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**ADAD IN ASSYRIA:
ROYAL AUTHORITY IN THE NEO-ASSYRIAN PERIOD**

Shana Zaia

Introduction: divinely-granted authority

Assyrian authority was divinely sanctioned: Assyrian kings credited the gods with their ability to rule, from the king's election to the throne, to the gods' support on campaign, to the gods' commands through divination.¹ In return, kings would complete works for the gods, including refurbishing temples, dedicating objects to the god's cult, or otherwise giving patronage. Studies about divine support of Assyrian kingship have largely focused on gods such as Aššur and Enlil, who consistently appear in royal titulary such as *iššak Aššur*, "vice-regent of Aššur", and *šakin Enlil*, "appointed by Enlil".² These titles, often found together, have a long history of use in the Assyrian royal inscriptions.³ Aššur is especially central to Assyrian kingship since not only is he the highest god of the Assyrian pantheon and a uniquely Assyrian god, but also because the Assyrian king was considered his designated representative on earth.⁴ Assyrian kings invoked a variety of gods in addition to Aššur and Enlil in their royal inscriptions, however, and the choice and characterization of the gods involved in how kings expressed their authority tended to change across the Neo-Assyrian period (ca. 1000–ca. 610 BCE). Because gods are ubiquitous in

*. I am grateful to Daniel Schwemer for his feedback on a draft of this article and to Agnete Lassen and Elizabeth Payne for access to YBC 7058 (photograph taken by the author). I also thank the reviewers for their helpful suggestions. Bibliographic abbreviations follow the CAD.

1. A number of works have discussed Assyrian kingship, including Maul 2017, Parker 2011, and Radner 2010.
2. On Assyrian titulary, see Cifola 1995 and Sazonov 2017.
3. Cifola 1995, 8–19, charts 1–13; CAD Š/1, 188f. *s.v.* *šaknu* 3b; 383f., *s.v.* *šangûtu* b and c; Greenwood 2008, 28. See Sazonov 2017 for a recent survey of Assyrian titulary. For an overview of translations of *iššakku*, see Seux 1965, 109, and CAD I, 263f. *s.v.* *iššakku*, 1.c.2'd', 1.c.2'e', and a brief discussion on p. 266.
4. See most recently Maul 2017, with further bibliography.

the Assyrian official corpus of royal inscriptions, a central source for studying royal ideology, considering how this authority was granted by tracing one consistently-invoked god can help to illuminate the nuances of how individual Assyrian kings conceptualized their divinely-granted powers and how this may have developed over time.

This study focuses on Adad, the Mesopotamian storm god *par excellence*. Adad's role in Assyrian kingship is relatively understudied — D. Schwemer most recently examined Adad's connection to kingship — with most works focusing on Adad's widespread cult and his nature as the storm god.⁵ Nonetheless, Adad appears in a diverse range of contexts related to the exercise of kingship, sometimes independently and at other times paired with Aššur, who is the primary source of Assyrian royal power. Moreover, Adad's prominence in Assyrian kingship and authority changes dramatically in state ideology over the course of the Neo-Assyrian period, as the empire takes shape, expands, and then eventually reaches its peak extent under the Sargonid kings. The shifting status of Adad is expressed most clearly in a sharp drop in the number of total attestations of the god in the Assyrian royal inscriptions: Adad starts the Neo-Assyrian period as the third most-attested god, following Aššur and Enlil, and declines in rank rapidly starting with Tiglath-pileser III, hitting his nadir under Ashurbanipal.⁶ This decline is accompanied by a change in Adad's involvement in kingship and in granting authority, from the god having an active role in military endeavours and royal construction projects to being restricted to guiding the king via divination. This signals a break from long-established traditions: Adad's prominence in kingship can be traced back to the Old Assyrian period, particularly in a famous text about Sargon of Akkad from Kārum Kaneš, which credits Adad with the success of Sargon's kingship, ending with the pronouncement “Adad is King!”⁷ Middle Assyrian texts likewise link Adad with kingship, reinforcing motifs that continue into the early Neo-Assyrian period such as Adad's close relationship with the state god Aššur and his martial characteristics.⁸ Adad also had a longstanding high rank in the Assyrian official pantheon; for instance, the Anu-Adad temple in Assur had existed since the reign of Šamši-Adad I and may have in fact been based on a temple to Adad alone built by Erišum I, meaning that Adad consistently had a cult space in the Assyrian religious and (until the

5. For more information on Adad and storm gods in general, including Iškur, Adad's equivalent in Sumerian texts, see Schwemer 2001, 2007, and 2008.

6. Zaia 2017.

7. For discussion of this text, see Dercksen 2005, esp. 116f., and Pongratz-Leisten 2015, 154–157.

8. See Schwemer 2001, 573–577, 589f. for Adad and Middle Assyrian kingship and Neo-Assyrian continuity. Schwemer (2001, 133f.) suggests that the characteristics of Adad as “der gemeinsam mit Ištar wirkende Helfer in der Schlacht und der Förderer des königlichen Ruhmes” may be quite ancient, though they do not yet appear in the Old Akkadian period inscriptions. It is interesting to note that a possible Assyrian addition to the lexical god-list AN = *Anu ša amēli* names an *Adad ša bēlūte*, “Adad of lordship”, see Schwemer 2001, 73f.

Neo-Assyrian period) political center.⁹

To better clarify how Neo-Assyrian kings understood divine authority and the gods that supported them, what follows are four illustrative aspects of the exercise of kingship and official power in which Adad is instrumental: 1. the authority that is granted through eponyms, 2. the success of the king at war, 3. the protection of the king's secular works through blessings and curses, and 4. the communication of divine instruction through divination. Through Adad's changing role, one can see that even long-held conceptions of divinely-granted Assyrian authority were not static but rather were subject to modifications over time. Moreover, Adad's case can further illuminate some of the shifting characteristics of other major gods in the pantheon during this period as well.

