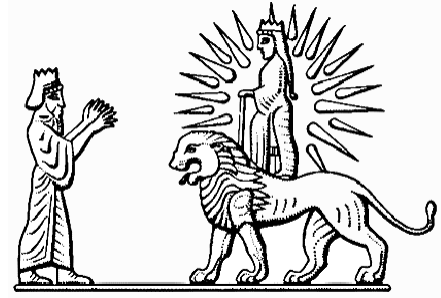


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BEATE PONGRATZ-LEISTEN Princeton

“Lying King” and “False Prophet”: the Intercultural Transfer of a Rhetorical Device within Ancient Near Eastern Ideologies

*Dedicated to Wolfgang Röllig
for his Seventieth Birthday*

The language of power as a coherent system of various rhetorical devices, subtly interwoven for the single purpose of acquiring or maintaining a specific political status quo, still remains a field in need of thorough research.¹ In the first millennium B.C. the geographical area of the Mediterranean, the Fertile Crescent, and Persia shared an intellectual koinè. The élites of the respective empires were in constant contact, sharing the same pool of ideas and borrowing from each other those cultural concepts and institutions that proved to be successful for political power. What was distinctive about each intellectual and political élite were the ways in which it patterned these concepts.

While the second half of the second millennium B.C. is characterized by an “intensive interaction of great politico-territorial formations, that reciprocally acknowledge their existence,”² the history of the first millennium, and espe-

cially the seventh century B.C., is determined by Assyria’s direct or indirect domination of the whole Fertile Crescent reaching from the Arabian-Persian Gulf up to Anatolia. This political domination, mainly grounded in military achievements and networks of communication,³ produced an intensive interaction between Assyria and the adjacent territories. International treaties, trade, diplomatic marriages, deportations of craftsmen, and the education of the élite of defeated enemies at the Assyrian court engendered a dynamic intercultural exchange of figurative and ideological policies, all of which had a formative impact on the development of the ideology of the Assyrian empire.

The rapid growth of the Assyrian state to imperial dimensions within the first half of the first millennium represented a challenge to the political discourse of the ruling élite. As P. Machinist put it: “the state was not just a bureaucratic appara-

¹ I am most grateful to my colleagues at the symposium in Chicago, from Tübingen University, at Yale, and to M. Davis and Th. Podella for their stimulating discussion of the ideas expressed here.

² C. Zaccagnini, “The Forms of Alliance and Subjugation in the Near East of the Late Bronze Age,” in:

A. Panaino & G. Pettinato (eds.), *MELAMMU SYMPOSIA III* (Milano 2002) ISBN 88-8483-107-5

L. Canfora/M. Liverani/C. Zaccagnini (eds.), *I trattati nel mondo antico. Forma, ideologia, funzione* (Rome, 1990) 37.

³ M. Liverani, “The Growth of the Assyrian Empire in the Habur/Middle Euphrates Area,” *AAAS* 1984, 107-115.

tus for the exchange – often forced – of goods and persons, but an arena for the communication of ideas, which in turn provided the energy and lubrication to keep the state functioning.”⁴

Architecture, iconography, ritual and text were the principal media used by the Assyrians to build a coherent ideological system expressing a particular self-understanding and world-view of the political élite. Once formulated, this ideology had a great impact on the political systems, military policies and ideologies of the contiguous territories as well as of the empires to follow.⁵

Recently, the German Old Testament scholar M. Weippert claimed a common Near Eastern or at least Syrian-Mesopotamian prophetic language and showed the interdependencies of formulas concerning Neo-Assyrian and Old Testament prophetism.⁶ In the following I would like to show that the same is true for a specific aspect of the rhetoric of ideology. Rhetorics of power belong in the larger context of propaganda, a subject that has received much attention from sociologists and historians in the last few decades.⁷ They should be approached therefore, as with propaganda, with a focus on the following questions:⁸ 1) What is the social and political background? 2) Who is the agent? 3) Who is the ad-

dressee? 4) What goal is pursued? 5) What kind of media and devices are used? 6) Can we grasp the effects of the rhetoric and how they did last?

With these questions in mind I will restrict myself to a small piece of ideological discourse, namely the motif of the “lie” and its role in the political rhetoric of the Assyrian and Persian ideologies, as well as in the theological discourse of the prophets of the Old Testament. Although one may claim that “lying” is a general human phenomenon,⁹ its use as a literary device within political or religious rhetoric is something special, to be evaluated independently of moral judgment. I will show that the use of this motif emerged out of similar contexts of interaction among social groups proclaiming diverging interests, be they political or religious, and that, consequently, a specific historical situation provoked the use of this motif.

Methodologically, my concept of intercultural transfer of ideologies is that of a deliberate and conscious *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, not that of a *Wirkungsgeschichte*.¹⁰ While *Rezeptionsgeschichte* presupposes the absolutely free decision between what a respective user wants to select and adapt to his own cultural system and what he does not, and understands reception as a creative and pro-

⁴ P. Machinist, “Assyrians on Assyria in the First Millennium B.C.,” in: K. Raaflaub (ed.), *Anfänge politischen Denkens in der Antike* (Oldenbourg, 1993) 78.

⁵ S. Dalley (ed.), *Legacy of Mesopotamia* (Oxford, 1998).

⁶ M. Weippert, «Ich bin Jahwe» – «Ich bin Ištar von Arbel», in B. Huwlyer (ed.), *Prophetie und Psalmen*, Festschrift Klaus Seybold, *AOAT* 280 (Münster, 2001) 31-59.

⁷ W. Schieder/C. Dipper, “Propaganda,” in: *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, vol. 5 (Stuttgart, 1984) 69-112; U. Daniel/W. Siemann (eds.), *Propaganda. Meinungskampf, Verführung und politische Sinnstiftung 1789-1989* (Frankfurt, 1994).

⁸ For the asking of similar questions in the context of

myth and propaganda, see J. N. Bremmer, “Myth as Propaganda: Athens and Sparta,” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 117 (1997) 9-16; M. Liverani, “The Ideology of the Assyrian Empire,” in: M.T. Larsen (ed.), *Power and Propaganda* (Copenhagen, 1979) 297-317; idem, *Prestige and Interest* (Padova, 1990) 28f.

⁹ See for example the book recently published by E. Sullivan, *The Concise Book of Lying* (New York, 2001).

¹⁰ For the difference, see G. Ahn, *Monotheismus in Israel und Iran. Methodologische und historiographische Überlegungen zur Frage nach dem Einfluß des Zoroastrismus auf das nachexilische Judentum*, Habilitationsschrift (Bonn, 1994) 62ff.

ductive process, *Wirkungsgeschichte* is mainly concerned with research on impact and dependencies.¹¹ This means that I depart from a pure philological text-immanent reception of concepts in order to trace the historical conditions provoking the migration and intercultural adaptation of concepts.¹²

First of all, a brief look at the terminology is in order. In Sumerian and Akkadian language the motif of “lying” can imply different actions and consequently be expressed by two different terms or formulas: either 1) “to tell untruthful things” in general, or 2) “to tell untruthful things” as used synonymously with “to tell evil things” or “to lie,” whereby in the latter case this formula belongs to juridical terminology and is used in the context of “treachery” or “rebellion” against the Mesopotamian king. While W. L. Moran many years ago brought the positive terms, such as “love” and “friendship,”¹³ of the treaty language into the fore, this study will contribute to its negative components.

The first concept, juxtaposing *surrū* and *kēnu* “lie” and “true” concerns the

veracity of information, a statement or report. It is formulated by the Akkadian king, Rimuš, in order to emphasize the veracity of his military reports,¹⁴ a motif which in the later periods is adopted by king Šulgi of Ur,¹⁵ and Išme-Dagan,¹⁶ and much later by Nabopolassar,¹⁷ and which is a well-known motif in wisdom literature. In the texts of royal self-presentation, this concept of veracity serves to characterize the sincerity of the king himself while the concept of the lie as being rebellious, expressed either by “lie” or “telling evil/untruthful things” or “planning evil things,” is always used by the king to characterize his enemies. In the following, I will focus exclusively on this second concept of the lie in the context of rebellion and its role as a literary device to justify the king’s military reaction. While research has been done on the terminology of war and objects connected with it in the Northwest Semitic languages,¹⁸ and on the ideological formulas justifying going to war in Assyrian inscriptions,¹⁹ the motif of lie in its diachronic and synchronic dimensions has not yet been studied.

¹¹ M. Stausberg, *Faszination Zarathustra. Zoroaster und die Europäische Religionsgeschichte der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin/New York, 1998) 3.

¹² On this problem see Ahn 1994, 31ff.

¹³ W. L. Moran, “The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy,” *CBQ* 25 (1963) 77-87; *idem*, “A Note on the Treaty Terminology of the Sefire Stelas,” *JNES* 22 (1963) 173-176.

¹⁴ Rimuš C 1 74-79: ^dUTU ù ^dA-ba₄ ú-má la sú-ra-tim lu kí-ni-iš-ma, for further references see B. Kienast/W. Sommerfeld, *Glossar zu den altakkadischen Königsinschriften*, *FAOS* 8 (Stuttgart, 1994) 272 s.v. *surrātum*.

¹⁵ Šulgi E (UMBS X/2 =TCL XV 14, see J. Klein, *Three Šulgi Hymns* (Ramat Gan, 1981) 40 with n.70: Šulgi E:

“As many lines as there may be in my songs,

None of them is false, (all of them) are verily true!”

¹⁶ See Išme-Dagan A 381-383; D. R. Frayne, “New Light on the Reign of Ishme-Dagan,” *ZA* 88 (1998) 6-44.

¹⁷ See the Nabopolassar inscription describing his restoration of the inner wall of Babylon, F. N. H. al-Rawi, “Nabopolassar’s Restoration Work on the Wall Imgur-Enlil at Babylon,” *Iraq* 47 (1985) iii 15 *šumma i-nim-ma-a-a sur-ra-tu-ma la ka-a-a-an-tu-um-ma* “(I swear by Marduk ...) that my words are not false but that they are true.”

¹⁸ M. Snycezer, “La terminologie de la guerre et de la conquête dans l’épigraphie ouest-sémitique,” in: *Guerre et conquête dans le Proche-Orient Ancien*, Actes de la table ronde du 14 novembre 1998 organisée par l’URA 1062, «Études Sémitiques» édités par L. Nehmé (Paris, 1999) 93-103.

¹⁹ M. Liverani, “The Ideology of the Assyrian Empire,” in: M. T. Larsen (ed.), *Power and Propaganda* (Copenhagen 1979) 297-317; B. Oded, *War, Peace and Empire. Justifications for War in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions* (Wiesbaden, 1992); E. Cancik-Kirschbaum, “Rechtfertigung von politischem Handeln in Assyrien im 13./12. Jh. v.Chr.,” in: B. Pongratz-Leisten et al. (eds.), *Ana šadī Labnani lū allik*, Fs W. Röllig (Münster, 1997) 69-77.

The Evidence in Old Akkadian and Ur III Texts

The motif of “lying” in the sense of being “rebellious” can already be found for the first time in an inscription of Sargon of Akkade in the second half of the third millennium B.C. Since it has already entered the text genre of royal in-

Sargon C 9²⁰

43 [in]
 44 30[+4 KAS.ŠUDUN]
 45 iš₁-ar
 46 URU^{ki}.URU^[ki]
 47 sà-ar-ru-t[im]

scriptions, which serve the ideological self-presentation of the kings, it can be classified as a concept, a rhetorical device used to legitimate the military action of the king.

in
 34 battles
 he was victorious.
 The rebellious (lit.: lying) cities ...

