Henri Cazelles, “*NSQW BR* [Ps., ii, 12],” *Oriens Antiquus* 3 [1964]: 43–45). Other possible options involve Ugaritic cognates or rearranging and repointing the line (Dahood, *Psalms I*, 13–14; William L. Holladay, “A New Proposal for the *Crux* in Psalm II 12,” *VT* 28 [1978]: 110–12).

<sup>24</sup> LXX has ἐξ οδοῦ δικαίας, “from the path of the righteous.” Syriac has “from his way.”

<sup>25</sup> See Olafsson, “*Crux Interpretum*,” 189–97.

thought in translation. Morgenstern has argued that the LXX translation reflects an understanding of בר as “pure (thing),” which later Jewish interpreters often understood as Torah or divine instruction. נשקו, “to kiss,” seems to be understood by the translator more broadly as “to pay homage to.” So here, paired with “pure (instruction)” as the object, the translator construes the verb as “lay hold of / accept.”<sup>26</sup>

The translations offered by Aquila (καταφιλήσατε ἐκλεκτῶς / “kiss discerningly”), Symmachus (προσκυνήσατε καθαρῶς / “worship purely”), and Jerome (*adore pure* / “kiss purely”) all seem to be wrestling with the same Hebrew text, indicating that the problem at this early stage was not produced by a different *Vorlage*. These three construe the בר as “pure” and render it adverbially, with Symmachus and Jerome understanding נשקו metaphorically as “submit/adore/worship.” Interpreters through the early-modern period often followed these paths or understood the MT’s בר as the Aramaic noun “son” and read, “Kiss the son.”<sup>27</sup> More recent scholarship, however, has offered a stunning array of different readings in attempts to make sense of this difficult phrase. These attempts have taken two different angles, either working with the consonantal text of the MT or attempting to rearrange and repoint the text. I will start this survey with the latter approach, as it has been the most popular in more recent scholarship.

### 2.1.2.1 Rearranging and Repointing the MT

Alfred Bertholet’s proposal to rearrange the MT has been the most popular approach to making sense of vv. 11b–12a since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In a short article published in 1908,

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<sup>26</sup> Morgenstern, “נשקו בר,” 372–73; for a similar argument, see Macintosh, “A Consideration of the Problems,” 10–11. Albert Pietersma makes a similar argument, contending that the LXX translator understood the phrase נשקו בר metaphorically, working from the MT rather than another *Vorlage* (Pietersma, “Empire Reaffirmed: A Commentary on Greek Psalm 2,” in *God’s Word for Our World: Theological and Cultural Studies in Honor of Simon John De Vries*, ed. J. Harold Ellens, Rolf P. Knierim, Isaac Kalimi, vol. II, JSOTSupp 389 [London: T&T Clark International, 2004], 60–61).

<sup>27</sup> E.g. Jerome, Ibn Ezra, Luther, Calvin (see Morgenstern, “נשקו בר,” 374–75).

Bertholet accepted the scholarly consensus that the text of Ps 2:11b–12a is corrupt and in need of amendment.<sup>28</sup> He transposed the consonants of the ‘hanging’ phrase נשקו־בר between ו and גילו resulting in לו ברעדה (י)ל, “and kiss his feet with trembling.” He points to the parallel structure that this emendation creates with v. 12a, “serve the Lord with fear.” The parallel structure validates his reconstruction, according to his argument. Though the emendation requires rearranging the consonants, his proposal does preserve most of the consonantal text, except for the ם between ג and ל of גילו.<sup>29</sup> He does not explain what he makes of the ם, but it presumably would not have occurred in the *qatl* segolate רגל. For external comparative evidence for his reconstruction, Bertholet points to Babylonian hymns that imagine kissing the deity’s feet.<sup>30</sup> Numerous modern scholars and Bible translations follow Bertholet’s reordering of the MT to render vv. 11b–12a of Psalm 2.<sup>31</sup> The reasoning behind this emendation is rarely explained beyond claims that the MT is nonsensical.

Despite the widely accepted status of Bertholet’s proposal, multiple other emendations have been proposed. G. R. Driver moves the consonants of גילו before בר to read לגבור, “kiss the mighty one with trembling,” as a reference to the king.<sup>32</sup> Alan Robinson objects to Bertholet’s

<sup>28</sup> Alfred Bertholet, “Eine crux interpretum: Ps 2:11f,” *ZAW* 28 (1908): 58–59.

<sup>29</sup> However, it also leaves the object of נשקו marked with a ב rather than the expected ל, as others have noted (see Alan Robinson, “Deliberate but Misguided Haplography Explains Psalm 2:11–12,” *ZAW* 89 [1977]: 421; Olofsson, “The Crux Interpretum,” 199). Gunkel, who followed Bertholet’s emendation, simply further changed the ב to a ל, but this, of course, requires even further unjustified emendation (Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 12).

<sup>30</sup> The first is a hymn to Marduk and the second is a Babylonian penitential psalm involving kissing Ishtar’s feet (see Bertholet, “Eine crux interpretum,” 58–9).

<sup>31</sup> For example, Kraus sees the formulation offered by the MT in v. 11 as “problematic,” “inexplicable,” and “unintelligible,” with the latter directed at the Aramaism, בַר (*Psalms* 1–59, 124). So, he enthusiastically follows Bertholet’s emendation of this text, “disregarding the *mater lectionis*, the vocalization, and the separation of words” (Kraus, *Psalms* 1–59, 125). In other parts of the psalm (v. 6, for example), though, he condemns emending the text (*Psalms* 1–59, 125). See also Anderson, who calls Bertholet’s emendation, “the simplest solution of the *crux*” (*Psalms* 1–72, 69–70). Rolf Jacobsen follows Bertholet, claiming that the use of בן earlier in the poem “militates against” the usage of בר here (deClaisse-Walford, Jacobsen, and Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, 67). See also Weiser, *The Psalms*, 108–09 and 115; Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 1*, 48; Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1*, 113; Starbuck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms*, 165; Leopold Sabourin, *The Psalms* (New York: Alba House, 1974), 342; Rowley, “The Text and Structure of Psalm 2,” 152–53.

<sup>32</sup> See G. R. Driver, “Difficult Words in the Hebrew Prophets,” in *Studies in O. T. Prophecy Presented to T. H. Robinson*, ed. H. H. Rowley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1950), 55–56.

emendation, both because Bertholet provides little explanation for his shifting of consonants and because, as he claims, “the idea of ‘kissing’ the king or his feet, which lies behind this and other interpretations, is not very satisfactory in the context.”<sup>33</sup> He proposes that the Hebrew originally read *וְגִלּוּ בְרַעְדָּה נְשָׁק בַּרְזֶל*, “and remove with trembling weapons (or, armor) of iron.”<sup>34</sup> He believes that this emendation and repointing better fits the context of the psalm, particularly the domination imagery of v. 9.<sup>35</sup>

A. A. Macintosh takes issue with Bertholet’s popular emendation based on the idea that the Psalmist/tradent would not employ “so gross an anthropomorphism.”<sup>36</sup> To make sense of *וְגִלּוּ בְרַעְדָּה*, Macintosh reviews readings of the verb proposed by the rabbinic authorities Saadya and ibn Janah. They understand the verb *גִּיל* not necessarily as “shriek joyously,” but rather as the bodily and vocal expressions that accompany both intense joy and fear.<sup>37</sup> They demonstrate the word’s flexibility with a turn to the usage of the word in both Hos 10:5 and Job 3:22, where the word seems to mean cry out or show fear.<sup>38</sup> So, Macintosh renders v. 11b as “shew fear with trembling,” noting that this parallels well with v. 11a and fits the larger context of the psalm.<sup>39</sup> To deal with 12a, Macintosh proposes deleting the *בַּר* entirely, arguing for partial dittography of *בְרַעְדָּה*. He then provides two possible readings of his reconstructed line: *וְגִלּוּ בְרַעְדָּה וְנִשְׁקוּ*, “shew fear with trembling and order yourselves / be ordered,” or *נִשְׁקוּ בְרַעְדָּה וְגִלּוּ*, “order yourselves / be

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<sup>33</sup> Robinson, “Deliberate but Misguided Haplography,” 422.

<sup>34</sup> His reconstruction involves an Aramaic scribe later deleting the *זל* of *ברזל* because of haplography with *פן*; to reinforce this possibility, he points to the similarity between the letters in an earlier stage of the Hebrew-Aramaic alphabet. He then proposes that a later Aramaic scribe read the consonants as they are currently construed in the MT, understanding 12a as *נִשְׁקוּ בַר*. To explain the other missing letters in comparison to the MT, he claims it likely that the *י* in the verb *גִּיל* and the *ו* at the end of *נִשְׁקוּ* were added by later scribes to further improve the reading. See Robinson, “Deliberate but Misguided Haplography,” 422.

<sup>35</sup> Robinson, “Deliberate but Misguided Haplography,” 421–22.

<sup>36</sup> Macintosh, “A Consideration of the Problems,” 13.

<sup>37</sup> Macintosh, “A Consideration of the Problems,” 2–3; see also *HALOT*, “גִּיל,” 189–90.

<sup>38</sup> Macintosh, “A Consideration of the Problems,” 3–4.

<sup>39</sup> Macintosh, “A Consideration of the Problems,” 4 and 14.

governed in trembling and shew fear.” The first requires that a ׀ be inserted before the נשקו while also deleting the copulative ׀ on the גילו, mostly retaining the word order of the MT. The second retains the copulative ׀ on the גילו but differs in word order from the MT.<sup>40</sup>

Other scholars rely on arguments concerning the overall theology or historical situation of the psalm to support their proposed reconstructions of the text. Julian Morgenstern contends that an original בו fell out after וגילו because of haplography. He argues that this addition makes better sense of the verb and brings the colon into line with his expected 3/3 beat meter.<sup>41</sup> He goes on, proposing that v. 12a should also have three words. He suggests that a shared theology with Ezekiel and other exilic/post-exilic prophetic texts such as Malachi, with their focus on the need for all nations to worshiping Yahweh and his name, should lead one to reconstruct v. 12a as תנו כבוד לשמו כבוד. He believes this emendation fits best with the sense of the psalm, its theology, and its meter.<sup>42</sup> Isaac Sonne’s reconstruction of the psalm is methodologically similar to Morgenstern’s. He freely reworks the text and makes arguments concerning meter. He believes that the psalm reflects a specific historical context, the rise of Hezekiah as king after Ahaz’s death. Thus, he deletes those phrases that give the hymn a messianic sense (v. 3c, 7, and 11b–12a). He then attempts to reconstruct what was originally in these lacunae, based on meter and context. With vv. 11b–12a, he argues that the phrase ולו ברדעה תשתחו “and prostrate yourselves before him with trembling,” would make the most sense in parallel with “Serve the Lord in fear.” He defends his proposal by noting possible misreadings of letters, spacing issues, and a faded manuscript.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Macintosh, “A Consideration of the Problems,” 13–14.

<sup>41</sup> Morgenstern, “נשקו בר,” 380–81.

<sup>42</sup> Morgenstern, “נשקו בר,” 382–85.

<sup>43</sup> Isaiah Sonne, “The Second Psalm,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 19 (1945–46): 46–48.

Many of these proposals provide compelling parallel readings to vv. 11b–12a. Yet, the vast number of different proposals demonstrates the highly speculative nature of emending the MT to solve the *crux interpretum*.

### 2.1.2.2 Working with the MT

A handful of scholars have attempted to make sense of the line by working with the consonantal text of the MT. Franz Delitzsch falls between our two outlined approaches, as he believed that an original בן was changed to בר to avoid consonance with the following פן.<sup>44</sup> This is a simple proposal, though it is not clear why a tradent would attempt to avoid the similar sounds. Others have repointed the line based on Ugaritic evidence. Dahood proposes that גילו should be read in relation to Dan 1:10 and Ps 139:15 as a root meaning “to live,” with its noun form meaning “life, life cycles.” So he renders וגילו ברעדה as “live in trembling.”<sup>45</sup> He then rearranges the MT to read ונשי קבר, contending that the form *našim*, “men,” is a documented Ugaritic parallel to *'anašym* in Hebrew. So, he reads 12a as “men of the grave,” or, more colloquially, “O mortal men.”<sup>46</sup> He understands his emendation to represent the psalmist underlining the mortality of surrounding Canaanite kings, who stylize themselves as deities.<sup>47</sup> William L. Holladay agrees that the word קבר makes sense in parallel to both fearing Yahweh and the threat that follows v. 12a. However, he does not accept Dahood’s proposal that *našim* means “men” in Hebrew, as this claim is based solely on the Ugaritic *√nšm*. Holladay rather develops two proposals that understand *nš* as

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<sup>44</sup> Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 98.

<sup>45</sup> For a larger argument on this proposed meaning and root see Dahood, “Value of Ugaritic for Textual Criticism,” 168–70.

<sup>46</sup> See Dahood, *Psalms I*, 13–14.

<sup>47</sup> Henri Cazelles has also drawn upon Ugaritic data to make sense of the MT. He connects the MT’s בר with “kiss the pure one / kiss the shining one” (Cazelles, “NŠQW BR (Ps. 2:12),” 43–5).

derived from the root *nšh* rather than a theorized *nšm*: “you who forget the grave (*nôšê qeber*)” or “you who forget him who buries (*nôšê qôbēr*).”<sup>48</sup>

A few scholars, however, have proposed translations based solely on different possible readings of the MT’s נשקר־בר. Peter Cragie is one of the few scholars to retain the MT’s, “Kiss the son,” reading בר as the Aramaic word for “son.” While he notes that other readings are possible, he claims there is no impetus to change the MT. Though the psalm uses the Hebrew בן for “son” earlier, Cragie points out that the usage in v. 7 reflects God’s speech to the king. In v. 12a, however, the Psalmist speaks to the nations; thus, the Aramaism בַּר may be used to reflect this context of speech.<sup>49</sup> Stefan Oloffson, on the other hand, argues that the MT should be read as “kiss the field” rather than “kiss the son,” or any of the other emendations presented.<sup>50</sup> He proposes then that the Hebrew בַּר “field,” found only in Job 39:4, would work better, positing that the idea of “kiss the field” can also indicate submission.<sup>51</sup> Finally, Goldingay has recently affirmed a reading of 12a very similar to those of Symmachus and Jerome. He renders 11b straightforwardly, following the MT’s pointing. For 12a, Goldingay reads בר as the Hebrew adjective “pure” rather than the Aramaic noun “son.” He proposes that נשק, on the other hand, should be understood as *CDCH*’s III-נשק, “to submit oneself.” So, he reads the phrase as, “submit sincerely,” rendering the adjective בר adverbially.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> See Holladay, “A New Proposal,” 110–12.

<sup>49</sup> Cragie notes that Aramaic was a popular language in the Levant at least by the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE by pointing to epigraphic evidence. Thus, the Aramaism is not completely out of place (Cragie, *Psalms 1–50*, 64). To add to Cragie’s argument, note the other Aramaisms present in the psalm with רעע and רגש.

<sup>50</sup> Olofsson, “The Crux Interpretum,” 198–99.

<sup>51</sup> He points out that a similar phrase is used in Akkadian to indicate reverence (*našaqu qaqqara*, “kiss the ground.” See Oloffson, “The Crux Interpretum,” 199). Anderson (*Psalms 1–72*, 69–70) and Starbuck (*Court Oracles in the Psalms*, 166) also mention the possibility of “kiss the field” as a rendering, with Starbuck even pointing to the ANE literary parallels presented by Oloffson. Yet, both end up following Bertholet.

<sup>52</sup> See Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41*, 93; he is followed by Cornell, “Divine Aggression in Royal Psalms and Inscriptions,” 99.



These many different proposals for reading the text of Psalm 11b–12a indicate another issue in interpreting vv. 11–12 of Psalm 2: who is the primary actor of these two verses? Most of the readings surveyed above shift the MT’s joint focus on Yahweh and his king in these verses to a focus on Yahweh alone as the one who threatens the nations and the one to whom the peoples should submit.<sup>53</sup> Only a few scholars retain a dual focus on Yahweh and his king, given the lack of a direct subject for vv. 12b–c.<sup>54</sup> This interpretive issue concerning the actor of vv. 12b–c is tied up with the textual problem of vv. 11b–12a. Therefore, I will address both the textual and interpretive issues together as I to re-read the psalm alongside ANE royal imagery.

### 2.1.3 Questions of Genre, Function, and Setting

Since Gunkel’s pioneering form critical work, the majority of scholars classify Psalm 2 as a royal psalm. However, this label indicates more of a genre based on content rather than literary structure or relation of elements.<sup>55</sup> Gunkel understood Psalm 2 as a royal enthronement hymn. He assumed a pre-exilic enthronement ceremony existed in ancient Israel/Judah based on ANE

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<sup>53</sup> See Bertholet, “Eine crux interpretum,” 58–59; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 124–25; Dahood, *Psalms I*, 13–14; Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 1*, 48; Goldingay, *Psalms 1–42*, 106; Weiser, *The Psalms*, 115–16; De-claisse Walford, Tanner, and Jacobsen, *The Book of Psalms*, 67 and 70; Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 69–70; Wilson, *Psalms Volume I*, 113; Starbuck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms*, 166–67; Holladay, “A New Proposal,” 111–12; Macintosh, “A Consideration of the Problems,” 14; John W. Hilber, *Cultic Prophecy in the Psalms*, BZAW 352 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 94–95; Morgenstern, “גשקו בר,” 382–85; Sonne, “The Second Psalm,” 45–50; Rowley, “The Text and Structure,” 151–54; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen I*, 49–50; Sabourin, *The Psalms*, 339; Cornell, “Divine Aggression in Royal Psalms and Inscriptions,” 102.

<sup>54</sup> See Olofsson, “The Crux Interpretum,” 186–87; Vang, “Psalm 2,11–12,” 180–83; Cragie, *Psalms 1–50*, 68; Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 97–99.

<sup>55</sup> Gunkel and Begrich, *An Introduction to the Psalms*, 99–103; Weiser, *The Psalms*, 63; Nancy deClaisse-Walford, *Reading from the Beginning: The Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997), 43–44; William Bellinger, *Psalms: Reading and Studying the Book of Psalms* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1990), 107; John Day, *Psalms*, OTG (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 91; Hamilton, *The Body Royal*, 36–7. Scott Starbuck claims that past scholarship has failed to identify and define the category of royal psalms clearly. He offers his own definition: “The RPss are psalms whose concern is the institution of Israelite Kingship. Their protagonist is an unspecified king; hence he is a typological representative of the ‘office’ of the institution.” He contends that Gunkel’s eleven psalms are the sole psalms that fit this definition. So, even Starbuck, in a volume meant to challenge the consensus, basically identifies the royal psalms as a genre based on their content and not shared form or a particular framing of content; he simply modifies the content that defines the genre (see Starbuck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms*, 101).

comparative data and the Yahweh-*mlk* psalms. He classified Psalm 2 as a hymn that functioned as a part of such a royal celebration.<sup>56</sup> Primarily following Mowinkel, many scholars since Gunkel have theorized that the psalm was an enthronement hymn that served as a specific part of an annual enthronement festival of Yahweh.<sup>57</sup> Yet, during the second half of the 20th century, scholars were less apt to follow Mowinkel et al. in proposing a mythic-cultic enthronement festival of Yahweh based only on evidence stitched together from the HB and the ANE.<sup>58</sup> In spite of this reluctance, scholars still retain the outlines of Gunkel and Mowinkel's original proposals concerning the psalm's genre and context. For example, Hans-Joachim Kraus and Arthur Weiser have proposed that the psalm was a hymn spoken by the king, probably at his enthronement or a celebration of his enthronement.<sup>59</sup> They base this proposal on comparative data, such as the Egyptian *sed* festival, as well as on the opening setting of rebellion, which Kraus associates with the rise of a new king.<sup>60</sup> Scholars have also proposed that the psalm served as a coronation hymn, used only at the time of a new king's installation.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Gunkel and Begrich, *An Introduction to the Psalms*, 101–03.

<sup>57</sup> Mowinkel connected many psalms to the king's enthronement ritual. He includes Psalm 2 as one of these psalms that were utilized during this proposed ritual, which he understood as a part of the new year festival of Yahweh's enthronement as king. See Mowinkel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 62–63 and 66. See also Aubrey Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1967), 128–30; Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, 111–13.

<sup>58</sup> Marc Zvi Brettler, *God is King: An Israelite Metaphor*, LHBOTS 76 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2009), 135–56; Haney, *Text and Concept Analysis*, 26–41.

<sup>59</sup> Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 125–26. Weiser notes that the death of a king and the ascension of his successor in the ANE in general was a time often associated with upheaval and rebellion. He does not think some particular historical circumstance or the ascension of a particular Israelite king lies behind this psalm. Weiser proposes that ANE royal ideology informs the psalm's picture of ascension and enthronement, as the time of ascension was generally a time of tension for a kingdom (*Psalms*, 109–110). Anderson also classifies Psalm 2 as part of an enthronement ritual. Like Kraus, he notes that the situation outlined by vv. 1–2 was a common one at the ascension of a new king, and so “this familiar political pattern provided the Psalmist with a suitable word-picture” (*Psalms 1–72*, 63). He thinks that a reference to a specific historical situation or rebellion is unlikely (Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 65).

<sup>60</sup> Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 125–26.

<sup>61</sup> Cragie also points out that the distinction is completely based upon content, and not any formal distinctions (*Psalms 1–50*, 64). Mark Hamilton understands Psalms 2 and 110 to be coronation psalms, probably a part of the same coronation ritual. He claims, “Both psalms, in any case, understand the coronation to be the moment at which God begets the king, bestowing on him a body fit to rule” (*The Body Royal*, 60). Cf. Dahood, *Psalms I*, 7.

Some scholars, however, have turned to possible settings and genres outside of enthronement or coronation contexts. John Willis, for example, also places the psalm within the monarchic period, yet he problematizes characterizations of the psalm as a coronation or enthronement hymn. Willis critiques those who would place the psalm in a mythic enthronement or yearly celebration of enthronement context, claiming, “The problem with these explanations is that the situation assumed by this psalm is so intense, one can hardly escape the impression that *it arose in a real historical situation.*”<sup>62</sup> Focusing on the threat-of-rebellion theme, Willis proposes that the psalm rather reflects an ANE genre of “rhetoric before a battle.”<sup>63</sup> He works through other ancient Mediterranean texts that reflect such boasts by warriors or armies before battle, such as Marduk and Tiamat’s exchange before battle within *Enuma Elish*, Ajax and Hector’s exchange in the *Illiad*, Baal and Moth’s exchange within the Baal cycle (I AB v. 8-23), as well as Abijah’s reproach of Jeroboam before battle in 1 Chron 13:4–12 and the Rabshekah’s intimidation of the Judahites in 2 Kings 18:19–35.<sup>64</sup> Drawing on these parallels, Willis claims that Psalm 2 makes best sense as a cry before battle that was then preserved and reused throughout the monarchy’s existence.<sup>65</sup> The genres proposed by Willis and other scholars who characterize the psalm as part of a coronation or enthronement ritual presume that the psalm emerged within a pre-exilic historical context. A few scholars, such as Kraus and Grogan, propose that the imagery of a universal empire ruled by a Davidic king would be most at home within the contexts of David or Solomon’s reigns.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> John T. Willis, “A Cry of Defiance–Psalm 2,” *JSOT* 47 (1990): 37. Italics original.

<sup>63</sup> Willis, “A Cry of Defiance–Psalm 2,” 41–42.

<sup>64</sup> Willis, “A Cry of Defiance–Psalm 2,” 38–44.

<sup>65</sup> Willis, “A Cry of Defiance–Psalm 2,” 44–46.

<sup>66</sup> See Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 126–28; Grogan, *Psalms*, 44; see also Albrecht Alt, “Das Grossreich Davids,” in *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, vol. 2, ed. Albrecht Alt (München: C. H. Beck, 1959), 66–75.

Another approach to discerning the psalm's form and context highlights the idealized imagery of the small kingdom of Israel/Judah ruling a world empire. Erhard Gerstenberger, for example, in his attempt to identify the psalm's genre and historical context, focuses primarily on the issue of this imagery of universal domination. He claims, "Above all, the ideology of world dominion seems strangely out of place in any Israelite historical context, an observation that is stressed by all commentators."<sup>67</sup> To solve this issue, Gerstenberger dates this psalm to the post-exilic period, sometime between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE, labeling it as a messianic hymn. He goes on to assert, "To oppose all the kings of the world, as visualized in Psalm 2, makes sense only in a political situation of universal dependency."<sup>68</sup> Therefore, despite all of the parallels in ideology that he notes between New Kingdom Egyptian royal rhetoric and Neo-Assyrian royal rhetoric, Gerstenberger claims that the literary imagery of universal reign on the part of a Judean king necessitates a post-exilic dating and genre classification.

Erich Zenger, too, dates Psalm 2 to the post-exilic period because of its idealism. He contends that Psalm 2:1–9 was the original form of the psalm,<sup>69</sup> yet he theorizes that this 'original' core of the psalm was first produced around 300 BCE during the aftermath of the Hellenistic empire.<sup>70</sup> He claims the core of the psalm was composed in order to serve as the introduction to books 1–3 of the Psalter as an independent collection. He argues that vv. 10–12 were then added later when Psalm 1 was added to the Psalter, binding the collection together.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 1*, 48.

<sup>68</sup> Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 1*, 48–49. He concludes his argument by claiming, "But the universalistic and eschatological horizon of Psalm 2 cannot be explained within the aspirations of Israel's historical monarchies, not even by referring to Egyptian prototypes of court rituals. Rather, Psalm 2 corresponds to early Jewish theological universalism, manifest also in Second and Third Isaiah and Zechariah (thus Press, against Gunkel, Gressmann, et al.)" (*Psalms, Part 1*, 49).

<sup>69</sup> Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen I*, 50. Cf. Otto, "Politische Theologie in den Königspsalmen," 33–51.

<sup>70</sup> Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen I*, 50–1.

<sup>71</sup> Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen I*, 51.

So, Zenger views the psalm as a messianic hymn with hope for restoration rather than as a historical poem that functioned within the monarchy.

The proposals for the setting, genre, and function of Ps 2 rival the number and variety of proposals for reading vv. 11b–12a. I will first turn to ANE royal art as a source of data to contextualize the way we view the psalm’s imagery before considering how the artistic data reshapes one’s approach to these interpretive issues.

#### 2.1.4 The Iconic Structure of Psalm 2

In order to draw upon artistic data to contextualize Psalm 2’s literary imagery, I will first describe the interrelated constellations of images that make up the psalm. That is, I will map its iconic structure.<sup>72</sup> Psalm 2 draws three groups of characters together—the enemies, the king, and Yahweh. The poem presents foreign kings and rulers as rebellious enemies threatening to overthrow the yoke of Yahweh and his king (vv. 1–3). These rulers are locked in bonds of submission to Yahweh and his kings, and they seek to cast off their bonds in defiance (vv. 2–3). The poem, though, portrays the futility of their desire. The psalm pictures these enemies as the subjugated possession of Yahweh’s king (v. 8). Foreign rulers only have two options. They may submit before the deity and his king and so prosper, or they may die dashed to pieces and burned up (vv. 9–12). The psalm portrays those who oppose Yahweh and his king as powerless, unable to break free of the bonds of their rule.

Yahweh, unlike the foreigners who oppose him, reigns confidently and fears no one (vv. 4–6). The poem displays Yahweh as the cosmic king, enthroned and reigning in the heavens (v. 4). The enthroned deity answers the scene of potential upheaval. He scorns their proposal with laughter, answering their threat with a revelation—the king of Zion is Yahweh’s king, installed

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<sup>72</sup> See Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 3–14; LeMon, *Yahweh’s Winged Form*, 14–22.

by the deity himself (vv. 5–6). Yahweh supports and enables the rule of his king, the one whom he has chosen as his offspring (v. 7). Yahweh empowers the king, granting him control over the nations and the ability to strike down those who oppose him (vv. 8–9). The peoples are called to serve this cosmic ruler so that they might flourish rather than perish (vv. 10–12).

Yahweh's king rules over the earth just as the deity rules over the cosmos. In Psalm 2, the identities and actions of Yahweh and his king are intertwined. Yahweh has chosen and appointed the king to rule from the deity's holy mountain, and the king reigns as a son of the cosmic king (vv. 6–7). The poem portrays the king as the ruler of all nations (vv. 1 – 3, 8). He stands ready to smite those who rebel against him with a rod of iron (vv. 9). Throughout the psalm, the king and Yahweh are interconnected in their identities and joint reigns over the nations/cosmos. The poem's final lines seem to indicate that service and submission to Yahweh and/or his king is required of all foreign rulers. Blessings are promised for those who submit. Destruction comes for those who spurn Yahweh and/or his king (vv. 10–12). The submission of all nations to Yahweh's king represents the rightful order of the cosmos. Yet, in these final verses, it is unclear who is the primary agent. Is it Yahweh or Yahweh's king who destroys those who rebel and provides safe harbor for those who submit (vv. 11–12)?<sup>73</sup>

The psalm has two major themes: (1) the poem displays the right relationship of foreign kings to Israel's monarch as one of submission and subjugation, and (2) the psalm's imagery pictures the overlapping identities of the deity and his king. Viewing these themes alongside similar ones in royal art throughout the ANE will provide a broader context for ascertaining the psalm's historical setting, genre, and rhetorical function.

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<sup>73</sup> See discussion in 2.1.2 above.

## 2.2 Royal Art and the Rhetoric of Royal Subjugation

A few scholars have explored the threat of foreign rebellion and the subjugation of foreign kings in Psalm 2 from a comparative perspective.<sup>74</sup> Yet, these studies have considered only ANE texts. ANE pictorial data can help elucidate the psalm's rhetoric on these points. As discussed above, some scholars have commented on how the idea of universal submission to Yahweh and his king is simply a facet of Judean royal ideology.<sup>75</sup> Yet, these discussions have not traced the theme of subjugation beyond vv. 1–3. Other scholars claim such universalizing imagery must stem from the post-exilic period and Achaemenid ideology.<sup>76</sup>

Re-reading the psalm in light of royal artistic imagery frames the psalm's dominant themes. A turn to ANE artistic data exposes multiple strategies for displaying the defeat, submission, and subjugation of enemy kings and nations. Such artistic depictions are prolific in royal artistic programs—programs that serve to construct the identity of the king and display how the king relates to national deities and foreigners.<sup>77</sup> Artistic tropes focused on the

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<sup>74</sup> See Cooke, “The Israelite King as Son of God,” 202–25; von Rad, “The Royal Ritual in Judah,” 222–31; Dahood, *Psalms I*, 8–14; Auffret, *The Literary Structure of Psalm 2*; Cragie, *Psalms 1-50*, 62–69; Sasson, “The Language of Rebellion in Psalm 2,” 147–54; Becking, “‘Wie Töpfe sollst du sie Zerschmeißen’ Mesopotamische Parallelen zu Psalm 2,9b,” 59–79; Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 123–35; Starbuck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms*, 67–102 and 161–67. Koch, “Der König als Sohn Gottes,” 1–32; Cornell, “Divine Aggression in Royal Psalms and Inscriptions,” 97–114.

<sup>75</sup> See Cragie, *Psalms 1–50*, 66; Weiser, *The Psalms*, 109–10; Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1*, 109; Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 64–65.

<sup>76</sup> See Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 1*, 48–9; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen I*, 50–51; Press, “Jahwe und sein Gesalbter,” 321–54.

<sup>77</sup> On ANE royal art as constitutive of royal identity and anxieties, see Reade, “Ideology and Propaganda,” 330–31; Bahrani, *The Graven Image*, 143–44 and 170–71; Frederick Mario Fales, “Art, Performativity, Mimesis, Narrative, Ideology, and Audience: Reflections on Assyrian Palace Reliefs in the Light of Recent Studies,” *Kaskal* 6 (2009): 274–75; Winter, “Royal Rhetoric,” 42–45; Winter, “‘Seat of Kingship’ / ‘A Wonder to Behold’,” 358–62; Paul Garelli, “La conception de la beauté en Assyrie,” in *Lingering over Words: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran*, ed. Tzvi Abusch, John Huehnergard, and Piotr Steinkeller (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1990), 173–77; John Baines, “Kingship, Definition of Culture, and Legitimation,” in *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, ed. David O'Connor and David P. Silverman, PAe 9 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 7–8; David O'Connor, “Beloved of Maat, the Horizon of Re: The Royal Palace in New Kingdom Egypt,” in *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, 290–92; Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 252; Porada, “The Uses of Art to Convey Political Meanings,” 15–17.

submission and subjugation of foreign peoples are central in Egyptian, Neo-Assyrian, and Achaemenid royal art, often modeling strikingly similar constellations of images to the imagery Psalm 2 models. The existence of imagery displaying universal subjugation of enemies in royal artistic programs throughout the ANE cautions against using the theme to date Psalm 2. I will first survey themes of domination, submission, and subjugation in ANE royal art before demonstrating that this trope and its prominence in ANE art should reshape scholarly discussion concerning text-critical, historical-critical, and form critical questions of Psalm 2.

### 2.2.1 Egyptian Royal Art

Imagery of the submission of foreign peoples to Egypt's king functions as a prolific theme in Egyptian royal art. Egyptian royal art displays the nation's enemies as subject, bound, and helpless before Egypt's pharaoh and deities. The submission of foreign enemies appears in symbolic displays, historical reliefs, and as a decorative element framing other scenes. Throughout different artistic media, foreign enemies appear as subject to the pharaoh, bound in submission before king and deity or helpless before the king's finishing blow. Egyptian royal art depicts foreign enemies as utterly powerless before the king and the deities who empower the king's rule.





**Fig. 2.1a.** Narmer Palette reverse. Herakonopolis. Circa 3200–3000 BCE. After Gay Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 32, fig. 25.

The Narmer Palette provides an early example of themes that become standard motifs of royal triumph in Egyptian art.<sup>78</sup> The reverse of the palette (**fig. 2.1a**) portrays king Narmer in the smiting posture—the king grasps a subdued enemy in one hand with the other hand drawn back to strike. The king also strides upon two enemies in the register below him, marking their defeat. With these postures, the king is pictured in the moment right before certain victory and as already victorious over his subdued enemies.<sup>79</sup> The Horus falcon accompanies the king, marking

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<sup>78</sup> Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 32–33; Whitney Davis, *Masking the Blow: The Scene of Representation in Late Prehistoric Egyptian Art*, California Studies in the History of Art 30 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 171; Emma Swan Hall, *The Pharaoh Smites His Enemies: A Comparative Study*, Münchner Ägyptologische Studien 44 (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1986), 5–6; Laurel Bestock, *Violence and Power in Ancient Egypt: Image and Ideology before the New Kingdom*, Routledge Studies in Egyptology (London: Routledge, 2018), 65–66.

<sup>79</sup> Joel M. LeMon, *Picturing Righteous Violence in the Psalms and Ancient Near Eastern Iconography*, forthcoming; Bestock, *Violence and Power*, 66. It is possible that the enemies are fleeing the king's presence, rather than represented as dead or dying (Davis, *Masking the Blow*, 169–71). Either way, their depiction in the register below the king's feet represents the king's inevitable victory over them, marking it as already accomplished.

out the shared work of the king and the deity in the subjugation of the king's enemies. The Horus falcon stands upon a representation of the peoples of the marsh, holding them in submission before the king with a cord through the nose. The deity presents the nation to the king, bound and subject.



**Fig. 2.1b.** Narmer Palette obverse. Herakonopolis. Circa 3200–3000 BCE. After Gay Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 32, fig. 25.

The obverse (**fig. 2.1b**) represents the subjugation of enemies in multiple violent scenes. Within the bottom register of the palette, the pharaoh in the form of a bull tramples and crushes an enemy while simultaneously piercing the enemy city's walls with his horns.<sup>80</sup> In the top register, the subjugated enemies are bound at the elbows. Their bodies are organized into rows and “re-ordered,” with their removed heads and phalli placed between their legs.<sup>81</sup> These bound

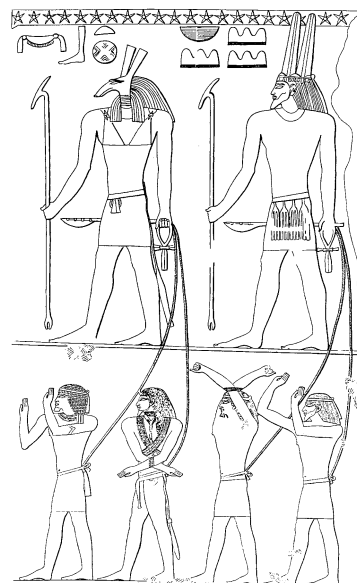
<sup>80</sup> Davis, *Masking the Blow*, 191; de Hulster, *Iconographic Exegesis and Third Isaiah*, 237–38.

<sup>81</sup> LeMon notes how the scene shows that Narmer, as king, creates order out of the chaotic enemies by dismantling and re-ordering their bodies (LeMon, *Picturing Righteous Violence*, forthcoming).

enemy bodies lay impotent before the king. The middle register depicts the binding of two monstrous beasts, likely symbolic of the king reigning in natural chaotic forces.<sup>82</sup> The imagery of the middle register indicates that the binding and subdual of the king’s enemies maps onto the binding and subdual of chaos itself.<sup>83</sup> The anticipated violence of the reverse scene is carried out on the obverse.<sup>84</sup> The subjugated enemies portray the king’s power and ability to rightly order the cosmos.



Figure 4.6 Gods hold ropes leading to bound prisoners of various ethnicities in the registers below them, from the causeway of Sahure’s mortuary complex at Abusir. Not all of the captives are of identifiable ethnicity, and some may represent Egyptians. Dimensions: 54 × 43.2 cm.



**Figs. 2.2a–b.** Full relief from Sahure’s mortuary temple (2.2a), and detail of relief (2.2b). Location: Mortuary Temple of Sahure, Abusir. Date: 25<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Bestock, *Violence and Power*, 97, fig. 4.6 (2.2a); Keel, *Symbolism*, 302, fig. 406 (2.2b).

<sup>82</sup> See Toby A. H. Wilkinson, “What a King is This: Narmer and the Concept of a Ruler,” *JEA* 86 (2000): 28–29.

<sup>83</sup> Davis refers to the scene of Narmer smiting his enemy on the reverse as the “metaphorical equivalent” of the mastering of the serpopard beasts on the obverse—both scenes portray the king’s mastering of chaos, either in the form of enemies or natural beasts (*Masking the Blow*, 175). Davis goes on to describe the mastering of the serpopards scene at the center of the obverse as the “key to the cipher of the narrative image” of the palette (*Masking the Blow*, 178).

<sup>84</sup> See Bestock, *Violence and Power*, 66–67; Davis, *Masking the Blow*, 175–85. Even if one does not accept Davis’s complicated proposal for reading the palette, his main point stands, “the obverse middle depicts the moment immediately *after* the decisive blow has fallen: here the serpopards have just been caught and their heads begun to be twisted together. The reverse middle depicts the moment immediately *before* the blow: here Narmer throws back his right arm, carrying his mace, just about to smite his enemy” (Davis, *Masking the Blow*, 185, italics original).

A relief located in the causeway of Sahure's mortuary temple (**figs. 2.2a–b**) displays bound and submissive foreigners led before the king. The remains of the relief show four registers, the first and third with deities holding *was*-scepters in their right hands and *ankhs*, axes, and ropes in their left. These ropes lead captive enemies in the second and fourth registers. The captives are smaller in stature than the deities who lead the prisoners toward what was likely an image of the king Sahure.<sup>85</sup> The captives, representing multiple ethnic identities, are bound by their arms and waists to emphasize their abject defeat.<sup>86</sup> A couple of captives are bound solely about the waist, and they raise their free arms in submission before the king. The deities above them represent both Egyptian and foreign deities, with Seth and the Asiatic Sopdu shown fully on the third register.<sup>87</sup> In this way, divine powers from Egypt and beyond cooperate together to bring all peoples under the king's control.<sup>88</sup>

In the New Kingdom, these scene types from the Old Kingdom are blended in complex scenes displaying the subjugation of Egypt's enemies.<sup>89</sup>

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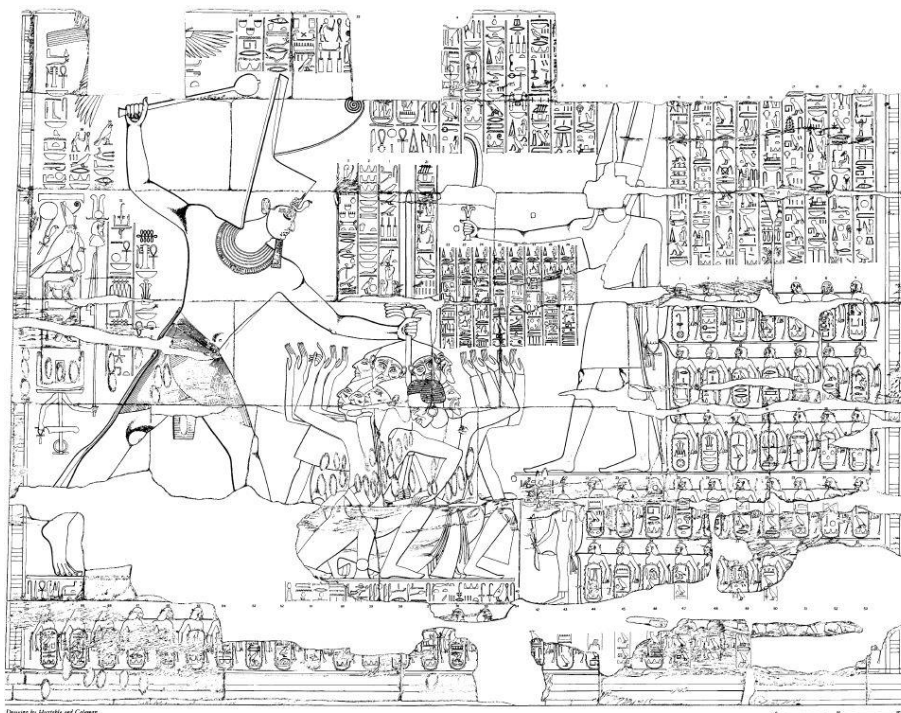
<sup>85</sup> See Bestock, *Violence and Power*, 96.

<sup>86</sup> Including Libyans, Asiatics, and seemingly others of mixed identities. Bestock, regarding the mixed identities, claims, "It is in any case likely that some ambiguity or at least blurred distinctions between peoples are deliberate factors in this scene of captives differentiated by such attributes, as is the decision not to label them. This has the effect of suggesting a generalized 'all' as the subject of captivity here" (*Violence and Power*, 98).

<sup>87</sup> Bestock, *Violence and Power*, 96–97.

<sup>88</sup> This motif of bound prisoners led before the king by a deity or deities is not unique to Sahure's mortuary temple. The later mortuary temple of Pepy II at Saqqara contains a relief block portraying a similar scene. See Bestock, *Violence and Power*, 118–19, fig. 4.26.

<sup>89</sup> See Anthony J. Spalinger, *Icons of Power: A Strategy of Reinterpretation* (Prague: Charles University in Prague, 2011), 91–92; cf. Otto Koefoed-Petersen, "Le triomphe du Pharaon," in *Actes du XXe Congrès International des Orientalistes* (Louvain: Bureaux du musée, 1940), 100–01.



KING SETI I TRIUMPHING OVER FOREIGN ENEMIES IN THE PRESENCE  
OF AMUN-RE AND THE GODDESS THERES  
NORTH WALL, EAST WING, BOTTOM REGISTERS

**Fig. 2.3.** Seti I smiting at Karnak. Location: Temple of Amun, Karnak. Date: 14<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Seti I*, pl. 15a.

A scene of Seti I in the emblematic smiting posture (**fig. 2.3**) on the north wall at Karnak sits within the context of multiple reliefs that depict the king quelling a rebellion. These other reliefs depict Seti's campaign against northern rebels, and yet here the smiting king grasps a host of subdued enemies, including a Nubian, a Libyan, and numerous Asiatics. In this way, the scene represents the king's domination of all peoples.<sup>90</sup> Seti strides forward, ready to smash his mace into the enemies before him. Concurrently, the king tramples upon the bound leaders surmounting name rings beneath him. Like Narmer, Seti is simultaneously depicted with his enemies cowering before him even as he tramples defeated peoples beneath his feet (see **figure**

<sup>90</sup> See The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Seti I*, vol. 4 of Reliefs and Inscriptions at Karnak, OIP 107 (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1986), 48–57; Joachim Śliwa, "Some Remarks Concerning Victorious Ruler Representations in Egyptian Art," *Forschungen und Berichte* 16 (1974): 102–04.

2.4 for a detail of bound figures atop city name rings from a relief of Thutmose III also at Karnak).<sup>91</sup>

The image stands outside of time; unlike the historical reliefs that run beside it, the smiting scene does not present a particular historical moment. The symbolic scene forever displays the triumph of the king over any and all of his enemies. Amun-Re stands across from the king, holding ropes wrapped about the necks of more enemy leaders upon name rings. With his other hand he holds out the *hepeš*-sword to the king. The offering of the *hepeš*-sword displays Amun's support of and cooperation with the king in subduing the nations.<sup>92</sup> Those leaders who rebelled remain in their bonds of subjugation before the king as he embodies his role as ruler over the cosmos.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> See LeMon, *Picturing Righteous Violence*, forthcoming.

<sup>92</sup> See Othmar Keel, "Powerful Symbols of Victory: The Parts Stay the Same, The Actors Change," *JNSL* 25 (1999): 207–09.

<sup>93</sup> An earlier relief displaying Thutmose III in a smiting scene exists upon the VII pylon at Karnak, and it too features the king striding upon enemy leaders bound upon name rings as a goddess and Amun both lead more bound enemies into the king's presence. See Regine Schulz and Hourig Sourouzian, "The Temples – Royal Gods and Divine Kings," in *Egypt: The World of the Pharaohs*, ed. Regine Schulz and Matthias Seidel (Köln: Könemann, 1998), 162, fig. 26. This strategy of portraying bound and defeated enemies, led before the victorious king by the deity or deities in smiting scenes became a stable part of the smiting motif in the New Kingdom. For another example, see the bound enemies in the smiting scenes of Ramses III at Medinet Habu in *The Epigraphic Survey, Later Historical Records of Ramses III*, vol. 2 of Medinet Habu, OIP 9 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932), plates 85 and 102.



**Fig. 2.4.** Close up of bound enemy leaders atop the name rings subdued peoples from Thutmose III's smiting scene on the VII<sup>th</sup> pylon. Location: Pylon VII, Temple of Amun, Karnak. Date: 1490–1436 BCE. Source: Photo by Michael Lusk. Uploaded by Ibolya Horvath on <https://www.ancient.eu/image/6894/temple-of-karnak-wars-of-thutmose-iii/>.

In fact, an inscription upon the scene narrates Amun's empowerment of the king in subduing the nations of the north, south, east, and west.<sup>94</sup> Amun identifies the king as his bodily son, one co-identified with the deity and therefore sharing in the deity's power and rule.<sup>95</sup> Amun declares how he worked a wonder for Seti I in the north, helping him to quell the actions of those rebellious peoples and subjugating them before the king.<sup>96</sup> The scene symbolizes the potential and yet already-accomplished defeat of all those who rebel against the king and the divine powers who have appointed him.<sup>97</sup>

The placement of this symbolic scene underlines its power and function. This smiting scene stood to the east side of the central doorway that leads to the main passage running south through the hypostyle hall. Another smiting scene of Seti I mirrored this one on the western side

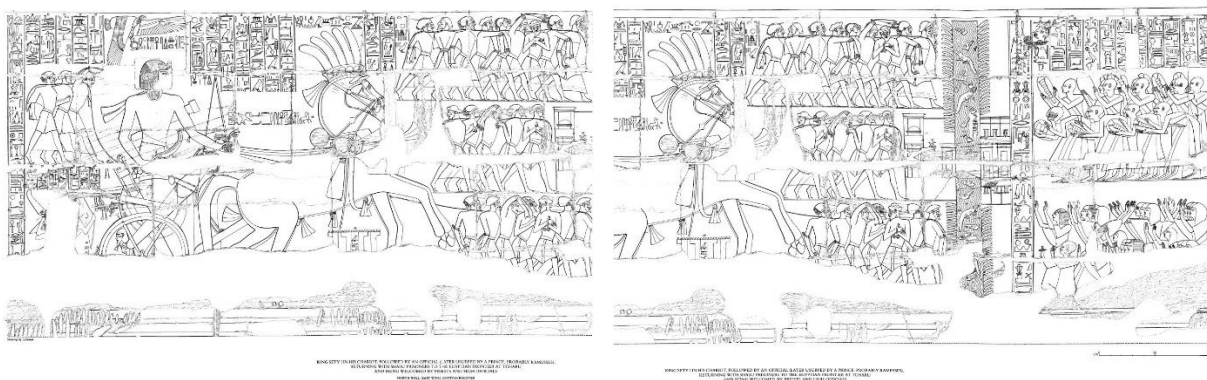
<sup>94</sup> See The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Sety I*, 51.

<sup>95</sup> The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Sety I*, 51.

<sup>96</sup> The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Sety I*, 51.

<sup>97</sup> See LeMon, "Yhwh's Hand and the Iconography of the Blow," 877.

of the entrance. Both of these scenes stood a full two registers high, indicating their importance. They symbolize the entirety of the campaigns upon the eastern wall<sup>98</sup> and the outcome of those campaigns—the king’s rule over all nations.<sup>99</sup> On either side of the entrance to the hypostyle hall, the scenes repel all evil and chaotic forces by representing the king transforming the forces of chaos into order. This representation of the king’s subjugation of foreign nations maintains a particular state of relations among the king, deity, and nations. The reliefs display the true state of the cosmos to all who view them.



**Figs. 2.5a–b.** Seti I triumph scenes. Location: Temple of Amun, Karnak. Date: 14<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Sety I*, pl. 6.

A scene among the battle reliefs of Seti I (**figs. 2.5a–b**) relates the king’s subjugation of rebellious enemies through text and image. One of the striking and somewhat confusing things about this relief is that the text inscribed on the scene seems disjunctive with what the relief depicts.<sup>100</sup> The text and the reliefs seem to work at odds, with the textual narrative beginning closer to the central entrance to the temple and proceeding out of Egypt, while the reliefs depict

<sup>98</sup> See The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Sety I*, plates 2–14.

<sup>99</sup> The Epigraphic Survey states “The two triumphal scenes flanking the doorway can be seen as formal, generalized summations of the battle reliefs on each wing” (*The Battle Reliefs of King Sety I*, 47).

<sup>100</sup> As the Epigraphic Survey notes: “The texts, for instance, appear to move in a direction contrary to that of the scenes they accompany. Sety hears of disturbances among the Shashu above the scene illustrating his triumphant return to Egypt (pl. 6:3–9), and the full extent of the campaign is only revealed at what is spatially the outermost point of the series, on the eastern side wall (pl. 3:1–5)” (*The Battle Reliefs of King Sety I*, 3).



the campaigns themselves on the outermost reliefs and progress visually towards the temple entrance. The text begins in Egypt with the report of a rebellion and moves outward, relief by relief, to recount the end of the campaigns. The reliefs present Egypt's enemies repelled from the temple, kept at the temple's edges. Even there they are felled easily in battle before the almighty pharaoh. The scenes closest to the temple are those of bound prisoners led before the Theban triad and the emblematic smiting scenes (such as **fig. 2.3**); these scene types symbolize the subjugation of all nations.

Despite the differences in how art and text portray the king's triumph on this wall of the complex, the imagery and text upon these reliefs (**figs. 2.5a–b**) together encapsulate the king's dominant place over the nations. The main inscription upon the relief relates the opening of the campaign, when Seti I was first told of the rebellion, "The Shasu enemies are plotting sedition. Their tribal leaders are gathered in one place, standing on the foothills of Khor, and they are engaged in turmoil and uproar."<sup>101</sup> The relief, however, displays a triumph scene, with Seti I leading bound enemies both before and behind his chariot. At least two Shasu prisoners are shown on the floor of Seti's chariot, with their heads hanging out of the open back, while three more follow behind led by the ropes that Seti holds. Seti's quiver is ominously empty, an indication of the destruction that he wreaked upon his enemies on the battlefield.<sup>102</sup>

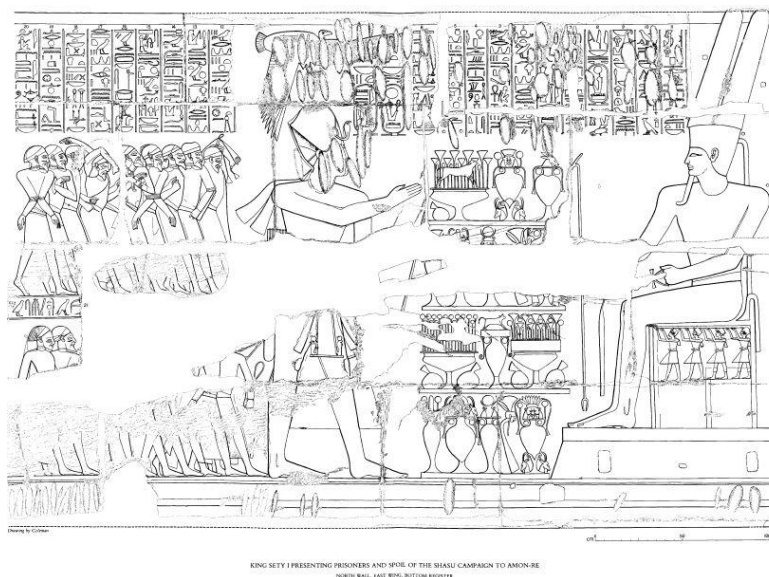
Three full registers of captive enemies bound at the necks and elbows walk before the chariot. All of the ropes lead back to Seti's chariot, signaling that the enemies are controlled by the king. Priests and dignitaries await Seti's return on the other side of the relief, greeting the king either with bouquets or with their arms raised in reverence. In short, the text portrays the beginnings of the campaign and the image presents its consummation. The dissonance between

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<sup>101</sup> See The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Sety I*, 20.

<sup>102</sup> See The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Sety I*, 16.

text and image conveys a world in which the beginning and end are always interconnected—the outcome was always secure. The text and imagery of the relief here work together to display this message of the king’s certain rule over all of Egypt’s enemies.<sup>103</sup>



**Fig. 2.6.** Seti I triumph scene before enthroned Amun-Re. Location: Temple of Amun, Karnak. Date: 14<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Sety I*, pl. 8.

Other Egyptian scene types show the king leading bound enemies. A triumph scene (**fig. 2.6**) from the wall reliefs of Seti I at Karnak displays the king with subdued enemies before an enthroned deity, Amun-Re.<sup>104</sup> Seti offers the deity the spoils of his campaign against the Shasu rebels. With one hand the king presents these spoils. With the other, now broken off, he held the ropes that bind the rebellious rulers, who are tied in tortuous poses.<sup>105</sup> The king has created order

<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, the speech above the heads of the officials greeting the king speak to Re’s empowerment of the king, and they proclaim the king’s place as the right ruler of all saying, “Your mace is over the head of every foreign land.” See The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Sety I*, 21.

<sup>104</sup> Amun-Re sits upon a throne decorated with a motif of the king in the act of holding of the sky and maintaining *maat*. See The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Sety I*, 23; D. Kurth, *Den Hummel Stutzen: Die "Tw3 pt" – Szenen in den ägyptischen Tempeln der griechisch-römischen Epoche*, RITEGY 2 (Brussels: Brepols, 1975), 136–46.

<sup>105</sup> For a discussion of the damage, see The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Sety I*, 23–4; compare the earlier more complete line drawing of the relief provided in J. Champollion, *Monuments de l’Egypte et de la Nubie*, vol. I (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1835), pl. ccxciii.

out of the chaotic rebels. Strikingly, the rebel chieftains proclaim their mistake in the text near their heads, calling out to the king, “Hail to you! How great is your name, how powerful your strength! The foreign land who acts loyally towards you rejoices, and that which attacks your frontiers is wretched.”<sup>106</sup> The prisoners themselves, in their state of humiliation, proclaim the blessed position of those who submit to the king and the anguish of those who stand against him. Their bonds serve as the pictorial representation of this subjugation, and the text indicates their foolish choice.<sup>107</sup>



**Figs. 2.7a–b.** Right (a) and left (b) exterior sides of Thutmose IV’s chariot. Location: Thutmose IV’s tomb, Valley of Kings. Date: 1400–1390 BCE. Source: Calvert, “Vehicle of the Sun,” figs. 4 and 8.

The exterior sides of Thutmose IV’s ceremonial chariot evinces a similar scene in which the king and deity work together to subjugate their enemies (**figs. 2.7a–b**).<sup>108</sup> The chariot’s right

<sup>106</sup> The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Sety I*, 26.

<sup>107</sup> Scenes of the pharaoh leading bound enemies before the enthroned deity(ies) were found throughout the New Kingdom era. For examples, see a scene of Ramses II at Abu Simbel in William MacQuitty, *Abu Simbel*, foreword by I. E. S. Edwards (New York: Putnam’s Sons, 1965), 112; and Ramses III at Medinet Habu in The Epigraphic Survey, *The Earlier Historical Records of Ramses III*, vol. I of Medinet Habu, OIP 8 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930), plates 11, 43, and 44.

<sup>108</sup> Howard Carter and Percy E. Newberry, *The Tomb of Thoutmosis IV* (Westminster: Constable and Co., 1904), 24–33.

and left side portray battle scenes, in which the pharaoh's violence is both potential and already inflicted. On the right exterior side (**fig. 2.7a**), the king stands upon his war chariot with his bow drawn, ready to fire into the chaotic host of enemies. The bow he holds indexes his responsibility for the resultative violence before him—the enemy bodies already pierced by arrows.<sup>109</sup> The large scene on the outer left side of the chariot is similar, except here the king holds his bow with the same hand by which he grasps two enemies by the hair, preparing to smite them from his chariot. As LeMon has noted, the bow seems to intrude upon the image, standing in the way of the axe which the king readies. Yet, the bow plays a key role in this scene—it connects the arrow riddled enemies to the king and his destructive power.<sup>110</sup>

Again, as we have seen in other scenes, the king and Egypt's deities work together to subdue their enemies. In the left exterior scene (**fig. 2.7b**), a Horus falcon hovers behind the king's head, with its wings outspread in a posture of protection. The falcon's talon overlaps with the king's weapon-wielding hand, indicating that the king's hand becomes the god's in judging his enemies.<sup>111</sup> In the opposite scene, a solar disc with two uraei hovers above the pharaoh and beneath Nekhbet's wing as the war-deity Montu guides the king's bow.<sup>112</sup> Thus, the king, with divine assistance, dominates his enemies in battle.

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<sup>109</sup> See LeMon, *Picturing Righteous Violence*, forthcoming.

<sup>110</sup> See LeMon, *Picturing Righteous Violence*, forthcoming.

<sup>111</sup> For a discussion of the possible meanings of the Horus falcon's talon overlapping the king's smiting hand, see Amy M. Calvert, "Vehicle of the Sun: The Royal Chariot in the New Kingdom," in *Chasing Chariots: Proceedings of the First International Chariot Conference (Cairo 2012)*, ed. André J. Veldmeijer and Salima Ikram (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2012), 52–3.

<sup>112</sup> On the identification of the deity, and more broadly on the chariot, see Calvert, "Vehicle of the Sun," 48–50.



**Fig. 2.8.** Front center of Thutmose IV’s ceremonial chariot featuring enemies are bound by the *sm3-t3wj* sign upon which the king’s *nomen* is enthroned. Location: Thutmose IV’s tomb, Valley of Kings. Date: 1400–1390 BCE. Source: Calvert, “Vehicle of the Sun,” fig. 12.

These exterior battle scenes are supported by a frame featuring bound enemies. At the front-center of the chariot (**fig. 2.8**), the king’s name cartouche rests below the *Ra*-sign, two ostrich feathers representing *maat*, and a lion-headed bird surmounted by a sun disc grasping *ankh*-signs in its pinions.<sup>113</sup> Two uraei face outward from the sun disc and towards the king’s enemies, guarding the king’s *nomen*. The king’s *nomen* sits enthroned upon a *sm3-t3wj* sign, made up of the standard plants of Upper and Lower Egypt.<sup>114</sup> The papyrus plant branches out from the sign to bind the necks and arms of the subjugated Asiatic enemies, drawing these enemies into the classic symbol of a united Egyptian kingdom.<sup>115</sup> The repetition of the bound enemies on either side of the *sm3-t3wj* sign symbolizes the king’s domination over his enemies in

<sup>113</sup> See Carter and Newberry, *The Tomb of Thoutmosis IV*, 26.

<sup>114</sup> The blue lily and the papyrus plant. See Carter and Newberry, *The Tomb of Thoutmosis IV*, 25.

<sup>115</sup> Carter and Newberry, *The Tomb of Thoutmosis IV*, 27; cf. Mark D. Janzen, “The Iconography of Humiliation: The Depiction and Treatment of Bound Foreigners in New Kingdom Egypt” (PhD diss., University of Memphis, 2013), 59–63.

his rule of the united Egyptian kingdom.<sup>116</sup> On either side of the bound enemies, the king's personified cartouche stands in the smiting posture.<sup>117</sup> The bound enemies of Egypt symbolize the power and rule of the Egyptian kingdom over the nations of the earth.



**Fig. 2.9.** Relief of Sheshonq I, Amun, and the goddess Wast with bound enemies of Egypt. Location: Temple of Amun, Karnak. Date: 945–24 BCE. Source: *ANEP*, 118, fig. 349.

Though imagery of bound enemies thrived during the New Kingdom period, it certainly did not disappear with its collapse. For example, a relief of Sheshonq I (**fig. 2.9**) displays a list of name rings of Palestinian towns conquered by the pharaoh. Amun and the goddess Wast both lead bound leaders surmounting name rings into the presence of the pharaoh with ropes, similar to smiting scene discussed above (**fig. 1.3**).<sup>118</sup> The imagery of subjugated enemies served as a key aspect of Egyptian royal ideology throughout the existence of the Pharaonic monarchy.

Such imagery cannot be contained within a singular period of time. The Egyptian king

<sup>116</sup> Calvert, “Vehicle of the Sun,” 54.

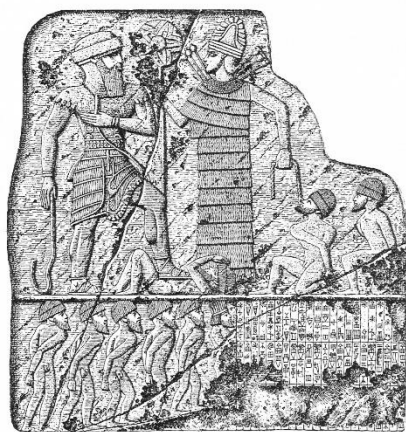
<sup>117</sup> See Calvert, “Vehicle of the Sun,” 55.

<sup>118</sup> See *ANEP*, 290 no. 349, fig. 349. Another rock carving from the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE at Gebel Qeitil displays similar imagery, with a solar deity handing over a group of bound captives to the king or crown prince (see Hall, *The Pharaoh Smites*, fig. 90).

appears before his enthroned deity with subdued enemies, stands ready to smite all enemies of Egypt, and reigns over bound enemies in multiple scene types; Psalm 2 reflects markedly similar imagery as the poem portrays Yahweh's king ruling over bound enemies (vv. 2–3), ready to smash those who rebel (v. 9) because the enthroned king of the cosmos empowers his actions (v. 4). The partnership between the king and deity as they smite their enemies and rule the cosmos is described as a father-son relationship in both Egyptian royal art (**fig. 2.3**) and Psalm 2 (v. 6). Psalm 2 shares motifs that appear in Egyptian royal art throughout the existence of the Pharaonic empire to display the subjugation of enemy nations.

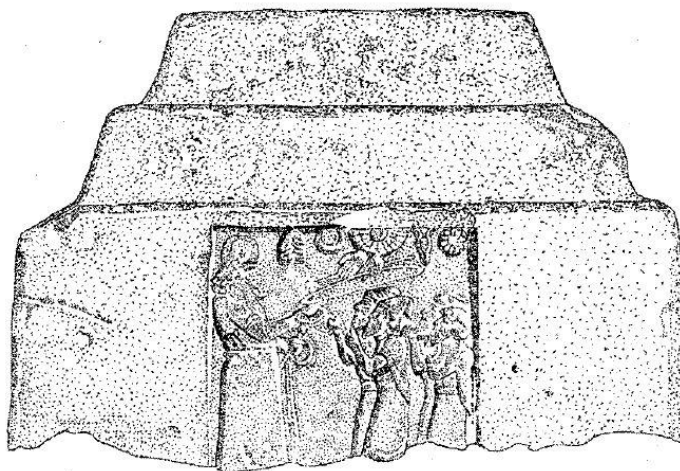
### 2.2.2 Mesopotamian Royal Art

The subjugation of enemies before the king was a primary theme in Mesopotamian royal art as well. Royal art from early Mesopotamian kingdoms to the later Neo-Assyrian empire portrays foreign enemies in postures of submission before the king. Enemies appear bound and controlled by the king and Mesopotamian deities or bowed down in submission before the king. Imagery of subjugated enemies shapes Mesopotamian royal ideology and rhetoric.



**Fig. 2.10.** Rock relief of Anubanini before Ishtar. Location: Zohab. Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> century BCE.  
Source: *ANEP*, 177, fig. 524.

An early example exists upon the rock relief of Anubanini at Zohab (**fig. 2.10**), near Sarii-Pul, often dated to c. 2000 BCE.<sup>119</sup> The relief features the king of the Lullubi, Anubanini, holding a curved rod and a bow as he tramples upon a fallen enemy.<sup>120</sup> Across from the king stands the goddess Ishtar.<sup>121</sup> She holds the Mesopotamian ring, a symbol of justice and authority to rule, in her right hand out towards the king.<sup>122</sup> In her other hand she holds a rope connected to the lip ring of a bound enemy who kneels behind her. Another bound enemy kneels behind this man. An astral symbol sits between the deity and the king. On the register beneath the king's feet is a line of five naked and bound enemies following after a figure with a crown.<sup>123</sup> This early royal relief displays the deity presenting subdued enemies before the triumphant king, who stands over those he has defeated.



<sup>119</sup> See Eva Braun-Holzinger, *Herrscherbild in Mesopotamien und Elam*, AOAT 342 (Münster: Ugarit-Vorlag, 2007), 149–51; Tally Ornan, “Who is Holding the Lead Rope? The Relief of the Broken Obelisk,” *Iraq* 69 (2007): 66; Izak Cornelius, “Aspects of the Iconography of the Warrior Goddess Ishtar,” in *Images and Prophecy in the Ancient Eastern Mediterranean*, ed. Marti Nissinen and Charles E. Carter (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 18; Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 305. Neilson C. Debevoise, however, dates the relief quite earlier to c. 2500 (Debevoise, “The Rock Reliefs of Ancient Iran,” *JNES* 1 [1942]: 80).

<sup>120</sup> Debevoise, “The Rock Reliefs,” 79; Cornelius, “Aspects of the Iconography,” 18.

<sup>121</sup> Cornelius claims that they are two maces and an axe (“Aspects of the Iconography,” 18); Emil G. Kraepling contends that they are rays (“A Unique Babylonian Relief,” *BASOR* [1937]: 16); Pritchard describes the objects protruding from the goddess’ shoulder as shoots and buds (*ANEP*, 312, no. 524).

<sup>122</sup> Debevoise, “The Rock Reliefs,” 80; Cornelius, “Aspects of Iconography,” 18; Ornan, “Who is Holding the Lead Rope?,” 66.

<sup>123</sup> Debevoise counts six bound figures (“The Rock Reliefs,” 80); Pritchard sees five prisoners being led by a royal figure wearing a feather-crown (*ANEP*, 312, no. 524).



**Fig. 2.11.** The broken obelisk depicting Ashur-bel-kala with bound enemies. Location: Nineveh. Date: 11<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Tallay Ornan, “A Complex System of Religious Symbols,” 211, fig. 1.

An 11<sup>th</sup> cent BCE stele (**fig. 2.11**), likely depicting the king Ashur-bel-kala, conveys a scene of enemies bound before a victorious king.<sup>124</sup> The king stands on the left, looming over the four enemies to his right. The enemies stand in pairs, two directly before the king with conical hats, and two behind them with headbands.<sup>125</sup> The king holds a looped rope that binds the enemy captives along with a mace in his left hand.<sup>126</sup> The king holds out his right hand in acceptance of a bow offered to him by a solar disc.<sup>127</sup> Other divine symbols stand above the heads of the enemies to either side of the solar disc. The solar disc offering the bow to the king indexes their joint roles in conquering the bound enemies. The king wears a rope coiled twice about his waist that is very similar to the lead rope binding the enemies that he holds in his hands. The rope about his waist and the lead ropes by which the king controls his enemies together denote the king’s dominion and “the right of the king to govern foreign peoples.”<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> E. F. Weidner, “Die Annalen des Königs Aššurbêlkala von Assyrien,” *AfO* 6 (1930–31): 75–94; Ornan, “Who is Holding the Lead Rope?,” 59.

<sup>125</sup> The larger hats and stature may mark the first two enemies as leaders (see Ornan, “Who is Holding the Lead Rope?,” 63).

<sup>126</sup> Eva Strommenger, *The Art of Mesopotamia* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1964), 437, pl. 188; *ANEP*, 300, no. 440; Jutta Börker-Klähn, *Alt Vorderasiatische Bildstelen und vergleichbare Felsreliefs*, BF 4 (Mainz: P. v. Zabern, 1982), 178; Dominique Collon, *Ancient Near Eastern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 117; John M. Russell, “Obelisk,” *RIA* 10 (2003): 4; Ornan, “Who is Holding the Lead Rope?,” 61.

<sup>127</sup> Ornan suggests that the solar disc symbolizes Ashur, yet she notes that Shamash is also possible (“Who is Holding the Lead Ropes?,” 70); see her discussion of different arguments concerning which deity the winged solar disc represents in Assyrian art in Tallay Ornan, “A Complex System of Religious Symbols: The Case of the Winged Disc in Near Eastern Imagery of the First Millennium BCE,” in *Craft and Images in Contact: Studies on Eastern Mediterranean Art of the First Millennium BCE*, ed. Claudia E. Suter and Christoph Uehlinger, OBO 210 (Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 211–14.

<sup>128</sup> Ornan, “Who is Holding the Lead Rope,” 63; cf. Ursula Magen, *Assyrische Königsdarstellungen, Aspekte der Herrschaft, eine Typologie*, BaF (Mainz: P. v. Zabern, 1986), 24.



**Figs. 2.12a–b.** Relief slabs featuring bound captives lead into king Ashurnasirpal II’s presence with a foreign leader groveling at the king’s feet. Location: Nimrud. Date: 883–859 BCE. Source: BM 124537–BM124539, © Trustees of the British Museum.

In the Neo-Assyrian period, the artistic program of Ashurnasirpal II’s throne room manifests a royal identity, displaying the power, piety, prosperity, and divine protection of the Assyrian king.<sup>129</sup> The throne room reliefs show the king and Ashur, in the winged solar disc, acting in tandem to maintain order in cultic, hunting, battle, and triumph scenes.<sup>130</sup> Multiple reliefs featuring triumph scenes construct the king’s identity in relation to foreign peoples. For example, slabs B-18 and B-17 (**figs. 2.12a–b**) display a scene in which bound enemies are led before the triumphant king. The king stands facing the approaching officials and the prisoners

<sup>129</sup> Russell, “The Program of the Palace,” 705.

<sup>130</sup> Reade, “Ideology and Propaganda,” 332; Winter, “Royal Rhetoric,” 22–24 and 27–29; Russell, “The Program of the Palace,” 685–87; cf. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 307–12; Mario Liverani, “The Ideology of the Assyrian Empire,” in *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires*, ed. Mogens Trolle Larsen, Mesopotamia: Copenhagen Studies in Assyriology 7 (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1979), 300–01.

that they bring before him. The king holds a bow in his left hand and two arrows in his raised right hand, symbolizing the king's might and victory.<sup>131</sup> A foreign ruler grovels before the king with his face pressed submissively against the king's feet, possibly kissing them.<sup>132</sup> Behind this ruler, Assyrian officials lead a group of bound prisoners before the king. The enemies are depicted with tribute above their heads, signifying that they themselves and the products of their land belong to the Assyrian king.<sup>133</sup>

These two reliefs lie on the end of the throne room closer to the king and his throne, well beyond the gates that likely served as the primary entryways for people approaching the king.<sup>134</sup> Though there is no deity present in the scenes, the Standard Inscription that runs above these reliefs links the action of Ashur and the king; as Winter puts it, "the texts put victory into the hands of the god."<sup>135</sup> Both text and image portray subjugated enemies as a sign of the king and deity's joint rule over the cosmos.

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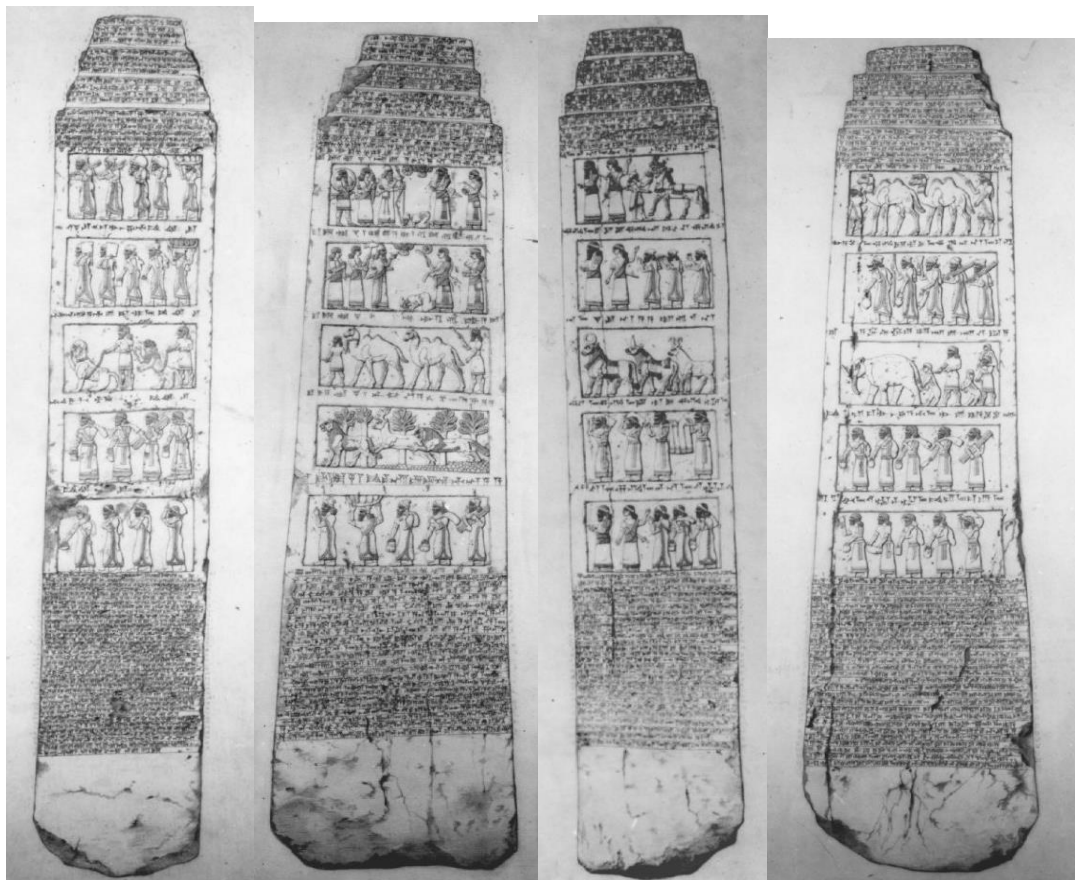
<sup>131</sup> See J. E. Reade, "The King on Campaign," in *Art and Empire: Treasures from Assyria in the British Museum*, ed. J. E. Curtis and J. E. Reade (London: The British Museum, 1995), 44; Russell, "The Program of the Palace," 684–85.

<sup>132</sup> See Winter, "Royal Rhetoric," 15, 17–18. The Standard Inscription speaks of enemy kings kissing the king's feet, and that may be what the relief is depicting here (Winter, "Royal Rhetoric," 30). Margaret Cool Root describes the scene as a captive enemy leader kissing the king's feet (see Root, *The King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art*, 205).

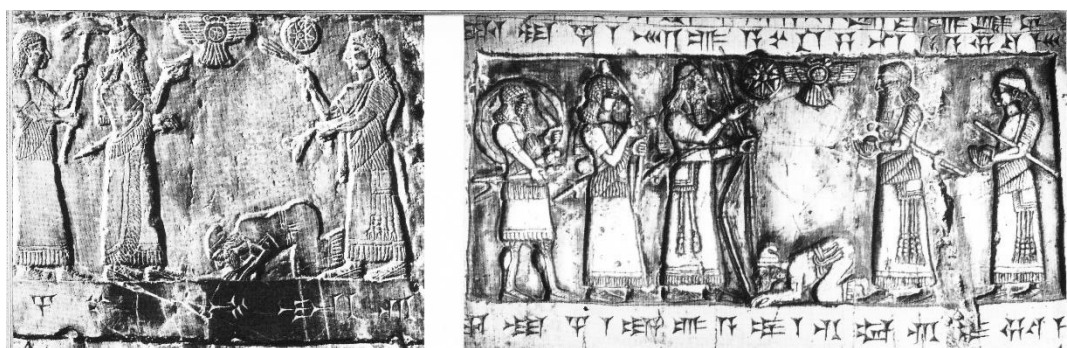
<sup>133</sup> Paul Collins, *Assyrian Palace Sculptures*, Photographs by Lisa Baylis and Sandra Marshall (London: The British Museum, 2008), 30 and 38; Winter, "Royal Rhetoric," 12 and 15.

<sup>134</sup> See Janusz Meuszyński, *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen und Ihrer Anordnung im Nordwestpalast von Kalhu (Nimrūd)*, (Räume: B.C.D.E.F.G.H.L.N.P), vol. 1, BaF 2 (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp Von Zabern, 1981), Plan 3.

<sup>135</sup> Winter, "Royal Rhetoric," 27.



**Figs. 2.13a–d.** Drawings of the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser. Location: Kalhu. Date: ca. 825 BCE. Source: Drawings © Trustees of the British Museum.



**Fig. 2.14.** Panels showing kings Jehu of Israel and Sua of Gilzanu prostrating themselves before Shalmaneser. Location: Kalhu. Date: ca. 825 BCE. Source: Amiet, *Art of the Ancient Near East*, 404, figs. 589–90.

The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III attests similar imagery of foreigners submitting before the Assyrian king. The obelisk is carved with five looping registers that each run around all four sides of the monument, depicting a continuous scene in each full register (**figs. 2.13a–**

d).<sup>136</sup> The obelisk features two registers at the top front that portray scenes of foreign kings (**fig. 2.14**), the king Sua of Gilzanu and king Jehu of Israel, leading in tribute before the Assyrian king.<sup>137</sup> These registers are prominently featured because they represent the eastern and western ends of the vast Assyrian empire, Gilzanu being located on the eastern edge of the empire and Israel on western edge.<sup>138</sup> These two kings together symbolized the entirety of the Assyrian king's empire.<sup>139</sup>

The kings bow before Shalmaneser in postures of total submission, bent low with their hands and faces pressed to the ground before the Assyrian king. In the upper most register before Sua of Gilzanu, Shalmaneser holds the accoutrements of war, with a bow in his left hand and arrows held in his right. In the register below, Shalmaneser stands before the submissive Jehu, and yet now he is adorned in cultic dress holding the libation cup. The two differing ways of depicting the king upon this monument simultaneously represent the king's fulfillment of both his militaristic and cultic roles in ruling the cosmos.<sup>140</sup> In each scene, the winged sun disc and the numinous star, symbols of Ashur and Ishtar respectively, stand slightly above and before the Assyrian king's face.<sup>141</sup> The presence of the deities confirms the Assyrian king's role as ruler over all the nations.

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<sup>136</sup> ANEP, 290–91, no. 351–55; Bahrani, *The Art of Mesopotamia*, 258–59.

<sup>137</sup> See ANEP, 290–91, no. 351–55.

<sup>138</sup> See Michelle Marcus, "Geography as an Organizing Principle in the Imperial Art of Shalmaneser III," *Iraq* 49 (1987): 88–89.

<sup>139</sup> See Edith Porada, "Remarks About Some Assyrian Relief," *Anatolian Studies* 33 (1983): 15–16; Marcus, "Geography as an Organizing Principle," 87–88.

<sup>140</sup> We have no other records of Shalmaneser having military encounters with Gilzanu or any explanation as to why the king would be depicted in cultic accoutrements specifically before Israel's king. To the contrary, according the inscription upon the obelisk and other royal records, Gilzanu seems to have been a state always willing to bring tribute before Assyria. See Julian E. Reade, "Hasanlu, Gilzanu and Related Considerations," *Archaeologische Mitteilungen Aus Iran* 12 (1979): 175; Marcus, "Geography as an Organizing Principle," 88.

<sup>141</sup> Bahrani, *The Art of Mesopotamia*, 259.

The two top registers are followed by three more sets of registers that wrap around the obelisk. The three registers feature scenes of tribute from three provinces: (1) Musri, probably a region located to the northeast of Assyria, (2) Suhi, a region on the middle Euphrates near the northwestern border of Babylon, and (3) Unqi, located to the far west along trade routes to the Phoenician coast.<sup>142</sup> The five bands of four registers each portray tribute brought from nations to the east (Musri, Gilzanu) and the west (Suhi, Unqi, Israel). Together these registers communicate the expansive might and economic control of the Assyrian empire.<sup>143</sup> Shalmaneser III is portrayed as a king who rules over the ends of the earth with the affirmation of Ashur and Ishtar.



