Household Religion in the Old Assyrian Period

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1. Introduction

This thesis is an investigation on religion in the Old Assyrian Period, asking how the mobility of the Old Assyrian merchants affected their practice of Household Religion. Most of the tablets dating to the Old Assyrian Period belong to private archives; Larsen claimed "the very nature of the Old Assyrian textual corpus leads us to concentrate on individuals and families."[1] This creates a corpus primed for examining the daily lives of the Old Assyrian people, including their religious practices. Practically none of the over twenty thousand documents unearthed at Kaneš are *about* religion. Religious sentiment and practice were largely mentioned in novel situations, when their normal routine was interrupted. Yet, from these disruptions, a wealth of evidence emerges.

Household Religion, also called Family Religion, is the religion practiced within the family home: nightly prayers, home shrines, and private rituals. The home was a vulnerable place; it was where one slept, recovered from illness, and spent the most vulnerable stages of their lives. Home ownership was also a form of monetary security and could serve as a status signal. Many Old Assyrian letters relate to protecting the paternal home from outside threats, both mundane and divine. The Old Assyrians most well-preserved in the archives were traveling merchants, whose houses were particularly vulnerable due to the travel. The merchant's paternal home was often left in the hands of the women of the family, whilst the men could spend years and decades living in a house in a foreign city. This thesis will examine how Household Religion preserved, or failed to preserve, the merchant family and its traditions however far individual members traveled.

1.1 Aššur and the Old Assyrian Period

The Old Assyrian Period started around 2025 BCE when the inhabitants of the city-state Aššur cast aside the yoke of distant Sumerian kings.[2] At this time, Aššur had a population of five to eight thousand, and stretched about forty hectares.[3] Aššur stood on a rocky plateau jutting out above the Tigris River. The natural springs which fed into the city were a gift of the divine, associated with the gates and walls which sheltered the city.[4] Over the centuries the natural cliffs on which the city stood were reinforced with layers of manmade fortification.[5] The Temple to the god Aššur was built on the highest point of this rocky formation, overlooking the city and surrounding lands.[6]

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[1] Larsen 2015:12.
[2] Eidem and Veenhof 2008:19; Harper and Klengel-Brandt 1995:17.
[3] Larsen 2015:96.
[4] RIMA 1 A.0.32.2.
[5] Harper and Klengel-Brandt 1995:17.
[6] Larsen 2015:89.

Archaeologists working at Aššur rarely dig deeper than the Middle Assyrian Period because the older layers are too deep; therefore the Old Assyrian levels are poorly investigated.[7] As of this writing, only 24 texts from Aššur proper that date to the Old Assyrian Period have been discovered.[8] If we only relied on the sources found within Aššur, we would be nearly lost. Luckily, among the Old Assyrians were a community of industrious traders who established trading settlements called *kārum* across Cappadocia. These Assyrian merchants would spend months and years living within such a *kārum*, directing the flow of goods and selling their merchandise, buying homes and raising families. It is within the main *kārum* at Kültepe (ancient Kaneš) that archeological remains of the Old Assyrians have been found. Approximately 24,000 Old Assyrian tablets have been discovered in Kültepe, most dating from a period spanning only 50 years.[9] These tablets record the business dealings of traders, their legal settlements, as well as personal letters exchanged between these travelers and their families. The Assyrian merchants were unconcerned with politics until it affected their personal livelihood, wars and kings were mentioned only when they infringed on their bottom line, and even then, in little detail.[10] Throughout the later 20th century, some of the large archives found in Kaneš were published in volumes such as the *Ankara Kültepe Tabletleri* (AKT) series. The Old Assyrian people, as we know them from their archives in Kaneš, were merchants. The philosophy of Aššur was described as so: “In accordance with the policy of the City of Aššur any Assyrian will go where it is profitable for him.”[11] It is the religious practices of these traveling merchants, and their more stationary family members, who this thesis seeks to examine.

1.2 Kaneš/Kültepe

Kültepe, the ruins of the ancient city of Kaneš, also known as Nesha, is the findspot of most of the sources used in this thesis. Hrozny, a Czech philologist, was the first to excavate at Kültepe in 1925.[12] This amateurish archaeological expedition did lead to some success: Hrozny ended up uncovering about 1000 tablets. In 1948 Turkish archeologist Özgüç reopened excavations and unearthed more than a thousand tablets during his first season at the site.[13] Özgüç worked at Kültepe until his death in 2005, and his excavations provide the backbone of all work on Kaneš and the Old Assyrian Period. A team from the University of Chicago did excavations at the nearby site of Alishar starting in 1927, and Old Assyrian seals and bullae have been found at Acemhöyük.

The Old Assyrian *kārum*, translated literally as “port” or “quay,” were settlements of Assyrian merchants within foreign cities. The *kārum*, and the smaller *wabartum*, were nestled in cities

[7] Larsen 2015:85.
[8] Larsen 2015:85.
[9] AKT 5:201.
[10] Eidem and Veenhof 2008:97.
[11] KT 6b 494:10-12.
[12] Veenhof 2010b:42.
[13] Larsen 2015:25.

throughout Upper Mesopotamia and Anatolia. Kaneš was the most prominent *kārum* and served as an administrative center for roughly forty other *kārum* and *wabartum* in central Anatolia.[14]