Royal eponyms and the endorsement of officials

Eponyms have largely been studied for chronological purposes, since years were named after whoever was selected as eponym that year from the pool of high officials that included the *turtānu*, *rab šāqê*, *šakin māti*, and city governors.¹⁰ The actual duties of the office are still unclear — some scholars have suggested that there were associated cultic duties in Assur, as the traditional religious centre of the Assyrian Empire, while others venture that being named eponym may have been only honorific in nature.¹¹ Nonetheless, the office was important enough that it was also divinely elected, though presumably with less fanfare than kingship was. The type of authority that was granted through the eponym was not exclusively royal; in fact, most eponyms were given to high officials.¹² The king, however, traditionally held the office of eponym for at least the first or second year of his reign, a custom that began with the reign of Enlil-nārārī I (1327–1318 BCE).¹³ Kings could also have a second eponym year after 30 years of kingship but it was only rarely that a king reigned that long.¹⁴ Shalmaneser III (859–824 BCE) is one such king who held two eponyms and is moreover the only Assyrian king to refer to his own election as eponym in his royal inscriptions, with two inscriptions that read “in my thirty-first regnal

9. Larsen 1976, 60. See also Schwemer 2001, 242–244, 264f., and Pongratz-Leisten 2015, 124–27, 141. For a ritual for Adad that took place in Assur, see Pongratz-Leisten 2015, 49 and 382f.

10. Millard 1994, 7, as well as for the practice of dating by eponyms in the Old and Middle Assyrian periods.

11. An overview of these theories are given in Millard 1994, 9; see also Finkel & Reade 1995, who call the office “ancient and prestigious” (171), and Mattila 2000, 6.

12. See Millard 1994, xvii 6–7 (for the relationship between the Assyrian King List and Eponym Lists); Finkel & Reade 1995, 167–169; Mattila 2000 for a survey of high officials, including those who held the eponymate.

13. Millard 1994, 7–9; Finkel & Reade 1995, 167.

14. Millard 1994, 14.

year, (when) I threw the die (*pūru*) for the second time before Aššur (and) Adad”.¹⁵ The reference to throwing a *pūru*, a “lot” or “die”, before Aššur and Adad as part of the election of the eponym is disputed, with the debate centring in part on YBC 7058, a unique artifact housed in the Yale Babylonian Collection (Fig. 1), which has been taken to support the idea that a *pūru* was cast during this process.

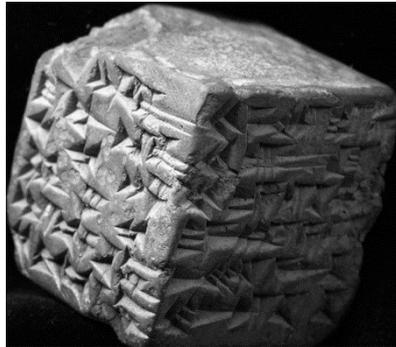


Fig. 1. YBC 7058 (2.8 × 2.7 cm).

YBC 7058 is a six-sided clay object with an inscription wrapping around four sides and a blank top and bottom. The object reads

Aššur, the great lord, Adad, the great lord: die of Iaḥalu, the chief *masennu* of Shalmaneser, king of Assyria: governor of the city Kipšuna, the lands Qumēnu, Meḥrānu, Uqu, (and) *Erimmu*; chief of trade: in his eponymy (and the period allotted by) his die, may the harvest of Assyria prosper well. May he throw his die before Aššur (and) Adad.¹⁶

Iaḥalu, the official to whom the *pūru* belonged, was eponym in 833, 824, and 821 BCE.¹⁷ The *masennu* was one of the highest offices, and has been translated as “treasurer” or “steward”.¹⁸ Iaḥalu was quite a powerful figure, as Mattila remarks that he was “the first *masennu* to hold the eponymate ... and was promoted to the office of *turtānu* by 821 at

15. RIMA 3 A.0.102.14, 175; A.0.102.16, 321'; Millard 1994, 14. Ashurnasirpal II refers to a year named after himself in the “Great Monolith” (Millard 1994, 85) but does not mention any selection process or dice.

16. RIMA 3 A.0.102.2003; Mattila 2000, 13. According to Mattila (2000, 19), “the evidence presented locates the land of the *masennu* in the region of the Lesser Habur as early as the reign of Shalmaneser III. Kipšuna, capital of Quma/eni, and probably to be identified with modern Qeḫše, was its central city”.

17. PNA I, 90 s.v. Aia-halu.

18. Mattila 2000, 13.

the latest and probably already by 824".¹⁹ It is not clear, however, whether this object was used in the process of choosing Iaḥalu as eponym and the debate has produced a number of theories: that it was a lot to be cast in the process of selecting the eponym, possibly shaken from a vessel; that it was meant to imitate a six-sided die used in the selection, on which each side represented one of six candidates; that this object is purely symbolic or dedicatory and lots and dice were no longer used to determine eponym order by this period.²⁰

What is noteworthy is the parallel between the text on the *pūru* and the inscriptions of Shalmaneser III: they both describe casting the die before Aššur and Adad. The *pūru* moreover begins with an invocation of Aššur and Adad, each identified as *bēlu rabû*, "great lord". These attestations indicate that it was these two gods who were responsible for designating this office. While the actual powers the eponym office conferred are still unknown, Adad clearly has influence in the endorsement of official authority, whether it is applied to the king or to officials, at least through the early Neo-Assyrian period. D. Schwemer even argues that Adad's role in choosing eponyms, while not attested as early as the Old Assyrian period, was probably already the practice at the time.²¹ If this is true, then Adad's role in the selection of eponyms and the granting of official authority was one of the oldest roles of the god, making the shift in his character in the late Neo-Assyrian period even more stark.