**Fig. 2.15.** Stele portraying two bound kings in Esarhaddon's captivity. Location: Zinjirli (Sam'al). Date: ca. 670 BCE. Source: Porter, *Trees, Kings, and Politics*, pl. 29.

Imagery of enemy nations bound and subject before the king displayed the king's power from the early Mesopotamian period (**figs. 2.10– 2.11**) through the period of the Neo-Assyrian empire. Esarhaddon's stele (**fig. 2.15**) found in the gateway at Sam'al shows the king with his

<sup>142</sup> Marcus, "Geography as an Organizing Principle," 89.

<sup>143</sup> Marcus, "Geography as an Organizing Principle," 89–90; cf. Bradley J. Parker, "The Construction and Performance of Kingship in the Neo-Assyrian Empire," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 67 (2011): 363.

face adjacent to multiple divine symbols as he looms over two captive kings.<sup>144</sup> The king holds a mace and a coiled rope attached to the lip rings of the two captive kings in his left hand and what seems to be a royal appurtenance in his right hand, raised towards the divine symbols.<sup>145</sup> The stele's huge size projected the dominance of the Assyrian king and empire; the stele stood 3.46 meters high, weighed over 6,000 kilograms, and sat upon a meter high base.<sup>146</sup> The stele symbolized the inevitable subjugation of those kings who stood against the Assyrian king.<sup>147</sup>

In fact, at the time Esarhaddon had the stele installed in the city, the province seems to have been in a state of unrest. A rebellion, which was swiftly put down, occurred here either right before or after the stele's installation.<sup>148</sup> Within this politically fraught context, the stele underlines the dominance of the Assyrian king. The stele displays both the Phoenician king Abdi-Milkutti, a rebel whom Esarhaddon had soundly defeated in 677 BCE, and a Nubian pharaoh in submissive states before Esarhaddon.<sup>149</sup> The two kings only rise to his knees, while Esarhaddon's face reaches the same plane as the symbols of the Assyrian deities.<sup>150</sup> This stele's

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<sup>144</sup> The stele was set in the gateway of the western city of Sam'al (Zinjirli), the capital city of the kingdom of Sam'al, east of the Phoenicians and north of the Canaanites.

<sup>145</sup> See *ANEP*, 300–01, no. 447; Reade, "Ideology and Propaganda," 341.

<sup>146</sup> Barbara N. Porter, "Assyrian Propaganda for the West: Esarhaddon's Steles for Til Barsip and Sam'al," in *Trees, Kings, and Politics: Studies in Assyrian Iconography*, ed. Barbara N. Porter, OBO 197 (Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 70.

<sup>147</sup> See Porter, "Assyrian Propaganda for the West," 70–72.

<sup>148</sup> Gunnar Lehmann, "Zu den Zerstörungen in Zincirli während des frühen 7. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.," *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 126 (1994): 105–22; Porter, "Assyrian Propaganda for the West," 68–70.

<sup>149</sup> On the identifications of the kings, see Porter, "Assyrian Propaganda for the West," 71–72. The same Phoenician ruler figure was explicitly labeled as Abdi-Milkutti on a similar stele of Esarhaddon found in Til-Barsip (see François Thureau-Dangin, "Tell Ahmar," *Syria* 10 [1929]: 185–205). Pritchard hesitantly identifies the Phoenician ruler as Ba'lu, king of Tyre (*ANEP*, 301, no. 447), but Porter contends that the depiction of Abdi-Milkutti, a Phoenician rebel king recently defeated and beheaded, makes more sense as an object lesson on the stele than Ba'lu, who seems to have resisted complete destruction by Assyria ("Assyrian Propaganda for the West," 71, ft. 171).

<sup>150</sup> Reade notes that the royal stele shows "the king as agent and servant of his gods" ("Ideology and Propaganda in Assyrian Art," 342).



message would have been powerful in Sam'al: anyone who rebels or attempts to stand against Assyria, like the Phoenician king or even mighty Egypt, will fall before the Assyrian king.<sup>151</sup>

Mesopotamian royal art also employs artistic imagery of subjugated and bound enemies to project the power and expansive rule of different kings. Analogous to the literary imagery of Psalm 2, Mesopotamian royal art displays the nations as a material possession of the king (fig. 2.12a–b; 2.13 a–b; Psalm 2:8) and is replete with images of the king's enemies bound and submissive before the almighty king and his divine supporters (Ps 2:2–5). Imagery of the subjugation of all peoples and nations to the Mesopotamian royal power remains a constant aspect of royal artistic rhetoric.

### 2.2.3 Achaemenid Royal Art



**Fig. 2.16.** Behistun relief depicting Darius' triumph over rebel kings. Location: Mount Behistun, Iran. Date: 6th–5th Centuries BCE. Source: Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 303, fig. 13.11.

<sup>151</sup> See Porter, "Assyrian Propaganda for the West," 71–72 and 74–76.



Achaemenid royal art draws upon Egyptian and Mesopotamian royal motifs to depict how the Persian king relates to his enemies.<sup>152</sup> The Behistun relief (**fig. 2.16**) sat above a key roadway running between Babylon and Ecbatana<sup>153</sup> and was meant to be seen by the public.<sup>154</sup> The relief displays the king's position as conqueror over ten rebellious kings who sought to throw off the rule of the Persian empire.<sup>155</sup> The text surrounding the relief describes Darius's defeat of each king, whereas the relief itself combines these narratives into a single, emblematic image of the Persian king's dominion over the rebels.<sup>156</sup>

Darius, the largest figure in the scene, stands with his foot upon the king Guamata, who lies upon his back. Darius holds a bow in his left hand, symbolizing his victory.<sup>157</sup> The attendants behind Darius are smaller than him but still larger than the defeated kings. Guamata lies beneath the king, while the other nine defeated kings stand bound together at their necks and their elbows. Each of these bound kings is labeled by name and nationality. This collection of different kings symbolizes the Persian king's dominant position over all nations.<sup>158</sup> Yet, Darius does not maintain this role on his own. The deity Ahuramazda sits above the bound foreigners in the winged sun disc, extending a ring symbol to the king. The deity's presence above the

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<sup>152</sup> See Root, *The King and Kingship*, 194–226.

<sup>153</sup> Heinz Lushey, "Studien zu dem Darius-Relief von Behistun," *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 1 (1968): 66; Root, *The King and Kingship*, 184–85.

<sup>154</sup> Lushey, "Studien zu dem Darius-Relief," 66 and Abb. 1–2; Root, *The King and Kingship*, 190; Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 302–04.

<sup>155</sup> Root contends that this was basically the sole Achaemenid victory monument (Root, *The King and Kingship*, 182–84).

<sup>156</sup> See Root on the "emblematic" nature of the relief's visual imagery as compared to columns I – III of the relief's text, which communicate in a narrative style (Root, *The King and Kingship*, 186–88). Root compares column IV of the text and its compression of the narrative into a single statement to the iconography: "The Behistun relief clearly parallels visually the literary summary function of the DB IV text" (Root, *The King and Kingship*, 187); cf. Arno Poebel, who makes the same point but uses the language of "unreal," and "symbolical" ("The Chronology of Darius' First Year of Reign," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 55 [1938]: 163–64).

<sup>157</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 190; Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 164.

<sup>158</sup> Poebel, "The Chronology," 164; Root, *The King and Kingship*, 192–94; Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 304–05.

subdued kings reinforces Darius's divinely appointed position as universal ruler.<sup>159</sup> This public royal relief constructs a world in which the Persian king is the right ruler over all nations; those who refuse to submit before the king are subjugated in shame.<sup>160</sup>

Though the Behistun relief is the sole example of bound and subjugated enemies in Achaemenid royal art, there are multiple other examples of the submission of nations before the Persian king. These include the tribute scenes at Apadana,<sup>161</sup> the tomb facades of Darius and Xerxes that depict the king enthroned upon all the nations,<sup>162</sup> and reliefs featuring Darius enthroned upon the willingly supportive representatives of the nations.<sup>163</sup> These examples of foreign peoples supporting the king together model a role of voluntary submission before the Persian king, whereas the Behistun relief portrays the consequences of attempted rebellion.<sup>164</sup> Persian royal art employs imagery of foreign representatives in postures of abject subjugation and humble submission to shape a vision of how the world should work. Psalm 2, like Persian royal art, portrays the king's domination as universal and supported by the king's divine partner.

#### 2.2.4 Syro-Palestinian Art



**Fig. 2.17.** Megiddo Ivory featuring scene of a triumphant ruler. Location: Megiddo. Date: 1550–1150 BCE. Source: LeMon, *Yahweh's Winged Form*, 6, fig. 1.2.

<sup>159</sup> Root asserts: “We should understand the god's presence here as a realization of the Achaemenid concept of Ahuramazda as the collaborator of the king” (*The King and Kingship*, 189).

<sup>160</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 190; Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 306.

<sup>161</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 192–93.

<sup>162</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, pls. 12–14

<sup>163</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, pl. 25a.

<sup>164</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 227–31, 277–78, and 283–84.

Minor art in Syria-Palestine also evinces scenes of the king victorious over bound and controlled enemies. An ivory plaque found at Megiddo (**fig. 2.17**) depicts dual scenes of the ruler triumphing over subjugated enemies and the ruler enthroned in celebration.<sup>165</sup> In the scene to the right, the ruler stands in his chariot. He holds both a whip and the reins controlling the two horses pulling his chariot within his hands. These tools, however, not only assert the king's place of power over the horses, but also show his power over the bound prisoners who walk before them, as their bonds are tied into the horses' reins.<sup>166</sup> The king asserts control over these enemies, indicated further by the king's troops who border the scene. Furthermore, the winged solar disc sits before the king, signaling the deity's blessing of the king's action in subjugating his enemies.<sup>167</sup> The king and deity reign victoriously over the enemies.

The scene to the left portrays the king in his rightful place as enthroned ruler. He sits upon a cherubim throne as a woman in a crown approaches him and offers him a lotus blossom, a symbol of life.<sup>168</sup> The connection of these two scenes upon the same plaque underlines that the king's triumph over all enemies provides the foundation for his reign. The deity's presence in the disc affirms the king's victory over his enemies and reflects the deity's approval of the king.

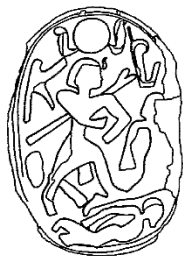
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<sup>165</sup> René Dussaud, *L'art phénicien du IIe millénaire* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1949), 89–90; *ANEP*, 288, desc. 332. On the representations of royal conquest and victory as two separate scenes, see Harold Liebowitz, "Military and Feast Scenes on Late Bronze Palestinian Ivories," *Israel Exploration Journal* 30 (1980): 165.

<sup>166</sup> See *ANEP*, desc. 322; Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 62.

<sup>167</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 62.

<sup>168</sup> See LeMon's discussion of winged *Mischwesen* and how they symbolize protection in Syro-Palestinian iconography (*Yahweh's Winged Form*, 39–42). On the lotus blossom as a symbol of life, see Philip Derchain, "Symbols and Metaphors in Literature and Representations of Private Life," *Royal Anthropological Institute News* 15 (1976): 8; Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 170, 249, and 366.



**Fig. 2.18.** Stamp seal depicting the king trampling and binding defeated enemies. Location: Unprovenanced Palestine/Israel. Date: 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: *IPIAO*, Band 3, 177, fig. 613.

An unprovenanced seal (**fig. 2.18**) from Syria-Palestine and dated to c. 1279–1213 BCE shows the king triumphant over his enemy.<sup>169</sup> The seal borrows from Egyptian royal motifs to depict the king's reign over all enemies. The king binds a subdued enemy, while simultaneously trampling upon another enemy beneath his feat.<sup>170</sup> A *Maat* figure kneels before the king's face, marking the king's action in subduing his enemies as an instance of ordering the cosmos.<sup>171</sup> The solar disc surmounts the scene, representing the deity's affirmation of the king's action in bringing all enemies under his control.



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63



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**Figs. 2.19a–c.** Seals portraying the king binding subdued enemies. **(a)** Location: Dotan. Date: 1292–1190 BCE. Source: Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette*, Band II, 491, fig. 2. **(b)** Location: Bet-Schean. Date: 1279–1213 BCE. Source: Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette*, Band II, 127, fig. 63. **(c)** Location: Tell el-Far'a Süd. Date: 1279–1190 BCE. Source: Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette*, Band III, 263, fig. 550.

<sup>169</sup> See Silvia Schroer, *Die Ikonographie Palästinas/Israels und der Alte Orient: Eine Religionsgeschichte in Bildern (IPIAO)*, Band 3: Die Spätbronzezeit (Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 2005), 116.

<sup>170</sup> LeMon, *Picturing Righteous Violence*, forthcoming.

<sup>171</sup> Schroer, *IPIAO*, Band 3, 116.

Multiple other seals from the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages depict similar constellations of imagery that draw upon motifs from Egyptian royal art.<sup>172</sup> Three such seals (**figs. 2.19a–c**) all depict the king binding enemies and thus creating order from chaos. In each of these scenes a symbol of *Maat* marks the king's action as an act of ensuring justice and order. In two of the scenes (**figs. 2.19b and 2.19c**), the sun disc is present with the king in his action. These seals portray an ideal of the king's control over all enemies. In each example, the enemy presents no resistance before the king.



**Fig. 2.20a.** Seal portraying pharaoh smiting bound enemy. Location: Tell el Far‘a Süd. Date: 1292–1150 BCE. Source: Keel, *Corpus*, Band III, 405, fig. 896.



**Fig. 2.20b.** Another example of the king smiting a bound prisoner with rope. Location: Tell el Far‘a Süd. Date: 1292–1150 BCE. Source: Keel, *Corpus*, Band III, 307, fig. 652.

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<sup>172</sup> See Othmar Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel: Von den Angängen bis zur Perserzeit*, Katalog Band II: Von Bahan bis Tel Eton, OBO Series Archaeologica 29 (Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck Ruprecht, 2010), 423, fig. 50; Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel: Von den Angängen bis zur Perserzeit*, Katalog Band IV: Von Tel Gamma bis Chirbet Husche, OBO Series Archaeologica 33 (Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck Ruprecht, 2010), 51, fig. 114 and 131, fig. 7.



**Fig. 2.20c.** Seal portraying the pharaoh in a uraeus crown preparing to smite a bound enemy. Location: Jabne. Date: 1279–1213 BCE. Source: Keel, *Corpus*, Band V, 11, fig. 2.



**Fig. 2.20d.** Pharaoh smiting a bound enemy. Location: Der el-Balah. Date: 1292–1150 BCE. Source: Keel, *Corpus*, Band II, 407, fig. 10.



**Fig. 2.20e.** Pharaoh prepared to smite a subdued enemy bound at the elbows. Location: Dor. Date: 1150–980 BCE. Source: Keel, *Corpus*, Band II, 479, fig. 34.

Furthermore, multiple seals combine the imagery of a bound enemy with the imagery of the smiting pharaoh (figs. 1.21a–21e). These seals depict the king ready to strike a bound enemy. The compact scenes portray the enemy as helpless before the king's dominance. The seals symbolize a threat to any who would attempt to stand against the king. The seals display the

king's victory through imagery of potential violence that threatens any challenger to the king's rule.<sup>173</sup> In some of the seals, the king's actions take place in the presence of a deity—the solar disc before the king's face in **fig. 2.20b** and the ostrich feather representing *Maat* in **fig. 2.20a**. The presence of the deities marks the action of the king as constitutive of an ordered reality.

### 2.2.5 The Rhetoric of Royal Imagery of Submission and Subjugation

Royal art portraying the subjugation of enemies to the king and deity was prevalent throughout the ANE. Such imagery displays a reality in which foreigners either submitted willingly before the king or were forcefully subjugated by the king and his divine supporters. Thus, ANE royal art constructs a reality in which the king's triumph over and subdual of all his enemies is constantly accomplished and made true in its display upon mountain sides, palace and temple reliefs, public steles, and seals.

Similarly, Psalm 2 arranges imagery of both bound foreigners threatened with violence and of voluntary submission. The psalm's literary imagery creates a rhetoric within which rebellion against Yahweh and his king is futile. The threats (vv. 1–2) and imagery of subjugation (v. 3) describing the kings and princes of the earth occurs alongside the image of the enthroned deity, who reigns above all earthly kings (v. 4). The relationship of the heavenly king Yahweh and the nation's king is developed as a close familial one (vv. 6–7). Yahweh's king inherits all nations (v. 8), smashing those who fail to submit (v. 9). Thus, the poem demands universal submission to Yahweh and his king (vv. 10–12). Psalm 2's literary imagery models a similar rhetoric to that of the royal art surveyed above.

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<sup>173</sup> See LeMon, *Picturing Righteous Violence*, forthcoming.

## 2.3 Re-Reading Psalm 2: Historical-Critical, Text-Critical, and Form-Critical Questions

### Contextualized by ANE Royal Art

#### 2.3.1 Text-Critical Questions

##### 2.3.1.1 Reading Verses 11b–12a (וגילו ברעדה נשקן בר)

The royal art surveyed above helps one interpret the imagery of subjugated enemies in vv. 11b–12a. The iconography can be applied as a sieve to determine which readings of v. 11b–12a are more probable in the context of a royal psalm. Royal iconography featuring bound enemies, often enemies marked as rebels, shows them in submissive postures in the presence of the king and deity. All of this artistic imagery displaying the relationship between the king and his enemies suggests that v. 12a should be understood as indicating general submission either to the king, the deity, or both.

Bertholet's emendation of the line ("and kiss his feet with trembling") indicates submission to the deity, yet its unjustified alterations leave much to be desired, particularly when the MT already indicates submission. Furthermore, while kissing a king's feet may be attested in ANE royal art (see **fig. 2.12a**), kissing a deity's feet is never represented pictorially. This absence on its own is not dispositive, but it does make Bertholet's reading less likely to be accurate. Driver's ("kiss the mighty one with trembling") and Sonne's ("and prostrate yourselves before him with trembling") readings also indicate submission, and yet they too require reorderings of the text to do so. Dahood's ("live in trembling, O mortal men") and Holladay's ("live in trembling, you who forget the grave") readings, featuring threats concerning the grave, repoint the text to provide readings built on tenuous arguments thinly supported by modern sensibility. Readings like Robinson's ("and remove with trembling weapons [or, armor] of iron") and Macintosh's ("shew fear with trembling and order yourselves / be ordered,") seem unlikely in



light of ANE art as they require the king's enemies to disarm or arrange themselves. ANE royal art by contrast emphasizes the king's agency in the reordering and subduing of his enemies. Morgenstern's reading ("give glory to his name") makes drastic changes to create a text only obliquely related to submission. The emphasis of Goldingay and other early textual traditions on submission fits, but it is unclear what it would mean to "submit purely/sincerely."<sup>174</sup>

Reading the psalm in the context of ANE royal imagery and in light of the psalm's focus on submission to Yahweh and Yahweh's king, I find two readings most persuasive, namely Olofsson's "Kiss the field" and the MT's "Kiss/submit to the king."<sup>175</sup> Reading בר as פָּר "open field," while only tenuously supported by the word's usage in the HB, finds analogues in ANE royal art.<sup>176</sup> Egyptian royal art does not feature imagery of enemies willingly kissing the ground before the king. Yet this motif does occur in peaceful scenes of foreigners bringing tribute before the king in tomb art (**fig. 2.21**).<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> See Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41*, 93–94 and footnote n.

<sup>175</sup> Earlier scholars also proposed this reading, for example see Buitenhuis, *The Psalms*, 791–94.

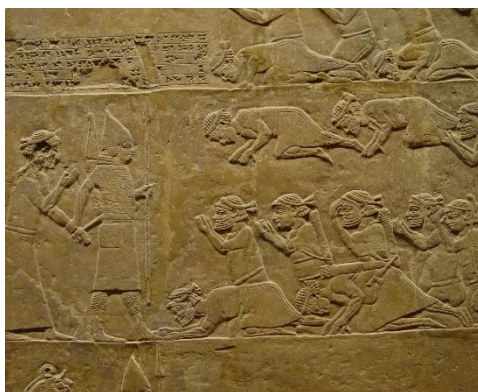
<sup>176</sup> The only other occurrence of this noun in the HB as "open field" is in Job 39:4.

<sup>177</sup> See, for example, Schroer, *IPIAO*, Band 3, fig. 617; Bertha Porter and Rosalind L. B. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings*, Vol. I: The Theban Necropolis, Part 1: Private Tombs, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1960), 177, ref. 8. Egyptian royal art rarely portrays foreign enemies in peaceful relation to the king, instead focusing on foreign enemies as representations of chaos that are subdued and controlled by the pharaoh.



**Fig. 2.21.** Scene of foreigners bearing tribute into the presence of the king Thutmose III. Location: Tomb of Menkheperreseneb at Thebes. Date: 16<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: *IPIAO*, Band 3, 119, fig. 617.

The occurrence of this theme in tomb art at least demonstrates the existence of this concept in ancient Egypt—putting one’s face to the ground before the king indicated abject submission. Such imagery is prevalent in Neo-Assyrian royal art, however. The reliefs featuring enemies led before Ashurnasirpal II (**figs. 2.12a–b**) and the depictions of kings Sua and Jehu before Shalmaneser III on the Black Obelisk (**fig. 2.14**) discussed above are clear examples of this trope, with subdued leaders pressing their faces to the ground before the king.



**Fig. 2.22.** Defeated Elamites surrendering, bowing to the ground before the king-regent appointed by Ashurbanipal. Location: Nineveh. Date: 660–650 BCE. Source: BM124802b. © Trustees of the British Museum.

An example from Ashurbanipal's palace (**fig. 2.22**), a relief displaying the submission of the Elamite forces, shows the king's enemies with faces to the ground before the king's chosen representative.



**Figs. 2.23a–b.** Relief of Elamites bowing with faces to the ground before (2.23a) the king Ashurbanipal feasting in his garden (2.23b). Location: Nineveh. Date: 660–650 BCE. Source: Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, pls. LXIV slabs a-b.

A relief from the garden banquet scene in Ashurbanipal's palace (**figs. 2.23a–b**) again displays Elamites face-down upon the ground before the king.

With this reading, Psalm 2 refers to kissing the ground in submission to Yahweh rather than the king. Yet, instances of Yahweh taking on royal imagery in the Psalter are frequent enough to support the proposal that נשקו בר should be read as “kiss the ground.”<sup>178</sup> This reading of v. 12a also allows for נשקו to be read simply as “kiss.” As for 11b, scholars such as Macintosh have already demonstrated that the verb גילו likely reflects both crying out in delight and in terror, and crying out in terror fits with the overall context of subjugation.<sup>179</sup> So, one option for rendering Psalm 2:11–12a that aligns with iconographic depictions of submission is, “Serve Yahweh in fear, shriek with trembling and kiss the ground.”

Let us turn, though, to the MT’s pointing of the text, which also makes sense when contextualized within ANE visual imagery of submission before the king. ANE royal art displays the subjugation of the king’s enemies in various ways: with enemies bound before the king, beneath the king’s feet, awaiting a final blow from the king’s divinely-authorized weapon or led by the king before an enthroned deity. The deity and the king are present together in many of these scenes featuring the subjugation of enemies. The presence of both king and deity in many of these scenes of submission warns against repointing the text to represent submission to the deity alone in Ps 2.

Furthermore, the psalm’s structure itself suggests that the king and deity should be represented together in the final stanza. The psalm opens with foreign leaders rebelling against Yahweh and his king (v. 3) and then progresses through two responses (vv. 4–6 and 7–9) in which the deity and then the king provide their rebuttals against the foreign rulers. So, it would make sense to read vv. 10–12 as final commands for submission to both Yahweh and his king.

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<sup>178</sup> See LeMon, “Yahweh’s Hand and the Iconography of the Blow,” 865–82; Brettler, *God is King: An Israelite Metaphor*; cf. James Luther Mays, *The Lord Reigns: A Theological Handbook to the Psalms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994).

<sup>179</sup> See Macintosh, “A Consideration of the Problems,” 2–8.

The Masoretic pointing of vv. 10–12 maintains a parallel structure with vv. 1–3, with a rebellion against the deity and his king (vv. 1–3) and commands to submit to both the deity and his king (vv. 10–12) framing the interlocking responses from the deity and the king in vv. 4–9.<sup>180</sup> Reading בר as the Aramaic noun בַּר “son,” is not as problematic as some commentators have claimed.<sup>181</sup> Peter Cragie contends that the usage of the Aramaic בַּר following the use of the Hebrew בֶּן in v. 7 makes sense within the shift of context. Verse 7 represents the deity’s speech to the king, whereas vv. 10–12 portray the psalmist’s commands to foreign rulers.<sup>182</sup> Aramaic בַּר may simply be a stylistic choice to match this speech context, and an unsurprising one alongside the other Aramaisms within the psalm.<sup>183</sup>

The verb נִשְׁקוּ, however, is more problematic. Reading, “kiss the son,” is possible, and yet the kissing of kings is not widely represented in ANE art (**fig. 2.12b** provides one possible example). The “son” as an ambiguous object for kissing stands out as a strange. However, some text traditions and scholars have read נִשְׁקוּ as “submit,” in a more idiomatic application of its general meaning “to kiss.”<sup>184</sup> Other biblical texts employ the verb נִשְׁקוּ in contexts where the meaning “submit” is implied or even required. The most obvious is Gen 41:40a, which reads: וְעַל־בֵּיתִי וְעַל־פֶּיךָ יִשָּׁק כָּל־עַמִּי (“You will be over my house, and all my people will submit to your command”). Multiple English translations have followed BDB in understanding נִשָּׁק here in

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<sup>180</sup> See Auffret on the simultaneous parallel and concentric structural patterns to the psalm (Auffret, *The Literary Structure of Psalm 2*). Maintaining the reference to both Yahweh and his king in the final stanza makes sense within the psalm’s structural pattern. This interpretive conclusion is supported by Vang, “Ps 2, 11–12,” 178–80.

<sup>181</sup> As Holladay puts it, “The traditional translation ‘kiss the son’ (Luther, King James Version, and often) is clearly impossible—the Aramaic *bar* is excluded, given the Hebrew *bēnī*, “my son,” in verse 7. The Ancient Versions shed no further light on the problem” (Holladay, “A New Proposal,” 110). See also Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 69; Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1*, 113; Macintosh, “A Consideration of the Problems,” 8.

<sup>182</sup> Cragie, *Psalms 1–50*, 68.

<sup>183</sup> רָגַשׁ in v. 1, רָעַע in v. 9, the possibility of בַּר in v. 12a.

<sup>184</sup> Primarily, Aquila, Symmachus, and Jerome. See Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41*, 93, footnote n.

relation to an Arabic cognate and rendered the verb as “to order, arrange.”<sup>185</sup> Yet, *CDCH* suggests that the root should be understood as, “to be in order, to submit oneself.”<sup>186</sup> Goldingay follows *CDCH*, arguing that this is the meaning of the verb in Ps 2:12a.<sup>187</sup> Another context in which the verb implies the idea of submission is 1 Kings 19:18. Here Yahweh promises Elijah that 7,000 faithful who have not submitted to Ba‘al will be left in the land: והשארתי בישראל שבעת אלפים כלהברכים אשר לא־כרעו לבעל וכל־הפה אשר לא־נשק לו (“Yet I will reserve in Israel seven thousand, all whose knees have not bowed to Ba‘al and whose mouth has not kissed him”). Indicative of submission to Ba‘al here is “bowing (כרע)” and “kissing (נשק).”<sup>188</sup> The text marks these actions as submission to another deity.

Hosea 13:2 also describes this issue of Yahweh’s people submitting to Ba‘al. Here the people are described as making idols (presumably calves [עגלים]), and unlike 1 Kings 19:18 where submission is implied through the act of kissing, translating נשק here as “submit” rather than “kiss” works well. There is no indication of mouths (כל־הפה) as there is in 1 Kings, and the text is focused upon the people submitting to another deity. David Noel Freedman and Francis I. Anderson propose that the verse portrays the people paying “homage” to Ba‘al, pointing to the verb’s usage in 1 Kings 19:18 and Ps 2:12a.<sup>189</sup> These uses of נשק both convey the idea of submission. In light of the focus in Psalm 2 on the submission of foreign leaders to Yahweh’s king and the various tactics for depicting subjugated enemies in ANE royal art, I maintain the

<sup>185</sup> *BDB*, “נִשְׁק־I,” 676.

<sup>186</sup> *CDCH*, “נִשְׁק־III,” 287.

<sup>187</sup> Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41*, 93–4.

<sup>188</sup> See Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings*, AB 10 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 2001), 454.

<sup>189</sup> Francis I. Anderson and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea*, AB 24 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980), 631–32. Another possible text wherein נשק implies submission is Samuel’s anointing of Saul in 1 Sam 10:1. Here Samuel anoints Saul and then kisses the man. Though this may simply be another case of a superior gracing an inferior with a kiss in the books of Samuel (see A. Graeme Auld, *I & II Samuel*, rev. ed., OTL [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012], 110), it also seems possible that after Saul’s anointing Samuel demonstrates his submission to the new king with a kiss (see Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 98). Cf. Vang, “Ps 2,11–12,” 181–82.

MT's pointing of vv. 2:11–12a, reading, "Serve Yahweh with fear, cry out with trembling, submit to the son."<sup>190</sup>

### 2.3.1.2 *Identifying the Primary Actor in vv. 12b–c*

The question of who, king or deity, vv. 11b–12a speaks of overlaps with a concern for who is the primary actor of v. 12. Whose wrath is kindled quickly, leaving those who ignore the commands of vv. 10–12a destroyed alongside the path? In whom are the nations commanded to take refuge so that they might be blessed? Is it the king or Yahweh? Interpreters often base their textual proposals concerning vv. 11b–12a on their answers to these questions concerning who acts in vv. 12b–c.<sup>191</sup> Verses 12b–c do appear strangely ambiguous as to whether the deity or the king is the primary actor. Of course, a (modern) reader might make the argument that one actor or the other necessarily makes sense. Many scholars take such an approach, citing the biblical context of the psalm to argue for the deity as the lone actor.

In ANE art, however, both in monumental royal artistic programs or minor seal art in Syria-Palestine, the king is the primary actor with the deity accompanying and empowering the king's action. As seen in multiple examples above, ANE royal art often casts the deity and king together as actors in scenes of battle and triumph. The king, the king's court, and all outsiders who viewed these monumental artistic programs witnessed the deity's support of the king. The art functioned to assure the king of his identity as well as to sustain a worldview among the

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<sup>190</sup> As for the lack of the definite article on בר, the verb נשק takes its object without a preposition or article in other poetic texts, such as Hosea 13:2. See Olofsson, "The Crux Interpretum," 199.

<sup>191</sup> Many commentators note the lack of a clear referent for the action in v. 12, particularly if בר is understood to be a reference to the king. However, most, even those who read בר as the king, tend to understand Yahweh as the threatening actor of v. 12. See Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 98–99; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 133–34; Dahood, *Psalms 1–50*, 14; Weiser, *The Psalms*, 115–16; deClaisse-Walford, Tanner, and Jacobsen, *The Psalms*, 70; Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41*, 106; Sabourin, *The Psalms*, 339; Olofsson, "The Crux Interpretum," 186–87. Vang, though, argues that v. 12 is purposefully ambiguous in order to blend the action of Yahweh and his king as the threat against those who fail to comply ("Psalm 2, 11–12," 183).

people ruled by the king, both natives and foreigners. The message for the viewers is that submission to the deity or deities requires support of the king.

I contend that the ambiguity of Psalm 2:12 is a textual phenomenon analogous to the artistic phenomenon of picturing the king and deity at work together. That is, vv. 12b–c are purposefully ambiguous in order to suggest that the foreign leaders (as well as the reader/hearer) should submit to both the king and the deity. The threat of destruction emanates from both the king and the deity, just as royal art often depicts the two together in scenes of the enemies' immanent destruction (**figs. 2.1a, 2.3, 2.7a–b, 2.19b–c, 2.20a–b**) or the resultant defeat of the enemies (**figs. 2.2a, 2.5a–b, 2.6, 2.9, 2.10, 2.11, 2.14, 2.15, 2.16, 2.17, 2.18, 2.19b–c, 2.20a–b**). This reading of the psalm provides the most satisfactory understanding of the final verses, and the theme of the king and deity acting together is consistent with imagery of the entire psalm. The psalm consistently casts the deity and king together in their work against their enemies.

### 2.3.2 The Psalm's Historical Setting

This collection of royal art from diverse time periods and geographical areas allows for a reframing of the questions concerning the psalm's historical setting. Many scholars have attempted to date Psalm 2 based upon its imagery of universal domination. Scholars such as Kraus and Grogan claim that this imagery roots Psalm 2 within the context of a Davidic or Solomonic empire.<sup>192</sup> Others, such as Gerstenberger or Zenger, contend that this imagery requires a post-exilic, Achaemenid context.<sup>193</sup> Still others such as Otto attempt to date discrete sections of the psalm to different periods by connecting its literary imagery to specific royal

<sup>192</sup> See Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 126–28; Grogan, *Psalms*, 44; c.f. Alt, “Das Grossreich Davids,” 66–75.

<sup>193</sup> Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 1*, 48–9; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen I*, 50–51; Press, “Jahwe und sein Gesalbter,” 321–34.



ideologies.<sup>194</sup> Yet, royal art and imagery across the ANE, whether New Kingdom Egypt, the Neo-Assyrian Empire, or the Achaemenid empire, demonstrates that imagery of royal domination was prevalent throughout the ANE in every period.

Even Otto's proposal, which draws on artistic and textual data in order to locate Psalm 2 historically, fails to hold up before a thorough survey of ANE royal art. Otto attempts to date layers of Psalm 2 based on artistic imagery and royal inscriptions from both New Kingdom Egypt and the Neo-Assyrian empire.<sup>195</sup> He contends that vv. 7–8b likely reflect the earliest layer of the psalm, influenced by New Kingdom Egyptian ideology and royal imagery, such as the well-known "Birth of the God King," cycle of imagery and texts from Deir el-Bahri.<sup>196</sup> He connects v. 8 to Egyptian imagery because of the prominence of the pharaoh's enthronement upon the "nine bows," representing the king's rule over all nations and peoples.<sup>197</sup> Yet, imagery of the king victorious over subdued representatives of all nations occurred throughout the ANE. Such imagery served to represent a king as the ruler of all ends of the earth. The close connection of the king and his divine supporter served as a part of different royal artistic programs across multiple time periods and geographical locales.

Otto goes on to claim that vv. 1–3 and v. 9 reflect later 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century Neo-Assyrian royal ideology and imagery. As for v. 9, Otto points to depictions of the king as a shepherd with a scepter alongside the deity in Neo-Assyrian art.<sup>198</sup> He also references royal inscriptions that

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<sup>194</sup> Otto, "Politische Theologie in den Königspsalmen," 33–65.

<sup>195</sup> Otto, "Politische Theologie in den Königspsalmen," 34–51.

<sup>196</sup> To explain the gap between New Kingdom Egypt and the early Israelite monarchy, Otto proposes that the Israelite kingdom adopted the concept from the Jebusite kingdom (see Otto, "Politische Theologie in den Königspsalmen, 35–39; cf. Keel, *Symbolism*, 248–53).

<sup>197</sup> See Otto, "Politische Theologie in den Königspsalmen," 40–43; cf. Keel, *Symbolism*, 253–55.

<sup>198</sup> See Otto, "Politische Theologie in den Königspsalmen," 45–47. He points to Ashurnasirpal II's throne room relief with the king on either side of the sacred tree to make his case here, claiming that the scene displays both warrior and shepherd imagery.

speak of the king as the chief shepherd of the peoples (*uttulu abrāti*).<sup>199</sup> Thus, he dates v. 9 to the 8<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> centuries based on this correspondence, as well as the presence of iron scepters in Palestine during this time.

According to Otto, another reason for viewing v. 9 as a verse influenced by Neo-Assyrian motifs is the smashing of pottery. He claims this imagery is not present in Egyptian sources but is prevalent in Neo-Assyrian royal sources.<sup>200</sup> To make his case that vv. 1–3 reflect Neo-Assyrian royal ideology, Otto turns to parallels in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions that discuss the king’s enemies plotting to rebel against the king and to throw off the yoke of Ashur. He also points to the Esharhaddon steles found at Zincirli and Sam’al (**fig. 2.15**), which depict the king controlling subdued enemies with ropes.<sup>201</sup> He claims that the concepts of vv. 1–3 fit better within a Neo-Assyrian context, as Neo-Assyrian royal art often features the king and deity together subduing enemies.<sup>202</sup> Otto views vv. 4–6 as uniquely Judean royal ideology, with Yahweh as enthroned deity ruling as judge over the earth. He proposes that Psalm 2:1–9 was formed in the 8<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE in response to Neo-Assyrian royal ideology, building the psalm around an already existing formula used in royal rituals (vv. 7–8b).

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<sup>199</sup> See Otto, “Politische Theologie in den Königspsalmen,” 44–45; A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennia BC (To 1115 BC)*, RIMA 1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 234:23–24.

<sup>200</sup> To support this claim, Otto points the reader to Becking’s article on this topic (Becking, “Wie Töpfe sollst du sie zerschmeissen,” 59–79), and he points to Assyrian texts that seem to describe a similar ritual in the Neo-Assyrian period. Multiple scholars, however, have pointed to the existence of similar execration rites in ancient Egypt that seemed to have involved the destruction of pottery formed as representative enemies (see Albert Kleber, “Ps 2:9 in Light of an Ancient Oriental Ceremony,” *CBQ* 5 [1943]: 63–67; Wilhelmi, “Der Hirt mit dem eisernen Szepter,” 196–204; Bestock, *Violence and Power*, 57–62).

<sup>201</sup> Otto, “Politische Theologie in den Königspsalmen,” 48–49. See Hans-Ulrich Onasch, *Die assyrischen Eroberungen Ägyptens I*, ÄAT 27 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994), 91; Riekele Borger, *Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals: die Prismenklassen A, B, C = K, D, E, F, G, H, J und T sowie andere Inschriften* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996), 21.213; Simo Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies*, SAA IX/17 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1997), 38. The stele of Esarhaddon that Otto refers to is **fig. 2.15** above.

<sup>202</sup> Otto, “Politische Theologie in den Königspsalmen,” 49–50.

Yet, as my exploration of ANE royal art has shown, the king and deity at work together to subdue bound enemies is a motif present in various forms within Egyptian, Neo-Assyrian, and Achaemenid royal art at many different times. Even Otto's reconstruction, worked out with both textual and iconographic evidence, does not hold up with a more extensive survey of the royal imagery that existed throughout the ANE. Though his argument concerning v. 9 is creative, it is not convincing in light of the prolific imagery of the Egyptian smiting motif present throughout Syria-Palestine on seals and other forms of minor art. Psalm 2 may very well have been created as a form of subversive royal rhetoric in contrast to the looming presence of the Neo-Assyrian empire. Yet that historical situation is certainly not the only context that could have motivated vv. 1–3 and 9.

Royal art concerned with deities and kings subduing enemy nations sustained the rhetorical worlds of multiple kingdoms across the ANE. Even if one time period, such as Neo-Assyrian domination of the Levant during the 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, makes more sense than others for the creation of Psalm 2, we still would not be able to narrow down a single source for the royal imagery that Psalm 2 employs. During the height of the Neo-Assyrian empire, Egyptian imagery was still present throughout the Levant, and it is clear that the Achaemenids drew upon both Egyptian and Neo-Assyrian royal imagery to create their own royal art. This aspect of the psalm's literary imagery cannot be reliably used to date the psalm or layers of the psalm to a specific historical context.

### 2.3.3 The Rhetoric of Psalm 2 within the Context of ANE Royal Art

Psalm 2 constructs a royal ideology by employing rhetorical strategies and themes evident in royal art across the ANE. As discussed above, scholars tend to read the psalm as script, mapping out part of a coronation or enthronement ritual. By contextualizing the imagery of

Psalm 2 within ANE royal art, I view Psalm 2 as a textual icon, made up of constellations of imagery that create a royal identity and soothe royal anxieties. In this section, I will compare the iconic structure of Psalm 2 to the ANE royal art surveyed above before considering some ways in which the comparanda of ANE royal art might reshape long-standing interpretive questions concerning the psalm's genre and function.

Psalm 2 renders a rhetorical world in which Yahweh's king, established at Zion, exerts his rule over the nations. Kings, princes, and leaders of the nations threaten to throw off the bonds that mark their subjugation to Yahweh and his king (vv. 1–3). However, Yahweh and his king provide a swift rebuttal of their proposed actions. Yahweh, enthroned as deity and ruler of the cosmos (v. 4), regards their claims as absurd. He furiously re-asserts that he himself established his king to rule (v. 5–6). The king then provides his own answer to the rebellious rulers. He relays the situation that faces them all as described by his deity—he alone is connected to Yahweh as his son in his role as king (v. 7).<sup>203</sup> Yahweh has granted all lands and nations to him to rule over, and he as king stands prepared to shatter those who attempt to stand against him (vv. 8–9). Those who refuse to submit to Yahweh and his king are depicted as already defeated by the wrath of the two (vv. 10–12). Their destruction of the rebels is cast as resultative violence with a passive rather than an active sense (תאבדו); they will be left dead along the road by the deity and his king (v. 12).<sup>204</sup> Conversely, those who choose to submit themselves before the deity and king will be blessed under their just reign (vv. 11–12). The psalm envisions a reality within

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<sup>203</sup> Ansgar Moenikes contends that the Israelite/Judahite king was understood as the son of God *in his role* as king, thus explaining the reality and the temporality of the phrase: אֲנִי הַיּוֹם יִלְדֶתֶיךָ (“Psalm 2,7b und die Göttlichkeit des israelitischen Königs,” *ZAW* 111 (1999): 619–21). Other texts, like Psalm 45:6 and Isaiah 9:4–7, also seem to understand the king in his role as king as divine in some fashion.

<sup>204</sup> LeMon describes resultative violence in the ANE as imagery in which, “the artist pictures the defeated enemy body in such a way that the body bears the clear marks of the assailant's domination (e.g., decapitation, impalement, prostration, puncturing by spears or arrows). In effect, the artist forces the observer to imagine the violent act by representing the consequences of the violence rather than the moment of the violent act itself” (LeMon, *Picturing Righteous Violence*, forthcoming).

which all threats from other rulers are futile, as the king's deity has granted the king all the lands of the cosmos and invested the king with the power to crush all resistance. The king and the deity are closely identified—the deity has elected the king as his son. Together the two subdue and destroy those who stand against them.

The rhetoric and ideology of Psalm 2 is strikingly analogous to the imagery employed throughout ANE art. This art constructs its royal rhetoric, in part, by displaying the submission of foreign enemies. Imagery of bound and subdued enemies shows up in multiple different scenes types and contexts. Egyptian scenes of the king and/or deities leading away bound and defeated captives from the battlefield emphasize the inevitable success of the pharaoh in his work to subdue his chaotic enemies (see **figs. 2.1b, 2.2a, 2.5a–b**). The presentation of subdued enemies before an enthroned deity (or deities) or a deity ushering bound enemies into the presence of the king marks out the involvement of divine power in the king's success in battle and rule over all peoples (see **figs. 2.1a, 2.2a–b, 2.3, 2.6, 2.9**). Similarly, Neo-Assyrian scenes of bound captives led before the king or held captive by the king also identify the king's reign over his enemies (see **figs. 2.10, 2.11, 2.12a–b, 2.15**). Divine support of the king and his rule is often evinced in such scenes with the presence of divine symbols above the king or an anthropomorphic representation of the deity, such as Ashur in the winged sun disc (see **figs. 2.11, 2.14, 2.15**). In Ashurnasirpal's Northwest palace in particular, the deity and king are often portrayed together in battle scenes, triumph scenes, and cultic scenes signaling divine authorization of the king as he rules the nations. The Behistun relief continues in this tradition, depicting the king with the support and authorization of the deity as rightful ruler of the nations (**fig. 2.16**). Upon this relief, Darius tramples his primary enemy, indicating the assured defeat of any uprising against his rule.

The New Kingdom Egyptian adaptation of the classic smiting scene draws together many of these motifs to symbolically depict the deity and king together subjugating all nations (see **fig. 2.3**). The absolute power of the king over the nations is displayed through the image of the king grasping subdued representatives of different nationalities. The deity's power is simultaneously portrayed both by the deity holding out the *hepeš*-sword to the pharaoh and by the bound enemies that the deity leads into the king's presence. The bound leaders upon the name rings that the king and deity trample beneath their feet serve as a further indication the king's victory.

Psalm 2 employs diverse strategies to picture the power of Yahweh's king over the nations. The psalm's use of various motifs of submission imagery in a single iconic structure resembles the complexities of the smiting scene (**fig. 2.3, 2.20a–e**). Yet, the psalm is not comparable to the smiting scene alone. The psalm pictures the king's enemies bound before an enthroned deity, under the authority of both king and deity. This strategy resembles Egyptian scenes of the pharaoh leading bound enemies before the deity (**fig. 2.6**), Assyrian scenes of bound enemies led before the king and deity (**figs. 2.10, 2.11, 2.15**), and minor art from Syria-Palestine such as the Megiddo plaque or seals upon which the king binds enemies in the presences of the deity (**figs. 2.18, 2.19, 2.20a–c**). The nations are granted to the king by divine authority, comparable to the king's name enthroned upon the subjugated representatives of the nations (see **fig. 2.8a**) or Behistun's portrayal of Ahuramazda granting the symbol of rule to Darius as bound leaders are led before him (**fig. 2.16**). Psalm 2 employs literary imagery analogous to the pictorial imagery in royal art throughout the ANE.

As discussed above, royal art served multiple functions in different contexts. Artistic scenes constructed royal identity, modeled the king's role in the world, refuted the threat of enemies to deal with royal (or broader) anxieties, and depicted the king's certain victory to all

who witnessed the art. In view of these multiple functions of royal scenes featuring the subjugation of enemies, let us consider questions of the genre and function of Psalm 2 and its imagery.

As surveyed above, there are multiple different proposals concerning Psalm 2's genre and function, most grounded within a coronation context. Goldingay, however, hesitates to assign the form of the psalm or propose a singular life setting for its use.<sup>205</sup> He does support the possibility of the psalm's use in a royal coronation or celebration of enthronement, but he also notes the psalm may simply have been employed in Israel's worship during the monarchical period.<sup>206</sup> Goldingay's claim that the psalm may fit within multiple possible contexts, and not simply a coronation or enthronement context, highlights an important point.

The idea of enthronement and coronation is primarily limited to vv. 6–9, and these verses are set in the past, not the present. The king's election is referenced as an event that has already occurred.<sup>207</sup> The coronation or enthronement of the king is not the primary theme of the psalm so much as an answer to the psalm's central concern, namely the rebellion of the foreign nations who should be under the control of Yahweh's king. The psalm opens with this theme of threat of rebellion and closes with the answer to this threat. In reply, the psalm pictures the king's place in relation to Yahweh as national deity and ruler of the cosmos, noting Yahweh's selection, installment, and reallocation of the king as his offspring. Yet, these promises to the king function as answers to the threat of universal rebellion. The threat is quelled by the God of the cosmos, who reigns from heaven and has identified the king installed upon Zion with himself and his office. Certain assurances accompany this royal identity—the ownership of all nations and the

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<sup>205</sup> Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41*, 95.

<sup>206</sup> Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41*, 95–6.

<sup>207</sup> See the use of the perfect for verbs like נִסְרַתִּי (v. 6) and אָמַר (v. 7), verbs that frame Yahweh's past actions and speech to the king.

ability to shepherd those who are obedient or crush those who stand in one's way. The psalm ends not with a restatement of the king's enthronement or position as one crowned and chosen by Yahweh, but with an admonishment issued to those threatening to rise up against Yahweh's king and, thus, Yahweh.

Is it possible that such a psalm was utilized within a Judahite enthronement, coronation, or celebration of enthronement ceremony? Absolutely. Yet, it is also conceivable that the psalm was employed as reassurance before a battle.<sup>208</sup> Furthermore, the psalm was maintained and reused by later communities as a promise of a Messianic return of the Davidic kingdom.<sup>209</sup> These are all conceivable contexts for the psalm.

Reading the psalm alongside ANE royal art, though, shows that another even more basic function is possible. The psalm employs literary imagery that is congruent with pictorial imagery prevalent throughout ANE royal art. The subjugation of foreign nations is key theme within royal art throughout the ANE. Kings within different empires employed the visual theme to illustrate their place in the empire and the cosmos. Such royal artistic programs rendered the identity of the king both for the sake of the king and for all those who viewed such artistic programs.<sup>210</sup> Perhaps Psalm 2 should be identified then primarily as an icon of royal rhetoric, that is, a poetic rendering of the king's identity in relation to both the national deity and to the rest of the world.

The poem constructs an image of the Judahite king's role in the world. As we will see, royal artistic programs served different functions, to quell anxieties with the 'truth' about the king and the deity (or deities) who support him, to encourage adherence to the program of

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<sup>208</sup> Willis, "A Cry of Defiance—Psalm 2," 44–46.

<sup>209</sup> Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 1*, 48; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen I*, 50–1.

<sup>210</sup> See footnote 77 above.



empire and the king who stands at the center of it, and to create a reality that speaks to the king himself and evokes his true identity. So too, Psalm 2 envisions threats to the king and resolves those threats through an illustration of the king's identity. The Psalm, then, may be understood as a poetic royal icon—a psalm for the king alone that quelled personal anxieties or that functioned similarly for the entire nation, encouraging commitment to the monarchy and reassurance of the king's identification with Yahweh.

## Chapter 3

## PSALM 21: BLENDING ROYAL AND DIVINE SPHERES

Unlike Ps 2, Ps 21 contains no major text-critical issues. It is widely understood to be a royal psalm, concerned as it is with the king (מֶלֶךְ, vv. 2, 8) and the king's relationship with Yahweh. The psalm pictures the divine-royal relations and its effects. Verses 1–7 present thanksgiving, praising Yahweh for his gifts to the king, particularly the gifts of life, victory, and divine-royal attributes (כבוד, הוד והדר).<sup>1</sup> Verse 8 affirms the trust of the king in Yahweh's חַסֵּד and the king's reliance on Yahweh. Verses 9–13 assure the future destruction of the king's enemies. Finally, v. 14 promises Yahweh eternal praise for his role in supporting the king.<sup>2</sup> The psalm presents the deity as (1) a source of power and victory for the king, (2) the one who grants the king life, (3) the one who crowns the king, and (4) one who defeats the king's enemies.

Yet, an issue faces interpreters of this psalm: who is the actor in vv. 9–13? This ambiguity arises because the poem shifts to a second person direct address right after v. 8 shifts to the king as subject and refers to Yahweh in the third person. It is clear a heroic figure is addressed, but it is not clear whether that figure is Yahweh (the addressee in vv. 1–7) or the king. Commentators generally make this interpretive decision based on the imagery of these verses and their judgment of whether or not the imagery best fits the actions of the king or the deity. For example, does v. 9 speak of the deity striking his enemies with a drawn back hand (cf. Ps 81:15) or does it picture the king in the classic smiting posture?<sup>3</sup> Does v. 10 contain divine warrior

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<sup>1</sup> See Cragie, *Psalms 1–50*, 191; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen*, 142–43.

<sup>2</sup> Yahweh's support is indicated by the use of יָ in v. 2 and v. 14.

<sup>3</sup> See LeMon, "Yahweh's Hand and the Iconography of the Blow," 865–82. For examples of this motif of the smiting Pharaoh in Egyptian art, see Hall, *The Pharaoh Smites His Enemies*. Robert Deutsch provides an example of the motif on an unprovenanced bulla that he identifies as a לִמְלֶכֶךְ seal that belonged to the Judean king (see Robert Deutsch, *Biblical Period Hebrew Bullae: The Josef Chaim Kaufman Collection* [Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center Publication, 2003], 21, fig. 5).

imagery or are these the actions of the king?<sup>4</sup> Does v. 13 present an image of the deity or the king as archer?<sup>5</sup>

I turn to ANE royal iconography to make sense of the ambiguity of vv. 9–13 and to explain how vv. 2–8 and 9–13 work together to create a picture of the deity and his king. In ANE royal art, the king and deity are often pictured together in scenes of battle and victory over enemies. In fact, the royal and divine identities blend in multiple different ways and scene types. Many of these scenes represent the duality of action on both the king and the deity’s part and the necessity of both of these actors in accomplishing victory over the nation’s enemies.<sup>6</sup> I survey a wide range of iconographic material to affirm that ANE royal ideologies envision deities and kings working in close partnership. Subsequently, I contend that Psalm 21 purposefully blends the identities and actions of the deity and the king, just as ANE iconography pictures both deities and kings together in various activities.

### 3.1 Psalm 21 Overview

#### 3.1.1 Psalm 21 Translation

- 1 For the overseer, a psalm of David.
- 2 O Yahweh, in your might the king rejoices,

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<sup>4</sup> Cragie notes the ambiguity of these verses and yet contends that the imagery best fits the future military actions of the king (*Psalms 1–50*, 192). Jacobsen agrees, asserting that the king aiming his bow at the enemies makes more sense than the deity doing so (*The Book of Psalms*, 225). Dahood contends that the verses best fit Divine Warrior imagery and so names Yahweh as the addressee (*Psalms I*, 131). Weiser concurs, claiming: “They [vv. 9–13] are usually interpreted as a promise made to the king. However, the manner in which the victor is spoken of is more suited to the ancient idea of Yahweh as the God of war” (*The Psalms*, 215). Goldingay also follows this line of logic (*Psalms 1–41*, 315–18).

<sup>5</sup> Rolf Jacobsen contends that the archer imagery best fits imagery of the king and argues that the monarch is actor here (*The Book of Psalms*, 225). The motif of the deity as archer, though, was also a prevalent one in ANE iconography (eg. Winter, “Royal Rhetoric,” 27–8).

<sup>6</sup> On the aspect of duality in the king’s and deity’s joint action see LeMon, “Yhwh’s Hand and the Iconography of the Blow,” 872; Keel, “Powerful Symbols of Victory,” 205–07; Winter, “Royal Rhetoric,” 27–29. Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 33; Keel, *Symbolism*, 292–96.

- and in your victory<sup>7</sup> how greatly the king exults!<sup>8</sup>
- 3 The desire of his heart you have given to him,  
and the request<sup>9</sup> of his lips you have not withheld.
- 4 Indeed, you meet him with blessings of goodness—  
you set a crown of refined gold upon his head.
- 5 Abundant life<sup>10</sup> he requested from you;  
you gave it to him—length of days forever and ever.
- 6 By your victory his glory is great; splendor and majesty you place upon him.
- 7 Indeed, you make him<sup>11</sup> an overwhelming blessing<sup>12</sup> forever;  
you gladden him with the joy of your presence.
- 8 For the king trusts continually in Yahweh,  
and by the covenant faithfulness of the Most High he will not be moved.
- 9 Your hand finds all of your enemies; your right hand finds those who hate you.
- 10 You make them like a blazing furnace at the time of your appearance.<sup>13</sup>  
Yahweh, in your anger you swallow them, and fire consumes them.
- 11 You will destroy their fruit from the earth and their seed from among the sons of men.
- 12 For they turn against you with evil; they plot wicked schemes that will not succeed.
- 13 Indeed, you turn them back;<sup>14</sup> you aim with your bows<sup>15</sup> against their faces.
- 14 Be exalted, O Yahweh, in your might! Let us sing and praise your warrior prowess!

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<sup>7</sup> ישועה is often translated as “salvation,” and yet this translation carries the sense of spiritual salvation in English. I have followed Shawn Zelig Aster in translating the noun as “victory” throughout this psalm both because of the overall militaristic context of the psalm with the king and/or Yahweh defeating their enemies and because the word parallels עו (Shawn Zelig Aster, “On the Place of Psalm 21 in Israelite Royal Ideology,” in *Mishneh Todah: Studies in Deuteronomy and Its Cultural Environment in Honor of Jeffrey H. Tigay*, ed. Nili Sacher, David A. Glatt-Gilad, Michael J. Williams [Grand Rapids, MI: Eisenbrauns, 2009], 309–10, esp. note 6).

<sup>8</sup> The *Ketib* has the longer *yiqtol* form, whereas the *Qere* has the shorter *yiqtol* form, indicating the jussive. I retain the *Qere*, as the use of the particle מה plus the jussive makes sense. Cf. the opposing use of this verb in Ps 2:11.

<sup>9</sup> HALOT, “אַרְשֵׁר,” 92. Based on Ugaritic (*a/iršt*, “need”) and Akkadian (*erīštu*, “desire”) cognates.

<sup>10</sup> I read the plural form as a way to “intensify the stem.” See *GKC*, 124e.

<sup>11</sup> When שׂיה takes a double accusative it may indicate, “to make a thing so and so” (see *GKC*, 117ii). Cf. Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41*, 310, footnote d.

<sup>12</sup> *GKC*, 124e.

<sup>13</sup> Francis J. Morrow expresses dissatisfaction with the usual scholarly renderings of Ps 21:10 as either “You will set them as a burning furnace at the time of your appearances,” or, “You will set them as a burning furnace at the time of your anger” (see Morrow, “Psalms XXI 10: An Example of Haplography,” *VT* 18, [1968], 558–59. Few scholars choose the second option, see Dahood, *Psalms I*, 130; Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 296; John Eaton, *The Psalms: A Historical and Spiritual Commentary with an Introduction and New Translation*, Old Testament Series [London: T&T Clark International, 2003], 114). Morrow contends that פנים is rarely, if ever, translated with either of these two meanings. He proposes that the text is an example of scribal haplography, arguing that a letter has dropped out of לעת. He reconstructs the text as לעמת, that is, “across from” rather than “at the time of” (Morrow, “Psalms XXI 10,” 559). I maintain the MT and understand, with the majority of scholars, פנים as “presence/appearance.”

<sup>14</sup> I read שׂיה with the 3mp object suffix and שׂהם as a second accusative: “you make them turn a shoulder.”

<sup>15</sup> Literally, מיתר “bowstring.”

### 3.1.2 Questions of Genre, Function, and Setting

No consensus exists concerning the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 21, other than a general agreement that the psalm belongs in the category of royal psalms.<sup>16</sup> Many scholars have followed Gunkel, who qualified Ps 21 as a song for royal “festivals,” such as “the birthday of the ruler or the anniversary of his taking power.”<sup>17</sup> Multiple scholars speculate that the psalm functioned within a coronation, enthronement, or celebration of enthronement ceremony, primarily because of the reference to the deity crowning the king in v. 4 and the king’s “glory,” “majesty,” and “splendor” referenced in v. 6.<sup>18</sup> Other scholars provide their own variations on this sort of theory, proposing different royal festivals within which the psalm may have been employed. For example, Kraus suggests that the psalm played a part within a yearly Zion festival, and Charles Fensham claims that the psalm functioned as a psalm of covenant renewal during a yearly enthronement festival.<sup>19</sup>

Some scholars turn to the militaristic language employed in vv. 9–13 to situate the psalm in a martial context. Mowinkel understands Ps 21 as a psalm delivered before battle, beginning with thanksgiving for Yahweh’s blessings and then moving into an oracle assuring victory.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See F. Charles Fensham, “Ps 21—A Covenant Song?” *ZAW* 77 (1965): 193–94; J. Kenneth Kuntz, “King Triumphant: A Rhetorical Study of Psalms 20 and 21,” *HAR* 10 (1987): 157; A. A. da Silva, “Ps 21—A Poem of Association and Dissociation,” *OTE* 8 (1995): 48–9. Psalm 21 has been considered a royal psalm by most scholars since Gunkel’s work (Gunkel and Begrich, *An Introduction to the Psalms*, 100).

<sup>17</sup> Gunkel and Begrich, *An Introduction to the Psalms*, 100.

<sup>18</sup> Eaton, *The Psalms*, 114; Sabourin, *The Psalms*, 347–48; Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel*, 134; Weiser, *The Psalms*, 211–12; Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 179; James Luther Mays, *Psalms, Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 103; da Silva, “Psalm 21,” 58–59; Reettakaisa Sofia Salo, *Die jüdische Königsideologie im Kontext der Nachbarkulturen: Untersuchungen zu den Königspsalmen 2, 18, 20, 21, 45 und 72*, *ORA* 25 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 107–08. See Cragie’s discussion of how the vocabulary marks the *Sitz im Leben* as a coronation context (Cragie, *Psalms 1–50*, 189–91).

<sup>19</sup> Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 284 and 287–88; Fensham, “Psalm 21,” 200–02.

<sup>20</sup> See Mowinkel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 70. Wilson and Schaefer follow Mowinkel in this designation (Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1*, 397–98; Konrad Schaefer, *Psalms*, Berit Olam [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001], 50). Buttenwiser also follows Mowinkel by translating the verbs in vv. 9–13 as though they promise a future victory, but he believes this sort of prayer for victory would have been delivered during a king’s coronation (Buttenwiser, *The Psalms*, 96–8).

Because of the psalm's thanksgiving language though, most who relate the psalm's function to a militaristic context generally view it as a thanksgiving hymn delivered after a successful victory.<sup>21</sup> For example, Dahood claims that the psalm is thanksgiving for a victory in battle that the king has previously requested from Yahweh: "Through the vigorous intervention of Yahweh, who fought at the side of the king, a resounding victory was won."<sup>22</sup>

The majority of scholars accept one of these two basic proposals for the psalm's *Sitz im Leben*, and so the psalm is generally situated in the monarchy of the pre-exilic period.<sup>23</sup> Rolf Jacobsen, however, departs from the general consensus. After surveying the generic proposals of different scholars, Jacobsen asserts:

While pinning the psalm down to one reconstructed life setting can serve to focus interpretive options, the approach taken here is that the psalm cannot be assigned to any one life setting. The interpreter is better served by taking an approach that reads the poem with a range of possibilities in mind. Reading with such a range of possibilities in mind will, admittedly, not allow one to narrow interpretive options. But this is not necessarily negative; the approach can be more theologically generative and may open up the interpreter's imagination to theological possibilities.<sup>24</sup>

Jacobsen's flexible approach to ascertaining the psalm's *Sitz im Leben* and function is more than just "theologically generative." His claim also questions attempts to pin down the psalm within a single *Sitz im Leben*. Scholars tend to focus in on one part of the psalm (vv. 1–8 vs. vv. 9–13) for their generic proposals of enthronement hymn or thanksgiving for success in battle. Jacobsen's approach cautions against emphasizing one part of the psalm over against the other. Attending to

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<sup>21</sup> See Briggs, *Psalms 1–50*, 183; Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 297; Kuntz, "King Triumphant," 162–63; Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41*, 311; Hamilton, *The Body Royal*, 105.

<sup>22</sup> Dahood, *Psalms 1–50*, 131.

<sup>23</sup> Gerstenberger, though, makes a concerted argument for dating the psalm to the post-exilic period. He claims that the psalm functioned as a post-exilic communal hymn of hope (Gerstenberger, *Psalms 1*, 107).

<sup>24</sup> deClaissé-Walford, Tanner, and Jacobsen, *The Psalms*, 221. Zenger also hesitates to propose a singular royal ceremony within which Ps 21 functioned, claiming: "So wird es dabei bleiben, daß Ps 21 als eigenständiger Psalm entstanden und im vorexilischen Jerusalemer Tempelkult Verwendung fand, wobei eine genauere Festlegung (Krönungsritual oder Jahresfeier der Krönung?) kaum möglich ist. Der Psalm ist kunstvoll komponiert" (Zenger, *Die Psalmen*, 140).

Jacobsen's warning, I view the psalm as a united constellation of imagery and compare it to ANE royal art to propose a broader *Sitz im Leben* for the poem.

### 3.1.3 The Iconic Structure of Psalm 21

The first half of Psalm 21 (vv. 2–8) pictures the close relationship of the king and deity. Yahweh supports the royal office, blessing the king so that the king might be a blessing as a ruler (ברכת in vv. 4, 7).<sup>25</sup> The king receives support from the deity in the form of might, victory, and life (vv. 2, 5). Yahweh grants the king's needs (v. 3) and marks the king as the right ruler of the nation with both material signs (עטרת פז in v. 4) and with the bestowal of divine attributes and power (כבוד והוד, in v. 6). The king becomes a source of blessing as he dwells within the deity's presence (v. 7), allowing him to serve as an outpouring of Yahweh's gifts for his people. Many scholars characterize these verses as thanks to the deity for blessing and supporting the king.<sup>26</sup> Shawn Zelig Aster, however, shows that vv. 2–8 portray more than just a list of divine blessings. Verses 2–8 display how the king and deity relate to one another, blending their identities at points to demonstrate their close association.<sup>27</sup>

Yahweh does not simply pour out gifts, power, and blessings on the king; rather, these verses speak to the overlapping identities of Yahweh and his king. The king shares divine

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<sup>25</sup> See Mowinkel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 60; Eaton, *The Psalms*, 115; Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41*, 310; Salo, *Die judäische Königsideologie*, 124–27.

<sup>26</sup> See Mowinkel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 70; Briggs, *Psalms 1–50*, 183; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 284; Eaton, *The Psalms*, 114; Cragie, *Psalms 1–50*, 189; Dahood, *Psalms 1–50*, 131; Schaefer, *Psalms*, 50; Mays, *Psalms*, 103; Hamilton, *The Body Royal*, 105; Kuntz, "King Triumphant," 161.

<sup>27</sup> See Aster, "On the Place of Psalm 21," 307–15. Salo also claims that vv. 2–7 focus on the close relationship between the king and the deity with v. 8 emphasizing the king's trust of the deity (Salo, *Die judäische Königsideologie*, 99–100). She asserts that vv. 2–7 highlight the divine-royal relationship, demonstrating the reciprocity between the king and the deity (Salo, *Die judäische Königsideologie*, 108–110), and she notes that the הוד, הדר, and כבוד granted to the king by Yahweh associates the king with the divine in the bestowal of these divine attributes (Salo, *Die judäische Königsideologie*, 140).

attributes bestowed and maintained by Yahweh (גדול כבודו בישועתך הוה והדר תשוה עליו).<sup>28</sup> The crown serves as a physical emblem of the king's election to rule, and the king's possession of divine markers such as "glory," "majesty," and "splendor" affirms Yahweh's establishment of his king. The king's place in the presence of Yahweh illustrates the link between the royal and the divine actors.<sup>29</sup> The relationship described in vv. 2–7 grounds the king's trust in the deity and marks the inability of anyone to upset the king's place alongside the deity (v. 8). The psalm ends by recalling its beginning as the community lauds Yahweh for his might (עז) and his martial prowess (גבורה) with which he supports the king (v. 14). The psalm blends the king's and Yahweh's roles, tying the two together.

Verses 9–13 shift from a depiction of royal identity to imagery of royal might and victory in battle. A haze of ambiguity, though, accompanies the shift in imagery. Verses 9–13 do not explicitly mark an addressee. The primary interpretive crux of Ps 21 has become a question of who is addressed in verses 9–13.<sup>30</sup> The martial imagery of vv. 9–13 focuses on the king and/or deity in battle and triumph over their enemies, who intend evil against them (v. 12). The literary images draw from both royal and divine contexts. The text pictures enemies snuffed out by an inescapable right hand (v. 9) and a blazing and all-consuming fire (v. 10). The heroic actor

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<sup>28</sup> Anderson asserts, "His glory...splendor...majesty are all divine attributes. They characterize the King only as far as he has received them from Yahweh; thus the King's majesty and glory is a derived splendor" (Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 181). Zenger notes that the gifts of the crown and the royal adornments associate the king and Yahweh, blurring the lines of distinction between the two (Zenger, *Die Psalmen*, 142). Saur agrees that the gifts of crown, splendor, and majesty indicate the king's identification with the sovereignty of the deity (Markus Saur, *Die Königpsalmen: Studien zur Entstehung und Theologie*, BZAW 340 [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004], 103). Also see Cragie, *Psalms 1–50*, 190; Dahood, *Psalms 1–50*, 132; Salo, *Die jüdische Königsideologie*, 99–100.

<sup>29</sup> Aster, "On the Place of Psalm 21," 310–11; Salo, *Die jüdische Königsideologie*, 107–08.

<sup>30</sup> See Da Silva, "King Triumphant," 49; Weiser too notes that the primary issue of interpretation is the question of "Who acts?" He claims, "It cannot be stated for certain to whom vv. 8–12 are addressed" (Weiser, *The Psalms*, 215). Cragie labels vv. 9–13 as the interpretive *crux* of the psalm, asserting, "the principal difficulty in the interpretation of this portion of the psalm lies in identifying the person addressed 'you'" (Cragie, *Psalms 1–50*, 192). Hamilton also notes that, "There is some question as to whether vv. 9–13 refer to the king or to Yahweh." For Hamilton, the issue moves him to decide against using these verses to consider his question of how the RPs picture the body of the king (Hamilton, *The Body Royal*, 107).



destroys the enemies with their offspring and land (v. 11) as a triumphant archer driving back his foes (v. 13). The intertwined images focus on the defeat of all of those who oppose the monarch set up by Yahweh. Yet, do the enemies fall at the hands of the deity or the king? Scholars have asserted one or the other for different reasons: the reference to Yahweh in v. 10, the aspect of the verbal forms, and the imagery's suitability for either the king or the deity.<sup>31</sup> Regardless, vv. 9–13 portray Judah's enemies vanquished in battle. With its ambiguous lack of addressee in vv. 9–13, the psalm blends both the actions and the identities of the king and the deity.

### 3.2 Royal and Divine Identities and Actions Blended in ANE Royal Art

Psalm 21 portrays the close relationship of Yahweh and the king, as Yahweh supports the king and works for the king in the world (vv. 2–8, 10). The psalm's imagery connects Yahweh and his king through the deity's gifts of royal attributes, victory, and power (vv. 2, 4–7). The psalm's imagery shapes a community, so that faithfulness to the deity is indistinguishable from faithfulness to the royal power. Royal artistic programs throughout the ANE display deities supporting and working alongside the king to order and maintain the cosmos. As in Psalm 21, ANE royal art provides examples of divine support and blessing of the king as well as royal and divine cooperation in different contexts. I will survey instances of the blending of the king and the deity in royal artistic programs in order to shed light on the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 21 and the ambiguity of the addressee in vv. 9–13.

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<sup>31</sup> Multiple scholars view the king as the primary actor: Briggs, *Psalms 1–50*, 185–87; Delitzsch, *The Psalms*, 299–300; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 284 and 287–88; Gerstenberger, *Psalms 1*, 106; Starbuck, *Court Oracles*, 115–16; Salo, *Die jüdische Königsideologie*, 107–08; Zenger, *Die Psalmen*, 140; Saur, *Die Königpsalmen*, 98 and 108–09; Eaton, *The Psalms*, 114–17; Cragie, *Psalms 1–50*, 192; Jacobsen, *The Book of Psalms*, 225; Kuntz, “King Triumphant,” 161. Other scholars view Yahweh as primary actor: Weiser, *The Psalms*, 214–16; Dahood, *Psalms 1–50*, 131; Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 183; Wilson, *Psalms Volume I*, 401; Goldingay, *Psalms 1–41*, 316; Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, 133; Fensham, “Ps 21,” 198; Pierre Auffret, “DANS TA FORCE SE RÉJOUIT LE ROI’: ÉTUDE STRUCTURELLE DU PSAUME XXI,” *VT* 40 (1990): 399–402; da Silva, “Psalm 21,” 55.

### 3.2.1 Blending Identities: Deities Bestowing Divine and Royal Attributes upon the King

Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Achaemenid royal art visualizes divine support of the king in order to “reaffirm its [the kingship’s] legitimacy as much in the eyes of its practitioners, the monarch and his court, as in the eyes of its subjects and outsiders.”<sup>32</sup> Royal art depicting divine support of the king creates a rhetorical world within which the king and the kingship could not be threatened by any earthly power, whether from within or without. Such art quieted royal anxieties and fostered support for the king among those he ruled. The visual rhetoric of divine support and empowerment sought to persuade those who wished to maintain a beneficial relationship with the divine powers that were aligned with the king. Similarly, Psalm 21 pictures the deity granting life, might, and symbols of authority to the king. I will survey examples of the bestowal of life, power, and royal attributes upon the king by deities in ANE royal art before considering how such artistic rhetoric might reframe an interpretation of Psalm 21’s literary imagery.<sup>33</sup>

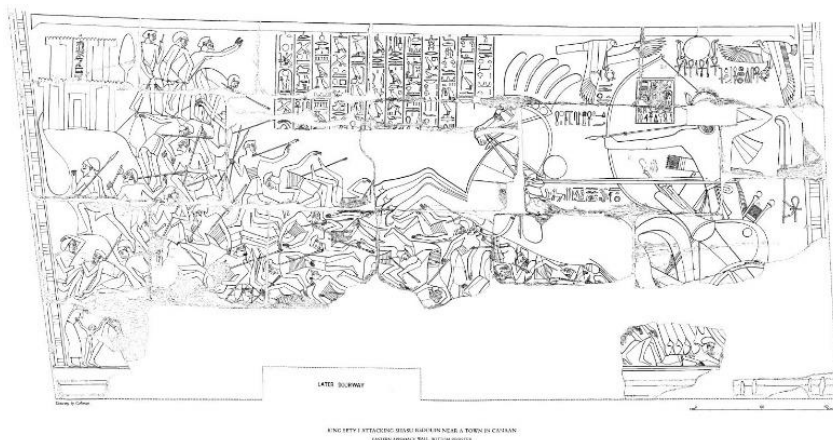
#### 3.2.1.1 Egyptian Royal Art

In Egyptian royal art, royal and divine identities overlap. The king receives life, strength, and victory from Egypt’s deities. The association of divine and royal figures in Egyptian art marks the king as one chosen by the gods to rule. Deities bestow divine-royal attributes upon the king alone. Thus, Egyptian art marks the king alone as proper ruler of the peoples.

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<sup>32</sup> Peter Machinist, “Kingship and Divinity in Imperial Assyria,” in *Text, Artifact, and Image: Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion*, ed. Gary M. Beckman and Theodore J. Lewis, BJS 346 (Providence: Brown University Press, 2006), 183.

<sup>33</sup> The classic approach to these verses has been to understand them as thanksgiving for past support, rather than as an expression of royal rhetoric and royal identity. The approach of Aster is an exception. See footnotes 26 and 27 above.



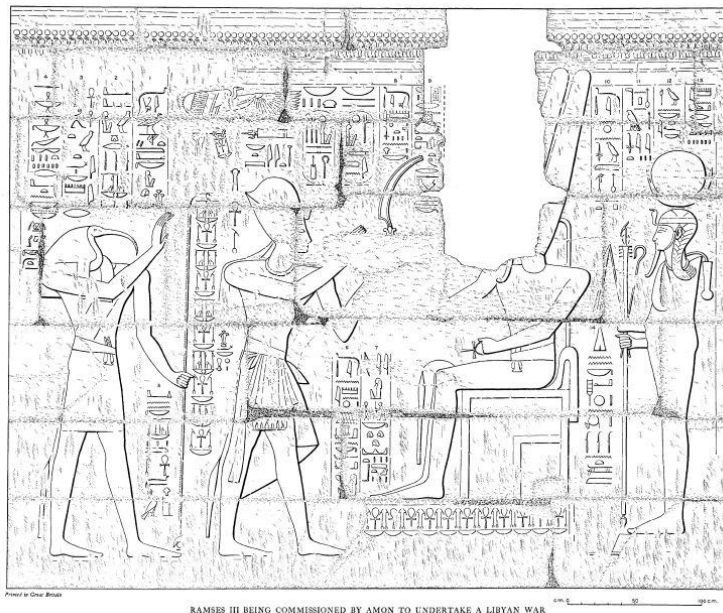
**Fig. 3.1.** Seti I fighting enemies from his chariot alongside the deity. Location: Temple of Amun, Karnak. Date: 14<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Seti I*, pl. 3.

Egyptian royal art intertwines the king and deity. The king reigns victorious on the battlefield because of the divine strength that Egypt’s deities share with him. For example, one of Seti I’s reliefs at Karnak shows the solar disc, the Horus falcon, and the Nekhbet vulture alongside the king as he battles the Shashu (**fig. 3.1**). The solar disc radiates *uraei* and *ankhs* as it floats above the king, providing him with life. The Horus falcon spreads its wings before the king’s head, and the Nekhbet vulture takes up the same position behind the king’s head. The text near the Horus falcon reads, “The Behdetite, The Lord of Heaven, as he gives life, stability, dominion and health like Re,” indicating that the king’s victory comes from the deity.<sup>34</sup> The deities supply the king with life and victory, enabling him to dominate his enemies. The main text of the scene claims, “All who escaped from the tips of his (Seti’s) fingers [t]ell of his strength to distant foreign lands, (this) being the strength of his father Amon, ‘who has decreed [for] you valor and victory over every foreign land.’”<sup>35</sup> The king stands victorious because Amun decrees it, and their identities blend upon the battlefield. The king dominates the battlefield as

<sup>34</sup> The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Seti I*, 7.

<sup>35</sup> The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Seti I*, 7.

Horus grants the king dominion. All of the king's success flows from the deities who empower him with dominion and victory.



**Fig. 3.2.** Ramses III being commissioned to go to war. Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Earlier Historical Records of Ramses III*, pl. 13.

A commissioning scene at Medinet Habu (**fig. 3.2**) pictures Ramses III surrounded by deities. Amun-Re holds out the scimitar to Ramses, representing the bestowal of divine power and assured victory. The metaphorical power and victory granted to the king by Amun-Re is displayed materially in the following battle and triumph scenes. Thoth stands behind the king, holding out his hands toward him. The text over the deity proclaims: “Words spoken by Thoth: ‘Behold, I am behind thee, my two hands bearing years, jubilees, life, and satisfaction.’”<sup>36</sup> At the same time, the text beside Khonsu, who stands behind Amun’s throne and faces the king, states: “Words spoken by Khonsu-in-Thebes Neferhotep to this good god (the king), the Horus: Great of Kingship: ‘They father Amon has decreed for thee victory against the Nine Bows. I have

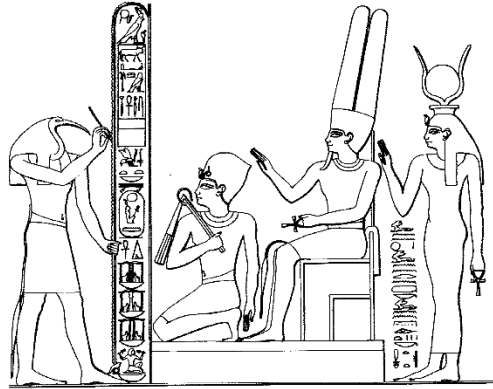
<sup>36</sup> William F. Edgerton and John A. Wilson, *Historical Records of Ramses III: The Texts in Medinet Habu Volumes I and II*, SAOC 12 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936), 4.

given to thee the lifetime of Re and the years of Atum.”<sup>37</sup> The deities offer him victory, satisfaction, and abundant life as they surround him. The support Ramses receives from the deities produces the king’s success over the Libyans in the subsequent battle scenes. Just as Psalm 21 pictures Yahweh granting his king strength (vv. 2, 14) and victory (vv. 2, 6), so too does Egyptian royal art display divine empowerment of the king in battle and victory. The bestowal of divine power upon the king portrayed in art and in text blends divine and royal identities.



**Fig. 3.3.** Amun-Re crowning Hatshepsut. Location: Karnak. Date: 1501–1480 BCE. Source: Keel, *Symbolism*, 259, fig. 348.

<sup>37</sup> Edgerton and Wilson, *Historical Records of Ramses III*, 4.



**Fig. 3.4.** Amun-Re and Hathor crowning and affirming Hatshepsut. Location: Karnak. Date: 1501–1480 BCE. Source: Keel, *Symbolism*, 260, fig. 349.



**Fig. 3.5.** Amun-Re crowning Hatshepsut as Hathor grants the king life. Location: Karnak. Date: 1501–1480 BCE. Source: Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 133, fig. 149.

Scenes portraying deities granting the king the symbols and attributes of kingship directly associate the royal and divine spheres. Depictions of Hatshepsut’s crowning by Amun-Re in particular show how royal art attempts to shape the identity of both king and people, as her legitimacy as a ruler was in question. As Robins notes, Hatsheput’s royal art, “underpins the legitimacy of her reign.”<sup>38</sup> In **fig. 3.3**, Hatshepsut kneels before Amun-Re as he crowns her,

<sup>38</sup> Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 132.

marking her as the legitimate ruler and granting her, “protection, blessing, and vital power.”<sup>39</sup> In a similar scene (**fig. 3.4**), Hatshepsut kneels before Amun-Re as the deity crowns her and blesses her with life, marked by the *ankhs* held out by Amun-Re and Hathor. The king holds the royal scepter and flail, signs which index her role as ruler.<sup>40</sup> In **fig. 3.5**, Hatshepsut kneels again before Amun-Re as he crowns her with the *atef*-crown. Hathor stands before the king; her presence confirms the crowning as she grants life to the king in the form of an outstretched *ankh*. Amun-Re declares Hatshepsut’s role as ruler and her close association with the divine as he crowns her. He announces: “My daughter, whom I love, I have established for you the *atef*-crown on your head so that you may appear in it for the Egyptian population and so that the Nine Bows may adore you.”<sup>41</sup> Imagery of the king crowned by the gods shapes the king’s understanding of her role even as it shapes the people. In these images, deities surround the king, displaying the close relationship between the king and the divine in Egyptian artistic rhetoric.<sup>42</sup> Those who worship these deities must then also respect the king as one empowered by the divine.

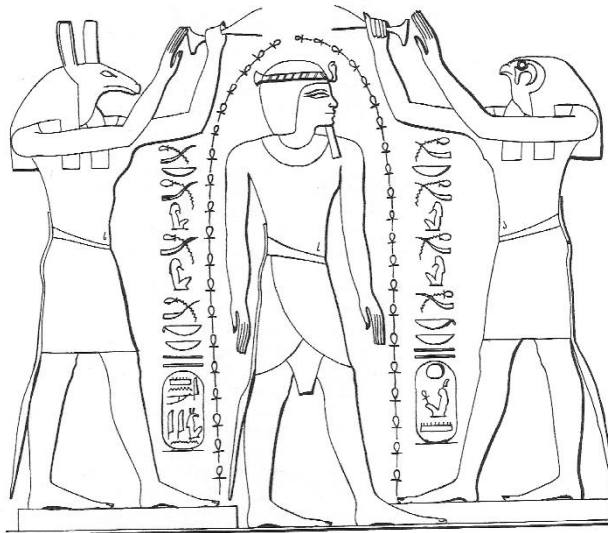
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<sup>39</sup> Keel, *Symbolism*, 259.

