THE LABORS OF IDRIMI

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THE LABORS OF IDRIMI

Inscribing the Past, Shaping the Present at Late Bronze Age Alalah

by
Jacob Lauinger

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For Marisa

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As with any project of many years, I owe a tremendous debt to a number of different people and institutions, and it is a great pleasure to acknowledge them here.

In a sense, this project began when I first read the Statue of Idrimi text in the autumn of 2001 in an Akkadian seminar taught by Martha Roth at the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute (now Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures). In the two decades since, I have had several opportunities to read it with students in my own Akkadian seminars at Johns Hopkins University. I am grateful to my former teacher and classmates in Chicago and to my past students in Baltimore for the conversations we had about Idrimi. A special acknowledgment needs to be made to Kathryn Medill in this regard.

Eleanor Robson helped me set up the Electronic Idrimi on the Oracc platform, and Steven Tinney has helped me to maintain it subsequently. James Fraser, then project curator for the ancient Levant at the British Museum, allowed me to study the Statue of Idrimi during a rare moment in 2017 when it came out from under its display case for a few days. Carole Roche-Hawley shared her at-the-time unpublished *Habilitation* (a revised version of which is now published as Roche-Hawley 2024) and has allowed me to reproduce some of her photographs that will appear in a forthcoming sign list.

Aspects of this book were presented as invited lectures at the British Museum and the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World at New York University in 2017, at the University of Pennsylvania's Art and Archaeology of the Mediterranean World Colloquium in 2018, at the University of Helsinki in 2019, and at Wheaton College (Illinois) in 2020, as well as in conference presentations at the annual meetings of the American School of Overseas Research in 2016 and 2017 and the Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale in 2018. I am grateful to the questions from audience members that I received at all of these presentations or in informal conversations afterward; one from Joshua Jeffers stands out in particular.

The translation of the Akkadian word *mānahtu* as "labors," which finds its way into the title of this book, derives from Andrew George's (2003) inspired translation of this same word in his critical edition of the Epic of Gilgamesh.

Jacob Lauinger
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Abbreviations

AASOR	Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
ÄAT	Ägypten und Altes Testament
ABL	*Assyrian and Babylonian Letters Belonging to the Kouyunjik Collections*
ABZ	*Assyrisch-babylonische Zeichenliste*. Rykele Borger. 3rd ed. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1986.
AeL	*Ägypten und Levante*
AfO	*Archiv für Orientforschung*
AHw	Soden, Wolfram von. *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*. 3 vols. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1965–1981.
AION	*Annali dell'Istituto Orientale di Napoli*
AIPHOS	*Annuaire de l'Institut de philologie et d'histoire orientales et slaves*
AJ	*Antiquaries Journal*
AJA	*American Journal of Archaeology*
AlT	Wiseman, Donald. *The Alalakh Tablets*. Occasional Publications of the British Institute of Archaeology in Ankara 2. London: British Institute of Archaeology in Ankara, 1953.
ANESSup	Ancient Near Eastern Studies Supplement Series
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AoF	*Altorientalische Forschungen*
AuOr	*Aula Orientalis*
AuOrSup	Supplement to *Aula Orientalis*
BaghM	*Baghdader Mitteilungen*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BBVO	Berliner Beiträge zum Vorder Orient Texte
BeO	*Bibbia e Oriente*
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BO	*Bibliotheca Orientalis*
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*

BWL	Lambert, Wilfred G. *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1960.
CAD	*The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1956–2006.
CDLI	Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
CNIP	Carsten Niebuhr Institute Publications
CTH	Laroche, Emmanuel. *Catalogue des textes hittites*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1971.
CunMon	Cuneiform Monographs
CUSAS	Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology
DULAT	Olmo Lete, Gregorio del, and Joaquín Sanmartín. *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*. Translated and edited by W. G. E. Watson. 3rd ed. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
EA	El-Amarna tablets. According to the edition of Knudtzon, Jørgen A. *Die el-Amarna-Tafeln*. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1908–1915. Repr., Aalen: Zeller, 1964. Continued in Rainey, Anson F. *El-Amarna Tablets, 359–379*. 2nd rev. ed. Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1978.
FM	Florilegium Marianum
GAG	Soden, Wolfram von. *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik*. 2nd ed. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969.
Gilg.	George, Andrew. *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts*. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
GMTR	Guides to the Mesopotamian Textual Record
HACL	History, Archaeology, and Culture of the Levant
HAM	Inventory number for an item in the Hatay Archaeological Museum
HdO	Handbuch der Orientalistik
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HSS	Harvard Semitic Series
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
IOS	*Israel Oriental Studies*
JANESCU	*Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JCSMS	*Journal for the Canadian Society of Mesopotamian Studies*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*

JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
KAI	Donner, Herbert, and Wolfgang Röllig. *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*. 2nd ed. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1966–1969.
Kaskal	*Kaskal: Rivista di storia, ambiente e culture der Vicino Oriente Antico*
KAV	Keilschrifttexte aus Assur verschiedenen Inhalts
KBo	Keilschrifttexte aus Bogazköi. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1916–1923; Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1954–
KpT	Wilhelm, Gernot. "Die hurritischen Texte aus Šamuha." Pages 197–209 in *Textfunde aus den Jahren 1999–2017*. Vol. 1 of *Keilschrifttafeln aus Kayalipinar*. Edited by Elisabeth Riekne. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2019.
KTU	Dietrich, Manfried, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín, eds. *Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit*. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2013. 3rd enl. ed. of Dietrich, Manfried, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín, eds. *KTU: The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Rad Ibn Hani, and Other Places*. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995.
KUB	Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi. Berlin: Akademie, 1921–.
LANE	Languages of the Ancient Near East
LAPO	Litteratures ancienes du Proche-Orient
MARI	*Mari: Annales de recherches interdisciplinaires*
MC	Mesopotamian Civilizations
MSL	Materialen zum sumerischen Lexikon/Materials for the Sumerian Lexicon. 17 vols. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1937–2004.
MZL	Borger, Rykle. *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon*. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2003.
NABU	*Nouvelles assyriologiques brèves et utilitaires*
NEA	*Near Eastern Archaeology*
OAC	Orientis Antiqui Collectio
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications
OIS	Oriental Institute Seminars
OLZ	*Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*
Or	*Orientalia (NS)*
Oracc	Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus
OrAnt	*Oriens Antiquus*
PBS	University of Pennsylvania, Publications of the Babylonian Section
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*
PIHANS	Publications de l'Institut historique-archéologique néerlands de Stamboul

PRU	Le palais royal d'Ugarit
RA	*Revue d'assyriologie et d'archaeologie orientale*
RGTC	Repertoire géographique des textes cunéiformes
RHA	*Revue hittite et asianique*
RIMA	The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods
RINAP	Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period
RS	Ras Shamra
RSOu	Ras Shamra-Ougarit
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SAOC	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilizations
SBA	Saarbrücker Beiträge zur Altertumskunde
SCCNH	Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians
Sef	*Sefarad*
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
SMEA	*Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici*
SSAU 2	Dietrich, Manfried, and Oswald Loretz. "Die soziale Struktur von Alalah und Ugarit (II). Die sozialen Gruppen *hupše-namê*, *haniahhe-ekû*, *ehele-šūzubu* und *marjanne* nach Texten aus Alalah IV." *Die Welt des Orients* 5 (1969): 57–93.
SSAU 4	Dietrich, Manfred, and Oswald Loretz. "Die soziale Struktur von Alalah und Ugarit (IV). Die É = *bītu*-Listen aus Alalah IV aus Quelle für die Erforschung der geseilschaftlichen Schichtung von Alalah im 15 Jhr. V. Chr." *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 60 (1970): 88–23.
StCh	Studia Chaburensia
Syria	*Syria: Archéologie, art et histoire*
SyriaSup	Supplement to *Syria: Archéologie, art et histoire*
THeth	Texte der Hethiter
TT	Richter, Thomas, and Sarah Lange. *Das Archiv des Idadda: Die Keilschrifttexten aus den deutsch-syrischen Ausgrabungen 2001– 2003 im Königspalast von Qatna.* Qatna Studien 3. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012.
TUAT	*Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments*
UF	*Ugarit-Forschungen*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
WAW	Writings from the Ancient World
WO	*Die Welt des Orients*
WVDOG	Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft
WZKM	*Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*
ZA	*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*

Note on Transliterations, Normalizations, and Translations

The edition in this book originates from an online version of the Idrimi text that I created for the Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus (Oracc) platform, the Electronic Idrimi; see §2.9 for the URL. Because of these origins, I use h for ḫ, I do not indicate secondary lengthening or vowel length in proper nouns, and the lexical length of an Akkadian word follows the *Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*.

In line with Oracc protocol, the transliteration of cuneiform signs uses the sign values in MZL. For the confusion of sibilants (/s/ for expected /š/ or /š/ for expected /s/), if a value for the expected sibilant is in MZL, then that value is used; for example, *ma-si₁₇-ik-tu₂* not *ma-ši-ik-tu₂* for *masiktu*). But if the value for the expected sibilant is not in MZL, then the sign is transliterated with the unexpected sibilant; for example, *ah-šu-šu* not *ah-su$_x$-su$_x$*. I omit mimation in the case of final CVm signs; for example, *-ni₇* not *-nim*. DA is transliterated as *ta₂* if the consonant is expected to be voiceless, even in contexts where it is reasonable to suggest that it has subsequently become voiced; for example, via nasalization in the case of *im-DA-har* (l. 55). But other considerations, and not always obvious ones, for the choice of this sign exist, as the spelling DA-*ba-li₃* for *tābali* (l. 34) makes clear. To transliterate *im-DA-har* as *im-da-har* would be, essentially, to make a possibility into a certainty, which is not justified on the basis of our current knowledge.