In contrast to the Akkadian tradition which explicitly uses the term “lying” in the context of a rebellion against the king, the Ur III texts refer to the rebellious land as ki-bal, never, as far as I can see, using explicitly the motif of lie. Instead, it seems that the expression “to speak evil” is used to depict the hostility either of external or internal enemies. It is very difficult to determine exactly

Šulgi A²¹

22 inim-gi-na-bi ḥa-ma-da-sá-àm
 23 nì-si-sá-e ki ḥa-ba-ág-gá-àm
 24 nì-ne-ru-e ki la-ba-ra-ág-gá-àm
 25 inim-nì-ne-ru-du₁-ga ḥul ḥa-ba-ra-gig-ga-àm

22 Its true/rightful words I strive to attain.
 23 Justice is what I love.
 24 Fraudulent action that I do not love.
 25 Fraudulent words are what I hate.

Gudea, for instance, refers to the threat of disloyalty in general when he depicts

whether the breaching of a treaty and disloyalty are implied or whether this expression denotes general disobedience, or whether disobedience typically equals disloyalty. Thus Šulgi certainly evokes both disobedience in the more general sense and disloyalty, emphasizing his role as “king of justice” when he depicts himself as follows:

himself as the guardian of the cult and political and social order:

²⁰ I.J. Gelb (†)/B. Kienast, *Die altakkadischen Königsinschriften des dritten Jahrtausends v.Chr.* (Stuttgart, 1990) 183.

²¹ J. Klein, *Three Šulgi Hymns* (Ramat-Gan, 1981) 190.

CylB xviii 2-3

2 eme-niġ-ḥul-da inim ba-da-kúr
 3 níġ-érim é-ba im-ma-an-g[i₄]

2 He changed the words of evil-speaking tongue,
 3 He turned everything hostile away from the temple.

And Hammurabi in the prologue to his law collection clearly evokes both aspects by introducing himself as a king who by the command of the gods “established truth (*kittu*) and justice (*mīšaru*)

as the declaration of the land.”²²

What needs to be stressed is the judicial connotation of acting righteously and justly which will be of major importance in the context of treaty-breaking.

The Old Babylonian Evidence

The development of the rhetorical device of the lie in the sense of being rebellious, that is, the chain of argumentation and its semantic frame, are only to be found in the epistolary literature of the second millennium B.C. Interestingly, the evidence is restricted to the geographical area of Northern Mesopotamia and Syria, that is, the archives of Shemshāra located east of Mosul in today’s Southern Kurdistan and Mari on the Middle Euphrates, as well as the archives of Amarna reflecting the political history of the Levant in the 14th century B.C.

At the beginning of the second millennium, the evidence for the motif of lying in the context of treachery is attested in the epistolary literature from Shemshāra. Southern Kurdistan has always been an area upon which the Assyrians looked with interest.²³ Because of its fertility, control of the Sherizor Plain was already a major concern by the time of king Šamšī-Adad I. It is from the end of his

reign that the Shemshāra archives attest to the importance he attributed to it. Šušarra/Shemshāra was the administrative center for an area called *māt Utēm*,²⁴ “which included the Rania plain with the strategic passage through the mountains at Darband-i-Ramkan.” It was governed by the local ruler Kuwari, who originally had entered into an alliance with the rulers of the Turukkeans. Kuwari’s main obligation towards them was the delivery of grain and flour. This local system of political alliances seems to have broken down under pressure of the Gutians and Šamšī-Adad, in connection with his son Išme-Dagan, viceroy of Ekallātum. The local ruler Kuwari switched his allegiance from the Turukkeans in the East, and became a vassal of Šamšī-Adad in order to save himself from the Gutian advance.²⁵ In the face of the Gutian invasion, the Turukkeans moved westwards. Apparently Kuwari was instructed to send them to Šubat-Enlil, the residence of Šamšī-Adad, in order to resettle the

²² Codex Hammurabi v 22-24, see M. Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor* (Atlanta, 1997, 2nd edition) 81.

²³ J. Laessøe, *The Shemshāra Tablets* (Copenhagen,

1959) 17.

²⁴ J. Eidem, *The Shemshāra Archives 2. The Administrative Texts* (Copenhagen, 1992) 17.

²⁵ Eidem 1992, 18.

stream of refugees coming out of the Zagros.

The letter SH 920 which follows, was sent by an unknown sender to Kuwari and reflects the situation of Šamšī-Adad after his conquest of Šušarra. The Gutian leader Endušše assures Kuwari there will

§ 2 SH 920²⁶

4 DUMU *ši-ip-ri ša Qú-ti-i*
 5 *ša i-na Ši-ik-ša-am-bi-im^{ki} wa-aš-bu*
 6 *a-na ši-ri-ja il-li-kam-ma*
 7 *ki-a-am iq-bi-im um-ma-mi*
 8 ^{lú}*Qú-tu-ú En-du-uš-še*
 9 *ki-a-am iq-bi-im um-ma-mi*
 10 *šum-ma ša-bu-um ša^dUTU-ši-^dIM a-bi-ja*
 11 *a-na Ši-ik-ša-am-bi-im^{ki} is-sà-an-qa-am*
 12 GIŠ.TUKUL.ḪI.A *la te-ep-pé-ša*
ma-ti-ma a-na a-bi-ja ú-ul u-ga-la-al
 13 *šum-ma wa-ša-am iq-ta-bu-ni-ik-ku-nu-ši-im*
 14 *še-e šum-ma iq-ta-bu-nu-ku-nu-ši-im ši-ba*
 15 *an-ni-tam iq-bi-im*
 16 *a-wa-tu-šu-nu ki-na ù sà-ar-ra*
 17 *ma-an-nu-um lu-ú i-de*

The letter of Shemshāra unfolds the whole theme (“*Wortfeld*”) as well as the semantic frame of the lie. The word *abu*, “father,” applied to Šamšī-Adad refers to a treaty (*riksu* or *mamītu*) which is sworn in the name of the gods. Its violation inevitably implies a breach with the king, expressed by the verb *gullulu*, “to commit a misdeed.” Hence “lie” (*awātu sarru*) implies speech as well as action, a phenomenon that has been already noted by the linguist Harald Weinrich.²⁷ The counterpart of *sarru* is *kīnu*, which stands not only for “truthful” but also for “trust-

be no hostile interference as a consequence of this conquest.

The letter provides evidence for the theme of speaking truthfully or falsely in tandem with treacherous behavior in military context:

A messenger from the Gutians,
 who are in Šikšambum
 came to me
 and said as follows:
 The Gutian Endušše
 said to me as follows:
 “When the army of Šamšī-Adad, my
 father,
 draws near Šikšambum,
 do not engage in battle, (for)
 I will never commit a misdeed against
 my father.
 If they tell you to leave,
 leave, if they tell you, stay!”
 This he told me.
 Whether their words are trustworthy or
 treacherous,
 who knows.

worthy” and “loyal.” The fact that “lie” (*sarru*) implies a treacherous action is corroborated by another letter (SH 861),²⁸ in which it is juxtaposed with a verb meaning “to change allegiance” (*muttablakattu* “rebellious” which derives from the root *nabalkutu*).

The whole semantic context may be elucidated by the so-called “protocôle des bédouins” from the city of Mari, which prescribes the behavior of the nomadic sheiks towards the king of Mari in times of war:

²⁶ Laessøe 1959, 32-37.

²⁷ H. Weinrich, *Linguistik der Lüge* (München, 2000) 14ff.

²⁸ Laessøe 1959, 57, SH 861 l.13: *sà-ar-ru mu-ut-ta-ab-la-ka-tu* “treacherous and rebellious they are.”

§ 3 M.6060²⁹

1' [šum-ma na-ak-rum] im-ḥa-aš [...]	“In case the enemy attacks ...
2' [la ap-pa-ra-š]i-du ù pa-da-[nam]	I swear I will not flee and follow a bad
3' la da-mi-iq]-tam la na-wi-ir-tam ¹ la ¹ [...]	and shameful path ...
...	
<hr/>	
6' [ù] uz-na-ia a-na ma-da- ¹ ri ¹ -ia	I will heed my lords
7' [ù pí]-ir-ḥi-šū-nu i-ba-aš-še-e ¹ ú-lu-ma ¹	and their descendants ...
...	...
15' [x x x x ni]-iš dingir-meš-ia an-ni- ¹ im ¹	... That oath,
16' [ša ² a]-na zi-im-ri-li-im be-l[i-ia]	which I have sworn to Zimrilim, my
	lord,
17' du[mu I]a-aḥ-du-li-im lugal ma-ri ^{ki}	son of Jaḥdun-Lim, king of Mari
18' ù ma-a-at Ḥa-na-meš áz-ku-ru	and the land of Ḥana,
19' ¹ la ¹ ú-še-pu-ma	I will not transgress.
20' [a-n]a Zi-im-ri-li-im be-lí-ia	Against Zimrilim, my lord,
21' [la ú]-ga-la-lu ú-lu a-wa-tam la da-mi-iq-tam	I will not commit a misdeed, and the
	hostile word
22' [ša] pí-i ¹ Ḥa-na-meš ša na-we-e-im	of the nomads of the steppe
23' [ú-lu]-ma i-na pí-i lú-meš ša a-la-ni	or of people of the cities,
24' [ša e-še] ₂₀ -mu-ú um-ma-mi Zi-im-ri-li-im	which I hear, saying: “Zimrilim
25' [ù pí]-ri-iḥ-šū ú-ul i-ša-ap-p[a]-r[u]/-né-[ti]	and his descendants will not govern us
	anymore ...”
...	...
28' [ú-ša-a]n ² -ni a- ¹ ta ¹ -x-[...]	I will report ...

Here, the sheiks swear an oath to the gods (l.15': *nīš ilī zakāru*) and never they will transgress it. This is expressed by the verb *šēpu* (l.19), which in the lexical lists is equated with the verb *etēqu* and is used in the context of violating treaties.³⁰ Likewise, non-transgression is juxtaposed with not committing of a misdeed, i.e., not acting in a hostile way against the king (*gullulu*). The hostile action is explicitly evoked by implying the open repudiation of the king's reign. Finally, the person put under oath swears to re-

port to the king any hostile activity or speech occurring in his territory.

I consciously avoided the translation “to commit a sin” for *gullulu* because the texts discussed above do not refer to any religious connotation of breaking a treaty. This could be due to the fact that the text categories embraced only letters and treaties but even royal inscriptions are still devoid of such rhetoric at that time. The theme still seems to have been restricted to the prayer literature.³¹

²⁹ J.-M. Durand, “Précurseurs syriens aux protocoles néo-assyriens,” in: D. Charpin/F. Joannès (eds.), *Marchands, diplomates et empereurs* (Paris, 1991) 50ff.

³⁰ Durand 1991, 53 (d) with note 107, quoting the synonym list *Malku* II 96 and *SpTU* III, 246 ll.100-102 (*malku=šarru*).

³¹ See the letter prayer of Yasmah-Adad (ARM I 3) quoted by J.-G. Heintz, “Des textes sémitiques anciens à la Bible,” in: F. Bœspflug/F. Dunand (eds.),

Le comparatisme en histoire de religions (Paris, 1977) 127-154, 142f. and for example W. G. Lambert, “A Further Attempt at the Babylonian ‘Man and his God’,” in: F. Rochberg-Halton (ed.), *Language, Literature, and History: Philological and Historical Studies Presented to Erica Reiner* (New Haven, 1987) 187-202; for a recent translation see B. Foster, *Before the Muses*, vol. I (Bethesda, 1993) 75-77 with bibliography.