<sup>40</sup> See Keel, *Symbolism*, 259.

<sup>41</sup> Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 133.

<sup>42</sup> Similar imagery at Medinet Habu portrays Ramses III receiving the crown and other royal implements from Amun-Re (see The Epigraphic Survey, *The Temple Proper Part 1: The Portico, the Treasury, and Chapels Adjoining the First Hypostyle Hall with Marginal Materials from the Forecourts*, vol. 5 of *Medinet Habu*, OIP 83 [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957], pl 295)



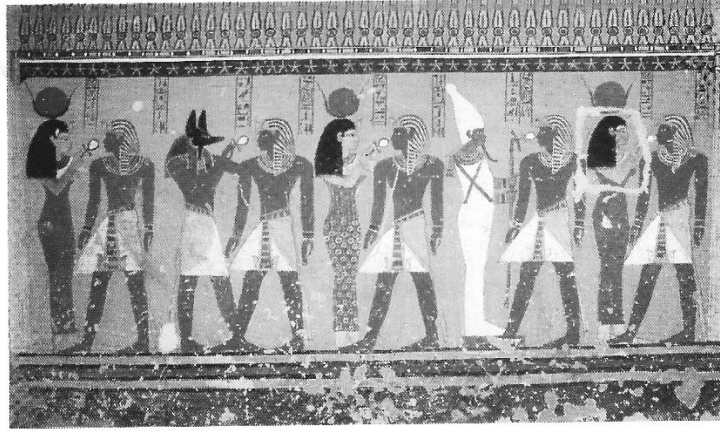
**Fig. 3.6.** Seth and Horus anointing the Seti I with the “waters of life.” Location: Karnak. Date: 14<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: Keel, *Symbolism*, 257, fig. 345.

Another scene type associated with the entronement and coronation of the king in Egyptian art is the purification of the king with the “waters of life.”<sup>43</sup> **Figure 3.6** from the west side of the Hypostyle Hall at Karnak portrays Seti I as the deities Seth and Horus pour life upon him. The deities surround him and bestow life, as Horus says: “I have purified [consecrated] you with life and strength so that you may endure even as Re [the sun god] endures.”<sup>44</sup> The scene associates the king and deities, as the deities grant the king divine life and strength to undergird his reign. Psalm 21 similarly tethers the king to the deity. The king stands in Yahweh’s presence (v. 7), and Yahweh bestows a crown (v. 4), majesty and glory (v. 6) upon the king.

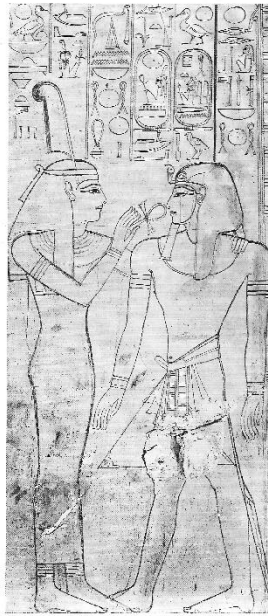
<sup>43</sup> See Keel, *Symbolism*, 258; A. H. Gardiner, “The Baptism of Pharaoh,” *JEA* 36 (1950): 3–12; Jean Leclant, “Les rites de purification dans le ceremonial pharaonique du couronnement,” in *Proceedings of the XI<sup>th</sup> Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions*, vol. 2, ed. C. J. Bleeker (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 48–51.

<sup>44</sup> Keel, *Symbolism*, 258.





**Fig. 3.7.** Hathor, Osiris, and Anubis presenting life to Thutmose IV. Location: Valley of Kings, Thebes. Date: 15<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 125, fig. 137.



**Fig. 3.8.** A goddess embracing Seti I with the gift of life. Location: Valley of Kings, Thebes. Date: 14<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 169, fig. 198.



**Fig. 3.9.** The Aten presenting *ankhs* before the faces of Akhenaten, Queen Nefertiti, and the royal children. Location: Amarna. Date: 1353–1336 BCE. Source: Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 156, fig. 182.

Egyptian royal art is rife with images of deities embracing the king and granting him life. Often a god or goddess embraces the king as they offer life to the king in the form of an *ankh* raised before his face. Royal art only depicts the king granted life by deities in this intimate fashion. The king thus is a conduit of divine life for his people and the cosmos.<sup>45</sup> For example, **fig. 3.7** portrays Thutmose IV embraced and offered life by Hathor, Osiris, and Anubis. Within a royal tomb, the imagery signifies the divine provision of life for the king both in this world and in the next.<sup>46</sup> **Figure 3.8** shows Seti I held by a goddess who faces him as she holds out an *ankh*.<sup>47</sup> These scenes portray the king as one closely associated with the divine, to the point that the deities supply the king with life granted from their own hands.

<sup>45</sup> John Baines, “Ancient Egyptian Kingship: Official Forms, Rhetoric, Context,” in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John Day, LHBOTS 270 (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 22–23.

<sup>46</sup> Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 122.

<sup>47</sup> Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 169.

Even in the Amarn period when the transcendence of the deity was emphasized, royal art depicts the close association of king and deity. **Figure 3.9** displays King Akhenaten, Queen Nefertiti, and their three daughters showered with life granted by the Aten. The Aten extends not one but multiple *ankhs* to the king and queen through its rays that reach out to them, despite the Aten's transcendent position at the top of the scene. In the royal art of the Amarna period, the Aten is depicted as creator aligned with the king and queen, "his first two creations, representing the male and female principles of the universe."<sup>48</sup> Despite the emphasis on divine transcendence within the Amarna period, royal art communicates the close connection between the royal and the divine. The deity supports the king and queen with divine gifts of abundant life.

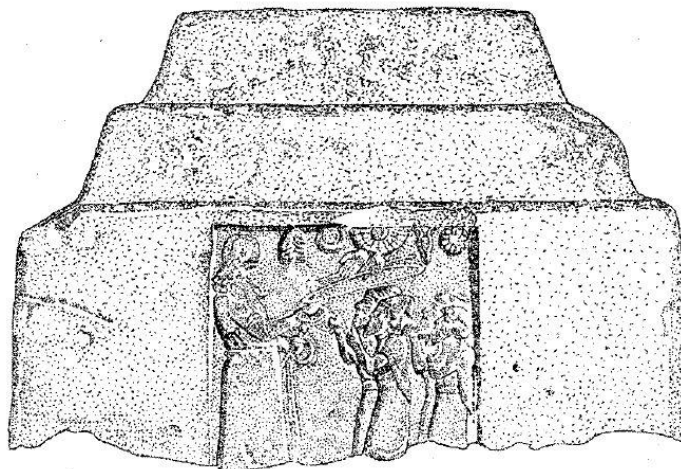
Like Psalm 21, Egyptian royal art often displays the king receiving life, royal attributes, and might from Egypt's deities. Royal art portrays the Egyptian king ruling as one chosen and supported by the deities who rule the cosmos. The king stands in the presence of the divine and receives life and divine power. The close association depicted between the king and his deities in royal art blends royal and divine identities. Egyptian royal art connects the king and Egypt's deities with signs and symbols akin to those pictured by Psalm 21, namely life, strength, victory, and royal attributes.

### *3.2.1.2 Mesopotamian Royal Art*

Mesopotamian royal art similarly displays the king and deity with overlapping roles and identities. Therein, Mesopotamian deities also grant victory to kings and bestow royal insignia and attributes upon kings. Multiple scene-types portray the king in the presence of deities, a privileged space that only the king experiences. In these ways, Mesopotamian royal art displays the interrelated nature of royal and divine identities.

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<sup>48</sup> Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 156.



**Fig. 2.11.** The broken obelisk depicting Ashur-bel-kala with bound enemies. Location: Nineveh. Date: 11<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Tallay Ornan, “A Complex System of Religious Symbols,” 211, fig. 1.

Multiple scene-types in Mesopotamian royal art portray a deity as the source of a king’s power and military victory. As discussed in chapter 2, Ashur-bel-kala’s stele (**fig. 2.11**) displays the Assyrian king in a place of power over conquered and bound enemies. The winged solar disc, centered in the midst of four other divine symbols, sits at the top of the stele and reaches down to hand a bow to the victorious king. The king’s open, upward facing palm marks him as the intended recipient of the deity’s weapon.<sup>49</sup> The deity’s gift of the bow marks the deity as the source of the king’s victory. The bow signifies, “the divine approval and legitimacy of the Assyrian king.”<sup>50</sup> The deity grants the king victory and the power to rule over all peoples.

<sup>49</sup> Ornan, “Who is Holding the Lead Rope?,” 60.

<sup>50</sup> Joan Westenholz, “The King, The Emperor, and the Empire: Continuity and Discontinuity of Royal Representation in Text and Image,” in *The Heirs of Assyria*, ed. Sanna Aro and Robert M. Whiting, Melammu Symposia 1 (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2000), 116.



**Fig. 2.15.** Stele portraying two bound kings in Esarhaddon’s captivity. Location: Zinjirli (Sam’al). Date: ca. 670 BCE. Source: Porter, *Trees, Kings, and Politics*, pl. 29.

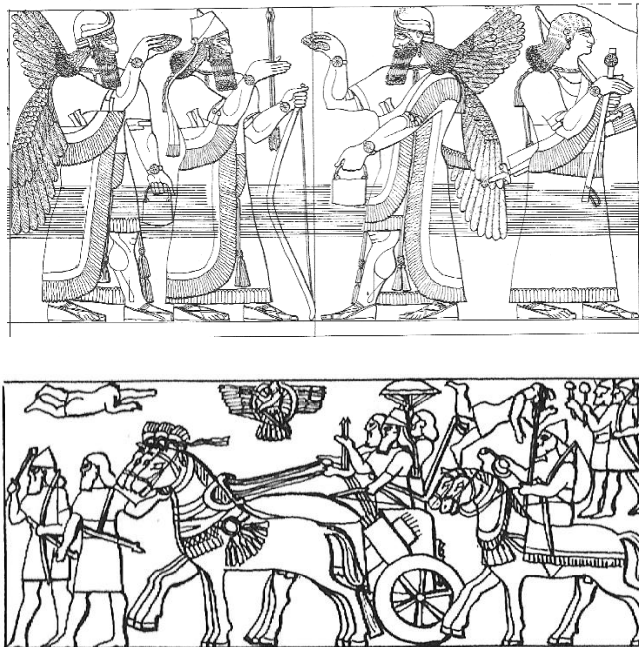
Esarhaddon’s stele at Sam’al (**fig. 2.15**) also displays the Assyrian king in close proximity to divine symbols as he stands in domination over other kings.<sup>51</sup> The king’s stature in comparison to the other kings communicates his might; his face reaches the divine plane.<sup>52</sup> However, the king acknowledges the gods in a deferential display as he raises a royal appurtenance to the divine symbols.<sup>53</sup> The stele models a reality in which the Assyrian king conquers and rules over all peoples because divine powers enable his rule.

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<sup>51</sup> The stele sat in the gateway of the western city of Sam’al (Zinjirli), the capital city of the kingdom of Sam’al.

<sup>52</sup> Reade notes that the royal stele shows “the king as agent and servant of his gods” (“Ideology and Propaganda in Assyrian Art,” 342).

<sup>53</sup> See *ANEP*, 300–01, no. 447; Reade, “Ideology and Propaganda in Assyrian Art,” 341.



**Figs. 3.10a–b.** Reliefs featuring the Ashurnasirpal II grasping a bow in the presence of deities. Location: Northwest Palace, Nimrud. Date: 9<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Source: Meuszyński, *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen*, Tafel 8, G–6 and G–7, Tafel 2, B–5a.

Throughout the Northwest palace of Ashurnasirpal II, the image of the king holding a bow and arrows signifies the king's might and victory.<sup>54</sup> The king often holds the weapon in the presence of deities. For example, three reliefs in room G of the palace (**fig. 3.10a**) portray the king grasping a bow and holding up arrows. Divine genii surround the king as he lifts up the weapon that symbolizes his might and military victory.<sup>55</sup> In the throne room itself, a relief across from one of the throne room entrances (**figs. 3.10b**) displays the king returning from battle with his bow in one hand and arrows raised in his other hand. Ashur accompanies the king above in the winged sun disc also holding his bow aloft. The mirrored postures of king and deity upon the relief suggests that the true source of the king's power and victory flows from the deity. As in Ps

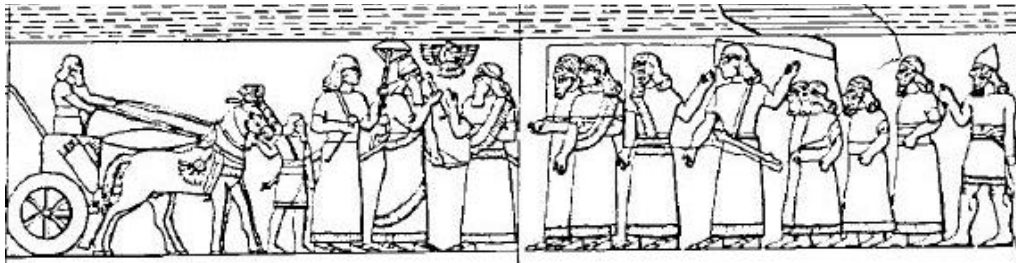
<sup>54</sup> Reade, *Art in Empire*, 44; Russell, "The Program of the Palace," 684.

<sup>55</sup> Russell, "The Program of the Palace," 684.

21, Mesopotamian royal art models a reality in which the king's strength and victory flow from a divine partner. The king conquers because he shares the deities' power.



**Fig. 3.11.** Hammurabi before Shamash on the Hammurabi Stele. Location: Elam. Date: 18<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:F0182\\_Louvre\\_Code\\_Hammourabi\\_Bas-relief\\_Sb8\\_rwk.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:F0182_Louvre_Code_Hammourabi_Bas-relief_Sb8_rwk.jpg).



**Fig. 3.12.** Two reliefs depicting Ashurnasirpal II and the deity Ashur receiving captives. Location: Northwest Palace, Nimrud. Date: 9<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Source: Meuszyński, *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen*, Tafel 2, B–6 and 7b.

Royal art often shows a deity presenting the king with royal attributes and authority to rule. In Mesopotamian art, the ring is a primary symbol of royal authority. As Russell notes, the ring “is a common attribute of godhood in Assyrian art. When offered to a king, its represents the

bestowal of authority by the god.”<sup>56</sup> The ring then serves as “the emblem of rule,” an indicator that the gods have chosen the king.<sup>57</sup> The symbol identified the king as one entrusted with power by the deity, and so the ring functioned as a standard motif of royal rhetoric in Mesopotamian royal art. Hammurabi’s stele (**fig. 3.11**) serves as an early example from the Old Babylonian period. The scene at the top of the stele depicts the king in the realm of the divine as he stands in the presence of Shamash, the god of justice. Shamash offers Hammurabi the ring symbol to mark him as the authorized monarch. The king’s identity blends with the deity’s for the king represents the link between divine and human realms.<sup>58</sup> The monarch’s slightly smaller stature and posture of worship, however, shows his humanness even as he stands in the divine presence.<sup>59</sup> Winter remarks, “The image serves as testimony to the king’s special relationship with the god, legitimizing his role and special status as righteous ruler (Akk. *šar mīšarim*).”<sup>60</sup> The deity’s presence and extension of the ring legitimizes the king’s position.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Russell, “The Program of the Palace,” 710.

<sup>57</sup> Bahrani, *The Art of Mesopotamia*, 180.

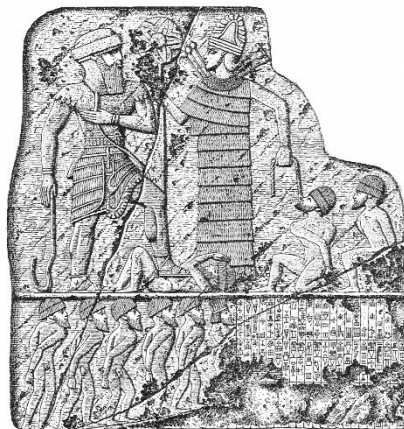
<sup>58</sup> See Irene J. Winter, “Touched by the Gods: Visual Evidence for the Divine Status of Rulers in the Ancient Near East,” in *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond*, ed. Nicole Brisch, OIS 4 (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2008), 83. Winter explains the scene composition: “Hammurabi is depicted making direct eye contact with (the image of) the deity as he receives the authority to promulgate his laws. His head is actually slightly higher than that of the seated sun-god, and the compositional balance suggests a relationship born not of subservience but of almost parity” (Winter, “Touched by the Gods,” 83).

<sup>59</sup> Bahrani, *The Art of Mesopotamia*, 180.

<sup>60</sup> Winter, “Touched by the Gods,” 83.

<sup>61</sup> As Bahrani notes, “Here, the king is mortal, but he is nevertheless enclosed in the space of the god. By means of the image we can say that the stele of Hammurabi is a monument that configures the place of the ruler in relation to the law. The king is given the authority to present the law, and to dispense legal decisions as the king of justice, who makes the law accessible to the people” (Bahrani, *The Art of Mesopotamia*, 180).





524. Goddess Ishtar on relief of Anubanini.

**Fig. 2.10.** Rock relief of Anubanini before Ishtar. Location: Zohab. Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. Source: *ANEP*, 177, fig. 524.

Anubanini's rock relief (**fig. 2.10**) also displays the king in the presence of the deity. Here, Ishtar grants the king victory and the right to rule as she holds out the ring symbol towards the king.<sup>62</sup> The goddess simultaneously bestows victory and the authority to rule upon the king. In the Neo-Assyrian period too, similar constellations of imagery justify the king's reign. Reliefs B-6 and B-7 from Ashurnasirpal II's throne room at Nimrud (**fig. 3.12**) show the king in a scene of triumph. The king's bow and the subdued enemies together represent his victory.<sup>63</sup> The victorious ruler stands in the presence of the deity, as Ashur sits above the king in the winged sun disc. Ashur mirrors the monarch's posture, facing those prisoners who are brought into their presence. Ashur, however, does not hold a bow like the king. The deity instead holds out the ring to the Assyrian king, as a symbol of the king's divinely ordained rule. In each of these scenes, divine actors grant Mesopotamian kings their royal attributes and divine power.

<sup>62</sup> Debevoise, "The Rock Reliefs," 80; Cornelius, "Aspects of Iconography," 18; Ornan, "Who is Holding the Lead Rope?," 66.

<sup>63</sup> Russell, "The Program of the Palace," 685.



**Fig. 3.13.** Scene of the Assyrian king crowned and confirmed by deities upon a helmet. Location: Unprovenanced. Date: 10<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: Salo, *Die judäische Königsideologie*, 155, Abb. 6.

Multiple texts from the Ur-III period through the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods describe how the gods bestow royal attributes and symbols such as the throne, scepter, *melammu*, and crown upon the king. Yet few images from these periods depict the king's legitimation as ruler with such symbols apart from scenes depicting the bestowal of the Mesopotamian ring.<sup>64</sup> For example, only a single image upon a helmet from the Neo-Assyrian period portrays Assyrian deities bestowing royal insignia upon the monarch (**fig. 3.13**).<sup>65</sup> In this scene, An stands before the king and offers the king royal implements as a goddess crowns the king from behind. A winged sun disc surmounts the scene, and two winged genii flank the scene on either side. The imagery legitimates the king's role and authority by imbuing the symbols of

<sup>64</sup> For example, texts that describe the investiture of the king by the gods with these royal attributes and symbols include Hymn D of the king Ur-Namma, an ascension text for king Nabopolassar (see Salo, *Die judäische Königsideologie*, 112; A. K. Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts*, Vol. 3 of the Toronto Semitic Texts and Studies [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975], 84), a crowning hymn for Ashurbanipal (Alasdair Livingstone, *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea*, SAA III [Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1989], 1 I), as well as some Neo-Assyrian ritual documents (see Salo, *Die judäische Königsideologie*, 114; Angelika Berlejung, "Die Macht der Insignien. Überlegungen zu einem Ritual der Investitur des Königs und dessen königsideologischen Implikationen," *UF* 28 [1996]: 1–35, specifically 9–15).

<sup>65</sup> Salo, *Die judäische Königsideologie*, 155; Walther Sallaberger, "Den Göttern nahe – und fern den Menschen? Formen der Sakralität des altmesopotamischen Herrschers," in *Die Sakralität von Herrschaft: Herrschaftslegitimierung im Wechsel der Zeiten und Räume*, ed. Franz-Reiner Erkens (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002), 88; Ursula Seidl and Hermann Born, *Schutzwaffen aus Assyrien und Urartu*, Sammlung Axel Guttman 4 (Mainz: Sammlung Guttman bei Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1995), Abb. 22.

his rule with divine association. As in Ps 21, imagery of the deity bestowing royal and divine attributes (vv. 4, 6) upon the monarch imbues the ruler with divine authority.



**Fig. 3.14.** The Banquet Stele of Ashurnasirpal II. Location: Northwest Palace, Nimrud. Date: 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 227, fig. 10.2.

Mesopotamian royal art highlights the king's close connection to the divine to portray divine support and approval of the monarch. The direct association of the king with the divine indexed the king's role as ruler. Ashurnasirpal II's Banquet Stele (**fig. 3.14**) qualifies the king as one chosen by the gods by way of image and text. The image of the king, centered at the top of the stele, depicts Ashurnasirpal II in the midst of divine symbols. In his left hand he holds a staff and in his right he holds a royal mace, symbols of his kingship.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, the text describes the king as one directly chosen by the gods:

“The palace of Aššur-našir-pal, priest of Aššur, the exalted one of Enlil and Ninurta, the beloved of Anu (2) and Dagan, the strong one of the great gods, the mighty king, the king of the world, king of Assyria, son of Tukulti-Ninurta, the great king, (3) the mighty king, the king of the world, king of Assyria, (grand-)son of Adad-nirari, the great king, the mighty king, king of the world, king of Assyria; the valiant hero (4) who, with the help of

<sup>66</sup> D. J. Wiseman, “A New Stela of Aššur-našir-pal II,” *Iraq* 14 (1952): 25.

Aššur, his lord, proceeds and among the princes of the four quarters (of the earth) (5) has no rival; the wonderful shepherd who fears no battle, the mighty (6) flood who has none who can withstand him. The king who has made to submit those who were not subject to him, (7) who has conquered all mankind. The king who with the help of the great gods (8) his lords proceeds; whose hand has captured all lands and (9) conquered all the highlands and received their tribute, taking hostages and establishing (10) power over all the lands.<sup>67</sup>

The text of the stele places the king in the midst of the gods with language that highlights the ruler as the chosen one empowered by all of the gods. The stele attributes Ashurnasirpal's might and royal identity to the Assyrian deities.



**Fig. 3.15.** Stele of Ashurnasirpal II in the midst of divine symbols from the Ninurta Temple at Nimrud. Location: Nimrud. Date: 883–859 BCE. Source: Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 261, fig. 11.8.

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<sup>67</sup> Translation from Wiseman, "A New Stela of Aššur-našir-pal II," 29.



**Fig. 3.16.** Royal stele depicting Sargon II before divine symbols. Location: Babylon. Date: 559–539 BCE. Source: Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 277, fig. 12.6.

A royal stele type that became popular in the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods depicted the king with divine symbols above and before him. The king generally stands before these symbols in a posture of prayer or worship. The Assyrian kings referred to these steles as, “the image of my kingship (*salam sarrutiya*),” and so we can assume that the steles display the identity of the king.<sup>68</sup> Like Ashurnasirpal II’s stele from the Ninurta Temple at Nimrud (**fig. 3.15**), the steles often pair the image of the king with an inscription that ran across the stele, inscribing “his deeds and acts, his heroism and pioussness,” upon the very body of the king.”<sup>69</sup> In **fig. 3.15**, the five divine symbols that the king worships appear also upon the king’s necklace, tying the king’s identity to the deities before whom he stands. Ashurnasirpal holds the “scepter of kingship,” has weapons sheathed at his waist, and wears a royal headdress.<sup>70</sup> All of these

<sup>68</sup> Bahrani, *The Art of Mesopotamia*, 259.

<sup>69</sup> Bahrani, *The Art of Mesopotamia*, 261.

<sup>70</sup> Bahrani, *The Art of Mesopotamia*, 261.

items symbolize his kingship. The divine symbols signify that Ashurnasirpal has been legitimately adorned as king by the gods.

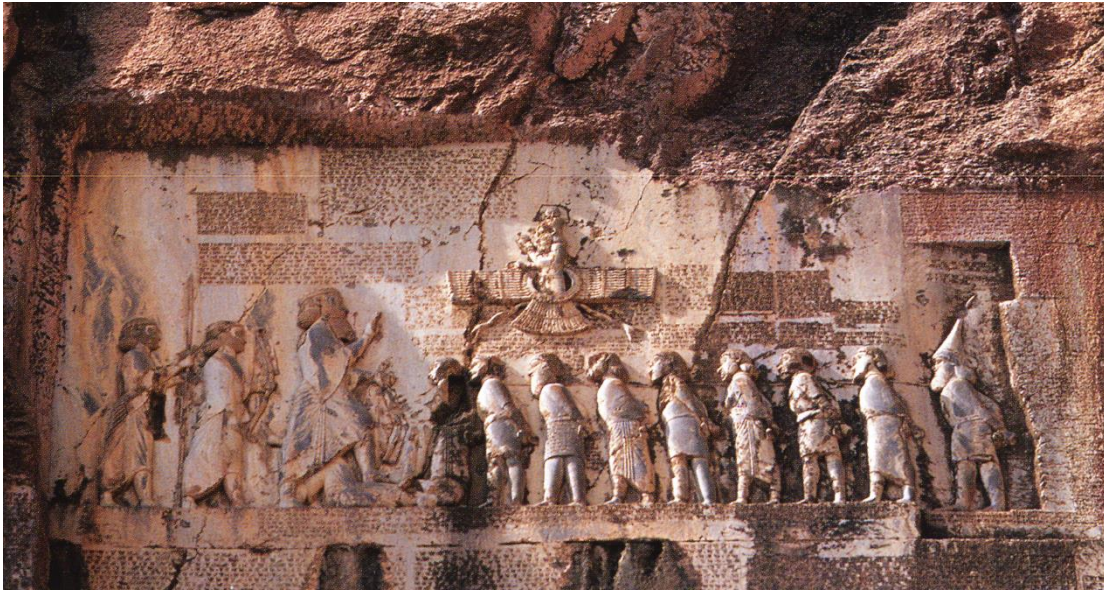
The Babylonian king Nabonidus also displayed his kingship with this style of stele. A royal stele from Babylon (**fig. 3.16**) shows the king in a posture of worship. He holds a staff in his left hand as he stands before three divine symbols representing Sin, Shamash, and Ishtar.<sup>71</sup> In each case, these royal steles represent the king as one chosen by the deities of the people. Rather than explicitly representing the king as divine, Mesopotamian royal art depicts royal and divine actors with shared symbols, postures, and actions in order to blend royal and divine identity.

Mesopotamian royal art, like Psalm 21, does not usually portray the king as a divine figure himself. This marks a contrast with Egyptian royal art. Rather, Mesopotamian royal art portrays the king in the presence of a deity or divine symbols. Alternatively, it shows the king receiving authority and royal attributes from a deity in order to communicate the close connection between the king and Mesopotamian deities. Scenes showing the king and a deity acting together indicate a blending of divine and royal identity. Psalm 21 employs similar rhetorical strategies to connect the king and Yahweh. Yahweh grants the king symbols of his rule (v. 3), and the king stands in the presence of the deity as one blessed by him (v. 6). In Mesopotamian art, as in Ps 21, the king and the deity or deities share attributes and work towards shared goals.

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<sup>71</sup> Bahrani, *The Art of Mesopotamia*, 277.

### 3.2.1.3 Achaemenid Royal Art



**Fig. 2.16.** Behistun relief depicting Darius’s triumph over rebel kings. Location: Mount Behistun, Iran. Date: 6th–5th Centuries BCE. Source: Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 303, fig. 13.11.

Achaemenid royal art draws on the motifs associating royal and divine identities found in Neo-Assyrian royal art. As we saw in the last chapter, the Behistun relief (**fig. 2.16**) entangles the identities of the deity and the king. The relief portrays both Ahuramazda and Darius as successful kings, with Darius wearing his crown in victory and Ahuramazda wearing a towering horned polos crown topped by a star.<sup>72</sup> The deity sits above the defeated rebel monarchs facing Darius. Ahuramazda grants the great king the ring of authority along with victory over the rebels. The fourth column of the text makes this clear, stating, “These IX kings I took prisoner within these battles...The Lie made them rebellious, so that these (men) deceived the people. Afterwards Ahura-mazda put them into my hands.”<sup>73</sup> In this scene, the deity invests the king with the right to rule and grants him victory over all who attempt to oppose him.

<sup>72</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 213.

<sup>73</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 186; translation from Roland G. Kent, *Old Persian: Grammar, Texts, Lexicon*, AOS 33 (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1950), 131.



**Fig. 3.17.** Darius depicted in his majesty and role as king beneath Ahuramazda in the winged sun disc upon the Tripylon doorway. Location: Persepolis. Date: 6<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 311, fig. 13.20.

The northern and southern doorjambes on the Central Building of Darius at Persepolis depict the splendor of the “king in state,” displaying the king in his glory.<sup>74</sup> The doorjambes project the king’s proper identity by drawing parallels between the king and the deity. The doorjamb scene (**fig. 3.17**) shows Darius in his majesty. The king stands adorned with royal robes and a crown as he holds both a staff and lotus blossom, symbols of the rule and life he receives from the deity.<sup>75</sup> The king is before two attendants, smaller than he in stature. The attendants pale in comparison to the king with his intricate clothes and full beard, existing only to serve as they follow him with parasol or bowl and fly whisk. The king’s resemblance to the deity ties their identities together. Ahuramazda, who sits above him in the winged sun disc, wears a crown and robes like the king’s as he holds out a ring symbol before him. As Root

<sup>74</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 285.

<sup>75</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 285.



claims: “In essence, these reliefs of the Great King, in full regalia and followed by smaller attendants, project a clear and simple statement of the monarch’s magnificence.”<sup>76</sup>



25a. Central Building, East Door.

**Fig. 3.18.** Darius enthroned upon a dais beneath Ahuramazda and supported by a variety of subjects representing the different nationalities that made up his empire. Location: Persepolis. Date: 6<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: Root, *The King and Kingship*, pl XVa.

On the same building, the eastern doorjambs display a similar set of relations. Root claims that the representatives of different nations holding up the king (**fig. 3.18**) displays rightly structured relationships: “It is my opinion that the portrayal of the platform carriers as personifications of the specific lands/peoples of the empire is one such symbolic device, a visual metaphor of the way in which the king wished to have his relationship to the subject peoples perceived.”<sup>77</sup> Ahuramazda’s presence above the scene marks the king as the primary connection between the god and the peoples of the earth. The king, placed between the deity and the peoples

<sup>76</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 286.

<sup>77</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 160.

who hold him aloft, is the representative of the deity and therefore *should* be supported by all those he rules. The deity is identified with the royal family, and so the nations are blessed when they rightly support Achaemenid kingship.

Achaemenid royal art portrays the king and deity together in their reign over the nations. The king shares divine glory and attributes, as the king and Ahuramazda mirror one another in their dress and posture. In light of this relationship, the king connects the peoples of the earth with the god, acting as a conduit of blessing for the nations. Psalm 21 reflects similar rhetorical strategies, depicting the king with divine attributes and as a conduit for divine blessing (vv. 5–6).

#### *3.2.1.4 Syro-Palestinian Art*

As we saw in ch. 2, Syro-Palestinian art portrays the king and deity together in scenes of the king's victory. The Megiddo Ivory (**fig. 2.17**) shows the king victorious with the winged solar disc accompanying him. The deity's presence affirms the king's subordination of his enemies, as both king and deity reign over the captives. Multiple seals (**figs. 2.18, 2.19a–c, 2.20a–b**) portray the deity together with the king as he triumphs over and subdues his enemies. These seals symbolize the deity's support of the king.



**Fig. 3.19.** Basalt stele portraying the king presenting the spoils of his victory as the deity simultaneously extends the *hepesš*-sword to grant the king power. Location: Beth-Shean. Date: 1650–1150 BCE. Source: Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 91, fig. 112.

A basalt stele and a cylinder seal from Beth-Shean present the deity bestowing might and victory upon the king. The stele (**fig. 3.19**) constructs a visual merism to represent the king's victory in a campaign.<sup>78</sup> The deity Amun holds out the *hepesš*-sword, a representation of the power and victory he grants the king. The king holds out his right hand as his left holds a bow. The outstretched right hand symbolizes both the king's acceptance of the *hepesš*-sword while simultaneously presenting the spoils the king received in the already-accomplished victory.<sup>79</sup>



**Fig. 3.20.** Cylinder seal displaying the king triumphing over subdued foes as a deity offers the king the *hepesš*-sword. Location: Beth-Shean. Date: 1650–1150 BCE. Source: Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 91, fig. 113.

<sup>78</sup> See Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 90.

<sup>79</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 90.

**Figure 3.20** displays an Asiatic god granting the king victory in the form of the *hepeš*-sword, even though the seal presents the king's victory as already accomplished.<sup>80</sup> The king's drawn bow symbolizes the might he employed to defeat the Asiatics bound beneath the king's target. The theme of the deity granting the king victory and might was prevalent in Syro-Palestinian art. The deity grants the king divine strength and victory as in Psalm 21. Multiple seals, though, portray the king and deity relating in peaceful contexts.



**Fig. 3.21a–b.** The king standing between Amun and Re-harakhty. Location: Southern Palestine. Date: 1650–1150 BCE. Source: Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 81, figs. 92a–b.

Numerous seals from the late Bronze Age period portray the monarch in the presence of different deities, receiving life and confirmation of his rule. In **figs. 3.21a** and **3.21b**, the king stands between Amun and Re-harakhty, who guide him in his work as ruler.

<sup>80</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 90.



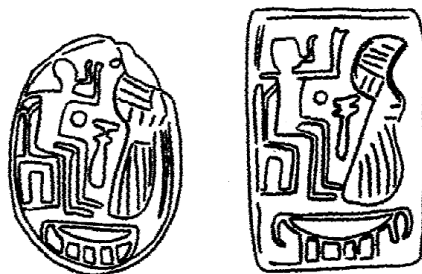
**Fig. 3.22.** An oval plaque showing the king riding with Re in the royal sun barque. Location: Southern Palestine. Date: 1650–1150 BCE. Source: Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 81, figs. 93.

In **fig. 3.22**, the king rides with Re in the royal sun barque as the deity, “confers sovereignty on the king.”<sup>81</sup> An *ankh* between the deity and the king signifies the life that flows between them.

The king rules with the deity, who guides and supports the king with divine life.



**Figs. 3.23a–c.** Seals with royal figure enthroned and surrounded by protective hawks with their wings outspread. Location: (a) Tel Zeror, (b) Gezer, (c) Tell el-Ajjul. Date: 10<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 139, figs. 158a–c.



**Figs. 3.24a–b.** Royal figure enthroned with uraeus protruding from his mouth as he is protected by a hawk. Location: (a) Achzib, (b) Taanach. Date: 10<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 139, figs. 159a–b.

<sup>81</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 80.

A variety of seals found in Southern Palestine and dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> century BCE display an enthroned royal figure (**figs. 3.23a–c and 3.24 a–b**). A solar disc accompanies the figure, either under his raised hand or at the top of the scene (**see figs. 3.23c and 3.24a**). In each of these scenes a falcon or falcons protect the royal figure with outspread wings. In a few of the seals, a uraeus protrudes from the ruler’s mouth (**figs. 3.23a and 3.24a–b**), marking the power of his decrees.<sup>82</sup> These images depict the royal figure as both king and deity, blending royal and divine identities to portray the magnificence of the monarch.<sup>83</sup> The blended features likely reinforced the king’s identity as representative of divine will upon the earth. The imagery demonstrates that the deity reigns over the cosmos through the chosen earthly king.

The minor art of Syria-Palestine reflects trends and motifs that appear in royal art throughout the ANE and within Psalm 21. The king receives life, victory, and authority from divine figures. The king’s rule is legitimized by the presence of deities, who guide him. The king even assumes divine attributes at times. Such art linking royal figures with both foreign and local deities marks the king as a ruler empowered by divine support.

### *3.2.1.5 Divine Support of Royal Figures in ANE Art*

Throughout the ANE, royal art employs various strategies to display the king and royal family as those supported by the divine realm through gifts of life, victory, and authority. Kings appear in the presence of deities who empower the king’s rule over the cosmos. Psalm 21 employs similar literary imagery to depict the overlapping identities of Yahweh and his king. Yahweh grants his king life (v. 5), blessings (vv. 4, 7), divine royal attributes (v. 6), symbols of authority (v. 4), and

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<sup>82</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 136–37.

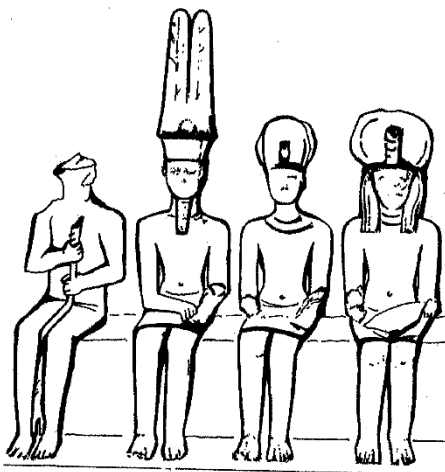
<sup>83</sup> Keel and Uehlinger theorize that the enthroned figure may represent the king or the sun god as ruler, highlighting aspects of the scene that allow for the two possibilities (Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 137). Their hesitation, along with the strong royal themes of the scene that they both point to, suggests to me that royal and divine attributes are purposefully blended so that they coalesce upon these seals.

might (v. 2). Yahweh and his king stand together as Yahweh uses his king to bless the cosmos (v. 7). As we have begun to see, king and deity often mirror one another in dress, stance, and action in both ANE royal art and in Psalm 21. Royal and divine identities overlap, as the king and his gods act simultaneously to achieve shared goals.

### 3.2.2 ANE Royal Art Blending the Actions of Deities and Kings

In ANE royal art, both the deity and the king act together to accomplish their goals. Their roles often mirror one another. Divine and royal actors work in concert to keep chaos at bay and rule over the earth. The deity and the king are often portrayed together, whether in battle scenes, triumph scenes, enthronement scenes, or scenes depicting the maintenance of the cosmos through cultic actions. I propose that this type of royal imagery of deity and king acting in concert informs the conversation about who serves as the primary actor in vv. 9–13 of Psalm 21.

### 3.2.2.1 Egyptian Royal Art



**Fig. 3.25.** Line drawing of statue representing Ramses II enthroned with three deities at Abu Simbel. Location: Abu Simbel. Date: 1279–1212 BCE. Source: Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 146, pl. 1.

In Egyptian texts such as the solar hymns, the deity acts in the divine realm as the king represents the deity on earth.<sup>84</sup> Artistic depictions from ancient Egypt, however, do not mark such a clear separation of roles and locations. Egyptian royal art is replete with examples of deities and kings in overlapping roles, as the king straddled the boundary between human and divine. The king was understood to be a human representative of the deity acting to fulfill the deity's will within the world.<sup>85</sup> Yet, as king, the pharaoh was a human manifestation of Horus. Thus, the pharaoh in his role as monarch was also a divine figure.<sup>86</sup> This ambiguity was not

<sup>84</sup> See Jan Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion in the New Kingdom: Re, Amun, and the Crisis of Polytheism*, *Studies in Egyptology*, trans. Anthony Alcock (London: Kegan Paul International, 1995), 30–37 and 42–43; Jan Assmann, *Ma'at: Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im alten Ägypten* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2006), 160–236.

<sup>85</sup> See O'Conner and Silverman, "Introduction," in *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, XVIII–XIX; Baines, "Kingship, Definition of Culture, Legitimation," in *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, 4–6; Jan Assmann, "State and Religion in the New Kingdom," in *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*, Yale Egyptological Studies 3, ed. W. K. Simpson (New Haven: Yale Egyptological Seminar, 1989), 55–88; Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 44–45 and 180–81; Thomas Schneider, "Sacred Kingship," in *Egypt: The World of the Pharaohs*, ed. Regine Schulz and Matthias Seidel (Köln: Könenmann, 1998), 325–28; Moenikes, "Psalm 2,7b und die Göttlichkeit des israelitischen Königs," 620–21.

<sup>86</sup> See Cyril Aldred, *The Egyptians*, rev. ed., *Ancient Peoples and Places* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987), 177–78; Frankfurt, *Kingship and the Gods*, 56–58; O'Conner and Silverman, "Introduction," XXI–XXVI;



settled completely until death, when the pharaoh merged with the divine in afterlife.<sup>87</sup> On earth though, the king held these identities together and bridged the gap between the roles—a human representative before the gods and an ambassador for the divine upon the earth.<sup>88</sup> In multiple artistic contexts, the king’s identity merges with the divine. One example of this is the co-enthronement of Ramses II with the deities Amun, Ptah, and Re-Harakhti (**fig. 3.25**; Ramses is third from the left). Ramses II is the same height and size of the deities, marking him as their partner.<sup>89</sup> The location of the statues in the midst of the temple reinforces the notion that Ramses II belongs among the gods, a human monarch who rules with divine authority.<sup>90</sup>

In battle scenes, the king and deity often act together to defeat Egypt’s enemies. As seen in chapter 2 (**fig. 2.7a–b**), Thutmose IV’s chariot displays the destruction and subjugation of Egypt’s enemies. The frame of the two battle scenes consists of a constellation of symbols representing the king’s enthronement upon the subject nations. The battle scenes portray the king as the source of destruction in the midst of the enemy’s chaotic forces. In each scene, deities accompany the king. The divine partners defend the king from harm and subdue Egypt’s enemies together with the king. The king dominates the battlefield because of his relationship to the divine.<sup>91</sup> The left battle scene portrays the war god Montu alongside the archer king, supporting

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Gay Robins, “The Small Golden Shrine of Tutankhamun: An Interpretation,” in *Millions of Jubilees: Studies in Honor of David P. Silverman*, ed. Zahi Hawass and Jennifer Houser Wegner, Cahier 39 (Cairo: The American University in Cairo, 2011), 210–11; Moenikes, “Psalm 2,7b,” 620–21.

<sup>87</sup> See Aldred, *The Egyptians*, 179; Rainer Stadelmann, “The Tombs of the Pharaoh – Between Tradition and Innovation,” in *Egypt: The World of the Pharaohs*, 108–17; Regine Schulz and Hourig Sourouzain, “The Temples – Royal Gods and Divine Kings,” in *Egypt: The World of the Pharaohs*, 152–215.

<sup>88</sup> See Georges Posener, *De la divinité du pharaon*, Cahiers de la Société Asiatique 15 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1960); Boyo Ockinga, *Die Gottebenbildlichkeit im alten Ägypten und im alten Testament*, ÄAT 7 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1984); Silverman, “The Nature of Egyptian Kingship,” 66–7; Schneider, “Sacred Kingship,” 323–29; Robins, “The Small Golden Shrine,” 211.

<sup>89</sup> MacQuitty, *Abu Simbel*, 107.

<sup>90</sup> See Assmann, “State and Religion,” 55–88; O’Conner and Silverman, “Introduction,” XVIII–XIX; Baines, “Kingship,” 3–47; Silverman, “The Nature of Egyptian Kingship,” 49–92; Schneider, “Sacred Kingship,” 324–27.

<sup>91</sup> Calvert, “Vehicle of the Sun,” 48–53.

his arms as he prepares to loose another arrow into the enemy masses (**fig. 2.7a**). The deity stands close behind the king, as Amy Calvert describes it, “almost absorbed by the body of the pharaoh.”<sup>92</sup> The right battle scene portrays the king and the Horus falcon together preparing to smite an enemy (**fig. 2.7b**). The king conquers his enemies in these scenes, and yet he succeeds only because of the presence of Montu, Nekbet, and Horus. Montu and Horus fell all who stand against the king, acting through the king’s own hand.

As seen above, a relief of Seti I at Karnak (**fig. 3.1**) evinces a similar example of deity and king together in battle. The king charges into the midst of the chaotic mass of enemy Shashu, above the fray atop his chariot. His horses trample those before him as fallen enemies are crushed beneath the chariot wheels. The king’s bow identifies him as the sole destructive force upon the field of battle.<sup>93</sup> The king conquers alone; no other Egyptian fights alongside him. Not even a chariot driver is depicted. The king guides the chariot with the reins about his waist.<sup>94</sup> Yet, divine partners surround the king. The solar disc, Horus falcon, and Nekbet vulture all accompany the king into battle. The presence of the deities facilitates the king’s subjugation of the foreigners. The king’s strength subdues foreigners, and yet the strength the king wields flows from his divine partners. The king creates order from the chaotic enemies just as Re orders the

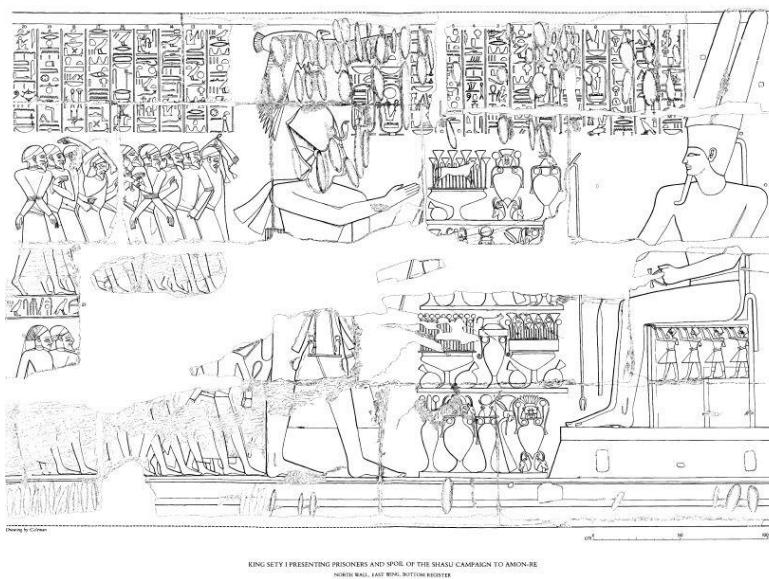
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<sup>92</sup> Calvert explains that the visual stacking of the pharaoh, Montu, and the *flabellum* held by the *ankh* behind them implies a shared identification between pharaoh and Montu (Calvert, “Vehicle of the Sun,” 50; cf. Heinrich Schäfer, *Principles of Egyptian Art* [Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1974], 180–81; Lanny Bell, “Aspects of the Cult of the Deified Tutankhamun,” in *Mélanges Gamal Eddin Mokhtar*, ed. Paule Posener-Krieger [Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale du Caire, 1985], 33–4; Cyril Aldred, *Akhenaten* [London: Hudson & Thames, 1988], 130).

<sup>93</sup> Indicated by the arrow riddled enemies lying about the field, see LeMon, *Picturing Righteous Violence*, forthcoming; W. Stevenson Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt*, rev. ed. with additions by William Kelly Simpson (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 370–73; Jaromir Malek, *Egyptian Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 1999), 310–11.

<sup>94</sup> Robins remarks that the absence of a chariot driver highlights the “heroic image” of the king (Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 178).

land daily.<sup>95</sup> The king and his deities assume different roles even as royal art blends their actions upon the battlefield.

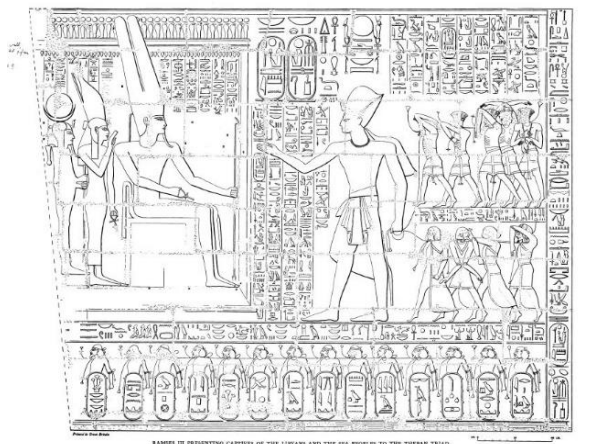


**Fig. 2.6.** Seti I triumph scene before enthroned Amun-Re. Location: Temple of Amun, Karnak. Date: 14<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Sety I*, pl. 8.

Scenes of triumph in Egyptian royal art display the joint roles of the king and Egypt’s deities in accomplishing victory. As seen in chapter 2, the deity and the king appear together in Seti I’s presentation scene (**fig. 2.6**). Here the king seems to be the primary actor as he presents bound enemies and their spoils before the enthroned deity. However, both the deity and the king reference how Amun enabled the king’s success in battle. The king claims that he was able to subdue the now captive enemy chieftains “by the valor that you gave me upon every foreign

<sup>95</sup> On the chariot scenes as symbolic of the king “confronting Evil and Chaos with Right and Order,” see Cyrus Aldred, *Egyptian Art in the Days of the Pharaohs: 3100–320 BC* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 189; on the general cooperation of the king and deity(ies) in the work of subduing chaos, see Assman, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 42–43; Bernd Janowski, *Arguing with God: A Theological Anthropology of the Psalms*, trans. Armin Siedlecki (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2013), 146–49; Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 44–5 and 177–78; Schneider, “Sacred Kingship,” 334; O’Conner and Silverman, “Introduction,” XVIII–XX; Baines, “Kingship,” 10–14.

land.”<sup>96</sup> Amun asserts, “My bodily son, my beloved, Lord of the Two Lands, Menma‘atre: I set the fear of you over every foreign country, your mace being over the heads of their chiefs.”<sup>97</sup> The king’s success is rooted in the deity’s assistance. Seti leads these enemies before Amun only because Amun empowered Seti, setting his mace “over the heads of their chiefs.” The enthroned deity and the king act in harmony to subdue chaotic enemies and order the world.



**Fig. 3.26.** Ramses III presentation scene before Amun, Mut, and Khonshu. Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *Earlier Historical Records of Ramses III*, pl. 43.

Seti I’s presentation relief is not unique, such scenes were a common part of the royal repertoire during the NK period.<sup>98</sup> **Figure 3.26**, featuring Ramses III, serves as an example of how this motif developed. Similar to the Seti scene (**fig. 2.6**), the king leads bound enemies into the presence of the Theban triad.<sup>99</sup> Enemy leaders atop name rings, representing locations bound in subservience to the king, sit beneath the king’s feet. The king effectively tramples these

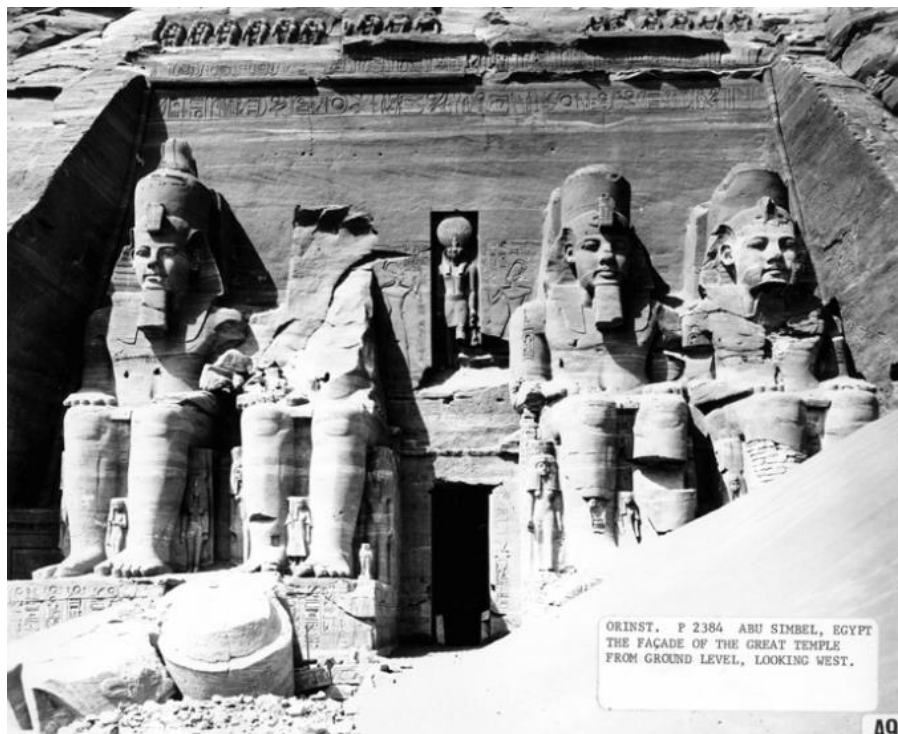
<sup>96</sup> The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Seti I*, 25.

<sup>97</sup> The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Seti I*, 25.

<sup>98</sup> For other examples, see Ramses II at Abu Simbel (MacQuitty, *Abu Simbel*, 112; Śliwa, “Victorious Ruler Representations,” 111, fig. 15) and Ramses III at Medinet Habu (The Epigraphic Survey, *Earlier Historical Records of Ramses III*, pls. 26, 43, and 44). On this larger motif, see Śliwa, “Victorious Ruler Representations,” 108–12.

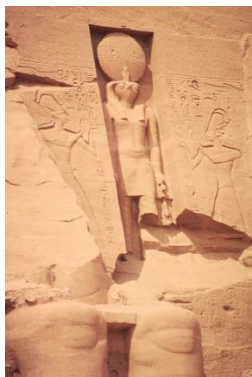
<sup>99</sup> Amun is enthroned as Mut and Khonshu stand behind him. It is likely that Mut and Khonshu were added to the scene later (see Edgerton and Wilson, *Historical Records of Ramses III*, 44).

enemies, indicating his dominion. Amun sits enthroned upon these bound peoples. Mut and Khonshu stand upon them as well. Again, the text before the king proclaims, “I have returned in valor, my arms (laden) with captives, the leaders of every land, through the decrees which issued from thy mouth. That which thou hast promised has come to pass. Thy mighty sword is mine, a reinforcement, that I may overthrow every one who assails me and the lands may behold me (only) to tremble.”<sup>100</sup> The scene type portrays the king and the enthroned deity working in concert.



**Fig. 3.27a.** The great façade of the temple at Abu Simbel. Location: Abu Simbel. Date: 1279–1212 BCE. Source: [https://oi.uchicago.edu/gallery/abu-simbel#11A9\\_72dpi.png](https://oi.uchicago.edu/gallery/abu-simbel#11A9_72dpi.png).

<sup>100</sup> Edgerton and Wilson, *Historical Records*, 45.



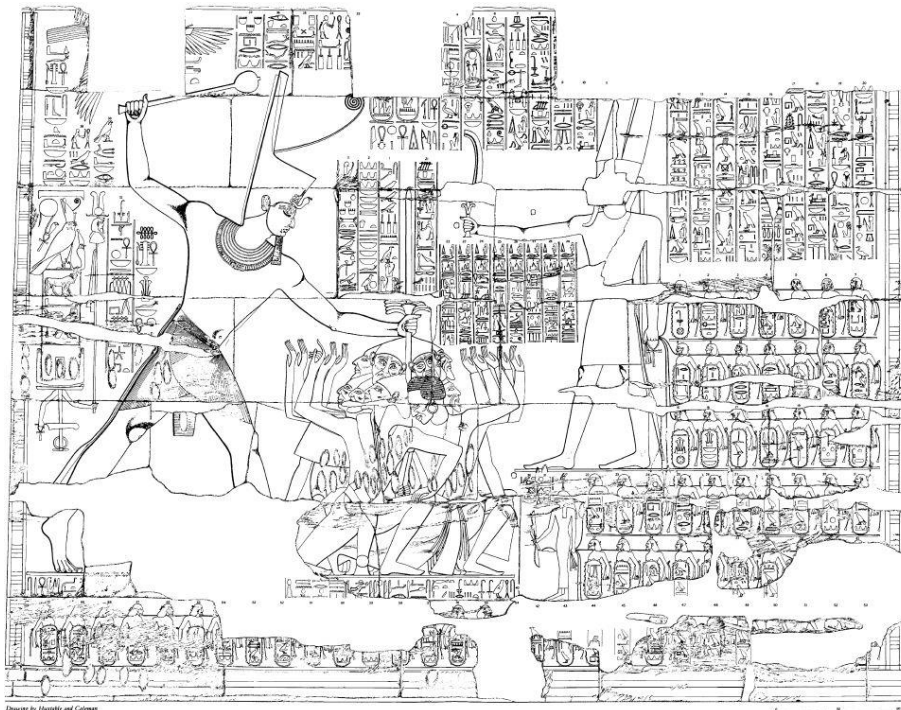
**Fig. 3.27b.** Niche above the entrance from which Re-Harakhty rises as Ramses II present a representation of the goddess *Maat* to the rising sun god. Location: Abu Simbel. Date: 1279–1212 BCE. Source: Mary Ann Sullivan, <https://www.bluffton.edu/homepages/facstaff/sullivanm/egypt/abusimbel/ramses/ramses.html>.

The king's and deity's roles overlap in Egyptian royal art as the two work to maintain order in the cosmos. The great façade of Ramses II's temple at Abu Simbel (**fig. 3.27a**) consists of four monumental representations of an enthroned Ramses II flanking either side of the temple entrance. The sun god Re-Harakhty rises from a niche above the entrance (**fig. 3.27b**). As the sun god rises to restore order, two smaller representation of Ramses II on either side of him offer up the goddess *Maat*.<sup>101</sup> The façade portrays Ramses and Re-Harakhty working together to order the world. The temple at Abu Simbel encouraged the Nubians on Egypt's southern border to view Ramses II as a deified figure, acting to bring about the will of the divine in the world.<sup>102</sup> Pharaoh's maintenance of *maat* in this world supports the deity's work.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>101</sup> See Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 180–81.

<sup>102</sup> Śliwa, "Victorious Ruler Representations," 114–16; Rainer Stadelmann, "The Builder Pharaoh: The Temples," in *The Pharaohs*, ed. Christiane Ziegler (New York: Rizzoli, 2002), 189; Schulz and Sourouzian, "The Temples," 214.

<sup>103</sup> Richard H. Wilkinson explains the king's presentation of *Maat* to a deity: "Maat represented truth, order, balance, correctness, justice, cosmic harmony, and other qualities which precisely embodied the responsibility of the king's role. In presenting Maat, therefore, the long not only acknowledged his responsibility in this area, but also effectively maintained Maat through the potency of the ritual itself" (*The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt* [New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000], 88). See also Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 181; Schulz and Sourouzian, "The Temples," 214; MacQuitty, *Abu Simbel*, 133–34; Kurt Lange and Max Hirmer, *Egypt: Architecture, Sculpture, Painting in Three Thousand Years*, with contributions by Eberhard Otto and Christiane Desroches-Noblecourt (London: Phaidon, 1968), 506; Stadelmann, "The Builder Pharaoh," 189.



**Fig. 2.3.** Seti I smiting at Karnak. Location: Temple of Amun, Karnak. Date: 14<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Seti I*, pl. 15a.

The classic smiting scene (see **fig. 2.3**) projects an image of the king’s power. It shows the deity and king at work together, collapsing many of the Egyptian scene types discussed above into one symbolic piece. The scene portrays the results of the king in battle, i.e., his enemies are subdued before him. The deity both leads enemies into the king’s presence and presents the *hepeš*-sword to the king, thus empowering the monarch’s victory. The smiting scene mirrors a cultic type-scene, in which the king presents re-ordered chaos to the deity.<sup>104</sup> In the smiting scene the king presents a representation of *maat*—subdued chaos in the form of

<sup>104</sup> José das Candeias Sales, “The Smiting of the Enemies Scenes in the Mortuary Temple of Ramses III at Medinet Habu,” *Journal of Oriental and Ancient History* 1 (2012): 96; Keel, “Symbols of Power,” 206–08. Śliwa claims, “The scene takes place in the presence of a god, presumably it is a sacrifice in his honor” (Śliwa, “Victorious Ruler Representations,” 103). Also see Aldred, who claims of the Narmer Palette, “The sacrifice is performed before the supreme sky-god Horus, of whom Narmer is also an incarnation, represented as a falcon with a human arm holding captive a personified papyrus thicket, probably symbolizing the inhabitants of the Delta” (*Egyptian Art in the Days of the Pharaohs*, 34).

enemies—to the deity just as Ramses II presents *Maat* to Re-Harakhti above the entrance to Abu Simbel.

The smiting scene indicates that the king does not work alone. In the Seti smiting scene, the text before Amun’s face reads, “Receive unto yourself the scimitar, (O) mighty king, as your mace has smitten the Nine Bows!”<sup>105</sup> The text above the deity’s head presents a speech by Amun that proclaims how the deity works for the king in the north, south, east, and west from the heavens to the earth, bringing victory to the king.<sup>106</sup> Meanwhile, the Horus falcon spreads its wings defensively behind the king’s head, and the goddess Thebes ushers more bound enemies into Seti’s presence. The smiting scene depicts the king and Egypt’s deities together subduing all peoples before the king.



**Figs. 2.7b.** Left exterior side of Thutmose IV’s chariot. Location: Thutmose IV’s tomb, Valley of Kings. Date: 1400–1390 BCE. Source: Calvert, “Vehicle of the Sun,” fig. 8.

<sup>105</sup> The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Seti I*, 51.

<sup>106</sup> The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Seti I*, 51.



To summarize this diverse material, we can observe that Egyptian royal art portrays the deity and king together in their reign. The pair work side by side to destroy enemies in battle and to uphold the cosmos. Multiple scene types display the shared action and goals of Egypt's king and deities. Royal art depicts the king and deity acting cooperatively. The hand of the deity and king overlap as they destroy chaotic enemies upon the battlefield (**fig. 2.7b**). Turning to the imagery of Psalm 21:9–13, we note that the psalm seems to portray a divine actor at some points and a royal actor at others. I contend that the psalm employs ambiguous imagery and verbal constructions to blend the action of king and deity in vv. 9–13. Likewise, Egyptian royal art blends the actions of deities and kings to the point where clear lines cannot be drawn between a primary and a supporting actor. Egyptian royal art does not stand alone in this practice, Mesopotamian and Achaemenid art contain examples of kings and deities acting together in various scene types.

### 3.2.2.2 Mesopotamian Royal Art



**Fig. 3.28.** Victory stele of Naram-Sin. Location: Susa. Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. Source: Photographed by Rama, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Victory\\_stele\\_of\\_Naram-Suen#/media/File:Victory\\_stele\\_of\\_Naram-Sin\\_of\\_Akkad-Sb\\_4-IMG\\_0556-white.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Victory_stele_of_Naram-Suen#/media/File:Victory_stele_of_Naram-Sin_of_Akkad-Sb_4-IMG_0556-white.jpg).

Royal and divine actors also overlap visually in Mesopotamian royal art. The Victory Stele of Naram-Sin (**fig. 3.28**) displays the king subduing enemies alongside and even as the divine.<sup>107</sup> In this scene, the king's enemies are swept aside, with the dead lying upon the ground or tumbling over the precipice. Live enemies line the right side of the scene in submissive postures.<sup>108</sup> The

<sup>107</sup> Portraying the king as divine is an atypical strategy for Mesopotamian royal art (see Winter, "Touched by the Gods," 75–77).

<sup>108</sup> One enemy even cowers, holding a broken spear with its tip pointing down in a sign of utter powerlessness (see Westenholz, "The King, The Emperor, and the Empire," 104).

elements combine to focus attention upward toward the victorious king.<sup>109</sup> As the focal point of the stele the king tramples upon a defeated enemy. The divine king subdues his enemies, empowered by the divine symbols above him. The king carries an array of weaponry—bow, arrow, axe, and javelin—connecting him to violent destruction before him.<sup>110</sup> The two enemies standing across from the king submit in pleading postures—one with his fists before his face and the other with an open hand raised outward towards the king.<sup>111</sup> The warriors before and underneath the king (**fig. 3.29**) present two options for his enemies, submit or be destroyed. The stele’s imagery allows for no other option. The king stands taller than both his own soldiers and those of the enemy. He looks up towards astral symbols above the plane of the battlefield.<sup>112</sup> The horned crown upon his head, a crown that marks divine beings, identifies him with these divine symbols.<sup>113</sup> The king acts as a god as he subdues all enemies before him.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Irene Winter, “Tree(s) on the Mountain,” in *On Art in the Ancient Near East Volume 2: From the Third Millennium BCE*, ed. Irene Winter, CHANE 34.2 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 109 and 114.

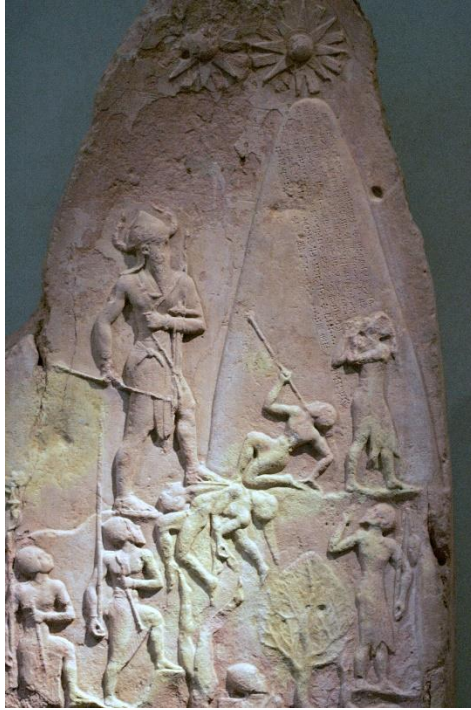
<sup>110</sup> See Winter, “Tree(s) on the Mountain,” 112; LeMon, *Picturing Righteous Violence*, forthcoming. On the bow in particular, see Westenholz, “The King, The Emperor, and the Empire,” 104–05; Richard H. Wilkinson, “The Representation of the Bow in the Art of Egypt and the Ancient Near East,” *JANES* 20 (1991): 83–99.

<sup>111</sup> Megan Cifarelli, “Gesture and Alterity in the Art of Ashurnasirpal II of Assyria,” *The Art Bulletin* 80 (1998): 214–18 and 223–25; Winter, “How Tall Was Naram-Sin’s Victory Stele?” in *On Art in the Ancient Near East Volume 2*, 136; Strawn, “The Iconography of Fear,” 105–23.

<sup>112</sup> Julia Asher-Greve, “Observations on the Historical Relevance of Visual Imagery in Mesopotamia,” in *Histoire et Conscience historique dans les Civilisations du Proche-Orient Ancien*, ed. Agnès Benoit (Leuven: Reunion des Musees Nationaux, 1990), 180; cf. Jutta Börker-Klähn, *Alt Vorderasiatische Bildstelen und vergleichbare Felsreliefs*, BF 4 (Mainz: P. v. Zabern, 1982), 134–36; Dana Bänder, *Die Siegesstele des Naramsin und ihre Stellung in Kunst und Kulturgeschichte*, Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte 103 (Hesse: Schulz-Kirchner, 1995), 172 and 185; Westenholz, “The King, The Emperor, and the Empire,” 105–06.

<sup>113</sup> Westenholz, “The King, The Emperor, and the Empire,” 101–04; Winter, “Tree(s) on the Mountain,” 110 and 114; Winter, “Sex, Rhetoric, and the Public Monument,” in *On Art in the Ancient Near East Volume 2*, 91–92.

<sup>114</sup> Winter, though, points out that Naram-Sin still relies upon divine support. He wears divine emblems about his neck and looks up to the divine symbols. His horn crown indicates his divine status, marking him as a sort of minor deity, beneath the deities who rule the cosmos. The king stands above all humans and serves as the conduit between the deities and humanity (Winter, “Touched by the Gods,” 76. Speaking of Naram-Sin’s visual and textual rhetorical strategies, she points out: “In text, Naram-Sin was the first to take on the title, ‘King of the Four Quarters’ along with that of ‘God of the Land,’ in denoting his elevated status—fully consonant with the expansionist tendencies of the Akkadian period that have led some colleagues to refer to this period as one of ‘empire.’ I would resist this term, arguing instead for the establishment of a ‘nation-state’ (see Fallers 1974; Bhaba 1990), unifying formerly autonomous polities under a centralized rule. The confluence of political change and title/status changes suggests a fusion of the political and the religious. Whether consciously, as an overtly political act, or



**Fig. 3.29.** Detail of the Victory Stele of Naram-Sin. Location: Susa. Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> century BCE.

Source: Photographed by Rama,

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Victory\\_stele\\_of\\_Naram\\_Sin\\_9064.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Victory_stele_of_Naram_Sin_9064.jpg).

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unconsciously, motivated by culturally generated requisites, the move was likely to have been driven by engines not unlike those marking the shift from Republican to Imperial Rome” (Winter, “Touched by the Gods,” 76).



**Figs. 3.30a–b:** Wall reliefs from Ashurnasirpal II's palace at Nimrud featuring Ashur as the winged solar disc at the king's side in images of war and triumph. Location: Northwest Palace, Nimrud. Date: 9<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Source: Meuszyński, *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen*, Tafel 2, B-3 and B-11.

Early Neo-Assyrian royal art employs similar themes to construe the monarch's acts upon the battlefield. Many of Ashurnasirpal II's throne room reliefs depict the king with the winged solarized Ashur at his side in scenes of battle and triumph. **Figures 3.30a and 3.30b** portray Ashur and the king together in the midst of battle. Both Ashurnasirpal II and Ashur draw their

bows as they advance upon their enemies.<sup>115</sup> In **fig. 3.30a**, the bows of both the king and the deity connect their presence on the battlefield to the arrow-riddled enemy now trampled beneath the chariot horses.<sup>116</sup> Other slain enemies lie off to the side at the top of the register. The enemy closest to the oncoming chariot raises his right hand as he lowers his bow in submission, turning to flee the pair's onslaught.<sup>117</sup> The slain and fleeing enemies indicate the eventual fate of the three archers who still stand against the king and Ashur. **Figure 3.30b** pictures Ashur and Ashurnasirpal II similarly, as they storm a fortified city. In both scenes Ashur's presence legitimizes the king's role and actions against his enemies. The reliefs of throne room display the king's martial prowess and victory, connecting the king's success to Ashur's presence at the king's side.<sup>118</sup>



**Fig. 3.12.** Two reliefs depicting Ashurnasirpal II and the deity Ashur receiving captives. Location: Northwest Palace, Nimrud. Date: 9<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Source: Meuszyński, *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen*, Tafel 2, B-6 and 7b.

Many of the wall reliefs close to the throne room entrance (**fig. 3.12**) show Ashur in the winged sun disc alongside the king in battle, triumph, and hunting scenes. In the triumph scene

<sup>115</sup> Ataç discusses the close connection between the deity in the winged solar disc and the Assyrian king (Mehmet-Ali Ataç, *The Mythology of Kingship in Neo-Assyrian Art* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014], 123). Winter points out that deity is present with the king in multiple different reliefs and scene types throughout the throne room, mirroring the king's action by, "shooting bow and arrow as the king shoots, standing when he stands, gesturing as he gestures (see slabs 3a, 9b, 5a, 11a)" ("Royal Rhetoric," 28).

<sup>116</sup> LeMon, *Picturing Righteous Violence*, forthcoming; Russell, "The Program of the Palace," 684–85.

<sup>117</sup> Cifarelli, "Gesture and Alterity," 223–25.

<sup>118</sup> Winter, "Royal Rhetoric," 27–9; see also LeMon's discussion of the "militarized winged sun disc" and how its presence denotes the military power and success granted to the king by the deity (LeMon, *Yahweh's Winged Form in the Psalms*, 95–101).

portrayed in **fig. 3.12**, the deity's posture mimics that of the king. Rather than holding a bow, Ashur now holds the ring down at his side.<sup>119</sup> The king and deity's roles blend together. The king functions as the deity's representative and the deity empowers the king's actions.<sup>120</sup> In **fig. 3.12** the ring that the deity holds before the king signals the ruler's dominance over the bound prisoners led before the king.<sup>121</sup> The scene mirrors the Standard Inscription that accompanies the reliefs, which names the king as a "valiant man who acts with the support of Assur, his lord, and has no rival among the princes of the four quarters."<sup>122</sup> Both text and image proclaim that the king and the deity are united in agency and dominion.

Later Neo-Assyrian kings discontinued the practice of depicting the deity alongside the king in palace reliefs of battle and triumph. It is possible, though, that the absence of the deity further underlined the king's role as the "perfect likeness of the god."<sup>123</sup> Later Neo-Assyrian kings could be declared as god in textual material, and so the representation of the king alone in scenes of battle and triumph in later periods may indicate a further blending of the king and the divine. In this period, the king's presence necessarily indicates the deity's presence.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Reade, "Ideology and Propaganda," 332; Winter, "Royal Rhetoric," 27–29; Russell, "The Program of the Palace," 684–85.

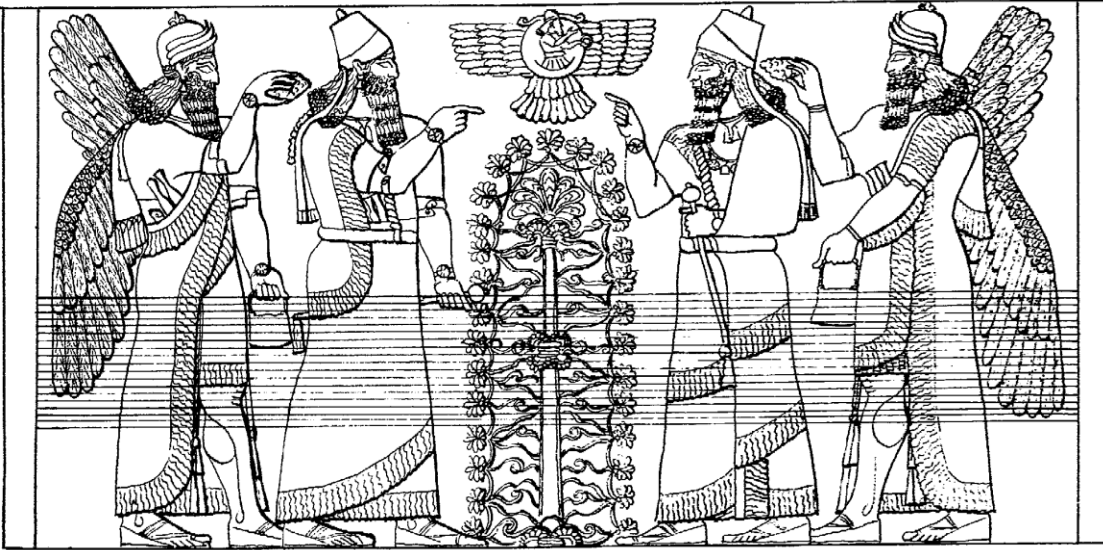
<sup>120</sup> See Russell on the connected identities of the king and deity in these scenes ("The Program of the Palace," 685–86).

<sup>121</sup> See Root, *The King and Kingship*, 172–75, 187–89, and 205–06.

<sup>122</sup> A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC I (1114-859 BC)*, RIMA 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 275: A.O. 101.23, (henceforth, RIMA 2). The Standard Inscription goes on to describe the king as a "marvelous shepherd, fearless in battle, mighty flood-tide which has no opponent, the king who subdues those insubordinate to him, he who rules all peoples, strong male who treads upon the necks of his foes, trampler of all enemies, he who breaks up the forces of the rebellious, the king who acts with the support of the great gods, his lords, and has conquered all lands, gained dominion over all the highlands and received their tribute, capturer of hostages, he who is victorious over all countries."

<sup>123</sup> See the letters to the ruler Esarhaddon discussed in Winter, "Art in Empire: The Royal Image and the Visual Dimensions of Assyrian Ideology," in *On Art in the Ancient Near East Volume 1*, 92; Machinist, "Kingship and Divinity," 171–74.

<sup>124</sup> For example, in a coronation hymn for the king Ashurbanipal, the ruler is referred to as the sun god (see Winter, "Touched by the Gods," 85; Machinist, "Kingship and Divinity," 172–73; Martin Arneht, "'Möge Samaš dich in das Hirtenamt über vier Weltgegenden einsetzen.' Der Krönungshymnus Assurbanipals' [SAA II, 11] und die Solarisierung des neuassyrischen Königtums," *ZABR* 5 [1999]: 28–53). Also, in a text picturing an Assyrian king departing to battle in his war chariot, the king is described as: "The king who stands in the chariot is the warrior



**Fig. 3.31.** Wall relief featuring the Assyrian king tending the sacred tree and flanked by two genii figures. The winged sun disc of Ashur/Shamash is above the scene. Location: Ashurnasirpal II's North-West Palace, Nimrud. Date: 9<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Source: Meuszyński, *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen*, Tafel I, B-23.

The throne room of Ashurnasirpal II is a microcosm of the palace's royal artistic program, blending the artistic themes of the different wings of the Northwest Palace in a single room to display the king in battle, triumph, and cultic maintenance of the cosmos.<sup>125</sup> The battle and triumph scenes vastly outnumber cultic oriented scenes. Only two reliefs within the throne room itself (**fig. 3.31**) depict the king performing cultic-priestly acts. The reliefs of the king in

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king, the lord (god) Ninurta" (see Winter, "Touched by the Gods," 85; Livingstone, *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea*, 100-02).

<sup>125</sup> Russell claims that the three different thematic aspects of Ashurnasirpal's rule are found in different suites of the palace, which he names as "military success in the west suite, service to the gods in the east suite, and divine protection of the king in the south suite" ("The Program of the Palace," 705). These three thematic aspects come together in the throne room: "In the relief decoration of the throne-room suite, all three of these themes were brought together" ("The Program of the Palace," 705). Cf. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 250-52; Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 99-101.



cultic action before the deity, however, are placed in focal points and centered on the wall rather than presented in double registers.<sup>126</sup>

The scene authorizes the king as the chosen ruler of the deity.<sup>127</sup> Both cultic reliefs portray mirror images of the king attending the “sacred tree,” symbolizing the king as a link between the human and divine worlds.<sup>128</sup> Winged genii accompany the king, standing behind him and holding buckets and purifiers.<sup>129</sup> The king holds a mace in one hand and makes a sign of homage toward Ashur with his other hand.<sup>130</sup> Ashur in the winged solar disc sits above the tree and extends the ring of authority towards the king.<sup>131</sup> The king stands as the link between the genii at work maintaining divine order and Ashur above the tree.<sup>132</sup> The genii behind the king purify and protect the space, indexing its sacred nature.<sup>133</sup> The function of the tree itself has been much debated; the tree may represent a tree of life, a sacred tree tended by the king before the

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<sup>126</sup> See Julian Reade, “Twelve Ashurnasirpal Reliefs,” *Iraq* 27 (1965): 122–23. Winter refers to these reliefs as “the organizing pivot-points of the Throneroom,” (“Royal Rhetoric,” 9); Russell, “The Program of the Palace,” 707.

<sup>127</sup> Russell, “The Program of the Palace,” 710–11.

<sup>128</sup> On this relief and its indication of the king’s priestly role, see Reade, “Ideology and Propaganda,” 336. Ataç also discusses the sacral or priestly realm indicated by these “sacred tree” scenes and their connection to the king and how they place the king within this sacral realm (see Ataç, *The Mythology of Kingship*, 117–19; also see Irene Winter, “Royal Rhetoric,” 9–10 and 23; Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 233–34). Various interpretations concerning what the tree and the king’s action on either side of it represents have been proffered (see the extensive bibliography and discussion in Russell, “The Program of the Palace,” 687–96). My understanding of the scene and its meaning is founded upon the arguments of Reade, Ataç, Winter, and Bahrani.

<sup>129</sup> On the identification of the cone held by the genii as an item meant for purification, see E. B. Tylor, “The Winged Figures of the Assyrian and Other Ancient Monuments,” *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 12 (1890): 383–93; Cyril J. Gadd, *The Assyrian Sculptures in the British Museum* (London: The British Museum, 1934), 51–52; Russell, “The Program of the Palace,” 674–82 and 709–10.

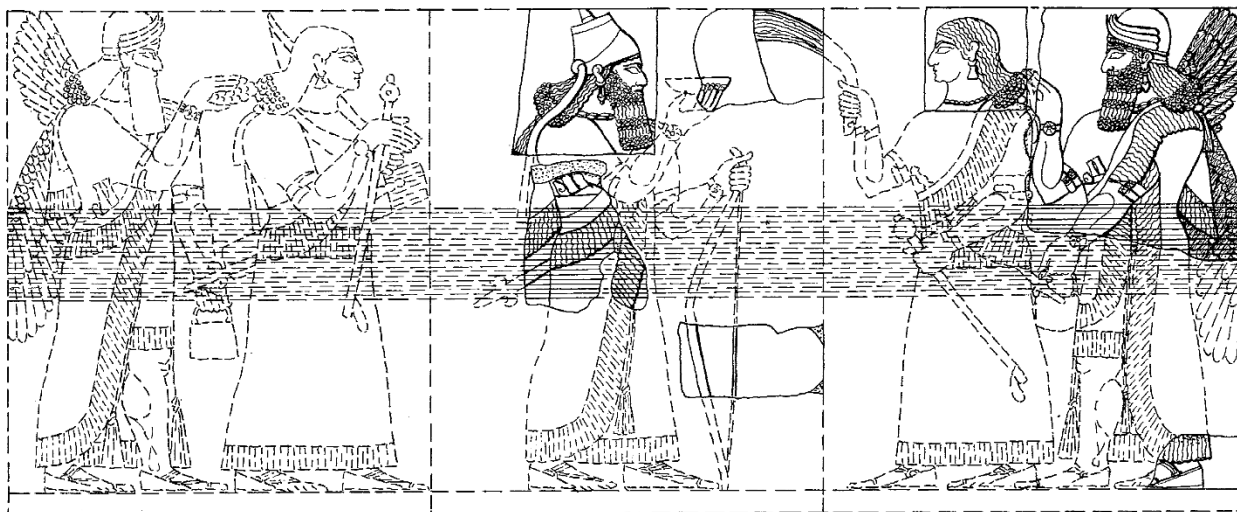
<sup>130</sup> See Strawn, “The Iconography of Fear,” 106–113.