When men were like gods: simile use in campaign narratives

As part of their divine imperative to add territory to the land of Assyria, the kings would take to the battlefield through yearly campaigns.²² Numerous gods accompanied the Assyrian king on campaign, and the king's success in war was attributed to this divine support. Adad, consistently an important deity in the Assyrian pantheon, was frequently one of the gods named in this role, likely as early as the Old Assyrian period, though inscriptions of that period focus on Adad's role in blessing and cursing formulae.²³ While that

19. Mattila 2000, 14, 108.

20. Millard 1994, 179; Finkel & Reade 1995, 167–172. There are some exemplars of Egyptian dice, including a Ptolemaic exemplar, a cube made of limestone, which might provide an interesting parallel. One source (Crist, Dunn-Vaturi & de Voogt 2016, 12) describes the object as "inscribed with hieroglyphs. Names of gods appear on each side: Osiris, Horus, Isis, Nephthys, Hathor and Har-behdety", but adds that "questions are still raised whether this type of die was used to play or was involved in magical/divinatory rituals".

21. Schwemer 2007, 140.

22. Most recently, Maul 2017, 349.

23. See Zaia 2017; Schwemer 2007 for an overview of the god's role in different phases of Assyrian history. On Old Assyrian blessings and curses, see below.

role continued to dominate after the Old Assyrian period, starting in the Middle Assyrian period Adad appears in campaign narratives and combat contexts, sometimes in combination with the trope of granting authority that was seen with the eponyms above.²⁴ In a continuation of this theme, early Neo-Assyrian kings such as Ashurnasirpal II included Adad actively in their statements of divine support on campaign, for instance in the claim that “with the assistance of Aššur (and) the god Adad, the great gods who made my sovereignty supreme, I mustered my chariotry (and) troops”.²⁵ In these cases, Adad is consistently paired with Aššur.

While kings frequently boasted of their divine favour as well as their own superhuman military prowess, instances of Assyrian kings likening themselves and their abilities to gods by use of a direct simile are quite rare. Adad is one of only three or four gods that are invoked in such a way. In the Neo-Assyrian period, this phenomenon begins with Ashurnasirpal II and Shalmaneser III, not incidentally the kings who campaigned most aggressively and frequently.²⁶ This trope continues in the royal inscriptions of Šamšī-

24. For instance, Aššur-bēl-kala makes reference to preparing for war “with the martial spirit of Adad” (RIMA 2 A.0.89.2, i 10') and going to war against the Arameans “by the command of Aššur and Adad” (RIMA 2 A.0.89.9, 3'-4'), while Adad-nērārī I calls himself “the king at whose feet the gods Anu, Aššur, Šamaš, Adad, and Ištar made all rulers and princes bow down” (RIMA 1 A.0.60.1). Tiglath-pileser I, in particular, makes several statements about Adad's martial character, including invoking Adad as “hero, who storms over hostile regions, mountains (and) seas”, writing of “my (Tiglath-pileser's) heroic victories, my successful battles, (and) the suppression of the enemies (and) foes of the god Aššur which the gods Anu and Adad granted me”, and claiming that he marched against Nairi “with the aid of the gods Aššur, Šamaš, (and) Adad, the great gods, my lords” (RIMA 2 A.0.87.1, i 9-10, viii 39-49; A.0.87.15, 1-3, respectively). The association between the storm god and military combat is not unique to the Assyrians; indeed, the Syro-Anatolian storm gods of the Late Bronze Age and Iron ages are typically associated with both military and political power. Bunnens (2006, 33-43, 79) in particular discusses the “smiting” storm god motif in iconography, starting with the second millennium, and the associations with implements of war such as chariots and maces. He (*ibid.*, 43, 55-76, 100) also establishes the connection between storm god and king, writing that the storm god on the Ahmar stele of Hamiyata of Masuwari is dressed as a ruler and the stele, which commemorates a military triumph, shows this king crediting the storm god “of the Army” as supporting him, going before him into battle, and assisting him with expanding his borders. He (*ibid.*, 100) concludes that “a special relationship existed between the Storm-God and royal power. This is especially apparent in the Syro-Anatolian world of the early first millennium B.C. The connection is well illustrated by the tendency, noted above (pp. 56-58), to portray kings as Storm-Gods. The Storm-God was a dispenser of power”. See Bunnens 2006, 109-171 for a catalogue of Syro-Anatolian storm god iconography, including Assyrianizing elements. For the possibility of influence between these traditions and the Assyrian ones, see Bunnens (2006, 64-68, 76-78) and Masetti-Rouault (2001, 71-81, 89-93, 104, 110-133), who explores the storm god iconography on a stone block from Tell Ashara that included an inscription of Tukultī-Ninurta II (RIMA 2 A.0.100.1004) and its historical context.