The Evidence in the Levant

Evidence for this specific meaning of “lie” is vividly illustrated some 500 years later in the Amarna letters representing part of the political correspondence between the pharaoh and his vassals in the Levant.

EA 159³²

1	[<i>a-na</i>] LUGAL EN- <i>ia</i> DINGIR- <i>ia</i> ^d UTU _x - <i>ia</i>	[To] the king, my lord, my Sun-God:
2	[<i>um-m</i>]a ¹ A- <i>zi-ri</i> LÚ.ÌR- <i>ka-ma</i>	[Messa]ge of Aziru, your servant:
3	[7-š]u ù 7-š <u>u</u> a- <i>na</i> GÌR.MEŠ EN- <i>ia</i>	[7 ti]mes and 7 times at the feet of my lord,
4	[DINGIR- <i>i</i>]a ù ^d UT]U _x - <i>ia</i> am- <i>qú-ut</i>	[m]y [god], and my S[u]n-God, I fall.

In the following, I quote from a letter from Aziru, one of the most powerful mayors and vassals of the Egyptian pharaoh in Amurru in the Levant:

5	[<i>iš-tu</i>] a- <i>ma</i> -[<i>te</i> .MEŠ L]UGAL EN- <i>ia</i> DINGIR- <i>ia</i>	I shall not depart [from the] wor[ds of the k]ing, my lord, my god,
6	[ù ^d UT]U _x - <i>ia</i> la a- <i>pa-aṭ-ṭar</i>	[and] my [Su]n-[God].
...
39	[ù ² aš-š]um LÚ.MEŠ ḥa- <i>za-an-nu-ú</i> -[<i>te</i> .MEŠ	[Concer]ning the mayor[s,
40	[a ² -qá]b ² - <i>bi gáb-bi-š<u>u</u>-nu</i>	[I ² sa]y ² : All of them
41	[LŠ.MEŠ <i>s</i>]a- <i>ar-ru-ú-tum</i> EN- <i>ia-ma</i> [la- <i>(a)</i>]	[are t]reachers [people]. My lord, [do not]
42	[<i>ta-qí-i</i>]p- <i>š<u>u</u>-nu</i>	[tru]st them.

In a very fragmentary passage Aziru uses the verb *kazābu* II “to lie,”³³ a loanword from West Semitic, to describe the treacherous action of the mayors, which is also used in the same context by Abdi-Aširta,³⁴ another powerful local chieftain who claimed for himself “the status of an

acting deputy in the absence of the Egyptian governor.”³⁵ The diplomatic or political terminology of the Amarna letters also uses the term *amēl arni*, “traitor,” to denote the political enemies of the king in close connection with *ḥītu*, “crime, misdeed”:

EA 157

13	ù <i>i-na-an-na</i> la- <i>a ḥi-iṭ-ṭám</i>
14	la <i>mi-im-ma-an a-na</i> LUGAL EN-[<i>i</i>]a

³² Sh. Izre’el, *Amurru Akkadian: A Linguistic Study, vol. II* (Atlanta, 1991) 24ff.

³³ W. L. Moran, *Les lettres d’el-Amarna. Correspondance diplomatique du Pharaon* (Paris, 1987) 395, n.1 refers to J. Nougayrol, *Ugaritica V* (Paris, 1968) 49, EA 159 ... *ú-ka-az-zi-[bu-nim]* “[alors co]mment des [servit]eurs pourraient-ils ment[ir] à mon Seigneur, [mon dieu]?” See also the English edition, W. L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore, 1992).

³⁴ EA 62:39, 43, see Izre’el 1991, vol. II, 10ff.; on Abdi-Aširta, see M. Liverani, “Social Implications in the Politics of Abdi-Aširta of Amurru,” *MANE* 1/5 (1979) 14-20; idem, *Prestige and Interest* (Padova, 1990) 77, 149 with n. 30, 236f.; F. Pintore, “Il carattere dell’autorità faraonica in base ad alcuni passi epistolari amarniani,” in Fs Pintore (1983) 323-333.

³⁵ I. Singer, “A Concise History of Amurru,” in Izre’el 1991, vol. II, 145.

15 *la e-te-pu-uš* LUGAL-*ru* EN-[*i*]a
 16 *i-de*₄ LÚ.MEŠ.*be-el ar-ni*-[*š*u²]

13 Now there was no misdeed,
 14 not anything, that I have committed against the king, my lord.
 15 The king, my lord
 16 knows [his] traitors.

In the first millennium the words *arnu*, “wrongdoing,” and *hītu*, “misdeed, crime,” will represent central terms in the politi-

cal language of the Neo-Assyrian kings for the behavior of traitors, rebels and treaty-breaking vassals.

The Hittite Evidence

In the Hittite royal inscriptions and treaties treachery and rebellion are explicitly denoted with concrete terms such as *wakaressar*, “rebellion” written with the Sumerogram BAL, or *kuruiyah(h)*–,³⁶ “to act in a hostile way” as for example in the annals of Muršili II from the second half of the 14th century B.C. The Hittite-Akkadian bilingual text of Hattušili I, his so-called “testament” dealing with his succession, is mainly concerned with the subject of rebellion, as well. Hattušili I was trying to strengthen the monarchy “by establishing a close partnership between the king and the representatives of the most powerful elements in the kingdom.”³⁷ Here the term *kusduwai*–, “to revile, slander, defame,”³⁸ is used to describe the rebellion of particular cities against the Hittite king. The

term *kusduwai*– with its Akkadian equivalent *šalīptu*, “treachery,” is paired with *harna*–, “to stir, agitate,” with its Akkadian cognate *tešû*. The pair *kuru*–, “enmity, hostility,” and *kururiyah(h)*, “to wage war, to act in a hostile manner,” is also attested.³⁹ According to J. Puhvel, *harna*– and its verbal noun *harnamma(r)* are regularly used in the context of rebellion against the Hittite king.⁴⁰ Similarly the historical introductions of the Hittite treaties almost exclusively deal with treachery,⁴¹ as do, for instance the treaty between Muršili and Duppi-Teššub⁴² and Tudḫalija IV in his bronze tablet.⁴³

What appears to be new in the rhetoric of the Hittite kings is the explicit blending of the political reality with religious arguments, a phenomenon, which becomes integral to the Neo-Assyrian rhetoric. In

³⁶ See for instance J.-P. Grégois, “Les Annales decennales de Muršili II (CTH 61, 1),” *Hethitica* 9 (1988) 17-145, see p. 120 for the attestations.

³⁷ T. Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites* (Oxford, 1998) 89-110, esp. 95.

³⁸ F. Sommer/A. Falkenstein, *Die Hethitisch-akkadische Bilingue des Hattušili I* (Labarna II.) (München, 1938) § 9, 51 *ku-uš-du-wa-a-ta*.

³⁹ Hattušili I § 13 ii 68-77, see J. Puhvel, *Hittite Etymological Dictionary*, vol. 3 (Berlin/New York, 1991) 280ff.

⁴⁰ Puhvel 1991, 171ff.

⁴¹ For a survey see G. Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic*

Texts (Atlanta, 1996).

⁴² J. Friedrich, “Staatsverträge des Hatti-Reiches in hethitischer Sprache,” *MVAG* 31/1 (1926); D ii 4’-9’; I. Singer, “Treaty between Muršili and Duppi-Teššub,” in: W. W. Hallo (ed.), *Context of Scripture*, vol. II (Leiden/Boston/Köln, 2000) 96-98; G. del Monte, *Il trattato fra Mursili II di Hattuša e Niqmepa di Ugarit* (Roma, 1986) 156-177

⁴³ H. Otten, *Die Bronzetafel aus Bogazköy: Ein Staatsvertrag Tuthalijas IV*, *StBoT Beiheft* 1 (Wiesbaden, 1988) § 2:7 *kururiyah(h)*– “to start hostilities”; § 13 ii 31-42 *pahšann*– “to be loyal”; § 14 ii 43-52 *aššiyatar* “love.”

Hittite belief, the breaking of loyalty oaths brings about the direct intervention of the gods, who turn the wheel of history in favor of the Hittite king by destroying his enemies:

“Although the Kalashma country was bound to me by treaty, they broke the treaty and began hostilities (*kururiyahh*). But the gods of the oath manifested their justice, and the gods of the oath seized them, so that brother betrayed brother, friend betrayed friend, everybody killed everybody else.”⁴⁴

The basic argument is that cosmic order is re-established by the will and ac-

tions of the gods rather than by the king’s own initiative: rather, the king appears to be a tool in the hands of the gods.⁴⁵ This short survey of the Hittite evidence shows that the terminology used to describe disloyalty and hostilities is made concrete in referring directly to the breaking of treaties. Hattušili I, by using the verb *kusduwai-*, “to revile, slander,” and thus entering the realm of metaphor, represents a kind of exception which proves, however, to be important for the stream of tradition in political rhetoric within the Ancient Near East.

The Northeastern and Northwestern Syrian Evidence

In his inscriptions from Zincirli dating to the midst of the eighth century B.C., King Panamuwa takes up the metaphor of calumny to describe disloyalty and rebellion together with the religious com-

ponent of violation against the gods. In the so-called Hadad Inscription from Gerçin, seven kilometers northeast of Zincirli, he links his military action to the will of the gods:

Hadad inscription⁴⁶

8 [wʹn]k*. pnmw. gm. yšbt. ʿl. mšb. ʹby*.
8-9 wntn. ḥd*d. b*y*d*y[.] (9) ḥtr. ḥl[bbh]
9 [wʹnk(?). nsʿ]t. ḥrb*. wlšn. mn*. byt. ʹby.

8 [“And I], Panamuwa, reigned also on the throne of my father,
8-9 And Hadad gave into my hands a scepter of do[minion].
9 [And I also cut o]ff war and slander (lit.: sword and tongue).

In his commemorative inscription for his father Bar-Rakib Panamuwa also emphasizes the loyalty (*ṣdq*) of his family toward their overlord, the Assyrian king

Tiglath-Pileser III, by explicitly using the antonym of treachery or disloyal behavior:

Bar-Rakib inscription⁴⁷

19 wʹnky. brkb. br. pn*m*[w]
19-20 [bṣ]d*q. ʹby. wṣdqy. ḥwšbny. mrʹ[y rkbʹl. wmrʹy. tgltpłsr. ʿl mšb]

⁴⁴ A. Goetze, *Die Annalen Muršilis*, MVAG 38 (Leipzig, 1933) 192-193 rev. iv 12-18.

⁴⁵ On this religious argumentation see M. Liverani, *Prestige and Interest* (Padova, 1990) 135ff.

⁴⁶ J. Tropper, *Die Inschriften von Zincirli*, ALASP 6 (Münster, 1993) 66.

⁴⁷ Tropper 1993, 127f.

(20) *’by.pnmw. br. bršr*

- 19 And I am Bar-Rakib, son of Panamuwa.
 19-20 Because of the loyalty of my father and because of my loyalty, my lord
 [Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria] has caused me to reign [on the throne of] my
 father, Panamuwa, son of Barsur.