<sup>131</sup> Cool Root, *The King and Kingship*, 172–75.

<sup>132</sup> See Winter, who claims: “The symmetry and particularly the un-‘realistic’ repetition of the royal figure and genii serve to lift this most important function of the king—the metaphoric maintenance and substance of life through the care of the tree—up to the realm of the ‘ideal’ world that implies the divine” (“Royal Rhetoric,” 24). She asserts that slabs 13 and 23 represent, “the full statement of the maintenance of the divine order by genii with lustral cone and bucket and through the person of the king” (“Royal Rhetoric,” 10).

<sup>133</sup> Both physically, as the scenes mark the entrance to the throne room and the space of the enthroned king, and artistically as the scene portrayed concerns sacred action (see Russell, “The Program of the Palace,” 707–10; Winter, “Royal Rhetoric,” 8–10).

deity, or an apotropaic symbol protecting the king's presence. Whatever it symbolizes, at their essences the reliefs indicate the king's role in maintaining a connection with the deity.<sup>134</sup>



**Fig. 3.32.** Reconstruction of wall relief fragments displaying the motif of the king holding the bow and libation bowl, surrounded by human and divine attendants. Location: Ashurnasirpal II's North West Palace, Room C, Nimrud. Date: 9<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Source: Meuszyński, *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen*, Tafel 4, C-6, 7, and 8.

Directly across from the king's throne on the back wall of room C, wall reliefs portray the king holding a bow in one hand and a bowl in the other "making offerings to the gods...accompanied by both human and divine attendants."<sup>135</sup> These reliefs (**figs. 3.31–32**) stood across from one another, one behind the king upon his throne and one directly across from the king. The reliefs together mark the king's cultic service to the gods and his divine authorization to rule.<sup>136</sup> Neo-

<sup>134</sup> Reade, "Ideology and Propaganda," 336–39; Simo Parpola, "The Assyrian Tree of Life: Tracing the Origins of Jewish Monotheism and Greek Philosophy," *JNES* 52 (1993): 165–69; Barbara N. Porter, "Sacred Trees, Date Palms, and the Royal Persona of Ashurnasirpal II," *JNES* 52 (1993): 129–39; Pauline Albenda, "Assyrian Sacred Trees in the Brooklyn Museum," *Iraq* 56 (1994): 124–33; Winter, "Royal Rhetoric," 9–10; Russell, "The Program of the Palace," 687–96 and 707–11; Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 233–34.

<sup>135</sup> Russell, "The Program of the Palace," 711.

<sup>136</sup> The motif of the king holding out a libation bowl is prevalent in suite G, wherein the king's role as priest and the king's role as victorious warrior are interconnected through the reliefs. The reliefs of suite G display the motif of the king with libation bowl alongside the motif of the victorious king holding bow and arrows (see Russell, "The Program of the Palace," 682–87, particularly 686–87). Brandes understands the motif of the king holding the bowl as indicative of the king performing ablutions and purifying his weapons (M. A. Brandes, "La Salle dite 'G' du palais d'Assurnasirpal II à Kalakh, lieu de cérémonie rituelle," in *Actes de la XVIIe Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*, ed. André Finet [Ham-sur-Heure: Comité belge de recherches en Mésopotamie, 1970], 147–54),

Assyrian scenes of battle, triumph, and cultic performance blended the actions and identities of the king and the deity.<sup>137</sup>

Like Egyptian royal art, Mesopotamian royal art is replete with examples of the king and his deities acting together in battle, triumph, and in maintaining the cosmos. The actions of royal and divine subjects blend together in royal art. The ambiguity of Psalm 21:9–13 may similarly reflect a textual example of blending divine and royal actors. In ANE royal art, no actor stands as primary over against the other in scenes of battle or triumph. The king and deity together conquer and reign over the cosmos.

### 3.2.2.3 Achaemenid Royal Art

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Figure 3. Seal of Darius from Thebes (after Collon 1988, fig. 558).

**Fig. 3.33.** Cylinder seal of Darius portraying the king hunting lions alongside the deity. Location: Thebes. Date: 6<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: Ryan P. Bonfiglio, “Archer Imagery in Zechariah 9:11–17 in Light of Achaemenid Iconography,” *JBL* 131 (2012), 516, fig. 3.

Persian imperial art also blends the actions of the king and deity. For example, a Persian seal found at Thebes (**fig. 3.33**) and inscribed with, “Darius the Great King,” depicts the king in a

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whereas Russell understands the motif to be depicting wine libations to the deities (Russell, “The Program of the Palace,” 683–84). Either way, both Brandes and Russell characterize the king’s action as priestly (Brandes, “La Salle dite ‘G,’” 151–54; Russell, “The Program of the Palace,” 686–87).

<sup>137</sup> See Russell, “The Program of the Palace,” 705; Winter, “Royal Rhetoric,” 23. The entire West Wing, and room G in particular connect the king’s military actions with cultic actions before the god.

hunting scene reminiscent of the Neo-Assyrian battle scenes.<sup>138</sup> Similar to those scenes, the king stands in his chariot with his bow drawn. His effectiveness with the weapon is demonstrated both by the arrow-ridden lion lying beneath the chariot's horses and by the lion who rears before the chariot, already struck by two of the king's arrows. Ahuramazda sits in the winged solar disc above this scene of royal violence. The god faces the lion like the king. The scene suggests that Ahuramazda and Darius together conquer chaos.<sup>139</sup>

The Behistun relief is another iconic display of the king and deity cooperating (**fig. 2.16**). As discussed above, Ahuramazda hovers above a scene portraying the king's triumph over his enemies. He sits above the king's bound enemies, facing the king and extending the ring of dominion towards the king. The king and deity act together in their subjugation of all peoples.<sup>140</sup>



**Fig. 3.34.** Tomb façade featuring Dairus supported by representatives of the nations as he stands before Ahuramazda and the fire altar. Location: Naqsh-i Rostam. Date: 6<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE.

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Xerxes\\_tomb\\_at\\_Naqsh-e\\_Rostam-upper\\_register\\_\(4614878357\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Xerxes_tomb_at_Naqsh-e_Rostam-upper_register_(4614878357).jpg).

<sup>138</sup> Bonfiglio, “Archer Imagery in Zechariah 9:11-17,” *JBL* 131 (2012): 514–15.

<sup>139</sup> See Root, *The King and Kingship*, 120. The presence of the palm trees flanking the scene may indicate that the king hunts in a non-civilized area.

<sup>140</sup> See Root on the collaboration of the king and deity (*The King and Kingship*, 171–76 and 189).

Darius's tomb façade at Naqsh-e Rostam (**fig. 3.34**) combines visual indicators of the king as warrior with those of the king as cultic officiator before the deity.<sup>141</sup> The king again appears across from Ahuramazda within the winged solar disc. Darius stands upon a dais supported by representatives of all the nations of the Persian empire. The monarch faces a fire altar surmounted by an astral symbol in a scene evoking cultic action. The symbols of the bow, the fire altar, and the many foreigners supporting Darius mark the king as one who rules both in militaristic and cultic contexts. The deity offers the symbolic ring to Darius and mirrors the king's gesture of greeting as an indicator of the pair's bond.<sup>142</sup> Both are crowned and mirror one another, indicating that their identities overlap. The tomb inscription conveys the deity's affirmation of Darius. At one point it reads: "And the (physical) skillfulnesses which Ahuramazda has bestowed upon me and I have had the strength to use them-by the favor of Ahuramazda what has been done by me, I have done with these skillfulnesses which Ahuramazda has bestowed upon me."<sup>143</sup> The deity empowered Darius to reach the position of power he currently holds as ruler over all the nations who now support the dais.

Different from representations of enemies in Egyptian or Neo-Assyrian art, here the foreigners holding the dais are not bound or crushed in humiliation. Rather, they support the throne with apparent ease in a pose often used by Atlas figures (the same is true of **fig. 3.18**).<sup>144</sup> Their state reflects a shift in royal rhetoric in the Achaemenid period. The nations are represented joyfully supporting their king and the ordered rule that he and the deity together represent.<sup>145</sup> Darius's role as conqueror remains as he holds his bow at his side. This bow indicates that

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<sup>141</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 162–70.

<sup>142</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 174–76.

<sup>143</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 164; from Kent, *Old Persian*, 140, DNb.

<sup>144</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 147–53.

<sup>145</sup> See Root, *The King and Kingship*, 131–61, particularly 160–61; Bonfiglio, *Reading Images, Seeing Texts*, 72–73.

violence has been applied to reinforce his place as ruler. The peoples beneath him lift him together, yet the tomb's inscription indicates that power defines their relationship: "If now thou shalt think that 'How many are the countries which King Darius held?' look at the sculptures (of those) who bear the throne, then thou shalt know, then shall it become known to thee: the spear of a Persian man has gone forth far; then shall it become known to thee: a Persian man has delivered battle far indeed from Persia."<sup>146</sup> Despite the shift in rhetoric, the façade clearly portrays Ahuramazda affirming the king's dominion over the nations.

The king and the deity relate "as peers" upon this tomb façade.<sup>147</sup> Porada notes that the king and deity mirroring each other seems to be part of an "intentional assimilation of the royal image to the divine" in the royal art of Darius.<sup>148</sup> Likewise, Margaret Cool Root views the visual program of the tomb façade as an aspect of a relationship between the royal and divine that "seems to have been typified by a merging of political and religious concepts of power."<sup>149</sup> In Achaemenid royal art, the king and deity appear together in scenes of violence, triumph, and cultic maintenance. The king and deity both produce and sustain the Achaemenid dynasty, as we have seen across the ANE.

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<sup>146</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 154; from Kent, *Old Persian*, 138, DNb.

<sup>147</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 176.

<sup>148</sup> See Edith Porada, "Review of *Persepolis II: Contents of the Treasury and Other Discoveries* by Erich F. Schmidt," *JNES* 20 (1961): 68.

<sup>149</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 181.

## 3.2.2.4 Syro-Palestinian Art



**Fig. 3.35.** Seal depicting the king preparing to smite an enemy before Amun. Location: Tell el-‘Agul. Date: 1292–1190 BCE. Source: Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette*, Band 1, 525, fig. 1234.

As seen above and in chapter 2, the king and deity (or deities) are often present together when the king shows up in the minor arts of Syria-Palestine (see figs. **2.17**, **2.18**, **2.19a–c**, **2.20a–b**). A seal found at Tell el-‘Agul (**fig. 3.35**) portrays the king and deity at work together to defeat their enemies. Whereas the seals discussed in chapter 2 (**figs. 2.18–2.20e**) show a divine symbol alongside or above the king as he subdues his enemies, **fig. 3.35** displays Amun holding out the *hepeš* sword before the king as the ruler prepares to smite a subdued enemy. The hieroglyphs beneath the scene read *neb hepeš* or “Lord of Power.” The deity’s presence indicates divine support of the king’s subjugation of his enemies.<sup>150</sup> The deity provides the king with the power to triumph over his enemies.<sup>151</sup> Thus, the king and deity act together in Syro-Palestinian art as well.

<sup>150</sup> As Keel and Uehlinger say of the Megiddo ivory, the presence of the deity in such scenes of victory, “gives the impression that the victor was blessed by the deity” (Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 62). Cf. Keel, “Powerful Symbols,” 206–210.

<sup>151</sup> Keel, “Powerful Symbols,” 205–14.

### *3.2.2.5 The Rhetoric of the King and Deity Acting Together*

ANE royal art interlaces the roles of royal and divine actors in different ways. Yet all of them reinforce the king's identity as the proper ruler of the cosmos. The royal and divine spheres overlapped in Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Achaemenid royal art both before and after the existence of Israel and Judah as monarchic states in Palestine. Judah participated in these formulations of divine and royal action. These artistic strategies blending divine-royal identities and actions surrounded Judah. The benefit of curating all of the images above is that it shows just how pervasive blending of royal and divine action was across the ANE.

## **3.3 Reading the Textual Rhetoric of Psalm 21 through the Lens of ANE Royal Art**

### 3.3.1 Clarifying the Relationship of King and Deity in Psalm 21

Again, identifying the actor of vv. 9–13 as long been viewed as the primary interpretive crux in Psalm 21, with vv. 2–8 simply categorized as thanksgiving language by most scholars. Yet, the royal art surveyed above shows how the psalm in its entirety, not simply in vv. 9–13, displays the interconnected roles of deity and king. Reading Ps 21 within the context of ANE royal art encourages us to view the psalm as a verbal icon expressing a complex royal identity.

#### *3.3.1.1 Verses 1–8: Overlapping Identities of King and Deity*

By rejecting the description of vv. 1–8 as a thanksgiving hymn, I do not mean to say that vv. 1–8 contain no language of thanksgiving. Verse 2 clearly opens with a refrain of thanks, and the following verses model a mode of thanksgiving with a turn to the kings' requests (v. 3) and their fulfillment by Yahweh (vv. 4, 7). The board categorization of thanksgiving hymn, though, misconstrues the overall function of vv. 1–8.



The royal art surveyed above supports Aster's interpretation of Ps 21. Specifically, Aster understands vv. 2–8 not as a prayer of thanks but rather as an image of the king that “articulates the total harmony between the king and Yhwh.”<sup>152</sup> Aster highlights how vv. 1–8 express the shared identity of deity and king. Drawing on ANE textual data, he asserts that vv. 6–7 are particularly expressive of this overlapping identity. In vv. 6–7, the king shares divine qualities (הוֹד, הִדָּר, הָדָר) with the deity, who set him in his role as a just ruler of the people.<sup>153</sup> Aster notes that the seemingly concrete objects of הוֹד and הִדָּר (and I would add כְּבוֹד) described in v. 7 might be understood by way of analogy with the Akkadian concept of *melammu*. Aster points out:

“Several Neo-Assyrian texts speak of *melammu* as placed on the king by the gods...Conceptually, the *melammu* functions as an indication of the king's power and of his legitimacy; it is a sign of his close relationship with the gods. This imagery is therefore appropriate in the context of Ps 21:6–7, which describes the king as possessing divine characteristics.”<sup>154</sup>

Aster compares the language of vv. 2–8 to Neo-Assyrian textual rhetoric. Widening the interpretive context to ANE royal art confirms Aster's proposal. Simultaneously, a turn to royal art demonstrates that Ps 21 draws on rhetorical tropes in use beyond the Neo-Assyrian sources that Aster identifies.

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<sup>152</sup> Aster, “On the Place of Psalm 21,” 309. Here Aster speaks specifically of v. 8. Yet, he views this rhetoric as the central focus of vv. 2–8. Speaking of the entire set of vv. 2–8, he claims: “The word order in these verses also serves to indicate the harmony of interest between Yhwh and king” (Aster, “On the Place of Psalm 21,” 309). Later speaking of the whole psalm, he postulates: “Psalm 21 seems to express a similar hope, for a ruler as closely tied to Yhwh as the Assyrian king was to Aššur” (Aster, “On the Place of Psalm 21,” 319). Aster clearly understands vv. 2–8 as working together to blend the identity of Yahweh and his king.

<sup>153</sup> Aster, “On the Place of Psalm 21,” 311.

<sup>154</sup> Aster, “On the Place of Psalm 21,” 313–14; see also Winter, “Touched by the Gods,” 84–86. For examples of texts that speak of the gods bestowing *melammu* upon the king, see RIMA 2, 147: A.0.99.2., lines 7–9; and Ashurbanipal's annals from Rassam cylinder A, col. I, lines 84–88 (Borger, *Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals*, 20). On the *melammu* as a divine attribute bestowed upon and possessed by the Neo-Assyrian king, see Elena Cassin, *La splendeur divine: Introduction à l'étude de la mentalité mésopotamienne*, Civilizations et sociétés 8 (Paris: Mouton, 1968), 71; Machinist, “Kingship and Divinity,” 169; Mehmet-Ali Ataç, “The *melammu* as Divine Epiphany and Usurped Entity,” in *Ancient Near Eastern Art in Context: Studies in Honor of Irene J. Winter*, ed. Jack Cheng and Marian H. Feldman, CHANE 26 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 308–09.

In light of the royal art surveyed above, it is clear that vv. 2–8 resemble ANE royal imagery. These verses display a king supported by his deity through gifts of sustaining life, power, and victory. The king stands in the presence of the deity, serving as a conduit of the abundant blessings that the deity bestows upon him. The deity’s support of the king highlights their closeness. In ANE royal art, deities are portrayed granting life to the king, but not all peoples. The king alone is portrayed receiving victory and power from the deity. The blending of royal and divine identities becomes more explicit with the gifts of the royal crown and divine attributes the king receives from the deity. The gift of royal and divine attributes in Ps 21 resembles Egyptian and Neo-Assyrian art that displays the deity crowning the king and granting the king life (**figs. 3.3–9 and 3.13**). ANE royal art depicts the king sharing divine attributes in Mesopotamian scenes portraying the king receiving the symbol of authority from the deity (**figs. 3.11–12, 3.31**) and in Achaemenid scenes displaying the king and deity mirroring one another in their actions and dress (**figs. 3.17–18, 3.33–34**). Reading vv. 2–8 in light of these royal artistic contexts highlights the core theme of the psalm: the blending of royal and divine identities.

### *3.3.1.2 Verses 9–13: Who is Acting?*

Confusion reigns when it comes to determining who exactly is described as acting in vv. 9–13: is it Yahweh or his king? Scholars have come down on either side of this question.<sup>155</sup> In view the imagery of vv. 2–8 and depictions of the king and the deity acting together in ANE royal art, I propose that vv. 9–13 employ ambiguous verbal constructions without direct reference to a specific actor to picture the king and deity acting in concert. The psalm uses singular verbs with no clear referent to the king or deity to convey their co-action in the total destruction of their

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<sup>155</sup> See footnote 31 above. Even Aster, who attends to how vv. 1–8 relate the overlapping identities of Yahweh and his king, contends that Yahweh is the primary actor of vv. 9–13.

enemies upon the battlefield. Again, ANE royal art displays kings and deities cooperating in various different ways, particularly in battle and triumph scenes. Verses 2–8 begin to blend the identity of the king and deity in ways that are consistent with ANE royal imagery. Thus, it makes sense to view the ambiguity of vv. 9–13 as a textual strategy for rendering the royal-divine pair acting together against their enemies.

I do not read the ambiguity of vv. 9–13 as a lack of clarity on the Psalmist’s part or the result of a later textual emendation. I view the lack of any explicitly indicated actor as a rhetorical strategy that blends the king and deity in the mind of a reader or listener. Verses 9–13 employ literary imagery that occurs throughout ANE royal art. For example, just as the king and deity’s power intertwines in smiting scenes (**figs. 2.3, 2.6, and 3.35**), the ambiguity of v. 9 pictures the monarch and deity as co-actors whose hands destroy their enemies. In ANE royal art, king and deity stand together before completely defeated and despoiled peoples (**figs. 2.16, 3.12, 3.20, 3.26, 3.28–29**). Psalm 21:11 renders a similar trope. Just as the king and the deity act together as archers in Egyptian (**fig. 2.7a**) and early Neo-Assyrian royal art (**fig. 3.30a–b**), so too v. 13 depicts the king and deity acting together as archers who repel their enemies.<sup>156</sup> Though v. 10 seems to consist of divine warrior and theophanic imagery, biblical and ANE royal texts also described kings as shining on the battlefield with divine glory and magnificence bestowed upon them by the deity.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Rather than displaying the deity with a bow, Ahuramazda appear alongside the king with the ring in Achaemenid art (**fig. 2.16**).

<sup>157</sup> For Mesopotamian texts referring to the king’s *melammu* (or that of his weapons) on the battlefield, see footnote 154. Egyptian texts also speak of the king’s glory like that of the deity’s upon the battlefield. The description of Ramses II marching against Kadesh asserts, “[He] was mighty like Montu when he goes forth, (so that) every foreign country was trembling before him, their chiefs were presenting their tribute, and all the rebels were coming, bowing down through fear of the glory of his majesty” (*ANET*, 255). 2 Sam 12:30–31 echoes the language and imagery of Ps 21:10. Speaking of Ps 21:10 and making the enemies like those consumed by fire, Briggs points to 2 Samuel 12:31 wherein David is described as forcing the defeated Amorites to “pass through the brick kiln” (Briggs, *Psalms 1–50*, 185–87). Cf. Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 298.

Psalm 21:9–13 employs language and imagery congruent with imagery found in royal art and texts throughout the ANE. Reframing vv. 9–13 as intentional blending underlines the continuity of vv. 2–13, unlike most scholarly analyses of the psalm that distinguish between these sets of verses. Verses 2–13 construct a tapestry in which the king and deity blend together. Thus, clarifying who does what is difficult and, more so, unnecessary.

### 3.3.2 Genre, Setting, and Rhetorical Functional of Psalm 21

Psalm 21's literary imagery constructs a world within which Yahweh and his king share overlapping identities and actions. Within the psalm, one actor cannot be easily distinguished from the other. The psalm explicitly speaks of the king embodying and displaying כבוד, הוד, and הדר, attributes that usually indicate the deity's kingship in other parts of the Psalter.<sup>158</sup> King and deity simultaneously subdue chaos and erase their enemies. The psalm displays a royal identity that receives its support and justification from a divine source.

How then might we characterize the psalm's genre and function? Scholars generally propose that Ps 21 is made up of two parts, a thanksgiving prayer in vv. 2–8 and a prophetic promise or reflection on past success in vv. 9–14. The majority of scholars classify the psalm as either a coronation hymn, focusing on the language of vv. 2–8 (specifically v. 4) and the promise of victory that follows, or as a psalm sung before or after battle, pointing to the language of vv. 9–13 and the thanksgiving-like opening and closing (vv. 2, 14). My analysis of the psalm's imagery and rhetoric allows for either of these proposals, as both fit the psalm's emphasis on the king and deity's cooperative relationship. The psalm's imagery displays the close connection between king and deity, in both their shared identity markers and their action together in battle.

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<sup>158</sup> See Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 181; Cragie, *Psalms 1–50*, 190; Zenger, *Die Psalmen*, 142; Saur, *Die Königpsalmen*, 103; Salo, *Die jüdische Königsideologie*, 99–100.

ANE royal imagery blending the king and deities occurs in a wide array of contexts, and so Psalm 21 also may have functioned within a variety of royal contexts: coronation; prayer before battle; celebration after battle; or regular celebration of the deity and king in the cult. Psalm 21 might have been employed in any and all of these settings to celebrate and re-present the royal/divine relationship.<sup>159</sup>

Verse 14 suggests the psalm's primary function in an array of contexts: "Be exalted, O Yahweh, in your might! Let us sing and praise your warrior prowess!" The verse echoes the opening language of the psalm (with its repetition of עז) and focuses on Yahweh's divine empowerment of the king. Psalm 21 displays Yahweh as the primary source of the king's power, success, and rule (vv. 2–6, 8, 9–13).<sup>160</sup> Some interpreters contend that the communal invocation of v. 14 (בְּשִׁירָה, בְּזִמְרָה) and the vocative address of v. 2 reflect a framework added to the psalm in the post-exilic period.<sup>161</sup> Yet, the communal framing indicated by v. 14 does not necessarily indicate a redaction layer or necessitate a post-exilic context. The clear shift to a communal praise (בְּשִׁירָה, בְּזִמְרָה) of Yahweh for his support of the king serves as a rhetorical tool to invoke and shape a particular sort of community. Picturing a community who praises Yahweh for

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<sup>159</sup> So, I agree with Jacobsen's assessment: "The interpreter is better served by taking an approach that reads the poem with a range of possibilities in mind" (Jacobsen, *The Psalms*, 221). Not necessarily because this approach is more theologically generative, as Jacobsen points out, but primarily because the psalm's particular royal rhetoric, focused upon the blended identity and actions of the king and Yahweh, could have been employed productively in multiple different contexts.

<sup>160</sup> As Aster notes: "The psalm is framed by mention of the עז of Yhwh (in vv. 2 and 14), and the psalm as a whole expresses the idea that the power of Yhwh is superior to royal power" (Aster, "On the Place of Psalm 21," 309); see also Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 288.

<sup>161</sup> Zenger views vv. 2 and 8, with their third person reference to the king, as part of a post-exilic redaction layer (*Die Psalmen*, 140–41). Saur views vv. 8 and 14 as post-exilic additions to an original pre-exilic royal psalm that consisted of vv. 2–7 and 9–13 (Saur, *Die Königspsalmen*, 106). Salo assigns multiple verses to a post-exilic redactor, including vv. 8, 10, 12, and 14, partly because of her assertion that Yahweh was understood as the actor of vv. 9–13 and partly because of the communal context assumed by v. 14 (Salo, *Die jüdische Königsideologie*, 99–106). While Gerstenberger does not propose redaction layers, he does assert that the psalm should likely be dated to the post-exilic period primarily because of the communal element indicated by v. 14 (Gerstenberger, *Psalms 1*, 107).

supporting his king, v. 14 implies that the audience faithful to Yahweh is necessarily faithful to the king.

The entire psalm draws together the king and the deity. Yahweh sustains and works with his chosen king in vv. 2–13. The community invoked in verse 14, one faithful to Yahweh, must be a community that accepts the claims of vv. 2–13 about the king's identity and divine empowerment. The communal turn in v. 14 inculcates a shared identity committed to the royal ideology drawn up in the rest of the psalm. That is, the reference to the community highlights the psalm's goal of shaping a social identity. Psalm 21 leads king and community to speak a world into existence in which the very identity, attributes, and actions of the king are fused with the deity. Like Psalm 2, Psalm 21 does not just speak to how king and deity relate. The psalm draws its audience into the web of relationships that it pictures, shaping royal and social identities simultaneously.

## Chapter 4

## PSALM 45 AND THE ROYAL COUPLE: DISPLAYING ROYAL POWER AND PROGENY

Psalm 45 is a peculiar psalm in that it constitutes the only clear hymn to a human in the entire HB.<sup>1</sup> Scholars have noted the lack of literary parallels to this psalm in the HB, choosing to draw upon hymns and letters to ANE kings as a source of comparative data.<sup>2</sup> The content of the psalm is generally described as a song for a royal wedding, with scholars often proposing that the song was used for a royal wedding during the pre-exilic monarchy.<sup>3</sup> Numerous scholars though, have expressed concern at the seemingly discordant combination of violent royal ideology (vv. 1–10 and 17–18) with imagery of the king and queen intimately united (vv. 11–16).<sup>4</sup> While some scholars simply express confusion over the psalm’s constellation of imagery, others propose redaction-critical solutions that place the final form of the psalm in the post-exilic period.<sup>5</sup>

ANE royal art, however, evinces intertwining images of the royal couple and royal violence and victory. Reading the psalm within the context of ANE royal imagery, I propose that confusion over the psalm’s constellation of imagery stems from modern aesthetic expectations. Further, with respect to genre and function, I argue that Ps 45 constructs royal identity rather than simply presenting a snapshot of a pre-exilic royal wedding or a mosaic of a Messianic union.

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<sup>1</sup> Kraus claims, “There is no parallel to Psalm 45 in the OT—not even anything approaching it” (see Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 453; see also Weiser, *The Psalms*, 361–62; Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 54).

<sup>2</sup> See Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 452–56; Gerstenberger, *Psalms: Part 1*, 187.

<sup>3</sup> Most scholars theorize that it was then copied and reused on subsequent occasions (see Cragie, *Psalms 1–50*, 337; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 452–53; Gerstenberger, *Psalms: Part 1*, 187–90; Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 54–55).

<sup>4</sup> Cragie, *Psalms 1–50*, 337–39; Gerstenberger, *Psalms: Part 1*, 187–90; Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 60–62; Wilson, *Psalms Volume I*, 706–07.

<sup>5</sup> Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen*, 278. For similar claims, see Saur, *Die Königpsalmen*, 116–19; Corinna Körting, “Isaiah 62:1–7 and Psalm 45 – or – Two Ways to Become Queen,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Chronological and Thematic Development in Isaiah 40–66*, ed. Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer and Hans M. Barstad, FRLANT 255 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 112–23.

## 4.1 Psalm 45 Overview

### 4.1.1 Psalm 45 Translation

- 1 For the director, concerning the Lilies, by the sons of Korah. A *maskil*, a love song.  
 2 My heart is aroused with a good message,<sup>6</sup>  
 I now speak my compositions to the king—my tongue is the stylus of a skilled scribe.<sup>7</sup>  
 3 You are most beautiful<sup>8</sup> among the sons of men,  
 charm is poured upon your lips—therefore God has blessed you forever.  
 4 Gird yourself with your sword upon your thigh,  
 O mighty warrior, gird yourself<sup>9</sup> with splendor and majesty,  
 5 and by your majesty advance,<sup>10</sup>  
 ride on for the cause of truth, humility, and righteousness.<sup>11</sup>  
 Let your right hand point you out<sup>12</sup> with terrifying acts.  
 6 Your arrows are sharp—the peoples fall beneath you—sharp in the heart of the king’s  
 enemies.  
 7 Your throne, O divine one,<sup>13</sup> is forever and ever;  
 the scepter of your kingship is a scepter of equitable justice.  
 8 You love righteousness and hate evil; therefore, God, your God, has anointed you beyond  
 your companions with an oil of gladness.

<sup>6</sup> The phrase דבר טוב, which opens and describes the psalm, marks the psalm as a piece of (royal) rhetoric, similar to the phrase’s use to describe the speech of Rehoboam in 1 Kings 12:7 and 2 Chron 10:7 (see Hamilton, *The Body Royal*, 40).

<sup>7</sup> On the translation of skilled scribe rather than something like “quick scribe,” see the use of this phrase in Ezra 7:6 to describe Ezra’s qualifications as a competent scribe. Cf. Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 347.

<sup>8</sup> Dahood notes that the יפיפית form is often emended, but he insists that it may be “a genuine dialectal form” (*Psalms 1–50*, 271). He points to the similarly formed Ugaritic form *d’d’*, “know well,” from the root *yd’*. For others who maintain the long form rather than emending and render the form as “most beautiful” or the like, see Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 79; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 454; Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 347.

<sup>9</sup> Understanding the הגור as gapped; see Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 52.

<sup>10</sup> For צלה as “advance, rush forward,” rather than, “to succeed,” see Judg 14:6, 19; 2 Sam 19:18; Amos 5:6.

<sup>11</sup> The combination of conjunctions and nouns following the imperatives here have proven difficult for interpreters. The MT seems to present the consonants for two absolute nouns, ענה and צדק, however, the vowel points of ענה are those of the construct state. One Hebrew manuscript indicates this clearly by providing ענות in the place of ענה. Aquila and the Syriac tradition render this noun pair as a construct chain, while the LXX, Targum, and Jerome understand the nouns as three separate concepts (ודבר אמת וענה וצדק) rather than two (ודבר אמת וענה צדק) by supplying a conjunction before each. I follow the majority of the versions in rendering the nouns as three separate concepts by providing a conjunction (see also Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 450–51); yet, reading the nouns as two parallel concepts with the second pair in a construct chain as a single concept is also possible (see Jan Mulder, *Studies on Psalm 45* [Witsiers: Almelo, 1972], 7 and 106; C. F. Whitley, “Textual and Exegetical Observations on Ps 45,4–7,” *ZAW* 98 [1986]: 279; and Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 52).

<sup>12</sup> The root ירה is often translated as “teach/instruct,” but the root with a double accusative and God as subject in Exod 15:24 seems to communicate showing or displaying the עץ to Moses. The same root is used earlier in the Song of the Sea to display God’s power in overthrowing the Egyptians (Exod 15:3). In 15:3 the root carries the meaning “to throw,” though the idea of God’s action (ירה) displaying God’s power is present. See Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 52 and Dahood, *Psalms I*, 72 for similar translations.

<sup>13</sup> The word אלהים has been held up a primary *crux interpretum* of the psalm in modern scholarship, as the noun seems to be a vocative reference to the king. The implications of the king as a divine or near-divine figure has led to a multitude of proposals for alternate ways to understand אלהים in v. 7. Murray J. Ellis provides an excellent and thorough overview of the wide range of translation options that have been presented (Murray J. Ellis, “The Translation of Elohim in Psalm 45:7–8,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 35 [1984]: 65–89).



- 9 Your garments consist of myrrh, aloes, and cassia;  
from palaces of ivory stringed instruments gratify you.
- 10 Daughters of kings are among your valued women,<sup>14</sup>  
yet the queen-consort<sup>15</sup> stands at your right, decked in the gold of Ophir.
- 11 ‘Listen, daughter, pay attention and take heed!  
Forget your people and your father’s house.
- 12 So that the king might desire your beauty;  
indeed, he is your lord, so prostrate yourself before him.
- 13 Then, the people of Tyre<sup>16</sup> will flatter you with gifts,  
and the rich ones among the people with an abundance of wealth.
- 14 The princess is within,<sup>17</sup> colored garments are her clothes, interwoven with gold.
- 15 She is led to the king; virgins follow her, her friends are brought to you.
- 16 They are led with gladness and rejoicing; they enter into the palace of the king.
- 17 Your sons will be in the place of your fathers;  
you will appoint them as princes over all of the earth.
- 18 I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations,  
so that the peoples will praise you forever and ever.

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<sup>14</sup> Though some have contended that jewels adorning the שגל are in view here, I think it more likely that the royal harem (“precious” or “valued” women) are referenced by the term יקרת and the preceding בנות מלכים. Compare the use of יקר in Lam 4:2 to describe the children of Zion. A reference to the harem here may explain why the king’s primary queen is labeled as שגל only here in the psalm, as the term seems to be an Akkadian loan-word marking out the “queen-consort,” the king’s primary wife. See HALOT, “שגל,” 1415; Simo Parpola, “The Neo-Assyrian Word for ‘Queen,’” SAAB 2 (1988): 73–76; Sarah C. Melville, “Neo-Assyrian Royal Women and Male Identity: Status as a Social Tool,” JAOS 124 (2004): 43–52.

<sup>15</sup> An Akkadian loan-word, see CAD E, 61a; HALOT, “שגל,” 1415. Though some scholars have proposed that the term here references the queen-mother rather than the king’s primary wife (see Andre Caquot, “Cinq observations sur le Psaume 45,” in *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical and Other Studies in Memory of P. C. Cragie*, ed. L. Eslinger and G. Taylor, JSOTSup 67 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1988], 259–60; Christoph Schroeder, “‘A Love Song’: Psalm 45 in the Light of Ancient Near Eastern Marriage Texts,” CBQ 58 [1996]: 424–28; Robert Couffignal, “Les structures figuratives du Psaume 45,” ZAW 113 [2008]: 202; Salo, *Die jüdische Königsideologie*, 156; Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 60). The term in Neo-Assyrian texts, though, always seems to refer to the king’s primary wife, only referring to the queen-mother once where a *MI.E.GAL* (the logogram of the word from which the Hebrew שגל is derived; see Parpola, “The Neo-Assyrian Word for ‘Queen,’” 73–76) has born an heir and become a queen-mother with the death of her husband. Interestingly, the picture of the queen in vv. 11–16 matches that of a Neo-Assyrian consort-queen or primary wife. For example, Melville notes: “The consort (*MI.E.GAL*) enjoyed privileges that other royal women did not. She received a share of tribute and audience gifts as did the crown prince and other certain high officials” (Melville, “Neo-Assyrian Royal Women,” 48). Psalm 45:13 displays the queen receiving tribute from other peoples and nations.

<sup>16</sup> Literally “daughter of Tyre,” but when a city is referenced as a “daughter,” such as references to “daughter Zion,” the term refers to the people who make up the city and/or nation (see Isa 1:8; 10:30, 32; 16:1; 23:10; 52:2; 62:11; Jer 4:31; 6:2, 23; 48:18; 50:42; 51:33; Mic 1:13; 4:8, 10, 13; Zeph 3:14; Zech 2:11, 14; 9:9; Ps 9:15; 137:8; Lam 1:6; 2:1, 4, 8, 10, 18; 4:22). Also see Aloysius Fitzgerald, “*Btwlt* and *bt* as Titles for Capital Cities,” CBQ 37 (1975): 167–83; F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, “The Syntagma of *bat* Followed by a Geographical Name in the Hebrew Bible: A Reconsideration of Its Meaning and Grammar,” CBQ 57 (1995): 451–70; Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 87; Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 353; Schroeder, “‘A Love Song,’” 429.

<sup>17</sup> Some emend to “corals (פנינים)” (see Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 452).

#### 4.1.2 Questions of Genre, Function, and Setting

The majority of commentators characterize Psalm 45 as a song of celebration utilized within a royal wedding, imagining the text as an outline of the royal ritual.<sup>18</sup> Almost all of these commentators date the psalm to the pre-exilic monarchical period, with a handful dating a portion of the psalm as it now stands to the post-exilic period.<sup>19</sup> Concern for identifying the ritual life of the psalm and the inclusion of the queen in vv. 10–16 pushes most commentators towards identifying Ps 45 as a royal wedding song, rather than a coronation hymn, (re-)enthronement hymn, or some other type of royal rhetoric.<sup>20</sup>

The proposed *Sitz im Leben* of a royal wedding explains the psalm's shared affinities with parts of Song of Songs and other ANE literature picturing royal and divine weddings.<sup>21</sup> Yet, labeling the psalm as a wedding song without qualification creates other interpretive problems. The imagery of vv. 2–10 and 17–18 arises as the primary challenge for most commentators who

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<sup>18</sup> Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 74; Briggs, *Psalms*, 384; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 453; Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 54–55; Gerstenberger, *Psalms 1*, 189; Cragie, *Psalms 1–50*, 137; Dahood, *Psalms 1–50*, 270; Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 346; Starbuck, *Court Oracles*, 114; deClaissé-Walford, Tanner, and Jacobsen, *The Book of Psalms*, 416; Whitley, “Textual and Exegetical Observations,” 277; Richard D. Patterson, “A Multiplex Approach to Psalm 45,” *Grace Theological Journal* 6 (1985): 29–30; Schroeder, ““A Love Song,”” 422; Mulder, *Studies on Psalm 45*, 158; Salo, *Die jüdische Königsideologie*, 161–62; Hamilton, *The Body Royal*, 38–39.

<sup>19</sup> There has been some variation among scholars concerning how such a royal wedding is conceptualized, with proposals ranging from a yearly *hieros gamos* wedding staged in the royal cult (see Aage Bentzen, *King and Messiah* [London: Lutterworth, 1955], 21–47; Geo Widengren, *Sakrales Königtum im Alten Testament und im Judentum* [Stuttgart; W. Kohlhammer, 1955], 78), to an annual marriage ritual accompanying re-enthronement celebrations (see Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, 118–19; Crim, *The Royal Psalms*, 92–94), to a conventional royal wedding (see footnote 18 above). Since Gunkel's proposal that the psalm functioned as part of an actual royal wedding ceremony, most scholars view the psalm as a poem performed at an actual royal wedding (see Gunkel and Begrich, *An Introduction to the Psalms*, 100).

<sup>20</sup> Hamilton's treatment of Psalm 45 is an excellent example of how the focus on *Sitz im Leben* and ritual life of the psalms affects a reading of the psalm and its imagery. He works from the psalm to map out a royal ritual that he proposes reflects actual ritual practices during the monarchical period (Hamilton, *The Body Royal*, 38–54). For earlier examples of readings of the psalm focused on ritual see Gunkel, *An Introduction to the Psalms*, 100–103; Mowinkel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 72–74; Weiser, *The Psalms*, 362; Cragie, *Psalms 1–50*, 340.

<sup>21</sup> See the use of the “oil of gladness” as well as spices for a groom's garments in Prov. 7:17–18, the accompaniment of the bride and bridegroom with their companions in Cant. 1:7 and 8:3, and note the exultation that accompanies the erotic love of the bride and groom in Cant. 1:2–4. Schroeder discusses the resonances among Psalm 45, these biblical texts, and ANE texts concerned with royal or divine marriage and the consummation of marriage in order to highlight the primary themes in Ps 45 (see Schroeder, ““A Love Song,”” 417–32).

claim that the psalm depicts a royal wedding. Multiple scholars point out the lack of focus on the royal couple in these verses. Instead, the verses focus simply on characterizations of the king and the monarchy.<sup>22</sup> There is no focus on a wedding or even a queen in these verses, except for the reference to the king's harem and queen-consort in v. 10. The abrupt transition from royal ideology into intimate imagery of the couple creates a dissonance that has pushed some commentators to propose stages of redaction and/or a different setting and genre for the psalm.

Among those scholars who diverge from the general consensus that the psalm reflects a royal wedding ceremony, some propose only minor differences. Fokke Dijkema, for example, retains the wedding context of the psalm but shifts the focus to common, everyday weddings rather than a royal wedding.<sup>23</sup> Dijkema highlights numerous linguistic and thematic parallels between Ps 45 and Song of Songs to buttress his argument that Ps 45 was originally a common wedding song that portrays the bride and groom as king and queen. He dates the composition of the psalm to the post-exilic period with Song of Songs.<sup>24</sup> Theodor Gaster contends for the same, but he builds his case on modern anthropological evidence and parallels from other Middle Eastern cultures.<sup>25</sup> These arguments, however, downplay the psalm's royal imagery and the direct references to the king within the poem.

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<sup>22</sup> Many scholars express discomfort with what they understand as a drastic shifts in the psalm's imagery in vv. 2–10, 17–18 and 11–16, including those who hold to the view that the psalm reflects a royal wedding ceremony (see Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 455–56; Cragie, *Psalms 1–50*, 337–39; Gerstenberger, *Psalms: Part 1*, 187–90; Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 60–62; Wilson, *Psalms Volume I*, 706–07; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen*, 278; Saur, *Die Königspsalmen*, 116–19; Körting, “Isaiah 62:1–7 and Psalm 45 – or – Two Ways to Become Queen,” 112–23; James M. Trotter, “The Genre and Setting of Psalm 45,” *ABR* 57 [2009]: 34–46).

<sup>23</sup> Fokke Dijkema, “Zu Psalm 45,” *ZAW* 27 (1907): 26–32.

<sup>24</sup> Dijkema, “Zu Psalm 45,” 27–29.

<sup>25</sup> Theodor H. Gaster, “Psalm 45,” *JBL* 74 (1955): 239–51.

Other scholars have rejected viewing Psalm 45 as related to a wedding ceremony in any form. James Trotter dates the psalm to the monarchic period, but he contends that the psalm's royal imagery marks the psalm as a coronation hymn rather than a wedding song.<sup>26</sup> He claims:

While this genre identification [royal wedding] treats seriously many features of the psalm and its possible social setting, it does not appear to do justice to all aspects of the psalm. In particular, the main focus of the psalm is on the king. The language used in the psalm has much more to do with kingship and coronation than marriage. In fact, the preponderance of coronation language leads me to wonder whether this psalm would have ever been connected with a wedding were it not for the phrase *שִׁיר יְדִידָה* in the title.<sup>27</sup>

According to Trotter, the focus on the king points to a coronation ceremony. He does not clarify though why the psalm's royal imagery necessitates coronation imagery, other than the reference to anointing in v. 8.<sup>28</sup> Trotter is not alone in his conviction that Psalm 45 reflects a setting other than a royal wedding. Trotter points out that Raymond-Jacques Tournay "revived the traditional, messianic interpretation of the psalm, but with a critical twist. He argued that Psalm 45 is a late (4<sup>th</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.E.) messianic text that intentionally evokes the image of Solomon, who by that time had achieved the status of ideal king within the tradition."<sup>29</sup> Trotter builds from Tournay's argument to propose instead that the psalm functioned as a coronation hymn in the pre-exilic period.<sup>30</sup>

Some scholars turn to redaction critical theories to explain the dissonance that Trotter notes, generally placing the final form of the psalm within a post-exilic context. Waldo Pratt serves as an early 20<sup>th</sup> century example of redaction critical approaches to Psalm 45.<sup>31</sup> Pratt

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<sup>26</sup> Trotter, "The Genre and Setting of Psalm 45," 34–46.

<sup>27</sup> Trotter, "The Genre and Setting of Psalm 45," 36.

<sup>28</sup> Trotter, "The Genre and Setting of Psalm 45," 38.

<sup>29</sup> Trotter, "The Genre and Setting of Psalm 45," 36; Raymond-Jacques Tournay, "Les Afinités Du Psaume XLV avec le Cantique Des Cantiques et Leur Interpretation Messianique," in *Congress Volume: Bonn, 1962*, ed. G. W. Anderson, P. A. H. de Boer, G. R. Castellino, Henry Cazelles, E. Hammershaimb, H. G. May and W. Zimmerli, VTSupp 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1963), 168–212.

<sup>30</sup> Trotter, "The Genre and Setting of Psalm 45," 46.

<sup>31</sup> Waldo S. Pratt, "A Comparative Study of Psalm xlv," *JBL* 19 (1900): 189–218.

asserts that vv. 9–16 have a remarkably different diction than vv. 3–8 and 17 and other RPss.<sup>32</sup> Drawing on parallels in the prophets, he argues that the “daughter” addressed in vv. 11–16 is daughter Zion, and so he contends that the king must be a messianic king.<sup>33</sup> Though he views the final form of the psalm as a messianic hymn set in the exilic/post-exilic period, Pratt envisions multiple composition layers for the psalm stretching from the time of Hezekiah to the post-exilic period.<sup>34</sup>

Zenger also doubts that Psalm 45 depicts a royal wedding, claiming that the theme of a royal wedding is not prominent in ANE narratives, iconography, or cultic traditions: “Gegen eine zu einseitige Deutung als Hochzeitslied wurden allerdings in der Forschung immer wieder Bedenken erhoben. Immerhin spielt die Königshochzeit weder in den Erzählungen noch in der Ikonographie noch in der kultischen Überlieferung des Alten Orients und Israels eine größere Rolle.”<sup>35</sup> Zenger proposes that vv. 2–10 and 17–18 existed independently as a royal psalm before later being modified by the addition of vv. 11–16. He claims that the parallel structures of vv. 11–16 differ from those established in 2–10 and 17–18. Further, he claims that v. 10, with its picture of a harem, contrasts with the image of a new bride in vv. 11–16 and that the imagery of the king as warrior contrasts sharply with the wedding imagery of vv. 11–16. Thus, Zenger proposes that vv. 11–16 were added during the post-exilic period to picture the people of Zion as

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<sup>32</sup> Pratt, “A Comparative Study of Psalm xlv,” 189–90.

<sup>33</sup> Pratt, “A Comparative Study of Psalm xlv,” 208–14.

<sup>34</sup> Pratt, “A Comparative Study of Psalm xlv,” 212–18.

<sup>35</sup> Zenger, *Die Psalmen*, 278.

the bride of the Messianic king.<sup>36</sup> Pratt and Zenger's approaches are two of many attempts to make sense of the psalm's imagery via redaction-criticism.<sup>37</sup>

The imagery of royal intimacy in vv. 11–16 has shaped almost all scholarly proposals for the psalm's genre, date, and function, except for perhaps Trotter's. All scholars though, including Trotter, share an anxiety over how the imagery of vv. 2–10 and vv. 17–18 should be understood in relation to vv. 11–16. Scholars have attempted to solve this issue through various methods and interpretive proposals, and yet there is still no consensus concerning how to understand the seemingly conflicting sets of royal imagery. Let us turn to an analysis of the interconnected imagery that makes up the psalm's iconic structure in order to contextualize the psalm's imagery within other examples of ANE royal art.

#### 4.1.3 The Iconic Structure of Psalm 45

The frame of the psalm characterizes it as royal rhetoric: רחש לבי דבר טוב אמר מעשי למלך ("My heart is aroused with a good message, I now speak my compositions to the king").<sup>38</sup> The psalm delivers on this promise, as the rest of the poem constructs a powerful image of the king and, to a lesser but still impressive extent, the queen. The psalm intertwines imagery of the king's beauty, rhetorical prowess,<sup>39</sup> connection to the deity, and military might. Verse 3 marks the king's ideal physical shape and beauty and his way with words as signs of his closeness to the deity. The

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<sup>36</sup> Zenger, *Die Psalmen*, 278–79. Zenger draws a sharp distinction between vv. 2–10 and vv. 11–16, which he sees as the only verses concerned with the 'marriage' theme. He claims: "In der Tat: Von 2 ab wird eine den Psalmen 20–21 verwandte Theologie des königlichen Amtes entfaltet; das Thema »Vermählung des Königs« ist dieser untergeordnet, wie auch der Schluß des Psalms zeigt, der - zumindest im MT - den König und nicht seine Braut rühmt" (Zenger, *Die Psalmen*, 278). Saur reconstructs a similar redaction history for the psalm. He reads the psalm in its entirety as a psalm constructed in the post-exilic period, focused not on a historical king and queen but on a messianic king who can be called אלהים and comes to unite with his bride, Zion (see Saur, *Die Königspsalmen*, 116–31).

<sup>37</sup> Along with Zenger, see Saur, *Die Königspsalmen*, 116–31; Körting, "Isaiah 62:1–7 and Psalm 45 – or – Two Ways to Become Queen," 112–23.

<sup>38</sup> See Hamilton, *The Body Royal*, 40.

<sup>39</sup> Goldingay notes that "graciousness of speech" likely indicates the king's "ways with words," that is, rhetorical prowess (*Psalms 42–89*, 57). See also Salo, *Die jüdische Königsideologie*, 165–69.

imagery then shifts to depicting the king at war (vv. 4–6); he girds on his sword along with **הוד** and **הדר** (majesty and splendor), attributes of both deities and kings.<sup>40</sup> The king rides out in splendor, armed for battle (v. 5). Throughout the psalm, the king is portrayed as one who loves and upholds righteousness (vv. 4–5, 8). The psalm displays the king’s military might with images of potential and resultative violence. The king’s right arm readies to smite his enemies (v. 5), and the king alone stands upon defeated enemies felled by his arrows (v. 6). The psalm pictures the monarch with royal symbols, describing the king’s throne, the “scepter of your kingship (שבט מלכותך),” as well as his anointment with oil and spices (vv. 7–9). Marked by these royal symbols, the king’s association with the divine reaches a climax as the psalmist refers to the king as **אלהים** in v. 7. The king and deity blend together in this image of the ideal king.<sup>41</sup> The psalm moves to focus on the queen-consort by displaying the king amongst his harem (ביקריותך), highlighting the place of the queen-consort (שגל) decked in gold at his side (v. 10).

The psalm shifts in vv. 11–16 towards a concern for the queen, who here, despite the reference to the king’s harem (v. 10; בנות מלכים ביקריותך), seems to be portrayed as the king’s primary wife or queen-consort. The psalmist first calls the queen to heed her husband and to commit to her role in ruling with him and leaving all other identities behind (v. 11). As one who supports the king and serves to maintain the kingdom, she is called to serve as a model of submission to the king (v. 12). The psalmist commands her to “bow down before him (והשתחויי)

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<sup>40</sup> See footnotes 41 and 48 below.

<sup>41</sup> Multiple scholars have noted that the king is pictured as a divine/semi-divine entity, both in v. 7 with the direct address **אלהים** and with the divine attributes that are ascribed to the king in vv. 4–5 (see Delitzsch, *Psalms*, vol. 2, 82–83; Hamilton, *The Body Royal*, 50–53; Cragie, *Psalms 1–50*, 339; Simon Chi-Chung Cheung, “‘Forget Your People and Your Father’s House’: The Core Theological Message of Psalm 45 and Its Canonical Position in the Hebrew Psalter,” *BBR* 26 (2016): 327; Salo, *Die jüdische Königsideologie*, 173–94; Trotter, “The Genre and Setting of Psalm 45,” 38; Ellis, “The Translation of Elohim in Psalm 45:7–8,” 65–89; Whitley, “Textual and Exegetical Observations on Ps 45,4–7,” 280–82; Patterson, “A Multiplex Approach to Psalm 45,” 40–41. Contra this reading of the king as divine/semi-divine, see Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 349; Mulder, *Studies on Psalm 45*, 38. In light of my discussion on the king’s blending with the deity in the previous chapter, I understand the **אלהים** in v. 7 as a title of the king, who in his role as monarch serves as a representative of the deity upon the earth.

לָ),” as one might present oneself before a deity.<sup>42</sup> The psalm portrays the queen similarly to how it pictures the king.<sup>43</sup> The poem highlights the queen’s beauty and her powerful place among all nations, marking out how foreigners and the wealthy will pursue her favor (vv. 12–14a). Like the king, the queen is majestically adorned with marvelous garments, interwoven with gold and dyed in many colors (v. 14–15a).

Verses 15–16 highlight the queen and her party’s procession to meet the king within his palace. They proceed towards him with gladness and joy (שִׂמְחָה וְגִיל), a sense of giddiness, as the active and passive nature of the women’s movement toward the king alternates in the text.<sup>44</sup> The will of the king and queen meld as they move towards the consummation of the marriage and the production of progeny.<sup>45</sup> Verses 11–16 foreground the queen’s close connection to the king with imagery that highlights her beauty, stature, her power among the peoples, and her sexual ardor for the king. Similar to the imagery of the Song of Songs, references to the queen’s power, beauty, and the production of progeny through sexual encounter are often veiled. The imagery here characterizing the queen lacks the same boldness of the imagery that carves out the king’s identity in the preceding verses. Yet, the psalm displays the queen with images parallel to those used to mark out the king’s identity, highlighting their shared rule.

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<sup>42</sup> See Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1*, 704; Cheung, ““Forget Your People and Your Father’s House,”” 327 and 333–34.

<sup>43</sup> Cheung points out: “The portrait of the bride in various ways creates the impression that she is separated from the other female characters in this psalm. On the other hand, however, there is a remarkable list of affinities between the psalmist’s description of her and that of the king. While isolating the bride from the other women in the psalm, the psalmist draws the bride so close to the king that they are described as sharing different common qualities” (Cheung, ““Forget Your People and Your Father’s House,”” 331). Other scholars have noted parallels that the psalm employs in constructing the identities of the king and queen (see Couffignal, “Les structures figuratives,” 201; Schaefer, *Psalms*, 113–15).

<sup>44</sup> The roots שִׂמְחָה and גִיל are employed in Song of Songs 1:2–6 to describe the joy and delight of the woman drawn into the king’s presence, presumably for an erotic encounter.

<sup>45</sup> The scene described in vv. 15–16 seems to imply an erotic encounter between the king and his new bride. See Couffignal, “Les structures figuratives,” 202–03; Schroeder, ““A Love Song,”” 221–31; Hamilton, *The Body Royale*, 44–46.



The focus on the king and queen together persists as the poem moves forward. Verse 16 underlines the royal couple's offspring, thus displaying the maintenance of the royal line. The dynasty continues. Its power remains and even expands (v. 17; תשיתמו לשרים בכל־הארץ). The psalm closes with a self-referential note, exclaiming how the poem will function to maintain the king's name—the king's identity—among the peoples for all succeeding generations (v. 18). The poem places the king in relation to all peoples as a god, one who will be praised and celebrated forever (אמים יהודך לעלם ועד).<sup>46</sup> The psalm as it stands employs imagery of the royal couple to display a consummate image of royal power. The question remains, though, as to whether commentators are correct to mark out diverging concerns in vv. 2–10, 17–18 and vv. 11–16. I argue that the constellation of images displayed in the final form of Psalm 45 makes sense as a royal icon in the context of ANE royal art.

#### **4.2 Royal Power Expressed through Violence, Eroticism, and Fecundity: The Royal Couple in ANE Art**

The major interpretive issues raised by scholars working with Psalm 45 focus on whether or not אלהים in v. 7 refers to the king and how imagery of the queen and royal intimacy in vv. 11–16 fits within the context of violent royal imagery in vv. 2–10 and 17–18. As I have spoken to the blending of royal and divine figures both in ANE royal art and in Psalm 21 in the previous chapter, I will not focus on that question here.<sup>47</sup> The artistic data that I surveyed in the last

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<sup>46</sup> Yahweh is generally the object of praise when the root ידה is employed, and yet the psalm places the king as the object of praise, putting the king in a parallel to Yahweh (see Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 454–57; Trotter, “The Genre and Setting,” 45; Schroeder, “A Love Song,” 417; Cheung, “Forget Your People and Your Father’s House,” 327–28).

<sup>47</sup> Murray J. Ellis discusses the vast number of readings that have been proposed for v. 7. He provides a compelling argument that reading אלהים as a vocative reference to the king is the most sensible option in terms of syntax, text-critical options, and royal ideology (Ellis, “The Translation of Elohim in Psalm 45:7–8,” 65–89). More recently, Hamilton asserts: “The psalm’s divinization of the king is not mere ‘flattery,’ but neither is it a case of ontological speculation. Rather, it is a statement about a relationship between king and God, on one side, and the king and his subjects, on the other. He is אלהים when he displays himself on the throne, bearing the insignia of power...the psalmist does not engage in ontological speculation, but rather emphasizes the king’s position before his

chapter demonstrates that a vocative reading of אלהים makes sense, contrary to the claims of some scholars.<sup>48</sup> Instead, I will survey ANE royal art that displays the king and queen together in scenes employing themes of violence, sexual ardor, and fecundity in the construction of royal rhetoric in order to better understand the psalm's imagery, genre, and function.

#### 4.2.1 Egyptian Royal Art

Egyptian royal art pictures the king and queen together as joint rulers over the cosmos; the royal couple represent the female and male aspects of the divine creative power.<sup>49</sup> Depictions of the royal couple display (1) the couple's rule over the cosmos, (2) maintenance of the royal line, and (3) subjugation of Egypt's enemies. These aspects of royal ideology often populate scenes depicting the king and queen together.

For example, Tutankhamun produced royal art that displays the king and his queen together with violent and erotic themes. The small golden shrine of Tutankhamun displays Tutankhamun and his queen, Ankhesenamun, together in multiple scenes.<sup>50</sup> The shrine likely functioned within the palace to produce an image of the king, serving as a part of the rituals and

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subjects, to whom he is (not, 'is like') Elohim" (Hamilton, *The Body Royal*, 53). Keel agrees: "the Israelite king is addressed as 'god' or 'divine'" (Keel, *Symbolism*, 284).

<sup>48</sup> The problem most scholars have is not grammatical/syntactical but conceptual, "since addressing a king as god is completely unique in the Old Testament, and veneration of a king as god is absolutely unknown" (Mulder, *Studies on Psalm 45*, 36). However, Delitzsch points to other references in the HB to support a vocative reading: "And since elsewhere earthly authorities are also called אלהים, Ex. xxi. 6, xxii. 7 sq., Ps. lxxxii., cf. cxxxviii. 1, because they are God's representatives and the bearers of His image upon earth, so the king who is celebrated in this Psalm may be all the more readily styled *Elohim*, when in his heavenly beauty, his irresistible doxa or glory, and his divine holiness, he seems to the psalmist to be the perfected realization of the close relationship in which God has set David and his seed to Himself" (Delitzsch, *Psalms*, vol. 2, 82–83).

<sup>49</sup> Robins, "The Small Golden Shrine of Tutankhamun," 210–11; Lana Troy, *Patterns of Queenship in Ancient Egyptian Myth and History*, Boreas. Uppsala Studies in Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern Civilization 14 (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1986), 20–53.

<sup>50</sup> Robins notes that the king and queen are the only anthropomorphic characters upon the shrine (Robins, "The Small Golden Shrine," 207). Deities are mentioned in the text of the shrine, with the goddess Weret-hakau's name occurring more than any other deities', and yet there are no representations of anthropomorphic deities upon the shrine (Robins, "The Small Golden Shrine," 208).

practices that sustained the divine kingship by displaying an ideal image of the royal couple.<sup>51</sup> The object consists of a constellation of imagery that depicts the king and queen together in scenes exuding erotic content. These scenes also depict violence employed in the maintenance of order and the renewal of the king's creative role in the cosmos.<sup>52</sup>

The shrine always represents the king facing outward from the shrine. This posture is similar to the depiction of deities on temple shrines. According to Robins, the king's outward orientation marks him as the "object of veneration rather than the performer of the ritual."<sup>53</sup> The queen, on the other hand, fills the role of ritual performer, often facing inward towards the king.<sup>54</sup> The shrine, then, displays the king as one who, "although mortal, was the bearer of the divine office of kingship, thereby taking on the divine attributes of the office."<sup>55</sup> The king paralleled the role of Re, who ruled the celestial realm, on earth.

The king filled his office and divine role by way of "a series of ascension rituals which included the bestowal on him by deities of various items of insignia, such as the *uraeus*, crowns, *ḥq3*-scepter and *nh3ḥ3*-flail."<sup>56</sup> The insignia of crook and flail, throne, crowns and anointing all function upon the shrine to enable the king to enact his divine role.<sup>57</sup> Robins notes: "Just as the king was the bearer of divine kingship, so the king's mother and the king's principle wife were the bearers of divine queenship...Divine queenship represented the female aspect of divine kingship, the means by which the divine aspect of the living king was constantly renewed and

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<sup>51</sup> M. Eaton-Krauss and E. Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine From the Tomb of Tutankhamun* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1985), 30; David O'Connor, "Reading the small golden shrine of Tutankhamun," in *Zeichen aus dem Sand: Streiflichter aus Ägyptens Geschichte zu Ehren von Gunter Dreyer*, ed. Eva-Maria Engel, Vera Müller and Ulrich Hartung, Menes: Studien zur Kultur und Sprache der ägyptischen Frühzeit und Alten Reiches Band 5 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008), 495–516; Robins, "The Small Golden Shrine," 208 and 222–24.

<sup>52</sup> Robins, "The Small Golden Shrine," 213–24.

<sup>53</sup> Robins, "The Small Golden Shrine," 208.

<sup>54</sup> Robins, "The Small Golden Shrine," 208.

<sup>55</sup> Robins, "The Small Golden Shrine," 210.

<sup>56</sup> Robins, "The Small Golden Shrine," 211.

<sup>57</sup> See Robins, "The Small Golden Shrine," 211.

regenerated.”<sup>58</sup> The images upon the shrine of the king and queen document Ankhesenamun’s “ideological role as Tutankhamun’s queen,” with each panel illustrating the queen’s role in the royal sphere. The shrine also displays the goddess Weret-hekau’s love for both the king and queen, legitimizing their joint rule.<sup>59</sup>



**Fig. 4.1.** The exterior face of the golden shrine’s front doors, showing panels AR 1–6. Location: Tutankhamun’s tomb, Valley of Kings, Thebes. Date: 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, Plate VIII.<sup>60</sup>

The shrine’s scenes portray the queen as a vital aspect of the kingship, though not as an equal partner. In each scene, the king takes precedence over the queen, who appears as one who supports, renews, and maintains the king and the royal line. Within the six panels that make up the exterior of the shrine’s front doors (**fig. 4.1**), it is clear the queen serves as one who supports and maintains the kingship and not as the object of veneration.

<sup>58</sup> Robins, “The Small Golden Shrine,” 211; Troy, *Patterns of Queenship*, 145–50.

<sup>59</sup> Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, 29.

<sup>60</sup> As well as indicating which side of the shrine the images I discuss come from, I include the standard labeling of scenes (here AR 1–6) used by Egyptologist so that their works might be easily cross-referenced.



**Fig. 4.2.** The first scene on the shrine's front doors (AR 1). Location: Tutankhamun's tomb, Valley of Kings, Thebes. Date: 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, Plate VIII, AR 1.

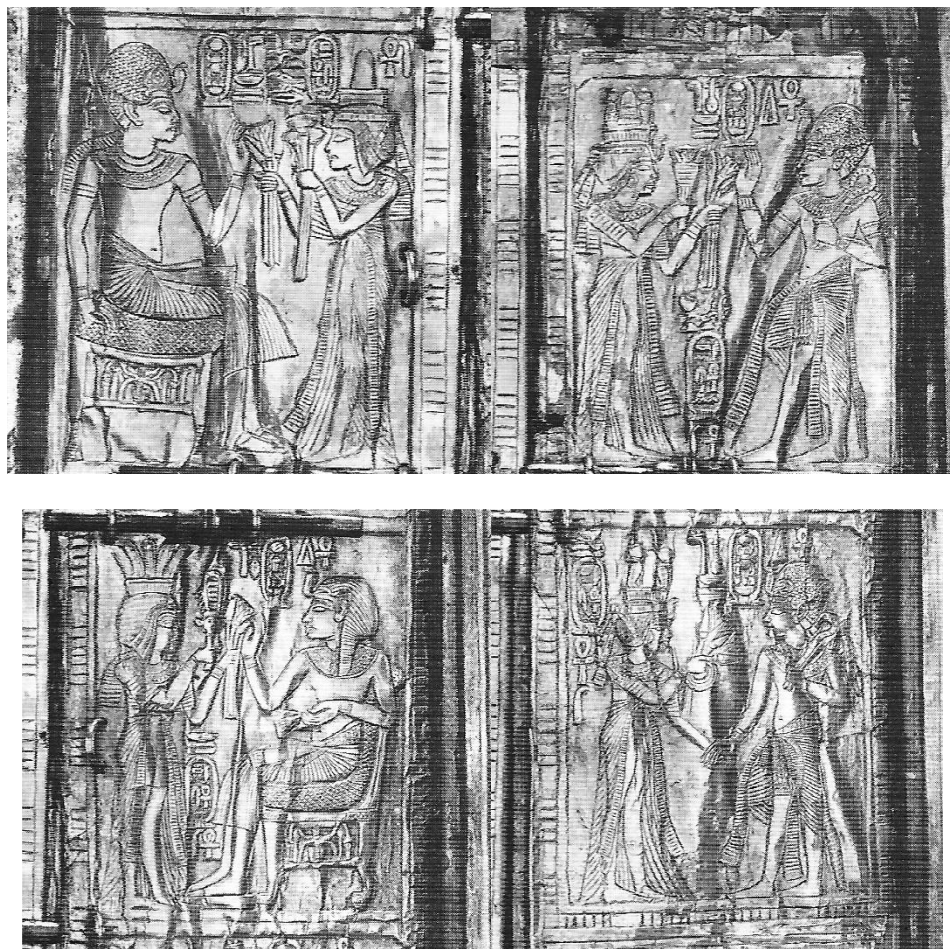
The upper left scene (**fig. 4.2**) establishes the relationship between the king and queen upon the object more clearly than the other scenes. The scene sets the stage for how one reads and understands the shrine, as Eaton-Kraus and Graefe illustrate: “Both the position and orientation of this scene attest to its prominence among the shrine's tableaux, for according to ancient Egyptian conventions of orientation, an officiant approaching the closed shrine should ‘read’ AR 1 first.”<sup>61</sup> Ankhnesenamun's posture and approach towards the king, with both her hands raised towards the king before her face, “implies a considerable gulf in the status between herself and Tutankhamun.”<sup>62</sup> The pose parallels other scenes in Egyptian art depicting worshippers approaching a deity and, less often, officials entering into the presence of their king.<sup>63</sup> The lapwing bird that the king holds in his left hand symbolizes the king's subjects, and so in this

<sup>61</sup> Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, 30.

<sup>62</sup> Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, 30.

<sup>63</sup> See Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, 31.

scene the queen models an ideal citizen before Tutankhamun, the absolute sovereign.<sup>64</sup> The other sixteen panels of the shrine portray how the queen works with and supports the king in his rule over the cosmos.



**Figs. 4.3a–d.** Scenes AR 2, 4, 5, 6 from front door. Location: Tutankhamun’s tomb, Valley of Kings, Thebes. Date: 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, Plate VIII, AR 2, 4, 5, 6.

In multiple scenes on the exterior of the doors the queen is shown before the king as she presents bouquets of blue water lilies, papyrus, and lotus blossoms to the king or shakes a sistrum before him (**fig. 4.3**). The blossoms represent the life, health, and renewal with which the

<sup>64</sup> See Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, 31.

queen restores the king, and the music of the sistrum marks out the queen's role in enlivening the king.<sup>65</sup>

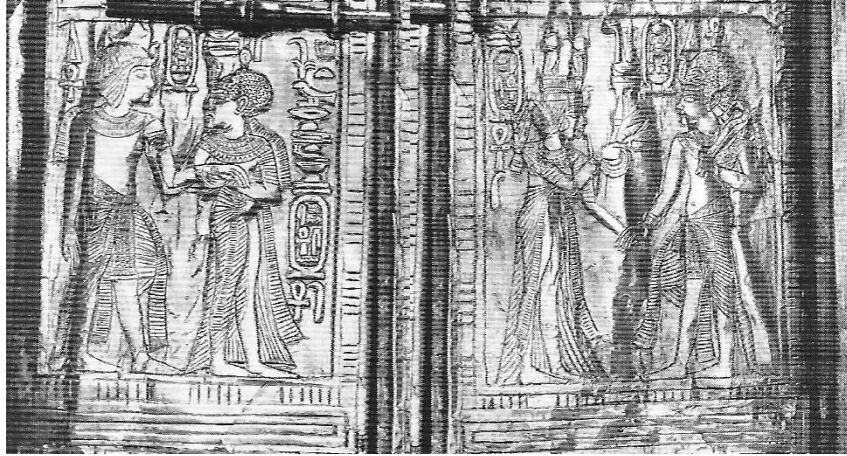


**Fig. 4.4.** Scene AR 3 from the front door. Location: Tutankhamun's tomb, Valley of Kings, Thebes. Date: 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, Plate VIII, AR 3.

In the lower left scene (**fig. 4.4**), the queen physically supports the king, marking out the queen's role in maintaining the kingship. In these scenes, "the offerings signify that Ankhesenamun, as the bearer of divine queenship, becomes the vehicle by which the king constantly renews his divine aspect, parallel to the daily renewal of the sun through the transforming power of the sky goddess."<sup>66</sup> So, these initial scenes characterize the relationship of the king and queen as a relationship wherein the queen sustains and enlivens the king. Though the king and queen parallel one another within their royal roles in some respects, the king stands in the primary place as the divine king upon the shrine.

<sup>65</sup> Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, 31–32; Robins, "The Small Golden Shrine," 214.

<sup>66</sup> Robins, "The Small Golden Shrine," 215.



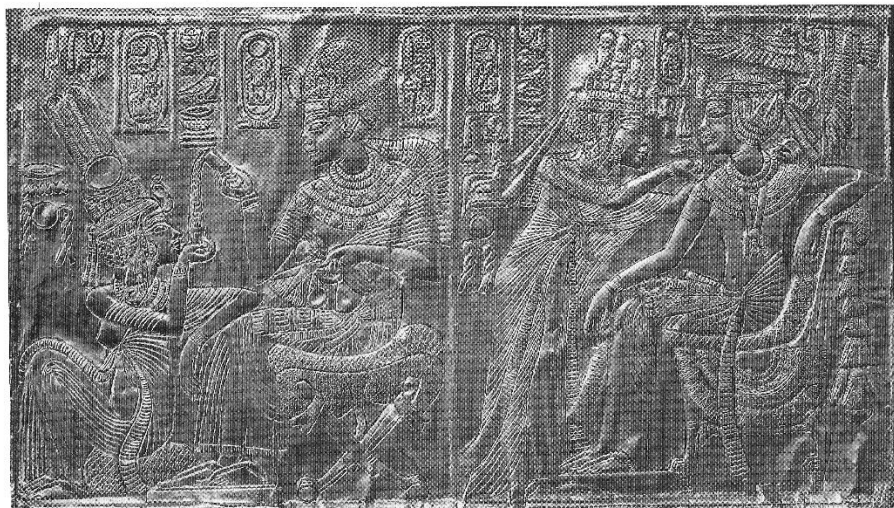
**Fig. 4.5.** Scenes AR 3 and 6 from the front doors. Location: Tutankhamun's tomb, Valley of Kings, Thebes. Date: 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, Plate VIII, AR 3, 6.

Some of the panel scenes on the exterior doors (**fig. 4.5**) allude to the king and queen's sexual intimacy. In these scenes, the queen and king hold hands or the queen holds the king's arms in both of her hands. Royal intimacy is the venue "through which the regeneration of the king will be achieved."<sup>67</sup> Other scenes upon the shrine more intently reveal the erotic nature of the king and queen's relationship.



<sup>67</sup> Robins, "The Small Golden Shrine," 215.





**Figs. 4.6a–d.** Scenes CR 1–4 from the outer side of the shrine. Location: Tutankhamun’s tomb, Valley of Kings, Thebes. Date: 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, Plates XVI–XVII, CR 1–4.

The four scenes that makeup side C (**figs. 4.6a–d**) of the shrine together indicate the erotic aspect of the royal pair’s relationship. The first and last scenes (**figs. 4.6a and 4.6d**) display the queen vivifying the king and maintaining the divine kingship. In the top left scene (**fig. 4.6a**), the queen grants the king cultic implements such as the sistrum and the *mnjyt*-necklace, implements that are associated with Hathor. The queen takes on the role of the goddess to renew the king’s life and rule.<sup>68</sup> The lower right scene (**fig. 4.6d**) again shows the queen as one who sustains the king in his role as divine king. She ties a pectoral necklace about the king’s neck, a symbol that refers to “the renewal of the divine king at dawn through the female agency of the queen, as the reborn sun appears at dawn through the female agency of the sky goddess.”<sup>69</sup> In these outer scenes the queen sustains the king through ritual actions.

Yet the two inner scenes are more starkly erotic. These scenes (**figs. 4.6b–c**) both employ liquid to signify both cultic and erotic themes of the renewal of the kingship and the king’s life.

<sup>68</sup> Robins, “The Small Golden Shrine,” 217–18; Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, 20–21 and 32.

<sup>69</sup> Robins, “The Small Golden Shrine,” 219.

**Figure 4.6b** displays the queen pouring liquid into the king's cup as she presents the king with a water lily and poppy. Robins notes that this scene:

Is yet another way of making reference to the role of the god's hand. Here, it is her hand that causes the liquid to flow, as the creator god's hand caused the ejaculation of his semen. The liquid is poured into the king's cup with the implication that he will swallow it, as the creator god swallowed his semen in order to become pregnant with Shu and Tefnut.<sup>70</sup>

The lower left scene (**fig. 4.6c**) is unparalleled in public or royal art.<sup>71</sup> The scene evokes the erotic while also signaling that the royal roles overlap with the role of the divine creator.<sup>72</sup> The queen sits before the king with her face turned back towards him. The king holds a lotus flower and either perseas or mandrake fruit, symbolizing life and fertility, in his left hand as he pours liquid into the queen's open hand.<sup>73</sup> The queen looks up at the king, and, though she wears the same dress here as in the other scenes, only in this scene is her breast exposed. The scene bespeaks the erotic life of the couple that denotes new creation, specifically the reproduction of the royal line and office. As Eaton-Krauss and Graefe claim, "The scene's intimate, amorous atmosphere cannot be gainsaid. In our view, CR 3 alludes to the sensual side of conjugal life ideally enjoyed by the royal couple."<sup>74</sup> Scenes that hint at or more boldly display erotic themes in their depiction of the royal couple indicate the continuation of the royal line and symbolize the love that permeates all creation.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Robins, "The Small Golden Shrine," 218.

<sup>71</sup> See Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, 33.

<sup>72</sup> See Keel, who notes that the scene's erotic overtones imply the production of royal offspring, signaling the security of the dynasty and the kingdom (Keel, *Symbolism*, 284).

<sup>73</sup> See Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, 19–20.

<sup>74</sup> Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, 34; cf. Wolfhart Westendorf, who contends that the scene displays an encoded depiction of sexual intercourse (Wolfhart Westendorf, "Bemerkungen zur 'Kammer der Wiedergeburt' im Tutanchamungrab," *ZÄS* 94 [1967]: 141).

<sup>75</sup> Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, 30; Robins, "The Small Golden Shrine," 210.

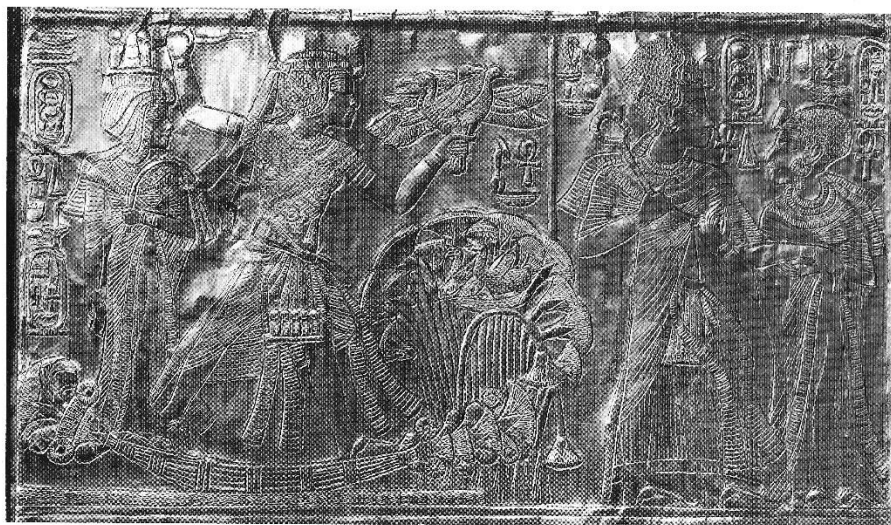


PLATE XIV

Side B, BR 1-2



Side B, BR 3

PL

**Figs. 4.7a–c.** Scenes BR 1–3 from the outer side of the golden shrine. Location: Tutankhamun’s tomb, Valley of Kings, Thebes. Date: 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, Plates XIV–XV, BR 1–3.

Other scenes upon the shrine mix erotic themes with royal violence and the establishment of order. On the opposite side of the shrine (**figs. 4.7a–c**) the queen appears with the king in two hunting and fowling scenes and in a scene depicting “the royal lady’s affectionate, sustaining role in her marriage.”<sup>76</sup> The scene of affection and support stands between two fishing and

<sup>76</sup> Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, 36.

fowling scenes. Fishing and fowling scenes classically indicate the taming of chaos and establishment of *maat*.<sup>77</sup> Different from classical fowling scenes though, in the first scene (**fig. 4.7a**) the king holds a wavy stick, likely a representation of the *wr-ḥkꜣw* wand.<sup>78</sup> The wand indicates that the king wields the creative force of *ḥkꜣ*-power in the wilderness, creating order in the midst of chaos.<sup>79</sup> The king holds pintail ducks in his other hand, as he works to shape the chaos.<sup>80</sup> Above the marsh thicket, a traditional wish for the king's reign, "all life and dominion," is inscribed, relating the king's action to the continuance of his reign.<sup>81</sup> In front of this scene (**fig. 4.7b**), the queen again leads the king by the arm, "suggesting once more the possibility of sexual intimacy between the king and queen, so that Ankhesenamun could stimulate the king to renew himself and the cosmos."<sup>82</sup>

In the scene below (**fig. 4.7c**), the king sits on a stool as he draws a bow to hunt ducks. One duck is already pierced by the king's arrows. A lion sits subdued wearing a collar at the king's side. Though a lion may seem out of place within this scene, Robins notes that the beast represents the monstrous powers of chaos controlled by the king's employment of violence.<sup>83</sup> The queen sits before the king, in a pose similar to that which the goddess *Maat* takes on the prow of the sun god's solar bark.<sup>84</sup> The queen holds an arrow in her hand as she turns back to face the king, blending the violent and the erotic.<sup>85</sup> These three scenes intermix royal weaponry,

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<sup>77</sup> See Melinda Hartwig, *Tomb Painting and Identity in Ancient Thebes, 1419–1372 BCE*, *Monumenta Aegyptica X* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2004), 103–06.

<sup>78</sup> Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, 38.

<sup>79</sup> See Eaton-Krauss, *The Small Golden Shrine*, 38; Robins, "The Small Golden Shrine," 216.

<sup>80</sup> Robins, "The Small Golden Shrine," 216.

<sup>81</sup> Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, 16.

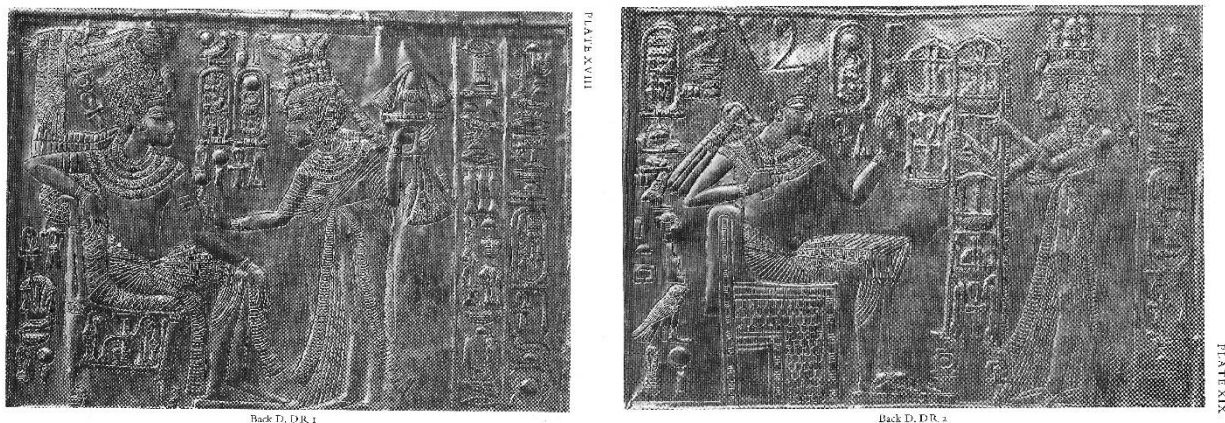
<sup>82</sup> Robins, "The Small Golden Shrine," 216.

<sup>83</sup> Robins, "The Small Golden Shrine," 217.

<sup>84</sup> Robins, "The Small Golden Shrine," 217.