I do not normalize divine names. There are various possibilities, and the correct readings are unclear. It is not even clear that a logographically written divine name needs to be read the same way within the text; for example, in line 2, ᵈIM could indicate Addu of Aleppo, since the deity is paired with Hebat (see the commentary to l. 2 in the appendix), while ᵈIM in line 29 could indicate Teššub or Baʿlu since Idrimi's first act upon arriving at the shores of Mukiš is to climb to the top of Mount Hazzi (= Mount Ṣapunu), the traditional home of Teššub and Baʿlu, in order to make an offering (see the commentary to l. 34 in the appendix. The goddess written logographically as ᵈiš₈-*tar₂* or ᵈINANNA could indicate Ištar,

Šaušga, Išhara, or even Aštarte. For similar reasons, I translate the divine names as just the Storm God, the Sun God, the Moon God, or, in the absence of any better option, IŠTAR.

I have intentionally tried to keep my translation of the Idrimi text more literal than idiomatic, with all the attendant advantages and disadvantages that come with this decision. The advantages are that it is easy for a reader to move from the Akkadian to the English and vice versa, and it will be transparent if anything has been dropped or added to the translation. The disadvantage is the danger of "Assyriologese." I follow the convention of putting the translation in italics when it is uncertain only when that uncertainty derives from epigraphic reasons. Otherwise, virtually the whole translation would be in italics.

1

Introduction

The Statue of Idrimi was excavated in or near a temple at Late Bronze Age Alalah in the modern-day Republic of Turkey and gets its name from the inscriptions carved on its body and cheek. These inscriptions are written in Akkadian cuneiform and, among other things, they tell the story of a young man named Idrimi who fled his home, spent time in exile, won a kingdom, and enjoyed a prosperous and successful reign. The essential question motivating this book is: Why was the story of Idrimi's life told at this particular time and place and in this particular way? This question, in turn, prompts some subsidiary questions about the statue's date, the significance of inscribing the text on a statue, the arrangement of the text on that statue, and who would have had access to the statue and the text, among others. The aim of this book is to try to answer these questions and explore how the answers inform our understanding of the social and historical context of the statue and the inscriptions.

The statue of the king, shown in figure 1.1 on the next page, is seated upon a throne. The statue is white, carved from magnesite, a soft stone; the throne is black, made of hard basalt and flanked by lions (or sphinxes?). Altogether, the king seated upon the throne measures about 1.67 m (5.5 ft) in height, so that the king's gaze meets the viewer's own. He is bearded and wearing a plain conical cap and an ankle-length robe, with his right hand open against his breast and his left hand lying in his lap. But little of the statue attempts mimesis. The king's robe is indicated only by the outline of its hem, his beard hangs as an undifferentiated mass that lacks any detail of its curls, and his lap has been left as a rectilinear block. Yet this representation is better understood as the sculptor's choice than as a lack of skill, for an interest in mimesis is evident in some parts of the statue's body. For instance, the king's right hand is depicted naturalistically, with his fingers the anatomically correct length so that the extension of his digits forms a crescent.

Alongside the tension between representation and mimesis, the second feature that catches the viewer's eye is that the statue is robed in writing. Its torso

Figure 1.1. The Statue of Idrimi on its throne
on display in the British Museum.

and legs are covered in a cuneiform inscription. A closer inspection of the statue's face reveals that another inscription of three lines extends along its right cheek, passing from the king's conical cap, between his eye and his ear, toward his chin. This inscription reads:

> CI 1 MU 30.K[AM.M]EŠ LUGAL-*ku* CI 2 *ma-na-ah-ti-ia* ⌜*a*⌝-*na* [U]GU-*ia aš-ṭu₂-ur li*-⌜*tak₂*⌝-*kal₂-šu-nu* CI 3 (erasure) *u₃ a-na* UGU-⌜*ia*⌝ *li-ik-ta-na*-⌜*ra-bu*⌝[1]

> I was king for thirty years. I inscribed my labors on [m]yself. May it (i.e, the inscription) encourage them (i.e., the descendants) so that they (the descendants) pray to me regularly.

If the inscription on the statue's cheek leaves the identity of the seated king a mystery, the inscription on the statue's body proclaims it in its very first words:

> 1 ⌜*a-na-ku*⌝ ᵐ*id-ri-mi* DUMU ᵐDINGIR-*i-li₃-ma* 2 ARAD ⌜ᵈ⌝[I]M ᵈ*he₂-bat u₃* ᵈ*iš₈-tar₂* NIN ᵘʳᵘ*a-la-la-ah* <<NIN>> / NIN-*ia*

> I am Idrimi, the son of Ilimi-ilima, a servant of the [Sto]rm god, Hebat, and IŠTAR, the lady of Alalah, my lady.

From here, the inscription on the statue's body plunges immediately into a tale of woe, narrating how, perhaps as a child, the seated king named Idrimi fled his ancestral seat of Halab, modern Aleppo, with his family for the city of Emar on the Middle Euphrates:

> 3 *i*-⌜*na*⌝ ᵘʳᵘ*ha-la-ab*ᵏⁱ E₂ *a-bi-ia* 4 *ma-si₁₇-ik-tu₂ it-tab-ši u₃ hal-qa₃-nu* / IGI 5 ⌜LU₂⌝.HI.A ᵘʳᵘ*e*⌜!⌝-*mar*ᵏⁱ *a-ha-te*.HI.A 6 [*š*]*a um-mi-ia u₃ aš-ba-nu a-na* ᵘʳᵘ*e-mar*ᵏⁱ

> In Halab, the household of my father, a criminal act occurred, so we fled before resident aliens at Emar, my mother's sisters, and stayed at Emar.

However, because the relatives from his maternal line with whom the family stayed at Emar were themselves resident aliens, they were not allowed to participate in the political life or collective decision making in the city. Idrimi, now identified as the family's youngest son and perhaps making a reference to a proverbial saying, alone realized the significance of how dramatically the family's opportunities had changed in their translocation from Halab to Emar:

> 7 *ah-he₂.*⌜HI.A⌝-*ia ša* UGU-*ia* GAL.GAL.HI.A 8 *it-ti-ia-ma aš-bu-u₂ u₃ ma-an-nu-um-ma* 9 ⌜*a*⌝-*wa-te*.MEŠ *ša ah-šu-šu u₂-ul ih-šu-uš* 10 *um-ma a-na-ku-ma ma-an*-⌜*nu*⌝-*um* E₂

---

a-bi-šu ¹¹ *lu-u₂ i-*⌈*dag*?⌉*-gal u₃ ma-an-nu-um* ¹² *a-*[*n*]*a* DUMU.HI.A ᵘʳᵘ*e-mar*ᵏⁱ *lu-u₂*
ARAD

While my brothers, who were older than me, stayed with me, myself, none of
them mentioned the words that I mentioned. I said: 'Who can, indeed, see the
household of his father, but (at the same time) is, indeed, a servant to the citizens
of Emar?

Accordingly, Idrimi set out and traveled into the desert, where he joined some
Suteans ("Southerners"), a term often used to describe seminomadic pastoralists.
Although Idrimi's actions with them are now unfortunately lost, it is clear that he
spent the night:

¹³ [AN]ŠE.KUR.RA-[*i*]*a* ⌈ᵍⁱˢGIGIR⌉-*ia u₃* ˡᵘ²IŠ-*ia* ¹⁴ [*el*]-*te-*⌈*qe₂*⌉-*šu-nu u₃ i-na ma-at
hu-ri-ib-te*ᵏⁱ ¹⁵ ⌈*e-te-ti-iq*⌉ *u₃ li-bi* ERIN₂.MEŠ *su-tu-u₂*ᵏⁱ ¹⁶ ⌈*e*⌉-*te-ru-ub* ⌈*iš*⌉-*ti-šu-<nu> a-
na li-bi* ¹⁷ᵃ ⌈KU?⌉-[*x*(-)*x*]*x-zak*?-*kar bi-ta₂-ku*

[I] took [m]y [h]orse, my chariot, and my chariot-driver, crossed into the desert,
and entered among Sutean people. I … -ed … with th<em>. I spent the night.

The very next day, Idrimi left the Suteans and traveled to Canaan. Specifically,
he went to the city of Ammiya, probably located near modern-day Tripoli in Leb-
anon. Here the inscription has Idrimi depart from his narrative and provide the
reader with a bit of background, informing us that "sons" (essentially citizens) of
Halab and of three different, larger political units—Mukiš, Niya, and Ama'u—
were present in the city of Ammiya; Mukiš is of particular significance because its
capital was Alalah, the city where the historical Idrimi lived and the statue was
found.

¹⁷ᵇ *i-na ša-ni u₄-*⌈*mi*⌉ ¹⁸ [*an*]-*mu-uš-ma u₃* ⌈*a*⌉-[*n*]*a ma-at ki-in-a-ni₇*ᵏⁱ ¹⁹ ⌈*al*⌉-*li-ik i-na ma-*
⌈*at*⌉ *ki-in-a-ni₇*ᵏⁱ ²⁰ ᵘʳᵘ⌈*am*⌉-*mi-ia*ᵏⁱ *aš-bu i-na* ᵘʳᵘ*am-mi-ia*ᵏⁱ ²¹ [D]UMU.MEŠ
ᵘʳᵘ*ha-la-ab*ᵏⁱ DUMU.MEŠ *ma-at mu-ki-iš-he*ᵏⁱ ²² DUMU.MEŠ *ma-at ni-hi*ᵏⁱ *u₃*
D[UMU.M]EŠ *ma-at* ²³ *a-ma-e*ᵏⁱ *aš-bu*

The next day, [I] set out and went to the land of Canaan. In the land of Canaan,
(the people of) Ammiya resided, and in Ammiya, [c]itizens of Halab, citizens of
the land of Mukiš, citizens of the land of Niya, and c[itizen]s of the land of Ama'u
resided.

When Idrimi entered Ammiya, these citizens of what the inscription implies were
constituent elements of his father's former kingdom recognized him and collec-
tively agreed to make him their leader:

²⁴ *i-mu-ru-un-ni-ma* ²⁵ *i-nu-ma* DUMU *be-li-šu-nu a-na-ku u₃ a-na* UGU-*ia* ²⁶ *ip-hu-
ru-ni₇-ma a-ka-a-na-ka ur-tab-bi-a-ku*

They saw that I was a son of their lord, so they held an assembly concerning me,
and in that way, I was elevated in rank.