The same wording is attested in the building inscription of Bar-Rakib.⁴⁸

It is, however, only in the Old-Ara-
 mean treaty between Bar-Ga’ah and

Sfire Stela I B ll. 21-23⁴⁹

[...] *lbytkm wlyšm’ mt’l [wlyšm’n rbwh wlyšm’ ‘m]
 [h wlyšm] ‘n kl mlky’ zy ymlkn b’rpd lm[ly spr’ znh zy yt]
 [šm’n tht k]l šmyn šqrtm lkl ’lhy ‘dy z[y bspr’ znh whn]*

“And (if) Mati’el will not obey [and (if) his sons will not obey, and (if) his people will not
 o]bey and (if) all the kings who will rule in Arpad [will not obey] . [] [] . LMNYN, you
 will have been unfaithful to all the gods of the treaty...”

Sfire Stela III

14b-17a If the idea should come to your mind and you should express with your lips (the
 intention) to kill me ... you shall have been false to all gods of the treaty...

The Middle- and Neo-Assyrian Inscriptions

The religious aspect of the treaty and the connotation of committing a sacrilege against the gods witnessing the treaty already observed in Hittite and Northern Syrian historiography, will come to the fore in some Middle Assyrian and especially late Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions. This religious dimension will shape the rhetoric of the Sargonid kings.

Whereas the text genres of letters and treaties describe the real nature of the political relationship between a superior king and his vassal and do not so much

rely on metaphorical rhetoric, literary texts, like royal inscriptions, or the reports of the Assyrian king to the god Aššur, provide an insight into the ideological system constructed to legitimate the king’s political and military actions.

As early as Shalmaneser I a link at least between rebellion and the neglect of the god Aššur – if not a link between a lie and the neglect of the gods – is made in the rhetoric of Middle Assyrian royal inscriptions:

⁴⁸ Tropper 1993, 135 B1:4-7.

⁴⁹ A. Lemaire/J.-M. Durand, *Les inscriptions araméennes de Sfiré* (Paris, 1984); for a new translation see

J. A. Fitzmeyer, S.J., in: W. W. Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture*, 2 (Leiden/Boston/Köln, 2000) 213-217.

RIMA I, A.O.77.1:46-50:

46 ... URU *a-ri-na ki-ša šur-šu-da*
 47 *ki-šir ħur-šá-ni šá i-na maḥ-ra*
 48 *ib-bal-ki-tu i-še-tu aš-šur*
 49 *i-na GIŠ.tukul-ti aš-šur ù DINGIR.MES*
 GAL.MEŠ
 50 EN.MEŠ-*ia* URU *šá-a-tu ak-šud aq-qur*

The city Arina, the sanctuary founded in bedrock, which had formerly rebelled and scorned Aššur, with the support of Aššur and the great gods, my lords, I captured and destroyed that city.

...

hood, he made his crimes enormous before you, judge me, O Šamaš!”

This disregard of the will of the Assyrian god Aššur is expressed by referring to the scorning of the oath sworn to the gods as it is the case in the Tukultī-Ninurta Epic.⁵⁰ The epic literature of the Middle Assyrian kingdom develops the line of evidence by linking rebellion and the breaking of treaties qualified as act of falsehood, with a religious sacrilege transforming these kinds of political deeds into sins against the gods. I quote some passages from the Tukultī-Ninurta Epic:

Tukultī-Ninurta Epic

Vs I 33' f. *ana ētiq mamīti Kaštīliašu ilāni šūt šam[ē eršetī] rašūma ana šarri māti u nišī* “Against the transgressor of the oath, Kashtiliash, the gods of Heaven and Netherworld ...] They were angry at the king, the land and the people.”

A I 28'-29' [...] *x-ta [ša]r Kaššī išīṭ māmīta [...] gillata šaburta ibni* “The king of the Kassites scorned the oath, he committed a crime, an act of falsehood.”

A II 20'-21': *ul išḫu[t] māmītkā etiq šiparaka šaburta iḫm[i]l / ušegl[il]a gillatišu maḥraka Šamaš dinanni* “He did not fear your curse, he transgressed your command, he schemed an act of false-

The Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions too constantly refer to rebellions,⁵¹ and references to *ḫītu*, “misdeed,” and *gul-lultu*, “misdeed, crime,” or *zērāt māt Aššur*, “hostilities against Assyria,” are attested as early as in the inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III.⁵² In the beginning, however, the rhetorical argumentation still remains restricted to the person of the king; no religious component is yet to be found, and terms connected with the topos of the lie do not occur.

It is only in the inscriptions of Sargon II in the eighth century B.C. that we observe again evidence for the rhetorical device of the lie. Sargon II consciously relied on the tradition of his Akkadian predecessor Sargon I, who – as mentioned above – used this motif in his inscriptions. Sargon II employed the motif of the lie in his accounts of his military actions against the princes of the Neo-Hittite kingdoms, as well as against the Manneans and the Medes. The historical context is always that of rebellion or conspiracy against the Assyrian king, expressed by the following formula:

⁵⁰ P. B. Machinist, *The Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I: A Study in Middle Assyrian Literature* (Diss. Yale University, 1978); for a new translation see B. Foster, *Before the Muses*, vol. 1 (Bethesda, 1993) 209-229.

⁵¹ For references see CAD N/1, 171 s.v. *nakāru* 14.

⁵² H. Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III King of Assyria* (Jerusalem, 1994) 62 Ann. 19:10; 100 Stele I B 22'; 112 Mila Mergi Rock Relief 21; 176 Summary Inscription 8 13'.

*amāt lemutti ... dabāb [sarrāti] atmē tēkēti*⁵³

“evil speech ... lies and perfidious
speech”
(prince of Carchemish)

Amitašši of Karalla in the Zagros mountains tries to incite Adā of Šurda against the Assyrian king. His conspiracy against Sargon II is expressed in the following way:

ana ^l[Adā kur Šurda]aja dabāb la kitti ša it[tija šum]kuri išpurū elītu

“He sent mendacious messages to Adā, untruthful words to instigate hostility against me.”⁵⁴

And it is now again that political misdeeds may be linked to a religious argumentation which borrows from the terminology of the prayer literature by referring to the wrath of the gods expressed by the terms *uggat ilāni* or *šibsāt ilāni*, as has also been emphasized by A. Fuchs.⁵⁵ Thus already in former days Daltā of Ellipi had provoked the anger of the gods, which the Assyrian king then appeases by killing all those people involved in the insurrection who “speak treachery” (*idabuba šalip̄tu*).⁵⁶ Similarly, the instigating action of the Hittites of deposing the king of Ashdod, who had been enthroned by the Assyrian king, in favor of one of their own appointees, as well as their attempts to draw the local kings of the coastline to their side, are described as *dabāb sarrāti atmē nullāte*, “lies and perfidious speech.”⁵⁷ The punishments performed by the Assyrian king, indeed, are now ascribed to the wrath of the god Aššur. This religious element represents an important new di-

mension attached to the rhetorical device of the lie within the Sargonid royal inscriptions. Thus, the action of the Urartian king Ursâ in plotting a conspiracy is in his Khorsabad inscription expressed with *dabābti sarrāti*⁵⁸ “lies,” whereas the Niniveh inscription describing the same event uses the expression: *la ādir mamīt ilāni rabūti ābiku dēn ^dŠamaš*,⁵⁹ “(Ursâ), who did not fear the oath sworn by the great gods, who neglected the judgment of (the sungod) Šamaš.”

The climax of the religious argumentation appears in the text categories of the reports sent by the Assyrian kings to the god Aššur. Here, the ideological system presents the king and the gods as complementary elements in the universal scheme of history. This shows in Sargon’s II report to the god Aššur of his campaign to Urartu.⁶⁰ The encounter between the Assyrian king and the king of the Mannaeans, Ullusunu, is described in a terminology patterned according to the vocabulary normally used to describe the devotee’s relationship to his personal god. The Mannean king and his officials pray (*uṣallūnima*) to the Assyrian king crawling like dogs before him. Sargon II accepts their prayers (*utnennīšunu*) by saying to them *aḫulap*, a term used to express compassion.

With the kings Esarhaddon and his son Assurbanipal around fifty years later the interweaving of the political-historical with the religious becomes even more

⁵³ A. Fuchs, *Die Annalen des Jahres 711 v. Chr.*, SAAS VIII (Helsinki 1998) 23 IIb/c 5.

⁵⁴ Fuchs 1998, 37 V.b-d 10.

⁵⁵ Fuchs 1998, 112ff.

⁵⁶ Fuchs 1998, 39 V.b-d 66.

⁵⁷ Fuchs 1998, 46 VII b 29.

⁵⁸ A. Fuchs, *Die Inschriften Sargons II. aus Khorsabad* (Göttingen, 1994) 96 Ann. 79.

⁵⁹ Fuchs 1998, 29 III.e 13.

⁶⁰ For a new translation of the text see W. Mayer, “Sargon’s Feldzug gegen Urartu – 714 v. Chr. Text und Übersetzung,” *MDOG* 115 (1984) 65-132.

elaborate and subtle.

King Esarhaddon’s report to the god Aššur,⁶¹ written after his campaign to Šubria in the North of Assyria, depicts a situation similar to that of Shemshāra, Mari and Amarna. The Šubrian king’s refusal to extradite Assyrian political refugees and traitors is interpreted as having broken the treaty with the Assyrian king and becomes the reason for the latter’s punitive campaign against him. In

K.2852+K.9662 I 20ff.:⁶²

20 *um-ma ru-bé-e ma-li-ki-ia sur-ra-a-ti la šal-ma-a-ti id-bu-bu it-ti-ia*
 21 *hi-iṭ-ṭu dan-nu a-na^d Aš+šur aḫ-ṭi/ṭu?-ma a-mat LUGAL EN-ia ul aš-me*
 22 *DUMU^{meš} KUR Aš+šur IR^{meš}-ka ul ú-tir-ra-kam-ma MUN (ṭābtu) ana ram-ni-ia ul*
e-pu-uš
 23 *ma-mit DINGIR^{meš} GAL^{meš} šá e-ti-qu a-mat LUGAL-ti-ka šá a-me-šú ik-šu-dan-ni*
 24 *ag-gu lib-ba-ka li-nu-ḫa-am-ma re-e-mu ri-šá-an-ni-ma pu-ṭur en-nit-ti*

20 The princes, my counselors, told me lies and evil things,
 21 I sinned heavily against Aššur, because I did not obey the order of my king (*amāt šarri*),
 22 I did not extradite the Assyrians, your servants, and therefore I did no good to myself.
 23 The consequences of having transgressed the oath taken by the great gods and of having neglected the order of the king, have caught up with me.
 24 May your angry heart calm down towards me, have mercy upon me and release me from punishment.

Because the literary treatment of the event simultaneously unfolds its religious dimensions, ll.21-24 offer an excellent illustration of the implications of a vassal’s “failure” against the Assyrian king.

Exactly this religious dimension operating on the meta-level is explicitly denoted in l.21, when Ik-Teššub’s failure is called a heavy sin against Aššur (*ḫīṭu dannu ana^d Aššur*). Only in a second step is it paralleled with a crime against the king by his not having obeyed the king’s order. Then, in line 22 the order itself is

his report Esarhaddon quotes from a letter which was sent to him by Ik-Teššub expressing the hope that he could prevent the Assyrian king from invading Šubria. In this letter Ik-Teššub tries to shift the responsibility for his actions to his counselors by calling their counsel “lie” (l.20), and in the next four lines Ik-Teššub’s “failure” against the king is equated to a sin against the god Aššur:

specified, namely that Ik-Teššub did not extradite the Assyrian refugees to the Assyrian king and thus brought this predicament upon him. Again in l.23 the primary emphasis is on the cultic action normally accompanying the conclusion of a treaty, namely, the oath sworn by the gods (*mamīt ilāni*). In this particular case, however, it is mentioned already from the perspective of the Šubrian king, who broke this oath. Only in a second step does he allude to the order of the king, which he ignored (*mēšu*). Hence, he has to bear the consequences of both, the

⁶¹ A. L. Oppenheim, “The City of Assur in 714 B.C.,” *JNES* 19 (1960) 133-147; idem, in: H. D. Lasswell/D. Lerner/H. Speier (eds.), *Propaganda and Communication in World History*, I (Honolulu, 1979) 125ff.; E. Leichty, “Esarhaddon’s ‘Letter to the

Gods,’” in: M. Cogan/I. Eph’al (eds.), *Ah, Assyria ... Studies ... Presented to Hayim Tadmor* (Jerusalem, 1991) 52-57.