<sup>85</sup> Robins, "The Small Golden Shrine," 217; Westendorf, "Bemerkungen zur 'Kammer der Wiedergeburt,'" 139–50.

violence, and the erotic. The animals represent the chaotic forces that the king as warrior and hunter tames to create *maat* with the support and affection of his queen.<sup>86</sup>



**Figs. 4.8a–b.** Scenes DR 1 and DR 2 from the rear outer side of the shrine. Location: Tutankhamun’s tomb, Valley of Kings, Thebes. Date: 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, Plates XVIII–XIX, DR 1–2.

The rear of the shrine (**figs. 4.8a–b**) displays the king as the divine ruler who is granted an abundant and long reign by his queen. **Figure 4.8a** displays the king seated in a throne decorated with the *smꜣ tꜣwj* motif, which projects a message that the king rules over a united kingdom. The queen holds a dish decorated with a water lily petal garland and containing a cone of what is likely scented oil. The queen touches the king’s upper arm with her hand. The scene depicts the queen anointing the king, scenting him with a divine fragrance to recreate the divine aspect of kingship that the king embodies.<sup>87</sup> **Figure 4.8b** displays the king upon the *ḥwt*-throne, which, “unlike the other chairs and stools on which the king sits, is used not only by the king but also by deities, suggesting that the king’s divine aspect is being emphasized by its use.”<sup>88</sup> The

<sup>86</sup> Robins, “The Small Golden Shrine,” 217.

<sup>87</sup> Robins, “The Small Golden Shrine,” 219–20.

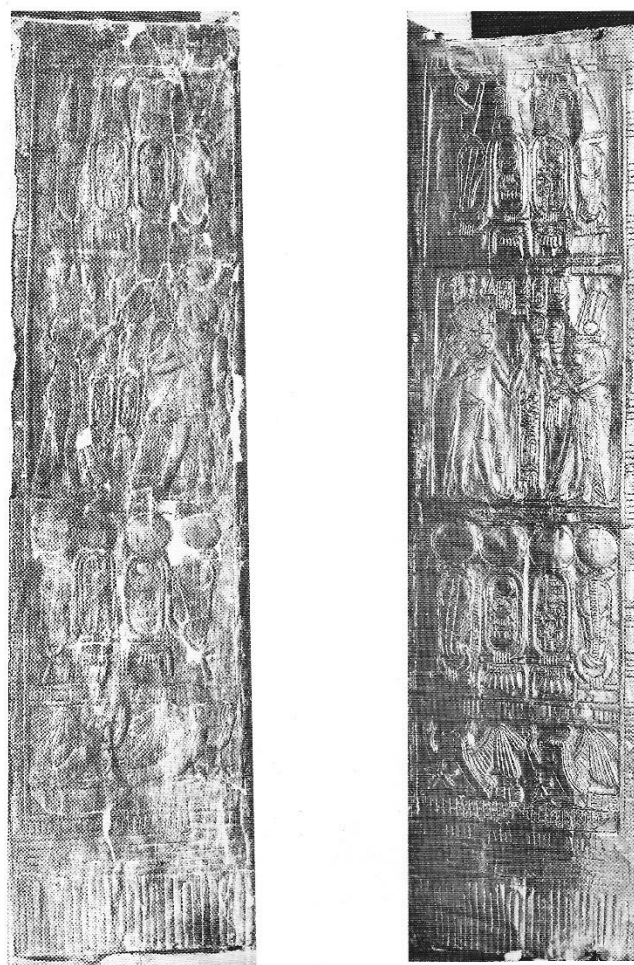
<sup>88</sup> Robins, “The Small Golden Shrine,” 221; see further Kraus Kuhlmann, *Die Thron im Alten Agypten. Untersuchungen zu Semantik, Ikonographie und Symbolik eines Herrschaftszeichens* (Gluckstadt: J.J. Augustin, 1977), 82–83.

queen offers the king two notched palm ribs ending in tadpoles on two *šn* signs with *sd*-festival hieroglyphs hanging from them. The signs that the queen offers before the king symbolize, “a hundred thousand years of *sd*-festivals, life and dominion.”<sup>89</sup> The king holds the crook and flail and wears the red crown, and the text labels him as one who “has arisen on the throne of Horus like Ra.”<sup>90</sup> These two scenes together portray Tutankhamun as the divine king with royal symbols such as the throne, crowns, crook and flail, and the anointing oil applied by his queen. These symbols of the king’s reign connect him to the divine and communicate the everlasting duration of the kingship—a kingship sustained and continued through the queen’s role.

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<sup>89</sup> Robins, “The Small Golden Shrine,” 221.

<sup>90</sup> Robins, “The Small Golden Shrine,” 221.



The doors of the shrine, interior (AR 7-14)

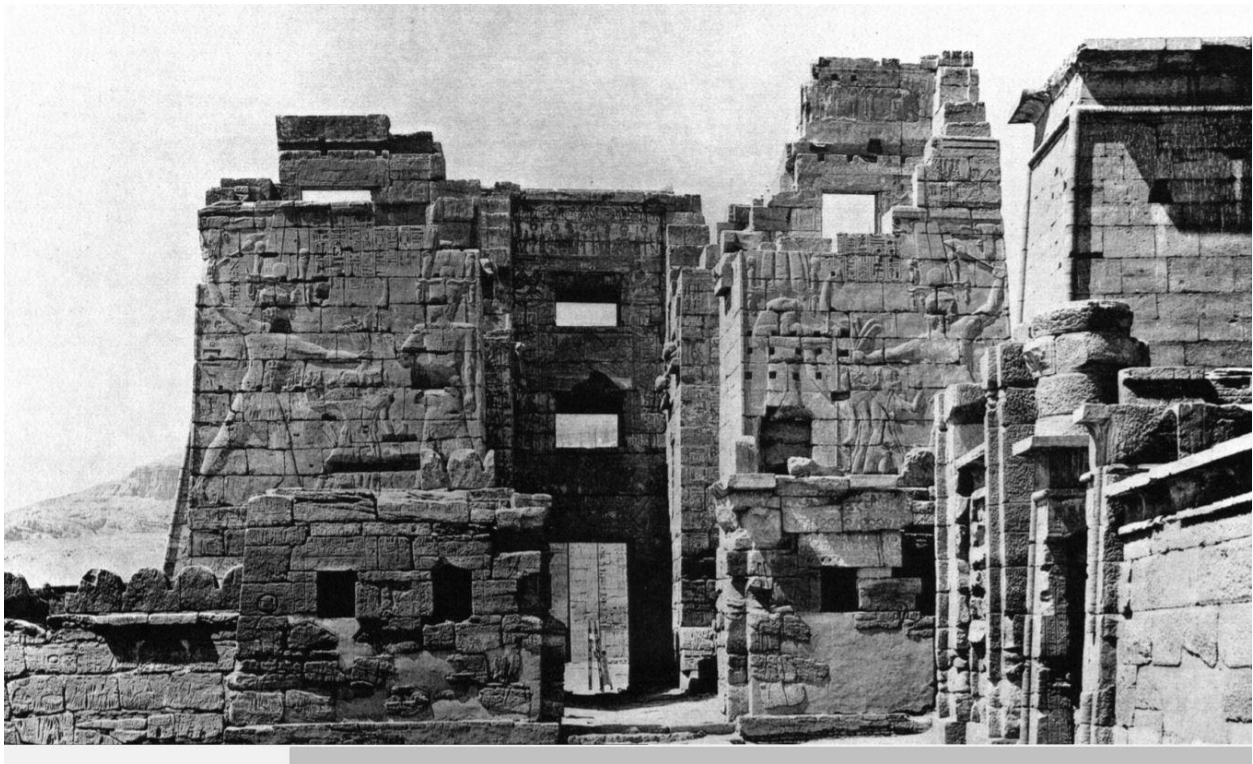
**Fig. 4.9.** Interior of shrine doors. Location: Tutankhamun’s tomb, Valley of Kings, Thebes. Date: 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Eaton-Krauss and Graefe, *The Small Golden Shrine*, Plate IX.

Finally, the interior of the shrine is decorated on the back of the front doors (**fig. 4.9**). As the shrine’s doors are opened, they display another two scenes of the queen before the king with flower bouquets and with sistrum instruments, again underscoring the queen’s role in vivifying the king. Above and below the two scenes of the royal couple stand multiple scenes that represent the king’s cartouches and show two *rhjtt* birds on *nb* baskets who “raise their human hands in adoration above the *dw3* hieroglyph, writing the phrase, ‘adoration by all the people.’”<sup>91</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Robins, “The Small Golden Shrine,” 214.

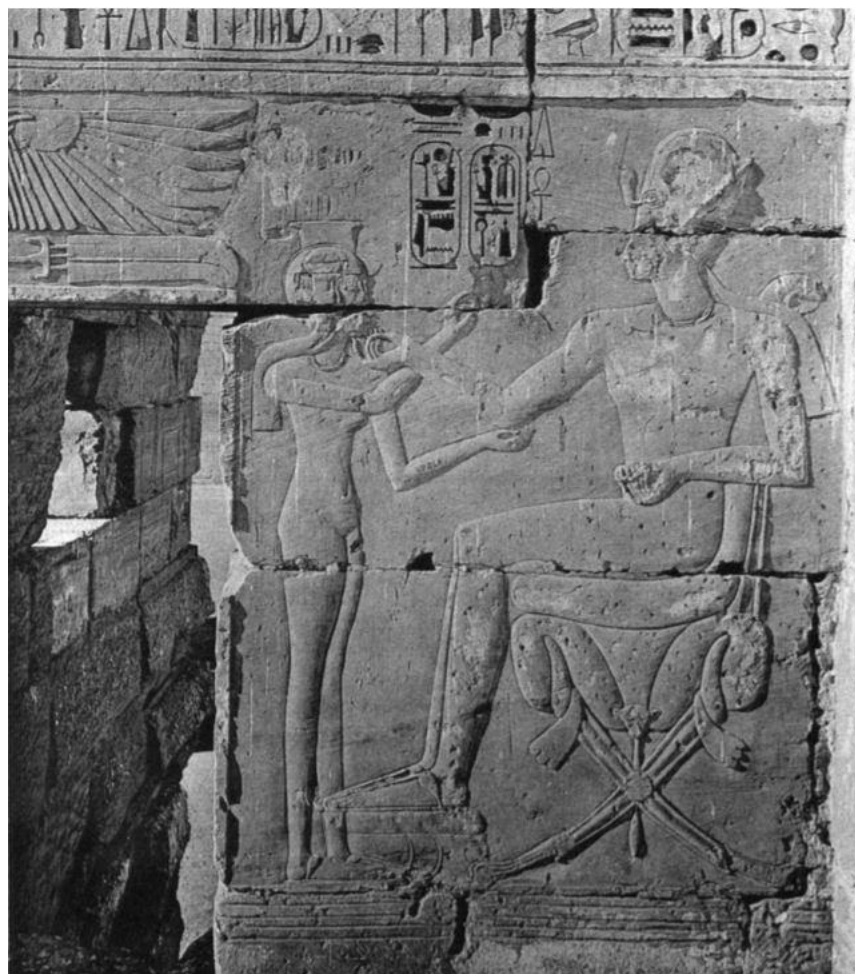
The shrine's imagery centers upon a display of the interaction of the king and queen in the maintenance of the divine kingship and the enactment of its primary roles. At the same time, these inner scenes portray how all peoples should relate to the king.

The shrine as a whole displays the king and queen together in a constellation of violent and erotic images and classic emblems of royal identity. Together the images display the maintenance of kingship and its power. The shrine intertwines the king violently subduing chaos with erotically charged images of the king and queen. The actions of the queen and king together renew the kingship and the cosmos. Psalm 45 and Tutankhamun's shrine draw together similar threads of imagery to picture the kingship.



**Fig. 4.10.** Exterior face of the Eastern High Gate at Medinet Habu. Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Hölscher, *The Mortuary Temple of Ramses III*, pl 15.





**Fig. 4.11.** Scene from the interior program of the Eastern High Gate. Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Hölscher, *The Mortuary Temple of Ramses III*, pl 23.

Tutankhamun's small golden shrine does not stand alone in its depiction of royal intimacy alongside displays of the violent defeat of the king's enemies. The Eastern High Gate at Medinet Habu is an example of royal monumental art displaying similar themes. The Eastern High Gate served as the primary entrance to the temple on its eastern wall, with a similar gate located on the western wall.<sup>92</sup> The gate models a constellation of images unexpected for a mortuary temple.<sup>93</sup> O'Connor describes the challenges in interpreting the artistic program of the

<sup>92</sup> See Uvo Hölscher, *The Mortuary Temple of Ramses III: Part II*, Volume IV of The Excavation of Medinet Habu, OIP 55 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 4–10.

<sup>93</sup> See The Epigraphic Survey, *The Eastern High Gate with Translations of Texts*, Volume 8 of Medinet Habu, OIP 94 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), xi; David O'Connor, "The Eastern High Gate:

Eastern High Gate similarly to how biblical scholars have described the challenges in interpreting the literary imagery of Psalm 45. He claims, “The Eastern High Gate (like the Western) was decorated with elaborate programs of scenes and texts, both externally and internally...However, the external and internal programs are in startling and inexplicable contrast to each other.”<sup>94</sup> The High Gate’s external program displays the king violently subjugating his enemies (e.g. **fig. 4.10**), whereas its internal program displays the king lounging and erotically interacting with princesses / the *nfrwt* (e.g. **fig. 4.11**).<sup>95</sup>

The artistic programs of the Eastern High Gate and Psalm 45 resemble one another in their basic structure. Psalm 45 begins and ends with the king’s violent defeat of the nations and the nations’ praise of the king (vv. 1–9, 18), while the middle of the psalm shifts to images of the king, his harem, the queen, and the production of a lasting royal line (vv. 10–17). The constellations of imagery in the High Gate and Ps 45, with their interlacing of violent and erotic imagery, have puzzled interpreters.

The High Gate, like Psalm 45, also stands out in some ways from standard examples of Egyptian monumental art. As O’Connor notes, “The analogy with New Kingdom temples would lead us to expect a more exclusive emphasis upon ritual in the internal scenes and texts, but instead, throughout all the rooms (insofar as they survive) we see the king ‘at play: surrounded by slender young women, he is offered food, drink and flowers; he plays at draughts and bestows an occasional caress.’”<sup>96</sup> The temple gate exudes intertwined martial and erotic imagery.<sup>97</sup>

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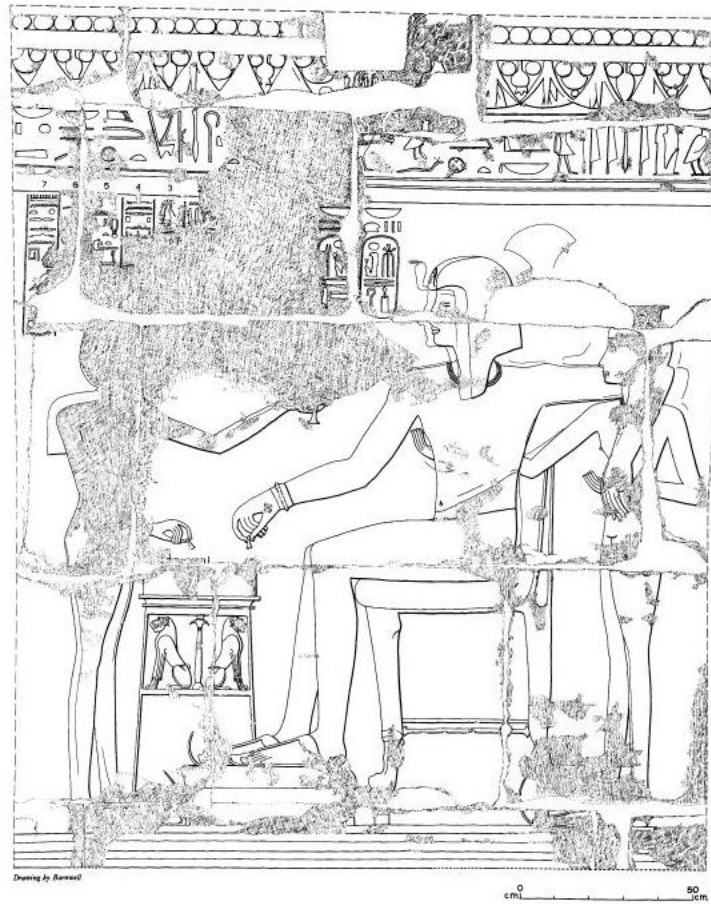
Sexualized Architecture at Medinet Habu?” in *Structure and Significance: Thoughts on Ancient Egyptian Architecture*, ed. Peter Jánosi (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2005), 439–41.

<sup>94</sup> O’Connor, “The Eastern High Gate,” 439.

<sup>95</sup> Troy and O’Connor contend that the women depicted upon the interior of the High Gate all belong to the royal harem (see Troy, *Patterns of Queenship*, 78–79; O’Connor, “The Eastern High Gate,” 446–47; see also The Epigraphic Survey, *The Eastern High Gate*, xi).

<sup>96</sup> O’Connor, “The Eastern High Gate,” 441.

<sup>97</sup> Evocative, one might say, of the constellations of imagery strung together by many a James Bond film, though the High Gate is a tad more graphic than even the recent PG-13 rated Bond films.



**Fig. 4.12.** Interior scene of the Eastern High Gate in which Ramses III embraces one princess and plays draughts with another (all actors apparently nude). Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Eastern High Gate*, pl. 640.

The primary subject matter of the High Gate’s interior portrays, “the king and groups of attractive young women of relatively high status, i.e., not serving women and the like (to judge from the costumes, regalia and activities of the women).”<sup>98</sup> The women sing and play music for the king, relax with the king, adorn him with clothing and jewelry, and interact intimately with the king. O’Connor notes that the interior rooms—with their erotic displays of the king among

<sup>98</sup> O’Connor, “The Eastern High Gate,” 445.

his princesses or with the queen(s)—likely reflect themes that were more prevalent in the royal palaces, which are unfortunately poorly preserved.<sup>99</sup>

Many of these intimate scenes that made up the interior walls of the High Gate are reminiscent of scenes upon Tutankhamun’s golden shrine. Unlike the small golden shrine, the women portrayed within the High Gate are always anonymous. O’Connor contends that the women likely represent some “female component of the royal household, a component enjoying a relatively informal, intimate and even eroticized relationship with the king.”<sup>100</sup> O’Connor agrees with Lana Troy that the women depicted in this internal artistic program are the *nfrwt*, “beautiful ones,” that is, women of the royal harem.<sup>101</sup> And yet, the women depicted within the High Gate interact with the king in ways comparable to how Ankhesenamun interacts with her husband (see **figs. 4.1–4.8**). They clasp him, touch him, and support him.

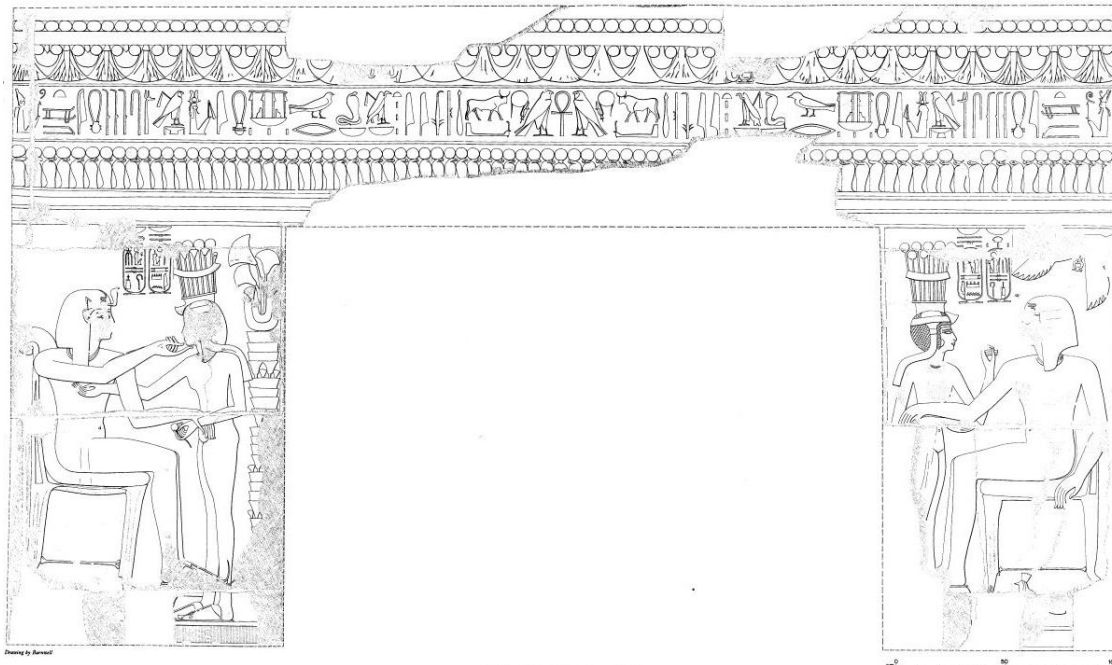
The erotic power of the king and the royal women is on display, a power that produces royal progeny and so maintains the kingship. For example, **fig. 4.12** shows the king with his arm draped about a nude woman to his right, who reaches up to clasp the king’s hand that is about her shoulders. The king also appears naked here. The art depicts a relaxed atmosphere. The pair holds each other as the king plays a game of draughts with another woman across from him. The scene exudes the king’s erotic allure and masculine potency, as he is pictured as a desirable male figure.

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<sup>99</sup> O’Connor, “The Eastern High Gate,” 445; Robins, “The Small Golden Shrine,” 211.

<sup>100</sup> O’Connor, “The Eastern High Gate,” 446.

<sup>101</sup> O’Connor, “The Eastern High Gate,” 446–47; Troy, *Patterns of Queenship*, 77–79.



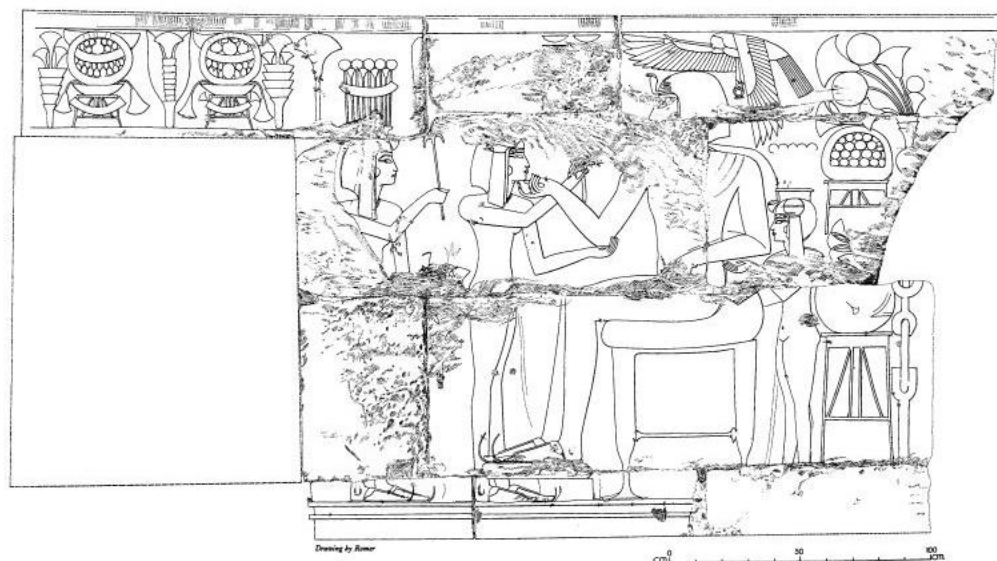
**Fig. 4.13.** Interior scenes on the western wall of the Eastern High Gate. Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Eastern High Gate*, pl. 654.

**Figure 4.13** also displays the desirability of the king while hinting at his sexual potency. Two scenes here show the king interacting with young, nubile women. The imagery of these scenes mirrors those scenes of the small golden shrine (see **figs. 4.1–4.6**). In the leftmost scene, the king and a princess embrace, the king grasping her forearm and as she supports his arm. The king uplifts her face with his right hand, and the princess holds a poppy flower in her left, likely symbolizing the life that her embrace supplies. Their interlocking posture underlines the continual love and life that flows between the king and the women of the royal harem. They constantly support him and arouse his sexual potency.<sup>102</sup>

The rightmost scene of the wall shows a princess supporting the king's arm with an uplifting embrace, similar to the scene of the queen and king on the small golden shrine (see **figs. 4.4–4.5**). Again, it seems likely that the king and the women were depicted naked in these loving

<sup>102</sup> See O'Connor, "The Eastern High Gate," 348.

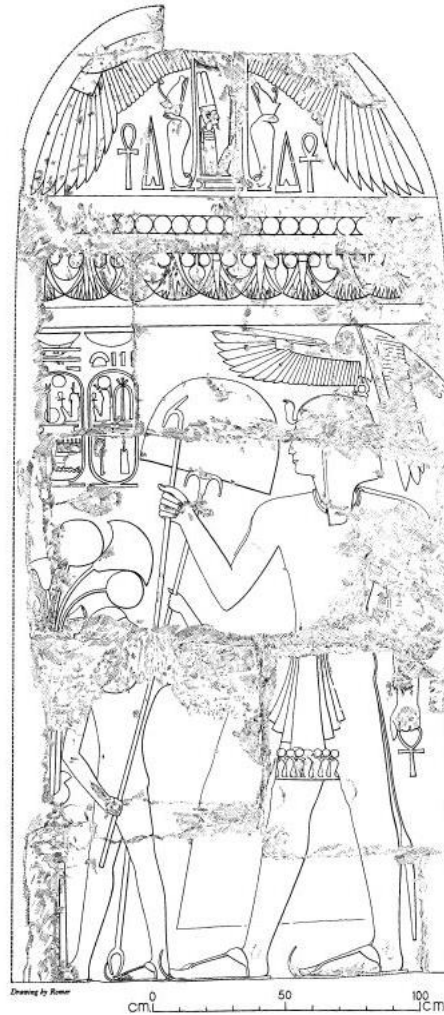
postures to highlight how the women of the king's harem supported him through sexual arousal and the production of royal progeny. These scenes of intimacy on the interior stand alongside scenes on the outer face of the same western wall that display the king as the violent conqueror of all his enemies (see **fig. 4.17** below). The themes of the king's sexual ardor and the violent subjugation of his enemies stand together upon this monument.



**Fig. 4.14.** Interior scenes depicting the king interacting with the *nfrwt*, again all nude. Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Eastern High Gate*, pl. 646.

**Figure 4.14** similarly draws upon themes of erotic excitement and the life such activity produces by picturing the king amongst his harem. The king is seated and surrounded by women who embrace him from different sides. One young woman stands behind the king, supporting his arm, and another stands before the king, lifting a flower before his face as she grasps his other arm. The king lifts this young woman's chin. Behind this woman stands another holding an ostrich feather, symbolizing *maat's* association with the life created by the erotic activity of the king and his harem. Flowers abound, imbuing the scene with symbols of life, and the horus falcon surrounds the king's head protecting him and signaling his royal status. Though this

scene, like the others, portrays no explicitly sexual content, the erotic nature of the scene is clear. The women and the king are all naked, and their intimate postures intertwine symbols of life and order with eroticism.



**Fig. 4.15.** An interior scene of the Easter High Gate that displays the king with a young prince. Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Eastern High Gate*, pl. 647.

The few scenes within the High Gate that portray the king in company with young royal princes establish a link between the erotic nature of High Gate's scenes and the production of royal progeny. **Figure 4.15** depicts a scene found within the third floor of the High Gate. A young prince stands before the king, holding a fan before the king's head. The king holds a *was*

scepter in his right hand and an *ankh* in his left, indicating the eternal dominion and life of the kingship. The everlasting nature of the kingship is indicated both by the *was* scepter itself and by the presence of the royal child in the scene. Behind the king's head, opposite the fan held by the prince, the horus falcon hovers protectively with a *shen*-hieroglyph grasped in its talons. The *shen*-sign communicates eternity, again symbolizing the eternal nature of the authority and life flowing from the kingship. The current king enacts such authority and life during his reign, and the kingship continues in his offspring.<sup>103</sup>

Thus, the eroticized nature of the scenes filling the interior program of the High Gate is not simply meant to communicate ideals of love or the king's sexual potency. These scenes also symbolize the everlasting nature of the kingship maintained through royal progeny. Describing the gate's interior program, O'Connor claims, "So far as the living king is concerned, the imagery relates to his capacity to generate heirs, and ensure the continuity of kingship; and to his symbolic role as, for the Egyptians, the exemplary representative of male potency and fertility."<sup>104</sup> These interior scenes displaying the king among the *nfrwt* and alongside royal children intertwine themes of the king's erotic power and the everlasting nature of the royal line.

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<sup>103</sup> On the *shen*-sign, see Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 43.

<sup>104</sup> O'Connor, "The Eastern High Gate," 448.

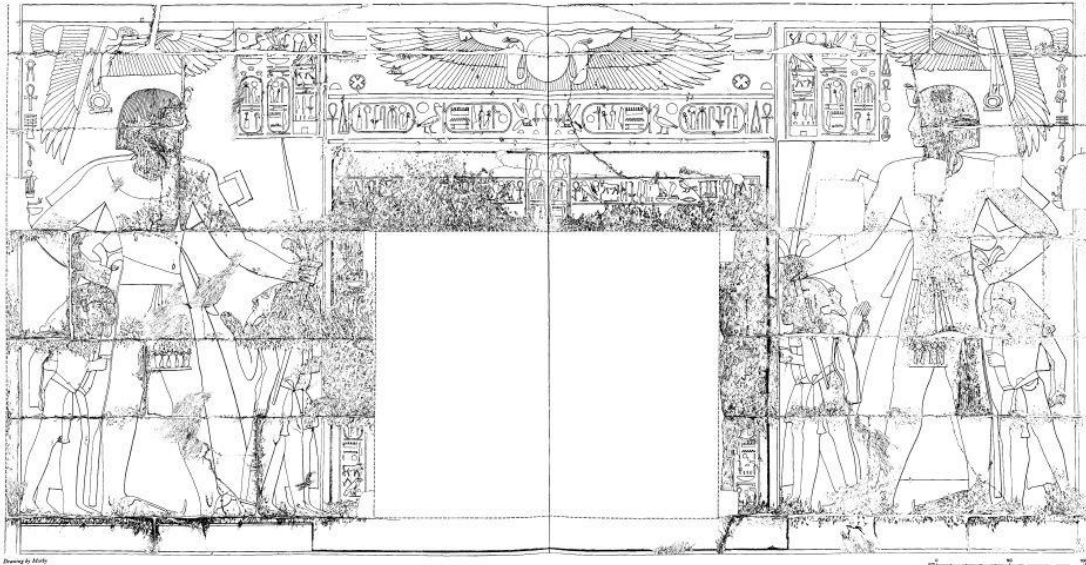




**Fig. 4.16.** Leftmost scene of the king smiting his enemies that dominates the front of the Eastern High Gate. Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Eastern High Gate*, pl. 598.

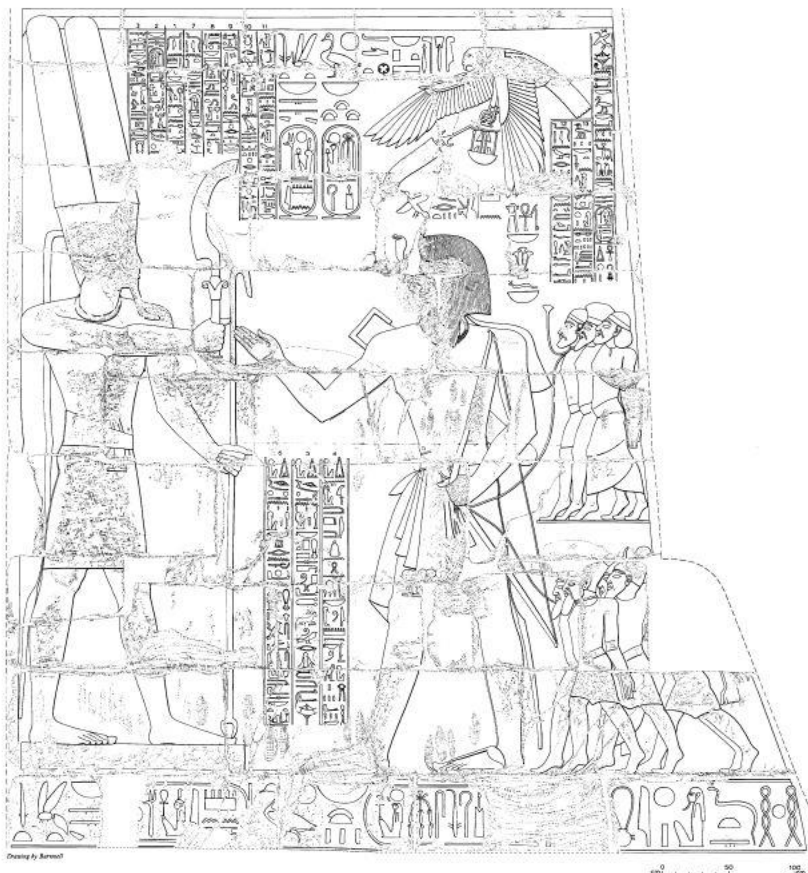
The exterior scenes portray markedly different content. On the exterior walls of the Eastern High Gate, Ramses III appears in various scenes displaying the violent subjugation of enemies as well as in smaller scenes depicting cultic action. The programmatic scenes of the exterior depict the king and his enemies with images of both potential and resultative violence. For example, the two large images that face all who approach the gate from the outside depict the king preparing to smite his subdued enemies (see **fig. 4.10**). The renderings dominate the front of the gate, far larger than any of the other artistic scenes. The images portray the maintenance of the king's everlasting reign through the employment of violent rather than sexual power. For example, the scene to the left front side of the gate (**fig. 4.16**) shows the king with a *mibt*-axe reared back as he prepares to strike down a collection of foreign enemies. He performs this act before Amun-Re, who holds out the *hpš*-sword as a symbol of the power that he grants the king. He also holds an *ankh* as a sign of the life he gives the king. The Nekbet vulture hovers

protectively above the king, holding out a *shen*-sign to symbolize the eternal efficacy of the king's power. These exterior scenes display the maintenance of the kingship through violence.



**Fig. 4.17.** Exterior scenes on the western side of the Eastern High Gate. Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Eastern High Gate*, pl. 626.

Various violent images appear upon the exterior walls along with the smiting scenes. Multiple scenes depict the result of the king's violent action on the battlefield, showing the triumph of the royal power over all enemies. Two scenes flanking a window on the western side of the central tower (**fig. 4.17**) picture the king grasping subjugated groups of enemies on either side of himself with both of his fists. The bow that the king holds in his forward hand in each scene marks him as the source of martial power that has subdued these defeated enemies. The king dominates the scene, towering over his enemies and standing as tall as the height of the viewing window that the scenes flank. No deity is present in these scenes other than the Nekbet vultures that cover the space above and behind the king's head with their wings as they hold out *shen* symbols, again marking the enduring nature of the royal power.



**Fig. 4.18.** Exterior scene on the north wall of the Eastern High Gate depicting the king in triumph before Amun-Re. Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Eastern High Gate*, pl. 606.

Another scene within a passage on the north wall of the High Gate (**fig. 4.18**) shows the king presenting bound enemies to Amun-Re, who holds out the *hps*-sword to the king. Here too the king's bow marks him as the one who has defeated these humiliated enemies. The Horus falcon hovers above the king in this scene, holding out an ostrich feather. The feather as a symbol of *maat* marks this display of the king's power over bound foreigners as a right ordering of reality. These exterior scenes portray the king's exertion of violence against Egypt's enemies as another avenue for the propagation and maintenance of the kingship.

As noted above, Egyptologists have puzzled over the constellations of imagery presented by the Eastern High Gate, claiming that the exterior and interior decoration programs stand in,

“startling and inexplicable contrast to each other.”<sup>105</sup> O’Connor attempts to solve this dissonance by making a case that the violent, exterior program and the erotic, interior program both “share a strongly sexualized dimension which integrates them into a meaningful unity.”<sup>106</sup> He contends that the historical texts of Ramses III at Medinet Habu, which describe enemies metaphorically as hunted animals, sheaved grain, and as impotent men, indicate that Egyptian viewers may have understood the Pharaoh’s dominant sexual power to be on display in the violent war scenes. He postulates that the exterior martial imagery shows Pharaoh’s enemies as weak, defeated men who are sexually available to Pharaoh’s advances while the interior imagery displays the positive sexual vigor of the Pharaoh put to use in producing royal progeny. Furthermore, he claims that the *midol*-like shape of the Eastern High Gate itself points to the Pharaoh’s masculine, sexual power.<sup>107</sup>

O’Connor performs careful and astute analysis in comparing texts and imagery in his presentation of these interpretive claims. And yet, the interpretation feels forced. Though everyday viewers of the High Gate’s artwork may have noted overtones of sexual dominance in the scenes depicting pharaoh’s violent subjugation of his enemies, it seems unlikely that the primary theme tying the interior and exterior programs together is the pharaoh’s sexual power. I contend that scholarly confusion over the juxtaposition of violent and erotic imagery in royal art stems from modern aesthetic taste rather than a lack of continuity in ANE royal imagery, particularly in light of Tutankhamun’s small golden shrine and Psalm 45 as comparanda. The Eastern High Gate displays an artistic program within which the king is displayed violently conquering his enemies in exterior scenes and as a desirable, potent character able to produce

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<sup>105</sup> O’Connor, “The Eastern High Gate,” 339.

<sup>106</sup> O’Connor, “The Eastern High Gate,” 441.

<sup>107</sup> O’Connor, “The Eastern High Gate,” 441–54.

royal progeny in interior scenes. In Egyptian royal art, these two domains of imagery interact meaningfully to construct a fully formed depiction of kingship.

#### 4.2.2 Mesopotamian Royal Art

Egyptian royal art is not alone in its depictions of the royal couple. Mesopotamian art pictures both the royal couple and even the queen alone, though portrayals of the queen are rare. Early Mesopotamian art employs imagery of the queen and royal couple to picture royal power and the enduring nature of the monarchy, similar to themes that arise in Psalm 45. Neo-Assyrian royal art, however, like Egyptian royal art and Psalm 45, clearly depicts the king and queen together amidst scenes of royal violence and demonstrations of power.



**Fig. 4.19a–c.** Middle Assyrian Cylinder Seals depicting enthroned royal women. Location: Unprovenanced. Date: 14<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: Ornan, “The Queen in Public,” 464, fig.



**Fig. 4.20.** Seal from Tell Morzan displaying the king and queen enthroned together with the royal children. Location: Tell Mozan. Date: 2300–2150 BCE. Source: Ornan, “The Queen in Public,” 464, fig. 8.

Most depictions of the queen in Mesopotamian art appear within the minor arts. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium, queens often appear alongside the king as an accompanying royal partner or alone with accoutrements that cast the queen in a cultic role.<sup>108</sup> Some Middle Assyrian cylinder seals, however, display the queen enthroned alone in a scene that evinces the queen’s royal identity (**figs. 4.19a–c**). In **figs. 4.19a–c**, the queen sits enthroned with a crown upon her head as an attendant stands before her holding a towel, a symbol of the queen’s role as a ruler.<sup>109</sup> The scene type portrays the queen alone in a display of her royal role and power.<sup>110</sup>

A Hurrian-style cylinder seal found at Tell Morzan (**fig. 4.20**) presents the queen enthroned alongside the king with her children in her lap and before her. The queen sits across from the king at the same height. In this scene, similar to the Middle Assyrian cylinder seals (**figs. 4.19a–c**), the queen reigns with the king in a scene of royal power. The scene focuses not

<sup>108</sup> Tallay Ornan, “The Queen in Public: Royal Women in Neo-Assyrian Art,” in *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 47th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki, July 2-6, 2001*, ed. Simo Parpola and Robert M. Whiting (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2002), 464–65.

<sup>109</sup> Ornan, “The Queen in Public,” 465; see also Irit Ziffer, “Apropos the Mandil: Tracing the Ancient Near Eastern Origins of Badge of Office,” in *The Metamorphosis of Marginal Images: From Antiquity to Present Time, Proceedings of the International Conference, 19-21 January, 1999*, ed. Nurith Kenaan-Kedar and Asher Ovadiah (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2001), 40.

<sup>110</sup> Ornan, “The Queen in Public,” 465.

on cultic activity but rather on constructing royal identity.<sup>111</sup> The queen's children accompany her in this scene. The queen's connection to her children in this royal display marks, "her main function in securing the dynasty by supplying it with descendants."<sup>112</sup> Early Mesopotamian seals show that displays of the queen alone or the royal couple together conveyed a sense of royal identity and power. As in Psalm 45, imagery of the king and queen present together with their offspring communicated the ongoing nature of the monarchy's power.



**Fig. 4.21.** Bronze fragment showing Queen Naqia and a king together in cultic activity. Location: Babylon. Date: 705–669 BCE. Source: Ornan, "The Queen in Public," 464, fig. 1.

The few depictions of the king and queen that occur in Mesopotamian monumental art are limited to Neo-Assyrian royal art. One example is a bronze depicting the queen Naqia with a king as they participate together in cultic action (**fig. 4.21**). The bronze portrays the queen following behind the king. She stands slightly shorter than the king, and yet her actions and

<sup>111</sup> Ornan, "The Queen in Public," 465–66.

<sup>112</sup> Ornan, "The Queen in Public," 466.

posture mirror the king's before her. The king holds a royal scepter in his left hand as a marker of his authority. His right hand holds a cultic symbol up to his face with her right hand.<sup>113</sup> The queen holds a duplicate cultic symbol before her face. In her left hand she holds a mirror, a symbol of feminine royal identity, similar to the king's mace.<sup>114</sup>

The stele itself commemorates the restoration of Babylon and the rebuilding of its temples, so the object displays the king and queen worshipping before the god(s) of Babylon.<sup>115</sup> Here, for the first time in Mesopotamian monumental art, the king and queen are pictured together with both actors functioning in a cultic role before the gods.<sup>116</sup> It is unclear whether the bronze depicts Naqia as queen alongside Sennacherib or as queen-mother alongside Esarhaddon. Either way, public royal art displays the queen mirroring the role of the king as a representative before the gods. Similar to Psalm 45, the relief portrays the king and queen together with parallel royal imagery shared by both rulers as it constructs royal identity.

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<sup>113</sup> Julian E. Reade, "Was Sennacherib a Feminist?" in *La femme dans le proche-orient antique: compte rendu de la XXXIII<sup>e</sup> Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*, ed. Jean-Marie Durand (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1987), 143.

<sup>114</sup> Ornan, "The Queen in Public," 471–72.

<sup>115</sup> See Jean Nougayrol, "Asarhaddon et Naqi'a sur un bronze du Louvre (AO 20.185)," *Svria* 33 (1956): 157; Sarah C. Melville, *The Role of Naqia/Zakutu in Sargonid Politics*, SAAS 9 (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1999), 26.

<sup>116</sup> Reade, "Was Sennacherib a Feminist?" 144; Ornan, "The Queen in Public," 469. A similar scene type of the queen and king together in postures of worship before a deity and standing upon a lion occurs on stamp seals from Sennacherib's reign (see Reade, "Was Sennacherib a Feminist?" 144–45).





**Fig. 4.22.** The stele of Libbali-sharrat displaying the enthroned queen. Location: Ashur. Date: 669–631 BCE. Source: Ornan, “The Queen in Public,” 464, fig. 2.

The stele of Libbali-sharrat (**fig. 4.22**), found among the *Stelenreihen* at Ashur,<sup>117</sup> depicts the queen enthroned alone in a style similar to the Middle Assyrian seals of the queen (**fig. 4.19a–c**). The stele shares many parallels with the numerous *salam sarrutiya* steles set up by Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian kings throughout their empires (see **figs. 3.14–3.17**).<sup>118</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, these royal steles display the king’s power and royal identity, highlighting the king’s close relationship with the gods.<sup>119</sup> These *salam sarrutiya* steles display the king in his, “ideal kingly form,” with the king often holding markers of his royal office such as a “scepter of kingship,” or a staff.<sup>120</sup> The king stands crowned and often adorned with jewelry of his office that indexes his close relationship with the gods, such as the necklace of divine

<sup>117</sup> The term *Stelenreihen* refers to a group of free-standing steles that stood between the innercity wall and the outer fortification wall on the south side of the city of Ashur. The steles pictured and described royal and official patrons (Libbali-sharrat is the only queen represented among the *Stelenreihen*). See Jeanny Vorys Canby, “The ‘Stelenreihen’ at Assur, Tell Halaf, and Maṣṣēbôt,” *Iraq* 38 (1976): 121.

<sup>118</sup> Ornan, “The Queen in Public,” 473.

<sup>119</sup> Winter, “Art in Empire,” 89–95; Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 259–62 and 276–78.

<sup>120</sup> Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 261.

symbols worn by Ashurnasirpal II (**fig. 2.14**). These steles served to perpetually maintain the king's name and identity.<sup>121</sup>

Similarly, the stele of Libbali-sharrat portrays the queen alone; she is the primary subject of the stele. The queen sits enthroned wearing a mural crown. She holds a plant in her left hand, similar to the plant symbol held by Sennacherib in scenes depicting the king as builder.<sup>122</sup> The stele presents the queen as a ruler; it serves as a permanent vehicle for displaying the queen's royal identity among other steles of official and royal identity. The stele seems to function analogously to the many *salam sarrutiya* steles, as an image of Libbali-sharrat's ideal queenship. The stele associates the queen with symbols of kingship, such as the crown, throne, and plant, even though the queen is not associated directly with divine symbols as the king often is upon such steles. The stele constructs the queen's identity in a form mirroring that utilized by Neo-Assyrian and later Neo-Babylonian kings, standing alongside *salam sarrutiya* steles among the *Stelenreihen* at Ashur.<sup>123</sup> The queen's stele portrays her royal identity while maintaining a hierarchy of power.

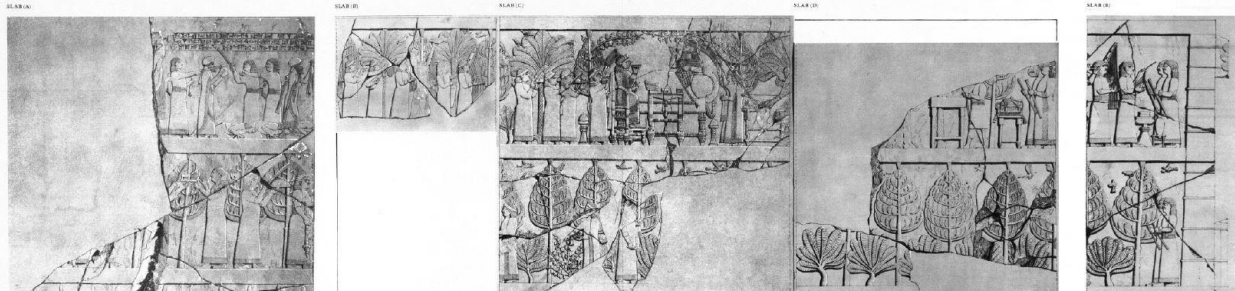
None of these examples of Mesopotamian minor or monumental arts depicting the queen portray violence or a martial context. A bas-relief from the North palace of Ashurbanipal (**figs. 4.19–22**), though, depicts the king and queen ruling together as a result of the successful martial activity of the king.

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<sup>121</sup> Winter, "Art in Empire," 94–95; Zainab Bahrani, *The Infinite Image: Art, Time and the Aesthetic Dimension in Antiquity* (London: Reaction Books, 2014), 74–81; Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 260–63.

<sup>122</sup> Ornan, "The Queen in Public," 473.

<sup>123</sup> Jeanny Vorys Canby contends that the steles functioned to represent individuals, displaying their identities with imagery and/or inscriptions (Canby, "The 'Stelenreihen' at Assur," 126–27).



**Fig. 4.23.** Bas-reliefs of Ashurbanipal and Libbali-sharrat banqueting in the garden from room S<sup>1</sup> of the North palace. Location: Nineveh. Date: 669–631 BCE. Source: Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, LXIII.

Libbali-sharrat and Ashurbanipal are depicted together upon a royal bas-relief within Ashurbanipal's North Palace at Nineveh (**fig. 4.24**). The bas-relief depicting the king and queen reclining in a royal garden held the central position in the visual program that made up room S<sup>1</sup> of the palace (**fig. 4.23**).<sup>124</sup> Rooms S and S<sup>1</sup> seem to have functioned as a *bīt-ḫilāni*, a room type with doorways supported by massive pillars. Such rooms often featured expansive windows, a portico, and an upper loggia. Room S served as one of the primary entrances to the palace. Albenda has argued that this *bīt-ḫilāni* likely looked out over an expansive royal garden.<sup>125</sup> The lower room's reliefs depicted the king hunting lions, while the reliefs of the upper room S<sup>1</sup> displayed the defeat of the Elamites, the king and queen banqueting in a royal garden, and the king hunting lions.<sup>126</sup>

Albenda, with attention to room S below and the relief fragments from the upper room S<sup>1</sup>, proposes that the original sequence of these artistic themes progressed as follows: from the

<sup>124</sup> See Pauline Albenda, "Landscape Bas-Reliefs in the *Bīt-ḫilāni* of Ashurbanipal," *BASOR* 224 (1976): 49–58.

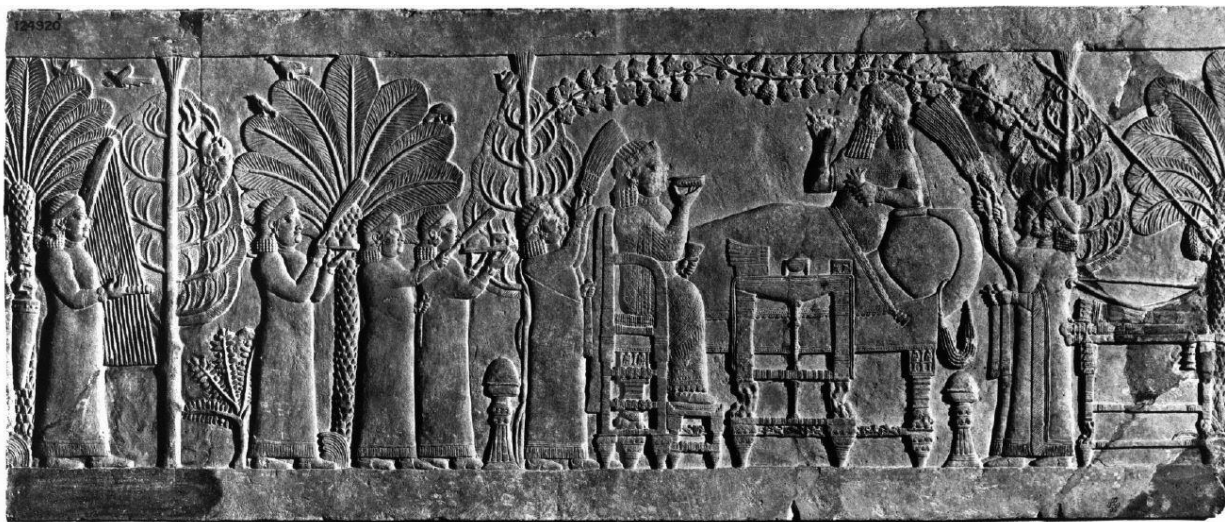
<sup>125</sup> Albenda points to artistic evidence of royal gardens surrounding *bīt-ḫilāni* style buildings in other Neo-Assyrian reliefs (Albenda, "Landscape Bas-Reliefs," 49–53).

<sup>126</sup> Richard D. Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh (668-627 B.C.)* (London: British Museum Publications, 1976), 19–20; Albenda, "Landscape Bas-Reliefs," 55.

destruction of the Elamite cities to the king and queen banqueting in the garden to the king hunting and killing lions.<sup>127</sup> She claims:

Such an overall scheme, while elaborate in its many details, actually displays a motif that continues traditional concepts in a more decorative manner. These unfolding scenes exalt the Assyrian king as a heroic and powerful figure against his enemies, whether the latter are human or wild beasts. The notion is achieved nicely by placing the banqueting royal couple within the center of the idyllic environment of an expansive outdoor setting that is balanced on each side with exploits of conquest in war and in the hunt.<sup>128</sup>

The scenes featuring the king and queen in the garden served as the room's focal point, suggesting that peace and prosperity derives from the king's violent conquest.



**Fig. 4.24.** The bas-relief depicting the king and queen banqueting together. Location: Nineveh. Date: 669–631 BCE. Source: Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, LXV.

The king and queen both hold drinking bowls as they banquet together in the central scene of the uppermost register (**fig. 4.24**). The background of alternating pine and date-palm trees along with the grape vines that create a canopy over the royal couple draws the eye to the king and queen.<sup>129</sup> In the central relief featuring the royal couple, women servants, likely the royal harem, and a young boy attend the king and queen with music, fly whisks, fans, and

<sup>127</sup> Albenda, "Landscape Bas-Reliefs," 58.

<sup>128</sup> Albenda, "Landscape Bas-Reliefs," 58.

<sup>129</sup> See Albenda, "Landscape Bas-Reliefs," 61 and 63.

platters of food.<sup>130</sup> All of the Assyrian servants face towards the king and queen, centering them as the focal point of the relief program.<sup>131</sup> As the scene expands to the right and left of this relief, other attendants and even prisoners are pictured at a distance from the royal couple. The relief on the leftmost periphery (see **fig. 2.24a** and **fig. 4.23**) depicts Elamite rulers bowing to the ground toward the royal couple and bearing food and drink for the banquet. These defeated Elamites were forced to serve the king and queen, representing their utter subjugation to the Assyrian royal power.<sup>132</sup>

The queen and king dine together in the center scene. The queen sits upon a royal throne raised above the surrounding servants and Elamites. She holds a wine bowl in one hand and a plant in her other as her feet rest upon a footstool. The footstool was reserved in Assyrian art for royal or divine figures, and so the stool here indexes the queen's royal identity.<sup>133</sup> The king reclines across from the queen, holding a lotus blossom in one hand and a wine bowl in the other. Ornan notes that, "the two bowls, symbolizing rulership, unite the figures of the king and queen, otherwise differentiated by their postures."<sup>134</sup> The king, even in his reclining pose, sits slightly higher than the queen. In this way, the scene models a hierarchy of royal power.<sup>135</sup>

Along with the subjugated Elamite rulers, other symbols of royal violence and domination adorn the peaceful dining scene.

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<sup>130</sup> See Albenda, "Landscape Bas-Reliefs," 65–67. Albenda claims, "Since only female attendants surround both king and queen, we must conclude that there is something exceptional about the location of the scene. The banqueting event can be explained if we consider the setting to be located somewhere within the queen's quarters, specifically the queen's garden" (Albenda, "Landscape Bas-Reliefs," 67).

<sup>131</sup> Albenda, "Landscape Bas-Reliefs," 65.

<sup>132</sup> Albenda, "Landscape Bas-Reliefs in the *Bīt-Hilāni* of Ashurbanipal," *BASOR* 225 (1977): 31.

<sup>133</sup> Albenda, "Landscape Bas-Reliefs," 63.

<sup>134</sup> Ornan, "The Queen in Public," 474.

<sup>135</sup> Albenda, "Landscape Bas-Reliefs," 64.



**Fig. 4.25.** The head of Teuman in the garden banquet scene. Location: Nineveh. Date: 669–631 BCE. Source: Albenda, “Landscape Bas-Reliefs,” 29, fig. 26.

The head of the defeated Elamite king Teuman hangs by a ring from the branches of a pine tree across from the king (**fig. 4.25**). The king’s head symbolizes the defeat and submission of the Elamite rebels.<sup>136</sup>



**Fig. 4.26.** Necklace hanging from Ashurbanipal’s couch in the Garden Scene. Location: Nineveh. Date: 669–631 BCE. Source: Albenda, “Landscape Bas-Reliefs,” 31, fig. 30.

An elaborate necklace hangs from one end of the couch upon which the king reclines (**fig. 4.26**). Albenda notes that the necklace does not resemble any worn by the king or other high Assyrian

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<sup>136</sup> Albenda, “Landscape Bas-Reliefs,” 31.

officials in royal art. She argues that the necklace resembles the Egyptian *mnjst*-style necklace. Thus, the necklace may serve as a symbol of Ashurbanipal's military triumphs over the Egyptians.<sup>137</sup>



**Fig. 4.27.** Weapons stacked to the right of Ashurbanipal and Libbali-sharrat in the Garden Scene. Location: Nineveh. Date: 669–631 BCE. Source: Albenda, “Landscape Bas-Reliefs,” 35, fig. 32.

Furthermore, a set of weapons, including a bow, a quiver, and a sword, rests on a low table to the right of the king and queen (**fig. 4.27**). Again, these weapons do not resemble those that the king or other Assyrians wield in reliefs throughout the palace; rather, they resemble weapons wielded by Elamite and Babylonian enemies.<sup>138</sup> The weapons stacked innocuously to the side of the royal couple's banquet likely represent Assyrian domination of the Babylonians and the Elamites.<sup>139</sup>

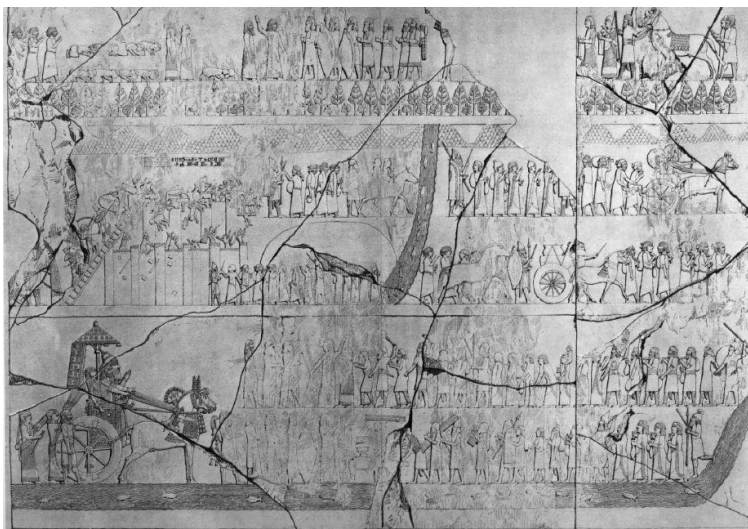
These numerous symbols of violent subjugation intermingle with the peaceful images of the king and queen banqueting together in a lush royal garden. The association of violence and royal couple dining together mirrors the larger artistic program of the room. The central garden

<sup>137</sup> Albenda, “Landscape Bas-Reliefs,” 35–36; Collon, *Ancient Near Eastern Art*, 151.

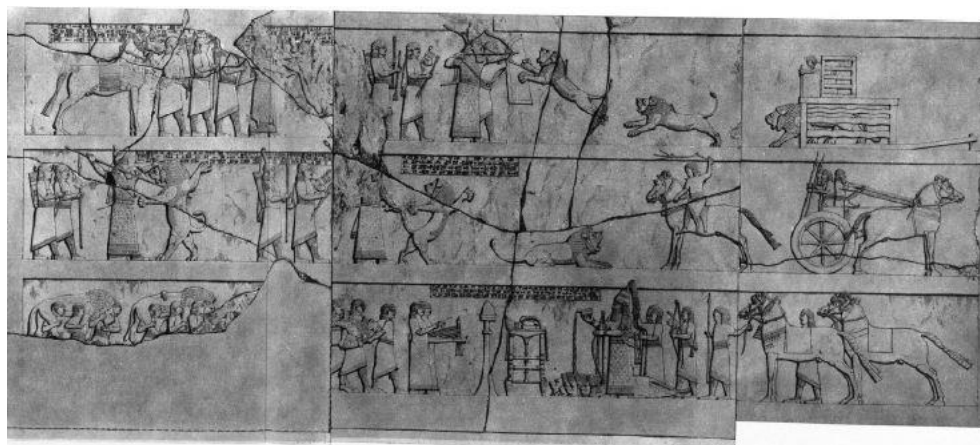
<sup>138</sup> Albenda, “Landscape Bas-Reliefs,” 36.

<sup>139</sup> Albenda, “Landscape Bas-Reliefs,” 37–38.

scene models, “a theme heretofore unknown in Assyrian art, *Peace*...stressed on the bas-reliefs by the calm and peaceful nature of wildlife and the rich fullness of plant life.”<sup>140</sup>



**Fig. 4.28.** Reliefs from room S<sup>1</sup> depicting the Elamite surrender to Ashurbanipal. Location: Nineveh. Date: 669–631 BCE. Source: Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, LX.



**Fig. 4.29.** Reliefs from room S<sup>1</sup> showing Ashurbanipal hunting lions. Location: Nineveh. Date: 669–631 BCE. Source: Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, LVI.

Scenes displaying the king’s royal might at war (eg. **fig. 4.28**) and in the hunt (eg. **fig. 4.29**) surrounded the central scenes portraying the king and queen relating peacefully in the royal garden. The entire room displays the might of the king on the periphery and the peace created by

<sup>140</sup> Albenda, “Landscape Bas-Reliefs,” 44, italics original.



such royal violence at its center. The room resembles Psalm 45 in both form and content, with violence at the edges of a display centered on the royal couple.

#### 4.2.3 Achaemenid Art

No extant examples of Achaemenid monumental royal art portray the queen. Instead, royal art focuses on the king, Ahuramazda, and the peoples who gladly serve the empire.<sup>141</sup> Depictions of women do occur in the minor arts, though scholars have yet to study these objects extensively.<sup>142</sup> Persian women are depicted upon different media, from seals to rings to ivories, and in multiple scene types. Yet women marked clearly as royal or courtly figures only appear in a couple of extant scene types inscribed upon cylinder seals.<sup>143</sup> Two Persian seals display what seems to be royal women in audience scenes, mirroring monumental scenes of the king in audience.

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<sup>141</sup> See Maria Brosius, “The Royal Audience Scene Reconsidered,” in *The World of Achaemenid Persia: History, Art, and Society in Iran and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John Curtis and St John Simpson (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 141; Bernard Goldman, “Women’s Robes: The Achaemenid Era,” *Bulletin of the Asia Institute New Series* 5 (1991): 83; Root, *The King and Kingship*, 161.

<sup>142</sup> Janine Bakker notes that no major study exists surveying how women are portrayed in Achaemenid art. Most iconographical studies focus on heroic and royal figures, while studies of women in the Achaemenid era generally draw from textual materials (Bakker, “The Lady and the Lotus: Representations of Women in the Achaemenid Empire,” *Iranica Antiqua* 42 [2007]: 207).

<sup>143</sup> One possible exception is a funerary relief that depicts a royal couple garbed in Persian dress in a banquet scene; however, the object was found at the periphery of the Achaemenid empire in Dascyleium (see Brosius, “The Royal Audience Scene Reconsidered,” 150; Ilknur Özgen and Jean Öztürk et al., *The Lydian Treasure: Heritage Recovered* [Turkey: Ugur Okman, 1996], 46, fig. 87b).



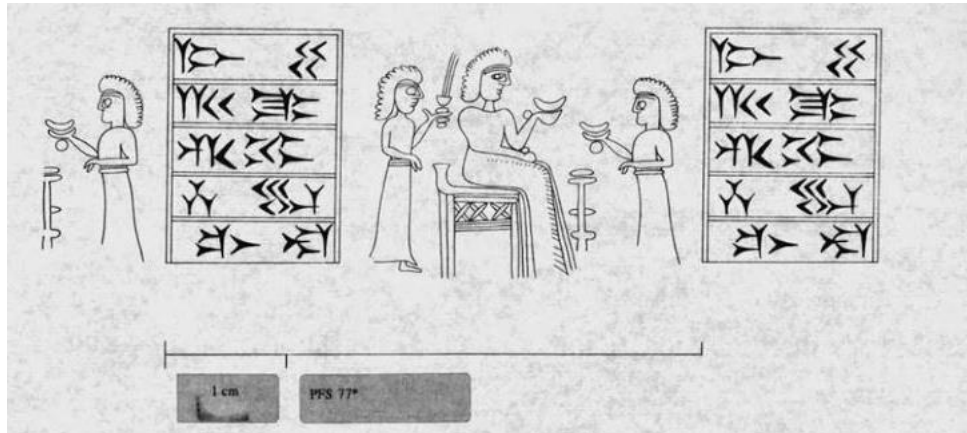
**Fig. 4.30.** Unprovenanced cylinder seal from the Achaemenid period displaying a female audience scene. Location: Unprovenanced. Date: 550–330 BCE. Source: Brosius, “The Royal Audience Scene Reconsidered,” 149, fig. 13.9.

The first seal, an unprovenanced seal carved in a Persian style and seemingly hailing from the Achaemenid period (**fig. 4.30**), portrays a majestic, enthroned woman.<sup>144</sup> She wears a fluted tiara covered by a veil that falls down her back. She holds a lotus in her hand and sits in an elaborate throne with her feet upon a footstool. The combination of the lotus flower, crown, throne, and footstool marks the woman as a royal figure, likely the queen-regent or queen-mother.<sup>145</sup> A young woman or boy approaches the queen with a bird, presented as a gift. Another royal woman, marked by her dentate tiara with an attached streamer, stands across from the enthroned queen. The bird presented by the boy likely represents a gift to the enthroned queen

<sup>144</sup> See Judith A. Lerner, “An Achaemenid Cylinder Seal of a Woman Enthroned,” in *The World of Achaemenid Persia*, 153.

<sup>145</sup> See Brosius, “The Royal Audience Scene Reconsidered,” 143–48; Bakker, “The Lady and the Lotus,” 214–15. However, others have proposed that the enthroned woman represents a goddess (see Pierre Amiet, *Art of the Ancient Near East*, trans. John Shepley and Claude Choquet [New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1980], 442, fig. 821; Agnes Spycket, “Women in Persian Art,” in *Ancient Persia: Art of an Empire*, ed. Denise Schmandt-Besserat (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1980), 44; Lerner, “An Achaemenid Cylinder Seal,” 159). Brosius contends that the goddess identification is rooted in the claim that no depictions of Achaemenid royal women exist. She argues that identifying the enthroned figure as a goddess works against most of the scene’s imagery and markers of royal identity (see Brosius, “The Royal Audience Scene Reconsidered,” 145–48).

from this woman.<sup>146</sup> An incense altar stands upright in the center of the scene between the enthroned queen and the woman in audience. The woman standing before the enthroned queen probably represents another royal woman, possibly of the royal harem.



**Fig. 4.31.** Seal of a female audience scene from the Persepolis Fortification Tablets. Location: Persepolis. Date: 6<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: Lerner, “An Achaemenid Cylinder Seal,” 157, fig. 14.5.

A seal impression, found among the Persepolis fortification tablets (**fig. 4.31**), displays a similar scene. The seal pictures an audience scene in which a woman sits enthroned across from another women. Both women hold bowls, and an incense altar stands between them. An attendant stands behind the enthroned woman with a flywhisk. The seated woman’s stature, throne, and accompanying attendant indicate her royal status.<sup>147</sup> Both of these scenes then display a Persian royal woman, likely the queen, in a scene that mirrors the royal audience scenes depicted in Achaemenid monumental art.<sup>148</sup>

<sup>146</sup> Brosius, “The Royal Audience Scene Reconsidered,” 144.

<sup>147</sup> Brosius, “The Royal Audience Scene Reconsidered,” 149–50.

<sup>148</sup> Brosius, “The Royal Audience Scene Reconsidered,” 149; Lerner, “An Achaemenid Cylinder Seal,” 156–57.



17. Apadana, North Stair, Original Central Panel.

**Fig. 4.32.** Darius in a royal audience scene from the north stairs at the Apadana. Location: Persepolis. Date: 6<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: Root, *King and Kingship*, XVII.

The royal audience scenes are amply attested. One example comes from the reliefs at Apadana. It portrays the king enthroned across from a man seeking the king’s audience (**fig. 4.32**). Like the seals’ depictions of the enthroned women, the king sits enthroned above all other actors in the scene. He grasps a staff in his right hand and a cup in his left. Similar to the portrayal of the royal woman in **fig. 4.30**, the king’s feet rest upon a footstool rather than the ground. Various servants, guards, and even the crown prince attend the king. Between the king and the man who approaches the king’s presence stand two incense altars, purposefully “intensifying the royal presence.”<sup>149</sup>

Even though the queen is not depicted in monumental Achaemenid art, when she does appear upon seals, her portrayal, presence, and actions mirror those of the king. Their royal identities are shared, expressed by similar symbols and markers. Psalm 45: 11–16 similarly portrays the queen with similar imagery used to picture the king in the psalm’s preceding verses.

<sup>149</sup> Lerner, “An Achaemenid Cylinder Seal,” 157.

#### 4.2.4 Syro-Palestinian Art

Syro-Palestinian minor arts depicting the king and queen together clearly parallel the royal imagery of the Egyptian and Neo-Assyrian empires. These minor arts also display the erotic power of the royal couple alongside the king's martial power. Whereas representations of the queen do not seem to have been a prominent theme in Achaemenid royal art, whether monumental or minor, portrayals of the royal couple together appear upon ivories from Syria-Palestine. These ivories picture the royal couple together in scenes of peaceful rule and even intimacy amidst royal violence.



**Fig. 2.17.** Megiddo Ivory featuring scene of a triumphant ruler. Location: Megiddo. Date: 1650–1150 BCE. Source: LeMon, *Yahweh's Winged Form*, 6, fig. 1.2.

The Megiddo Ivory (**fig. 2.17**), surveyed above with attention to scenes of royal victory and subjugation of enemies, displays the royal couple together in a banquet scene that celebrates the king's victory over his enemies.<sup>150</sup> The left side of the ivory pictures the ruler enthroned upon a cherubim throne. He sits higher than any other character in either the banquet scene or the victory scene on the right side (except for his double in the chariot). The queen stands before the ruler. She grasps the king's arm with her right hand and holds a lotus flower, a symbol of their joint rule, together with the king in her left hand.<sup>151</sup> The queen stands slightly below the plane of

<sup>150</sup> Liebowitz, "Military and Feast Scenes," 165; Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 62–63.

<sup>151</sup> The lotus flower seems to mark out royal figures when employed in scenes with other symbols of royal identity. For example, on a seal from at Ashkelon an enthroned queen holds an *ankh* in one hand and a lotus flower in her other hand; the scene that mirrors other scenes depicting enthroned kings (see Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel: Von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit*, Katalog Band I: Von Tell Abu Farāğ bis 'Atlit [Freiburg; Göttingen: Universitätsverlag; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997], 690–91, fig. 5). Also see

the king. Yet she still stands higher than all other servants and enemies upon the plaque. She wears a crown and robes that stand out as richly embroidered when compared to the robes of the servants and enemies. In fact, the combination of differences in height and clothing mark a hierarchy of power, wherein the king and queen rule over all. Only the deity rests above their plane. This hierarchy holds true in the depictions of the couple's servants and enemies. Their servants stand higher and are better dressed than the enemies led before the royal chariot.



**Fig. 4.33.** Fragment of an ivory from Tell el-Far‘ah. Location: Tell el-Far‘ah. Date: 1650–1150 BCE. Source: Ornan, “The Queen in Public,” 468, fig. 12.

An ivory displaying a similar scene was found at Tell el-Far‘ah. The remains of this ivory, which decorated either a box or a bed frame, consists of three bands.<sup>152</sup> One of these bands (**fig. 4.33**) displays a banquet scene like the one displayed on the left side of the Megiddo ivory, with the enthroned king attended by servants and musicians with a woman, likely his queen, before him.<sup>153</sup> The king and the woman standing before him both wear matching, elaborate

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the discussion of lotus flowers as indicators of royal figures in Ornan, “The Queen in Public,” 467; Bakker, “The Lady and the Lotus,” 212 and 214–15.

<sup>152</sup> Petrie thinks the fragments originally adorned a box (Flinders Petrie, *Beth-Pelet I [Tell Fara]* [London: British School of Archaeology in Egypt and Bernard Quaritch, 1930], 19), while Brandl contends that they likely adorned a royal bed frame (Baruch Brandl, “The Tell el-Far‘ah (South) Ivory Reconstructed,” in *Abstract of Papers, Seventh International Congress of Egyptologists, Cambridge, 3-9 September 1995*, ed. Christopher J. Eyre [Oxford: Oxford Books for International Association of Egyptologists, 1995], 26).

<sup>153</sup> Ornan, “The Queen in Public,” 468. Previous scholars referred to this woman as an “attendant” of the king (Petrie, *Beth-Pelet I [Tell Fara]*, 19; Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 64–65), though it is unclear why. The woman seems to be dressed more elaborately than the other servants/attendants in the scene, and she stands in the same

robes. The king holds a bowl in his left hand, while the queen fills it, similar to the imagery of Tutankhamun and his wife upon the small golden shrine (**fig. 4.6b**). Both of them hold lotus blossoms as a sign of their royal identities. Liebowitz compares this ivory depicting the royal couple in a banquet scene to other ivories from the same time period in order to argue that the banquet scene likely made up one scene among multiple, one of which would have depicted either the king at war or the king's victory over his enemies.<sup>154</sup> If so, then this banquet scene would have portrayed the king and queen together in celebration of their victory over their enemies. If Liebowitz is correct, both the Megiddo ivory and the Tell el-Far'ah ivory portrayed the king and queen side-by-side within a larger constellation of imagery depicting the king's subjugation of his enemies.



**Figs. 4.32a–c.** Ivories from a royal bedframe at Ugarit depicting the king preparing to slaughter an enemy (a), the king and queen in close embrace (b), and two princes nursing at the breasts of a winged goddess (c). Location: Ras Shamra, Ugarit. Date: 1650–1190 BCE. Schaefer, “Les fouilles de Ras Shamra-Ugarit,” pl. VII, XI, X.

position as the royal spouse upon the Megiddo ivory. In fact, both women grasp a lotus blossom along with their kings, suggesting that the woman who stands before the ruler upon this ivory represents the ruler's spouse.

<sup>154</sup> Liebowitz, “Military and Feast Scenes,” 165–66.

The ivories found at Megiddo and Tell el-Far‘ah resemble a more complex set of ivory plaques found at Ras Shamra Ugarit (**figs. 4.32a–c**).<sup>155</sup> These plaques, found within the royal palace, made up an elaborate, royal bedframe.<sup>156</sup> On one side of the frame, the central plaque depicts a winged goddess nursing two young boys (**fig. 4.32c**). The identical boys probably represent the young king or royal princes, the offspring of the king and queen.<sup>157</sup> The plaque beside this one depicts the royal couple in an intimate embrace (**fig. 4.32b**), supporting the identification of the young boys as royal offspring. Here the king holds the queen’s breast as the queen lifts perfume to the king’s nose. This scene of the royal couple’s love hints towards sexual activity and serves to contextualize the nursing goddess scene. The nursing goddess scene symbolizes divine support of the offspring produced by the royal couple.<sup>158</sup>

On the other side of the frame facing away from the king and queen’s bed and towards anyone approaching it were plaques depicting human and divine guardians flanking the central image of the Ugaritic king smiting his enemy (**fig. 4.32a**).<sup>159</sup> The king grasps his enemy by his hair in the moment before slamming a dagger into the defeated enemy’s skull. The king’s enemy kneels helpless before him, holding out his hands before the king in a posture of pleading desperation. So, similar to the Palestinian ivories discussed above, here upon this royal ivory frame from Ugarit the king and queen appear together amidst scenes of the royal couple’s love, the production and divine support of royal progeny, and royal violence employed to subdue enemies of the crown.<sup>160</sup> The ivory bed frame’s constellation of imagery displays the royal

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<sup>155</sup> Ornan makes this connection between the Megiddo/Tell el-Far‘ah ivories and the Ugarit ivory (see Ornan, “The Queen in Public,” 467–68).

<sup>156</sup> Claude F.-A. Schaefer, “Les fouilles de Ras Shamra-Ugarit. Quinzième, seizième et dix-septième campagnes (1951, 1952 et 1953). Rapport Sommaire,” *Syria* 31 (1954): 53.

<sup>157</sup> Ornan, “The Queen in Public,” 468.

<sup>158</sup> See Keel, *Symbolism*, 284–85.

<sup>159</sup> Schaefer, “Les fouilles de Ras Shamra-Ugarit,” 57.

<sup>160</sup> See Keel, *Symbolism*, 282–85.



couple and their progeny alongside imagery analogous to that employed by Psalm 45 to display the king, queen, and their offspring. In fact, ivories across Syria-Palestine picture the king and queen together in scenes invoking intimacy, victorious rule, and violent subjugation of enemies. In both Syro-Palestinian art and Ps 45, violent imagery surrounds imagery of the royal couple ruling in peace and perpetuity.

#### 4.2.5 The Rhetorical Display of the Royal Couple in ANE Royal Art

Royal identity was created, displayed, and maintained by art throughout the ANE. Royal art represents the king or queen, extending their presence and maintaining their identity throughout time. Images of the king and queen reinforce royal power. Individual steles and seals portray the ruler, either king or queen, in their ideal form, marking the ruler with symbols of their relation to the gods and their power over all other people. Depictions of the queen mirror those of the king and indicate their shared royal identity.

Such art displays their individual roles as rulers too. The king is often pictured as one close to the divine, while the queen is depicted in postures similar to the king. A royal hierarchy is present even in images of individual rulers. Royal art displays the world as ordered and at peace when the king and queen rule together. Such scenes of the king and queen together, even intimate scenes, often appear alongside scenes of violent royal action enacted against the monarch's enemies. Depictions of the king and queen construct royal identity, project royal power, and in many scenes suggest or display royal progeny and thus confirm the eternal nature of the kingship.

### 4.3 Re-Reading Psalm 45: Interpreting Constructions of Royal Identity

#### 4.3.1 Royal Intimacy Amidst Royal Violence? The Sensibility of Psalm 45's Literary Imagery

As I noted earlier, many modern scholars struggle to understand Psalm 45's move from so-called standard royal rhetoric with a focus on king as warrior to the depiction of the king and queen together in intimate relations. Some scholars simply express their confusion over such a conflation of imagery, whereas others pursue redaction-critical theories to explain the psalm as it now stands. Such interpretive proposals may well be correct. It is possible that vv. 2–10, 17–18 and vv. 11–16 were originally composed as separate hymns with their own concerns<sup>161</sup> or that vv. 11–16 were a later addition meant to reshape an earlier royal hymn in the post-exilic period.<sup>162</sup> While none of these theories are invalidated by the artistic evidence surveyed above, displays of the king and queen together in ANE royal art indicate that the starting point of these interpretive proposals are problematic. The struggle to understand how images of the royal couple in intimate relations and images of royal violence could form complimentary parts of a royal rhetoric stems from modern aesthetic sensibilities. The constellation of royal violence and the royal couple's intimacy presented by Psalm 45 fits sensibly within the context of ANE royal art.

Just as royal violence and the subjugation of enemies constructs royal identity in ANE royal art, imagery of the king's martial prowess (vv. 4–6) and the subjugation of all nations to the royal power (v. 17–18) constructs royal identity in Psalm 45. Psalm 45 interweaves imagery of martial violence, the intimacy of the royal couple, and royal progeny to project an icon of kingship. The iconic structure of the psalm resembles the rhetorical worlds constructed and modeled by Egyptian (The Eastern High Gate at Medinet Habu), Neo-Assyrian (Room S<sup>1</sup> at

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<sup>161</sup> See Saur, *Die Königspsalmen*, 117–31.

<sup>162</sup> See Zenger, *Die Psalmen*, 278–79; Körting, "Isaiah 62:1–7 and Psalm 45," 112–23.

Ashurbanipal's North Palace), and Syro-Palestinian (the Megiddo Ivory and the royal bed frame from Ugarit) royal art. Each of these cultures constructed royal artistic programs in which images of royal violence and power occur alongside depictions of the joint rule and intimate relations of the king and queen. Psalm 45 displays the royal couple in its own way. Yet the organization of the psalm is similar to the way that the High Gate pictures royal intimacy on its interior walls and royal violence on its exterior walls. Likewise, the psalm's iconic structure resembles how scenes of the king and queen banqueting together in the palace garden are centered amidst scenes displaying the king's power at war and in the hunt in Ashurbanipal's North Palace. In these ways, Psalm 45's imagery is congruent with the imagery and the rhetorical strategies of royal art found throughout the ANE.

#### 4.3.2 Psalm 45: Genre, Setting, and Rhetorical Function

The proposal that Psalm 45 represents a wedding song, whether in the context of the royal court, everyday life, or the Messianic wedding of the Messiah with his people, stands largely uncontested in modern Psalms scholarship.<sup>163</sup> Scholars have attempted to reconstruct a specific royal wedding or an outline of a royal wedding ritual as practiced in Israel or Judah from Psalm 45.<sup>164</sup> Psalm 45 may well have been employed as a wedding poem. In light of the artistic displays of the king and queen surveyed above, however, I offer a broader proposal for the psalm's genre that moves beyond the narrow context and function of a wedding poem.

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<sup>163</sup> Again, Trotter is an example of a differing opinion (see Trotter, "The Genre and Setting of Psalm 45," 34–46).

<sup>164</sup> See Delitzsch, *Psalms*, vol. 2, 74; Briggs, *The Psalms*, 384; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 453–57; Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part I*, 187; Cragie, *Psalms 1–50*, 347–48; Dahood, *Psalms 1–50*, 270; Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 346; deClaisse-Walford, Jacobsen, and Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, 416; Hamilton, *The Body Royal*, 38–45.

As many scholars have noted, Psalm 45 functions as “a hymn of praise to the king unparalleled in the Hebrew Bible for its unrestrained exultation of a human being.”<sup>165</sup> The poem constructs the ideal identity of a king and his queen. The psalm pictures the queen’s identity with imagery parallel to that used to picture the king (vv. 10, 12–14; the queen is beautiful, decked in majestic clothes, receiving tribute from the nations).<sup>166</sup> The concern for constructing royal identity seen in Psalm 45, in terms of the king and queen’s relation to the deity, the nations, and each other, also appears in the imagery of royal steles seen particularly in Mesopotamia during the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian empires.