The inscription narrates how Idrimi lived for a long time at Ammiya among the
citizens of his father's former kingdom, whom it now identifies as *habiru*, a term,
sometimes used pejoratively in antiquity, to designate displaced persons. After the
clearly symbolic span of seven years, however, the Storm God communicated
with Idrimi via ominous signs and gave him some indication that he should sail
up the coast of the Mediterranean to the land of Mukiš, one of the lands that,
according to the inscription, had formed part of his father's kingdom. Idrimi's
ships made land near the southern border of the land of Mukiš at Mount Hazzi,
the home of the Storm God.

> [27] *u₂-ra-ak u₃ a-na li-bi* ERIN₂.MEŠ ˡᵘ²SA.GAZ [28] *a-na* MU 7.KAM.MEŠ *aš-ba-ku*
> MUŠEN.HI.A *u₂-za-ki* [29] SILA₄.HI.A *ab-ri-ma u₃ še-eb-i ša-na-ti* ꜥdꜥ[I]M [30] ꜥaꜥ-*na*
> SAG.DU-*ia it-tu-ru u₃ e-te-pu-uš* ᵍⁱˢMA₂.ꜥHIꜥ.A [31] ERIN₂.MEŠ *nu-ul-la a-ꜥnaꜥ*
> ᵍⁱˢꜥMA₂.HIꜥ.A *u₂-šar-ki-ib-šu-nu* [32] *u₃* A.AB.BA *a-na* ꜥmaꜥ-[*a*]*t m*[*u-k*]*i-iš-he₂*ᵏⁱ [33] *eṭ-
> he₂-e*ˡ⁷*-ku u₃ pa-ꜥanꜥ* HUR.SAG *ha-zi* [34a] ꜥaꜥ-*na ta₂-ba₂-li₃ ak-šu-ud*

A long time passed; I resided among the displaced people for seven years. I re-
leased birds, and I inspected (the entrails of) lambs, and in the seventh of (those)
years, the St[or]m God was looking favorably at me, so I built ships. I boarded
troops, *nullu*-soldier(s), onto the ships, I approached the la[n]d of M[uk]iš by sea,
and I reached dry ground before Mount Hazzi.

Although the mention of *nullu*-troops suggests that the expedition to the land of
Mukiš was a military one, Idrimi's first action upon landing was to climb Mount
Hazzi, presumably to make an offering to the Storm God.

> [34b] *e-li-ia-ku* [35] *u₃ ma-ti-ia iš-mu-un-ni-ma* GU₄.HI.A *u₃* UDU.HI.A [36] *a-na pa-ni-ia
> ub-lu-u₂-ni₇* ꜥu₃ꜥ *i-na* UD 1.KAM [37] *ki-ma* 1ᵉⁿ LU₂ *ma-at ni-he*ᵏⁱ *ma-at a-ma-e*ᵏⁱ [38] [*m*]*a-
> at mu-ki-iš-he₂*ᵏⁱ *u₃* ᵘʳᵘ*a-la-la-ah*ᵏⁱ URU.KI-*ia* [39a] ꜥaꜥ-*na ia-ši₂-im it-tu-ru-ni₇*

I went up (the mountain), and my land heard (about this), so they brought oxen
and sheep before me, and in one day, as one man, the land of Niya, the land of
Ama'u, the [l]and of Mukiš, and Alalah, my city, looked favorably at me.

When Idrimi's land heard about his arrival, it brought him its own offerings; pos-
sibly this land comprised the residents of Mukiš at the time, considered
retroactively to belong to its future ruler. After this, the lands of Niya, Ama'u,
Mukiš, and the city of Alalah acknowledged Idrimi as their ruler. Here the text
seems to be engaging in a piece of legerdemain, whereby "it confuse[s] the seat of
his father and his new submitted seat" (Márquez Rowe 1997, 184)—that is, with
one exception, the list of lands together with one city enumerated in this passage
is the same as the list of lands together with one city that collectively raised Idrimi

to their leadership in Ammiya. The one exception is Alalah, which now takes the place of Halab, Idrimi's ancestral home. Furthermore, whereas the previous list had been careful to describe "the sons" of the lands, now this politically loaded term has been dropped, and it is simply "the lands" that acknowledge Idrimi's rule. The implication is that it is the actual collective political bodies of Niya, Ama'u, and Mukiš that are acknowledging Idrimi's rule, not just their scattered, displaced citizens.

Finally, as Idrimi assumes control of the lands of Niya, Ama'u, and Mukiš, this particular narrative arc comes to an end. The end of the narrative arc is marked by the sudden reappearance of his brothers, whom he had left to enjoy a second-tier status in Emar. Now they join him at Alalah, where they are explicitly described as his dependents:

39b ⌜ŠEŠ.MEŠ⌝-*ia* 40 [*i*]*š-mu-u₂-ma u₃ a-na mah-ri-ia il-li-ku-u₂* 41 [*a*]*h-he*.HI.A-*ia it-ti-ia-ma in-na-hu-u₂* 42a [*a*]*h-he₂*.HI.A-*ia aṣ-ṣur-šu-nu*

My brothers [h]eard (about this), so they came into my presence. My [br]others were laboring for me, myself; I protected my [b]rothers.

At this point, the narrative widens its geopolitical perspective and begins a new and pivotal episode. This episode opens by describing how one of the great kings of the time, Parattarna I, the king of what was, or what would be, the Mittani Empire, was hostile to Idrimi. Accordingly, Idrimi sent an envoy to Parattarna I to describe his ancestors' allegiance to the Hurrian king's own ancestors and, presumably, to attempt to pledge his own fealty:

42b *ap-pu-na* 43 [M]U 7.KAM.HI.A ᵐ*pa₂-ra-at-tar-na* LUGAL *dan-nu* 44 LUGAL ERIN₂.⌜MEŠ⌝ *hur-ri*ᵏⁱ *u₂-na-kir-an-ni* 45 ⌜*i*⌝*-na š*[*e*]*-eb-*⌜*i*⌝ *ša-na-ti a-na* ᵐ*pa₂-ra-at-ar-na* LUGAL*ʳⁱ* 46 LUGAL ⌜ERIN₂⌝.MEŠ*ᵃⁿ-wa-an-da aš-ta₂-par₂ u₃ ad-bu-ub*⌞(TE) 47 *ma-*⌜*na-ha*⌝*-*[*te*].HE₂ *ša a-bu-te*.HI.A-⌜*ia i*⌝*-nu-ma* 48 ⌜*a-bu*⌝*-te*.⌜HI⌝.A-*ia a-na* UGU-*šu-nu in-na-hu-u₂* 49 ⌜*u₃ pa-nu-ti*⌝*-ni a-na* LUGAL.HI.A *ša* ⌜ERIN₂⌝.MEŠ *hur-*⌜*ri*⌝ᵏⁱ *da-mi-iq* 50 [*u₃*] ⌜*a-na*⌝ *bi-ri-šu-nu* NAM.ERIM₂ *dan-na* 51a ⌜*iš-ku*⌝*-nu-ni₇-na*

Moreover, over seven [ye]ars, Parattarna (I), the mighty king, king of the armies of Hurri, turned hostile towards me. In the seventh of (those) years, I sent a message to Parattarna (I), the king, king of the Umman-manda, and I spoke of the tribut[e] of my forefathers, (namely) that my forefathers labored for them *and our ancestors* belonged to the kings of the Hurrian armies. This was pleasing (to the kings of Hurri), [so] they established a powerful oath between them.

Parattarna I was receptive to Idrimi's overtures. The text describes how he received Idrimi's peace offering and gives some details about a sacrifice that are obscure. The result, however, is clear: Idrimi formally acknowledges the Hurrian

king's hegemony and, in turn, his rule over Alalah is formalized, his status now equal to the other rulers who belong to the Hurrian king's orbit.

> [51b] LUGAL *dan-nu ma-na-ha-te*.HI.A [52] *ša pa-nu-ti-ni u₃* NAM.ERIM₂ *ša bi-ri-šu-nu*¹ *iš-me-ma* [53] *u₃ it-ti ma-mi-ti ip-ta-la-ah aš-šum a-wa-at* [54] *ma-mi-ti u₃ aš-šum ma-na-ha-te*.MEŠ-*ni šu-ul-mi-ia* [55] *im-ta₂-har u₃ ki-nu-[n]u*² *ša kab*?-*tu₃-u₂ ša* SISKUR₂ [56] *u₂-šar-bi u₃* E₂ *hal-qu₂-u₂-te-er-šu* [57] *i-na* LU₂-*ti-ia i-na ki-nu-ti-ia* SI? ŠUB *an-na-am* [58] *aṣ-bat-šu u₃* LUGAL-*ku a-*⌈*na* uru⌉*a-la-la-ah*ki [59] LUGAL.MEŠ *ša* ZAG-*ia u₃* GUB₃-*ia il*?-*lu-an-ni-ma* [60a] *u₃ ki-ma šu-nu-ti-ma um-ta₂-ši-la-ku*

The mighty king heard about the tribute of our ancestors and the oath that was between them, and he respected the oath. Because of the words of the oath and because of our (former) tribute, he received my peace-offering. So *I made a brazier already heavy for sacrifice even greater*, and so I returned a household that was lost to him. In my status as a retainer, in my loyalty, I seized *this abandoned hem* for him, and so I was king. Kings from all around *came up to me* at Alalah, and I was their equal.

Significantly, Idrimi's statement "and so I was king" mirrors his statement "I was king" that is carved on his cheek in its use of a nominal predicate (LUGAL-*ku* = *šarrāku*; see §4.2 for more discussion). The implication is clear: although Idrimi had previously controlled a kingdom, only now, with Parattarna I's acknowledgment, was he actually its king.