⁶² Th. Bauer, “Ein Erstbericht Asarhaddons,” *ZA* 40 (1931) 234-259; Borger, *Esh.*, 103 § 68 ii 20ff.

cultic default as well as his political misdeed against the king, expressed by the verb *kašādu*. With l. 24 the text refers back to the religious implications of Ik-Teššub's behavior by using the religious language of incantation and prayer (*aggu libbaka līnuḥamma rēmu rišannima puṭur ennitti*). Ik-Teššub, in fact, addresses the Assyrian king beseeching him to have mercy (*rēmu rišannima*) and to release him from what in these text genres is divine punishment (*ennittu*). The verb *paṭāru* normally represents the leitmotiv phrase *lu paṭra*, “be released,” in cathartic rituals. Hence, again in the king's report to Aššur we encounter a vocabulary, which is normally used to describe moral or cultic offences and which is now transferred to the originally profane level of the breaking of a treaty.

Consequently, ll. 21 and 24 expressing the religious meta-level of a “lie” form a rhetorical device framing the political relationship of the Assyrian king and his vassal as described in ll. 22 and 23. Thus, in the ideological presentation of the political alliance the oath sworn by the gods gains primary importance and determines the whole situation by transforming the political relationship of king and vassal into the religious relationship of god and sinner, a topic that is constantly addressed in the vassal treaties.⁶³

However, in contrast to Sargon, who uses this rhetorical device in the general context of rebellion by his former vas-

sals, in the inscriptions of Esarhaddon it is restricted to the historical context of the succession to the throne and the breaking of the loyalty oaths. E. Leichty⁶⁴ has argued convincingly that Esarhaddon's report to the god Aššur has to be seen in the light of the succession of his younger son Assurbanipal to the Assyrian throne. H. Tadmor⁶⁵ postulated the same background for Esarhaddon's Niniveh inscription, in which Esarhaddon reports his own succession to the throne.

The motif of the “lie” is used in the introductory section of the dedication inscription for his palace at Niniveh that reports his accession to the throne. Esarhaddon apparently was not his father's initial choice as heir,⁶⁶ and even after he had been chosen he had to leave the country for his safety. He took the throne by force during an uprising after his father's death.⁶⁷

In the Niniveh inscription his accession is likewise put into a religious context, since in a first step Esarhaddon claims that, although he was younger than his brothers, his father, by the order of the gods, chose him for succession to the throne. In a second step, this choice was confirmed by the divinatory technique of extispicy and only then were the Assyrians, as well as the brothers, brought together in order to swear the loyalty oath to Esarhaddon. The loyalty oath (*adê*) had been introduced by Sennacherib according to the Hittite⁶⁸ and

⁶³ See references in S. Parpola/K. Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*, SAA II (Helsinki, 1988) 89 s.v. *ḥaṭû*. J. Assmann invented the term of the “Ümbuchung” for the transfer of a political relationship to a religious one in order to describe the relationship between Yahweh and his people, see J. Assmann, *Politische Theologie zwischen Ägypten und Israel* (Bonn, 1992) 81; idem, *Herrschaft und Heil* (München, 2000) 49ff.

⁶⁴ Leichty 1991.

⁶⁵ H. Tadmor, “Autobiographical Apology in the Royal Assyrian Literature,” in: H. Tadmor/M. Weinfeld

(eds.), *History, Historiography and Interpretation* (Jerusalem, 1983) 36-57, esp. 36ff.

⁶⁶ Sennacherib speaks of Aššur-nādin-šumi as being the first born son (*māru rēštû*), see *OIP* II, 35 ll.71-74.

⁶⁷ B. Porter, *Images, Power, Politics. Figurative Aspects of Esarhaddon's Babylonian Policy* (Philadelphia, 1993) 13.

⁶⁸ F. Starke, “Zur urkundlichen Charakterisierung neuassyrischer Treueide anhand einschlägiger hethitischer Texte des 13. Jh.,” *ZAR* 1 (1995) 70-82.

Aramaic⁶⁹ model in order to guarantee political stability during the irregular succession of his son.⁷⁰ These oaths were imposed on everyone: “the court and royal family, palace staff, soldiers together with their wives, cultic personnel, and ‘Assyrians, great and small’ (i.e. all subjects). They were also sworn by adjacent states seeking Assyrian protection and hence adopting the stance of subjects ... The oaths were administered in a formal ceremony on divinely determined favorable days and in the presence of divine statues. The gods of all parties were called upon to witness the solemnity of the occasion, and the divine punishments and curses for oathbreakers were described in blood-curdling detail.”⁷¹

However, the ceremony of the oath-taking in this case failed to guarantee a smooth succession for the Assyrian throne. On the contrary, it seems that the brothers of Esarhaddon seriously discredited him and forced him to hide in a

Borger, Esh., § 27 Nin. A-F, Ep. 2 24ff.

24 *ša ilāni^{meš} umašširūma ana epšētišunu
šurruḫāti*

25 *ittaklūma ikappudū lemuttu*

26 *lišān lemuttim karši tašqirti kī lā libbi ilāni*

27 *elīja ušabšūma surrāti lā šalmāti*

28 *arkīja iddanabbubū zērāti*

Esarhaddon continues his narrative describing how in his desperation he turned to the gods praying for support and pro-

secluded place north of Ḥanigalbat. The Babylonian Chronicle informs us about the murder of Esarhaddon’s father Sen-nacherib, who was killed by his son Arad-Mulissi, a fact, which is confirmed by Hebrew as well as Greek sources.⁷² According to his own account, Esarhaddon left his refuge without waiting for his infantry which was almost certainly dispersed in their winter quarters or collecting provisions for his campaign. Instead, counting on the element of surprise, he won a battle against his brothers’ armies, which according to the Bible fled then to Urartu.⁷³

The literary presentation of the situation again transposes political events to the religious level and describes how the brothers of Esarhaddon were abandoned by the gods and how they started to make plans for a upheaval by telling wicked and godless things about Esarhaddon which the latter denounced as lies:

whom the gods abandoned, and who trusted
only in their arrogant deeds, plotting evil plans,
evil rumors, calumnies and blasphemies they produced against me in a way contrary to the will of the gods, lies and wickedness,
behind my back they spread hostile rumors.

tection, which they granted him by abandoning the treacherous brothers. Then he tells us:

⁶⁹ See the Sfire stela mentioned above and H. Tadmor, “Assyria and the West: The Ninth Century and its Aftermath,” in: H. Goedicke/J. J. M. Roberts (eds.), *Unity and Diversity. Essays in the History, Literature and Religion of the Ancient Near East* (Baltimore, 1975) 36-48, esp. 42f.

⁷⁰ On the interconnection between loyalty oath and irregular succession see Starke 1995, 75, 81f.

⁷¹ A. Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East c. 3000-330 B.C.*, vol. 2 (London/New York, 1997) 515.

⁷² II Kings 19:37; S. M. Burstein, *The Babyloniaca of Berossus*, 24f.; S. Parpola, “The Murderer of Sen-nacherib,” in: B. Alster (ed.), *Death in Mesopotamia* (Copenhagen 1980) 171-182.

⁷³ II Kings 19:37.

Borger, Esh., § 27 Nin. A-F, Ep. 2 41ff.:

41	<i>arkānu aḥḥēja immaḥûma mimma ša ilāni^{meš}</i>	Afterwards, my brothers went mad and did what was not good in the sight of gods
42	<i>u amēlūti lā ṭāba ēpušûma ikpudū lemuttu</i>	and men: they plotted evil.
43	<i>issihûma^{gis} kakkē^{meš} ina qereb Ninua balu ilāni^{meš}</i>	And they godlessly drew weapons in Niniveh,
44	<i>ana epēš šarrūti itti aḥameš ittakupū lala'iš</i>	They butted each other like goats over the exercise of kingship.

The historical situation, which stimulates the use of the motif of the lie, is clearly that of a crisis: the struggle over the succession to the throne from which Esarhaddon emerged victorious. In the literary account of the historical events this victory is ascribed to divine support, hence the political and religious spheres are merged. Consequently, the concept of lie and falsehood is linked to the political actions of revolt and disloyalty, as well as to the religious action of disobedience against the divine will. The two inscrip-

tions, the report to Aššur and the Niniveh inscription, are the only texts in which Esarhaddon uses the motif of the lie, and we may deduce that the concept of the lie as characterizing the insurgents clearly serves on the textual level the purpose of maintaining the political status quo, namely the rulership of the designated heir.

An example from the inscriptions of Assurbanipal completes the picture from the Sargonid period:

R. Borger, BIWA, 179 E-Prismen:

2	<i>arkānu¹ Nikû [Šarruludari]</i>	Afterwards, Necho, [Šarruludari].
3	<i>¹Paqruru šarrū š[a ...</i>	(and) Paqruru, kings whom
4	<i>iškunu [abu banū]a</i>	my own father had installed [in Egypt]
5	<i>adē Anšar u ilāni ra[būti belī]ja</i>	transgressed the loyalty oath sworn by Aššur and the great gods, my lords,
6	<i>ētiqūma ipru[š]u mamītsun</i>	and broke the oath.
7	<i>ṭābti abi bānīja imšūma</i>	The good deeds of my father, my begetter, they forgot,
8	<i>libbašunu ikpudu lemuttu</i>	plotting evil in their hearts,
9	<i>dababti surrāti idbubūma</i>	and telling lies.

The previous overview demonstrated that the motif of the lie is either connected to the rebellion against an already existing overlord, and is thus linked to the breaching of a treaty, or addresses the claims of pretenders to the throne in crises occasioned by an irregular succession. It also showed just how long it could take for a single rhetorical element

to reach its ultimate complex figurative form within the ideological framework of a specific culture. In what follows I will proceed to examine the adaptation and transformation of the rhetorical device of the lie by civilizations adjacent to Mesopotamia, focusing on the Persian Empire and the books of the Old Testament.

Old Persian Inscriptions

As has been pointed out by H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, "too often, Persian politics, political behavior or political thinking are judged from the Greek reports on Persia,"⁷⁴ or Persian history "is discussed in isolation from the whole of Near Eastern historiography."⁷⁵

The motif of the lie is an excellent example of the close cultural interaction between the civilizations within the Ancient Near East and the interdependencies of the political élites in constructing and formalizing their respective complex ideological systems. And what is more, it will elucidate Persia's as well as Israel's place in the history of the 'longue durée'⁷⁶ of the Near East, as both came into close and intimate contact with earlier cultures and traditions.

Just as the program of the Persian imperial art, in terms of iconography and style, was planned by the king and his image-makers,⁷⁷ the content, form and style of the royal inscriptions were subject to conscious planning and deliberate creation; absolutely nothing was left to chance. Furthermore, we should not underestimate the great mobility of the officials of the royal entourage who traveled throughout the empire on behalf of the courts and were therefore constantly exposed to cultural cross-fertilization.