25. RIMA 2 A.0.101.1, i 76-77.

26. Before the Neo-Assyrian period, Tiglath-pileser I compares himself directly to Adad, writing “with the

Adad V, Tiglath-pileser III, Sargon II, and Sennacherib. While the military campaigns in which these similes occur differ, the kings essentially use the same elements to compare themselves to Adad, who is invoked in his aspect as a destructive storm, rather than one that provides rainfall for the harvest (see Table 1). The destructive element is emphasized with divine epithets and acts derived from *raḥāṣu*, “to destroy, devastate”, such as Adad being *ša riḥṣi*, “of the devastation”, *rāḥiṣu*, “the devastator”, or the king inflicting damage as if he were bringing *riḥiltu (riḥiṣtu)*, “devastation”, or attacking *kīma riḥiṣti*, “like devastation”.²⁷ The king himself is often said to *šaḡāmu*, “thunder”, or to cause the destruction, to *zanānu*, “rain”, upon his enemies, with Šamšī-Adad V drawing an even closer parallel to Adad by using the verb *šaḡāmu* in tandem with *šāḡimi*, a cognate epithet for Adad.²⁸ Sargon II’s description of his campaign against Urartu provides unique cases in that the king makes his troops thunder or flood like Adad, claiming the power but exercising it through his military. The resulting effect is that of a king who approaches the enemy like a dark and foreboding storm advancing from the horizon, fearsome to behold and impossible to turn back, and one that leaves a path of annihilation behind as if in a flood, the natural consequence of a particularly heavy storm. For some reason, however, the motif of using Adad to symbolize the storm is discontinued after the reign of Sennacherib. Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal compare their military assaults to generic storms, but even this differs from the way in which Sennacherib had compared himself to a storm (*ūmiš ṣarpiš alsâ*, “I roared loudly like a storm”); for example, Esarhaddon writes that he “ripped out the roots of the Sutû, who live in tents in a remote place, like the onslaught of a fierce storm (*kīma ezzi tīb meḥê*)” and Ashurbanipal uses essentially the same phrase in “like the assault of a fierce storm (*kīma tīb meḥê ezzi*), I covered the land Elam in its entirety”.²⁹ Thus, the idea of the destructive storm and flooding is retained in campaign narratives but without reference to Adad directly, which is especially significant when tracing the development of Adad’s characteristics through the Neo-Assyrian period.

That the king takes on aspects of a specific god is quite telling for how the king conceives of his own powers on the battlefield. Adad is the most prominent of the gods of this category; other gods are attested in a simile construction with the king exceedingly

onslaught of my fierce weapons I approached them (the enemy kings in Nairi) (and) destroyed their extensive army like a storm of the god Adad”. (RIMA 2 A.087.1, iv 84–90). See also Schwemer 2001, 176 fn. 1239 for Middle Babylonian, Middle Assyrian, and Neo-Assyrian examples of the king using Adad as a topos.

27. CAD R, 70f. s.v. *raḥāṣu* A 1.a, 335f. s.v. *riḥṣu* A a; there does seem to be a sense of “flood” or “down-pour”, especially when used with *zanānu*, “to rain”, but this is not inherent in the definition of the term.

28. In Ashurnasirpal II’s inscriptions, moreover, the king is said to “rain down flames”, which may be simply for dramatic effect but might also be drawing upon imagery of fires started by lightning striking dry areas.

29. RINAP 4 1, v 15–16; RINAP 5 Asbpl 9, ii 59. Compare to RINAP 3/1 22, v 75.

rarely and exclusively in the context of combat. Shalmaneser III likens himself to the violent god Erra when he claims, “I slaughtered the extensive Guti like the god Erra (*kī Erra ašgiš*)”.³⁰ Similarly, Adad-nērārī II writes of himself that “I scorch like the god Girru (*kīma Girru aḥammaṭ*)”, the fire god, among other royal epithets that emphasize the king’s might in battle.³¹ Later, Esarhaddon describes his military onslaught as taking the form of ^d*Girru lā āniḥu*, “Girru who does not rest”.³² Moreover, the ability to equate oneself to a god is apparently a royal prerogative, as no inscriptions written by high officials use this kind of language, even those of officials who had relative independence.³³ Furthermore, gods were sometimes likened to one another, such as when Šarrat-nipḥi and Ninurta are compared to Šamaš.³⁴ This suggests that kings were able to access a close relationship to the gods as part of their royal authority, one that paralleled the relationships between divine beings. Adad’s appearance here, therefore, provides a glimpse into how the god was conceptualized as part of the Assyrian king’s abilities to conquer the world around him.

Public works and their divine protections

Completing public works was central to a successful kingship and the creation of one’s royal legacy. This is particularly true of building projects, since they also served as a visual and tangible demonstration of the king’s military accomplishments and control over territory, which funded and supported these endeavours with tribute, taxes, and labourers. These projects were protected on the divine level through inscriptional blessings and curses that called upon the gods to favour or punish anyone who reconstructed or damaged the work, respectively. Earlier studies have persuasively shown that the gods invoked in blessings and curses are carefully chosen; in the case of temples, for instance, blessings and curses tend to invoke the god(s) for whom the temple is dedicated.³⁵ More telling for this study, however, are the instances in which the construction works are not temples but rather “secular” buildings, such as palaces, or parts of the city, like walls and

30. RIMA 3 A.0.102.5, iii 2. A “hymn” to the Isin king Ur-Ninurta of the Ur III period (Ur-Ninurta A) shows an early, Sumerian example of the king being compared to Erra, but unfortunately the line is broken; Sjöberg (1977, 193) translates “Urninurta! In authority (and) youthfulness may you ‘make fat’ your neck like a wild bull! Like Irra, the heroic warrior, ... [...]”. In the Erra Epic, I 115, Erra himself is compared to Adad: “like the wind I blow, like Adad I thunder” (see Cagni 1977, 30f.).