With the conclusion of the Parattarna episode, the narrative portion of the body inscription moves into its third and final episode. The theme of this episode is kingship, as we see Idrimi perform acts that are associated with proper rule. His first acts are military: constructing defensive fortifications at home and then, once his people are secure in his absence, embarking on a military campaign. During the course of this campaign, Idrimi seized seven cities.

> [60b] *ki* BAD₃-*šu-nu* [61] *ša a-bu-te*.HI.A *i-na qa-qa-ri tab-ku-*⌈*u₂*⌉ [62] *u₃ a-na-ku i-na qa-qa-ri u₂-ša-at-bu-u₂* [63] *u₃ a-na* AN.TA₂ *u₂-šaq-qu₂-u₂-šu-nu* [64] ERIN₂.MEŠ*ba₂ el-te-qe₂ u₃ a-na ma-at ha-at-te*ki [65] *e-te-[l]i u₃* 7 URU.DIDLI.HI.⌈A *aṣ*⌉-*bat-šu-nu* [66] uru*pa-aš-ša-he₂*ki uru*ta₂-ma-ru-ut-la*ki [67] uru*hu-luh-ha-an*ki uru*zi-la*<ki uru>*i-e*ki [68] uru*u₂-lu-zi-la*ki *u₃* uru⌈*za*⌉-*ru-na*ki [69] *an-mu-u₂* URU.DIDLI.HI.A *aṣ-bat-šu-nu u₃ ul-lu-u₂* [70a] *eh-te-pi₃-šu-nu-ti*

Because the city wall of the forefathers had lain flat on the ground but I caused (it) to rise up from the ground and set (it) high up above for them (i.e., the people of Alalah), I took troops, went up to the land of Hatti, and captured seven cities: Paššahe, Tamarutla, Huluhhan, Zila, I'e, Uluzila, and Zaruna. These are the cities. I captured them, and I destroyed others.

To the extent that the seven cities mentioned by name can be localized, they seem to have been located around Mukiš's northern border in the land of Kizzuwatna

(modern Cilicia). The narrative describes Idrimi's campaign as an unqualified success, as he moved unopposed in enemy territory, taking all sorts of plunder and distributing it among his soldiers before returning home:

> 70b *ma-at* ⌈*ha*⌉*-at-te*ki 71 *u₂-ul ip-hur u₃ a-na* ⌈UGU-*ia*⌉ *u₂-ul il-li-ku* 72 *ša* ŠA₃*bi-ia e-te-pu-*⌈*uš šal*⌉*-la-te*.HI.A-*šu-nu* 73 *aš*⌈*-lu-ul-ma nam-ku-ri-šu*⌉*-nu bu*⌉*-še-šu-nu ba-ši-tu-<šu>-nu* 74 *el-te-qe₂ u₃ u₂-za-iz a-n*[*a*] ⌈ERIN₂⌉.MEŠ *til-la-ti-ia* 75 lu₂.meš*ah-he₂*.ḤI.A-*ia* 76 *u₃* lu₂.meš*ib-ru-te*.HI.A-*ia ka-ka₄-šu-nu-ma* 77 *a-na-ku el-te-qe₂ u₃ a-na ma-at mu-ki-iš-he*ki *at-tu-ur* 78a *u₃ e-ru-ub a-na* uru*a-la-la-ah*ki URU.KI-*ia*

> The land of Hatti did not gather and march against me. I did what I wanted. I carried off their prisoners, I took their valuables, their luxury goods, and <th>eir precious items, and I distributed (these) to my allies' troops, my brothers, and my comrades. I, myself, took their weapon, though, and returned to the land of Mukiš and entered Alalah, my city.

With the military campaign concluded, the narrative has Idrimi focus next on domestic concerns, another sphere of action associated with proper rule. Idrimi built himself a palace, ensured that his entourage and dependents had suitable status, and attended to the well-being of his kingdom's population, which now included some new inhabitants. Tellingly, the inscription explicitly states that the spoils of his military campaign provide the means for this domestic agenda:

> 78b *i-na šal-la-ti₃* 79 *u₃ i-na mar-ši-ti₃ i-na nam-ku-ri i-na bu-ši₂ u₃ i*⌉*-na ba-ši-tu₂*!? 80 *ša iš-tu ma-at ha-at-te*ki *u₂-še-ri-du* E₂ *uš*₁₀*-te-pi₂-iš* 81 gišGU.ZA-*ia ki-ma* GU.ZA.MEŠ *ša* LUGAL.MEŠ *u₂-ma-ši-il* 82 lu₂.mešŠEŠ.MEŠ-*ia ki-ma* ŠEŠ.MEŠ *ša* ⌈LUGAL⌉.MEŠ DUMU.MEŠ-*ia* 83 *ki-ma* DUMU.MEŠ-*šu-nu u₃* lu₂.meš*tap-pu-te*.HI.A-*ia ki*!(U₃)-<*ma*> *tap-pu-te*.HI.A-*šu-*⌈*nu*⌉ 84 *u₂-ma-ši-lu-u₂-šu-nu* TUŠ.MEŠ *ša a-na* ŠA₃*bi ma-ti-ia*ki 85 KI.TUŠ-*šu-*⌈*nu*? *ne₂*?⌉*-eh*?*-ta₅ u₂-še-ši-ib-šu-nu ša* KI.TUŠ *la u₂-uš-ša-bu* 86 *a-na-ku u₂-še-ši-bu-šu-nu u₃*!(KI) *ma-ti*ki*-ia u₂-ki-in-nu* 87a *u₃ u₂-ma-ši-il* URU.DIDLI.HI.A-*ia ki-me-e pa-nu-ti-ni-ma*

> I had a house built with the prisoner(s) and livestock, the valuable(s), luxury good(s) and the precious item(s) that I brought down from the land Hatti. My throne was equal to the thrones of kings, my brothers were equal to the brothers of kings, my sons to their sons, and my companions to their companions. I caused the inhabitants who were (already) in my land to reside *in security*, and by means of those who did not reside in a dwelling, whom I, myself, caused to reside (in one), and with whom I stabilized my land, I made my cities equal to our earlier ones.

The final act demonstrating proper rule that is attributed by the narrative to Idrimi occurs in the sphere of religion. Significantly, Idrimi concerned himself with the veneration of a divinized ancestor. Having performed the necessary rites, he entrusted their future performance to his own son, a certain IM-nerari:

87b *ki-ma* A.A-*ni-ma* 88 A₂*ᵗᵉ*.MEŠ *ša* DINGIR.MEŠ *ša* ᵘʳᵘ*a-la-laḫ₃*ᵏⁱ *u₂-ki-in-nu-u₂-ma* 89 *u₃* SISKUR₂.ḪI.A*ⁿⁱ⁻ⁱq⁻qⁱ˟*.ḪI.A *ša a-bi* NINDA₂-*ni ša uš-te-pi₂-šu-u₂ˡ-šu-nu* 90 *a-*⌐*na*⌐-*ku e-te-ne-pu-uš₁₀-šu-nu an-mu-u₂ e-te-pu-uš₁₀-šu-nu* 91 *u₃ a-na qa-ti* ᵐᵈIM-*ne₂-ra-ri* DUMU-*ia ap-ta-qi₂-id-šu-nu*

Just as our father, himself, attended to the signs of the "gods" (i.e., divinized ancestors) of Alalah, so I, myself, was regularly performing the offerings (Akk. gloss: the offerings) for our grandfather that he had regularly caused to be performed. I regularly performed these things, and then I entrusted them to the authority of IM-nerari, my son.

At this point, not just the third episode of the narrative but the narrative portion of the body inscription ends. But the body inscription continues with Idrimi's voice speaking a series of curses against anyone who harms his statue or, seemingly, the body inscription:

92 *ma-an-nu-um-me-e* ALAM-*ia an-ni-na-ti i-na-as-saḫ₂-š*[*u*] 93 *u₃* <<*pi₂-ri-ih-šu li-il-qu₂-ut*>> AN*ˢᵃ⁻ᵐᵘ li-iz-zu-ur-šu* 94 *ša-ap-la-tu₂ᵉʳ⁻ˢᵉ⁻ᵗᵘ² pi₂-ri-ih-šu li-il-qu₂-ut* 95 DINGIR.MEŠ *ša* AN *u* KI LUGAL-*ut-šu u₃ ma-at-šu*ᵏⁱ *lim-du-du-šu* 96 *ma-an-nu-um-me-e u₂-na-ak-kar₃-šu i-ip-pa-aš₂-ši-*<*iṭ²*> 97 ᵈIM EN AN *u* KIᵉʳ⁻ˢᵉ⁻ᵗⁱ *u₃* DINGIR.MEŠ GAL.GAL.E.NE ⌐*šu*⌐*-ma-šu* 98a *u₃* NUMUN.MEŠ-*šu li-hal-liq* ⌐*i-na ma*⌐*-ti-šu*

(As for) anyone who might remove this statue of mine, may the Heavens (Akk. gloss: the Heavens) curse him! May the Underworld (Akk. gloss: the Underworld) gather up his offspring! May the gods of the Heavens and the Underworld measure out his kingship and his land for him! (As for) anyone who might alter it (i.e., the statue?) (so that) it is effac<ed>, may the Storm God, the lord of the Heavens and of the Underworld (Akk. gloss: the Underworld), and the great gods make his name and his seed disappear from his land.

After having Idrimi utter these curses, though, the body inscription suddenly shifts gears and drops the illusion of Idrimi speaking. In what is conventionally described as the inscription's colophon, the authorial voice belongs now to a certain Šarruwa, a scribe who claims to have inscribed the text on the statue (using the same word as Idrimi used in the inscription on the cheek; see §6.1) and who requests blessings for himself:

98b ᵐ*šar-ru-wa* DUB.SAR ⌐*lu₂²*⌐ARAD 10 20 30 *u₃* ᵈINANNA 99 ᵐ*šar-ru-wa* ˡᵘ²DUB.SAR ⌐*ša*⌐ ᵈALAM *an-ni-na-ti₃ iš-ṭu₂-ru-šu* DINGIR.⌐MEŠ⌐ *ša* AN *u* KI 100 *li-bal-li-tu₂-u₂-šu li-na-ṣa-ru-šu lu-u₂* SIG₅*u₂-šu* ᵈUTU EN *e-lu-ti* / : *u₃ šap-li-ti* ENˡᵘ⁻ᵘ² *e-tim-mi* ⌐*lu-u₂*⌐ TI.LA-*šu*

Šarruwa is the scribe, the servant of the Storm God, the Sun God, the Moon God and IŠTAR. Šarruwa is the scribe who inscribed this (divine) statue. May the gods of the Heavens and the Underworld keep him alive! May they protect

him! May they favor him! May the Sun God, lord of the Upper World and the Lower World, lord of ghosts, keep him alive!