Rather than the generally accepted view that the Persians emerged out of the cultural vacuum of their nomadic pre-history, they should be seen as being part of a "complex network of extensive historical and cultural relationships within the Near East."⁷⁸ And these relationships had a deep effect on the formulation of the ideology of the Persian Empire.

I focus now on the trilingual inscription of Darius at Mount Besitun, carved in Elamite, Akkadian and Old Persian on the face of a cliff alongside the ancient strategic road through the Zagros Mountains connecting Iran and the East with Mesopotamia and the West⁷⁹ from Ecbatana to Babylonia.

The Besitun inscription is an exceptional document among the Persian inscriptions for its content as well as for the rock relief connected with it. It obviously follows Assyrian tradition in its iconography, content and style. Already the introduction of this inscription shows a great similarity to that of the Zinjirli inscription of the Assyrian king Esarhadon,⁸⁰ who not only gave his titlature together with his genealogy, but also referred to the importance of being of Assyrian descent and to the eternal existence of the institution of Assyrian rulership.⁸¹ There has been much debate about

⁷⁴ H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, "Political Concepts in Old-Persian Royal Inscriptions," in: K. Raaflaub (ed.), *Anfänge politischen Denkens* (München, 1993) 145.

⁷⁵ Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1993, 146.

⁷⁶ J. Le Goff, "Neue Geschichtswissenschaft," in: J. Le Goff/R. Chartier/R. Revel (eds.), *Die Rückeroberung des historischen Denkens* (Frankfurt, 1994) 11-61.

⁷⁷ M.C. Root, *The King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art*, *Acta Iranica* 19 (Leiden, 1979).

⁷⁸ Root 1979, 28.

⁷⁹ H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, "Darius I and the Persian Empire," in: J. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, vol. II (New York, 1995) 1036.

⁸⁰ On these elements see B. Pongratz-Leisten, "Genealogien als Kulturtechnik zur Begründung des Herrschaftsanspruchs in Assyrien und Babylonien," *SAAB IX* (1997) 75-108.

⁸¹ On the elements of the legitimation to the throne see H. Tadmor, "History and Ideology in the Assyrian Royal Inscriptions," in: F. M. Fales (ed.), *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: New Horizons* (Roma, 1981) 13-33.

the veracity or mendacity of Darius' testimony⁸² and I hope that with by diachronically unfolding the lie as a rhetorical device within royal ideology I can contribute to a critical assessment of Darius' trustworthiness.

In the case of Darius it is not only irregular succession but also the political deed of usurpation which has to be adapted to generate legitimacy and acceptance. All the rhetorical elements effectively composed by the scribes of Esarhaddon to mobilize the acceptance of his successors and the gods are used by Darius to create his own fiction of a legitimate kingship and to distinguish himself from the so-called lying kings:⁸³

Darius, Besitun, Introduction:⁸⁴

1.1-3 I am Darius the Great King, King of Kings, King in Persia, King of countries (**Titulature**), son of Hystaspes, grandson of Arsames, an Achaemenian (**Ethnicity**).⁸⁵

1.3-6 Saith Darius the King: My father was Hystaspes; Hystaspes' father was Arsames; Arsames' father was Ariaramnes; Ariaramnes' father was Teispes; Teispes' father was Achaemenes. (**Genealogy back to eponymous hero**)

1.6-8 Saith Darius the king: For this reason we are called Achaemenians.

From long ago we have been noble. From long ago our family had been kings (**eternal status of rulership**).

1.8-11 Saith Darius the king: VIII of our family (there are) who were kings afore; I am the ninth; (altogether) IX now as ever⁸⁶ we are kings.

This genealogical formula has to be read as the political address of a usurper that seeks to legitimize Darius' claim to the throne; it is not a historical document. Rather, it strategically excludes every pretender who cannot meet this dynastic principle.⁸⁷ In a very subtle way Darius had to combine two different lines, the non-Achaemenid line of the house of Teispes and his own line, in order to be able to put himself in line with his great predecessors Cyrus and Cambyses.⁸⁸ Darius' rhetoric represents a kind of escalation of the use of the lie because he as a usurper denounces every other throne pretender as a liar.

The inscription proceeds with an enumeration of the Persian satrapies,⁸⁹ which Darius then comments upon by a remark, which is very important for our discussion:

1.20-4 Saith Darius the King: Within these countries, the man who was loyal

⁸² For a bibliography see A. Shapur Shahbazi, "Darius," *EncIr* VII (1996) 41ff.; R. Rollinger, "Der Stammbaum des achaimenidischen Königshauses oder die Frage der Legitimität der Herrschaft des Dareios," *AMIT* 30 (1998) 155-209, esp. 176 n. 113.

⁸³ I herewith follow the proposal made by R. Rollinger to consider the genealogy of Darius as a homogeneous whole created to propagate the historical fiction of a royal dynasty from which he originated, see R. Rollinger 1998, esp. 182ff.

⁸⁴ R.G. Kent, *Old Persian. Grammar, Texts, Lexicon* (New Haven, 1953) 116ff.

⁸⁵ On the novelty of Darius' concept of a ruling 'Achaemenid line' see D. Stronach, "Of Cyrus, Darius and Alexander: A New Look at the 'Epithaphs' of Cyrus the Great," in: R. Dittmann et al. (eds.), *Variatio Delectat. Iran und der Westen*, Gedenkschrift für Peter Calmeyer (Münster, 2000) 681-702.

⁸⁶ Kent 1953, 119 translates *duvitāparanam* "in suc-

cession," whereas many scholars have interpreted it as "in two royal lines," see lastly H. Koch, *Es kündigt Dareios der König ...* (Mainz, 1992) 18; a survey of the history of the discussion of this term is given by Rollinger 1998, 156ff. I follow him in assuming a similar meaning as the Babylonian *šá zēru* (NUMUN) *da-ru-ú* "of an eternal descent."

⁸⁷ G. Ahn, *Religiöse Herrscherlegitimation im Achämenidischen Iran*, *Acta Iranica* 31 (Leiden, 1992) 231.

⁸⁸ Rollinger 1998, 186 and 209.

⁸⁹ For the names of the lands and people living in it see R. Schmitt, "Der Numerusgebrauch bei Länder- und Völkernamen im Altpersischen," *AAH* 25 (1977) 91-99; idem, *Beiträge zu altpersischen Inschriften* (Wiesbaden, 1999) 4ff.; P. Briant, *Histoire de l'empire de Cyrus à Alexandre* (Leiden, 1996) 75-78.

(*āgariya*), him I rewarded well; (him) who was hostile (*arika*), him I punished well; by the favour of Ahuramazda (*vašnā Auramazdā*) these countries showed respect toward my law (*dātā*); as was said to them by me, thus it was done.

This passage is of crucial importance because it tells us how Darius treated the loyal and the disloyal, and at the same time emphasizes that under the auspices of Ahuramazda everyone obeyed his law and royal order, which also reminds us of the Assyrian *abat šarri/amāt šarri* in Esarhaddon’s letter to the god Aššur. This passage must be interpreted as a rhetorical device anticipating the later description of Darius’ punishment of the lying kings. The statement that with the favor of Ahuramazda everyone acted according to the order of the king justifies and legitimates the later suppression of the insurgents. Only with the expression “by the favor of Ahuramazda” does the relationship of Darius and the later insurgents gain a religious dimension, sanctioning the king’s military actions in advance.

But before this, the history preceding his accession to the throne is narrated, claiming that Cambyses assassinated his brother Bardiya⁹⁰ before he went to Egypt:

1.33 -35 When Cambyses had gone off to Egypt, after that the people became evil (*arika*). After that the Lie (*drauga*) waxed great in the country, both in Persia and in Media and in the other provinces.

The story follows of the Median magus Gaumata, who pretended to be Bardiya and instigated a rebellion throughout the country, which only Darius could suppress enumerating the other eight kings

from Elam, Babylonia, Media, Armenia, and other countries who joined the rebellion. This enumeration is taken up again in col. iv in the following passage declaring the insurgents to be liars:

iv 6ff. by the favor of Ahuramazda I smote them and took prisoner IX kings. One was Gaumata by name, a Magus; he lied (*adurujiya*); thus he said: “I am Smerdis (Bardiya), the son of Cyrus;” he made Persia rebellious. One, Ačina by name, an Elamite; he lied; thus he said: “I am king in Elam;” he made Elam rebellious to me...”

In his tomb inscription at Naqš-i Rostam Darius juxtaposes the lie-follower (*draujanam*)⁹¹ with what is right (*rāstam*),⁹² whereby *rāsta-* also has the meaning of “straight, true,” and thus the expression can be linked to the Assyrian concept of “lie” and “truthfulness,” used within the context of disloyalty and loyalty.

While the first four columns, in their description of Darius dealing with the uprising and his accession to the throne is remarkably close to Mesopotamian tradition, the fifth column is completely different, and not only because it is written in Old Persian. As has already been stressed by H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, the first part of this column tells of the rebellions in the second and third year of his reign, when the revolts of the Elamites and Scythians were crushed. The new element is represented by the concluding statement on the suppression of these revolts:

5.14-17 Saith Darius the King: Those Elamites were faithless (*arikā*) and by them Ahuramazda was not worshipped (*ayadiya*). I worshipped (*ayadaiy*) Ahuramazda; by the favor of Ahuramazda, as

⁹⁰ Briant 1996, 111ff.

⁹¹ Kent 1953, 138 DNb 12.

⁹² Kent 1953, 138 DNb 11.

was my desire, thus I did unto them.

While in the first four columns the rebels are called lie-followers, in the fifth the political situation is transferred to the religious level, by characterizing them as “non-Ahuramazda-worshippers.” Here worship of Ahuramazda becomes a religious metaphor for being loyal to the king⁹³ also in this context signifies “swearing by Ahuramazda,” or, in other words, worship of Ahuramazda equals the adherence to the oaths sworn to Ahuramazda. This is supported by the Assyrian evidence of the loyalty oath securing Esarhaddon’s succession in which the god Aššur and loyalty to the Assyrian king become inextricably interconnected: “In the future and forever Aššur will be your god, and Assurbanipal, the great crown prince designate, will be your lord. May your sons and your grandsons fear him.”⁹⁴ A similar concept occurs in an inscription of the Babylonian king Nabopolassar: “He who is loyal to Bēl, his foundations will endure. He who is loyal to the son of Bēl will last for eternity.”⁹⁵

I would agree therefore with H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg and others that there is no need to assume that there was an enforced exclusive cult of Ahuramazda, since there is ample evidence in the Persepolis archives that the worship of the indigenous gods continued as before. However, the literary phraseology used to describe political events slowly develops into what Sancisi-Weerdenburg calls a typical Iranian style and culminates in the formulation used by Xerxes I in his

so-called *daivā*-inscription from Persepolis:

Xph⁹⁶

§ 4a 28-35. Saith Xerxes the King: When I became king, there was among these countries which are inscribed above (one which) was in commotion. Afterwards Ahuramazda bore me aid; by the favor of Ahuramazda I smote that country and put it down to its place.

§ 4b 35-41. And among these countries there was (a place) where previously false gods were worshipped (*ayadiya*). Afterwards, by the favor of Ahuramazda, I destroyed this sanctuary of the *daivās*, and I made a proclamation: “The *daivās* shall not be worshipped!”. Where previously the *daivās* were worshipped, there I worshipped Ahuramazda and Arta reverent(ly).