31. RIMA 2 A.0.99.2, 18; A.0.99.4, 5’.

32. RINAP 4 98, r.14. A fragmentary second text appears to be a duplicate of the first (RINAP 4 100, 3’).

33. See Zaia 2018.

34. RIMA 2 A.0.101.28, i 2; RIMA 3 A.0.103.1, i 11. These direct comparisons to Šamaš should be distinguished from the title “sun(god)” (written ^d*šam-šī*), which is essentially dropped after the reign of Shalmaneser III, with one exception in Esarhaddon’s corpus (RINAP 4 1006, i 13’). On this title and solar imagery in Assyrian kingship, see Pongratz-Leisten 2013.

35. See Greenwood 2010 and 2008.

gates, because the gods that protect non-religious monuments are not predictable in the same ways as gods safeguarding their own temples. As mentioned above, Adad's association with blessings and curses is one known already in the Old Assyrian period, and, while many cases are related to temples and cult spaces of Adad, there are a number of divine protections related to buildings that are not primarily religious in nature. The phenomenon of Adad as a "hearing god" in blessings begins as early as the reign of Old Assyrian king Puzur-Aššur, who does renovation work on the city wall of Assur, writing that "the gods Aššur and Adad will listen to the prayers of a later prince when that wall becomes dilapidated and he rebuilds (it)".³⁶ Adad remains a blessing god for such structures into the Middle Assyrian period, also taking on a role in curses, for such non-religious construction projects in Assur as Adad-nērārī I renovating several walls and storehouses, Aššur-uballiṭ I building a terrace of the New Palace, and Enlil-nērārī I renewing the outer wall.³⁷ Perhaps most telling for Adad's connection to kingship is Tukulti-Ninurta I invoking the god in blessings and curses that protect the king's construction of a new palace in Assur.³⁸ In these cases, Adad is generally invoked with Aššur and occasionally alone, and the location of these projects is significant, as new kings were crowned and ritually granted their royal sovereignty by the god Aššur in his temple, which was located exclusively in Assur.³⁹

In a show of significant continuity, Adad appears in the majority of the early Neo-Assyrian period examples in which kings construct such buildings, where he is still consistently paired with Aššur. Under Tukultī-Ninurta II, Aššur and Adad are the blessing and cursing gods that protect the king's reconstruction of the New Palace in Assur, a symbol of royal power in the traditional religious and political capital of Assyria and one with a long history, originally built by Aššur-bēl-kala. The inclusion of Adad with Aššur in a context so closely associated with Assyrian kingship is a substantial expression of the extent of his oversight of royal authority. The blessing and curse are standard formulations meant to ensure that a royal successor will maintain the building and the builder king's legacy:

36. RIMA 1 A.0.61.1, 11–14. This city wall (and possibly other non-religious structures) in Assur are renovated by other Old Assyrian kings, such as Aššur-bēl-nišēšu, Aššur-rēm-nišēšu I, Enlil-nāšir, and Erība-Adad, with Adad invoked as a blessing god. The term "hearing god", referring to blessings in which the gods will "hear [the renovator's] prayers", was coined in Greenwood 2008. For Adad in the Old Assyrian period blessings and curses, see Schwemer 2001, 237f.

37. RIMA 1 A.0.76.9, 5–33 (quay wall); A.0.76.14, 4–38 (city wall); A.0.76.17, 4–29; RIMA 1 A.0.73.2, 13–27; A.0.74.1, 2–11.

38. RIMA 1 A.0.78.5, 70–126 (among several other similar accounts).

39. Most recently, Maul 2017, 348. There are arguably attempts to create shrines of Aššur outside of his eponymous city, such as at Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta, but Aššur was ultimately intrinsically bound to the city (Maul 2017, 339–341).

May a later prince, when this wall becomes old and dilapidated, restore its ruined (portions). May he not remove my monumental inscriptions from their places (but) anoint (them) with oil, make sacrifices, (and) return (them) to their places. (Then) Aššur (and) the god Adad will listen to his prayers. He who erases my inscribed name and removes my monumental inscriptions from their places; may Aššur (and) the god Adad destroy his name and his seed from the land.⁴⁰

Similarly, Shalmaneser III promises a later ruler that, should he maintain the king's work on the gates and walls of Assur and preserve the inscriptions that he left chronicling the building of these constructions, Aššur and Adad will bless him and listen to his prayers.⁴¹ That Adad is one of the gods invoked in all of these passages further suggests that Assyrian kings in the early Neo-Assyrian period saw the pairing of Aššur and Adad as central to their authority, especially given the location of these building works in Assur.⁴²

From battles and buildings to *bārûtu*: Adad's role in divination

Despite these examples of Adad's importance in royal authority, Adad's prominence in this role begins to decline already under Tiglath-pileser III. By the late Neo-Assyrian period, Adad is not found in any of the aforementioned contexts: no longer do the kings compare themselves in battle to Adad, non-religious building projects do not feature Adad in any significant way in blessings and curses, and, while eponym dating formulae are still in use, there is no mention of the particular gods that grant the office. Adad's earlier roles are replaced with an association with divination through extispicy (*bārûtu*) and the granting of divine consent.⁴³ Adad is not explicitly linked to divination in the inscriptions

40. RIMA 2 A.0.100.5, 142–146.

41. RIMA 3 A.0.102.42, 12; A.0.102.44, 13.

42. Interestingly, there is a curse that invokes Adad by himself in the Neo-Assyrian period not in relation to buildings but rather within the context of political alliances, and it is found in an inscription of Tukulti-Ninurta II that reads: "I was merciful towards Amme-ba'li, a man of Bīt-Zamāni. I established (them) in abandoned cities (and) settled them in peaceful dwellings. I had him take an oath by Aššur, my lord, before the statue of ... [...]: 'If you give horses to my enemies (and) foes, may the god Adad [strike your] land with terrible lightning' " (RIMA 2 A.0.100.5, 25). Tukulti-Ninurta II makes Amme-ba'li take an oath before Aššur, and part of this oath, which prevents Amme-ba'li from giving horses to the enemies of Assyria, appears to be specifically protected by the god Adad. This type of curse, relying upon Adad's characteristics as a storm god, is closer in form to inscriptional curses from the treaty and oath corpus, see Parpola & Watanabe 1988. Adad and Aššur are sometimes invoked together in literary and ritual contexts as well, see Pongratz-Leisten 2105, 252–254, 404f.