On this note—and in exactly one hundred lines (see §1.4)—the inscription on the statue's body ends.

As the guided reading that accompanies the translation above has tried to show, the inscriptions carved on what we can now call the Statue of Idrimi are remarkable. They are carefully structured and full of vivid detail. They have also provoked many questions for modern scholars—to name just a few: What is the relationship between the short inscription on the statue's cheek and the long inscription on its body? Why do two people, not only Idrimi but also a scribe named Šarruwa, claim to have made the inscriptions? Who is IM-nerari? Although he is Idrimi's son and successor according to the body inscription, other ancient texts from Alalah make it clear that the historical Idrimi was succeeded by a son of a different name, Niqmepa, and a son named IM-nerari is, in fact, otherwise unattested.

As the qualification to this last question makes clear, there is abundant evidence, archaeological and textual, from the site of Alalah, where the Statue of Idrimi was found. This evidence intersects with the inscriptions in exciting and suggestive ways. Among other points of intersection, cuneiform tablets from Alalah establish that there was a historical Idrimi who ruled Alalah and the kingdom of Mukiš around 1475–1450 BCE. This Idrimi and his descendants were in fact client kings of the Mittani Empire. And the historical Idrimi does seem to have fought a war with the ruler of Kizzuwatna, his northern neighbor and part of what can be described as "greater Hatti." Yet, despite these points of intersection, there is little consensus among scholars about the historical context of the statue and its inscriptions.

The variety of different approaches that these scholars have adopted in their work is the subject of chapter 2. The rest of this chapter is primarily concerned with providing the background necessary to follow those scholars' arguments and my own. I begin with the site at which the statue was found, Alalah, focusing first on providing an overview of the excavations and second on a sketch of the site's political history over its millennium-long occupation history. From there, I look at the circumstances of the statue's discovery and offer a brief discussion of the first reports of its archaeological context (a more critical discussion occurs in §2.1). Having introduced the statue properly, I continue by introducing its inscriptions, specifically the physical arrangement of the inscriptions upon the statue. Doing so raises, in turn, questions of terminology that need to be addressed at the outset of any sustained discussion.

1.1. ALALAH: THE CITY AND ITS EXCAVATIONS

The city of Alalah, modern Tell Atchana, is located near the great bend of the Orontes River in the Amuq Valley of what is now the Republic of Turkey's Hatay province. The city was inhabited for most of the second millennium BCE, during which time it was the dominant city in the Amuq. Assyriological interest in Alalah has focused on the site's cuneiform tablets, which were excavated predominantly from two different stratigraphic levels, Level VII and Level IV, and which date to the Middle Bronze Age and Late Bronze Age, respectively. While Alalah was itself never a major international power, its location at the southern end of a corridor in the Amanus Mountains placed it in "a conduit for the movement of people and goods" (von Dassow 2008, 1). Consequently, the city was exposed to Mesopotamian, Hurrian, Hittite, Levantine, Aegean, and Egyptian influences. In particular, during its best documented stratigraphic levels, the city was subordinate to the kingdoms of Yamhad and Mittani, two of the major geopolitical powers during the Middle Bronze Age and Late Bronze Age, respectively. The Alalah texts provide important windows into these two polities as we lack the archives of their central administrations.

Alalah was first excavated by the British archaeologist Sir Leonard Woolley between 1936 and 1949, with an interruption for World War II. Following the success of his excavations at Ur, Woolley began excavating at Tell Atchana in 1936 with the aim of exploring interconnections between the Aegean and the Near East.[2] The first cuneiform tablets were discovered the next year. He found the substantial archives of the Level IV palace in 1938 and both the Statue of Idrimi and also the archives of the Level VII palace the following year. The 1939 excavation season was the last before World War II forced the excavations to be postponed; following the war, they were resumed between 1946 and 1949.

In eight years of excavation, Woolley and his staff uncovered eighteen stratigraphic levels (Levels XVII-0) that span almost the entire second millennium.[3] Woolley concentrated the excavation's energies on the tell's northwestern summit, where he uncovered various city gates and palatial residences dated from Level VII to Level I. Two of these palaces, dating to Levels VII and IV, contained the majority of the cuneiform tablets discovered at Alalah. A deep sounding in this area revealed that monumental architecture went back to Level XVI (although

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[2] Von Dassow (2008, 2 n. 1) has traced succinctly the manner in which Woolley's interest in interconnections between the Aegean and the ancient Near East shifted its focus from the cultural to the chronological as excavations progressed.

[3] Woolley (1955, 380–81) was of the opinion that the earliest levels at Alalah dated to ca. 3400–3300 BCE, but see Heinz 1992 for a redating of Levels XVII–VIII to the Middle Bronze Age. He also considered the last major occupation level to have been destroyed by the Sea Peoples, ca. 1200 BCE, but, as discussed immediately below, results from the new excavations at Alalah now suggest that the end of Level I dates to 1300 BCE.

see the revisions of Heinz 1992, 23–36). However, this earlier architecture was not further uncovered in order to preserve the Level VII and IV palaces. Slightly to the southeast of this excavation area, another deep sounding revealed that temples had been successively rebuilt on the same spot throughout Alalah's entire occupation; it was during this sounding that Woolley discovered the Statue of Idrimi (see §1.2). Further to the southeast and more toward the center of the tell, he discovered private houses dating to Levels VI–I along the remains of a city wall. Finally, he cut a series of trenches in the southwestern slope of the mound, one of which revealed another gate ("Site H").[4]

Excavations at Alalah resumed in 2003 under the direction of K. Aslıhan Yener and, subsequently, Murat Akar. Already, however, the preceding years had seen archaeological work on the site and in the region of the Amuq more generally within the framework of the Amuq Valley Regional Project (AVRP). In particular, between 2000 and 2002, the team paved the way for the resumption of full-scale excavations by conducting intensive surveys both on- and off-site, documenting the site with photographic records, correlating visible architectural remains with features recorded in the excavation reports, and, perhaps most importantly, creating the composite plans of the architectural features of Levels VII–0 excavated by Woolley that are mostly lacking from the preliminary and final reports; the results of much of these efforts appeared as an edited volume (Yener 2005).

Since 2003, the renewed excavations have concentrated on four different areas on the tell: the northwestern summit where Woolley excavated the palaces (Area 1); a more central part of the site near the cluster of private houses found by Woolley (Area 2); the slope on the site's eastern edge (Area 3); and, most recently, the southwestern part of the site (Area 4).[5] Among the most important developments to have come out of the new excavations so far is a revision of Alalah's stratigraphy showing that the Level I occupation "ended at the beginning of the 13th century BC.… There is simply no evidence for 13th century settlement in any area of Atchana yet excavated, with the exception of the Temple" (Yener, Akar, and Horowitz 2019a, 341).

With the vast majority of the textual data from Alalah coming from Levels VII and IV, we are naturally best informed about the history of the city during the late Middle Bronze Age and early Late Bronze Age. But some clues to the earlier history of the site and the region exist. Alalah, or at least a site with that

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[4] The final excavation report is Woolley 1955. For a popular account of the excavations, see Woolley 1953. Woolley also published number of preliminary reports on individual seasons, mostly in the *Antiquaries Journal* (Woolley 1936, 1937, 1938, 1939b, 1948, and 1950). In addition, Woolley published many articles on the excavations, often with informative photographs not available elsewhere, in the *Times* (London) and the *Illustrated London News*; see, e.g., Woolley 1939a and 1939c.

[5] See Yener 2010 and Yener, Akar, and Horowitz 2019b for the final site reports of the 2003–2010 seasons.

name, may have been a dependency of Ebla in the third millennium (see Archi 2006, 4 and Archi 2020, 35). An entry in an administrative text, TM.75.G.10280: rev. iv 5–10, seems to indicate that Alalah rebelled and the two polities fought at least one battle, although it is unclear which side was victorious. Ultimately, however, it seems that Alalah rejoined Ebla's sphere of influence (Archi 2020, 35).[6] Mukiš, a region of the later Level IV kingdom ruled from the capital of Alalah,[7] appears in Ur III archival texts from Drehem.[8] During the Middle Bronze Age, the city formed part of the kingdom of Yamhad, the Amorite state that controlled northwestern Syria with its capital at Halab, modern Aleppo. Shortly before the period of time documented by the Level VII archives, Alalah appears in texts from Mari under the name Alahtum, where Zimri-Lim of Mari acquired it, with some difficulty, from Hammurabi, the king of Yamhad, and the queen mother Gašera (Durand 2002).[9]

After the fall of Mari, during the period of time documented by the Level VII texts, Alalah was an *appanage* for a junior line of the royal family of Yamhad. The first ruler of this line, Yarim-Lim, received the city in exchange for another that he had inherited from his father, and that was destroyed in a rebellion against the king of Yamhad. The Level VII archives document the economic concerns of this junior line and its attendant bureaucracy over four generations.[10] The end of Level VII is marked by a site-wide destruction level that is typically attributed to the Syrian campaigns of the Hittite king Hattušili I, although this attribution is not certain.