Here, in the inscription of Xerxes not only is political loyalty juxtaposed with the worship of Ahuramazda but rebellion or disloyalty is transferred to the religious sphere by describing it as worship of *daivās*, translated by Kent as “false god” or “demons.” And very importantly at the end, the worship of *daivās* is replaced by the image of Darius worshipping Ahuramazda and Artā. It is still debated among Iranists whether *artācā* in this case has to be interpreted as “with, through” or “in accordance with *artā* (truth),” or whether *artā* already has to be looked upon as an abstract concept which has been personified, as it is to be found in the Gathas.⁹⁷

The debate surrounding these *daivās* has produced three different interpretations: the text refers to 1) the destruction

⁹³ Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1993, 157.

⁹⁴ S. Parpola/K. Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*, SAA II (Helsinki, 1988) no. 6 § 34, ll. 393-396.

⁹⁵ F. N. H. al-Rawi, “Nabopolassar’s Restoration Work on the Wall Imgur-Enlil at Babylon,” *Iraq* 47

(1985) 5, ll. 28-29; P.-A. Beaulieu, in: W. W. Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture*, II (Leiden/Boston/Köln, 2000) 307f.

⁹⁶ Kent 1953, 151.

⁹⁷ *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol. 1 (London/Boston, 1982) 696, s.v. Old Persian “Arta” (B. Schlerath).

of the Marduk Temple in Babylon; 2) the pillage of the acropolis at Athens; and 3) the destruction of a non-Zoroastrian cult within Iran.⁹⁸ From the Mesopotamian perspective one would assume that *daivā* denotes the gods of the enemy. G. Ahn, however, argues that the religious conflict between Zoroastrianism and the Old Persian local cults and the Iranization of the province of Fars were still going on and that Xerxes’ inscription is just a reflection of it.⁹⁹

To sum up the results to be drawn from investigating the Persian material from the perspective of an Assyriologist, I would consider the first appearance of the term *arta-* in the *daivā* inscription to be evidence that only with Xerxes are we able to detect the dualistic concept of the Avesta and signs for a new religious

SAA X 111 12-17

12LÚ.gi-mir-a-a
 13 šá iq-bu-ú um-ma KUR.man-na-a-a ina
 pa-ni-ku-nu
 14 GÌR.2-a-ni ni-ip-ta-ra-su mìn-de-e-ma
 15 pi-ir-ša-tu ši-i NUMUN-LÚ.ḫal-ga-ti-i šu-nu
 16 [m]a-me-ti šá DINGIR ù a-de-e ul i-du-ú

... The Cimmerians
 who said, “The Manneans are at
 your disposal,
 we shall keep aloof” – maybe
 it was a lie; they are barbarians.
 They recognize no oath sworn by god
 and no loyalty oath.

And in another letter (SAA X 161: 10) *piršātu* is paired with *la kitti* (untruthful), in the context of speaking lies and untruthful to the king.

The Aramaic cognate of the Besitun inscription in fifth century papyri from Elephantine uses the verb *kdb*, “to lie,”¹⁰¹ and can be traced back to the Canaanite loanword *kazābu* in the Amarna letters,¹⁰² found in the context of not obeying the orders of the king.

system, whereas the rhetoric of Darius still fits in the wider context of its ancient Near Eastern background.¹⁰⁰

Looking at the Akkadian cognates of the Persian terminology in Darius’ trilingual Besitun inscription, it is interesting to note that the word used for lie is not *surru* and its derivatives, but *pirištu* used in the plural form *piršātu*, a derivative from the root *parāšu* “to separate”; this usage thus already very clearly denotes the meaning of rebellion and disloyalty. Evidence for the term *piršātu* can also be found in the late Sargonid epistolary literature, where it likewise is used in the context of rebellion. This usage may be linked to Aramaic influence as evidence for the verb *prš* is found in Hebrew as well as in Aramaic.

In summarizing the evidence drawn from the Mesopotamian and Persian sources we can establish that throughout the millennia the motif of the lie represents a central rhetorical device within the context of the literary narrative of disloyalty and rebellion against an overlord, i.e., within the context of breaking a treaty in the ancient Near East. In the cases of Esarhaddon and Darius it is connected to the critical historical moment

⁹⁸ G. Ahn, *Religiöse Herrscherlegitimation im Achämenidischen Iran*, *Acta Iranica* XVII (Leiden, 1992) 113.

⁹⁹ Ahn 1992, 120-122.

¹⁰⁰ Herewith I differ from Ahn 1992, 108 who claims that the dualistic concept of *drauga* and *arta* is al-

ready implicit in the inscription of Besitun.

¹⁰¹ See for example J.C. Greenfield/B. Porten, *The Bisitun Inscription of Darius the Great. Aramaic Version* (London, 1982) 46 l. 64.

¹⁰² EA 159 uses *kazābu* II, see S. Izre’el, *Amurru Akkadian* (Atlanta, 1991) 24ff.

of the succession to the throne, that is the breaking of the loyalty oaths and the attempts to consolidate the position of a royal successor or a usurper. The fact that this literary motif is clearly anchored within the particular historical situation of breaking a treaty transforms it into more than a rhetorical device. I would even call it a strategy of defense justifying the king's inexorable treatment of his insurgents.

The convincing success of this strategy of defense within the official ideology may have induced Darius, who lacked any prior right to become ruler of the Persians, to adopt this rhetorical device for his own self-representation. Thus Persian imperial ideology proves to be a deliberate and conscious adaptation of this rhetorical strategy and provides further evidence for the spreading of ideas and concepts across the cultural and linguistic borders within the ancient Near East. However, Persian ideology transforms Assyrian tradition by taking in a new element: that is, the dualistic concept introduced by Xerxes juxtaposes the treacherous action of the enemy with worship of the *daivās*, which should probably be interpreted as swearing by the gods of the enemy. In the Persian ideology these *daivās* are contrasted to Ahuramazda and to Arta, eventually becoming the personification of truth. This concept of exclusivity concerning the oath, which should be sworn only to Ahuramazda instead of to the gods of both treaty partners, is a typical feature of the Iranian ideological discourse.

The important conclusion we can draw from the survey of the ancient Near East-

ern sources in view of the Persian royal inscriptions is that, contrary to former scholarly opinion, the Persians, at least in the early stage of Darius I, on the political level did not rely on the ethic-metaphysical dualistic conception of the Avesta¹⁰³ in order to formulate their concept of lie and truth in the context of rebellion but instead drew on Assyrian ideological concepts. It is probably only with Xerxes that they created a political and religious discourse, which may also have embraced Avestan tradition. And there are even Iranists who doubt any Avestan impact on Persian ideology because of the insecurity of dating Zoroastrianism before the Hellenistic period.

Whether or not the Iranian dualistic concept, which has been described by many scholars as a kind of limited monotheism, had an impact on the monotheistic movement in Israel, and whether it is legitimate to establish an analogy between these two religions, cannot be discussed in this context.¹⁰⁴ It is, however, striking that in general 1) the categories of "monotheism" and "polytheism" are still the central patterns of classification of religions, and consequently play an important role in the history of research on the intercultural relationship and possible interdependencies between Iran and Israel, and that 2) the obviously scholarly construct of a monotheism, which as a model may be applied to different cultures, has never been questioned. On the contrary, recent attempts, like J. Assmann's approach to classify Egypt's monotheistic tendencies after the revolution of Echnaton as cosmotheism focusing on the "verborgenen einen Gott,"¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ See still the argumentation put forward by Ahn 1994, 166.

¹⁰⁴ For a detailed survey of the history of this debate see G. Ahn, *Monotheismus in Israel und Iran*, un-

published Habilitationsschrift (Bonn, 1994) 101-151.

¹⁰⁵ J. Assmann, *Moses der Ägypter. Entzifferung einer Gedächtnisspur* (Frankfurt am Main, 2000).

and S. Parpola's attempt to trace a monotheistic concept in Assyria,¹⁰⁶ prove the construct of monotheism still to be the preferred model of interpretation.¹⁰⁷ As will be shown in the following discussion, the motif of the lie formed an important rhetorical device in the rhetoric of the prophets propagating the exclusivity of the cult of Yahweh.

The evolution towards an exclusive cult of Yahweh took a long time in Israel and suffered several setbacks. It is obviously closely connected to the Monarchical period, a time when David after the defeat of the Philistines transferred the worship of Yahweh – who previously was worshipped at a multiplicity of sites – to Jerusalem, a historical event which is reported in the *Narrative of the Ark*¹⁰⁸ and in 2 Sam 7. The transfer of this single national god to the political capital entailed a stylization of Yahweh similar to Mesopotamian models such as Marduk or Assur. It is the radical exclusivity of the cult site that certainly sharpened the perception of Yahweh's uniqueness.¹⁰⁹ The prophets Isaiah and Hosea were radical adherents to the royal cult of Yahweh of the Davidic-Solomonic empire. At the time of the prophet Hosea about 740 B.C. we observe the first evidence of the motif of the lie to denote the enemies of this political-religious decision, thereby addressing the peoples of Samaria and Ephraim (Hos 7.3 "By their wickedness they make the king glad, and the officials by their treachery"). However, in this period we are still far from

any organized party or organization of prophets dedicated to this movement.¹¹⁰ Politically decisive moments like the exile of thousands of North Israelites to Syria and Mesopotamia after the fall of Samaria entailed a temporary limitation of the Yahweh cult to Jerusalem in 722 which was, however, revived under king Josiah (623-609 B.C.). His interest in centralizing the cult in Jerusalem may have been influenced by his wish to control the country.¹¹¹ With the deportation of the upper class of Israel into Babylonian exile, the cult of Yahweh gains in significance as the central cultural-symbolic element creating identity, and with the prophets Zefaniah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel it acquires more and more followers.¹¹² Jeremiah accuses the institutionalized prophets of being liars and attacks the priests: "the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule as the prophets direct" (Jer 5:31). With Jeremiah we find the whole display of ethical instructions stipulated to maintain Israel as an outstanding religiously pure community exclusively bound by her covenant with Yahweh. Among the stipulations concerning the king the prophecies of Jeremiah display the whole range of those requirements, which are known to have been the duties of the king in Mesopotamia. These are the requirement to do social justice (*mišpaṭ*) between men (Jer 21:12), the requirement not to oppress the widow and the orphan (Jer 7:6; 22:3), which recalls CH xlvii 59-78; the requirement not to spill "innocent blood"

¹⁰⁶ S. Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies*, SAA IX (Helsinki, 1997).

¹⁰⁷ For the negative aspect attached to the model of polytheism in the history of religions see *Handwörterbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe*, vol. IV (Stuttgart, 1998) 321-330, s.v. "Polytheismus" (B. Gladigow).

¹⁰⁸ P. D. Miller/J. J. M. Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord: A Reassessment of the "Ark Narrative" of*

1 Samuel (Baltimore, 1977).

¹⁰⁹ I am grateful to M. Davis for having pointed out this aspect to me.

¹¹⁰ M. Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament* (London, 1987) 31ff.

¹¹¹ Smith 1987, 38.

¹¹² *Handwörterbuch religionsgeschichtlicher Grundbegriffe*, vol. IV (Stuttgart, 1998) 162 s.v. "Monotheismus" (B. Lang).

(Jer 22:3, 17), which evokes likewise CH I 27-49, as well as the inscription of Darius from Naqš-i Rostam (Dnb), and the prohibition against worshipping "other gods" (Jer 3:13; 11:10; 13:10, 16:11; 25:6; 35:15), a concept which we already found in the Xerxes inscriptions. There is the repeated accusation, "you are trusting in the words of the lie" (Jer 7:9) which introduces the whole range of infractions, such as theft, murder, adultery, and swearing falsely, followed by the religious delicts such as burning incense to Baal and worshipping other gods (7:8/9; 11:10).