43. This is not to say that Adad's association with divination is an innovation of the Neo-Assyrian period (Schwemer 2007, 149f. provides a succinct summary of the long history of Adad in this role, starting in the Old Babylonian period), but rather that it is not a visible feature of Adad's characterization in the Assyrian royal inscriptions earlier than this point.

of Tiglath-pileser III or Sargon II, but he is under Sennacherib and, by the time of Esarhaddon's reign, being a god of divination is Adad's most significant characteristic.

Divination was important to Assyrian kingship in that kings would routinely seek the decisions of the gods before taking political, religious, or military action.⁴⁴ Divination's use in the exercise of kingship becomes most visible in the royal inscriptions of Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Ashurbanipal, who narrate seeking the gods' advice or receiving their consent. While astrological divination was important under these kings, the form of divination in which Adad is involved is extispicy, *bārûtu*, arguably the highest form of official communication with the divine.⁴⁵ In this function, Adad always follows the sun god Šamaš, a connection that existed under earlier kings but becomes Adad's primary pairing as his earlier association with Aššur is discontinued.⁴⁶ Moreover, that Šamaš is approached independently in the "queries to the Sungod" suggests that he is the more important god in these forms of divination and that Adad is secondary. The reports of seeking the advice of Šamaš and Adad are largely related to cultic or temple-building projects; changes related to cultic performance are high-stakes modifications and the will and consent of the gods is a critical component of carrying out the construction correctly. Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Ashurbanipal all use this motif. For example, when Sennacherib builds an "*akītu*-house of the steppe" in Assur, he portrays the project as reviving a long-neglected festival and cultic space for Aššur, though the existence of an *akītu*-house there is unlikely to be historical fact.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, the king claims that,

The festival of the feast of the king of the gods, (the god) Aššur, which from distant days, because of chaos and disruption, (and) the *akītu*-house of the steppe had been forgotten; the rites of the king of the gods, (the god) Aššur, had been performed inside the city. With (regard to) that work, I made up my mind to (re)build th(at) *akītu*-house, and (then) I found out the will of the gods Šamaš (and) Adad, and they answered me with a firm "yes" and commanded me to (re)build (it).⁴⁸

44. One can see, for instance, the "queries to the Sungod" and extispicy reports collected by Starr (1990), which include divine communications about everything from military movements to cultic matters to the appointment of officials and medical issues.

45. See Starr 1990, XXXf., XXXVI–LV for an overview of extispicy and court diviners.

46. As noted, Adad's association with Šamaš as an oracular god is attested as early as the Old Babylonian period (Schwemer 2001, 221). Schwemer (2001, 590) argues that the pairing with Šamaš that originated in the Middle Assyrian period became fixed by the Neo-Assyrian period, and suggests that "die paarweise Nennung mit Šamaš rekuriert wohl auf das gemeinsame Wirken der beiden Götter in der Vorzeichenschau, auch wenn sich die Texte nirgends ausdrücklich auf Extispizin beziehen".

47. On the *akītu* in Assyria under the Sargonids, see most recently Barcina 2017.

48. RINAP 3/2 168, 22b–30a.

This construction project was part of a larger ideological program in which Marduk, the patron god of Babylon, was supplanted by Aššur in *Enūma eliš* after Sennacherib's destruction of Babylon in 689 BCE. The construction of a new *akītu* house moreover meant that an integral festival was shifted from Babylon to Assur, and any radical changes in cultic performance needed to be decreed by the gods. Parallel statements are found in related matters, such as the creation of a bronze gate depicting the battle between Tiamat and Marduk from *Enūma eliš* as occurring between Tiamat and Aššur instead, as well as Sennacherib's renovations on Aššur's Ešarra temple and his claims that he performs rituals properly.⁴⁹

Under Esarhaddon, these statements reach peak usage thanks to the emphasis on divination in the king's narratives about his ascension to the Assyrian throne and regarding his rebuilding projects, especially those in Babylonia. The complicated circumstances in which Esarhaddon succeeded the throne are well discussed elsewhere;⁵⁰ what is important to note is that Adad plays a central role in the granting of Esarhaddon's authority, but only in the context of the divine will of Šamaš and Adad together. For instance, Esarhaddon writes that Sennacherib

questioned the gods Šamaš and Adad by divination (*ina bīri*), and they answered him with a firm “yes”, saying: “He is your replacement”. He heeded their important word(s) and gathered together the people of Assyria, young (and) old, (and) my brothers, the seed of the house of my father.⁵¹

While in this case Adad is involved in matters of kingship, it is as a legitimizing force; Sennacherib has already decided upon his successor, prompted by the command of the gods Aššur, Sîn, Šamaš, Bēl, Nabû, Ištar of Nineveh, and Ištar of Arbela, and he receives the divine consent through divination only after the divine instructions are given.⁵²

Esarhaddon also uses extispicy to receive the instructions of Šamaš and Adad relating to the refurbishment of the Babylonian cult images, which had been damaged and deported (or destroyed, in some cases) by Sennacherib during the devastation of Babylon.⁵³ Esarhaddon's reliance upon Adad (and Šamaš) for communications relating to political and cultic matters is clearly expressed when he considers renovating Aššur's temple, and he writes that,

49. RINAP 3/2 160, obv. 3, 8–9, 12–16; 166, 16; 168, 5.

50. See recently Knapp 2016, with further bibliography.

51. RINAP 4 1, i 13; 5, i 6'.

52. RINAP 4 1, i 9–12: “by the command of the gods Aššur, Sîn, Šamaš, Bēl, and Nabû, Ištar of Nineveh, (and) Ištar of Arbela, (my) father, who engendered me, elevated me firmly in the assembly of my brothers, saying: ‘This is the son who will succeed me’ ”.