After Level VII, textual documentation is interrupted during Levels VI and V before resuming in the fifteenth century with the Level IV archives. These archives document that the city was ruled by three successive generations of the same ruling family: Idrimi, Niqmepa, and Ilimi-ilima, the first of these rulers being the same individual whose deeds are inscribed on the statue that is the subject of

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[6] Because Tell Atchana does not seem to have been occupied in the third millennium, but a third millennium settlement, including monumental architecture, has been discovered at nearby Tell Tayinat, "it is reasonable to suggest that the texts are referring to the EBA occupation at Tell Tayinat. When the settlement moved from one site to the other, so too did the ancient name" (Batiuk and Horowitz 2010, 168).

[7] For Mukiš as "but one of several territories belonging to the realm of [Level IV] Alalah," see von Dassow 2008, 65.

[8] See RGTC 2, s.v. "Mukiš," where the unpublished reference listed there is now published as OIP 121 575. For Mukiš as both the name of a region and a town within that region, see §6.3, citing previous literature.

[9] For discussions of the identification of the toponym Alahtum with Alalah/Tell Atchana, see Lauinger 2015, 114–15 and Torrecilla 2021, 120–22.

[10] I reviewed the question of whether the Level VII texts span two, three, or four generations in Lauinger 2015, 202–27.

this book.[11] The Level IV archives establish that Idrimi and his successors ruled a subject kingdom of the Mittani Empire during the period of time documented by the texts.[12] These texts date mostly to the reign of Niqmepa and generally concern matters of state administration, although several small assemblages record the personal affairs of nonroyal persons; see von Dassow 2005 for a reconstruction and analysis of the archives and Niedorf 2008, 31–1221 for an overview of the corpus. As with its Level VII counterpart, the Level IV palace suffered a violent destruction; here, too, the destruction is typically attributed to a Hittite campaign, this time perhaps of Tudhaliya I, although, again, this attribution is not certain (von Dassow 2020a, 201–2).

Following the destruction of the Level IV palace, our primary textual evidence for the history of Alalah derives not from Alalah but from Hittite texts or texts produced at other sites that were under Hittite hegemony. These sources, which have been gathered and reviewed by von Dassow (2020a), demonstrate that a ruler named Itur-Addu was part of a coalition that fought against Šuppiluliuma I during his campaigns in Syria, and that this coalition was defeated and Alalah conquered by Šuppiluliuma I, at which time the city became part of the Hittite Empire (see §6.3 for more discussion). Alalah would remain under Hittite rule, possibly punctuated by a local rebellion (von Dassow 2020a, 213), until shortly before the destruction of its last major level of occupation, Level I. While Wooley dated this destruction to ca. 1200 BCE and attributed it to the arrival of the Sea Peoples, as mentioned above, the end of the Level I occupation is now dated to 1300 BCE, with a subsequent occupation persisting only in the area of the temple.

1.2. CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE STATUE'S DISCOVERY

As mentioned in the preceding sketch of the excavations at Alalah, the Statue of Idrimi was found toward the end of Woolley's 1939 season. The season had already been busy, both locally and geopolitically. Locally, Woolley and his team were dealing with a very compressed season. Work had not begun at the site until the end of March due to late rains, while at the end of the season Woolley was hard pressed for workers because, as he wrote in the preliminary report (published almost nine years later), "the best harvest that the Hatay had known for many years called our workmen away at the beginning of June" (Woolley 1948, 1). Within this ten-week period, however, Woolley and his team of three (including his wife, Lady Katherine)—assisted, as was Woolley's custom, by his Syrian

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[11] Following Sidney Smith, Woolley originally thought that Idrimi was Ilimi-ilima's son so that the sequence of Level IV rulers was Niqmepa–Ilimi-ilima–Idrimi. Accordingly, he attributed the Level IV palace to Niqmepa, the supposed first ruler of Level IV. For an unintended consequence of this sequence that has persisted in the literature, and on the historical Idrimi in general, see §2.3.

[12] For a comprehensive historical overview of the empire of Mittani, see von Dassow 2022.

foreman, Hamoudi, and Hamoudi's sons—employed four hundred men and made many important discoveries. Among the most important was the Level VII palace and the archives of cuneiform tablets therein.[13] Subsequently, the excavators had begun to dig the temple site, clearing what would be known as the Level 0 and Level I temples. It was at this point, shortly before the workmen left for the harvest in early June and the season ended, that Woolley wrote in a letter dated May 21. This letter is to my knowledge the first account of the discovery of the Statue of Idrimi:

> A rubbish-pit at the temple gave us great surprise. From it there came a white stone statue just over a metre high of a Hittite king, a seated figure; the head and feet were broken off but except for part of the foot the statue is complete and in wonderfully good condition and even the nose is only just chipped. The figure is covered literally from head to foot with cuneiform inscription which begins on one cheek, runs across the front and one side of the body and ends at the bottom of the skirt, rather more than fifty lines of text. Nothing like that has been found before.[14]

If Woolley's 1939 excavation season at Alalah was busy, to call the previous year "busy" from a regional perspective would be a profound understatement. The preceding months had seen the elections for the first (and what would be only) Assembly of the Sanjak of Alexendretta in July 1938, which had sat for the first time on September 2 of the same year and immediately proclaimed itself the State of Hatay, with Tayfur Sökmen elected to be the head of the new state (Khadduri 1945, 422–23). On June 29, 1939, only a little more than a month after Woolley wrote the letter quoted above that describes his discovery of the Statue of Idrimi, the Assembly of Hatay would meet again, and for the last time, as it voted to self-annex itself to Turkey (Khadduri 1945, 424; Fink 2010, 16).

In a penetrating article, Hélène Maloigne (2017) has detailed how the Statue of Idrimi became a pawn in the larger diplomatic negotiations between France,

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[13] In Lauinger 2011, 29–31, I traced the excavation of this structure through the testimony of the field cards for tablets.

[14] The letter is quoted by Fink (2010, 16) and cited by him as *Sir Leonard Woolley's Excavations at Atchana: Extracts from Letters* in University College London Special Collections. As Fink remarks in a note (16 n. 1), there are, in fact, 104 (or, more accurately, 103; see §1.4) lines of cuneiform text, not 50. Interestingly, this same, incorrect line count is repeated in a caption in a newspaper article describing the season's excavations that was published in early December of the same year (Woolley 1939c, fig. 11). Since the final line of the body inscription carved on the statue's right leg is line 51, my guess is that Woolley initially thought that the lines inscribed on the right leg were a continuation of the lines written on the left leg. Note that in the same caption in the *Illustrated London News* Woolley dated the inscription to the fifteenth century BCE, whereas he had described the statue as representing "a Hittite king" in the letter from late May.

Turkey, and England concerning the status of the Sanjak of Alexandretta/State of Hatay. Such a role became possible because the State of Hatay adopted the antiquities law of the French Mandate of Syria when it came into being in 1938. In general, this antiquities law stipulated that "at the end of each excavation season the excavator was to divide the moveable finds into two lots, roughly equal in object category, materials and so forth. The country's Director of the Antiquities Service would choose one lot for the national collections, the other would go to the excavating institution as an indemnity" (Maloigne 2017, 207). Crucially, however, there was an important exception to the division of finds in that "the Director of the Antiquities Service … reserved the right to retain any exceptional items from the excavator's lot for the country and the division had to be approved by the head of state before an export license was granted" (207–8). At the end of the 1939 season, the Director of Antiquities for the new State of Hatay chose the lots of finds that did not include the Statue of Idrimi but then reserved the right to retain the statue on the basis of its quality as an exceptional find (208).

Woolley vigorously protested this action, and the matter went before the State of Hatay's Council of Ministers, which voted against Woolley on June 5 and once more, after appeal, on June 7, 1939. At this point, A. W. Davis, the British consul in Aleppo, "suggested Woolley, with the help of the British Ambassador, should involve Cevat Açıkalın, the Turkish Envoy Extraordinaire in the Hatay and head of negotiations with the French," after which "the Turkish Consul-General in the Hatay apparently forthwith received instructions from his government to 'tell the Hatay authorities that Sir Leonard's view must be accepted'" (Maloigne 2017, 208–9, quoting a letter of Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen). Ultimately, then, Woolley's insistence that the Statue of Idrimi was *not* an exceptional find prevailed (see §2.4 for a ramification of this position) because a decision of the central Turkish government overruled the provincial government. However, the Turkish diplomats' interest in accommodating the request of their British counterparts seems to have had less to do with any strong feeling about the exceptional (or not) nature of the Statue of Idrimi and more to do with providing an easy concession to a potential treaty partner within the context of negotiations for the so-called Tripartite Treaty between France, England, and Turkey that was signed on October 19 of the same year (Maloigne 2017, 209, 211; Hale 2021).

1.3. WOOLLEY'S DESCRIPTION OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF THE STATUE

These diplomatic negotiations comprised, of course, only one small facet of the geopolitical tensions that were already exploding into World War II. To compare great things with small, this conflict had a profound impact on the modern understanding of the statue's archaeological context. The 1939 season would be Woolley's last at Alalah until 1946; he was recommissioned into the military in September 1939 and served in various capacities, beginning with the Intelligence

Division and culminating in his role as Archaeological Adviser to the Directorate of Civil Affairs, essentially functioning as a precursor to—and helping to establish—the famous division of Monuments Men (Winstone 1990, 221–42). Significantly, Woolley ceased not just the excavations but also all publications on Alalah with this refocusing on wartime activities. Indeed, the preliminary report on the 1939 season (Woolley 1948) did not appear until nine years after the season had concluded. (Interestingly, this report focuses on the Level VII palace and does not mention the statue at all.)