Royal steles portray the king with symbols of royal power. In doing so, they depict the king’s close relationship with the gods in order to maintain the king’s identity (or *נש* in the case of Ps 45) for future generations. Psalm 45 marks the king with royal-divine attributes (vv. 4–5) and implements such as the sword, scepter, and throne. The poem relates the king’s beauty and ideal form (vv. 3, 4, 7) and underlines the loyal bond between the king and his deity (vv. 3, 8). Like Mesopotamian and Persian cylinder seals and the stele of Libbali-sharrat, Psalm 45 portrays the queen with themes similar to those employed to depict the king. The poem pictures the queen as ruler over the peoples (vv. 13–14). Drawing on imagery in vv. 3–4 and 8–9, the psalm describes the queen’s beauty and royal attire (vv. 12, 14–15). This imagery highlights a parity between the king and queen, even as it marks out her subordinate place in relation to the king (vv. 11–12). Like much of the royal art surveyed above, particularly the royal bedframe from

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<sup>165</sup> Trotter, “The Genre and Setting of Psalm 45,” 55; for similar sentiments see Goldingay, *Psalms 43–89*, 54; Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 453; Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 1*, 187; Starbuck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms*, 108–09; Mays, *Psalms*, 180.

<sup>166</sup> Couffignal, “Les structures du Psaume 45,” 201; Schaefer, *Psalms*, 113–15; Cheung, ““Forget Your People and Your Father’s House,”” 331.

Ugarit, Ps 45 employs imagery of the king's everlasting dynasty (vv. 16–17) alongside imagery of royal violence (vv. 4–6) and love (vv. 12, 16).

In light of these parallels, we can reassess the genre and function of the psalm. I propose Psalm 45 is a poem that employs standard royal imagery to construct and maintain the royal identity of the king and queen. The psalm pictures how the deity relates to the king. It envisions where the queen stands in relation to the king. Ultimately, the poem imagines how these rulers together reign over all peoples, now and forever. The psalm explicitly describes its function as a poem meant to maintain the name of the king for all time (vv. 17–18). Psalm 45 may have functioned as a wedding song. Yet we might also imagine the psalm as a poetic icon of kingship in ancient Judah, working to display the identity, place, and power of the royal couple.

## Chapter 5

## PSALM 72 AND THE RIGHTEOUS KING: CRUSHING CHAOS AND EXTENDING COSMIC FECUNDITY

Psalm 72 describes the king as righteous judge, source of life, and universal monarch. The king both brings prosperity and subdues chaotic powers. Recent scholarship on the psalm has cast doubt on whether the imagery stems from the same historical context. ANE royal art, however, often blends images of the king's violent subjugation of enemies with images of the king as a source of fertility and blessing. After surveying recent approaches to interpreting the psalm and its literary imagery, I compare the psalm's iconic structure to royal artistic programs from across the ANE. I contend that the psalm constructs a royal rhetoric that displays the king as one who ushers in peace and fertility by subjugating chaos. The psalm casts the royal figure as the conduit of Yahweh's righteousness, addressing multiple facets of the king's just and fecund reign.

## 5.1 Psalm 72 Overview

## 5.1.1 Psalm 72 Translation

- 1 For Solomon,  
O God, give your decrees to the king; give your righteousness to the son of a king.<sup>1</sup>
- 2 The king judges<sup>2</sup> your people righteously, your afflicted ones justly.
- 3 The mountains bear<sup>3</sup> peace for the people, the hills also, by way of righteousness.<sup>4</sup>
- 4 He judges those afflicted among the people,  
brings victory<sup>5</sup> to the children of the poor and crushes the oppressor.

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<sup>1</sup> Goldingay contends that מלך and בן-מלך are two parallel terms referring to the same person (John Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, vol. 2, BCOTWP [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006], 384; see also Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 220; Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 519; Hamilton, *The Body Royale*, 76).

<sup>2</sup> Goldingay notes that the verb is unequivocally a *yiqtol*/imperfect (Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 383).

<sup>3</sup> I translate נשא as “bear,” as in bearing fruit, in parallel with the verb's use in Ezek. 17:8 (see Delitzsch, *Psalms*, vol. 2, 301).

<sup>4</sup> I understand the *bet* preposition as an indication of the means by which the mountains and hills bear שלום (see Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 201–03; Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 379 and 385; Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 520); however, others propose removing the *bet* preposition entirely (see Weiser, *The Psalms*, 500; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, trans. Hilton Oswald, CC [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000], 74–75; deClaisse-Walford, Jacobsen, Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, 575).

<sup>5</sup> Goldingay notes that this stem too is also clearly *yiqtol*/imperfect (Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 383).

5 He endures long<sup>6</sup> with<sup>7</sup> the sun and before the moon, generation after generation.  
 6 He falls down like rain upon the mown grass, like copious showers upon the land.<sup>8</sup>  
 7 Righteousness<sup>9</sup> flourishes in his days;  
 an abundance of peace flourishes until the moon is no more.  
 8 So may he exert dominion from sea to sea, from the Euphrates to the ends of the earth.<sup>10</sup>  
 9 Before him, the creatures of the desert<sup>11</sup> will bend the knee,  
 and his enemies will lick the dust.  
 10 Kings of Tarshish and the coastlands will relinquish an offering;  
 Kings of Sheba and Seba will offer tribute.  
 11 All kings will bow down to him, all nations will serve him;  
 12 for he delivers the poor one when he cries out  
 and the oppressed when there is no helper for him.  
 13 He has compassion upon the weak and poor; he rescues the lives of the poor.  
 14 From oppression<sup>12</sup> and violence he redeems their life; their blood has value in his eyes.  
 15 Therefore, may he live! May they supply him with Sheba's gold,  
 may they pray on his behalf continually, may they bless him all the day long.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Many scholars emend the MT here to אַרְרִיךְ following the LXX (Weiser, *The Psalms*, 500; Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 75; Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2, and Lamentations*, FOTL 15 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001], 65; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 203; Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 220; deClaisse-Walford, Tanner, Jacobsen, *The Book of Psalms*, 575; Patrick W. Skehan, “Strophic Structure in Psalm 72 [71],” *Biblica* 40 [1959]: 304; Walter J. Houston, “The King’s Preferential Option for the Poor: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Ethics in Psalm 72,” *BibInterp* 7 [1999]: 345; Salo, *Die jüdische Königsideologie*, 208–09). Delitzsch follows the MT, noting that the king is not directly addressed at any other point in the psalm (Delitzsch, *Psalms*, vol. 2, 301). Goldingay follows the MT while reading the verb’s 2cs pronomial suffix as a reference to the king and not the deity, translating, “People will reverence you when the sun shines and before the moon, generation after generation” (Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 379).

<sup>7</sup> The preposition עִם here, in parallel with לְפָנֵי יְרַח, seems to indicate both the temporal and spatial endurance of the king “with the sun” (see Manfred Dietrich and Oswald Loretz, “Von hebräisch ‘m / lḫny zu ugaritisch ‘m ‘vor,’” in *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical & Other Essays in Memory of Peter C. Craigie*, ed. Lyle Eslinger and Glen Taylor, JSOTSup 67 [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988], 109–16; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 203).

<sup>8</sup> The poetic line seems to contrast the king’s influence on both the ordered land and the land writ large. Kraus reasons that גַּז refers to, “the mown grass of the meadows that belongs to the royal privileges wherever the crown property of the rulers is involved” (Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 77–78). The line, then, contrasts the king’s influence over both the ordered land of the state and the land beyond the king’s direct control.

<sup>9</sup> Following the LXX, Syriac, and some Hebrew manuscripts (see Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 221; Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 522). A translation that follows the MT and renders צַדִּיק as “righteous one,” may also make sense here, as some commentators have shown (see Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 380; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 203).

<sup>10</sup> The geographical markers enumerated here portray the king as a world-king, mapping out the entirety of the earth based on a Babylonian-style world geography with the Euphrates marking the center of the world in contrast to the “ends of the earth” (Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 79; Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 523).

<sup>11</sup> Delitzsch, noting that the term could refer to either desert animals or people dwelling in the desert, claims, “here they are men beyond all dispute” (Delitzsch, *Psalms*, vol. 2, 303). Following such a line of thought, some emend the צַיִם to צַרִּי (see Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 75; Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 221; Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 523). Others translate the term as a reference to wild animals alone (see Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 380 and 388). I understand the word’s ambiguity as a representation of the chaos over which the righteous king reigns, both in the form of animals and peoples (cf. Saur, *Die Königpsalmen*, 142).

<sup>12</sup> See the usage of תוֹךְ in Ps 10:7 and Jer 9:5.

<sup>13</sup> Delitzsch interprets the poor and downtrodden as the natural object of the verbs in v. 15a and the king as the implied object of v. 15b (Delitzsch, *Psalms*, vol. 2, 304). Zenger contends the first clause of v. 15 alone refers to the king, whereas the following clauses picture the king providing for the poor (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 203–04). Gianni Barbiero, however, understands v. 15a as the king providing for the life of the poor with gold, and

- 16 Thus an abundance of grain might exist in the land so that it waves<sup>14</sup> on the tops of the mountains; may its fruit<sup>15</sup> be like Lebanon, while they sprout forth from the city<sup>16</sup> like the grass of the land.<sup>17</sup>
- 17 May his name exist forever; may his name reproduce before the sun<sup>18</sup> as they are blessed in him, all the nations made happy by him.
- [18 Blessed be Yahweh God, the God of Israel, who alone performs wondrous acts.
- 19 And blessed be the name of his glory forever; may his glory fill all of the earth. Amen and amen.
- 20 Ended are the prayers of David, son of Jesse.]<sup>19</sup>

### 5.1.2 Questions of Genre, Function, and Setting

A general consensus exists concerning Psalm 72's genre, with many scholars labeling the psalm an intercession for a royal figure.<sup>20</sup> The consensus, however, ends with this claim. Scholars propose different specific genres and functions for the prayer, and they tie their proposals to conjectures concerning the psalm's historical context, composition history, and ideology.

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v. 15b as the king's support from the prayers and blessings of the poor (Barbiero, "The Risks of a Fragmented Reading of the Psalms," *ZAW* 120 [2008]: 78). Weiser views the poor and downtrodden as the object of all of the verbs in v. 15 with the king understood as the subject, assisting and caring for them (Weiser, *The Psalms*, 501). Kraus takes the opposite stance, contending the king is the object of all of the verbs in v. 15 (Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 75 and 80; also Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 380; deClaissé-Walford, Tanner, Jacobsen, *The Book of Psalms*, 576; Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 524–25; Skehan, "Strophic Structure," 307).

<sup>14</sup> Anderson notes that the verb stem here may parallel the Arabic *rağasa*, "to give abundantly" (Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 525).

<sup>15</sup> Taking the בר from the last stanza as the referent for the 3ms pronomial suffix (see Delitzsch, *Psalms*, vol. 2, 306; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 204).

<sup>16</sup> The line intertwines the fruitfulness of the land with that of the people, compare to Job 5:25 (see Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 221; Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 526). Some emend מעירו to מעיר, "his stalks," claiming that the former is non-sensical (see Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 76; cf. Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 204).

<sup>17</sup> Goldingay views the verse's imagery as a metaphorical reference to the fruitfulness of the king and the king's offspring, not solely as a depiction of the fruit and fruitfulness of the land (Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 392).

<sup>18</sup> Though the verbal root גין is a *hapax legomenon*, the noun root generally indicates offspring or posterity. So, most translators emphasize the idea of continuation, endurance, and the production of descendants (see *HALOT*, "גין," 696; Weiser, *The Psalms*, 501; deClaissé-Walford, Jacobsen, Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, 577; Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 380).

<sup>19</sup> There is a scholarly consensus that vv. 18–20 are late additions to the psalm (See Delitzsch, *Psalms*, vol. 2, 306; Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 76; deClaissé-Walford, Jacobsen, Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, 574; Houston, "The King's Preferential Option," 343; Salo, *Die jüdische Königsideologie*, 227–29), though a few scholars have contended that vv. 18–19 or even vv. 18–20 are original to the psalm (see Weiser, *The Psalms*, 504–05; Barbiero, "Risks of a Fragmented Reading," 82–90).

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Delitzsch, *Psalms*, vol. 2, 298–99; Weiser, *The Psalms*, 502; Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 77–78; Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 2*, 65; Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 281; deClaissé-Walford, Jacobsen, Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, 573–77; Houston, "The King's Preferential Option," 344–45; Salo, *Die jüdische Königsideologie*, 215–17.



Multiple scholars date the psalm to the pre-exilic period based on the rhetorical world the psalm constructs.<sup>21</sup> For example, Goldingay dates the psalm to the monarchical period, assuming that the psalm functioned, “when Israel had kings and needed this kind of prayer answered.”<sup>22</sup> The psalm’s intercessory nature, along with its focus on the king’s justice and worldwide reign, leads scholars to assign the poem to the coronation of a new king.<sup>23</sup> Scholars who date the psalm (vv. 1–17) to the pre-exilic period often highlight the reference to the בן־מלך in the psalm’s opening verse as grounds for labeling the psalm as a coronation hymn.<sup>24</sup> Tate, representing their consensus, interprets the psalm’s ideological claims and imagery as a display of, “a concern for the well-being of the dispossessed and the intricate relationship among God, the king, and the people....When the righteous king is blessed with God’s justice, the earth itself participates in the positive relationship existing among God, king, and people.”<sup>25</sup> For these reasons, scholars who date the psalm to the pre-exilic period view the psalm as a unified composition (vv. 1–17) and situate the poem’s worldview within a monarchical context.

Another perspective on the psalm’s setting proposes an entirely different context and ideological goal for the psalm, while still viewing the psalm as a unified whole. Some scholars stress that the focus on the poor and the universal reign of the king mark the psalm as a late composition.<sup>26</sup> William Seiple infers that a reference to Yahweh’s people as “oppressed (עֲנִי)” in

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<sup>21</sup> Delitzsch, *Psalms*, vol. 2, 298; Weiser, *The Psalms*, 502; Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 76–77; Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 222; Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 518; Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 381; Ronald Clements, “Psalm 72 and Isaiah 40–60: A Study in Tradition,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 28 (2001): 333–341; David Jobling, “Deconstruction and the Political Analysis of Biblical Texts: A Jamesonian Reading of Psalm 72,” in *Ideological Criticism of Biblical Texts*, ed. David Jobling and Tina Pippin, Semeia 59 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 98; Houston, “The King’s Preferential Option,” 341–67; Hamilton, *The Body Royale*, 75.

<sup>22</sup> Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 381.

<sup>23</sup> Delitzsch, *Psalms*, vol. 2, 298; Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 222–23; Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 381; Hamilton, *The Body Royale*, 75.

<sup>24</sup> Goldingay, *Psalms 42–89*, 381 and 384; Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 220–22; Hamilton, *The Body Royale*, 76.

<sup>25</sup> Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 223.

<sup>26</sup> William G. Seiple, “The Seventy-Second Psalm,” *JBL* 33 (1914): 173; Barbiero, “The Risk of a Fragmented Reading,” 82–90; see also the similar sentiments expressed by Gersternberger and Salo, who do not

v. 2 does not fit in the monarchic period and rather points to the post-exilic period.<sup>27</sup> He also proposes that the extensive boundaries of the king's reign and the motif of nations bearing tribute together mark the king as a foreign rather than a native monarch.<sup>28</sup> For these reasons, Seiple names Ptolemy II Philadelphus as the most likely candidate for the monarch referenced by the poem because of Ptolemy II's charitable relationship with the Jews.<sup>29</sup> He views the poem as a prayer that celebrates the Hellenistic ruler for his beneficent reign over the Jews.

Similarly, Gianni Barbiero builds a case for viewing the entire psalm (vv. 1–20) as a literary unit.<sup>30</sup> He dates the poem to the Hellenistic period, placing it within the context of a community of poor rather than a royal court. He claims the psalm as a whole reflects on the reign of Solomon (v. 1a), praying for a peaceful messiah king who will intervene for the poor and bring the Kingdom of God to earth.<sup>31</sup> He suspects the psalm offers a counter model to Hellenistic messianic longings that called for a messiah who would violently establish God's kingdom.<sup>32</sup> Psalm 72, according to Barbiero, instead envisions a messianic king who will rule with justice and serve as a blessing for all peoples by uniting them in the worship of Yahweh (v. 5).<sup>33</sup> Both Seiple and Barbiero view the psalm as a unified whole and assert that the psalm's rhetoric situates it in the post-exilic period.

Both of these approaches view the psalm as a united composition and perceive its descriptions of the king's justice, the fertility of the land, and the king's universal reign as naturally intertwined. Tate claims "As the psalm progresses we see that these are not three

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view the psalm as a unified whole (Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 2*, 65–68; Salo, *Die jüdische Königsideologie*, 223–27).

<sup>27</sup> Seiple, "The Seventy-Second Psalm," 173

<sup>28</sup> Seiple, "The Seventy-Second Psalm," 173–74.

<sup>29</sup> Seiple, "The Seventy-Second Psalm," 175–79.

<sup>30</sup> Barbiero, "The Risks of a Fragmented Reading," 71–88.

<sup>31</sup> Barbiero, "The Risks of a Fragmented Reading," 89.

<sup>32</sup> Barbiero, "The Risks of a Fragmented Reading," 88–89.

<sup>33</sup> Barbiero, "The Risks of a Fragmented Reading," 84.

separate goals, but one.”<sup>34</sup> The scholars surveyed above share this sentiment concerning the psalm’s literary unity, whether they place the psalm in the monarchic era and or as late as the Hellenistic period.<sup>35</sup> Yet, the psalm’s diverse literary imagery and ideological perspectives drive the divergent composition histories proposed by other scholars.

Recent German scholarship highlights the disjunction of the psalm’s literary imagery, suggesting that the pairing of the king’s protection of the poor with the king’s rule over all nations are a secondary development. The reconstructions of these scholars are not new. They revive earlier composition theories that situate parts of the psalm within multiple historical periods.<sup>36</sup> Martin Arneth, Bernd Janowski, Erich Zenger, Eckhart Otto, and Markus Saur (Arneth et al.) agree that Ps 72 is comprised of three composition layers, with vv. 1b–7, 12–14, and 16–17ab as an original pre-exilic layer, vv. 8–11, 15, and 17cd as a post-exilic addition, and vv. 1a and 18–19 as an even later doxological addition.<sup>37</sup> They root each of these proposed literary

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<sup>34</sup> Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 225.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Hamilton’s exposition of the psalm’s themes: “The three themes of foreign conquest, fertility, and care of the poor intertwine. Since the king was both judge and warlord, the presence of the first and last is not surprising. However, the subjugation of foreign enemies is a precondition of political stability, which in turn is a prerequisite of equitable economic relationships (the poor suffering most during war), the combination of the two themes may indicate that the psalmist recognized a causal link between foreign domination and the care for the poor at home. The foreign enemies and the domestic oppressor of the poor are linked metonymically as groups the king must defeat (hence the unusual expression ורדכא עישק [‘he will crush the oppressor’]) in v. 4” (Hamilton, *The Body Royale*, 77).

<sup>36</sup> Julius Boehmer attributes vv. 1–7 and 12–15 to the original psalm and vv. 8–11 and 16–20 to a post-exilic layer (Julius Boehmer, “Zu Psalm 72,” *ZAW* 26 [1906]: 147–55). Charles and Emily Briggs assign 1–7 and 13–17a to a pre-exilic text (Charles A. Briggs and Emily G. Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms II*, ICC [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1907], 131). Friedrich Baethgen and Bernhard Duhm both argue that vv. 5–11 are not original but rather represent a late, messianic addition (Friedrich W. A. Baethgen, *Die Psalmen*, GHK 11/2 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1904], 222; Bernhard Duhm, *Psalmen*, KHC 14 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1922], 275). Oswald Loretz dates vv. 10–15αβ and 17–20 to the exilic and/or post-exilic periods (Oswald Loretz, *Die Königspsalmen. Die altorientalisch-kanaanäische Königstradition in jüdischer Sicht*, UBL 6 [Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 1988], 125–27). Bernard Renaud asserts that vv. 8–11 and 18–19 (and possibly vv. 5, 15, and 17) belong to a post-exilic redaction layer (Bernard Renaud, “De la bénédiction du roi à la bénédiction de Dieu [Ps 72],” *Bib* 70 [1989]: 305–26).

<sup>37</sup> There is some slight variation among the five scholars. Otto does not provide a reconstruction of the psalm’s entire composition history, instead focusing on the proposed original layer of the psalm. See Arneth, “*Sonne der Gerechtigkeit*”; Bernd Janowski, *Stellvertretung. Alttestamentliche Studien zu einem theologischen Begriff*, SBS 165 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1995), 46–49; Janowski, “Die Frucht der Gerechtigkeit. Psalm 72 und die jüdische Königsideologie,” in “*Mein Sohn bist du*”, 102–09; Zenger, ““Es sollen sich niederwerfen vor ihm alle Könige” (Ps 72,11). Redaktionsgeschichtliche Beobachtungen zu Psalm 72 und zum Programm des

layers in historical contexts that supposedly explicate the separate ideological themes of each layer. Despite the broad agreement among these scholars concerning psalm's literary layers, they do not agree on the particular historical factors that shaped each layer.<sup>38</sup>

Arneth et al. claim that the themes of vv. 1b–7, 12–14, and 16–17ab and of vv. 8–11, 15, and 17cd are contradictory. For example, Zenger contends that vv. 8–11 interrupt the linkage of ideas explicit in vv. 2–7 and 12–14. He shores up his claim by pointing out that vv. 8–11 share no vocabulary or themes with vv. 2–7 and 12–14. Further, he views the idea of the king as a source of blessing through fruitfulness and justice as necessarily at odds with the idea of all peoples and nations submitting before the Judean king with tribute.<sup>39</sup> Another thread of the argument insists that vv. 8–11, 15, and 17cd share numerous intertextual echoes with Genesis and the post-exilic prophets while sharing few linguistic or ideological parallels with the rest of the psalm.<sup>40</sup>

Once the two sets of verses are separated as independent literary layers, it is not difficult to assert that vv. 8–11, 15, and 17cd fail to draw on the language of the rest of the psalm. Such textual and literary arguments shape claims concerning the poem's conflicting ideologies. For

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messianischen Psalters Ps 2-89," in *"Mein Sohn bist du"*, 66–93; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 207–09; Eckhart Otto, "Political Theology in Judah and Assyria," *Svensk exegetisk årsbok* 65 [2000]: 59–76; Saur, *Die Königspsalmen*, 135–36.

<sup>38</sup> For example, Arneth and Kaiser root the pre-exilic layer of the psalm as a direct propagandistic response to Ashurbanipal's coronation hymn (Arneth, *"Sonne der Gerechtigkeit,"* 56–108; Otto, "Political Theology in Judah and Assyria," 65–71). Zenger, however, does not push the proposal quite as far, noting parallels between the texts without requiring a genetic literary relationship (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 205). Saur focuses more on parallels between pre-exilic prophetic texts and the pre-exilic layer of the psalm, dating it less specifically than the other scholars to the 8<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE in general rather than the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE in particular (Saur, *Die Königspsalmen*, 135).

<sup>39</sup> Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 208.

<sup>40</sup> See Renaud, "De la bénédiction du roi," 305–26; Arneth, *"Sonne der Gerechtigkeit,"* 29–42; Otto, "Political Theology in Judah and Assyria," 70–71; Saur, *Die Königspsalmen*, 147–52; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 208; Salo, *Die jüdische Königsideologie*, 214 and 218–20. Note, though, Barbiero demonstrates that vv. 8–11, 15, and 17cd are not the only verses that share intertextual connections with other parts of the HB (Barbiero, "The Risk of a Fragmented Reading," 81–82). Ronald Clements makes the case that the prophetic texts of Isaiah 40–66 develop themes that directly draw on Psalm 72 (as well as Psalms 2 and 89). He contends that the psalms are the older texts and that they are drawn upon directly as "the consequence of deliberate citation of a text which is treated as authoritative" (Clements, "Psalm 72 and Isaiah 40-60," 333–41).

example, Otto claims that the psalm's "subversive character...becomes obvious from the fact that Ps 72 [ie. vv. 1b–7, 12–14, and 16–17ab] cancelled all the motifs of military supremacy of the Assyrian king gifted with the divine weapons."<sup>41</sup> We may note, though, that Ashurbanipal's coronation hymn portrays the king as the source of justice, natural fertility, and as one who subdues the nation's chaotic enemies. Psalm 72, in its canonical form, portrays the king by employing a similar constellation of themes. In order to claim that Ps 72 purposefully subverts Assyrian royal ideology, scholars like Otto and Zenger must first excise all verses that present the king as universal ruler.

Arneth et al. largely agree upon the historical context and ideology of the psalm's proposed second layer (vv. 8–11, 15, and 17cd). They situate this layer within the universalizing ideology of the Achaemenid empire, with its textual and artistic rhetoric that emphasizes the joyous submission of the nations to the Persian king.<sup>42</sup> Though the royal rhetoric of the Achaemenid empire displays parity with the submission of the nations depicted in Ps 72, Zenger, Saur, Arneth, and Janowski draw selectively on Persian comparative data while giving little attention to such themes in earlier ANE royal rhetoric. While the imagery of submission and subjugation does take a more positive turn in Achaemenid royal rhetoric, multiple analyses of Ps 72 note the underlying violent nature of the imagery in vv. 8–11, 15, and 17cd.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Otto, "Political Theology in Judah and Assyria," 67.

<sup>42</sup> For an overview of the universalistic rhetoric of Achaemenid royal art, see Root, *The King and Kingship*, 309–11. Salo emphasizes the reliance of vv. 8–11, 15, and 17cd on Achaemenid rhetoric as she follows Arneth, Janowski, Zenger, et al. in dating these verses to the post-exilic period: "Auch das Vergleichsmaterial aus der Umwelt von Israel und Juda stark für diese These: Das Motiv der Weltherrschaft kommt zwar auch in den assyrischen und babylonischen Texten vor, spielt in ihnen aber eine wesentlich kleinere Rolle als in den Königsinschriften der Achämeniden, in denen es das zentrale Element ist" (Salo, *Die jüdische Königsideologie*, 268).

<sup>43</sup> Goldingay notes that the verb *הָרַךְ* communicates an image of forceful domination of all of the peoples, while Hamilton remarks: "The tribute the foreigners bring before the king marks their defeat, and the abased bodies of the foreigners become an index of the prowess of the Israelite king's warrior-like body" (Hamilton, *The Body Royale*, 78).

Reettakaisa Sofia Salo's study of the royal psalms demonstrates the idiosyncratic process of selecting contextual data for dividing the psalm into separate literary layers. Salo follows the basic model set out by scholars like Arneth, Janowski, Zenger, and Saur. She differs, though, in that she proposes a fourth layer by separating vv. 12–14 from vv. 1b–7, designating vv. 12–14 to an even later layer focused on an ideology of the poor.<sup>44</sup> She includes vv. 2 and 4a in this late layer based on keywords used within these verses and on the identification of the entirety of the people as “the poor” in v. 2.<sup>45</sup> She argues that this textual layer responds to the previous layer's (vv. 8–11, 15, and 17cd) depiction of universal domination with its own imagery of all peoples as downtrodden and in need of the king's protection. Thus, Salo dates vv. 2, 4a, and 12–14 to the Hellenistic period and adds another textual layer to the psalm's reconstructed history.<sup>46</sup>

Arneth et al. root their proposed literary layers in ANE literary and artistic parallels. The parallels they draw are useful. Yet one wonders if such cutting and reshaping of the psalm is necessary? Psalm 72:1–17 already makes sense in the proposed context of a Judean kingdom under the pressure of the Neo-Assyrian empire. Verses 1–17 picture the king with imagery analogous to that used in Ashurbanipal's coronation hymn. Modern scholarly interest in imagining biblical texts that map onto modern cultural ideologies seems to drive reconstructions of an original psalm that served, as Otto claims, as “a counter-programme to its neo-Assyrian source.”<sup>47</sup> By contextualizing the psalm within ANE royal imagery, I contend that vv. 1–17 form a coherent depiction of the king as they blend imagery of a just and fecund reign with imagery of worldwide dominance over all nations.

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<sup>44</sup> Salo, *Die jüdische Königsideologie*, 223–27.

<sup>45</sup> Salo, *Die jüdische Königsideologie*, 224.

<sup>46</sup> Salo, *Die jüdische Königsideologie*, 226–27.

<sup>47</sup> Otto, “Political Theology in Judah and Assyria,” 71.

### 5.1.3 The Iconic Structure of Psalm 72

Psalm 72 dwells on the king's role in maintaining righteousness both within the community and the cosmos at large. The poem constructs an economy of righteousness. This economy is fueled by the king's encouragement of justice and subdual of chaotic oppressors. The psalm portrays the king as the conduit of blessing running between the deity and the land. The poem's imagery imagines the monarch's influence in ever-widening circles until his fecund reign envelopes the entire cosmos (vv. 8–11). The poem displays an image of a king at work suppressing chaos and promoting right order (שָׁלוֹם and צְדָקָה) in the world (vv. 1, 4, 6, 8–9, 12–14, 17). The king promotes justice among his people (vv. 3–4). As the psalm progresses his just reign extends beyond his own nation to envelop the cosmos (v. 8–14, 17). The king crushes oppressors both within and without to create an ordered cosmos (v. 4, 8–11). In doing so, the king serves as a conduit of Yahweh's blessing for all nations (v. 1, 3, 6, 17). As Tate observes, "Psalm 72 offers a glimpse of the ideal relationship among ruler, God, and people."<sup>48</sup> Nature itself responds to the king's righteous reign with a fecund yield of fruit and peace (vv. 3, 7, 16).<sup>49</sup> The psalm portrays the king's work as violent, both directly (v. 4: וַיִּדְכָא עוֹשֵׁק, "and so crush the oppressor") and indirectly. Yet the king's violent action promotes Yahweh's righteousness throughout the cosmos.<sup>50</sup> The poem interlaces themes of the subjugation of chaos (both within and outside the king's people; vv. 2, 4, 8–14), the maintenance of righteousness (vv. 1, 3, 7, 12–14), the fertility of the land (vv. 3, 6, 16), and the longevity of the royal dynasty (vv. 5, 15, 17).<sup>51</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 225.

<sup>49</sup> Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 222.

<sup>50</sup> See Hamilton, *The Body Royale*, 78.

<sup>51</sup> As Houston notes, this combination of imagery "represents how the dynasty itself wished to be understood" (Houston, "The King's Preferential Option for the Poor," 344)

## 5.2 The King and Righteous Order: Imagery of Subjugation, Fertility, and Just Reign in ANE Royal Art

The question that stands before us then is this: do these themes reflect disparate contexts and concerns? Does imagery of a righteous king creating a fruitful land stand in contrast to imagery of a dominant ruler (v. 8, 771) who subjugates the nations and crushes the oppressor underfoot? I turn to ANE royal iconography to contextualize the psalm's imagery and answer these interpretive questions. Royal art throughout the ANE portrays the king as a just ruler rightly ordering the world, as a source of abundance and fertility, and as one who subjugates foreign and domestic enemies. These individual themes of imagery can be traced across the ANE through different royal artistic programs. Rather than tracing each theme individually, I survey below instances wherein ANE royal art blends these motifs in depictions of the king to construct persuasive rhetoric.

### 5.2.1 Egyptian Royal Art

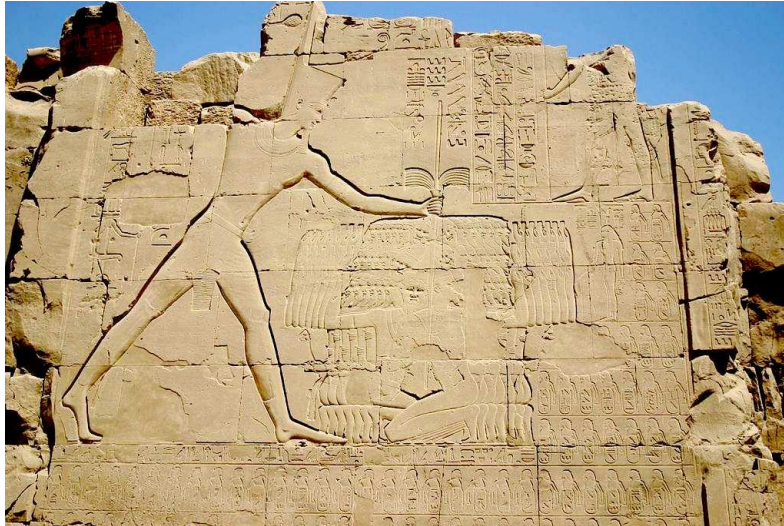
Egyptian royal art displays the king as a partner with the divine in maintaining *maat* in the land.<sup>52</sup> Egyptian art at times shows the king at work subduing chaos in battle and in the hunt. At other times, Egyptian art focuses on the fruitful results of the king's work in rightly ordering the cosmos. Egyptian royal art portrays a worldview in which the king subdues chaotic enemies and maintains order and fertility in the land. The Egyptian king could be simultaneously portrayed as world ruler, judge, and source of life for his people.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> See Jan Assmann, *Ma'at: Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im alten Ägypten*; Claude Traunecker, "The Ritualist Pharaoh. The Religious Cult," in *The Pharaohs*, ed. Christiane Ziegler, 145–60; Keel, *Symbolism*, 272–80.

<sup>53</sup> Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 55–60.





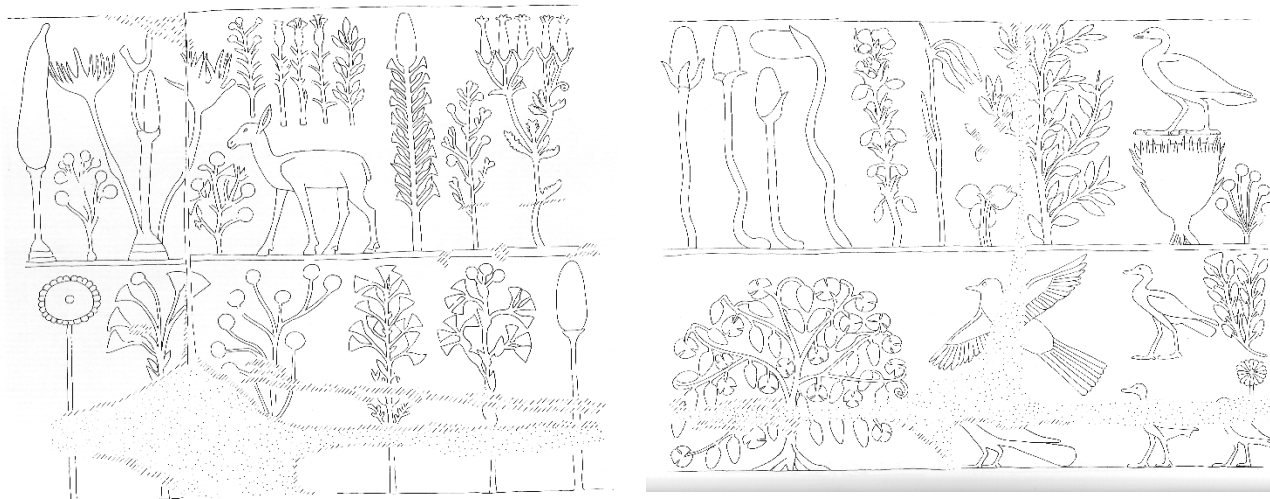
**Fig. 5.1.** Thutmose III smiting his enemies on the Seventh Pylon at Karnak. Location: Pylon VII, Temple of Amun, Karnak. Date: 1490–1436 BCE. Source: Photographed by Olaf Tausch, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Karnak\\_Tempel\\_15.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Karnak_Tempel_15.jpg).

Royal art at the Great Temple of Amun at Karnak displays Thutmose III as both universal ruler and as a source of fecundity in nature. Thutmose III added the seventh stone pylon gate to the southern processional route into the temple (**fig. 5.1**).<sup>54</sup> The western tower of the pylon shows the king towering over a collection of Asiatic enemies that he prepares to smite, even as he tramples upon a list of the conquered cities identified by names rings (see **fig. 2.4**). The list and cowering enemies represent the defeated nations of Syria and Palestine conquered on the king's various northern campaigns.<sup>55</sup> This monument displays Thutmose III's subjugation of Egypt's enemies in towering relief as one enters the temple. The smiting scene symbolizes the king subduing *isfet* and maintaining order, while simultaneously projecting an image of the king as ruler of the nations.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> See Elaine Sullivan, "Karnak: Development of the Temple of Amun-Ra," *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology* 1 (2010): 8.

<sup>55</sup> See Redford's discussion of the seventh pylon inscription (Donald B. Redford, *The Wars in Syria and Palestine of Thutmose III*, CHANE 16 [Leiden: Brill, 2003], 119–27).

<sup>56</sup> Keel, "Powerful Symbols of Victory," 207–09.



**Fig. 5.2.** Line drawings of reliefs featuring plant and animal life from Thutmose III's *Akhmenu*. Location: Pylon VII, Temple of Amun, Karnak. Date: 1490–1436 BCE. Source: Beaux, *Le Cabinet de Curiosités*, pl. VII and XI.

Further into the temple, Thutmose III constructed a great festival court, the *Akhmenu* (“the most glorious of monuments”).<sup>57</sup> The lower room of this temple features reliefs depicting almost three hundred different varieties of plants, animals, and birds (**fig. 5.2**).<sup>58</sup> The so-called “botanical garden” reliefs display images of plants and animals that range from the exotic and otherworldly to the everyday.<sup>59</sup> The texts that accompany the reliefs mark out the animal and botanical specimens as products collected during the king’s campaigns in Syria and Palestine.<sup>60</sup> The king acknowledges that these natural specimens came from a foreign land, and yet he claims that earth bears such products because of the life that he provides.<sup>61</sup> Even the foreign lands of

<sup>57</sup> Sullivan, “Karnak: Development of the Temple of Amun-Ra,” 8.

<sup>58</sup> Nathalie Beaux, *Le Cabinet de Curiosités de Thoutmosis III: Plantes et animaux du «Jardin botanique» de Karnak*, OLA 36 (Leuven: Department Oriëntalistiek; Peeters, 1990), 1.

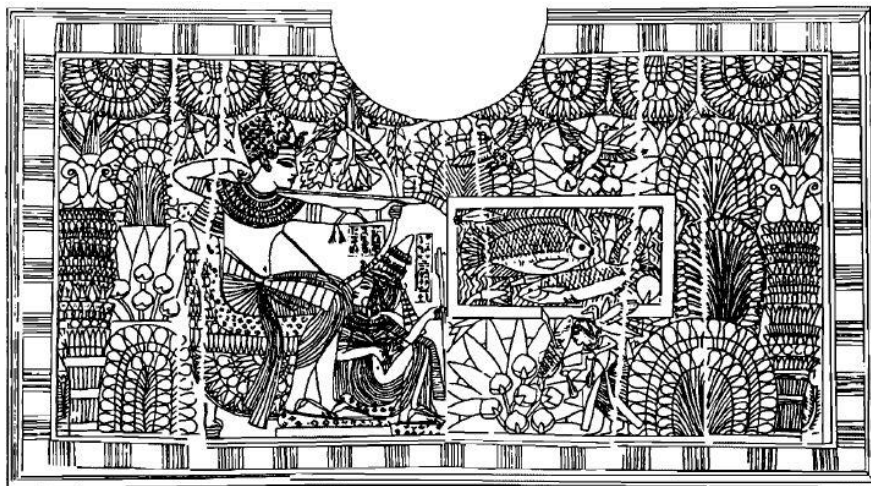
<sup>59</sup> Karen Polinger Foster, “Gardens of Eden: Exotic Flora and Fauna in the Ancient Near East,” in *Transformations of Middle Eastern Natural Environments: Legacies and Lessons*, ed. Jeff Albert, Magnus Bernhardsson and Roger Kenna, Bulletin Series Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies Number 103 (New Haven: Yale University, 1998), 326; Beaux, *Le Cabinet de Curiosités*, 46.

<sup>60</sup> Beaux, *Le Cabinet de Curiosités*, 45–46.

<sup>61</sup> Specifically, the king claims that his *b3w* empowered the land’s abundant fertility (see Beaux, *Le Cabinet de Curiosités*, 42).

Syria and Palestine, lands which Amun has placed under Thutmosis' rule, teem with life because of the Pharaoh's animating role.<sup>62</sup>

Art and text together render the pharaoh as a source of life and order. This life and order issues from the king's rule over the cosmos. The ruler's organization of exotic plants and animals in art displays what Foster calls a, "heroic imposition of order upon a chaotic, non-Egyptian world."<sup>63</sup> The king's rule over all nations is expressed textually in the references to his successful campaigns and visually on the seventh pylon. Furthermore, the monarch's reign creates and regenerates life. The depictions of flora and fauna within the *Akhmenu* serve "to establish magically and ritually divine creative and regenerative power in connection with the guarantee of royal creation."<sup>64</sup> The reliefs of the *Akhmenu* manifest the life-giving power of the king. Art and text within the Temple at Karnak construct a rhetoric wherein the king's subjugation of and rule over other nations enables the king's role as a provider of life and order in the cosmos.



**Fig. 5.3.** Scene of the king and queen bow-hunting fish and fowl in a garden from a chest found in Tutankhamun's tomb. Location: Tutankhamun's tomb, Valley of Kings, Thebes. Date: 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Cornelius, "The Garden in the Iconography of the Ancient Near East," 222, fig. 13.

<sup>62</sup> The accompanying texts render this claim, see Beaux, *Le Cabinet de Curiosités*, 42.

<sup>63</sup> Foster, "Gardens of Eden," 327.

<sup>64</sup> Regine Schulz and Hourig Sourouzian, "The Temples – Royal Gods and Divine Kings," in *Egypt: The World of the Pharaohs*, ed. Regine Schulz and Matthias Seidel (Königswinter: Könnemann, 2004), 160.

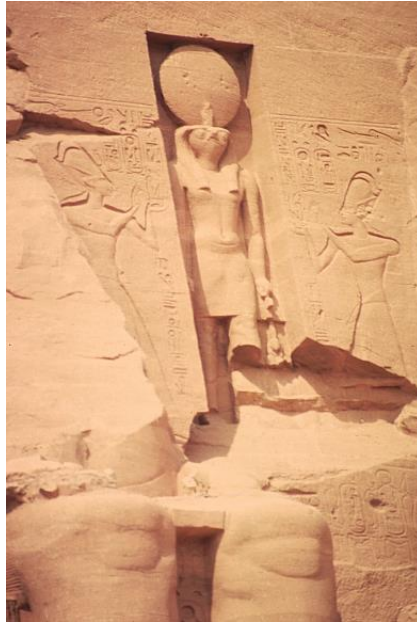
Tutankhamun similarly drew upon symbols of power and natural fertility to characterize his reign as king. In Tutankhamun's tomb, the central scene on a wooden chest portrays the king and his queen together within a bounteous garden filled with lotus flowers, mandrakes, and vines (**fig. 5.3**).<sup>65</sup> The pharaoh sits upon a throne as he hunts both fish and fowl with a bow. An attendant below the pool brings a fish and a bird pierced with arrows towards the king as another bird pierced by the king's arrow flies above the pool. Ankhesenamun kneels before the king, holding an arrow and a lotus blossom. Symbols of royal power and natural virility intersect in the scene. The bow, out of place in a scene displaying fish and fowl hunting, represents a symbol of royal power and rule.<sup>66</sup> Izak Cornelius claims, "The bow represented power and authority. In this case it is the power of the pharaoh over the created order of life and vegetation, represented as hunting in a garden."<sup>67</sup> The scene renders the king as a source of both violent power and fertile abundance as he rules in the midst of the garden.

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<sup>65</sup> Izak Cornelius, "The Garden in the Iconography of the Ancient Near East: A Study of Selected Material from Egypt," *Journal for Semitics* 1 (1989): 221–23.

<sup>66</sup> The bow is generally reserved for scenes of militaristic triumph, whereas boomerangs or nets are the weapons usually pictured in fishing and fowling scenes. See Cornelius, *The Garden in the Iconography of the Ancient Near East*, 223; Othmar Keel, "Der Bogen als Herrschaftssymbol. Einige unveröffentlichte Skarabäen aus Ägypten und Israel zum Thema 'Jagd und Krieg'," *SDPV* 93 (1977): 158.

<sup>67</sup> Cornelius, "The Garden in the Iconography of the Ancient Near East," 223.



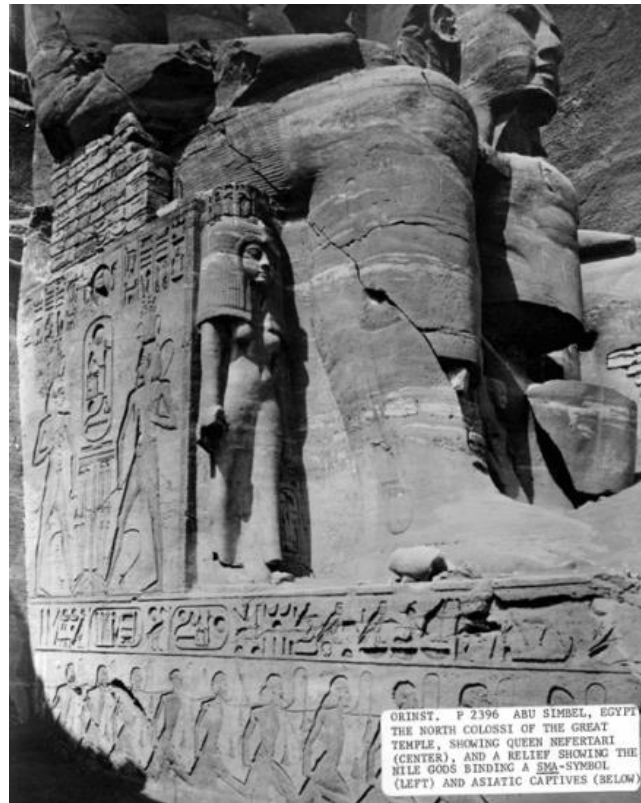
**Fig. 3.27b:** The niche above the entrance to Abu Simbel. Location: Abu Simbel. Date: 1279–1212 BCE. Source: Mary Ann Sullivan, <https://www.bluffton.edu/homepages/facstaff/sullivanm/egypt/abusimbel/ramses/ramses.html>.

Above the entrance door at the peak of the Abu Simbel temple façade, a representation of Ramses II displays the king on either side of the solar deity Re-Harakhty as he rises from his niche to blot out evil and order the cosmos (**fig. 3.27b**). The theme of the solar deity rising to recreate and order the world as judge occurs throughout Egyptian textual and artistic data.<sup>68</sup> Here, above the temple’s entrance, the king stands as the deity’s partner, offering up a miniature representation of the goddess *Maat* to Re-Harakhty as he rises to his task. The king establishes order and justice in the world in tandem with the work of the deity.<sup>69</sup> As Regine Schulz and Hourig Sourouzian note, the temple portrays Egypt as a land, “where the divine order of the cosmos is upheld by the king.”<sup>70</sup> The façade centers around this image of the king as a one maintaining *maat*.

<sup>68</sup> See Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion in the New Kingdom*; Assmann, *Ma’at: Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit*, 154–272.

<sup>69</sup> See Keel, *Symbolism*, 279–80 and 286.

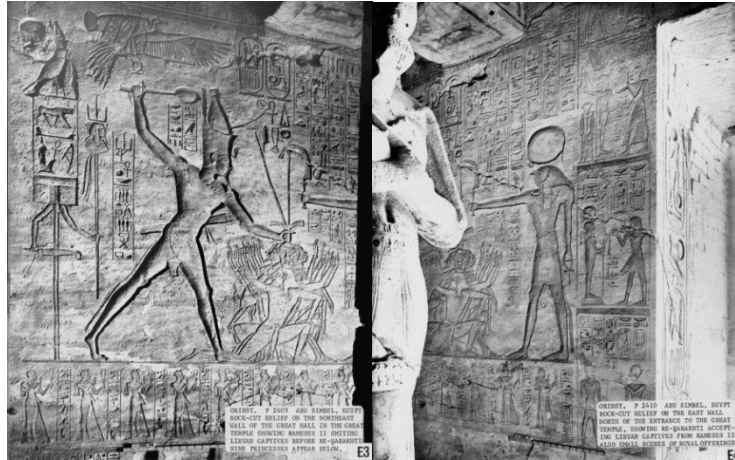
<sup>70</sup> Schulz and Sourouzian, “The Temples,” 214.



**Fig. 5.4.** Ramses II enthroned upon representations of bound foreigners upon the Abu Simbel façade. Location: Abu Simbel. Date: 1279–1212 BCE. Source: John Henry Breasted, *The 1905–1907 Breasted Expeditions to Egypt and the Sudan*, <https://oi.uchicago.edu/collections/photographic-archives/breasted-expeditions/introduction>.

The façade simultaneously displays the king’s subjugation of chaos with a portrayal of the king as ruler over foreign peoples. To either side of the facade entrance, four colossal figures of Ramses II sit enthroned, flanking the image of the king offering a rightly ordered cosmos to the deity. These representations of the king appear above subjugated foreign enemies, who kneel bound beneath the king’s feet (**fig. 5.4**). Furthermore, the interior temple reliefs also confirm that the king’s rule over his enemies orders the cosmos.





**Fig. 5.5.** Ramses II prepared to smite his enemies before the deity Re-Harakhty within the temple of Abu Simbel. Location: Abu Simbel. Date: 1279–1212 BCE. Source: John Henry Breasted, The 1905–1907 Breasted Expeditions to Egypt and the Sudan, <https://oi.uchicago.edu/collections/photographic-archives/breasted-expeditions/introduction>.

One of the temple's interior reliefs (**fig. 5.5**) portrays the king preparing to smite a collected group of enemies before the same deity, Re-Harakhty, to whom Ramses II offers *Maat* upon the façade. The relief represents the king again presenting right order, *maat*, before the deity. Only now the theme of the king presenting *maat* to the deity modulates into an image of the monarch subjugating chaotic enemies.

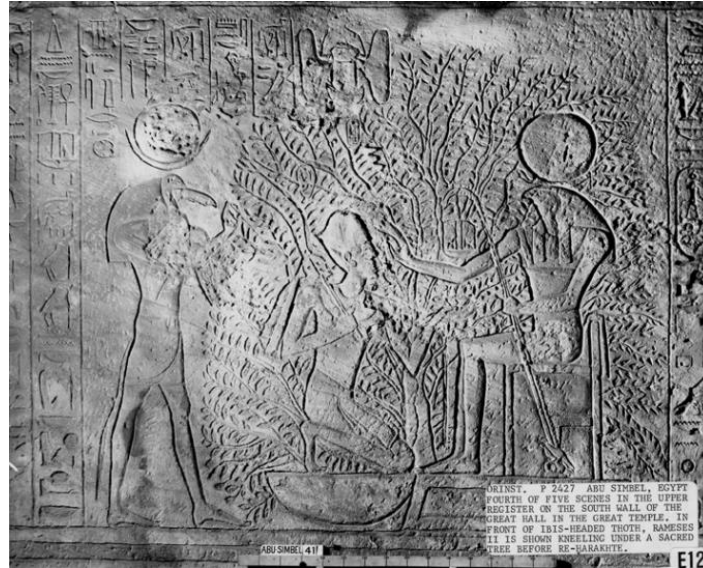


**Fig. 5.6.** Ramses II trampling enemies as he prepares to smite another enemy with his spear. Location: Abu Simbel. Date: 1279–1212 BCE. Source: John Henry Breasted, *The 1905–1907 Breasted Expeditions to Egypt and the Sudan*, <https://oi.uchicago.edu/collections/photographic-archives/breasted-expeditions/introduction>.

Another interior relief shows the king alone preparing to strike down his foe as he simultaneously treads defeated Libyan enemies underfoot (**fig. 5.6**). The king literally crushes his enemies, representations of chaos, by treading upon them. The king stands displayed, “as guarantor of that order on earth, warding off the dangers that threatened Egypt.”<sup>71</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Schulz and Sourouzian, “The Temples,” 214.





**Fig. 5.7.** Ramses II kneeling amidst the branches of the *ished* tree before Re-Harakhty. Location: Abu Simbel. Date: 1279–1212 BCE. Source: John Henry Breasted, *The 1905–1907 Breasted Expeditions to Egypt and the Sudan*, <https://oi.uchicago.edu/collections/photographic-archives/breasted-expeditions/introduction>.

An interior relief on the south wall renders the king as a source of fertility (**fig. 5.7**). The relief shows Ramses II kneeling before Re-Harakhty, who confirms the king’s office as he touches his crown. The image both assures the monarch’s reign and casts Ramses II, who kneels before the sacred tree, as a source of growth and fecundity.<sup>72</sup> The artistic program at Abu Simbel blends imagery displaying the monarch as purveyor of a just world, the monarch as ruler of the nations, and the monarch as a source of natural fertility in order to construct iconic representations of Ramses II’s kingship. The temple projects a royal rhetoric that identifies the king as the divinely ordained purveyor of order and justice across the cosmos.

Ramses III’s mortuary temple at Medinet Habu combines images of the king’s rule over all peoples with images of the king as the source of natural bounty. As noted in chapter 4, the Eastern High Gate embodies a paradoxical combination of imagery featuring violent subjugation

<sup>72</sup> The tree represents the life and regeneration of the king and the solar deity Re, and thus portrays the life and fertility of the entire cosmos (see Marie-Louise Buhl, “The Goddesses of the Egyptian Tree Cult,” *JNES* 6 [1947]: 89).

and fructifying love. The outer faces of the gate display the king's rule over foreign enemies with smiting and presentation scenes (see **figs. 4.16–4.18**). The king completely controls his enemies. At points the reliefs display the ruler simply grasping varied captives in both of his hands (**fig. 4.17**). In the smiting scenes (e.g. **fig. 4.16**), the king prepares to destroy his subdued foes as if they consist of a force who might oppose him, yet **fig. 4.17** shows the king effortlessly controls those who stand against him. In **fig. 4.17**, the king's enemies appear weak and unthreatening as they are subdued by the ruler.

The interior scenes of the high gate, however, portray the king in a different role. Inside, imagery depicting abundant life, erotic love, and the production of progeny fills the walls of the rooms and hallways. The imagery herein displays the erotic power of the king and the creation of an everlasting dynasty. The interior scenes root the natural abundance of the cosmos and the production of life in the erotic renewal of the king.<sup>73</sup> **Figure 4.14**, for example, portrays the king amidst his harem, surrounded, supported, and aroused by his female companions. Symbols of cosmic life and order frame this scene. The young woman standing to the far left holds up an ostrich feather towards the king, symbolizing that the renewal of the royal dynasty is an aspect of maintaining cosmic order. The blossoming flowers that frame the scene index life, life that the monarchy's continuing reign upholds. Flowers again abound in **fig. 4.15**, a relief that portrays the renewal of the dynasty with a depiction of the king's offspring. The renewal of the monarchy produces the renewal of natural life. The artistic program of the Eastern High Gate blends imagery of the king's unmatched dominion with imagery of the king's renewal of cosmic order and abundance.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> See O'Connor, "The Mortuary Temple of Ramses III," 252–55.

<sup>74</sup> See O'Conner, "The Mortuary Temple of Ramses III," 251–52.

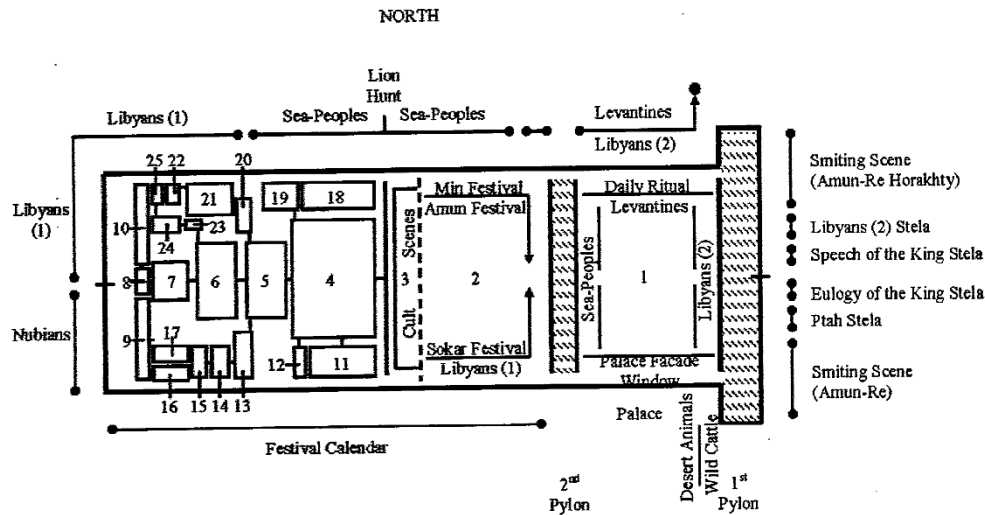


Fig. 6.11. Diagrammatic representation of the programmatic organization of Medinet Habu. (Drawing by D. O'Connor and T. Prakash.)

**Fig. 5.8.** Diagram representing the organization of the relief program of Medinet Habu. Source: O'Connor, "The Mortuary Temple of Ramses III," 258, fig. 6.11.

The entire temple at Medinet Habu is a microcosm. It shows the king and deity working together in maintaining *maat*.<sup>75</sup> The temple's outermost mud walls are broken only by the two high gates and the *midgol* shape of the first pylon rising above it. These walls create a mountainous-like horizon. In this way, the outer walls model the mountain range at the edge of the world that holds back chaos and destruction.<sup>76</sup> Inside these perimeter walls, the external walls of the temple proper primarily display scenes of the king repelling chaotic forces. Images of the pharaoh cutting down different foreign enemies appear alongside scenes of the pharaoh hunting wild animals. The reliefs that portray battles with different national enemies form an "actual and symbolic topography," according to O'Connor.<sup>77</sup> The temple walls create a map of the nations

<sup>75</sup> See O'Connor, "The Mortuary Temple of Ramses III," 246–49.

<sup>76</sup> See O'Connor, "The Mortuary Temple of Ramses III," 244–48.

<sup>77</sup> O'Connor, "The Mortuary Temple of Ramses III," 265. The campaign against the Nubians is displayed on the southeastern section of the outer walls, the first campaign against the Libyans stands on the northwestern portion of the walls, the campaign against the Sea Peoples takes up much of the northern face of the walls with the Levantines displayed in the northeastern position.

that the king has subdued (see **fig. 5.8**). On these outer reliefs, the king establishes order by repelling chaos, whether in the form of foreign enemies or wild lions and bulls.

Within the walls of the temple the visual environment shifts. The inner walls do display some violent imagery.<sup>78</sup> Yet scenes of the king performing cultic actions, supporting the gods, leading festivals, and serving to connect the gods with the people populate the inner walls. The first two large courtyards picture a living and abundant cosmos.<sup>79</sup> The pillars of the courts replicate papyrus stalks with capitals shaped like papyrus buds and blooms.<sup>80</sup> The temple as artifact represented a cosmos rightly ordered by the Egyptian divine king, offering an icon of *maat* to the deity that it served.<sup>81</sup>

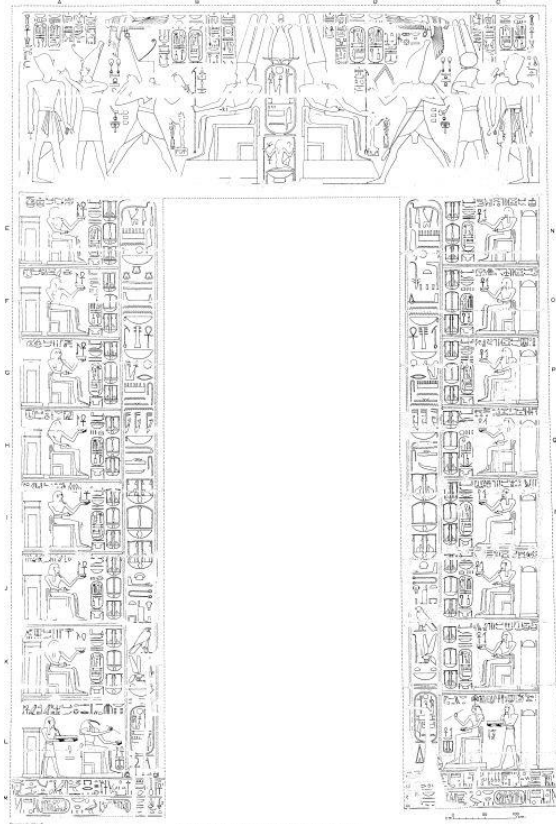
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<sup>78</sup> For example, the first courtyard still displays some battle reliefs, such as scenes from encounters with the Libyans, the Sea Peoples, and the Levantines. Condensed symbols of the king's victory surround the royal window of appearance, as well.

<sup>79</sup> These courtyards were likely the farthest into the temple any of the public would have processed. See O'Conner, "The Mortuary Temple of Ramses III," 242.

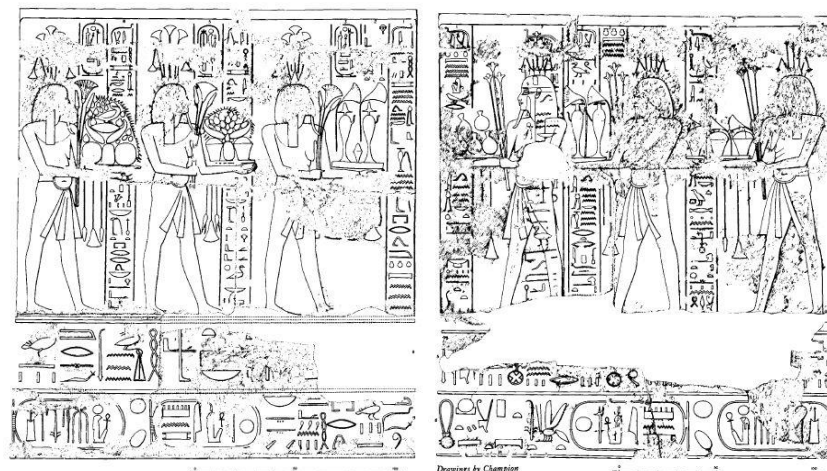
<sup>80</sup> Uvo Hölscher, *The Mortuary Temple of Ramses III: Part I*, Volume III of The Excavation of Medinet Habu, OIP 54 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1941), 7–8.

<sup>81</sup> O'Conner, "The Mortuary Temple of Ramses III," 248.



**Fig. 5.9.** Outer façade of the entrance into the second court at Medinet Habu. Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Temple Proper*, pl 251.

The king assumes various roles to order the cosmos throughout the temple. For example, the façade of the granite portal that leads from the first palatial courtyard into the temple court proper displays images of dominance, order, and natural abundance. Ramses III subdues the Sea Peoples in reliefs that surround the outer façade. One must pass all of these as one approaches the second courtyard. The granite lintels of the doorway themselves, though, portray the king maintaining the cosmos in a cultic role, as he offers up food, drink, and symbols of the goddess *Maat* to different deities (**fig. 5.9**). These scenes culminate in the uppermost right and left corners of the doorway with scenes of Amun-Re (upper right) and Re-Harakhty (upper left) extending life in the form of an *ankh* before the king's nostrils. The deities fill the king with life so that he might convey that life to others.



**Fig. 5.10.** Lower two reliefs of the inner façade of the entrance into the second court at Medinet Habu. Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Temple Proper*, pl 259a–b.

The inner lintels of the doorway communicate the abundant life conveyed by the king's work. The upper lintel and the upper majority of the two side lintels on the inside of the portal depict scenes similar to those on the front. The inner lintels show the king's close relationship with the deities. The king ministers to the deities with dance, food, and drink. These deities support the king by embracing and leading him. The two lowest panels on each lintel though, those that ground the doorway, display the reciprocal acts of the deities in response to the king's ordering of the cosmos (**fig. 5.10**). On these panels, the Nile gods bear forth the produce of the land.<sup>82</sup> They move towards the door's opening, theoretically out into the first courtyard that represents the cosmos at large. The tight network of artistic motifs along the doorway illustrates how the multifaceted work of the king in maintaining cosmic order results in the abundance of the land. On numerous levels, the mortuary temple at Medinet Habu depicts the cosmos teeming with life when ruled and ordered by the king.

<sup>82</sup> The Epigraphic Survey, *The Temple Proper: Part I*, pl. 259.



**Fig. 5.11.** Blue faience depicting Re-Harakhty and the pharaoh in mirrored roles. Location: Unprovenanced. Date: 11<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: EA14556. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

A small blue faience piece from the Third Intermediate Period (**fig. 5.11**) serves as a condensed example of intertwined images of subjugation and fertility. One side shows Re-Harakhty standing in the midst of other deities. With one hand Re-Harakhty grasps a subdued foreigner, and with his other hand he holds an *ankh*. The god Montu stands to the right, holding a scimitar out to Re-Harakhty, and the goddess Mut waves a sistrum as she stands behind Montu. The god Horus, also extending a scimitar, stands on the other side with Sekhmet standing behind him. Re-Harakhty grasps both an enemy and an *ankh*. According to Wegner and Franco, the deity’s posture portrays “the kingly aspect of the sun-god,” while, “the motif of the ruler’s triumph over enemies serves to reaffirm the principle of *maat*.”<sup>83</sup>

The other side of the plaque displays the king in the central position, parallel to the solar deity on the opposite side. Deities surround the king as well, Thoth and a uraeus serpent to the right and Horus and Sekhmet to the left. Thoth and Horus hold out libation vases as they shower the king with regenerative water, portrayed with *ankh* and *was* signs. The *ankh* represents life and the *was* symbol represents the power and dominion these deities grant the king. The water poured out upon the king, “indicates that the anointed king in his turn will be able to pour forth

<sup>83</sup> Jennifer Houser Wegner and Isabelle Franco, “Catalog of the Works,” in *The Pharaohs*, 400, fig. 37.



for others the life forces which issue from the gods.”<sup>84</sup> The plaque symbolizes the connected relationship of the king and the gods as they order the cosmos, rule over Egypt’s enemies, and support life. The king’s performance of each of these aspects of his role results in a fertile world. Egyptian royal art often blends imagery of the king’s universal rule over his enemies with imagery of fertility.

### 5.2.2 Mesopotamian Royal Art

In Mesopotamian royal art, the Neo-Assyrians in particular combined militaristic, naturalistic, and civic imagery to portray kingship. Some earlier examples, though, also combine these images.



**Fig. 3.11.** Hammurabi before Shamash on the Hammurabi Stele. Location: Elam. Date: 18<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source:

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:F0182\\_Louvre\\_Code\\_Hammourabi\\_Bas-relief\\_Sb8\\_rwk.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:F0182_Louvre_Code_Hammourabi_Bas-relief_Sb8_rwk.jpg).

Multiple commentators have noted the parallels between Psalm 72 and the Hammurabi stele with respect to the royal concern for justice (**fig. 3.11**). The stele pictures the king “face to

<sup>84</sup> Wegner and Franco, “Catalog of the Works,” in *The Pharaohs*, 400, fig. 37.



face with the god,” marking the king as the link between this world and the divine.<sup>85</sup> The solar god of justice, Shamash, extends symbols of authority and kingship, a ring and a scepter, to Hammurabi. The image itself stands at the top of the 7 ft stele, directly within a viewer’s line of vision. Below the image, cursive cuneiform script covers the stele, making the monument a physical embodiment of the law.<sup>86</sup> The text of the stele describes Hammurabi both as a king who subjugates and rules over the cosmos as well as one who upholds justice by caring for the widow and orphan. The literary imagery of subjugation and universal rule, however, has been neglected by psalms scholars.<sup>87</sup>

The prologue of the monument describes Hammurabi as, “the warrior,” “the onslaught of the four regions of the world,” “the fierce wild bull who gores the enemy,” and, “the lord of kings, peerless warrior.”<sup>88</sup> Simultaneously, the king is the one, “to make justice prevail in the land, to abolish the wicked and the evil, to prevent the strong from oppressing the weak, to rise like the sun-god Shamash over all humankind, to illuminate the land.”<sup>89</sup> He is named, “the judicious one, the noble one,” the “solar disc of the city of Babylon, who spreads light over the lands of Sumer and Akkad, king who makes the four regions obedient,” one who, “heaps high abundance and plenty,” as he, “provides abundant waters.”<sup>90</sup> These epithets picture Hammurabi as both universal ruler and as provider of justice and life. These two roles are brought together in the king’s claim: “I am the king preeminent among kings. My pronouncements are choice, my ability is unrivaled. By the command of the god Shamash, the great judge of heaven and earth,

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<sup>85</sup> Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 180.

<sup>86</sup> Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 179.

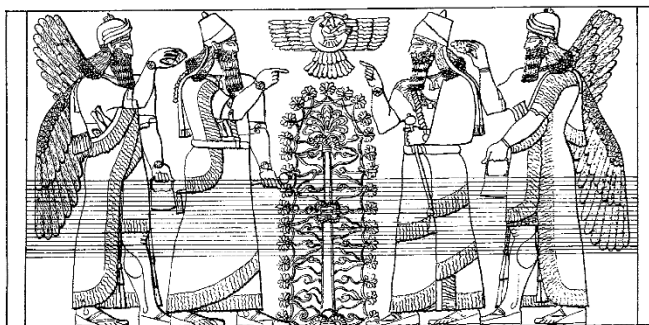
<sup>87</sup> See Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 77–78; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 211–13; Saur, *Die Königpsalmen*, 138–39; Salo, *Die jüdische Königsideologie*, 235–41. Bahrani, though, in her analysis of the monument notes how Hammurabi is described as a just and righteous ruler, a caregiver, a source of life, and a militaristic power who overtakes and rules his enemies (see Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 180).

<sup>88</sup> *COS II*: 336–37.

<sup>89</sup> *COS II*: 336.

<sup>90</sup> *COS II*: 336–37.

may my justice prevail in the land.”<sup>91</sup> The stele displays Hammurabi as the human exemplar of divine rule. Hammurabi is judge, king, and source of life alongside Shamash.



**Fig. 3.31.** Wall relief featuring the Assyrian king tending the sacred tree and flanked by two genii figures. The winged sun disc of Ashur/Shamash is above the scene. Location: Ashurnasirpal II’s North-West Palace, Nimrud. Date: 9<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Source: Meuszyński, *Die Rekonstruktion der Relieftdarstellungen*, Tafel I, B–23.

Neo-Assyrian royal art connects scenes wherein the king reigns over foreigners through military triumph, blesses the cosmos as a source of fecundity, and rules his own people as a judge. Ashurnasirpal II’s throne room program intermixes images of the king as source of fertility and as ruler over his enemies. The throne room walls hold a multitude of reliefs that display the king subjugating his enemies at war or striking down lions and bulls in the hunt. Other reliefs, as seen in chapter 2 (**figs. 2.12a–b**), show the king’s enemies submitting to his reign.

Two central reliefs, one across from the throne room’s main entrance and the other behind the throne, portray the king as a source of life and fertility for the land (**fig. 3.31**). The two reliefs stand twice as tall as the surrounding reliefs. The scene upon them depicts the king standing on either side of the sacred tree. Ashur sits above the tree in the winged sun disc, while two winged deities stand behind the king on each side, holding pinecones and buckets out

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<sup>91</sup> *COS* II: 351.

towards the king. The king himself holds his hand out towards Ashur in a gesture of greeting and worship.

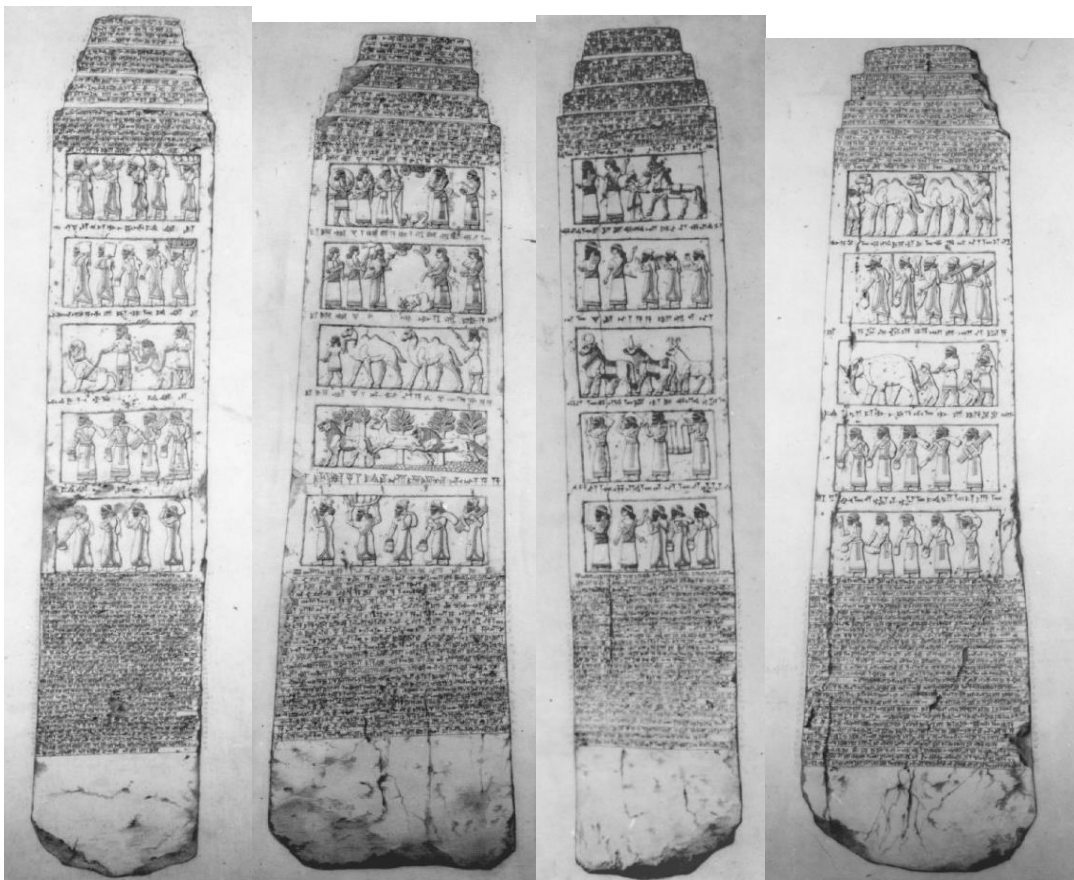
Scholars debate the exact symbolism of the date-palm tree in the center of the scene, and yet there is wide agreement that the scene symbolizes the king as a source of life and fertility for the land. Reade views the scene as representing fertility and the cosmic order maintained by the king. Winter similarly understands the scene as an “emblem of the provisioning of the land and the role of the king in relation to it.”<sup>92</sup> Barbara Porter builds on these interpretations, bringing the presence of the deities into view. She claims, “The scene, for all its links to real agriculture, is in essence an emblem, representing the gods’ gift to mankind of abundant crops and, by extension, of the security such agricultural success provides,” and so, the scenes that feature the king portray the deities “not literally pollinating the king, but, rather, metaphorically bestowing on him abundance and security as a gift from the gods.”<sup>93</sup> In this way, the king serves as the link between the deities and the nation, conveying order, protection, and life.<sup>94</sup> In fact, one relief stood behind the throne itself, thus framing the king. When enthroned, anyone approaching the king viewed him within the divine tree itself. The living king mapped onto the divine tree became a symbol of life and fecundity. These central scenes that depict the king maintaining order and life within the cosmos appeared alongside scenes of the king subjugating and ruling over his enemies.

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<sup>92</sup> See Julian Reade, *Assyrian Sculpture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 27–28; Winter, “Royal Rhetoric,” 9.

<sup>93</sup> Porter, “Sacred Trees, Date Palms, and the Royal Persona,” 137.

<sup>94</sup> Porter, “Sacred Trees, Date Palms, and the Royal Persona,” 138–39.



**Figs. 2.13a–d.** Drawings of the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser. Location: Kalhu. Date: ca. 825 BCE. Source: Drawings © Trustees of the British Museum.

The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III (**figs. 2.13a–d**) portrays the monarch’s reign over nations from all ends of the cosmos. Upon the top two bands of the monument, foreign kings “bow down” before the Assyrian king and his gods. This visual imagery reminds one of the claim within Ps 72 that foreign rulers “lick the dust” before Yahweh’s king (cf. Psalm 72:9, 11). The scenes of the pillar show the ordered, even peaceful, movement of goods and gifts towards the king. The obelisk conveys an ordered empire as foreign nations submit willingly before the king.<sup>95</sup> The scenes render the Assyrian king as a source of abundance, as the foreigners bear

<sup>95</sup> Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 259.

items of tribute to Assyria. The form of the vignettes upon the obelisk orders the foreigners and displays the power of the king in providing peace and abundance for the nation.<sup>96</sup>

Neo-Assyrian kings also constructed visions of the extent of their reigns via royal gardens. Gardens served as an avenue to convey a king's expansive rule and the fruitfulness provided by his reign. Kings such as Tiglath-Pileser I, Ashurnasirpal II, and Sennacherib all described the beauty of their exotic gardens, made up of plants from across their empires. Tiglath-pileser I connected his expansive dominion with the fecundity of exotic plants within his land: "I took cedar, box-tree (and) Kanish oak from the lands over which I had gained dominion, such trees which none among the previous kings, my forefathers, had ever planted, I planted (them) in the orchards of my land; I took rare orchard fruit which is not found in my land (and) filled the orchards of Assyria."<sup>97</sup> Ashurnasirpal II recorded in his Banquet Stele how he built a magnificent garden filled with the plants and fruits from the lands that he had conquered.<sup>98</sup> David Stronach asserts:

"Assurnasirpal II (883–859 B.C.), the founder of the Neo-Assyrian empire, is one of the first monarchs, for example, to view the garden as a potent vehicle for royal propaganda. In keeping with one of the evident prerogatives of widespread dominion, Assurnasirpal goes out of his way to record the often exotic trees, cuttings, and seeds which were retrieved on his campaigns and which were then planted within the bounds of his new garden at Nimrud."<sup>99</sup>

Royal gardens were not simply for shade and pleasure. They displayed the king's power and life-giving rule over all the cosmos.<sup>100</sup> Sennacherib constructed an extravagant royal garden around

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<sup>96</sup> Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 258–59.

<sup>97</sup> RIMA 2, 27: A.0.87.1 vii 17–27.

<sup>98</sup> See Wiseman, "A New Stele," 30, lines 36–52.

<sup>99</sup> David Stronach, "The Garden as Political Statement: Some Case Studies from the Near East in the First Millennium B.C.," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, New Series Vol. 4, In honor of Richard Nelson Frye: Aspects of Iranian Culture (1990): 171.

<sup>100</sup> D. J. Wiseman, "Mesopotamian Gardens," *Anatolian Studies* 33 (1983): 141–42.

his “palace without rival” at Nineveh. The king asserted that the plants and fruits that he transplanted to his royal garden flourished in his land and under his rule:

“Above the city and below the city I laid out parks. The wealth of mountain and all lands, all the herbs of the land of Hatti (Syria), myrrh plants, among which fruitfulness was greater than their (natural) habitat, all kinds of mountain-vines, all fruits of (all) lands (settlements), herbs and fruit-bearing trees I set out for my subjects.”<sup>101</sup>

According to Sennacherib’s claims, the fruitfulness of the land underscored his successful reign as king, and, furthermore, the land’s abundance directly benefited his subjects.<sup>102</sup>



**Fig. 5.12.** Relief from Room H of Ashurbanipal’s North Palace of an Assyrian king overlooking an expansive palatial garden set above reliefs of the Elamites going to battle. Location: Nineveh. Date: 669–631 BCE. Source: BM124939. © Trustees of the British Museum.

<sup>101</sup> D. D. Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib*, OIP 2 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1924), 113–14.

<sup>102</sup> Mirko Novak, “The Artificial Paradise: Programme and Ideology of Royal Gardens,” in *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East. Proceedings of the 47<sup>th</sup> Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki, July 2–6, 2001*, ed. Simo Parpola and R. M. Whiting (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2002), 449.

Ashurbanipal developed visual motifs of his worldwide and life-giving reign upon the reliefs of his North Palace at Nineveh. In Room H of the palace, Ashurbanipal seems to have depicted Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh and its expansive gardens (**fig. 5.12**).<sup>103</sup> The king, whether Sennacherib or Ashurbanipal, stands facing an abundant garden filled with streams and multitudinous species of trees. As seen in the excerpt from Sennacherib's annals above, the trees of the garden represent the life and fertility that the king's reign provides. At the same time, the collection and ordering of the natural crops of foreign lands signals the king's rule over the nations. The lower part of these reliefs and the other reliefs of Room H and the adjacent Room I display the king's position over foreign peoples. The lower half of the garden relief shows the Elamites charging towards battle, and the reliefs of Room I display their utter defeat on the battlefield by the Assyrian army. The reliefs portray the king's universal dominion by interlacing themes of the king's military conquest and the land's abundant fertility.



**Fig. 4.24.** The bas-relief depicting the king and queen banqueting together. Location: Nineveh. Date: 669–631 BCE. Source: Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, LXV.

<sup>103</sup> See Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, 41; Julian E. Reade, "More Drawings of Ashurbanipal Sculptures," *Iraq* 26 (1964): 5.

The famous garden banquet reliefs from Ashurbanipal's north palace present a similar rhetoric in which the king's subjugation of his enemies results in natural abundance (**fig. 4.24**). The king and queen recline at a banquet in the midst of a fertile garden teeming with animal and plant life, as the garden reliefs surrounding this central scene show (see **fig. 4.23**). The garden stretches out to either side of the king and queen across multiple reliefs. The monarch reclines upon a royal palanquin, seated as ruler and source of the abundant life that surrounds him. The reliefs display the Assyrian king as one who has brought order and life to the natural world. Other symbols within the garden scene index the king's rule over the cosmos. As shown in the last chapter, the weapons and jewelry of defeated nations from across the ANE mark Ashurbanipal as the king of the entire world.