53. RINAP 4 48, 72; 48, 81.

I was worried, afraid, (and) hesitant about renovating that temple [of Aššur]. In the diviner's bowl, the gods Šamaš and Adad answered me with a firm "yes" and they had (their response) concerning the (re)building of that temple (and) the renovation of its chapel written on a liver.⁵⁴

Ashurbanipal seeks the consent of the same gods when he renews the emblem of Šarrat-Kidmuri.⁵⁵

Ashurbanipal likewise mirrors his predecessor closely in claiming that Adad had a part in declaring him king by using essentially the same motifs. He writes that Esarhaddon prayed to Šamaš and Adad regarding Ashurbanipal's succession, and that Ashurbanipal is the one "(whom) the gods Šamaš (and) Adad declared to exercise its (Assyria's) kingship through their firm decision(s)".⁵⁶ This example, along with Esarhaddon's narratives about his succession, indicate that Adad does not entirely disappear from contexts in which kings describe their divine authority, particularly in their selection as king, but the ways in which the storm god is related to designating and supporting kingship has become less direct and active, essentially confirming decisions the reigning king had already made and featuring Adad more often in theological matters than military ones. In addition, there are other places in the texts where the kings credit the support of the god for their successes and sovereignty, but these sentiments generally include Adad with several other deities within the category "great gods" and therefore the god's individual contributions to Assyrian authority are diluted.⁵⁷

Conclusion: the shifting network of gods who grant authority

Adad is one tile in a larger mosaic of divinely-granted authority, and one should analyse the changes he undergoes by considering other individual gods that become more prominent during the late Neo-Assyrian period.⁵⁸ As Adad declines in the state pantheon, a few

54. RINAP 4 57, iii 42–iv 6.

55. SAACT X 2, ii 18; RINAP 5 Asbpl 6, i 57'–i 61'; Asbpl 7, i 29'–i 34'; Asbpl 10, ii 18–ii 24.

56. RINAP 5 Asbpl 9, i 5. Similarly, "one who was named (*nibū*) by the gods Šin, Šamaš, (and) Adad", and this statement is preceded by claims of divine creation and selection first by Aššur and Mullissu and then Ea and Bēlet-ilī (RINAP 5 Asbpl 2, i 6).

57. For instance, Ashurbanipal claims "the deities Aššur, Šin, Šamaš, Adad, Bēl (Marduk), Nabū, Ištar of Nineveh, Šarrat-Kidmuri, Ištar of Arbela, Ninurta, Nergal, (and) Nusku gladly made me sit on the throne of the father who had engendered me" and uses similarly long deity sequences that include Adad in his conquest narratives (RINAP 5 Asbpl 11, i 41–44, for instance). As Schwemer (2001, 594) notes, however, Adad is not always named in these deity sequences by the reign of Ashurbanipal, perhaps another sign of Adad's decline in status.

58. For religious aspects of kingship in general, see Pongratz-Leisten 2015, especially 219–270 for the king's associations with Ninurta in particular.

major gods rise, some quite sharply. In particular, Ištar, who was already consistently important to the success of kingship, especially in the battlefield, becomes increasingly popular until she is the second most-attested god under Ashurbanipal, following Aššur, with whom she is often directly paired.⁵⁹ As part of this shift, Ištar becomes more directly involved in the king's divine election and deeds; for instance, Esarhaddon calls himself "favourite of the goddess Ištar, the queen" and Ashurbanipal claims that "through the support of (the god) Aššur and the goddess Ištar, my lords, I conquered my enemies (and) achieved my heart's desire".⁶⁰ Ashurbanipal in particular pairs Ištar with Aššur in campaign narratives, giving the goddess what was Adad's former pride of place. Both Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal link Ištar with their royal authority as well: Esarhaddon cites her role as "Ištar, [my lady], gave me [a royal destiny] as [a gift] (while I was still) in the womb of my mother to refur[bish] the gods" and "Ištar, my lady, made my kingship greater than that of the kings, my ancestors", while Ashurbanipal makes such statements as Ištar is "(the goddess) who rai[s]ed me like (my own) birth-mother, ki[ll]ed my enemies, (and) made all of the rulers bow down at my feet".⁶¹ The geographically-specified forms Ištar of Arbela and Ištar of Nineveh, who become suddenly prominent in Assyrian royal inscriptions under Sennacherib, also quickly become involved in the selection and elevation of kings to the throne, usually in tandem.⁶² Some of the changes to Adad's role may also be due to Babylonian influence, as Marduk and Nabû become increasingly central to Assyrian kingship except, of course, under Sennacherib.⁶³ Indeed, D. Schwemer suggests Babylonian influence behind a stock pairing of Adad with Ea in Ashurbanipal's inscriptions, wherein the gods are invoked together for their water-providing qualities in

59. Zaia 2017.

60. RINAP 4 1, ii 17; RINAP 5 Asbpl 35, 2–3; 47, 2–3; 51, 2.

61. RINAP 4 43, obv. 12; RINAP 4 54, r.19; RINAP 5 Asbpl 10, v 33–38. These are meant to be representative examples, for more details about the relationships between Esarhaddon, Ashurbanipal and Ištar (also of Arbela and Nineveh), see Zaia 2017.