Accordingly, the only contemporary published descriptions of the statue's find-spot appeared in popular accounts in the *Times* of London (Woolley 1939a) and the *Illustrated London News* (Woolley 1939c); there is also the unpublished letter quoted above (see §1.2). Then, after the war, Woolley presented the statue's archaeological context in a series of venues over the space of about six years: his introduction to Smith's (1949) edition of the inscriptions, the preliminary report on the 1946 season (Woolley 1950), *A Forgotten Kingdom*, his popular account of excavations at Alalah (Woolley 1953), and the final excavation report (Woolley 1955).[15]

In general, these accounts agree in describing the statue as having been discovered in a pit that was dug into the floor of an annex to the Level I temple; the head and several smaller pieces of the statue lay next to the body in the pit. Furthermore, the basalt throne on which the statue originally sat is said to have been found on the surface of the floor of the same building. Woolley's description in *A Forgotten Kingdom* (Woolley 1953, 121) provides a representative if vivid account:

> When we excavated the Level I temple…, we found its forecourt littered with objects belonging to the final phase of the building; amongst them was a much defaced basalt throne, obviously that of a statue. In a room in the annexe of the temple proper, lying NE. of the court, we found a hole which had been dug into the floor and filled with earth and large stone (the largest weighing nearly a ton and a half) and smoothed over; under the stones there was a broken statue; the head, which had been knocked off, was set beside the body together with two smaller fragments, one of the beard, the other of a foot…. The statue belonged to the throne found on the temple floor, for it fitted exactly into the cut socket…. We can be sure that the statue was on its throne when the temple was destroyed because the breaking of the feet must have resulted from its being knocked violently off its base into which the feet were socketed…. After the sack of the temple someone must have crept back and piously collected all that he could find of the figure and hidden it in a hastily-dug hole in the hope of recovering it later.

Indeed, so vivid is this account that David Ussishkin (1970, 124–25) used it as his prime example of "the Syro-Hittite ritual burial of monuments," quoting it

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[15] The statue is also briefly mentioned in the published summary of a lecture that Woolley gave on the 1946 season to the British School of Archaeology in Iraq (Woolley 1947).

word for word and saying that the description "speaks for itself." Yet, as mentioned above, a significant amount of time—and a world war—had passed since the statue's discovery and this or any other substantial published accounting of its archaeological context. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that differences can be found among Woolley's various accounts of the find-spot of the statue as well. These differences have profound implications and have prompted a substantial reevaluation of the statue's archaeological context, as discussed in detail in §2.1.

1.4. INTRODUCING THE INSCRIPTIONS

Up to this point, this introduction has said very little about the inscriptions carved on the statue other than to present their content. However, the inscriptions and, in particular, their material expression require some additional introduction, not least because a central contention of this study is that there are two distinct inscriptions carved onto the statue, whereas it is customary in the scholarship to speak of a single "Idrimi inscription"; see, for example, the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative's list of the "100 Most Important Cuneiform Objects," which ranks the statue as number eighteen and reports that "the inscription [is] written all over the statue (even on the beard)."[16]

More accurately, we should speak of two inscriptions. One inscription of exactly one hundred lines is arranged in four units across Idrimi's chest and arms and down from his knees toward the hem of his robe,[17] while a second inscription

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[16] The Statue of Idrimi of Alalakh, CDLI:wiki, https://cdli.ox.ac.uk/wiki/doku.php?id=statue_idrimi_alalakh.

[17] This inscription has traditionally been seen as comprising 101 lines. However, the putative line 101 is both indented and preceded by a *Glossenkeil*. These extralinguistic markers communicate that this "line" is to be understood as part of the previous line, which has run over; Mabie (2004, 171, 177) has described a *Glossenkeil* used this way as an "overflow marker." Indeed, Smith (1949, 23) acknowledges as much in his comment to the line, where he notes that the *Glossenkeil* "appears to mean that this line is an overlap"; see also "The single oblique [wedge] to indicate a run-over, 101, where this line given a separate number in the edition, is actually a continuation of 100" (29), citing parallels from the Amarna letters. However, perhaps because Smith nonetheless gave the run-over text its own distinct line number, the indentation has received no subsequent discussion, and the inscription on the statue's body is uniformly treated in the scholarship as if it were 101 and not exactly 100 lines in length.

of only three lines is carved on the statue's cheek. The inscription on the statue's body is arranged in four divisions. Described from the perspective of the viewer, not the statue, the first division contains twenty-three lines of text that are written on the statue's upper left chest and left arm. The second division, comprising lines 24–51, is inscribed on the statue's left leg, directly below the first section. Curiously, the third division of the inscription does not move to Idrimi's upper right chest and proceed downward from there, in which case we could describe the inscription on the body as having been conceptualized as two columns of text. Rather, the third division, comprising lines 52–74, is inscribed on the statue's right leg, proceeding downward from the lap toward the hem of the robe (alt-

Figure 1.2. Arrangement of the body inscription on the statue.

hough it terminates earlier than the parallel second unit; see §2.8). The fourth and final unit of this inscription is carved on the statue's upper right chest and proceeds downward to its lap. In other words, the inscription displays a counterclockwise arrangement on the statue, not a columnar one, as can be seen in figure 1.2. For a comparison of this physical arrangement of the inscription on the statue's body with its literary structure, see §2.8.

As mentioned above, in addition to the inscription of one hundred lines carved on the body of the statue, there is a short inscription of only three lines carved on the statue's cheek; see figure 1.3 on the next page. In its vertical orientation, this inscription is clearly physically distinct from the inscription on the statue's body, which has a horizontal orientation. Indeed, Sidney Smith (1949, 10) considered that "these lines must have been inscribed while the figure was lying on its back." Nonetheless, this second inscription has traditionally been considered part of the same inscription as that on the statue's body. Smith assigned it lines 102–104 (on the basis of the body inscription being 101 lines), and this line numbering and placement is found in all subsequent treatments of the text.

To be sure, some dissenting opinions can be found in the scholarship. The earliest of these known to me was offered by Jean Nougayrol (1951, 154 n. 1), who

Figure 1.3. The inscription on the statue's cheek.

suggested that it was more likely that the cheek inscription functioned as a prologue to the body inscription than as a concluding epitaph. In a similar vein, Cory Crawford (2014, 256) remarked that the conventional line numbering puts the text on the statue's cheek at the end of the inscription on the body, "without noting that we have moved to the head of the statue, and back to the (spatial) beginning of the inscription." Jack Sasson (1981, 312–13) also considered that the cheek inscription "ought not to be regarded as an epilogue," but, instead of understanding it as a prologue, he argued that "these lines are comparable to the legends that are placed close to the bodies of protagonists." Writing the same year as Sasson, Manfried Dietrich and Oswald Loretz (1981, 245) occupied the more radical position that the cheek inscription was neither a prologue nor an epilogue to the inscription on the statue's body, despite referring to "Die Inschrift der Statue des

Königs Idrimi" and maintaining the traditional line numbering; for them, it was "a stand-alone text."[18]

1.5. TERMINOLOGY

I am in firm agreement with the argument that the inscription on the statue's cheek should be treated not as part of the inscription on the body but as a distinct inscription. Indeed, a central claim of chapter 4 is that intertextuality between these two inscriptions contributes greatly to the larger program of the statue and its inscriptions. In order to emphasize that these inscriptions are distinct, I depart from previous scholarship in distinguishing between the *body inscription* and the *cheek inscription*. I also give the cheek inscription distinct line numbers, *CI 1–3*; I maintain the numbering *lines 1–100* for the body inscription without an identifier such as "BI" in order to facilitate the consultation of previous literature; note that I consider line 100 of the body inscription to include the text traditionally numbered as line 101, as described in §1.4.

Because I understand there to be two inscriptions carved on the statue, I have tried to be consistent in this monograph in referring to the *Idrimi inscriptions* in the plural, following Jean-Marie Durand (2011, 130), who has spoken of "des textes d'Idrimi" in the plural (see the discussion in §2.7). However, on occasion, I do need to discuss the sum of the material inscribed on the statue as a whole, especially since, as mentioned above, I am arguing that both inscriptions are part of a larger program. On these occasions, I refer to the *Idrimi text*. Finally, in a number of different places, my focus is specifically on lines 1–91 of the body inscription, which encompasses Idrimi's self-introduction through his entrusting the cult to his son IM-nerari; when discussing this portion of the body inscription specifically, I refer to the *Idrimi narrative*. When discussing the nonnarrative remainder of the body inscription (ll. 92–100), I follow the scholarly convention in referring to the *curse formulae* (ll. 92–98) and the *colophon* (ll. 98–100).

1.6. WESTERN HYBRID AKKADIAN

One last piece of terminological housekeeping has less to do with the structure or content of the inscriptions and more to do with their language. The texts are written in an umbrella variety of the Akkadian language that is customarily referred to as "peripheral Akkadian" (German *Randgebiete des Akkadischen*). Krzysztof Baranowski (2016, 21 n. 2) has defined peripheral Akkadian as

> a cover term for the language(s) of the texts written by non-native speakers in various localities outside Mesopotamia…. The common characteristic of Peripheral Akkadian is the influence of the local languages on the grammar and lexicon

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[18] Note that this position is fundamentally connected to their understanding of the redaction history of the inscriptions; see §2.7 for more discussion.

that distinguishes it from the native varieties of Akkadian…. The use of the cover term Peripheral Akkadian does not imply its uniformity as a tradition or the homogeneity of its linguistic features.

As used in the scholarship, western peripheral Akkadian in particular encompasses corpora of cuneiform texts from a number of different sites in Anatolia, the Levant, and Egypt that date, usually but not always, to the Late Bronze Age. These sites include Alalah itself, as well as Hattuša, Ekalte, Emar, Ugarit, Taanach, and Tell el-Amarna, to name only some of the more prominent.[19] And, of course, even if certain texts have been found at one of these sites, sometimes they were written at and sent from other so-called western peripheral sites in Anatolia or the Levant. Again, to offer only a couple examples, texts from Carchemish have been found at both Emar and Ugarit, while the Amarna letters include texts from Amurru, Byblos, and many other locations.