According to M. Smith and R. Albertz¹¹³ we may suppose that with the return of the exiles there existed "three parties in Jerusalem: a local party, and two important groups of former exiles. The local party, composed of descendants of the men who had been left in the country in 582,"¹¹⁴ adhered mostly to a diversity of cults and had close ties to the surrounding people. The two groups of exiles probably consisted of a majority of Yahweh-alone devotees and the "priests of the Jerusalem temple, who had an economic interest in its restoration. ... These various groups did not live in peace with each other,"¹¹⁵ as is illustrated by the prophecies of Zechariah. Instability and insecurity were very much the order of the day until the strong governorship of Nehemiah.¹¹⁶

It is striking that the concept of the lie as described above plays such an important role in the Hebrew Bible dealing with the Persian domination, such as the Nehemiah Memorial, the compilation of the narratives of Ezra and the prophecies of Zechariah and Haggai all of which seem to contain some contemporary material.¹¹⁷ Since copies of the Besitun inscription circulated in Jewish communities even down to Elephantine,¹¹⁸ we may presuppose a transcultural migration of the motif of the lie, which found its way from an originally political context into the theological discourse of the Hebrew Bible.

In the last part of my study I would like to focus on the compilation of the narratives of the scribe Ezra and the governor Nehemiah, whose missions reflect the Achaemenids' post-exilic involvement in the local affairs of Judah in the 5th century B.C., as well as on the prophecies of Zechariah. According to the Old Testament scholar Høglund, Achaemenid imperial authorities tried "to secure access to the Satrapy of Egypt along the strategic routes that ran through Jerusalem."¹¹⁹ He was able to show that the "dramatic entry of Greek military power onto an imperial territory in support of" the Egyptian revolt "represented the most serious challenge to imperial control the Persians faced in the fifth century. ... Consequently, for the

¹¹³ R. Albertz, *Religionsgeschichte Israels in alttestamentlicher Zeit*, vol. 2 (Göttingen, 1992) 378ff.

¹¹⁴ Smith 1987, 81.

¹¹⁵ Smith 1987, 81.

¹¹⁶ E. M. Meyers, "The Persian Period and the Judean Restoration: From Zerubbabel to Nehemiah," in: P. D. Miller Jr./P. D. Hanson/S. D. McBride (eds.), *Ancient Israelite Religion, Essays ... Frank Moore Cross* (Philadelphia, 1987) 509-521.

¹¹⁷ L.L. Grabbe, *Ezra-Nehemiah* (London/New York, 1998); idem, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, vol. 1 (Minneapolis, 1992) 119.

¹¹⁸ Greenfield/Porten 1982, 3.

¹¹⁹ K. G. Høglund, *Achaemenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah* (Atlanta, 1992) 87; Jerusalem was located on a national highway that went from Beersheba passing Hebron, Jerusalem, Bethel, Sichem to Samaria, see D. A. Dorsey, *The Roads and Highways of Ancient Israel* (Baltimore, 1991) 118-146; the *Via Maris* linked Ugarit, Jaffa (the harbor of Jerusalem), Gaza and Rafa with Egypt, *ibid.*, 42; see also P. Høgemann, *Östlicher Mittelmeerraum. Das achämenidische Weltreich von Kyros bis Xerxes 547-479/8 v. Chr.*, TAVO B IV 23.

period from 460 BCE on, it can be assumed that the Achaemenid empire was intensely involved in taking steps to consolidate its hold over those territories that were imperiled by the continuing pressure in the eastern Mediterranean,"¹²⁰ a fact which is corroborated by archaeological evidence from numerous Achaemenid fortifications in the Levant.

As has been put forward by N. P. Lemche¹²¹ and others, the author and the narrator of the Old Testament sources which are a literary and ideological construction focusing on the conceptualization of Israel, have to be clearly distinguished. Consequently, it is the phraseology that the authors of the narratives of Zechariah, Ezra and Nehemiah choose to describe the restoration of the walls and the temple of Jerusalem, which matters for our discussion, and not the historicity of the events themselves. Considering the ideological level, therefore, it is only of minor importance whether these books reflect the physical restoration of the temple and the city walls or whether they should be read as a symbolic reflection of the consolidation of a religious community. But in our case, it will provide us with an interesting insight into the ideological conceptualization of the text producers.

In Ezra 4.12 the author describes the discontent of the Samaritans regarding the re-building of the temple. Here it is the local opposition, which adopts the rhetoric known from Assyrian and Persian royal inscriptions to denounce the Yahweh-alone followers. Their report to the Persian king Artaxerxes reads as follows:

Ezra 4. 12

"And now may it be known to the king that the Jews who came up from you to us have gone to Jerusalem. They are rebuilding that rebellious (bibl. Aramaic: *mārād*) and wicked (hapax: *bī'yš*) city, they are finishing the walls and repairing the foundations."

The temple completed, its authorization is emphasized in terms of being legitimated by

Ezra 6. 14

"the command of the God of Israel and by the decree of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes, king of Persia."

What rebellious and evil means is elucidated by:

Nehemiah 6. 6

"You and the Jews, you intend to rebel (*m^erōd* of the verb *mrd*). That is, why you are building the wall."

In the prophecy proclaimed by Zechariah, which is basically devoted to the new concept of the religious community of Jerusalem,¹²² the God of Israel guarantees a prodigious life for the people of Israel should they behave according to his ethical instructions which establish the renewed relationship between Yahweh and his people:

Zechariah 8. 16-17

These are the things you shall do: Speak reliable things (truth) to one another (*dbr 'emet*)! Reliable things (truth) (*'emet*) and a judgment of peace (*mišpaṭ šālôm*) render in your gates. Do not devise evil in your heart against one another and do

¹²⁰ Hoglund 1992, 163.

¹²¹ N. P. Lemche, *The Israelites in History and Tradition* (London/Louisville, 1998) 22ff., 129ff.

¹²² P. Marinkovic, "What does Zechariah 1-8 tell us about the Second Temple?" in: Eskenazi/Richards 1994, 96.

not love false oath (literally: oath of falsehood *šebu'at šeqer*)! for all these are things that I hate, says the Lord.

These Old Testament sources show how in the terminology the political and the ethical aspect are inextricably interwoven. The terminology used by the prophets to describe the ethical behavior of the people is intermingled with the legal terminology qualifying the political relationship between the Mesopotamian kings and their subjects as well as between the Assyrian or Persian overlords and their vassals. The term *'emet* literally means "reliability" and "loyalty," and the Greek translation of the Septuaginta shows how by using the term ἀλήθεια, "truth," the ethical concept of truth enters the ideological message conveyed by the prophets.

Like the inscription of Xerxes which spoke of the *daivās*, the opposing side is referred to as follows:

Zechariah 10. 2

For the teraphim (*rāpīm*) utter deceitful things, and the diviners (*waqōsmīm*) see lies (*šeqer*); the dreamers tell false dreams and give empty consolation.

A literary climax of the use of the motif of the lie in the content of false prophecy is represented in the narrative of the prophet Micaiah ben Imlah and his prophecy concerning the alliance of Judah and Israel against Aram as found in 1 Kings 22:1-28.¹²³ After Ahab has consulted his four hundred court prophets who all predicted victory, Micaiah was brought forward and predicted defeat. He describes a vision in which he saw a heavenly court presided by Yahweh con-

sulting Yahweh to send a lying spirit to the prophets consulted by Ahab in order to destroy him in battle due to a false prophecy.¹²⁴

Already this short list of references reveals the intellectual context of the text producers: the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the formation of the religious community are made directly dependent on the relationship of the Persian kings and as having to meet their favor. In view of the military aspect, the accusations of Nehemiah's opponents concerning a possible rebellion have some plausibility, because his fortification work could be used against the Persian king as well. Like the Akkadian sources, the Hebrew sources likewise display the juxtaposition of rebellion, evil, treachery and the lie.

However, what distinguishes the Hebrew ideological concept from its Assyrian and Persian counterpart, and what is completely new, is the following idea: while on the political level Israel is bound to the Persian king, on the religious level she is bound exclusively to her own god Yahweh, and not to Ahuramazda. In this way we find the same concept of exclusivity already formulated by Xerxes, but articulated from the opposite perspective. However, this concept is now combined with the institution of the covenant with Yahweh. As has been shown by ancient Near Eastern and Old Testament scholars, the institution of the covenant can be traced back to the Assyrian loyalty oaths imposed by the Assyrian kings on their vassals and subjects. In the Hebrew concept, this covenant now gains a religious dimension by de-

¹²³ S. J. de Vries, *Prophet Against Prophet. The Role of the Micaiah Narrative (1 Kings 22) in the Development of Early Prophetic Tradition* (Grand Rapids, 1978).

¹²⁴ L. L. Grabbe, *Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages. A Socio-Historical Study of Religious Specialists in Ancient Israel* (Valley Forge, 1995) 72.

fining the existence of the religious community of Israel on the basis of its

ethical and religious behavior.

Conclusion

The discussion of the concept of the lie and falsehood presented above spanned nearly 2000 years of ancient Near Eastern history. This diachronic perspective, as well as the synchronic perspective of the different text genres of epistolary literature and royal inscriptions allowed determining the theme and the semantic frame of the term "lie" as well as the successive stages of its development. This enabled us to trace its development within the respective ideological systems of the different cultures of Mesopotamia, Persia and Israel towards an increasing sophistication and growing theologization of this rhetorical argument, and, indeed, proved them to be an intellectual *koinè* during the first millennium B.C. Although politics and religion are inextricably interwoven in the Ancient time and the religious character of the ideological systems is an integrative element,¹²⁵ the royal inscriptions still differ in their explicitness regarding theological justification.

Scrutinizing the historical contexts in which the rhetorical device was used results in the observation that from the second half of the second millennium onwards, despite their cultural differences, all of these cultures could be linked by a comparable political-historical situation, – the breaking of a treaty or loyalty oath, or usurpation. In other words, the rhetoric depended very much upon the form of agreement preceding the violation. In each case a similar historical situation engendered a similar literary

production being characterized by the need to legitimate and justify a specific position or political or theological/cultic power. Furthermore, they were also connected semantically and partly even linguistically by the use of a similar terminology, similar formulae and lexicography. And last, the rhetoric of ideology developed into associating offenses against the king with offenses against the gods. The motif of the lie connected with breaking an oath sworn to the gods is evidenced first in literary texts such as Hattusili's Testament or the Tukultī-Ninurta Epic in the second half of the second millennium; it finds its first climax in the Sargonid royal reports to the god Aššur in the seventh century B.C., likewise texts of a highly literary character. A next important step is represented by Xerxes' *daivā*-inscription, which links the motif of lie with the exclusivity of the cult of Ahuramazda. This linkage then finds its full expression in the Old Testament prophecies proclaiming the exclusivity of the cult of Yahweh. Thereby the motif of lie represents a central rhetorical device within the prophecies, and, consequently, in the theological discourse of monotheism.

All these observations lead to my proposal to define the concept of the lie even more as primarily a rhetorical device and to classify it as a kind of strategy of defense. The reason all these cultures chose to apply such strategy of defense was its proven success. Its cultural transfer as a result was not restricted to

¹²⁵ Liverani 1979, 309.

the ruling élite, but also found its way into the theological discourse of the groups constructing the ideological con-

cept of Israel, which culminated in theologization of history.