62. Ištar of Arbela is probably first attested in the Assyrian royal inscriptions under Shalmaneser I (RIMA 1 A.0.77.16) and only appears in a handful of royal inscriptions until Sennacherib's reign; earlier kings who mention the goddess in royal or royal-type inscriptions include Aššur-dān I, Tiglath-pileser I, and Shalmaneser III, and she is attested in a few non-royal inscriptions as well, see Nissinen forthcoming. I am grateful to Martti Nissinen for sharing with me an advance copy of his article. Ištar of Nineveh has a longer history in Assyrian royal inscriptions, starting with the Old Assyrian period, but these are largely focused on her temple until Sennacherib's reign, when the king makes more active statements such as "I myself prayed to the deities Aššur, Sîn, Šamaš, Bēl, Nabû, Nergal, Ištar of Nineveh, (and) Ištar of Arbela, the gods who support me, for victory over (my) strong enemy and they immediately heeded my prayers (and) came to my aid" (RINAP 3/1 22, v 62–67).

63. Sennacherib's Babylonian policies versus those of his successors have been discussed by Porter 1993 and most recently (briefly) by Frahm 2017, 186.

the context of the fecundity and prosperity of the land during Ashurbanipal's reign.⁶⁴

Using Adad as a case study starts to reveal how conceptions of divinely-granted authority developed and changed during the Neo-Assyrian period. That Adad goes from an active supporter of the king to a purely divinatory god in the royal inscriptions suggests a major change in the choice of gods that the Assyrians credited with their ability to reign as a successful king. Re-contextualizing Adad with the other gods that are consistently invoked, in turn, allows for a better understanding of the greater trends behind this phenomenon to further illuminate the nuances of Assyrian authority, where it came from, how it was granted to the king, and how it changed over time.

Akkadian	Translation	King	Inscriptions
<i>kāma Adad ša riḫši elišunu ašgum nablu elišunu ušaznin</i>	I thundered against them like the god Adad-of-the-Destruction (and) rained down flames upon them	Ashurnasirpal II	A.0.101.1, ii 106–107; A.0.101.17, iv 71–72, A.0.101.19, 73; ⁶⁵ A.0.101.21, 12' (omits <i>nablu</i> onwards)
<i>kāma Adad rāḫiši elišunu ašgum</i>	I thundered like the god Adad, the devastator	Ashurnasirpal II, Shalmaneser III	A.0.101.1, iii 119–120; A.0.101.2, 10–11; A.0.101.3, 33–34; A.0.101.23, 7–8; A.0.101.26, 18–21; A.0.101.28, iii 14–N (reconstructed); A.0.101.51, 14–17; ⁶⁶ A.0.101.33, 11'; A.0.102.5, iii 3
<i>kāma Adad elišunu riḫilta (riḫišta) ušaznin</i>	I rained down upon them destruction as the god Adad would	Shalmaneser III	A.0.102.1, 59' (partially reconstructed); A.0.102.2, i 46; A.0.102.2, ii 50; A.0.102.2, ii 98
<i>kāma Adad šāgimi elišunu ašgum</i>	I thundered like the god Adad, the thunderer	Šamši-Adad V	A.0.103.1, iii 68–69
<i>kāma riḫišti Adad arḫissunūti</i>	I swept over them like a downpour of the god Adad	Tiglath-pileser III	RINAP 1 Tp III 16, 8 (continues from text 15)

64. Schwemer 2001, 594. See, for instance, RINAP 5 Asbpl 3, i 27–28: “the god Adad released his rains (and) the god Ea opened up his springs”. While Adad has positive characteristics of bringing beneficial rainfall and abundance throughout the Neo-Assyrian period, there is more emphasis on these characteristics than on his destructive ones under Tiglath-pileser III and his successors in general. These aspects are common to other storm god traditions as well; see, for instance, Bunnens (2006, 58f., 73–75) for associations with rain, fields, and vineyards in the iconography and characteristics of Syro-Anatolian storm gods.

65. See Schwemer 2001, 673, especially fn. 5557.

66. In these passages, the king is also said to be assisted by Šamaš and Adad: “With the help of the gods Šamaš and Adad, the gods my supporters, I thundered like the god Adad, the devastator, against the troops of the lands Nairi, Ḫabḫu, the Šubaru, and the land Nirbu”. These two sentiments do not rely upon each other, however; in other words, these are two separate statements of Adad's character and relationship with the king placed next to one another.

Akkadian	Translation	King	Inscriptions
<i>kāma Adad arḫiṣma</i>	I flooded like Adad	Sargon II	Mayer 2013, 120, iii 230
<i>rigim ummānīya galtu kāma Adad ušašgim-ma</i>	Like Adad I made thunder the terrifying clamor of my troops	Sargon II	Mayer 2013, 130, iv 343
<i>kāma Adad ušašgimu rigim kalabbi parzilli</i>	Like Adad I made thunder the clamor of an iron axe	Sargon II	Mayer 2013, 118, iii 224
<i>kāma Adad ... arḫiṣma</i>	I flooded ... like Adad	Sargon II	Mayer 2013, 120, iii 230
<i>ūmiš šarpiš alsâ kāma Adad ašgum</i>	I roared loudly like a storm (and) thundered like the god Adad	Sennacherib	RINAP 3/1 18, v 21'–22'; 22, v 75; 23, v 64; RINAP 3/2 145, obv. i' 9 (restored); 230, 66 (partially restored)

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