On the one hand, then, the term "western peripheral Akkadian" can be considered relatively neutral in that it reflects the fact that texts written in this variety come from locations at the periphery of the core area where the Akkadian language was spoken (namely, Babylonia and Assyria) and that the general orientation of this particular periphery to the core was to the west. On the other hand, it is undeniable that value judgments are also at work with this terminology. As Baranowski emphasized, the various text corpora gathered under the umbrella term of "western peripheral Akkadian" can show as many differences from each other as they do from the standard Akkadian varieties, as a simple comparison of texts written at, for example, Qatna and Byblos makes abundantly clear. These differences derive in part from the fact that the relevant texts grouped under the term can often be separated from each other by hundreds of years and/or thousands of kilometers. What unites the texts is that their phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon is different, specifically from the standard Akkadian varieties.[20]

Because what unites so-called western peripheral texts is difference from a norm, a danger in placing these differences within a core-periphery model of Akkadian is that it facilitates a discourse in which the peripheral utterance is

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[19] Vita (2021a, 1214–24) has provided an overview of the primary archives with relevant publication information. Sites producing texts considered by scholars to be peripheral Akkadian but not "western peripheral Akkadian" would include Middle Bronze Age Susa and Late Bronze Age Nuzi.

[20] For instance, in Akkadian texts from Ugarit, a construct noun in the nominative or accusative case can be marked with a case vowel before a noun in the genitive or a pronominal suffix. For instance, Vita (2021a, 1242) gives the example of the phrase *ni-id-nu* LUGAL, "a gift of the king" (see, e.g., PRU 3 65 [RS 16.247]: 14), where the corresponding form in nonliterary Old Babylonian is *nidin* (e.g., *aš-šum ni-di-in* ⌜*pí*⌝-[*i*]*m* … *ir-šu-u₂*, "Because (PN) acquired an oral promise (literally, 'a gift of the mouth')," AbB 9 1: 9).

considered to be wrong instead of the product of a complex interaction of linguistic, material, and/or historical factors.[21] This pejorative attitude toward the language of the texts is reinforced by the fact that some linguistic differences may not be consistent even within corpora or are not currently explainable. The pejorative attitude is probably further compounded by the fact that Assyriologists are often also language teachers who communicate the standards especially of the classical Old Babylonian variety of Akkadian in the classroom.

But, as anyone who has worked deeply with these texts knows, the utterances that they embed are meaningful codes in their own right, and these codes are much more than a set of differences or deviations from a norm. Some may qualify as creoles or interlanguages; others seem never to have been spoken but only to have existed in written form. To be understood, these Akkadian cuneiform texts from Anatolia, the Levant, and Egypt need to be approached, first, on their own terms; second, in dialogue with each other; and third, in dialogue with other disciplines. Happily, such approaches have been adopted for over half a century now and have produced exciting and meaningful results.[22]

At the same time, the continuing habit in academic discourse of referring to all of these dialects under the umbrella term "peripheral" undermines this scholarly work.[23] Given the obvious difficulty with a core-periphery framework, why continue with it by referring to any text originating from Anatolia, the Levant, or Egypt as an example of "western peripheral Akkadian"? One ready answer is probably inertia.[24] But a second answer lies in the fact that it *is* sometimes necessary to have an umbrella term for the varieties of Akkadian written in these texts

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[21] To return to the example of PRU 3 65 [RS 16.247]: 14, the Akkadian construct form with a case vowel in the text from Ugarit cited in the previous note, it may come as no surprise that case vowels are preserved in this position in the indigenous Ugaritic language, even if positing direct substratum influence to explain the phenomenon is an oversimplification.

[22] A pioneering example is Moran's (1950) dissertation on the dialect of Akkadian used in Amarna letters sent from Byblos. Vita (2021a, 1235–52) has exemplified this approach in his overview of the grammatical features found in the different text corpora from the Late Bronze Age Levant, conveniently gathering the relevant bibliography, as well.

[23] The objection is not new; see, e.g., Boyes 2020, 12 n. 27: "The term 'Peripheral Akkadian' is often used as a catch-all for the various dialects spoken or written outside of Mesopotamia proper, but I avoid it here both for its Mesopotamia-centricness and because it risks obscuring rather than highlighting the linguistic diversity of the region." For a related critique of a core-periphery model of ancient Near Eastern cultural history, see Van De Mieroop 2016 and now Van De Mieroop 2023.

[24] Cf. the continued use by scholars of the terms *Syrian* and *Syro-Hittite* to refer to tablet "types" from the Middle Euphrates despite the clear advantages of the alternate terms *Conventional* and *Free Format* that have been proposed by Sophie Démare-Lafont and Daniel Fleming; see Fleming and Démare-Lafont 2009 and Démare-Lafont and Fleming 2015.

in order to compare them with each other and with the standard Akkadian varieties, and no suitable alternative has yet, to my knowledge, been offered.

Here, looking at Near Eastern archaeology, which has long since moved past a core-periphery binary approach, may be helpful. For instance, world systems theory, in which the interaction of a geographic core with its periphery is foundational, was famously applied by Giullermo Algaze to the so-called Uruk expansion (see especially Algaze 2005). Assemblages of Mesopotamian material culture outside of Mesopotamia, whether these assemblages occur isolated at independent sites or mixed with indigenous wares at local settlements, are explained as different manifestations of the economic and political exploitation of the periphery by Mesopotamian colonists who resided there and extracted resources to send back to the Mesopotamian core. However, this analytic framework has rightly been criticized for "highly questionable assumptions [that] eliminate or minimize the roles of polities or groups in the periphery, local production and exchange, local agency, and internal dynamics of developmental change" (Stein 2014, 55, citing previous literature).

In one attempt to move past the limitations of the core-periphery approach, Anne Porter (2012) looked to the concept of hybridity that had emerged from scholarly conversations about contemporary globalism at the end of the last century (e.g., Bhabha 1994). For instance, she demonstrated that this term, which encompasses not "the mere melding of technical influences, differentiation, delineating differences in style" (Porter 2012, 79) but manifestations of identity, was useful in making sense of the complex distribution of Mesopotamian material culture outside of Mesopotamia that is attributed to the so-called Uruk expansion. In particular, she emphasized that "hybridity is not indicated by the mere *transference* of goods, symbols, and ideas from one group to another but by the *transformation* of those goods, symbols, and ideas through the intersection of different understandings of them" (142; emphasis mine).

A sustained application of theories of hybridity to the various corpora of Akkadian cuneiform texts from Late Bronze Age Anatolia, the Levant, and Egypt would be a valuable contribution, although it is unfortunately outside the scope of this study. However, given the degree to which the concepts of hybridity and hybridization have entered mainstream academic discourse over the past two decades, it also does not seem necessary. It is hard to imagine that an interlocutor still exists who would insist that the scribes of Anatolia, the Levant, and Egypt were merely receptacles for the knowledge of Akkadian cuneiform, which they received passively, partially, and imperfectly. Yet this vision of asymmetrical and exploitative core-periphery power relations is essentially the position that is implied when one speaks of "western peripheral Akkadian."

With its emphasis on identity and agentive transformation against these notions of (incomplete, incorrect) transference, I think that it is hard not to agree that the concept of hybridity is superior for talking about the similarities and differences in the varieties of Akkadian cuneiform in texts from Late Bronze Age

Anatolia, the Levant, and Egypt.[25] Furthermore, the concept of hybridity already has some foothold in these conversations whether it be in titles,[26] terminology,[27] or the simple use of hyphenation to differentiate Hurro-Akkadian from Canaano-Akkadian as varieties of Akkadian found in the Levant, which has the effect of creating a linguistic third space. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, when I have need of an umbrella term for the varieties of Akkadian from Late Bronze Age Anatolia, the Levant, and Egypt, I use the term *western hybrid Akkadian* in place of *western peripheral Akkadian*, where *hybrid* replaces *peripheral* in order to emphasize agentive transformation in place of asymmetrical power relations but *western* remains in order to communicate the broad geographical region in which similar linguistic developments may occur relative to the dialects of Akkadian spoken and/or written to the east in Mesopotamia.

1.7. AIMS AND STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

One final reason why the concept of hybridity is appropriate for the linguistic code(s) studied in this book in particular is that this concept also captures the larger program of the Idrimi statue and its inscriptions. As stated in this chapter's opening paragraph, the question motivating this book is: Why was the story of Idrimi's life told at this particular time and place and in this particular way? Although I do not return to the language of hybridity to articulate it, the answers that I reach are very much informed by the concept. The vision of the statue and the inscriptions that I try to present in this book is more than simply a melding of Mesopotamian literary traditions with Syro-Anatolian practices of ancestor veneration. I see the Statue of Idrimi as a transformation of those traditions and practices and the creation of something entirely new.

The Idrimi inscriptions are obscure in many places. The statue's archaeological context is difficult to interpret, and its enigmatic representation of a robed

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[25] Similarly, in his study of writing at Ugarit, Boyes (2020) has stressed the analytical value of the concept of hybridity for understanding the writing of Akkadian cuneiform at the site; see, e.g., "we should be clear that we're thinking in terms of the emergence of a hybrid set of practices which, while on the face of it founded in extremely orthodox Mesopotamian traditions, are nevertheless distinct from them and specifically Ugaritian, even before alphabetic cuneiform arrived on the scene" (13) and esp. 103–4.

[26] See, e.g., Rainey 2010 ("The Hybrid Language Written by Canaanite Scribes in the 14th Century BCE"); although cf. Izre'el 2012, 181 in reference to the term "Canaano-Akkadian": "One might also suggest the term 'hybrid language,' which is not usually associated with any specific type of language contact…. Therefore, I could resort to this solution. However, the use of this term would not be transparent enough for the actual split between linguistic components in Canaano-Akkadian."

[27] See, e.g., the "suffix conjugation hybrid" forms like *irtīhātī* (EA 196: 13 [Mušihuna]), which combine the suffixes of a perfective conjugation verb to a prefix conjugation base; see, in general, Rainey 1996, 2:317–46 and Medill 2019, 248.

human form—its style—is hard to contextualize. For these reasons, the history of scholarship on the Statue of Idrimi and its inscriptions is deep. In particular, this scholarship is characterized by a number of different approaches, and all of these approaches have informed my own particular attempts to answer the question I asked above. Accordingly, in chapter 2, I discuss the history of scholarship on the statue and its inscriptions from the perspective of these approaches before describing and illustrating my own approach in the book. I leave a more detailed description of the book's structure to the end of that chapter, where it can be informed by this discussion.