The garden scenes, full of life and fertility, do not shy away from violent symbols of the monarch's reign. In fact, the disembodied head of the Elamite ruler, Teuman, hangs from a tree across from where Ashurbanipal and his queen sit together at banquet as Elamite officials wait upon the royal couple. The larger context of the garden reliefs highlights the king's violent subjugation of chaos, both in the form of human enemies and animals. The scenes that surrounded the garden reliefs depict the Assyrian army tearing apart their enemies on the one side and the king hunting lions on the other side.<sup>104</sup> The room's reliefs draw together images of fertile abundance, universal reign, and the violent subjugation of chaos in order to present a fulsome ideology of kingship.

Mesopotamian royal gardens indicate how a ruler created order from chaos. As Karen Foster claims, "Many rulers saw acquisition and display of exotic flora and fauna as effective ways to enhance prestige or to demonstrate imperial dominion over far-flung lands."<sup>105</sup> Both

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<sup>104</sup> See Barnett, *North Palace*, 19–20; Albenda, "Landscape Bas-Reliefs," 55.

<sup>105</sup> Foster, "Gardens of Eden," 320.



visual depictions of garden and landscape in royal art and the royal gardens themselves built by different kings projected “a programmatic message.”<sup>106</sup> Royal gardens, filled with flourishing plants, wild animals, and canals of water displayed the virility, power, and expansive rule of the king. Novak continues, “The flourishing garden was a symbol of civilization. The cultivation of the steppe and the successful creation of an artificial paradise by the Assyrian king probably should maintain the fertility of Assyria under the reign of its charismatic ruler.”<sup>107</sup> Both textual and visual rhetorics of Neo-Assyrian royal gardens display the king’s universal rule and the natural abundance that resulted from his reign.

### 5.2.3 Achaemenid Royal Art

Extant examples of Achaemenid royal art do not employ imagery of natural abundance or active maintenance of the cosmos to portray the king. Instead, Achaemenid art provides, “a static picture of something that is already done, that already exists, that is accomplished (tribute brought, monsters slain, fire honored, dignitaries received).”<sup>108</sup> Themes of order, justice, and natural fertility are not absent. Rather, Achaemenid royal art undergirds the king’s rule with such themes, making them implicit and already accomplished rather than explicit.<sup>109</sup> As numerous recent commentators have pointed out, the Apadana tribute reliefs at Persepolis display imagery largely congruent with the literary imagery of vv. 8–11 of Ps 72.<sup>110</sup>

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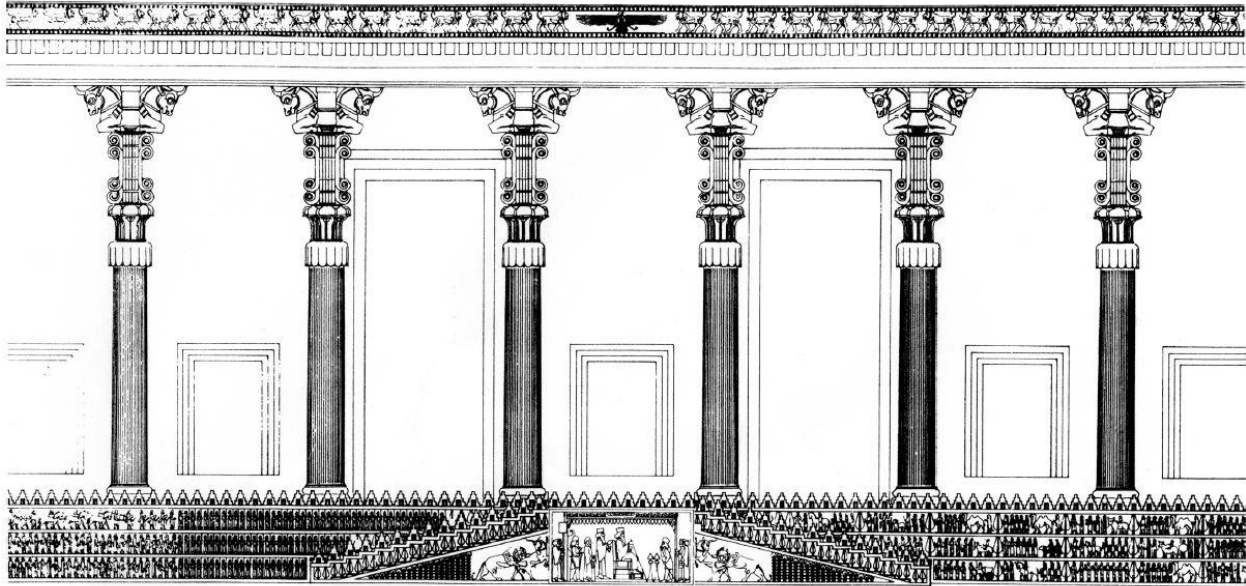
<sup>106</sup> Novak, “The Artificial Paradise,” 452.

<sup>107</sup> Novak, “The Artificial Paradise,” 452.

<sup>108</sup> T. Cuyler Young, Jr., “Persepolis,” *ABD* 5: 236.

<sup>109</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 310–11.

<sup>110</sup> Zenger, 208–09 and 216; Bernd Janowski, *Stellvertretung*, 164–66; Arneth, “*Sonne der Gerechtigkeit*,” 49–54; Saur, *Die Königspsalmen*, 136. Salo goes beyond Zenger, Saur, and others to acknowledge that the motif of universal dominion did exist in royal rhetoric of the Egyptian, Neo-Assyrian, and Neo-Babylonian empires. She claims, however, that it was only a minor theme compared to its use during the Achaemenid empire: “auch das Vergleichsmaterial aus der Umwelt von Israel und Juda stark für diese These: Das Motiv der Weltherrschaft kommt zwar auch in den assyrischen und babylonischen Texten vor, spielt in ihnen aber eine wesentlich kleinere Rolle als in den Königsinschriften der Achämeniden, in denen es das zentrale Element ist” (Salo, *Die jüdische Königsideologie*, 268).



**Fig. 5.13.** Reconstruction of the north façade of the Apadana at Persepolis. Location: Persepolis. Date: 6<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: Strawn, “A World Under Control,” 91, fig. 3.

The tribute reliefs (see **fig. 5.13**) display the enthroned king beneath the winged solar disk, as the crown prince stands at his side with other courtiers and guards behind him. Behind the king on the stairway reliefs to the left, Persian soldiers and courtiers stand facing the same direction as the king. The stairway reliefs to the right, directly across from the king and the expectant Persians, portray a multitude of envoys carrying various types of tribute towards the enthroned king. The envoy groups represent different nationalities.<sup>111</sup> The groups are separated from one another by trees that break up the reliefs, and Persian officials, who grasp the hand of the foremost representative of each group, lead the groups into the ruler’s presence.<sup>112</sup> In the central relief, a Persian official stands across from and bows towards the king. The official serves to introduce the entire tribute procession, and the viewer’s eye works to place each group in the king’s presence, each one presented to the king by their own Persian official.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>111</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 234.

<sup>112</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 235.

<sup>113</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 238.

The structure of the scene mirrors that of Mesopotamian presentation scenes, wherein a minor deity or cultic official leads a king or adorant into the presence of a seated deity.<sup>114</sup> The parallel in form frames the king as a divine partner of the deity represented by the solar disc above him. All participants in the scenes flow towards the king, with foreign delegates happily bearing their gifts toward the monarch. The Apadana tribute program presents to the world, as Young says, “the concept of a *Pax Persica*—a harmonious, peaceful empire ruled by a king who contained within his person and his office the welfare of the empire.”<sup>115</sup> The king sits at the program’s center, as the ruler who sustains an ordered empire. His empire brings peace to the nations even as the nations support the empire with gifts and supplies. The art does not depict the king as judge or one who crushes opposition underneath his feet; rather, the king sits enthroned as ruler of a rightly ordered cosmos in which the nations supply the empire with exotic tribute.

#### 5.2.4 Syro-Palestinian Art



**Fig. 5.14.** A wall painting from Mari showing the king authorized to rule by Ishtar in the midst of imagery of natural fertility. Location: Mari. Date: 1728–1686 BCE. Source: Keel, *Symbolism*, 143, fig. 191.

<sup>114</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 267–72; Strawn, “‘A World Under Control’,” 98.

<sup>115</sup> T. Cuyler Young, Jr., “Persepolis,” *ABD* 5: 236.

Syro-Palestinian art also displays the king as the source of order, justice, and life as he banishes chaotic forces.<sup>116</sup> A wall painting from Mari (**fig. 5.14**) displays the investiture of the king in the midst of a fertile garden and life giving waters.<sup>117</sup> A large palm tree stands to the far right with a dove in flight before it. The center of the painting depicts two rectangular rooms with one on top of the other, representing a temple or a palace.<sup>118</sup> Two tall trees flank the structure, while four griffins and two bulls stand to either side of the trees. The upper room, the center point of the scene, depicts the goddess Ishtar offering the ring and scepter to the king as symbols of his reign.<sup>119</sup> The room beneath shows two fountain deities holding containers from which abundant waters flow freely, filled with fish and sprouting plants. The painting displays imagery of life and abundance in connection with the investiture of the king. The reign of the king establishes a fertile, living land.<sup>120</sup>

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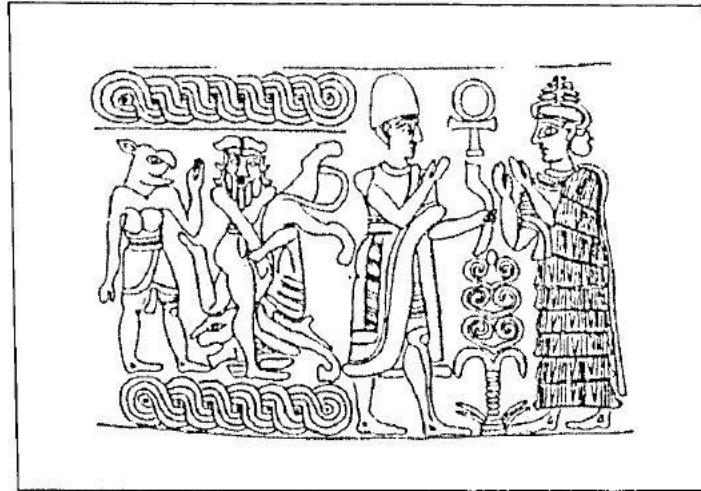
<sup>116</sup> On the fertility themes in the psalm and the larger ANE, see Jan Dietrich, “Psalm 72 in its Ancient Syrian Context,” in *Mediating Between Heaven and Earth: Communication with the Divine in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Carly L. Crouch, Jonathan Stokl, and Anna Elise Zerneck, LHBOTS 566 (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 144–78.

<sup>117</sup> Keel, *Symbolism*, 142.

<sup>118</sup> Keel, *Symbolism*, 144.

<sup>119</sup> Keel, *Symbolism*, 144.

<sup>120</sup> Keel, *Symbolism*, 142–44; Dietrich, “Psalm 72,” 149–50.



**Fig. 5.15.** Middle Bronze Age Seal depicting a king and goddess sustaining life before the sacred tree. Location: Palestine. Date: 1800–1550 BCE. Source: Dietrich, “Psalm 72,” fig. 4.

Motifs of fertile abundance and the subjugation of chaos appear together on a seal from Palestine dated to the Middle Bronze Age (**fig. 5.15**).<sup>121</sup> The seal shows a ruler standing across from a protective goddess.<sup>122</sup> The king holds a staff or weapon in his left hand over the tree while raising his right hand in a sign of blessing and greeting as does the goddess. Between the two of them stands a stylized palmette tree, above which hovers an *ankh*. The imagery communicates that the king and deity together uphold the life and fertility of the cosmos. Furthermore, behind the monarch a Mesopotamian hero figure wrestles and subdues a lion as an onlooker observes the scene. The king’s reign is connected to the subdual of chaotic powers. Symbols indexing life, fertility, and the subjugation of chaos all intersect in this display of the king’s reign.

<sup>121</sup> A similar motif occurs on a seal that is likely from the same workshop that produced this seal (see Othmar Keel, “Zur Identifikation des Falkenköpfigen auf den Skarabäender ausgehenden 13. und der 15. Dynastie,” in *Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel*, ed. Othmar Keel, Heidi Keel-Leu, and Silvia Schroer, vol. 2, OBO 88 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 253, fig. 20.

<sup>122</sup> Dietrich, “Psalm 72,” 150.



**Fig. 5.16.** Stamp seal showing the smiting king protecting and encouraging natural fertility. Location: Jerusalem. Date: 1800–1550 BCE. Source: Keel, *Corpus: Einleitung*, 222, Abb. 486.

A Middle Bronze Age stamp seal more explicitly draws themes of subjugation and fertility together (**fig. 5.16**). Here the king prepares to smite a subdued enemy who is helpless before the king's might. The king's action in successfully ruling over his enemies encourages and sustains fertility.<sup>123</sup> The seal marks the connection to fertility with imagery of plants or stylized trees growing up around the scene and with numerous birds and animals that look on.<sup>124</sup> Plant life permeates the scene, growing up between the king's legs and behind the defeated enemy. The king's ordering of the land through the defeat of chaos allows for and encourages abundant life.

#### 5.2.5 The Rhetorical Display of the King as the Source of Fertility in ANE Royal Art

Just as Hammurabi's stele displays the king's spread of life through war and the judgment of evil both within and outside of his people, so too the Achaemenid emperor brought fertility and peace to the nations with his universal reign over all peoples. Throughout the ANE, royal art portrayed the king as the source of fertility and abundance in his roles as warrior, judge, priest, and ruler. The interconnection of violent action, righteousness, and the cultivation of life in the royal

<sup>123</sup> Dietrich, "Psalm 72," 155.

<sup>124</sup> Dietrich, "Psalm 72," 155–6.

rhetoric of prosperity appears in various constellations of royal imagery in Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Persian, and Syro-Palestinian art.

### 5.3 Re-Reading Psalm 72: A Royal Rhetoric of Order and Life

#### 5.3.1 The Coherence of Psalm 72's Literary Imagery

Ancient Near Eastern royal art displays the king maintaining order within the cosmos and conveying life to the land. Imagery of fertility, violence, order, and justice intermingle in displays of the king and his reign. The iconic structure of Psalm 72 displays a constellation of imagery consistent with these artistic displays. Egyptian temples (**figs. 5.1–2, fig. 3.27b and 5.4–7, 5.8–10**), Neo-Assyrian palaces (**figs. 2.12a–b and 3.31, 4.23–24, 5.12**), and Syro-Palestinian seals (**figs. 5.15–16**) construct images of royal power by connecting the king's subjugation of his enemies with an orderly and fertile land. Psalm 72 employs similar tropes to represent, as Houston says, "how the dynasty itself wished to be understood."<sup>125</sup> The poem displays a royal rhetoric congruent to the rhetorical programs developed in art across the ANE.

Despite the protests of Arneth, Janowski, Zenger, Saur, and Salo, the threads of imagery woven together in the final form of the psalm in fact do not contrast with one another. Salo succinctly summarizes the arguments for viewing vv. 8–11, 15a, and 17c-d as contrasting literary layers:

Es werden hierfür als Argumente angeführt, dass die Verse den engen Zusammenhang zwischen 2–7.12–14 unterbrechen, sie des Weiteren eine andere Geschehensrichtung im Gegensatz zum weiteren Psalm haben und dass die Verse 8–11 kaum Stichwortverbindungen zum übrigen Text enthalten. Weiterhin ist beobachtet worden, dass hier die universale Dimension des Königtums als Thema dominiert, was im restlichen Psalm nicht der Fall ist. Schließlich ist mit den bemerkenswert vielen Bezügen zu weiteren alttestamentlichen Texten argumentiert worden, – ein weiterer Unterschied zum übrigen Psalm.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>125</sup> Houston, "The King's Preferential Option," 344.

<sup>126</sup> Salo, *Die jüdische Königsideologie*, 218–19.

Salo's arguments for separating Psalm 72's strands of imagery rely on the claims of scholars like Zenger, Janowski, and Arneth, as she notes. Yet vv. 8–11, 15a, and 17c-d do not portray, "a course of events that differs from the rest of the psalm text."<sup>127</sup> ANE royal iconography and artistic programs evince images of universal reign alongside images of natural abundance. The imagery of blessing and justice as a movement that "goes outward from the king," and the king's dominion over all peoples as a "movement that runs toward the king," are not in fact conflicting themes.<sup>128</sup>

### 5.3.2 Psalm 72: Genre, Setting, and Rhetorical Function

Psalm 72 may have originated in the Achaemenid period, influenced by Persian imagery such as the Apadana tribute scenes. The psalm, however, employs imagery congruent with royal art found in Egypt, Assyrian, and Syro-Palestinian contexts. The psalm's imagery need not be limited to a singular historical period. Ironically though, Arneth's comparison of Ashurbanipal's coronation hymn and his proposed original layer of Psalm 72 points to a sensible context for the entirety of vv. 1–17, not just vv. 1b–7, 12–14, and 16–17ab. The coronation hymn, Neo-Assyrian royal art, and Psalm 72 each display the conquering monarch who subdues all the nations and who provides life and fertility for the land. The Neo-Assyrian kings portrayed themselves with images of fecundity, order, and universal reign in both their inscriptions and palace art (**figs. 2.12a–b and 3.31, 3.11, 4.23–24, 5.12**). The royal rhetoric of the Neo-Assyrian empire could provide a backdrop for the entirety of Ps 72's royal rhetoric, not just a part of it.

Furthermore, the deity's constant presence in the royal imagery surveyed above throws into question the widely held scholarly consensus that vv. 1–17 existed as a unit before the

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<sup>127</sup> Salo, *Die jüdische Königsideologie*, 219, my translation of "sie des Weiteren eine andere Geschehensrichtung im Gegensatz zum weiteren Psalm haben."

<sup>128</sup> Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 208.



additions of vv. 18–19. As we have seen, ANE royal art often portrays the deity alongside the king in similar constellations of imagery. The deity’s presence indicates the god’s empowerment and authorization of the monarch’s rule. Thus, Weiser and Jean-Marie Auwers may in fact be correct that vv. 18–19 serve as the original conclusion to vv. 1–17, serving as “the theological foundation of the poem.”<sup>129</sup> The vast majority of modern critical scholarship has eschewed these verses as a later addition, a benediction modeled after other psalmic benedictions. Yet, the connections of king and deity, order and dominion, justice and fertility modeled by vv. 1–19 as a whole mirror installations of royal imagery across the ANE.

Psalm 72 presents a constellation of imagery that stands in continuity with the imagery employed by ANE royal art. The psalm constructs a royal rhetoric that underlines the people’s need for the king since he provides justice, life, and protection from chaos in all its forms. The psalm pictures the monarch ruling foreign peoples and creatures without challenge, and in doing so he delivers blessings of life and fertility to the entire cosmos (vv. 1–17). According to the psalm, the king provides life and abundance specifically because of his relationship with Yahweh (v. 1, 18–19). The king’s willing enactment of Yahweh’s *משפט* and *צדקה* enables the monarch to rule the nations, order the cosmos, and usher in abundant life (vv. 1–4, 6–7, 8–16). The psalm, stylized as an intercessory prayer, likely functioned as a royal poetic icon modeling, as Tate describes, “the ideal relationship among ruler, God, and people,” for all those who read, heard, or recited its words.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Jean-Marie Auwers, “Les psaumes 70–72: Essai de lecture canonique,” *RB* 101 (1994): 256.

<sup>130</sup> Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, 225.

## Chapter 6

## PSALM 110 AND THE KING AS PRIEST: PATTERNS OF CULTIC AND MARTIAL ROYAL IMAGERY IN ART AND TEXT

Psalm 110 contains confusing literary imagery. This imagery presents multiple problems for interpreters, problems that the psalm's text critical issues both illustrate and compound.<sup>1</sup> Many interpreters balk at the reference to the king as priest and the implications of priesthood within v. 4: why the sudden reference to the king as priest (נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה וְלֹא יִנְחַם אֶת־כֹּהֵן לְעוֹלָם עַל־דְּבַרְתִּי (מַלְכִי־צֶדֶק) in the midst of the enthronement and divine warrior imagery of vv. 1–3 and 5–7?

Discussions of v. 4 are not concerned with text-critical issues but with a contextual issue. For many scholars, the royal and violent imagery that surrounds v. 4 doesn't make sense alongside priestly imagery.<sup>2</sup> Some scholars resolve this crux by claiming that kingship and priesthood were connected in a single office in the ancient Near East.<sup>3</sup> Yet others, like Erhard Gerstenberger, disagree, arguing that such a connection never existed in ancient Israel or Judah during the monarchical period.<sup>4</sup> Still others argue that, even if such a dual office of priest and king did exist

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<sup>1</sup> Thijs Booij highlights the dense literary imagery of the psalm (Booij, "Psalm CX: 'Rule in the Midst of Your Foes!'" *VT* 41 [1991]: 396–407, at 396). He sees little continuity among the psalm's images, except in their united goal of depicting the sovereign rule of the king. He points to J. P. M. van der Ploeg, who claimed that the literary imagery of this psalm is "almost kaleidoscopic" in the way that it accesses and blends images from different contexts (J. P. M. van der Ploeg, *Psalmen: uit de grondtekst vertaald en uitgelegd. Deel II: Psalm 76 T/M 150*, De boeken van het Oude Testament VIIb [Roermond: Romen, 1974], 247–48). Also see Kraus's claim concerning the opacity of verse 3 and its "mysterious images" (Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 150).

<sup>2</sup> For example, Leslie Allen claims, "The military amplification of the oracles in vv 2, (3), 5, 6 is strangely uniform—strangely because v 4 has no obviously military reference" (Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 85).

<sup>3</sup> See Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 351; Weiser, *The Psalms*, 695; Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 84–7; Mays, *Psalms*, 351; John Goldingay, *Psalms: Psalms 90–150*, vol. 3, BCOTWP (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 291 and 296–97. Gunkel and Begrich, *An Introduction to the Psalms*, 107–08; Deborah W. Rooke, "Kingship as Priesthood: The Relationship between the High Priesthood and the Monarchy," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John Day, JSOTSup 270 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 187–208; Gard Granerød, *Abraham and Melchizedek: Scribal Activity of Second Temple Times in Genesis 14 and Psalm 110*, BZAW 406 (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2010), 187–88.

<sup>4</sup> Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 2*, 265.

in Israel or Judah, the priestly aspect would not have been emphasized in a royal psalm until after the exile when the position of priest became far more important.<sup>5</sup>

I demonstrate below that constellations of royal, priestly, and martial imagery within ANE royal art assist us in understanding the constellations of literary imagery presented by this psalm. First, I summarize the scholarly attempts to interpret the mixture of priestly and royal imagery with textual data alone before considering ANE iconographic data relevant to the image of the king presented in Psalm 110. My turn to iconography begins with exploring how different ANE empires portray the king and deity in royal art. Then I turn to contiguous artistic data in Syria-Palestine that picture the king as priest. I conclude with a discussion of how the artistic evidence might shape our understanding of this psalm's constellation of imagery.

## 6.1 Psalm 110 Overview

### 6.1.1 Psalm 110 Translation

- 1 Yahweh's oracle to my lord:  
"Sit at my right hand until I set your enemies as a footstool for your feet.
- 2 Yahweh sends forth<sup>6</sup> your mighty scepter from Zion;

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<sup>5</sup> Savignac, "Essai d'interpretation du psaume CX," 128–29; Marco Treves, "Two Acrostic Psalms," *VT* 15 (1965): 81–90, at 85–91; Stefan Schreiner, "Psalm CX und die Investitur des Hohenpriesters," *VT* 27 (1977): 216–22; Herbert Donner, "Der verlässliche Prophet. Betrachtungen zu I Makk 14,41ff und zu Ps 110," in *Prophetie und geschichtliche Wirklichkeit im alten Israel: Festschrift für Siegfried Herrmann zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Rüdiger Liwak and Siegfried Wagner (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1991), 89–98; Ernst Axel Knauf, "Psalm lx und Psalm cviii," *VT* 50 (2000): 55–65, at 64–65; Gerald Wilson, "King, Messiah, and the Reign of God: Revisiting the Royal Psalms and the Shape of the Psalter," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, ed. Peter W. Flint, Patrick D. Miller, Aaron Brunell and Ryan Roberts (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 391–405, at 398–400; Miriam von Nordheim, *Geboren von der Morgenröte? Psalm 110 in Tradition, Redaktion und Rezeption* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2008), 134–41; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 146–47.

<sup>6</sup> Hans Bardtke (*BHS*) recommends emending ושלח to an imperative with the following ושלח so that both stand together as imperatives and the verse reads "the staff of your strength, send forth, O Yahweh, from Zion, rule in the midst of your enemies!" The Syriac tradition attempted to make sense of the verbs by doing the opposite of Bardtke; it leaves ושלח as a *yiqtol* and translates ושלח as a *yiqtol* as well rather than an imperative. The issue is that one must assume a change of speaker with the shift from a finite verb to a modal and the shift in person from v. 1 to v. 2. However, Bardtke's suggested change here introduces new problems. Rendering both verbs as imperatives redirects the poet/prophet's voice away from the king to Yahweh and then back to the king. Though the MT disorients the reader with its transition in speakers, its reading makes sense in an ancient oracular context. With the move from imperfective to imperative, the prophetic speaker takes up the voice of the deity directly and commands the king,

- rule in the midst of your enemies!  
 3 Your people are volunteers<sup>7</sup> on your day of battle;<sup>8</sup>  
 On the holy mountains<sup>9</sup> from the womb of the dawn<sup>10</sup>  
 go forth as the dew; I have given birth to you.<sup>11</sup>

“rule in the midst of you enemies!” On the mixing of the deity’s and messenger’s voice in prophetic contexts, see Mays, *Psalms*, 350–51. On Psalm 110 as a court oracle, see Starbuck, *Court Oracles*, 121–23 and 142–61.

<sup>7</sup> The nominal phrase עִמָּךְ נִדְבָת is difficult to translate. The LXX translator(s) rendered it as μετὰ σοῦ ἡ ἀρχὴς as if it were pointed עִמָּךְ נִדְבָת (“with you is the rule/domain”), reading the עִמָּךְ as a preposition with a 2cs suffix and the נִדְבָת as an abstract feminine plural from נִדְבָה, an adjective meaning, “noble, generous.” Kraus and Booij follow the LXX, envisioning the nobility accompanying and surrounding the king “on the day of the military review of the potential of his power and wealth,” that is, on the day of his coronation (Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 344 and 350; Booij, “Psalm CX,” 407). However, such a use of נִדְבָה occurs nowhere else in the HB, and the reading makes more sense in the Greek than it does in the reconstructed Hebrew. I retain the MT pointing and understand the נִדְבָת as a feminine plural abstract from the noun נִדְבָה, “free inclination, voluntary gift, free-will offering” (see HALOT, “נִדְבָה,” 671–72). Leslie Allen maintains that the MT makes sense within the context of enthronement and holy war, and he points to Judges 5:2 as justification for this reading (see Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 80–81; also see deClaissé-Walford, Jacobsen, and Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, 834–3). Saur, though, reads the noun as a reference to actual thanksgiving offerings (see Saur, *Die Königspsalmen*, 205).

<sup>8</sup> Bardtke and others emend חוֹלְלֶךָ to חִילֶךָ, assuming that a lamed dropped out because of haplography (see G. R. Driver, “Psalm CX: Its Form, Meaning, and Purpose,” in *Studies in the Bible Presented to Professor M. H. Segal*, ed. J. M. Grintz and J. Liver [Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1964], 21–2; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 142; Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 2*, 265). The reconstruction renders the word as a *polal* infinitive from חִיל with a 2cs pronomial suffix, suggesting a translation along the lines of “on the day of your birth,” or “on the day you are birthed.” The reading attempts to make sense of the phrase in light of the final phrase of the verse and its possible birth imagery. See footnote 11 below. Though such a reading is plausible, particularly if יִלְדֶתִיךָ is pointed as a finite verb and not an abstract noun, I maintain the MT reading here since I read יִלְדֶתִיךָ as an abstract noun. Furthermore, the MT pointing makes sense within the martial and coronation imagery of the psalm (see Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 350; Booij, “Psalm CX,” 407; Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 80–81).

<sup>9</sup> The reading בְּהַדְרֵי־קִדְשׁ (“in the garments/splendor of holiness”) represented in the MT is confusing. The phrase may draw on throne room imagery (see deClaissé-Walford, Jacobsen, Tanner, *Psalms*, 834–35) or solar imagery (see William Brown, “A Royal Performance: Critical Notes on Psalm 110:3aγ-b,” *JBL* 117 [1998]: 95–6). The phrase, though, presents grammatical problems since הַדְרֵי requires us to read a masculine plural construct noun when the noun הַדְרָה is feminine. I follow Zenger, Kraus, and Allen in emending the phrase to הַרְרֵי־קִדְשׁ, as the reading makes more sense both grammatically and within the psalm’s constellation of imagery (see Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 345; Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 80–1; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 142–3 and 147).

<sup>10</sup> This phrase is problematic primarily because of the word מִשְׁקֶרֶת. The expected word for dawn is שֶׁקֶרֶת. There are two possible understandings for the word מִשְׁקֶרֶת: 1. The *mem* should be read as a *min* preposition (so the word should be repointed as מִשְׁקֶרֶת) and the two words should be understood in apposition “from the womb, that is, from the dawn,” or מִשְׁקֶרֶת should be understood as a rare variant word for “dawn” (see Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 142; von Nordheim, *Geboren von der Morgenröte?*, 25–29; Brown, “A Royal Performance,” 94). The latter option makes sense, as adding a *mem* to a verb is a common way to form a noun, generally indicating the location of the action—so the word מִשְׁקֶרֶת might indicate “the place where the sun rises” (see GKC, 85e, *locative mem prefix*). I retain the MT מִשְׁקֶרֶת as a standalone word for “dawn.”

<sup>11</sup> Translators deal with the phrase לָךְ טֵל יִלְדֶתִיךָ according to how they make sense of the rest of this line. The MT’s reading is at least sensible as it stands, “to you is the dew of your youthfulness,” that is, the lamed + 2cs pronomial suffix functions as a possessive and טֵל is read as a construct form in construct with the following abstract noun. The word יִלְדֶתִיךָ has given both ancient and modern translators pause. The primary problems are the rarity of the abstract noun יִלְדֶתִי and the masculine plural construct ending indicated by the ך before the second common singular pronomial suffix. The abstract form of the noun only shows up in the late text Ecclesiastes 11:10, and the abstract noun is feminine singular. The problem of the masculine plural gender ending is not unheard of, as some feminine abstract nouns (and other feminine nouns besides the abstracts) do exhibit such gender confusion when rendered in the plural (see GKC 87i and 87k), Allen has made the argument that יִלְדֶתִיךָ purposefully follows the noun נְעוּרִים in its plural ending (see Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 80–81). Brown argues against Allen’s proposal, but

- 4 Yahweh swore, and he will not change his mind:  
 ‘You are a priest forever; because of me, my king is righteous.’<sup>12</sup>
- 5 The Lord is at your right hand; he crushes kings on the day of his anger.
- 6 He executes justice among the nations!  
 He accumulates corpses;<sup>13</sup> he crushes a head upon the vast land.
- 7 He drinks from a stream by the way; therefore, he exalts a head.<sup>14</sup>

then makes a similar argument to maintain the MT’s *הדרי* rather than emending it, claiming that the irregular abstract plural is to be preferred as the more difficult reading (Brown, “A Royal Performance,” 96, ft. 21). Thus, the rarity of the word and its seemingly incorrect plural gender ending here have led translators to repoint the word. Early translators of the LXX versions and some Syriac manuscripts render the word as a finite verb, *יִלְדְּתִיךָ*. This reading maintains the consonants while repointing the word as a *Qal*, *yiqtol*, 1cs verb with a 2cs pronomial suffix so that the reading becomes “I bore you.” This reading has much to commend it, particularly as it makes more sense of the consonants than a more tenuous reading of an artificial feminine plural abstract noun pointed with the masculine plural ending. Yet, it has its own problems. Primary among them is the preceding phrase *לְךָ טַל*, which fails to make sense when *יִלְדְּתִיךָ* is repointed as a finite verb. For example, the LXX translator, who translates *יִלְדְּתִיךָ* as a finite verb, leaves out *טַל לְךָ* entirely. Some translators, such as Bardtke, propose that the first *lamed* be deleted and the *kaf* be read with the following word so that we have *בְּטַל* and may translate, “I have borne you as the dew.” The emendation, though, deletes a letter without textual evidence or reason, except that the translator has trouble dealing with it. Another possible solution is to again separate the preposition and the noun while adding a second *כ*, proposing that one fell out due to haplography (see Brown, “A Royal Performance,” 95–96). This leaves us with *לְךָ בְּטַל*, that is, “go forth like dew,” which makes more sense with a finite verb, “go forth like dew, I have borne you.” I propose the same reading as Brown but without the addition of the *כ*, as I read *טַל* as an adverbial accusative modifying the imperative *לְךָ*.

<sup>12</sup> Some manuscripts read here *על־דְּבָרְתוֹ* or *על־דְּבָרָת* in place of the *hireq-yod* ending represented in the majority of manuscripts. The text as it stands may reflect the *hireq compaginis* (see GKC, 90a–b), an ending seemingly used on the end of some construct nouns primarily in poetic texts. If this is the case, the ending should not be understood to carry any specific or particular meaning on its own. The variant versions reflected in some manuscripts probably reflect difficulties on the part of translators in making sense of this ending and an attempt to alter by changing it to a 3ms suffix or do away with it completely. The same issue presents itself if *מלכי־צדק* is not read as a proper name; and, unless we posit some pre-existing Melchizedek myth that lies behind Psalm 110 and Genesis 14, the phrase *מלכי־צדק* in the psalm should likely be read as a title (see the thorough argument of Granerød, *Abraham and Melchizedek*, 172–246, particularly 205–13). Granerød makes a convincing case for reading both the *hireq-yod* endings as the 1cs pronomial suffix, based on both sensibility and probability (see Granerød, *Abraham and Melchizedek*, 200–214).

<sup>13</sup> This phrase and the following phrase are both compressed images that are difficult to make sense of word by word. Some translators have followed Aquila, Symmachus, and Jerome in readings *גָּאִיוֹת* in place of *גְּוִיֹּת*. Either way, the same problem of compression remains; “he fills valleys,” makes little more sense than “he fills with corpses.” Bardtke proposes an original *בְּגִוִיֹּת מְלֵא גָּאִיוֹת*, “he fills valleys with corpses,” but this reconstruction, besides having no manuscript evidence, is unnecessary. The phrase can be understood as a terse elliptical image for the filling of valleys or the earth with bodies. With the phrase *על־אֶרֶץ רַבָּה* standing at the end of the line as a sort of locative for both of these terse phrases here, I will maintain the reading, “he fills with bodies” with the understanding that the image is “he fills (the vast earth) with bodies,” understanding “the vast earth” as back-gapped.

<sup>14</sup> The ambiguity of the second half of this line has led to various renderings. Some Syriac manuscripts translate the verb as if it were a *Qal* rather than a *Hiphil*, so “the head is exalted (or, in some, “his head”)” rather than “he exalts the head.” However, the verb has attracted less attention than the noun. The subject/object of the verb is here again a non-definite *רֹאשׁ*. What caused trouble and angst in the last line (v. 6) reappears here in contrast to its usage there. Whereas in v. 6 “a/the head” is crushed, here “a/the head” is exalted—the repeated word contrasts the enemies with the king and deity. Both the Syriac and Coptic versions specify this “head” in v. 7 in order to place it sensibly; they render it as if it were *רֹאשִׁי* “my head” or *רֹאשׁוֹ* “his head.” Yet, these renderings aim for precision and, in doing so, obscure what in the Hebrew is clear comparative echoing.

### 6.1.2 The King as Priest in Psalm 110:4? A Contrast of Violent Action and Priestly Status

Psalm 110, with its terse poetic lines, dense imagery, and convoluted text-critical history, has been a generative text throughout history from the New Testament authors to modern scholars. As Miriam von Nordheim notes, almost no other psalm has received the same amount of scholarly attention as Psalm 110.<sup>15</sup> In view of the psalm's complex interpretive history, I will focus on a single interpretive issue concerning the psalm's constellation of imagery—the supposed contrast between the king pictured as priest (110:4) in the midst of the royal and divine martial imagery surrounding v. 4.<sup>16</sup> Surprisingly, a consensus exists concerning the psalm's genre. Most scholars agree the psalm pictures an aspect of an enthronement ritual, whether real or fictional.<sup>17</sup> Scholars debate the historical setting of the psalm and the context within which it functioned. These debates generally center upon how to understand the description of the king as priest by v. 4. So, I focus on the interpretive question of how to understand the king pictured as priest in the midst of martial imagery, rather than other possible issues raised by the psalm.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Von Nordheim, *Geboren von der Morgenröte?*, 5. She points out: "Ein Blick auf die Forschungsgeschichte von Ps 110 lässt schnell erkennen, dass bei seiner Auslegung viele unterschiedliche Schwerpunkte gebildet und ebenso unterschiedliche Ergebnisse erreicht wurden".

<sup>16</sup> Zenger frames this question as the interpretive linchpin of the psalm, noting that different arguments concerning the psalm's date and function often center upon how v. 4 is contextualized (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 144). He goes so far as to describe the martial imagery of the king's universal rule described in vv. 1–3, 5–7 and the portrait of the king as priest in v. 4 as two different "worlds of imagery," (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 145).

<sup>17</sup> See Booij, "Psalm CX," 405–06; J. K. Bowker, "Psalm CX," *VT* 17 (1967): 34–41; Weiser, *The Psalms*, 693; Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 347; Klaus Homborg, "Psalm 110,1 im Rahmen des jüdischen Krönungszeremoniells," *ZAW* 84 (1972): 243–46; John Hilber, "Psalm CX in the Light of Assyrian Prophecies," *VT* 53 (2003): 353–60; Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 2*, 266–67; Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 85–87; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 144–46; Mays, *Psalms*, 351–53; Saur, *Die Königpsalmen*, 210–14 and 221–24; Hamilton, *The Body Royal*, 60–66. John Gammie, Willem van der Meer, and Miriam von Nordheim stand against this consensus (see Willem van der Meer, "Psalm 110: A Psalm of Rehabilitation?" in *The Structural Analysis of Hebrew Poetry*, ed. Willem van der Meer and Johannes C. de Moor, JSOT supp. 74 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988], 207–34; John Gammie, "A New Setting for Psalm 110," *Anglican Theological Review* 51 (1969): 1–16; Von Nordheim, *Geboren von der Morgenröte?*, particularly 130–34).

<sup>18</sup> For example, ANE iconography might also be fruitfully applied to the text-critical issues displayed particularly in by vv. 3 and 7 of the psalm. Yet, such a task is beyond the scope of a single chapter.

Several scholars have asserted that the priestly imagery of v. 4 contrasts with the royal and martial imagery of the surrounding verses.<sup>19</sup> For example, Erhard Gerstenberger sharply differentiates the language of appointment as priest in v. 4 from the enthronement language that precedes it.<sup>20</sup> Though he acknowledges that a connection between the offices of king and priest existed in the ANE among many of the nations that surrounded Israel and Judah, he contends that a conception of a “priest-king,” particularly the imagery of king as priest amidst the context of violence, was not present in the monarchic period in Israel or Judah.<sup>21</sup> He states that this absence is reflected in the HB’s lack of emphasis on the priestly dimension of the king’s office.<sup>22</sup> This alleged absence of a priestly dimension to the monarch’s role leads him to claim that the psalm is a post-exilic reworking of older, originally independent prophetic oracles.<sup>23</sup> He concludes that the psalm’s textual problems stem from this editorial history. According to Gerstenberger, Psalm 110’s constellation of imagery indicates a fragmentary editorial history.<sup>24</sup>

Erich Zenger also views the divine oath of v. 4 as non-sensical, set as it is within the divine warrior imagery of vv. 2–3 and 5–7. Yet, he makes a more precise argument about the psalm’s redaction history than Gerstenberger. Rather than vaguely claiming that the psalm is made up of oracles that were at some point redacted together to create the psalm in the post-exilic period, Zenger proposes that v. 4 in its entirety was added to the psalm in the post-exilic

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<sup>19</sup> H. H. Rowley, “Melchizedek and Zadok (Gen 14 and Ps 110),” in *Festschrift für Alfred Bertholet zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. Walter Baumgartner, Otto Eissfeldt, Karl Elliger, Leonhard Rost (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1950), 461–72; Rudolf Kilian, “Relecture in Psalm 110,” in *Sendung und Dienst im bishoflichen Amt. Festschrift für Bischof Josef Stimpfle*, ed. Anton Zieganaus (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1991), 299–302; Starbuck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms*, 155–56; Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 2*, 263–67; Wilson, “King, Messiah, and the Reign of God,” 398–400; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 143–47.

<sup>20</sup> Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 2*, 264–65.

<sup>21</sup> Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 2*, 265–66.

<sup>22</sup> Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 2*, 265.

<sup>23</sup> Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 2*, 266–67.

<sup>24</sup> Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 2*, 265–67. Starbuck also views the psalms as a compendium of seven originally independent oracular sayings that were layer knitted together into a single psalm (*Court Oracles in the Psalms*, 155–56). According to Starbuck, v. 4 was originally its own independent oracle.

period.<sup>25</sup> According to Zenger, Psalm 110 existed in a mythic, pre-exilic version without v. 4 and with a pointing of v. 3 that described the birthing of the king from the holy mountains.<sup>26</sup> Zenger believes that the version of the psalm represented by the Masoretic tradition was created in the post-exilic period, when Psalm 110 was demythologized and incorporated into the trio of Psalms 108–110. He proposes that v. 3 was repointed and v. 4 was added to the psalm at this time.<sup>27</sup> Zenger reconstructs a redactional history in which an earlier, mythical, enthronement psalm was reinterpreted and given a priestly dimension within the post-exilic period. He proposes this reconstruction primarily to solve the perceived issue of the king in battle alongside the divine warrior and the king as priest representing clashing “image worlds.”<sup>28</sup>

Markus Saur agrees that the king was not conceived of as a priest during the pre-exilic period: “In vorexilischer Zeit hatte der König möglicherweise kultische Funktionen, er wurde aber sicher nicht als Priester verstanden.”<sup>29</sup> Saur, though, does not view the psalm’s imagery as clashing or necessarily dissonant.<sup>30</sup> He instead proposes that vv. 1–3 represent a pre-exilic royal oracle, cast in standard ANE royal ideology while vv. 4–7 present post-exilic reconceptualizing of the kingship in light of messianic hope.<sup>31</sup> Saur views the final form of the psalm as a creative interweaving of theocratic, priestly, and messianic-prophetic imagery, resulting in a composition that places its hope in a messianic king who will serve as a priestly intermediary for the true

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<sup>25</sup> See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 146–47.

<sup>26</sup> Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 142–43 and 147.

<sup>27</sup> Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 146–47; see also Schreiner, “Psalm CX und die Investitur des Hohenpriesters,” 216–22.

<sup>28</sup> Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 142–47.

<sup>29</sup> Saur, *Die Königpsalmen*, 208.

<sup>30</sup> Saur asserts: “Das Ps 110 zusammenbindende Wechselspiel zwischen Jahweworten und Kommentar läßt den Text als eine Einheit erscheinen, innerhalb derer sich keine Anhaltspunkte für literarische Eingriffe finden lassen” (Saur, *Die Königpsalmen*, 208).

<sup>31</sup> Saur, *Die Königpsalmen*, 210–21.



divine king.<sup>32</sup> The shift to describing the king as priest in v. 4 serves as the anchor to Saur's contention that vv. 4–7 reflect a post-exilic re-reading.

Gerald Wilson takes a slightly different stance while still contending that classical Israelite royal imagery and priestly imagery do not mesh, particularly in any context before the exilic or post-exilic periods. Wilson argues that the imagery of Psalm 110 is not actually royal imagery but is rather priest-regent imagery.<sup>33</sup> To make his point, he highlights the use of *רדה*, which he translates as “exercise authority” or “supervise the labor of others,” rather than *מלך* or *משל* in v. 2 as the first indicator that this psalm is not concerned with classical Israelite royal imagery. He goes on to claim that v. 4 is the linchpin of this argument—the king is actually a priest. He states, “Contrary to all expectation, the one who is commissioned here is *priest* and not *king!*”<sup>34</sup> He goes on to make the case that the portrayal of the deity's action in judgment and war (rather than the king's action) in vv. 5–6 cements his claim.<sup>35</sup> So, Wilson also dates the psalm to the post-exilic period, based upon his understanding that it accesses priest-regent imagery. He assumes that the two, priestly and royal imagery, are mutually exclusive.<sup>36</sup>

Not all scholars are so troubled by the apparent blending of royal and priestly imagery in this psalm. Hans-Joachim Kraus considers the offices of kingship and priesthood to be bestowed together at the moment of enthronement, particularly in the context of ANE kingship. To defend his view, he rightly turns to HB texts that highlight priestly aspects of the office of kingship.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Saur, *Die Königspsalmen*, 221–24.

<sup>33</sup> Wilson, “King, Messiah, and the Reign of God,” 399–400.

<sup>34</sup> Wilson, “King, Messiah, and the Reign of God,” 399, italics original.

<sup>35</sup> Wilson, “King, Messiah, and the Reign of God,” 400.

<sup>36</sup> See also Treves, “Two Acrostic Psalms,” 85–91; Donner, “Der verlässliche Prophet. Betrachtungen zu I Makk 14,41ff und zu Ps 110,” 89–98; von Nordheim, *Geboren von der Morgenröte?*, 134–41.

<sup>37</sup> Kraus notes Gen 14:18; 1 Sam 13:9; 2 Sam 6:13–14, 17–18; 24:17; 1 Kings 8:14, 55–56; Jer 30:21; Ezek 44:3; 45:16f, 22ff.; 46:2ff (one might also note 1 Kings 3:4, 15; 8:5, 62–64; 9:25; 12:33; 13:1; 2 Kings 16:12–15; 1 Chron 16 and 2 Chron 7 and 8). See Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 351. Klaus Koch also claims that Psalm 110 originated in a pre-exilic context, asserting that this is reflected by its archaic vocabulary and conceptual world; see Koch, “Königspsalmen und ihr Rituellem Hintergrund,” 9–52, here 14–16. He understands v. 4 as a sensible part of Psalm

He contends that the dual nature of the office is perfectly sensible in the Canaanite context of Israelite kingship.<sup>38</sup> Gard Granerød similarly surveys biblical texts that display Israelite and Judean kings acting in priestly roles.<sup>39</sup> While he notes that at times the texts of the DtrH portray such action negatively, he concludes the texts overall reflect that, “the kings in ancient Israel/Judah did indeed function as priests.”<sup>40</sup> Leslie Allen also asserts that the relatedness of kingship and priesthood in a single office would have made sense in an ancient Israelite setting, though he expresses confusion over the break from holy war imagery in v. 4. Allen struggles with this combination of imagery, claiming that the idea of election as priest does not mesh well with the war imagery that precedes and follows it.<sup>41</sup> His only suggestion for making sense of the combination of priestly and martial imagery is to view the psalm as a composition that looks back to the capture of Jerusalem as a martial context for the assumption of the Jebusite priesthood by the Davidic line. That is, he proposes a very specific historical context to help relieve what he perceives as tension within these verses.<sup>42</sup>

In short, the presence of v. 4 in Psalm 110 has led many scholars to provide reconstructions of the psalm and its compositional layers or to date the psalm to a historical context within which such combinations of imagery would have made sense. Yet some claim

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110, and he makes sense of an Israelite priest-king particularly in light of Egyptian literary parallels, see Koch, “Der König als Sohn Gottes in Ägypten und Israel,” 1–32, here 20–22. Arthur Weiser also views v. 4 as original to the Psalm and as sensible within a pre-exilic context, possibly as an ideological response “directed against the aspirations towards autonomy of a priesthood which was prompted by hierarchical desires and striving for the separation of the ecclesiastical power from the secular one” (see Weiser, *The Psalms*, 695).

<sup>38</sup> Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 351. Also see Helen Jefferson, who contends that the psalm fits best in a pre-exilic Canaanite context based on the concepts and language it employs. Jefferson draws on proposed parallels to Ugaritic vocabulary to defend this argument (“Is Psalm 110 Canaanite?” *JBL* 73 [1954]: 152–56). John Hilber also claims that the roles of king and priest were likely interconnected in a pre-exilic context, primarily by drawing on Neo-Assyrian parallels, though he does also point to some Egyptian iconographic evidence to make his point (“Psalm CX in the Light of Assyrian Prophecies,” 353–366).

<sup>39</sup> Granerød, *Abraham and Melchizedek*, 180–82. He points out that David’s sons are referred to as priests in 2 Sam 8:18: וּבְנֵי דָוִד כַּהֲנָיִם הָיוּ.

<sup>40</sup> Granerød, *Abraham and Melchizedek*, 187.

<sup>41</sup> See Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 85.

<sup>42</sup> Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 84–7.

that the blending of royal and priestly imagery is at home within both a broader ANE context and a more restricted Canaanite context. Artistic data may help us move forward in this debate.

### 6.1.3 The Iconic Structure of Psalm 110

Psalm 110 employs dense and confusing imagery for modern readers. Yet, the overarching structure of the psalm is clear. The poem pictures the installation of the king as an act of Yahweh. Yahweh subdues the king's enemies and makes them the king's footstool (v. 1, 2, 5–6). The king sits enthroned at Yahweh's right hand as the human ruler of the cosmos, and Yahweh establishes his monarch's rule by fighting at the right hand of the king, bringing judgment against the nations and trampling their rulers into the earth (vv. 1, 5–6). The king's success is rooted in Yahweh's divine action. Like Psalm 2 (Ps 2:1–3, 6), the threat of battle with the nations is answered by Yahweh's proclamation that his king reigns because Yahweh has given birth to him (v. 3). As Yahweh crushes the rulers (רֹאשׁ; v. 6) of the nations, he simultaneously exalts his own king (שֹׁרֵשׁ; v.7). Yahweh and his king act simultaneously (v. 5). Yahweh extends his monarch's reign over the earth even as he commands the king to rule actively over his enemies (v. 2).

In the midst of this imagery of the monarch's universal reign and the martial action of both deity and king that establishes it, Yahweh names his king as a priest and a righteous king (v. 4). The poem presents no narrative development, with the king named as priest so that he accomplishes victory over the nations or with the king established as priest because of his reign over the nations. Instead, the psalm seemingly interrupts the scenes of violence and martial establishment of the king's reign with an image of the king as one who maintains order in the cosmos and a right relationship with the deity through cultic action. The psalm's martial imagery

frames Yahweh's concise proclamation of the king as "priest forever." The king's priestly role is set amidst the king and deity's violent establishment of the monarch's reign.

### **6.2 ANE Priest-Kings: Royal Cultic Action Amidst Scenes of Martial Action**

The combination of priestly and martial imagery in Psalm 110 has confounded scholars, provoking multiple theories concerning the psalm's composition history and original historical setting. The psalm's constellation of imagery, however, fits well with other examples of ANE royal art. I will survey monumental royal art from the Egyptian, Neo-Assyrian, and Achaemenid empires before turning to Syria-Palestinian minor art that corresponds to the imagery of Psalm 110. This data does not suggest that the psalmist was directly influenced by these cultural artefacts. Rather, I will demonstrate that royal art from across the ANE employs congruent constellations of imagery—the king as priest in the midst of imagery of the king and deity as warriors—for similar rhetorical goals.

## 6.2.1 Egyptian Royal Art

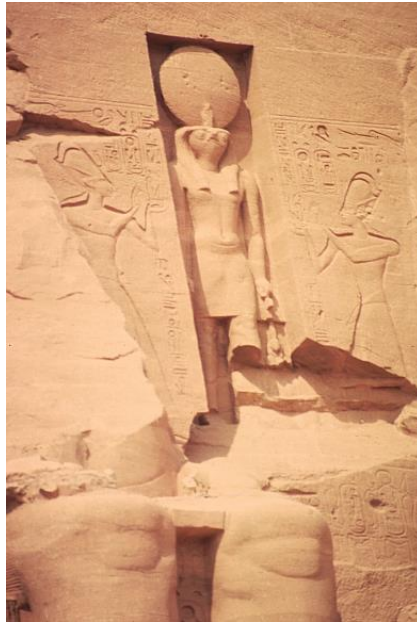


**Fig. 6.1.** Scene showing the king, Sekhemrawadjkhau Sebekemsaf I, offering two cakes to the god Montu. Location: Gateway in the temple of Medamud. Date: 16<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 121, fig. 134.

A scene from Egypt dated to the Seventeenth Dynasty within a gateway in the temple of Medamud (**fig. 6.1**) shows the Pharaoh Sebekemsaf I, presenting an offering to the god Montu, a solar and warrior deity.<sup>43</sup> The god holds both the *was* scepter and the *ankh* sign, which represent power, ordered dominion, and life. The solar disc also stands behind the king, holding out *ankh* signs upon its *uraei*. In this scene, the king acts as priest to maintain a right relationship with the deity so that the power and life of the king and the land might continue. This scene does not appear alone. Rather, it is set amidst other reliefs wherein the same king is depicted subduing his enemies before the same god, Montu. Imagery portraying the king as priest sits within the

<sup>43</sup> Barbara Watterson, *Gods of Ancient Egypt* (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 1996), 196–97.

context of king and deity at war. The larger rhetorical goal is to demonstrate the activity of the monarch in maintaining order and stability through cultic and military actions.<sup>44</sup>

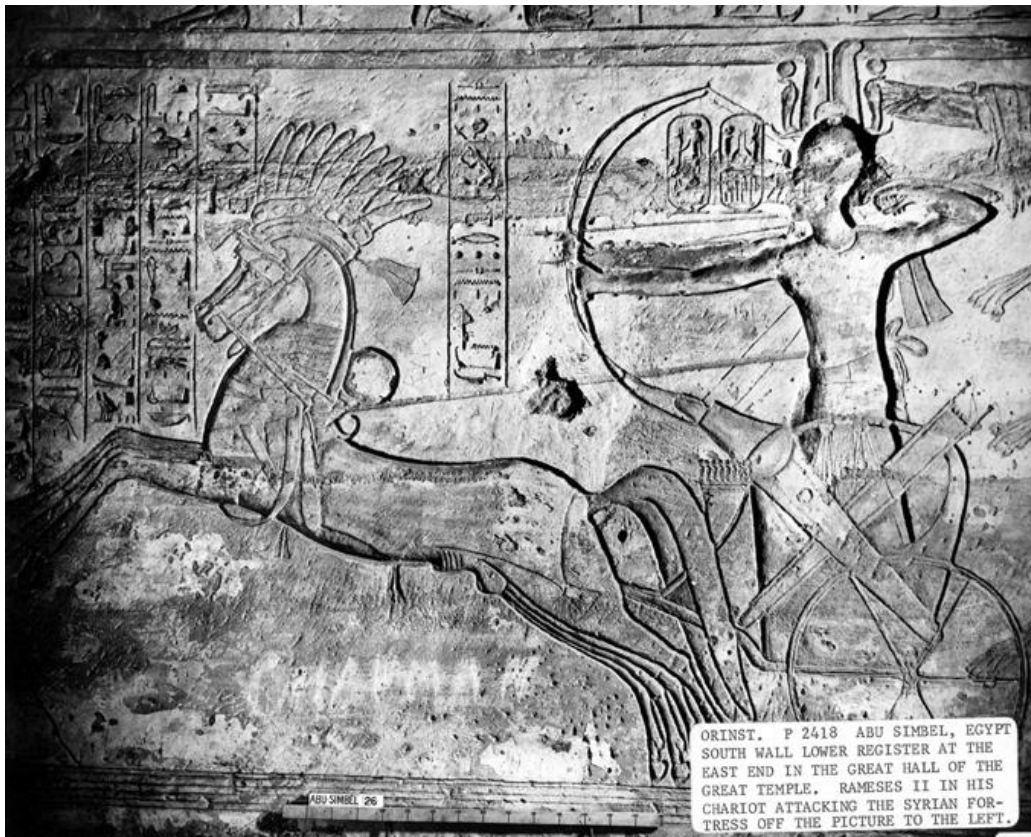


**Fig. 3.27b.** The niche above the entrance to Abu Simbel. Location: Abu Simbel. Date: 1279–1212 BCE. Source: Mary Ann Sullivan, <https://www.bluffton.edu/homepages/facstaff/sullivanm/egypt/abusimbel/ramses/ramses.html>.

The niche above the entrance on the great façade of the temple of Ramses the II at Abu Simbel, dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty, provides us with another clear scene of the Egyptian king as priest. Re-Harakhty is shown rising from the niche, while Ramses II stands on either side of the god. The king offers up a small figure of the goddess *Maat*, the goddess of order, to the rising sun god (**fig. 3.27b**). Ramses II appears prominently on the entrance of his temple at Abu Simbel as priest before the god Re-Harakhty.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> See Baines, “Kingship, Definition of Culture, and Legitimation,” 11–14.

<sup>45</sup> Richard Wilkerson claims: “Maat represented truth, order, balance, correctness, justice, cosmic harmony, and other qualities which precisely embodied the responsibility of the king’s role. In presenting Maat, therefore, the long not only acknowledged his responsibility in this area, but also effectively maintained Maat through the potency of the ritual itself” (Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt*, 88). See also Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 181; Schulz and Sourouzian, “The Temples,” 214; MacQuitty, *Abu Simbel*, 133–34; Kurt Lange and Max Hirmer, *Egypt: Architecture, Sculpture, Painting in Three Thousand Years*, with contributions by Eberhard Otto and Christiane Desroches-Noblecourt (London: Phaidon, 1968), 506; Stadelmann, “The Builder Pharaoh,” 189.



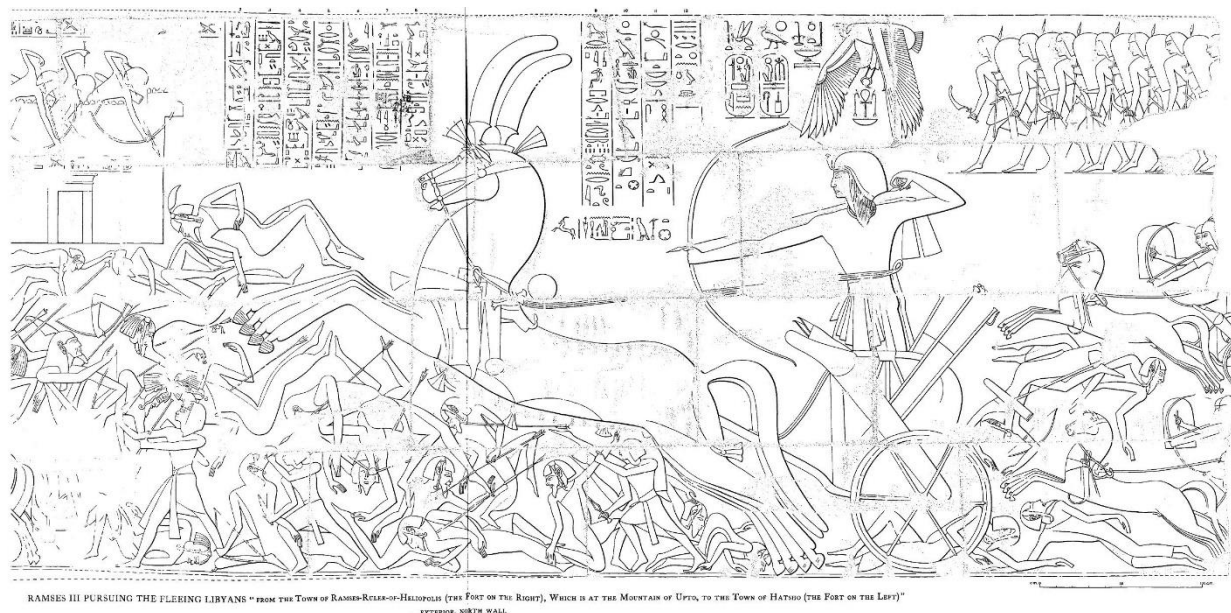
**Fig. 6.2.** Relief of Ramses II accompanied by the Nekhbet vulture charging Syrians in his chariot. Location: Abu Simbel. Date: 1279–1212 BCE. Source: John Henry Breasted, *The 1905–1907 Breasted Expeditions to Egypt and the Sudan*, <https://oi.uchicago.edu/collections/photographic-archives/breasted-expeditions/introduction>.

Yet Ramses II is not depicted as priest alone at this temple site. Inside the temple, cultic depictions of sacrifices and festivals to the gods stand alongside scenes of Ramses II in battle against and victory over different enemies, such as the Hittites, as seen in **fig. 6.2** (see also **figs. 5.6–7**).<sup>46</sup> The artistic program of the temple complex presents a rhetoric that portrays the king’s maintenance of rule, order, and power as flowing from both martial action and enactment of a priestly role.

Ramses III’s mortuary temple at Medinet Habu evinces a similar artistic program, wherein the king’s cultic actions are set amidst a larger program of reliefs portraying the

<sup>46</sup> Stadelmann, “The Builder Pharaoh,” 189.

violence of conquest. On many of the outer walls and the inner walls of the first court, Ramses III is portrayed again and again in militaristic scenes dominating Egypt's enemies and thus dominating chaos.<sup>47</sup>

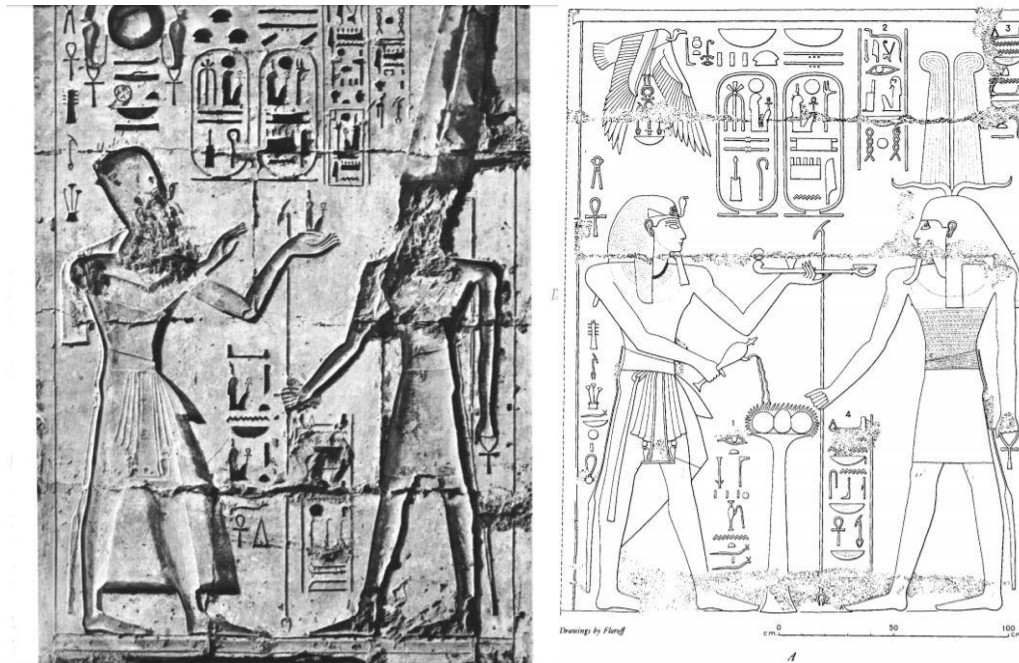


**Fig. 6.3.** Relief of Ramses III pursuing fleeing Libyans. Location: Exterior north wall, Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *Later Historical Records of Ramses III*, pl. 70.

For example, in this relief from the north outer wall (**fig. 6.3**) Ramses III is shown triumphing over the Libyans in his chariot with the Nekhbet vulture hovering protectively above him, extending life and dominion. Ramses's bow is drawn, ready to strike down his enemies, and the viewer knows that Ramses is victorious here as many of the enemies before him are already riddled with his arrows. Even his horses are shown trampling upon the Libyan enemies.

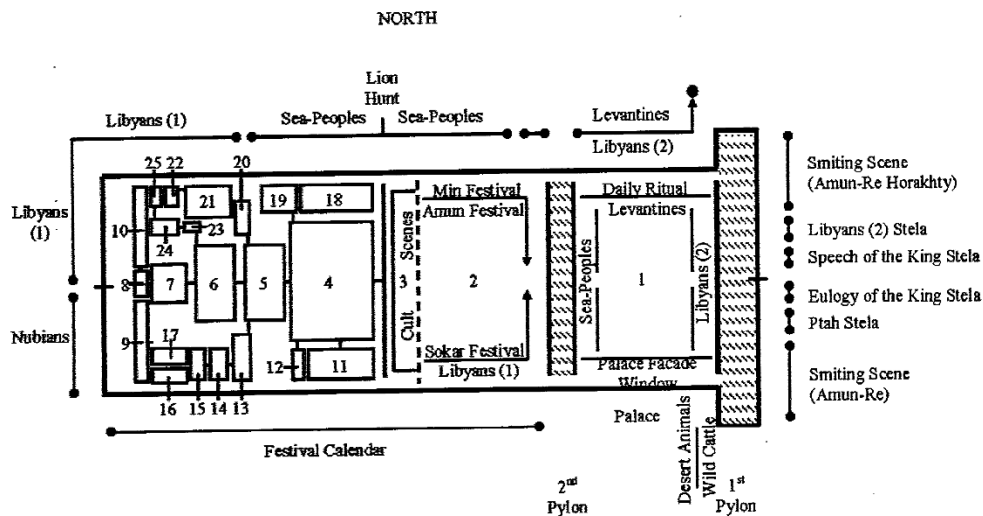
<sup>47</sup> See Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 170–71; O'Connor, "The Mortuary Temple of Ramesses III," 256–59.





**Figures 6.4a and 6.4b.** Ramses III offering *Maat* to Amun-Re (5a) and a libation to Osiris (5b). Location: Second Court, Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *The Temple Proper—Part I: The Portico, the Treasury, and the Chapels Adjoining the First Hypostyle Hall with Marginal Materials from the Forecourts*, vol. V of *Medinet Habu*, OIP 83 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1957), plates 258D (fig. 5a) and 277A (fig. 5b).

Yet as one moves farther into the temple complex, many of the reliefs show Ramses III officiating as priest before different deities. For example, in one relief (**fig. 6.4a**) the king is shown offering *Maat* to Amun-Re and in another (**fig. 6.4b**) pouring out a libation before Osiris.



**Fig. 5.8.** Diagram representing the organization of the relief program of Medinet Habu. Source: O'Connor, "The Mortuary Temple of Ramesses III," 258, fig. 6.11.

As discussed in chapter 5, the layout of the temple's relief program (**fig. 5.8**) shows the reliefs of the outer walls and courts primarily feature Ramses III in militaristic actions, conquering enemies and chaos with the empowerment of Amun-Re, whereas many of the reliefs of the inner courts of the temple portray Ramses in priestly action before the gods. At Medinet Habu, as at Abu Simbel, images of the king's warrior and priestly activity cohere and render the depth and breadth of a royal rhetoric. The depiction of the monarch's work in the role of priest fits sensibly within a context of the king and deities at war. Together this imagery portrays the ruler successfully defending and maintaining the cosmos and his people's right place within it.

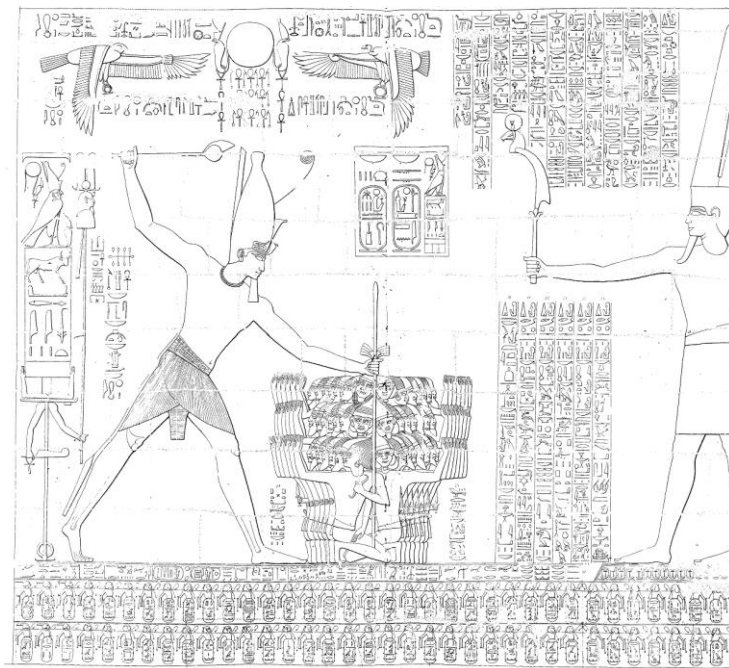
As a final Egyptian example of how the image of king as priest is often tied in with contexts of martial action, we may turn to the long-standing smiting motif: the pharaoh with raised weapon above a subdued enemy or enemies in the presence of one or multiple deities.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Robbins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 32–33.

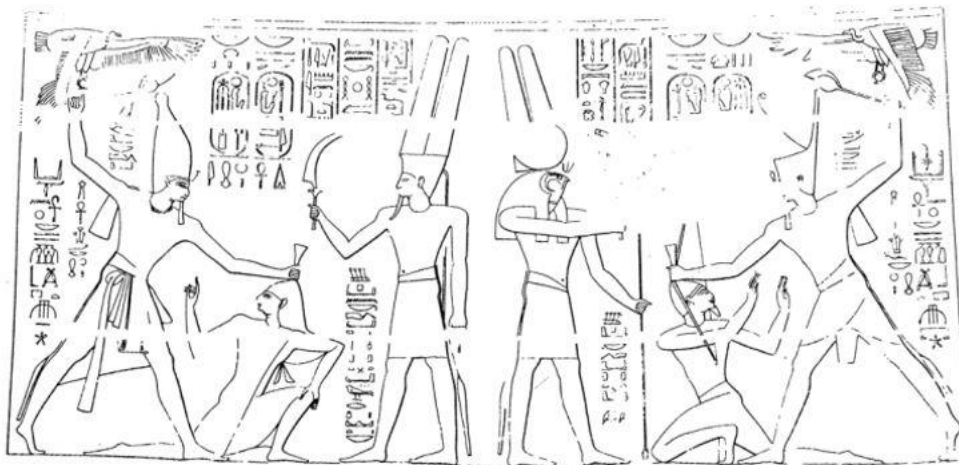


**Fig. 2.1a.** Slate palette featuring Narmer prepared to slay enemies before the deity Horus. Location: Hierakonpolis. Date: ca. 2850 BCE. Source: Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 32, fig. 25.

The Narmer Palette demonstrates that the king with arm raised to strike the enemy in the presence of the deity dates as far back as pre-dynastic times in ancient Egypt (**fig. 2.1a**). This smiting motif was used by different kings throughout Egyptian history, as examples from the first pylon and a pillar of the forecourt of Ramses III at Medinet Habu illustrate (**figs. 6.5–6**).



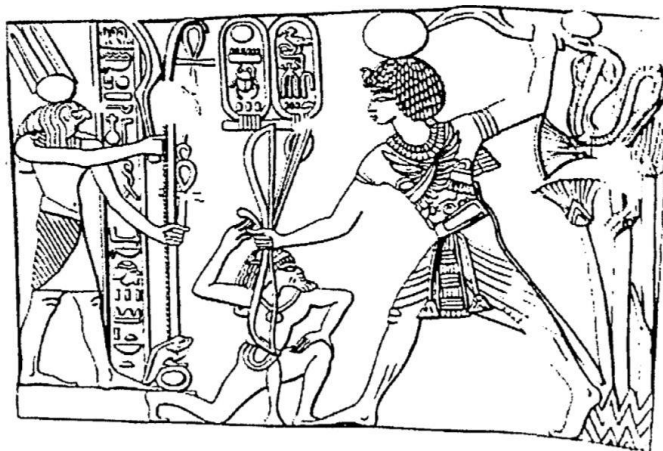
**Fig. 6.5.** Ramses III in the Smiting Posture before Amun-Re on First Pylon. Location: First Pylon, Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, et al., *Later Historical Records of Ramses III*, Plate 101.



**Fig. 6.6.** A relief featuring Ramses the III prepared to strike down subdued enemies before two deities. Location: Pillar of the forecourt of the temple at Medinet Habu. Location: Medinet Habu. Date: 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: The Epigraphic Survey, *Later Historical Records of Ramses III*, Plate 121C.

On the pillar relief (**fig. 6.6**), Ramses III is shown twice, once in the red crown and once in the white crown, prepared to strike a collected group of subdued enemies before the gods, who

authorize the action in this scene. Joel LeMon has suggested that the shared stature of the deities and the king here places the monarch's action on the same level as the deities' action. This allows for the identification of the king as one enabled to act with the deity's authority.<sup>49</sup> The motif and its variations depict the king's power over his enemies, and thus over chaos, in connection with the deity, who serves as the ultimate source of power, life, and military success.<sup>50</sup> The deity's primary role in this action is made clear in the Narmer palette (**fig. 2.1a**), where Horus is shown subduing the enemy population alongside the king's action. In other scenes, the deity holds out the scimitar or mace to the king as he stands over his enemies or leads them before the deity, illustrated by a scene on an ivory bangle from Amarna of the king Thutmose IV (**fig. 6.7**) and by the reliefs featuring the smiting scene at Medinet Habu (**figs. 6.5 and 6.6**).



**Fig. 6.7.** Ivory bangle depicting Thutmose IV wielding a scimitar ready to strike a captured and subdued enemy before the deity. Location: Amarna. Date: 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Source: Keel, “Powerful Symbols of Victory,” 234, fig. 4.

Thutmose stands in the same smiting position before the deity who holds out a scimitar saying, as Keel translates, “Receive the scimitar, good lord, so that you defeat the chiefs of all of the

<sup>49</sup> LeMon, “Yhwh’s Hand and the Iconography of the Blow,” 872.

<sup>50</sup> Keel, “Powerful Symbols of Victory,” 207.

foreign countries” (**fig. 6.7**).<sup>51</sup> The warrior action is associated with both the king and the deity. They are somewhat inseparable in this action—both the king and deity defeat the enemies and create order for the land from chaos.<sup>52</sup>

Yet, the king in these images is not only represented in warrior action but is also depicted in a priestly and ritualistic role, surrendering the enemies to the deity as an offering. José Sales describes the images of Ramses III on the first pylon at Medinet Habu (**fig. 6.5**) as images of “the pharaoh offering to the gods the enemies captured and subdued.”<sup>53</sup> The ivory bangle of Thutmosis IV (**fig. 6.7**) also evinces a scene in which the deity offers the king victory with the scimitar as the king offers the deity the defeated enemies. Keel has pointed to the polyvalence of this motif in his work on symbols of power in Egyptian iconography. This smiting motif depicts the king as warrior enacting violence empowered by the deity and in the role of priest presenting his action in maintaining right order before the deity.<sup>54</sup> This characterization of the enemies and their presentation as an offering before the deity is further supported by the inscriptions that accompany the narrative scenes of Ramses III leading captives of the defeated Sea Peoples before Amun. The king says, “It is in order to present them to your ka, my august father, that I have captured their runners, pinioned in my grip.”<sup>55</sup> The smiting scene then depicts the king as both triumphant warrior and as a priest-king performing his work of destroying chaos before the deity to maintain *maat* in the land. So, the smiting motif is a clear and well-attested example of

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<sup>51</sup> Keel, “Powerful Symbols of Victory,” 208.

<sup>52</sup> Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 33; Keel, *Symbolism*, 292–96.

<sup>53</sup> Sales, “The Smiting of the Enemies Scenes,” 96.

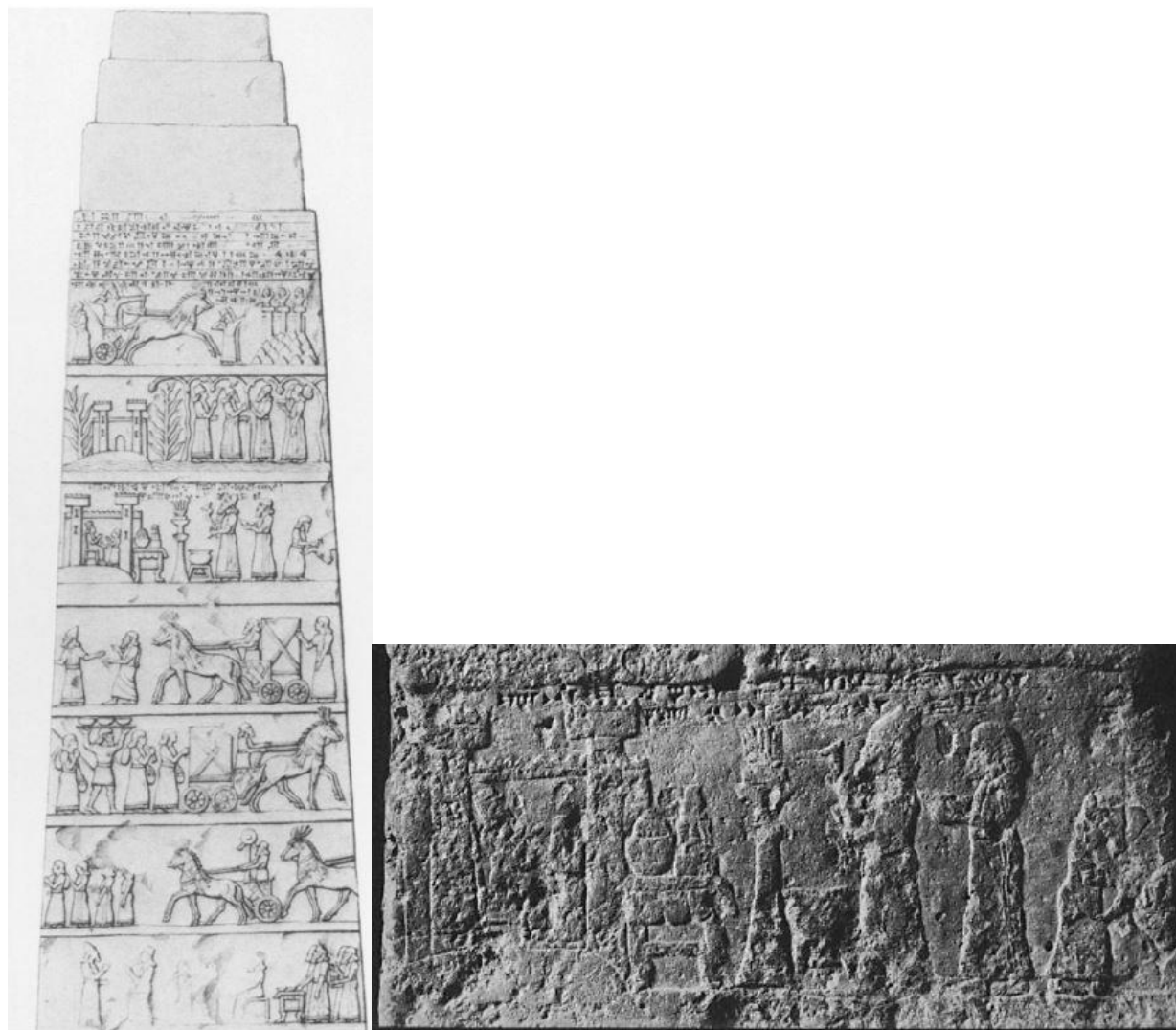
<sup>54</sup> See Keel, “Symbols of Power,” 206–08. Also see Joachim Śliwa, who states, “The scene takes place in the presence of a god, presumably it is a sacrifice in his honor” (“Victorious Ruler Representations,” 103). Also, see Cyril Aldred, who claims of the Narmer Palette, “The sacrifice is performed before the supreme sky-god Horus, of whom Narmer is also an incarnation, represented as a falcon with a human arm holding captive a personified papyrus thicket, probably symbolizing the inhabitants of the Delta” (*Egyptian Art in the Days of the Pharaohs*, 34).

<sup>55</sup> Shlomit Israeli, *Ceremonial Speech Patterns in the Medinet Habu War Inscriptions*, ÄAT 79 (Munster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2015), 121.

the king simultaneously functioning as warrior and as priest. Priestly action is set within the context of violent action. Similar to Psalm 2, Egyptian iconography often depicts the king as both priest and warrior, as one who provides life and order for his land through both of these avenues. Egyptian royal art demonstrates the king's effectiveness in providing life and stability for his land through these intertwined roles.

### 6.2.2 Assyrian Royal Art

The nexus of royal violence and royal priestly action is not solely a feature of Egyptian art. Assyrian royal art also portrays the king in the role of priest amidst violent scenes of conquest.



**Figs. 6.8a–b.** Side A of the White Obelisk (a) and detail of register 3a (b). Location: Nimrud. Date: 11<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Source: Sollberger, “The White Obelisk,” Plate XLII (6.8a) and Pittman, “The White Obelisk,” 337, fig. 7 (6.8b).

The White Obelisk (**fig. 6.8a**), a stone royal monument produced at some point during the 11<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, possibly under Ashurnasirpal I, is carved with eight registers of scenes that cover all four sides of the monument.<sup>56</sup> The scenes portray the Assyrian king “subduing

<sup>56</sup> Scholars disagree on the precise dating of the obelisk. The monument’s inscription refers to Ashurnasirpal, and so scholars debate whether the obelisk should be dated to the Middle Assyrian period during the reign of Ashurnasirpal I or the early Neo-Assyrian period during the reign of Ashurnasirpal II. See overviews of the discussion and contrasting arguments in Edmund Sollberger, “The White Obelisk,” *Iraq* 36 (1974): 231–38; Julien E. Reade, “Assurnasirpal I and the White Obelisk,” *Iraq* 37 (1975): 129–50.



rebellious cities, securing booty, receiving praise from his country-men, and giving thanks to the goddess Ishtar in her temple at Nineveh.”<sup>57</sup> While multiple registers show the monarch at war or receiving spoils from defeated peoples, a sole scene towards the center of the front side of the obelisk in the third register renders the king offering a libation sacrifice to the goddess Ishtar (**fig. 6.8b**).<sup>58</sup> The king stands before the deity’s temple and holds a mace in one hand and libation vessel in the other.<sup>59</sup> Priests follow the king, with a set of priests slaughtering a bull in an image that overlaps onto the next horizontal scene of the obelisk.<sup>60</sup> The visual depiction of the king’s priestly action stands alongside a verbal caption wherein the king claims: “I performed the wine (libation) and sacrifice of the temple of the august goddess.”<sup>61</sup> Within the temple itself, the king stands across from an image of Ishtar as the goddess grants the Mesopotamian ring to the king.<sup>62</sup> The obelisk displays an ideal picture of empire wherein the king acts as warrior and priest to maintain his rule over the cosmos as the goddess Ishtar confirms her king’s action in these dual roles.

The throne room of Ashurnasipal II constructs a similar rhetoric of kingship. As discussed in chapter 3, a wall relief from Ashurnasirpal II’s throne room at his Northwest palace at Nimrud (**fig. 3.31**) displays the king standing on either side of the sacred tree.

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<sup>57</sup> Holly Pittman, “The White Obelisk and the Problem of Historical Narrative in the Art of Assyria,” *The Art Bulletin* 78 (1996): 339.

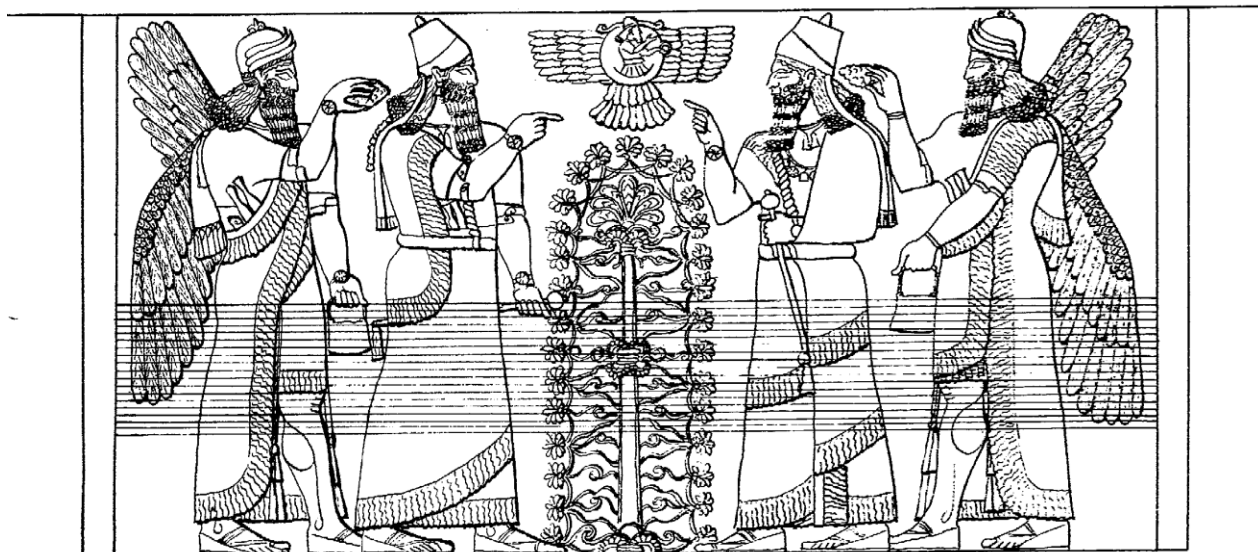
<sup>58</sup> Pauline Albenda contends that the ritual scene marks “the central portion for all the narrative units” (Pauline Albenda, “On Reading the White Obelisk from Nineveh,” *Source: Notes in the History of Art* 17 [1998]: 3).

<sup>59</sup> Julien E. Reade, “Religious Ritual in Assyrian Sculpture,” in *Ritual and Politics in Ancient Mesopotamia*, ed. Barbara Nevling Porter, AOS 88 (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 2005), 13.

<sup>60</sup> Reade, “Religious Ritual in Assyrian Sculpture,” 13.

<sup>61</sup> Sollberger, “The White Obelisk,” 237.

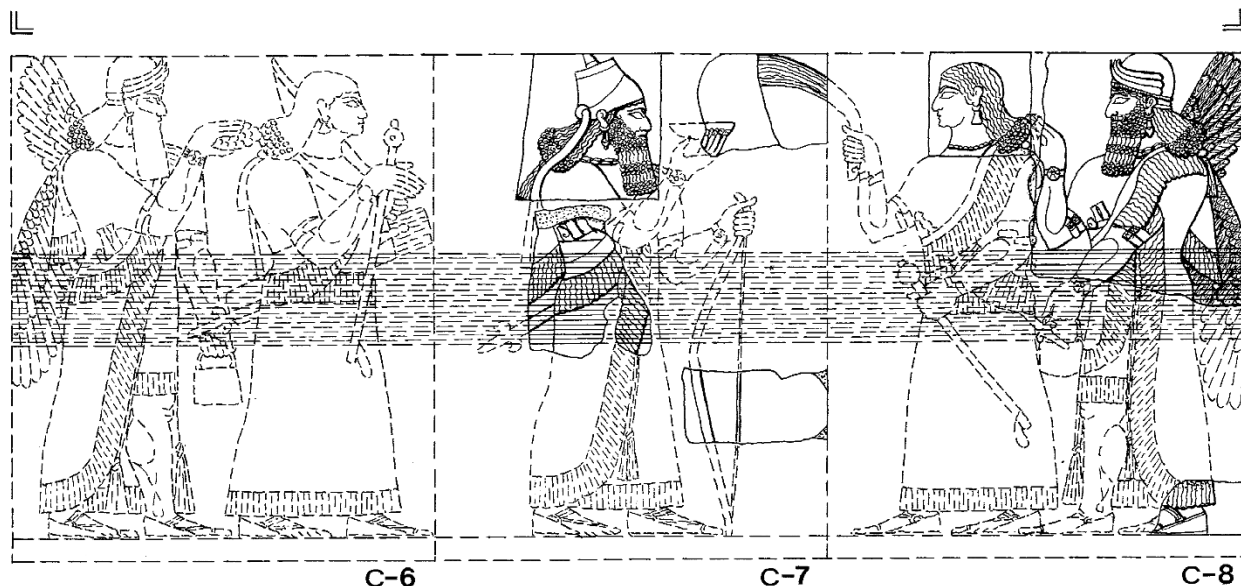
<sup>62</sup> See Sollberger, “The White Obelisk,” 237–38; Reade, “Religious Ritual in Assyrian Sculpture,” 13–14; Pittman, “The White Obelisk,” 354.



**Fig. 3.31.** Wall relief featuring the Assyrian king tending the sacred tree and flanked by two genii figures. The winged sun disc of Ashur/Shamash is above the scene. Location: Northwest Palace, Nimrud. Date: 9<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Source: Meuszyński, *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen*, vol. 1, Tafel I, B–23.

The king is twice depicted attending the sacred tree, a sacral-priestly duty, as the king works to maintain the cosmos with the authority granted to him alone by the deity.<sup>63</sup> Winged genii stand behind the king to either side as he goes about his work. The god Ashur, holding out the ring symbol to grant the king authority, is above the scene in the winged solar disc.

<sup>63</sup> On this relief and its indication of the king's priestly role, see Julian Reade, "Ideology and Propaganda," 336; Ataç, *The Mythology of Kingship in Neo-Assyrian Art*, 117–19; Irene Winter, "Royal Rhetoric," 9–10 and 23; Bahrani, *Art of Mesopotamia*, 233–34. Various interpretations concerning what the tree and the king's action on either side of it represents have been proffered (see the extensive bibliography and discussion in John M. Russell, "The Program of the Palace," 687–96). My understanding of the scene and its meaning is founded upon the arguments of Reade, Ataç, Winter, and Bahrani.



**Fig. 3.32.** Reconstruction of wall relief fragments displaying the motif of the king holding the bow and libation bowl, surrounded by human and divine attendants. Location: Northwest Palace, Room C, Nimrud. Date: 9<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Source: Meuszyński, *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen*, Tafel 4, C-6, 7, and 8.

Directly across from the king's throne, visible to the king through the wide door at the west end of the throne room, was a relief depicting the king in priestly service to the gods (**fig. 3.32**). The relief portrays the king holding a libation bowl, surrounded by divine and human attendants.<sup>64</sup> Russell describes the visual effect of the placement of these two reliefs across from each other: "From the king's perspective on the throne, the image visible at the farthest end of the room depicts his service to the gods, while on the wall directly behind him, that service is rewarded with the divine gift of royal authority."<sup>65</sup> These reliefs portraying the king in cultic and priestly roles were not the sole reliefs in the throne room; this room was filled with wall reliefs, many of

<sup>64</sup> The motif of the king offering libation also occurs in suite G, wherein the king's role as priest and as warrior are interconnected in the room's reliefs. See Russell, "The Program of the Palace," 682–87, particularly 686–87; Brandes, "La salle dit 'G'," 151–54).

<sup>65</sup> Russell, "The Program of the Palace," 711.

which depict the king, along with the winged solarized Ashur, in scenes of battle and triumph (figs. 3.30a–b).



**Figs. 3.30a–b.** Wall reliefs from Ashurnasirpal II's palace at Nimrud featuring Ashur as the winged solar disc at the king's side in images of war and triumph. Location: Northwest Palace, Nimrud. Date: 9<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Source: Meuszyński, *Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen*, Tafel 2, B–3 and B–11.

These and similar reliefs formed the scenes of a pictorial narrative that wrapped around the walls of the throne room. Ashurnasirpal II is depicted with his bow drawn in battle against

his enemies alongside Ashur, bow drawn as well.<sup>66</sup> Ashur is depicted multiple times in scenes of battle and triumph after battle at the side of the king, as a mark of legitimation for the king's role and his actions against the enemies. Irene Winter emphasizes the importance of the deity beside the king in these scenes, and she points out that the texts that run alongside the scenes, “put victory into the hands of the god.”<sup>67</sup> The king's victory, power over his enemies, and martial prowess merge in these scenes that line the throne room. The king's power and success are symbolized visually by Ashur's warrior presence at the king's side.<sup>68</sup> Again, in this same room, placed before both the entrance to the throne room and directly behind the king's throne, stood wall reliefs depicting the king maintaining the cosmos as a priest (**fig. 6.8**).

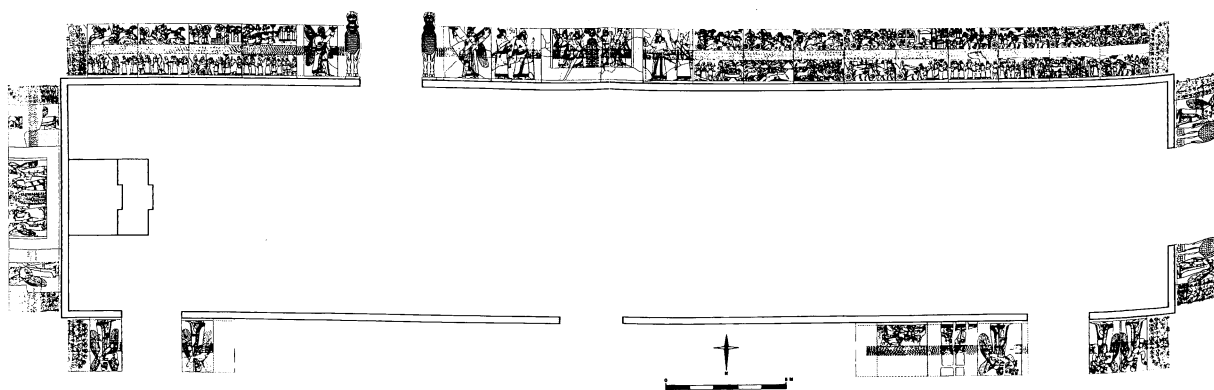


Figure 2. Detailed plan of Throneroom (Room B), Northwest Palace.

**Fig. 6.9.** Reconstructed plan of Ashurnasirpal II's throne room at the Northwest Palace at Nimrud. Source: Irene Winter, “Royal Rhetoric,” 54, fig. 2.

The throne room relief program (**fig. 6.9**) centers the king's cultic action amongst numerous scenes of Assyrian military victory. Winter contends that the reliefs instantiate a specific rhetoric of the empire to those entering the throne room. She claims, “The whole

<sup>66</sup> Ataç speaks to the close relation of the deity in the winged solar disc and the Assyrian king (see Ataç, *The Mythology of Kingship*, 123).

<sup>67</sup> Winter, “Royal Rhetoric,” 27.

<sup>68</sup> See how Ashur's presence alongside the king denotes the military power and success granted to the king by the deity (*Yahweh's Winged Form in the Psalms*, 95–101).

Throneroom can then be read as a statement of the establishment and maintenance of the exterior state through military conquest and tribute, and the maintenance of the internal state through cultic observances, achieved through the person of the all-powerful king.”<sup>69</sup> Thus, the wall reliefs of the throne room depict the king in a priestly role on a few central reliefs within the context of multiple reliefs that portray scenes of the king and deity attacking and defeating foreign enemies and wild animals.<sup>70</sup> In this way, the reliefs exhibit a rhetorical strategy similar to that of Psalm 110, with a display of the king as priest centered within an array of martial imagery. These wall reliefs together demonstrate that royal art featured imagery of the king as priest within the context of imagery displaying the king and deity enacting violence in Assyrian royal iconography, just as in Egyptian iconography.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Winter, “Royal Rhetoric,” 28.

<sup>70</sup> See Winter, “Royal Rhetoric,” 52–58, figs. 2–10.

<sup>71</sup> See Russell on the three different thematic aspects of military success, service to the gods, and divine protection are brought together in the throne room’s artistic program (“The Program of the Palace,” 705). See also Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 252–52; Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 99–101.

## 6.2.3 Achaemenid Royal Art



**Fig. 3.34.** Tomb façade featuring Darius supported by representatives of the nations as he stands before Ahuramazda and the fire altar. Location: Naqsh-i Rostam. Date: 6<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE.  
Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Xerxes\\_tomb\\_at\\_Naqsh-e\\_Rostam-upper\\_register\\_\(4614878357\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Xerxes_tomb_at_Naqsh-e_Rostam-upper_register_(4614878357).jpg).

Similar to Egyptian and Neo-Assyrian royal art, Darius's tomb façade at Naqsh-i Rostam (**fig. 3.34**) evinces a scene of the king in cultic action even as art and text reflect the monarch's martial violence. The king stands before Ahuramazda and a fire altar in a scene that either displays an actual cultic ritual or a visualization of the ideal relationship between the king and deity.<sup>72</sup> The peoples of the Persian empire joyfully support the dais upon which the king and altar stand. The king's bow and the foreigners beneath his feet show the king as conqueror, and the fire altar before which the king stands marks him as cultic officiator.<sup>73</sup> The inscription upon the relief clearly indicates Darius' martial victory, as he is described as conquering the nations that

<sup>72</sup> Root contends that the scene likely displays, or at least references with its imagery, an actual religious rite and role that the king held in the Achaemenid period (Root, *The King and Kingship*, 178–81).

<sup>73</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 162–70.

support the dais.<sup>74</sup> Achaemenid royal art also combines visual indicators of the king as warrior and conqueror with those of the king as cultic officiator before the deity.<sup>75</sup>

#### 6.2.4 Syro-Palestinian Art

Syro-Palestinian art also contains numerous examples of the king as priest. It too connects the king's cultic actions and his role as warrior enacting violence before the deity. Seals dating to the Late Bronze Age found in southern Palestine (such as Tell el-Ajjul, Tell el-Far'ah, and Lachish) depict the pharaoh offering a sacrifice or standing in a position of worship and adoration before different deities.



**Fig. 6.10.** Seal depicting the pharaoh/king offering a sacrifice or standing in a position of worship and adoration the solar deity Re-Harakhty. Location: Southern Israel-Palestine. Date: 1650–1150 BCE. Source: Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 81, fig. 94c.

For example, one of these seals (**fig. 6.10**) depicts the king worshipping before the deity Re-Harakhty. In the Iron Age IIC period, many Assyrian-style cylinder seals (**figs. 6.11a–b**) depict the motif of the king as priest in cultic service before the gods.

<sup>74</sup> Again, part of the relief's inscription reads: "If now thou shalt think that 'How many are the countries which King Darius held?' look at the sculptures (of those) who bear the throne, then thou shalt know, then shall it become known to thee: the spear of a Persian man has gone forth far; then shall it become known to thee: a Persian man has delivered battle far indeed from Persia. See Root, *The King and Kingship*, 154; from Kent, *Old Persian*, 138, DNb.

<sup>75</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 162–70.





**Figs. 6.11a–b.** Cylinder seals showing king as priest in cultic service before the gods. Location: 45a from Megiddo Str. II and 45b from Tell Dothan. Date: 750–587 BCE. Source: Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 289, figs. 280b and 281.

In these scenes, the king is shown without his crown and with his weapons either sheathed or set aside as he stands before a collection of cult stands or shrines marked with a deity’s emblem.<sup>76</sup>

Astral bodies such as the crescent moon or eight-rayed star are often present above the scene. As Keel and Uehlinger explain, “The fact that the king wears no head covering, and additionally that the cultic emblem is present, demonstrates that this is a depiction of ritual activity.”<sup>77</sup> In addition to these images of the king acting in a cultic role, an ivory inlay (**fig. 6.12**) found in Samaria and dating to the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, two seals found in Late Bronze Age Palestine (**figs. 6.13 and 6.14**) an Iron Age seal from Tel Masos (**fig. 6.15**), and a silver bowl found in 7<sup>th</sup> century Phoenicia (**fig. 6.16**) together demonstrate that the smiting motif was well-known in ancient Palestine and not just in Egypt.

<sup>76</sup> Often the stand of the Moon God of Haran.

<sup>77</sup> Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 290. The presence of the bow held before the king, turned back towards the king, marks the figure as royal, as this motif is common in both Neo-Assyrian and later Achaemenid royal art (see Root, *The King and Kingship*, 164–69).



**Fig. 6.12.** Ivory inlay with the motif of the pharaoh with raised arm prepared to strike the subdued enemy. Location: Samaria. Date: 8<sup>th</sup> Century. Source: Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 263, fig. 262b.



**Fig. 6.13.** Ramesside scarab with the pharaoh poised to strike enemy before the deity Seth. Location: Bet-Shean. Date: 1650–1150 BCE. Source: Othmar Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette*, Band II, 107, fig. 23.



**Fig. 6.14.** Ramesside scarab depicting the pharaoh in the smiting posture before Amun. Location: Tell el-‘Ağul. Date: 1650–1150 BCE. Source: Keel, “Powerful Symbols of Victory,” 236.



**Fig. 6.15.** Scarab seal depicting the pharaoh preparing to smite a subdued enemy before a representation of a deity. Location: Tel Masos. Date: 1050–900 BCE. Source: Othmar Keel, Menakhem Shuval, and Christoph Uehlinger, *Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel*, Band III: Die Frühe Eisenzeit, Ein Workshop, OBO 100 (Freiburg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 345, fig. 17.



**Fig. 6.16.** Phoenician silver bowl depicting the pharaoh in the smiting posture. Location: Kourion. Date: 7<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Source: Keel, “Powerful Symbols of Victory,” 236.

Moreover, the evidence suggests that the image of a king executing violent action as a warrior may also have been understood as a priestly act, since the violence happens in the presence of a deity in all of the scenes except the ivory inlay (**fig. 6.12**), which is damaged. The deity’s presence in these scenes implies a divine empowering of the king to be successful in his action as a warrior. The deity is present alongside the king, enabling the destruction of enemies. Thus, these constellations of imagery match up well with the combination of priestly imagery amidst

violent imagery in Psalm 110. Now, Ps 110 primarily pictures the deity as one who acts violently on the part of the king, whereas in the artistic evidence the king is the primary actor. Yet the presence of the deity in the scenes of royal violence surveyed above also displays the shared work of the deity and king in destroying their enemies.<sup>78</sup>

### 6.2.5 The Rhetorical Display of the King Performing Cultic and Martial Actions

Across time and place in the ANE, royal art often portrays the king serving within and leading the cult as a priestly figure. Imagery of royal priestly action is often set within imagery of the king as warrior, defeating human and animal enemies. Such a blending of motifs pictures the monarch at work establishing order simultaneously through the destruction of chaotic enemies and through priestly service to the gods. Royal art portraying the king as priest and warrior marks the king as a representative performing the work of the deity and as an intercessor between the deity and people.

### 6.3 Cultic Action amidst Martial Imagery: The Rhetoric of Psalm 110

In view of the above artistic evidence, I suggest that the ideology of the king as priest was shared widely across the ANE. In short, the imagery of priesthood and kingship combined within Psalm 110 fits well with ANE royal art. The rhetorical strategies of ANE artistic programs such as Ashurnasirpal II's throne room and the textual imagery of Psalm 110 are congruent. The ANE examples given above may not have had direct historical influence on Psalm 110, and yet they instantiate a rhetoric that is remarkably similar to the rhetoric of Psalm 110. Across the ANE, royal rhetorics place the priestly action of a successful king in the midst of the violent warrior actions of the king and/or the king's deity. Psalm 110 highlights Yahweh's power with its

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<sup>78</sup> Keel, "Power Symbols of Victory," 206–09; LeMon, "Yhwh's Hand and the Iconography of the Blow," 872; Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 33; Winter, "Royal Rhetoric," 27–28.

rhetoric, shifting most of the warrior action to the deity alone. Yet, its rhetorical goal is the similar. The psalm depicts the king as one who is supported by the deity and so is successful in both militaristic and priestly roles simultaneously.

The constellation of literary imagery presented by Psalm 110 is not as dissonant as some commentators have claimed.<sup>79</sup> In fact, the rhetorical strategy of portraying the king in priestly action in constellation with depictions of the king's military prowess appears throughout ANE royal art. Though the smaller kingdoms of the Levant such as Israel and Judah did not produce monumental art, Psalm 110's literary imagery offers another reflex of this royal rhetoric. The iconic structure of the psalm correlates to Egyptian (see **figs. 3.27b, 6.1–6.7**), Assyrian (see **figs. 3.30–3.32, 6.8–6.9**), and Achaemenid (see **fig. 3.34**) royal monumental art. The psalm's imagery of the king as priest also fits within ancient Israelite conceptions and symbols of kingship, as indicated both by HB texts and, as I have attempted to show, ancient Syro-Palestinian art (**figs. 6.10–16**) that depicts the king as priest.<sup>80</sup> The artistic evidence demonstrates that the concepts of the king and deity at war and the king as priest were intertwined aspects of royal rhetoric. If imagery of the king as priest in the midst of a militaristic, royal psalm creates dissonance, then the problem stems from modern taste and conscience.<sup>81</sup>

In light of the iconographic evidence, scholarly claims about the historical context and literary unity Ps 110 require revisiting. It is not necessary to suppose a specific date for the psalm based on the psalm's imagery of universal domination.<sup>82</sup> Nor is it necessary to posit the existence

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<sup>79</sup> See section 6.1.2 above.

<sup>80</sup> See footnotes 37 and 39 above.

<sup>81</sup> See, for example, Charles Kimball, "Religion and Violence from Christian Theological Perspectives," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence*, ed. Mark Juergensmeyer, Margo Kitts, and Michael Jerryson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 424–36 as well as Wolfgang Palaver, "Mimetic Theories of Religion and Violence," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence*, 533–53.

<sup>82</sup> That is, the psalm's imagery does not require a pre-exilic dating or a post-exilic dating; the combination of priestly and royal imagery does not limit the psalm to either context.

of redaction layers within the psalm.<sup>83</sup> The constellation of royal, priestly, and violent imagery in Psalm 110 accords with ancient Near Eastern, including ancient Syro-Palestinian, conceptions of kingship, as depicted within artistic evidence. The artistic data demonstrates that Psalm 110's constellation of imagery portraying the king as priest alongside the king and deity at war makes sense within both a larger ANE and a more limited Syro-Palestinian context. The psalm displays the king, empowered by the deity, as the people's foremost defense against other nations and as the head of the deity's cult and thus the people's primary connection to their god. The poem's rhetorical world marks the king as right ruler over the cosmos and priest-king who maintains the nation's relationship with the deity. According to Psalm 110, the monarch's roles as warrior and priest blend together as the king's reign mirrors the reign and actions of Yahweh within the cosmos. The literary imagery of Psalm 110 constructs a textual royal icon that when read or heard reinforced the close connection of the deity and king, highlighting the monarch's key role for the people whom he ruled.

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<sup>83</sup> Interestingly enough, Jean de Savignac claims that the Psalm draws on Egyptian imagery (literary and iconographic), as I have argued above; yet, he dates the Psalm to a post-exilic context, arguing that the psalm draws on Egyptian imagery to paint a picture of a messianic king. He even notes specifically that the image of the king as priest in v. 4 is comparable to the concept of the pharaoh as both king and priest in Egypt. Yet, he argues that this imagery is a retrojection of post-exilic Israel, yearning for a messianic king, onto the Davidic kings of the past (Savignac, "Essai d'interprétation du psaume CX," 129).

## Chapter 7

## ATTENDING TO JUDAH'S ROYAL RHETORIC IN LIGHT OF ANE ROYAL ART

In the preceding chapters, I contextualized and re-read RPss 2, 21, 45, 72, and 110 in light of the royal rhetoric(s) presented by different ANE royal artistic programs. In this chapter, I trace the contours of Judah's royal rhetoric as portrayed in these psalms and in the RPss as a whole.

Numerous studies have attended to Judah's ideology of kingship in comparison to surrounding ANE monarchies, but these studies have primarily relied upon textual data, comparing the RPss to other royal texts and inscriptions.<sup>1</sup> I will attend to Judah's royal rhetoric as portrayed by the imagery of the RPss in light of the iconographies of kingship of surrounding ANE nations. To put it simply, I consider the imagery of the RPss as Judah's version of royal 'monumental art', viewing the RPss alongside other ANE iconographies of kingship.<sup>2</sup> The exegetical chapters draw upon ANE royal art in order to better contextualize and view the royal rhetoric of Pss 2, 21, 45, 72, and 110 individually. With this chapter I will consider the RPss as exemplars of Judahite royal rhetoric in order to attend to both the similarities and differences of Judah's royal rhetoric in light of the surrounding nations.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For examples, see Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*; Whitelam, "Israelite Kingship: The Royal Ideology and its Opponents," 119–41; Nel, "The Theology of the Royal Psalms," 71–92; Koch, "Königpsalmen und ihr Rituaeller Hintergrund," 9–52; Hamilton, *The Body Royal*, 32–117; Starbuck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms*, 67–102 and 205–12; Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 337–44. Cornell, "Divine Aggression in Royal Psalms and Inscriptions," 114–29.

<sup>2</sup> I will distinguish between the rhetoric of Syro-Palestinian minor art and the RPss, despite their geographical propinquity, in order to avoid attributing the specific royal rhetoric of Judah to other Syro-Palestinian nations.

<sup>3</sup> I say "loose" because I will draw broadly from the themes named in previous chapters that occur across the RPss and ANE royal art to do this comparative work, despite the fact that the individual RPss represent the monarchy and royal identity with different sets of imagery and different emphases. I will draw on the RPss as a loose whole to consider how these Syro-Palestinian poems constructed images of deity, king, and peoples in comparison to royal artistic traditions through the ANE.

## 7.1 The Rhetoric of Royal Subjugation

The rhetoric of royal subjugation of foreign enemies is, not surprisingly, one of the most stable themes of royal rhetoric throughout the ANE. Imagery of the nations subject to the king occurs in major and minor kingdoms across the ANE over the centuries. I will summarize here how Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Achaemenid royal arts, as well as Syro-Palestinian minor arts, employ this theme with their own particular emphases before considering how the RPss portray Yahweh's king.

### 7.1.1 Subjugation in Egyptian Royal Art

Imagery of the subjugation and submission of enemies, foreign and domestic, abounds in Egyptian royal art. Egyptian battle scenes generally feature the pharaoh, a figure larger than all others, conquering his enemies in scenes of potential and resultative violence.<sup>4</sup> In these scenes, Egypt's deities and the pharaoh work together in subduing foreign enemies. As discussed in chapter 2, Horus and Nekhbet appear, defending the king's life while Montu and Amun grant the king power and victory (see **figs. 2.1a, 2.3, 2.7a–b, 2.9**). Triumph and presentation scenes display bound and dismembered enemies brought before the victorious pharaoh (see **figs. 2.2a–b, 2.3, 2.9**) or show the pharaoh leading subjugated enemies before the gods who empowered his victory (**2.5a–b and 2.6**).

Imagery of subjugated enemies permeates a myriad of scene types in Egyptian royal art, even when the subjugation of enemies is not the primary theme on display. The pharaoh often sits upon thrones that include scenes of subjugated enemies as features of their design (see **fig. 5.4**). Likewise the borders of multiple royal reliefs display bound and subject enemies tied together by the *sm3-t3wj* plant (see **figs. 2.7a–b and 2.8**). The ubiquitous smiting scene,

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<sup>4</sup> See LeMon, *Picturing Righteous Violence*, forthcoming.



especially in New Kingdom iterations, portrays Egypt's enemies as helpless before the king and his gods (see **fig. 2.1a, 2.3, 2.4, 2.7b, 6.5**). Throughout Egypt, royal thrones, footrests, sandals, and pendants were often decorated with scenes of bound and defeated enemies, creating an atmosphere of triumph. These artistic renderings allowed the king to sit enthroned upon his enemies and trample them under his feet.<sup>5</sup>

Imagery of the subjugation of enemies pervades Egyptian royal art. This imagery is so prevalent because foreign enemies represent the forces of chaos. Thus, the king defeating enemies shows the king subduing chaos to order the cosmos.<sup>6</sup> The tendency to represent enemies as a form of chaos in Egyptian royal art likely explains why enemies are never shown willingly submitting before the king in official royal art. As discussed in chapter two, scenes of the nations streaming to the enthroned pharaoh and bowing before him with tribute only occur in tomb art, often in the tombs of priests and royal officials (see **fig. 2.21**). The setting of an official's tomb creates space for a different scene-type wherein the official might be shown leading the representatives of the nations into the presence of his king.<sup>7</sup> In royal art, however, the enemy always appears as a chaotic force that is defeated, bound, and made subject by the king whom Egypt's deities empower. There exists no room for any other way to portray the foreign enemies in Egyptian royal art.

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<sup>5</sup> For examples and a thorough discussion, see Janzen, "The Iconography of Humiliation, 52–118, figs. 2–8.

<sup>6</sup> See Kerry Muhlestein, *Violence in the Service of Order: The Religious Framework for Sanctioned Killing in Ancient Egypt*, BAR International Series 2299 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2011); Erik Hornung, *Idea Into Image: Essays on Ancient Egyptian Thought*, trans. Elizabeth Bredeck (New York: Timken, 1992), 131–46; Assmann, *Ma'at: Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit*.

<sup>7</sup> See Flora Brooke Anthony, *Foreigners in Ancient Egypt: Theban Tomb Paintings from the Early Eighteenth Dynasty (1550–1372 BC)* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 53–84. Whereas official tomb art likely reflected the political realities of tribute and the submission of foreigners to Egypt's king, royal art depicts an ideal world wherein all enemies are violently subjugated. Official tomb art depicts an ideal world as well, wherein the royal official enacts his job perfectly. Yet this world allows for the peaceful submission of foreigners in a way that official royal art does not.

### 7.1.2 Subjugation in Mesopotamian Royal Art

While the imagery of subjugated foreign enemies exists as an important theme in Mesopotamian royal art, it does not hold the same prominence in Mesopotamian royal art as it does in Egyptian royal art. Mesopotamian royal art also displays enemies of the king defeated in battle, trampled beneath the king's feet or chariot (see **figs. 2.10, 3.30a–b**), struck down by the king's arrows (see **figs. 3.28, 3.30a–b**), or bound and led before the king in defeat (see **figs. 2.10, 2.11, 2.12a–b, 2.15**). Enemy bodies are shown bound and subject, mounted on spikes, trampled, pierced, beheaded and dismembered (see **figs. 2.10, 2.11, 2.12a–b, 2.15, 3.28, 3.30a–b**). No enemy force is able to stand before the king.<sup>8</sup>

Mesopotamian royal art portrays the subjugation of all enemies before the king and his deities, who appear as divine symbols or as anthropomorphic partners in the king's victory (see **figs. 2.10, 2.11, 2.12a–b, 2.14, 2.15**). Imagery of violent subjugation abounds in Mesopotamian royal art, and Neo-Assyrian royal art displays enemies in multiple modes of submission before the Assyrian king: violently subjugated (see **figs. 2.10, 2.11, 2.15, 3.28, 3.30a–b**), bowing in willing submission (see **figs. 2.12a–b, 2.14, 2.22**), and carrying tribute into the presence of the king (see **figs. 2.13a–d, 3.12**). For example, the outer façade of the entrance to the throne room of Ashurnasirpal II's Northwest Palace displays the nations streaming toward the throne room entrance with their tribute, in a similar fashion to Shalmeneser's Black Obelisk (**fig. 2.13a–b**).<sup>9</sup> Neo-Assyrian royal art imagines multiple ways in which a king's enemies might submit, unlike Egyptian royal art.

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<sup>8</sup> Winter asserts, "In fact, content is carefully manipulated, and the spectator is enjoined to participate in a foregone conclusion: only the enemy fall; the Assyrians never lose and, given the strength of the king and the benevolence of the gods, are never even wounded" (Winter, "Royal Rhetoric," 5).

<sup>9</sup> See Russell, "The Program of the Palace," 657.

### 7.1.3 Subjugation in Achaemenid Royal Art

Achaemenid royal art moves away from imagery of violent subjugation.<sup>10</sup> Whereas Mesopotamian art expands upon the focus on violent subjugation seen in Egyptian royal art, Achaemenid royal art narrows its employment of subjugation imagery to the Behistun scene in monumental art (**fig. 2.16**).<sup>11</sup> In the Behistun relief, Darius subdues the rebellious kings as he tramples the king Guamata with a noble and controlled air. Ahuramazda hovers over the rebel kings in the winged sun disc, enabling Darius's overwhelming victory.

While Achaemenid royal art narrows the use of imagery of subjugation, it expands on the theme of peaceful and even joyful submission scenes. The Apadana tribute scenes display the nations streaming to the Persian king and his deity with gifts.<sup>12</sup> Achaemenid reliefs display the king held aloft by representatives of the nations, who support the king together in an effortless atlas pose (**figs. 3.18 and 3.34**). Achaemenid royal art shifts to depict the nations as united in supporting the Persian king rather than as those forcefully subjugated by the monarch as in Egyptian and Mesopotamian art. Only a single, emblematic relief displays a threat of violent defeat and subjection for those who dare to stand against the great king. The Behistun relief stands alone as a singular note, unlike the overwhelming tide of subjugation imagery in Egyptian and Mesopotamian royal art.

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<sup>10</sup> As Root suggests, I am assuming that Achaemenid royal art intentionally drew upon Egyptian and Neo-Assyrian royal imagery and adapted it for a new era to show continuity and contrast with past empires.

<sup>11</sup> Some minor arts, however, display the Persian king violently defeating his enemies. For example, see BM 124015, a seal from the Oxus treasure collection.

<sup>12</sup> See Root, *The King and Kingship*, 192–93 and plates xvii–xxiv.

#### 7.1.4 Subjugation in Syro-Palestinian Art

Syro-Palestinian art is rife with imagery of the king's subjugation of his enemies.<sup>13</sup> The minor art of Syria-Palestine displays the king, often accompanied by a deity, in a position of power over his enemies (see **figs. 2.17, 2.18, 2.19b–c, 2.20a–b**). The imagery is often Egyptianizing, sometimes explicitly portraying the king as pharaoh and the accompanying deities as Maat or Amun (see **figs. 2.18, 2.19a–c, 2.20a–e**). The king's enemies are generally shown bound and helpless before the ruler, already in states of subjugation. Syro-Palestinian minor art drew on patterns, divine symbols, and royal-divine relationships as depicted in ANE royal art to display the king and deity in a position of power over their enemies.

#### 7.1.5 Subjugation in the Literary Imagery of the RPss

The RPss often display Yahweh's king as one who reigns over all nations and rulers. Psalm 2 portrays the king as a ruler over the nations and their kings. Ps 18 also pictures all foreign peoples submitting with trembling before Yahweh's king (18:45–46). Psalm 45 claims that the king's enemies fall beneath his feet, pierced by his arrows (45:6). The psalm further describes the king's sons as rulers throughout the earth with the peoples praising his name for all time (45:18). Similarly, Psalm 72 displays the king as ruler of the entire cosmos with all creatures, nations, kings and rulers bowing before him and licking the dust (72:8–11). In Ps 72, the peoples of the world serve Yahweh's king and bring him tribute (72:8–11), and because of their submission they are blessed (72:17). Likewise, Psalm 89 describes Yahweh's king as the highest of the kings of the earth (89:28), and Ps 110 asserts that the monarch reigns over his enemies.

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<sup>13</sup> As Cornell demonstrates, Syro-Palestinian royal inscriptions too frame the king as one who subjugates all enemies; inscriptions often render, "a grand and indeed mythic claim of total victory" (see Cornell, "Divine Aggression in Royal Psalms and Inscriptions," 20–21).

Echoing classic Pharaonic imagery, Psalm 110 asserts that Yahweh will make the king's enemies his footstool (110:1–2).

As in ANE royal art, the RPss picture the king not just as the ruler of his own people, but as the ruler of the entire cosmos. The RPss imagine different dimensions of the king's rule. Psalms 2, 18, 45, and 110 like Egyptian and some Mesopotamian royal imagery, emphasize the violent, merciless reign of the king over his subjugated foes. Psalm 72, however, displays the nations flowing to the king with tribute as they humble themselves before him, a picture that aligns with the themes of submission shown on the Black Obelisk or the Behistun relief (**figs. 2.14a–d, 2.16**). To be sure, ANE royal art and the RPss employ varied strategies in depicting the subjugation of *all* foreign enemies to their king. The theme of universal subjugation, though, stands prominent in the royal rhetoric of ANE kings.

Divine empowerment of the monarch is a central trope in both the RPss and ANE royal art. The king reigns over all the earth in Psalm 2 because Yahweh grants him the cosmos as his possession (2:8). In Ps 18, Yahweh delivers the king (18:4). The king is able to strike down and trample upon his enemies only because Yahweh trains and steadies his hands (18:30, 33, 35–39, 43). Psalms 20 and 21 explain that the king's victory and strength flows from Yahweh, not the king's own power (20:7–8; 21:2). Assuming Yahweh's primacy, Ps 72 requests Yahweh to enable the king's just reign over the nations (72:1). According to Ps 89, the monarch can only be described as the highest of the earth's kings because Yahweh appointed the king as his firstborn (89:28). Similarly, Ps 110 pictures Yahweh granting the king power over the nations (110:1–2). Yahweh himself fights at the monarch's right hand to subdue all peoples (110:4–5). Psalm 132 concludes with the assertion that Yahweh makes the king's crown shine forth, while he simultaneously clothes the ruler's enemies with shame (132:18). The final royal psalm of the

Psalter describes Yahweh routing the king's enemies as he fires his arrows from heaven, though the king himself is not described as fighting (144:6–7, 11). While Yahweh trains the king for battle (144:1–2), the poem roots the king's victory in Yahweh's violent acts.

The RPss display the king and deity working together to subdue the enemies of the state. The king and deity or deities appear together in many examples of ANE royal art (e.g. **figs. 2.1a–b, 2.3, 2.16, 3.1, 3.30a–b, 5.1, 6.2**), though in some Egyptian and Neo-Assyrian battle and triumph scenes the king appears alone.<sup>14</sup> The royal psalms rarely depict the king alone in his rule or triumph over his enemies. Only Ps 45 displays the king victorious with no explicit mention of Yahweh's assistance or empowerment (45:4–6). As noted in chapter 4, this exception fits the psalm's rhetoric. Divine empowerment of the king is a significant aspect of the rhetoric of subjugation in the RPss. In this way, the RPss fit into a larger pattern found in ANE royal art even as they further emphasize the deity's role.

Psalm 89, however, contradicts the pattern of how ANE royal art and the majority of the royal psalms display the king's relationship to his enemies. The first half of the psalm names the king as the “highest of the kings of the earth” (89:28). Yet, the second half of the psalm describes the defeat of Judah with imagery of Yahweh turning against his chosen king (89:39–46). The poem pictures Yahweh as one who has breached and torn down the king's strongholds. Yahweh, enraged with his king, empowers the right hand of the king's enemies rather than his king, turning back the monarch's sword so that it is ineffective (89:39, 43–44). Yahweh casts down the king's throne and dresses him in shame (89:45–46). The psalm radically reshapes classic royal imagery of the subjugation of the king's enemies in order to explain Judah's defeat. Yahweh must have turned against his king and empowered the king's enemies, making his monarch

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<sup>14</sup> As discussed in chapter 3, Neo-Assyrian king following Ashurnasirpal II tended to picture themselves in combat alone without an accompanying deity upon their palace reliefs.

subject to them. The imagery paints Yahweh as ultimately responsible for the nation's downfall, reshaping the rhetoric of the king and deity at work together against their enemies to explain the exile. Yet, the psalm leaves open the possibility that Yahweh might turn, remember, and exalt the king again (89:47–53). The RPss adopt and adapt ANE royal rhetoric of subjugation to imagine how Yahweh and his king relate to the nations.

## 7.2 The Rhetoric of Blending Royal and Divine Actors

Imagery that blends the identities and actions of kings and deities is a prominent feature in ANE royal art. Royal artistic programs across the ANE employ the trope with varied strategies and emphases. There is no single way or set group of scenes for portraying the overlapping identities and goals of kings and deities.

### 7.2.1 Divine-Royal Blending in Egyptian Royal Art

Egyptian royal art depicts the king and his divine partners in close concert in multiple scene types. The king often stood in the presence of different deities who supported the human ruler with blessings of life, strength, and victory (see **figs. 3.1–2, 3.6–9**). Royal art portrays the king and Egypt's deities accomplishing shared goals from different angles even as their actions and purposes blend. For example, in triumph scenes the king approaches the deity with bound prisoners and spoils as the deity empowers the king's action (see **figs. 2.6 and 3.26**). In battle scenes, the deity and king appear on the battlefield together, but they do not mirror one another's actions. Instead, the deity protects the king as he fights (see **fig. 3.1**), or the deity joins his king in slaying his enemies by guiding the king's hand (see **figs. 2.7a–b**). Smiting scenes display the deity and king in distinct postures and processes that accomplish the goal of subduing Egypt's enemies (see **figs. 2.1a, 2.3, 5.1**). The king stands poised to smite his enemies as the deity holds

out the *hepeš*-sword and grants the king bound foes. Egyptian royal art displays the king and deity as allies, with the king often labeled as the deity's son and as a divine partner alongside Egypt's deities. The close association of the king and deity supports the king's rule.<sup>15</sup> Royal art displays a social order and identity both for the royal figure and for the society that he ruled.

### 7.2.2 Divine-Royal Blending in Mesopotamian Royal Art

Though a few exceptions exist, Mesopotamian royal art generally does not represent the king as a divine figure. Yet, the king is often presented as closely associated and aligned with the divine. Muddying the line between human and divine, multiple scenes portray the king standing alongside deities and divine symbols (see **figs. 3.10a–b, 3.11–16, 3.31**) or receiving royal attributes from deities (see **figs. 3.11–13, 3.31**). Others show the deity mirroring and acting alongside the king (see **figs. 3.12, 3.30a–b**). Mesopotamian royal art portrays the king as chosen and supported by his deities. Displaying the deity's empowerment of the royal figure legitimated the monarch and his reign. The king shares royal insignia and attributes with the deities, and they are often portrayed working together towards the same goals. Such imagery creates a rhetorical world in which there is a “porous membrane” and a “blurring of boundaries” between divine and royal identities.<sup>16</sup>

### 7.2.3 Divine-Royal Blending in Achaemenid Royal Art

Achaemenid royal imagery displays the partnership of the king and supreme deity in ways similar to Mesopotamian and Neo-Assyrian royal art. As in Neo-Assyrian art, the king and Ahuramazda often appear together in their reign over the nations. Ahuramazda empowers his king's rule so that the nations gladly support the king (see **figs. 3.18 and 3.34**). The pair mirrors

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<sup>15</sup> Baines, “Ancient Egyptian Kingship,” 28–41.

<sup>16</sup> Winter, “Touched by the Gods,” 88.



each other in their dress, particularly the markers of their royalty such as crowns, and in their purpose (see **figs. 2.16, 3.17–18, 3.33–34**). Instead of mirroring the king’s acts, the deity often symbolically supports the king by granting him authority as he subdues his enemies or reigns over an ordered empire (see **figs. 2.16 and 3.34**). In sum, Achaemenid royal art emphasizes aspects of identity that the king and deity share.

#### 7.2.4 Divine-Royal Blending in Syro-Palestinian Art

Syro-Palestinian art evinces scenes of royal-divine blending, though generally the scenes are less complex.<sup>17</sup> The deity appears in support of the king’s actions in subduing his enemies and as the king sits enthroned as ruler (see **figs. 2.17–20.20e, 3.19–3.24b**). The deity’s presence authorizes the king’s identity and actions. Unlike monumental art throughout the ANE, though, the king and deity do not mirror each other’s actions explicitly or act simultaneously. The primary exception to this pattern are those scenes that draw heavily on Egyptian tropes and show the deity holding out the *hepeš*-sword to the king as he subdues his enemies (see **figs. 3.19 and 3.20**). Syro-Palestinian art underlines the deity’s support and empowerment of the king.

#### 7.2.5 Divine-Royal Blending in the Literary Imagery of the RPss

The RPss draw from themes on display across the ANE in royal art to blend the identities and actions of Yahweh and his king. Psalm 2 describes Yahweh and his king reigning jointly over the earth’s rulers (vv. 2–3) with Yahweh empowering his king’s reign (vv. 4–5, 8–9). The monarch describes how Yahweh named him as his son (v. 7). As a consequence of their relationship, the rulers of the nations can either choose to submit to the pair or be struck down by their wrath (vv.

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<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, Cornell notes that the royal mortuary inscriptions of Syria-Palestine “yield more verbs with a divine subject and more divine titles, even though in royal inscriptions the main character is oftentimes the king himself such that the king and the deity serve together as the ‘dual personal center’ of an inscription” (see Cornell, “Divine Aggression in Royal Psalms and Inscriptions,” 14).

10–12). Psalm 2 portrays Yahweh empowering the king to smite those who stand against him (v. 9). In these ways, the psalm’s imagery aligns closely with Egyptian iconography of kingship.

Psalm 20 pictures Yahweh ready to answer the plea of his anointed. In response to the king’s plea, the deity grants the king’s victory with his own right hand (v. 6). Psalm 21, as demonstrated in chapter 3, pictures the king in the presence of the deity (v. 7), adorned in attributes usually reserved to describe Yahweh’s splendor and power (v. 6). The actions of Yahweh and his king blend to the point that it is difficult to distinguish who is acting as the pair destroys their enemies upon the battlefield (vv. 9–13), similar to imagery of the king and deity acting together in Egyptian smiting scenes or in early Neo-Assyrian palace reliefs. Psalm 45 joins Psalm 21 with its portrayal of the king bedecked in the divine attributes *הדר* and *הור*, attributes reserved elsewhere for Yahweh (vv. 4–5).<sup>18</sup> The psalm praises the king’s beauty, splendor, and might. Praise spills over praise until the psalmist names the king himself a divine figure, *אלהים* (45:7). The poem closes with a description of how the nations will praise the king’s name forever with language reminiscent of creation’s praise of Yahweh (*ידה*, v. 18).<sup>19</sup> In Psalm 45 the king and deity share attributes of identity, similar to depictions of kings and deities in Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Achaemenid royal art (see **figs. 3.3–13, 3.17–18, 3.31, 3.33–34**).

Similarly, Psalm 72 pictures all other kings and nations worshipping (*הורה*) and serving (*אבד*) Yahweh’s king (72:11). As discussed above, Psalm 110 pictures Yahweh empowering his king, granting him the nations as his footstool and fighting on his right against all his enemies (110:1, 5). Psalm 89 describes Yahweh’s ownership of the king (89:18), and vv. 26–27 explicitly

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<sup>18</sup> On the general divine nature of these attributes, see Anderson, *Psalms 1–72*, 181; Zenger, *Die Psalmen*, 142; Saur, *Die Königpsalmen*, 103; Cragie, *Psalms 1–50*, 190; Dahood, *Psalms 1–50*, 132; Salo, *Die jüdische Königsideologie*, 99–100.

<sup>19</sup> See Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 454–57; Trotter, “The Genre and Setting,” 45; Schroeder, “A Love Song,” 417; Cheung, “Forget Your People and Your Father’s House,” 327–28

name their father-son relationship from both the king's and the deity's point of view. The king names Yahweh as his father (אבי; v. 26) and Yahweh names the king as his firstborn (בכור; v. 27). The king reigns and subdues his enemies only because of Yahweh's empowerment of the king (89:21–25, 29, 36–37). The reversal of the king and deity's relationship results in the king's downfall and the triumph of his enemies (89:39, 41–43). Psalms 89 and 110 draw on and reshape Egyptian and Neo-Assyrian royal imagery to portray the relationship of Yahweh and Judah's king.

The RPss as literary icons display the overlapping nature of the identities and actions of Yahweh and his king. These psalms adapt Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Achaemenid iconographies of kingship as they imagine Judah's king. This comparison then supports claims that Judahite royal ideology blended the king's role, nature, and power with the deity's identity and actions.<sup>20</sup> The rhetorical patterns that the RPss employ to blend the deity and the king appear in ANE monumental and minor art. The rhetorical theme is one of the most prominent and consistent in ANE royal art and the RPss, even though different cultures and even rulers refracted the divine-royal relationship in various ways.

### **7.3 The Rhetoric of Violence and Eroticism in the Display of the Royal Couple**

Compared to imagery of the subjugation of enemies and the blending of kings and deities in ANE royal art, imagery of the royal couple is not nearly as widely attested. ANE royal art tends to display the king as a victorious ruler, as a link between the human and divine realms, and as the source of right order and fruitfulness for the land. The majority of the RPss employ similar

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<sup>20</sup> The imagery of many of the RPss portrays the king as divine, possessing divine attributes and performing divine actions. My analysis of the RPss weighs against those who assert that Judahite royal ideology distanced the king from the divine with adoption language or demythologized the kingship. See the overview of this debate in Starbuck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms*, 4–15, particularly 10–15.

rhetoric, focusing on the king, deity, and how the pair relates to the rest of the cosmos. Yet, at times, imagery of the royal couple is employed to portray the enduring nature of the monarchy. Egyptian, Neo-Assyrian, and Syro-Palestinian art displays the royal couple in settings and patterns similar to the literary imagery of Ps 45.

### 7.3.1 The Royal Couple in Egyptian Royal Art

In Egyptian royal art, the royal couple appear together in scenes that communicate the renewal of life and the perpetuity of the dynasty. As the representatives of the male and female aspects of the divine creative power, the king and queen maintain cosmic order with their rule.<sup>21</sup> The queen and other royal women vivify the king and produce royal progeny.

The king and queen do not appear together often in Egyptian royal art, though the scarcity of the royal couple in monumental art may simply be a matter of survival.<sup>22</sup> Displays of the royal couple portray the renewal and maintenance of the kingship and the cosmos (see **figs. 4.1–4.9, 4.11–15**). Scenes of the royal couple exude erotic intimacy, either subtly as with the small golden shrine or more openly as seen in the interior scenes of the Eastern High Gate (see **figs. 4.5–4.6d, 4.7b–c, 4.8a, 4.11–15**). The erotic hue of such scenes conveys the renewal of the king's strength and life while also hinting at the continuation of the kingship through royal progeny (see particularly **fig. 4.15**). Egyptian royal art also portrays the royal couple with undertones of violence. At times, the king may act against symbolic forces of chaos (see **figs. 4.7c, 4.10**). Often though the royal couple appears together in close proximity to standard imagery of the king subjugating his enemies (see **figs. 4.16–18**). The erotic and the violent converge in such scenes to portray the identity, power, and purpose of the monarchy.

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<sup>21</sup> See Robins, "The Small Golden Shrine," 210–11; Troy, *Patterns of Queenship*, 20–53

<sup>22</sup> See O'Conner, "The Eastern High Gate," 445; Robins, "The Small Golden Shrine," 211.

### 7.3.2 The Royal Couple in Neo-Assyrian Royal Art

Depictions of the queen and the royal couple only play a small role in Mesopotamian royal art. In fact, the only examples of royal art portraying the couple together come from the Neo-Assyrian period (705–631 BCE). The themes of sexual intimacy present in Egyptian depictions of the royal couple do not occur in Neo-Assyrian royal art. Neo-Assyrian portrayals of the queen and the royal couple primarily display royal power. When portrayed, the queen shares royal symbols and postures with the king. Naqia and Libali-sharrat wear crowns, hold royal cultic implements, and Libali-sharrat twice appears enthroned as a ruler (see **figs. 4.21–23**).

Scenes of the royal couple together, though, display a royal hierarchy in which the king reigns supreme as the queen rules alongside but still beneath his power (see **figs. 4.20, 4.21, 4.24**). In the scene of Naqia together with the king, the queen follows the monarch and stands slightly shorter than he (see **fig. 4.21**). Both appear as rulers even as the scene establishes an internal hierarchy. In the garden scene of Ashurbanipal and Libali-sharrat, the king and queen sit enthroned alongside one another as rulers of a cosmos at peace (see **fig. 4.24**). They are both surrounded by symbols of their expansive reign. Yet, Ashurbanipal sits higher than his queen, even though he is reclining at banquet. Furthermore, the surrounding reliefs portray the king at war and in the hunt (see **figs. 4.28–29**). Ashurbanipal conquers chaos without his queen, making possible the central scenes wherein the two reign together in the midst of peace and fruitfulness. In sum, Neo-Assyrian royal art employs imagery of the king and queen together in order to construct a complete picture of royal identity and power.

### 7.3.3 The Royal Couple in Achaemenid Royal Art

Achaemenid royal art lacks any display of the royal couple. In fact, there are no representations of the queen at all. Instead, Achaemenid royal art focuses on the close connection between the

monarch and the deity, Ahuramazda. All of the cosmos is ordered beneath these two figures. Rather than portraying a royal hierarchy enforced by the king's martial action, Achaemenid royal art focuses on the nations working in concert with the king. The nations happily support the Persian king (see **figs. 3.18 and 3.34**), and the peoples peacefully stream to the king and deity with tribute for the empire (see **figs. 4.32 and 5.13**). Achaemenid royal art models a move away from depictions of the royal household, instead emphasizing the cosmic support of the great king as the nations and the supreme deity embrace the king's reign with joy.

#### 7.3.4 The Royal Couple in Syro-Palestinian Art

Syro-Palestinian royal ivories display the king and queen together in constellations of imagery similar to both Egyptian and Neo-Assyrian scenes of the royal couple (see **figs. 2.17, 4.33, 4.32a–c**). The ivories portray the king and queen together in scenes that suggest erotic intimacy. Despite the presence of the erotic, images of the king's violent subjugation of his enemies frame the imagery of the king and queen together. For example, the royal bedframe from Ugarit renders the eternal nature of the dynasty with a display of royal offspring nurtured by a goddess (see **figs. 4.32a–c**). Other Syro-Palestinian royal ivories draw together images of the subjugation of foreign enemies, the royal couple's intimate love, and the couple's expansive reign. These constellations of imagery cast the king and queen as the proper rulers of the cosmos.

#### 7.3.5 The Royal Couple in the Literary Imagery of Psalm 45

Psalm 45 also draws together literary imagery of violent subjugation with imagery of the king and queen's joint rule, intimate relations, and the production of royal progeny. The psalm's imagery creates a literary icon that constructs and maintains Judean royal identity. The royal rhetoric modeled by the psalm corresponds to similar constellations of imagery employed in

Egyptian, Neo-Assyrian, and Syro-Palestinian royal art. The poem envisions a world wherein the Judean king conquers his enemies and reigns over all nations with his queen in an everlasting dynasty. Similar to the dearth of artistic material portraying the royal couple in Egyptian and Neo-Assyrian royal art, among the RPss only Ps 45 displays the royal couple.

#### 7.4 The Rhetoric of Crushing Chaos to Extend Fertility

Royal art throughout the ANE pictures the king simultaneously as a warrior against chaos and as a source of life and abundance. Within ANE royal rhetoric, the king promulgates righteousness and life through the violent work of ordering the cosmos and righting wrong. Of course, different ANE empires picture the monarch's subdual of chaos and dissemination of fecundity with their own emphases.

##### 7.4.1 Subjugation and Fecundity in Egyptian Royal Art

Egyptian artistic rhetoric weaves together imagery of the king as ruler of the cosmos with imagery of the king as a source of justice, order, and life. Royal art displays such constellations of imagery to mark the king as one working alongside the gods to maintain *maat*. The king serves as the representative of the divine on earth, the conduit through whom divine life and order flows. The king judges the enemies he readies to smite, and the cosmos survives and flourishes because of his work (see **figs. 5.1–2, 5.4–7**). Egyptian art focuses these seemingly separate aspects of the monarch's role through the concept of *maat*. The king maintains *maat* by subduing chaos, righteously judging the peoples, and enlivening the land (see **figs. 5.1–11**). Depictions of natural life and abundance are rarer in Egyptian royal art than imagery of the king subduing the nations, and yet symbolic depictions of the king's maintenance of *maat* occur often

(see particularly **figs. 3.27a–b**). When it does appear, imagery of natural fertility is always connected to the king's subdual of chaos and reign over the cosmos (see **figs. 5.2, 5.3, 5.7**).

#### 7.4.2 Subjugation and Fecundity in Mesopotamian Royal Art

Mesopotamian royal art arrays the king as a subjugator of chaos and as a life-giving source of order in both the legal and natural realms. In fact, the king's role as righteous judge over his people was intimately connected to his subjugation of enemies and provision of life and fertility.<sup>23</sup> Justice and subjugation of foreign enemies parallel one another like two sides of a single coin. The monarch maintains justice by judging internal oppressors who violate order, while simultaneously bringing order to a chaotic cosmos by suppressing external enemies. The monarch's quelling of oppression and chaos both internally and externally establishes order and life. Hammurabi's stele (see **fig. 3.11**) connects the king's role as judge, warrior, and source of fertility in its visual and textual rhetoric. Neo-Assyrian royal rhetoric draws these themes together in palatial reliefs that picture the king ruling amidst a fruitful cosmos as a result of his martial action against the forces of chaos (see **figs. 2.12a–d, 3.31, 4.24, 5.12**). Justice and life, violence and fertility, universal reign and an ordered cosmos appear together as aspects of Mesopotamian royal rhetoric.

#### 7.4.3 Subjugation and Fecundity in Achaemenid Royal Art

Achaemenid royal art pictures the king as the omnipotent ruler of all peoples. The Persian king propagates an empire of peace, and he provides for his land by drawing abundant resources from all the nations that he rules. Persian royal art downplays the king's martial action, with the Behistun relief (**fig. 2.16**) as the primary example of the monarch ordering reality by subduing

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<sup>23</sup> See the discussion of the prologue to Hammurabi's law code in chapter 5.



chaotic enemies, servants of “the Lie.”<sup>24</sup> Achaemenid royal rhetoric focuses instead on the peace and abundance ushered in by the monarch’s universal reign. Royal art displays the king joyfully supported by all of the nations (see **figs. 3.18 and 3.34**). According to the Apadana reliefs the peoples of the earth eagerly bring tribute before the Persian king, thus supplying the empire with abundant resources (see **fig. 5.13**). Achaemenid royal art pictures the abundance of the empire as a result of the peace and stability propagated by the emperor’s rule.

#### 7.4.4 Subjugation and Fecundity in Syro-Palestinian Art

The arts of Syria-Palestine draw together imagery of the king’s reign over chaos with imagery of the land’s fertility, as seen in the minor arts (**figs. 5.15–16**) and a wall painting from Mari (**fig. 5.14**). Syro-Palestinian art portrays the king as one destined to order the cosmos by way of a just rule over all people. The king sustains a land filled with life and abundance by eradicating evil and chaos (see **figs. 5.15–16**). The monarch’s reign, empowered by the deity, provides cosmic fertility and abundance (see **figs. 5.14–15**).

#### 7.4.5 Subjugation and Fecundity in the Literary Imagery of the RPss

Many of the RPss picture the king’s just reign over the nations, and yet few connect the king’s reign to the provision of life and abundance. Psalm 101 ruminates on the ruler’s piety and righteousness (101:2–4). The king appears as one who favors the righteous (101:6) and banishes the wicked oppressor (101:3–5, 7–8). Yet, the psalm does not address the circumstances of the king’s reign or how his actions affect the fecundity of the nation. Psalm 132 connects the ideas of the king’s just and wide-ranging reign with abundance and fertility. The psalm asserts that those

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<sup>24</sup> See Root, *The King and Kingship*, 186.

kings who maintain God's covenant (ברית; 132:12) and decrees (עדות; 132:12) will reign from Zion and be able to defeat their enemies (132:18). Thus, the holy city will be blessed with food and provisions so that it becomes a place of joy (132:15–16). Even here, though, only Zion specifically receives a blessing of abundance as a result of the king's righteous conduct. The interconnection of the king's reign over the nations with his establishment of order, righteousness, and natural fertility occurs primarily in Psalm 72.

Psalm 72 strikes a different chord than other royal psalms. The poem envisions the fecundity of the cosmos and the blessing of the nations under the universal reign of Yahweh's king. The psalm presents a picture analogous to Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Achaemenid iconographies of kingship. Psalm 72 differs, though, in its representation of Yahweh rather than the king as the source of right order and conduct. According to Ps 72, the king reigns over the nations and supplies the cosmos with life when he follows the statutes established by the deity (72:1). Divine actors, of course, were not absent in ANE royal art. Yet, the psalm's characterization of the deity as lawgiver assigns a role held by kings in ANE royal rhetoric to the deity. The psalm draws on standard ANE royal rhetoric and adapts that rhetoric with its own emphasis on the deity as lawgiver rather than the king.

### **7.5 The Rhetoric of Royal Priestly Action Amidst Royal Violence**

In ANE art, the king straddles the human and divine realms, serving as a link between the two. In this way, the king represents the deity's rule on earth while simultaneously appearing as a representative for humanity before the gods. Thus, ANE royal ideologies tended to label the king as priest or cultic officiant, one who interceded with the gods on the people's behalf. The priestly nature of the royal role is emphasized and portrayed in different ways throughout the ANE. Yet in many contexts, the king's cultic action is paired with the king's martial action.

### 7.5.1 The King as Priest and Warrior in Egyptian Royal Art

In Egyptian royal art, the concepts of the king as priest and the king as warrior merge seamlessly, whether in the smiting scene (see **figs. 2.1a, 2.3, 4.16, 5.1, 6.5, 6.7**) or across multiple sculptures and reliefs within the artistic programs of entire temples (see **figs. 6.1; 3.27b, 5.6–7, and 6.2; 5.8 and 6.3–6.6**). The king's role as priest is prominent in Egyptian royal ideology. The king functions as the “‘lord of performing rituals’ (*nb irt-ḥt*), the high priest in every state temple, and the sole actor depicted on temple walls—offering to the gods, performing sacred rites, and officiating at state festivals.”<sup>25</sup> The pharaoh serves in the role of priest as he “was simultaneously human and divine, servant and delegate of the gods on the one hand, but himself the embodiment of divine kingship on the other.”<sup>26</sup> The Egyptian monarch is then the chief priests of all of the gods and their cults. In fact, the king alone is capable of being priest. The myriad of priests who carry out the daily cult rituals are embodiments of the king's priestly action.<sup>27</sup> The king alone mediates between his people and the divine realm. As the conduit between human and divine, only the king is authorized to build a temple, dedicate it to a deity, or give an offering to a temple or deity.<sup>28</sup>

The king maintains the human realm on behalf of the deity, and the king's provision for Egypt's deities results in the deities bestowing abundance and military success upon the king and his land.<sup>29</sup> In fact, the king's martial action in battle against human or animal enemies is the counterpart to the king's priestly service to the gods for his people. The two roles of the king,

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<sup>25</sup> Ellen F. Morris, “The Pharaoh and Pharaonic Office,” in *A Companion to Ancient Egypt: Volume I*, ed. Alan B. Lloyd (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 213.

<sup>26</sup> O'Connor, “Beloved of Maat, the Horizon of Re,” 265.

<sup>27</sup> See O'Connor, “Beloved of Maat, the Horizon of Re,” 265.

<sup>28</sup> See Morris, “The Pharaoh and Pharaonic Office,” 214.

<sup>29</sup> See Morris, “The Pharaoh and Pharaonic Office,” 214.

priest and warrior, together accomplish the king's work to maintain *maat* (for example, figs. **3.27b, 5.6–7, and 6.2**).<sup>30</sup> The king as priest provides the gods with food, gifts, and right order (see figs. **5.9, 6.2, 6.4a–b**), and the king as warrior combats and destroys the forces of chaos. Egyptian royal art displays the monarch's cultic and martial actions as aspects of the king's work to order and sustain the cosmos.<sup>31</sup>

### 7.5.2 The King as Priest and Warrior in Neo-Assyrian Royal Art

There is no stable trend concerning the king's connection to the divine world or his status as priest in ancient Mesopotamia. As discussed above and at length in chapter 3, Mesopotamian texts only describe the king as divine in a few cases, often at times of great change.<sup>32</sup> The visual record implies the king's association with the deities and his inclusion in the divine realm more often than texts suggest, and yet the king is not often represented as a divine actor in royal art either.<sup>33</sup>

Despite this fact, the Mesopotamian king consistently holds the role of conduit between the divine and human realms. Different Mesopotamian kingdoms frame the king's role as representative before the gods in distinct ways. For example, Neo-Babylonian royal rhetoric depicts the king as supporter of the gods rather than as a priest.<sup>34</sup> The high priest of Marduk acted with authority over the king during the king's yearly investiture at the New Year's festival, and Neo-Babylonian art only portrays kings in the presence of deities or divine images with

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<sup>30</sup> See Assmann, "State and Religion in the New Kingdom," 57–66.

<sup>31</sup> Again, though many priests throughout Egypt carried out the day to day priestly work of multiple cults, as reported in administrative documents and displayed in some temple and tomb iconography, royal art and rhetoric portrays only the king as priest.

<sup>32</sup> For example, the move of multiple city-states to nation-state under Naram-Sin's reign. See Winter, "Touched by the Gods," 75–102; Machinist, "Kingship and Divinity," 152–88.

<sup>33</sup> See Winter, "Touched by the Gods," 87–88.

<sup>34</sup> Caroline Waerzeggers, "The Pious King: Royal Patronage of Temples," in *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture*, ed. Karen Radner and Eleanor Robson, Oxford Handbooks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199557301.013.0034.

priests acting as intercessors.<sup>35</sup> According to Caroline Waerzeggers, Neo-Babylonian textual and visual rhetoric pictures the relationship of king to priest and deity as “a triangle... between god, king, and priest, with the last occupying the role of intercessor who negotiated the gift of kingship.”<sup>36</sup> Neo-Babylonian artistic rhetoric imagines the king’s cultic role in a distinct fashion from the artistic rhetoric of Egypt.

Neo-Assyrian royal ideology, though, openly portrays priestly and cultic action as a vital aspect of the king’s role. Textual and artistic rhetoric conceives of the Assyrian king as a priest. The monarch holds priestly titles and performs sacerdotal rituals.<sup>37</sup> In palace reliefs, stone carvings, and obelisks the king performs various cultic duties including acts of worship (see **figs. 3.14–16**), the symbolic mediation of life and abundance (see **fig. 3.31**), and acts of sacrifice and libation (see **figs. 3.32, 6.8a–b**).<sup>38</sup> Like the Egyptian pharaoh, the Neo-Assyrian ruler functions as priest in his role as representative before the divine. Similarly, too, the Assyrian king acts as both priest and military leader, one who pleases the gods with proper ritual action and by defeating Assyria’s enemies (see **figs. 3.30a–b, 6.9**). Through these roles, the king provides his land with life, abundance, and stability. Unlike Egyptian royal rhetoric, though, Assyrian royal rhetoric does not limit the priestly role to the king alone. Neo-Assyrian royal art displays various types of priestly figures performing cultic actions alongside the king or alone without the king.<sup>39</sup>

Like the king, priests appear in Neo-Assyrian royal art amidst contexts of violence, offering sacrifices after a victory in battle, and in contexts not directly associated with violence. In Egyptian royal art, the king alone appears as cultic mediator performing priestly acts in the

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<sup>35</sup> Wilfred G. Lambert, “Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia,” in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, 64–66; Waerzeggers, “The Pious King,” 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199557301.013.0034.

<sup>36</sup> Waerzeggers, “The Pious King,” 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199557301.013.0034.

<sup>37</sup> Ataç, “Visual Formula and Meaning,” 87; Machinist, “Kingship and Divinity,” 154–59; Waerzeggers, “The Pious King,” 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199557301.013.0034.

<sup>38</sup> Reade, “Religious Ritual in Assyrian Sculpture,” 7–61.

<sup>39</sup> Reade, “Religious Ritual in Assyrian Sculpture,” 7–61, particularly 13–22.

presence of Egypt's deities. Yet, Neo-Assyrian royal art displays both the king and various priestly figures attending to the cultic work of the state. The priestly role extends beyond the royal persona. In Neo-Assyrian royal art the king functions as one priest, even the foremost priest, among many priests who serve the nation's gods.<sup>40</sup> Neo-Assyrian royal art portrays the king as one who upholds the cosmos and maintains a right relationship with Assyria's deities and its people through priestly and militaristic actions.

### 7.5.3 The King as Priest and Warrior in Achaemenid Royal Art

A paucity of textual and visual evidence exists from which to reconstruct the religious system and practices of the Achaemenids.<sup>41</sup> Darius's tomb façade at Naqsh-e Rostam is one of the few pieces of evidence offering a glimpse into how Achaemenid royal ideology intersects with the cult (see **fig. 3.34**). The tomb façade's imagery draws from Assyrian imagery of Ashur before the king in the solar disc and from Babylonian imagery of figures worshipping before altars surmounted by astral symbols.<sup>42</sup> The tomb display blends these motifs to present new conceptions of the king and deity's relationship.

On the façade, the king and deity mirror one another in action and dress, so that the king appears closely related to the deity who empowers his reign.<sup>43</sup> The display portrays the king before the fire altar, implying the king's active role in cultic action.<sup>44</sup> Again drawing on early Neo-Assyrian motifs, the king's cultic action is framed with hints towards the king's martial

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<sup>40</sup> See Reade, "Religious Ritual in Assyrian Sculpture," 7–61.

<sup>41</sup> See Root, 163. For recent reconstructions drawing from royal inscriptions and aspects of Achaemenid iconography, see Bruce Lincoln, "The Role of Religion in Achaemenian Imperialism," in *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond*, ed. Nicole Brisch, OIS 4 (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2008), 221–33; Avram R. Shannon, "The Achaemenid Kings and the Worship of Ahura Mazda: Proto-Zoroastrianism in the Persian Empire," *Studia Antiqua* 5 (2007): 79–85.

<sup>42</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 169–78.

<sup>43</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 171–76.

<sup>44</sup> Root, *The King and Kingship*, 178–81.

action. The king holds his bow down at his side while the nations that he has subdued support him upon the dais. Yet, departing from Egyptian and Neo-Assyrian tropes, the façade depicts the king's martial prowess with symbols of the nations subdued and at peace as they joyously support the king. The king's martial action is communicated with imagery of the *Pax Persica*. Despite the lack of resources, we can reasonably conclude that, at least under Darius I, Achaemenid royal rhetoric imagined the king as both cultic intercessor and universal ruler.

#### 7.5.4 The King as Priest and Warrior in Syro-Palestinian Art

Syro-Palestinian minor arts draw on Egyptian and Mesopotamian motifs to similarly display the king as priest. Various stamp and cylinder seals (see **figs. 6.10–11b**) show the king worshipping before a deity, whether in Egyptianized (**fig. 6.10**) or Mesopotamian style (**figs. 6.11a–b**). In the cylinder seals particularly, the monarch stands before an altar in a position of cultic actor.<sup>45</sup> The various renditions of the king in the smiting posture before a deity that occur across Syria-Palestine from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age (eg. **figs. 6.12–16**) hint that the king's role as warrior was imbued with cultic significance, as the smiting symbol was in Egyptian royal art.

#### 7.5.5 The King as Priest and Warrior in the Literary Imagery of Psalm 110

The king's priestly role, merely implied by the smiting scene in Syro-Palestinian minor arts, is on full display in the literary imagery of Psalm 110. Psalm 110's literary imagery is congruent with royal art throughout the ANE. The psalm describes the king as priest (110:4) amidst literary imagery of the king and deity at war against the nation's enemies (110:1–3, 5–7). This binding of the king's roles as priest and warrior is also represented in ANE art. Medinet Habu encases imagery of the king as priest upon its inner courts while images of the king as warrior appear

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<sup>45</sup> See Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 290.

upon its outer courts and walls (see **figs. 6.3–6.6, 5.8**). Likewise, the Northwest Palace's throne room reliefs surround two central depictions of the king as priest with a multitude of reliefs displaying the king and deity's warrior prowess (see **figs. 3.30–3.32, 6.9**).

Psalm 110 similarly constructs an icon of Judahite kingship that simultaneously communicates the monarch's key roles as priest and warrior. The psalm emphasizes the deity's action in martial encounters. Yet, the psalm still expresses the king's role in battle alongside Yahweh. ANE royal art often displays the king and deity together in battle, and ANE royal texts emphasize the deity's empowerment of the king's martial success. So too Psalm 110 reflects on the king's martial action by picturing the deity as the ultimate source of the king's power and universal rule. Psalm 110 projects an image of kingship in which the roles of warrior and priest merge in the ideal king.

## **7.6 Reflections: The Royal Psalms as Judean Royal Icons**

### **7.6.1 Reimagining the Royal Psalms: Icons of Royal Identity**

The RPss employ dense constellations of imagery to picture Yahweh and Yahweh's king ruling together over the entire cosmos. Their sovereignty supports the people of Judah, the nations, and the earth itself. Like ANE royal art, the RPss display the king in close relationship with the national deity. These psalms shaped the identities of their readers and hearers by portraying the monarchy as powerful and stable. The rhetoric of the RPss thus sustains particular relationships between king and deity, king and the nations, and deity and people. This rhetoric responds to explicit or implied social anxieties.

The rhetorical worlds created by the RPss, like those of ANE royal art, shaped royal and social identities. They responded to communal anxieties. The RPss comfort and encourage the king with promises of universal reign, long life, and a lasting dynasty if the king adheres to



Yahweh and right practice (e.g. Pss 2; 21:2–8; 45:3–17; 72:1, 18; 110:1–3). At the same time, the RPss often evoke a communal response by calling on those who worship Yahweh to also praise, submit to, and support Yahweh’s chosen king (e.g. Pss 2:10–12; 21:14; 45:18; 72:8–11, 16–17). Thus, the RPss draw conceptual models and imagery from their socio-historical contexts—models and imagery that resemble those employed within ANE royal artistic programs—to construct rhetorical worlds in which the ideology of kingship made sense.

The RPss employ rhetorical strategies that parallel visual strategies seen in different examples drawn from ANE royal art. For example, the wall reliefs in Ashurnarsipal II’s throne room exhibit a similar rhetorical strategy to that of the literary imagery of Psalm 110. The wall reliefs of the throne room depict the king in a cultic role on a few central reliefs placed behind the throne and across from the main entrance. The numerous other reliefs of the throne room portray scenes of the king defeating foreign enemies and animals with the deity at his side in the winged sun disc. Psalm 110 also identifies the king as priest (v. 4) amidst multiple images of the king and deity as warriors (vv. 1–2, 5–6). Identifying the analogous royal rhetoric employed in Neo-Assyrian and Egyptian art clarifies issues that have long faced interpreters of Ps 110. The comparison of rhetorical strategies also allows for scholars to reimagine how the psalm might have functioned in ancient Judah. The RPss employed rhetorical strategies comparable to the visual programs that surrounded them for similar rhetorical goals. In this way, they functioned as Judean royal icons.

#### 7.6.2 Defining the Rhetoric of Royal Psalms and ANE Royal Art

The comparative and rhetorical analyses of this study open up a new way of viewing the RPss. One productive way to view the royal psalms is as icons in their own right, that is, as complex constellations of imagery that sustain royal identities and deal with societal anxieties. The

kingdom of Judah never had the resources to construct monumental artistic programs to display a visual royal rhetoric. Yet, we might conceive of the RPss as a functional equivalent to those monumental artistic programs. The iconic structures created by the literary imagery of the RPss functioned as Judah's royal art. Though I cannot prove that these poems were read aloud to the king, the royal court, or the general populace for such a purpose, I contend that the comparative analysis of the previous chapters demonstrates the productivity of viewing the RPss from this angle. The RPss function as royal icons.

As discussed in chapter 1, ANE royal art and the RPss employ a rhetoric that “makes evident” a reality rather than “giving evidence” for a right way of viewing the world.<sup>46</sup> The rhetoric of the RPss and ANE royal art is not judicial, deliberative, or even epideictic.<sup>47</sup> Neither is the rhetoric of the poems and artistic programs surveyed in the previous chapters epiphanic with a focus on making known through the relation of a vivid testimony or visionary experience.<sup>48</sup> Rather, in light of the analyses above, I propose that we might better understand the rhetorical style employed by the RPss and by ANE royal art as iconic rhetoric. Iconic rhetoric projects a vision of reality in dense constellations of literary or artistic imagery. ANE royal art and the RPss present icons of kingship to their audiences and picture a reality in which rule of the king reflects a properly ordered cosmos. An analytic category of iconic rhetoric allows for a broadening of rhetorical criticism. Analyzing iconic rhetoric allows me to view images and architectural programs as tools to persuade and shape identity. As the above rhetorical analyses

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<sup>46</sup> Drawing on Carol Newsom's language (see “The Rhetoric of Jewish Apocalyptic Literature,” 72–73).

<sup>47</sup> Though, in terms of classical Greek categories the RPss fall closest to the category of epideictic, with Pss like Ps 45 overlapping significantly with this category.

<sup>48</sup> As Newsom describes the rhetoric of apocalyptic literature (see Newsom, “The Rhetoric of Jewish Apocalyptic Literature,” 73).

of ANE artistic and textual data have shown, rhetorical critics need not limit rhetorical analysis to verbal/textual practices and phenomena.

### 7.6.3 Reflections on Methodological Contributions

In chapter 1, I outlined how this study draws on the iconographic-biblical approach. I also framed how the study addresses questions raised by the form-critical approach and raises new ways of contextualizing the RPss. Through the lens of rhetorical criticism, the inductive studies in chapters 2–6 and the thematic study in chapter 7 expands each of these methodological discourses.

#### *7.6.3.1 Expanding the Iconographic-Biblical Approach*

The study as a whole presents theoretical justification for expanding the ways iconographic-biblical exegesis is practiced by biblical scholars. It also provides practical examples grounded in the study of the RPss and ANE royal art. Chapters 2–6 respond to Bonfiglio’s call for scholars of the biblical text and ANE iconography to move beyond the consideration of iconographical content alone to attend to how other aspects of art signify. The interpretations of Pss 2, 21, 45, 72, and 110 model ways of expanding the iconographic-biblical approach to a wholistic visual-exegetical approach.<sup>49</sup> Following Irene Winter and Zainab Bahrani, chapters 2–7 analyze the rhetoric of ANE art to demonstrate how such attention is generative in the comparison of textual and artistic rhetorics. The study models how the comparison of visual and textual rhetoric expands the comparative project. I also suspect that future work might show how attention to

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<sup>49</sup> As noted in chapter 1, I certainly build on interpretive moves and frameworks already modeled in the work of biblical scholars like Brent A. Strawn, Joel M. LeMon, and Ryan Bonfiglio and scholars of ANE art like Irene J. Winter, Margaret Cool Root, and Zainab Bahrani. With chapters 2 – 6, I attempt to model an analysis of art and text that attends to rhetoric. My work does not present a new method or a comprehensive visual-exegetical approach. Rather this study models one direction in which such an approach might move to analyze and compare visual and textual data with exemplars drawn from a specific set of visual (ANE royal art) and textual (RPss) data.

both congruence in pictorial content and congruence in rhetoric might help in delimiting visual comparative material in the interpretation of textual imagery.

#### *7.6.3.2 Supporting Broader Approaches to Rhetoric with Visual and Textual Data from the ANE*

This study draws on the language and interpretive frameworks offered by a rhetorical-critical approach to compare and interpret ANE royal art and the RPss. My analysis of these datasets adds support to recent scholarship that calls for reframing the category and study of rhetoric to encompass more than simply verbal or textual data. Furthermore, in working with ANE royal art and the RPss, I have proposed the label of iconic rhetoric as a specific type of rhetoric that draws on evocative imagery to model a reality in order to shape identity rather than employing argument to do so. I contend that both texts and material objects might employ iconic rhetoric to project a vision of reality.

#### *7.6.3.3 Expanding How We Contextualize the Royal Psalms: Issues of Identity and Function*

Finally, this study interprets the RPss by viewing their imagery, rather than only reading them as collections of metaphorical language. By contextualizing RPss 2, 21, 45, 72, and 110 within the imagery of royal artistic programs from across the ANE, the previous chapters contend for viewing these poems as icons, complex constellations of imagery that create a rhetorical world to sustain royal identities and deal with societal anxieties. Drawing upon ANE royal artistic data to interpret the RPss allows for new approaches to answering long-standing interpretive questions, including those of genre and social function. Though I only began the work of proposing alternative models for analyzing the social location and function of the RPss in ancient Judah, this study makes a case for revisiting such questions in future work concerning the genre and function of the RPss.

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