Kaneš was located more than one thousand kilometers from Aššur, a six-week journey by donkey caravan.[15] The city was located on the Kayseri Plains where hills turn to mountains in the distance on the bank of the Sarımsaklı River, which flowed into the Kizilirmak (Halys) and ultimately the Black Sea.[16] Kültepe, the name of the modern archeological site, is Turkish for "ash mound."[17] Today, Kültepe sits 22 kilometers from the city Kayseri in Türkiye.[18] Özgüç, the longest positioned excavator at Kültepe, theorized that Kaneš had a diameter of about 2 kilometers, while Barjamovic estimated that it was about 170 hectares, with a population of 25,000.[19] Kaneš would have been surrounded by smaller communities; 18 toponyms contemporary to the *kārum* are known.[20] On the mound, archeological remains date back to the Early Bronze Age.[21] While Kaneš was ancient, at the time of the *kārum* the city experienced a cultural renaissance, marked by an increase in artwork production and the adoption of written language.[22]

Assyrians and Anatolians are only distinguishable in the archeological record when their ethnicity was recorded in their archives.[23] Assyrians lived in the same types of houses as Anatolians, used the same pottery, and probably ate the same food.[24] They took few personal belongings with them to Kaneš, so the contents of their home were largely locally sourced.[25] Intermarriage was also common. However, the Assyrians and their neighbors in Kaneš considered each other to be different peoples. In their words for each other, we see Assyrians and Anatolians lumping the foreigners into a single unnuanced group: regional culture in Anatolia was very distinct, but Assyrians called all Anatolians *nuā'um*; meanwhile the Anatolians in Kaneš referred to all Assyrians in the city as merchants (*tamkārum*), regardless of their age or occupation.[26] Even Assyrians who settled in Anatolia permanently, of which there were a number, remained in close contact with their home city, making efforts to visit family and the Aššur temple.[27] However long they lived abroad, Aššur remained only "the city," no elaboration was needed.

[14] Veenhof 2010b:42; Michel 2014:70.
[15] Veenhof 2010b:42.
[16] Larsen 2015:29.
[17] Larsen 2015:138.
[18] WAW 42 6.
[19] Barjamovic 2014:59 and 66.
[20] Dercksen 2008:139.
[21] Larsen 2015:30.
[22] Lumsden 2008:25.
[23] Lumsden 2008:37.
[24] Michel 2014:76.
[25] Veenhof 2014:345.
[26] Michel 2014:72; Lumsden 2008:34.
[27] Lumsden 2008:40.

1.3 Defining Household Religion

Household Religion is, simply put, the religion that is practiced within private homes. The importance of the home is easy to understand; the home is where a person is most vulnerable; where they sleep, and where their family and valuables rest. There is a tradition in religious scholarship of distinguishing between popular religion and official or state religion. The category "popular" religion suggests that state-run religion was the opposite and implies friction between private and state-sanctioned religious practices.[28] Household Religion, and the similarly defined Family Religion, provide a clearer avenue for studying domestic religion practiced outside temples and other public spaces. I use the term Household over Family because the household is more easily defined, as biological relations are not always evident. The household includes servants, slaves, and unrelated residents, and defining the bounds of a family can be difficult.

The topic of Family or Household Religion in the Ancient World has gained steam in the past few decades. Household Religion in Mesopotamia was studied most cohesively by Van Der Toorn in his 1996 book *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria, and Israel*. A conference entitled "Household and Family Religion in Antiquity" was held at Brown University in 2005, and its proceedings were published three years later by Bodel and Olyans. Old Assyrian Household Religion in particular has been studied primarily by Veenhof in his 2018 article "The Family God in Old Babylonian and Especially in Old Assyrian Sources" and more briefly in 2014 in "Families of Old Assyrian Traders." Household Religion in the ancient Levant has been more extensively explored. A chapter of Patrick Miller's 2000 book, *The Religion of Ancient Israel,* discussed family religion. In 2012, Albertz and Schmitt wrote an extensive overview on the topic, *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant*, and Carol Meyers published *Households and Holiness: The Religious Culture of Israelite Women* in 2023. Occasionally the study of Women's Religion and Household Religion have been considered synonymous, a result of the domestic realm thought of as a woman's sphere in the antiquity.[29]

In *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant*, Albertz and Schmitt draw three concentric circles of family and household religion. The Inner Circle includes religion practiced within the house itself, whereas the Medium Circle includes religion practiced outside the house, but within the neighborhood, and encompassing the larger kinship group. Finally the Outer Circle includes religion practiced within temples and together with the larger population.[30] This thesis focuses solely on the Inner Circle.

In his article "A Problem of Definition: "Cultic" and "Domestic" Contexts in Philistia," Press offers a critique of efforts to identify domestic religion. He mentions the vast disparity within households, which on its own could include homes belonging to every level of wealth, power, and position. He also writes about the difficulty in determining if an object is cultic. Archeologists have traditionally used knowledge of the object in other contexts, as well as its findspot, to

[28] Albertz and Schmitt 2012:50.
[29] Albertz and Schmitt 2012:9.
[30] Albertz and Schmitt 2012:46.

determine if it is cultic. Press argues that just because a similar object was used for cultic purposes, that does not mean the object is always intended for religious use. Similarly, just because an object was not found in a cultic space, that doesn't mean it is not cultic. He proposes the best way to search for evidence of cultic practice is to identify cultic behaviors in the culture under investigation and look for archaeological correlation or evidence of these practices.[31]

[31] Press 2011:379.

2. Old Assyrian Households

Before speaking of religion within Assyrian households, we will establish a basic understanding of Assyrian households both at home and abroad, including both the occupants of the house as well as the physical structure and composition of the houses themselves.

2.1 Family Members and Other Occupants

The Old Assyrians called the occupants of a house the *nišū bētim*, or people of the house. Old Assyrian houses were heavily occupied; Hertel theorizes there was an average of 5 to 8 people living in the houses in the *kārum* at Kaneš.[32] The people living within the house, in both Aššur and Kaneš, were not just the immediate family, but also extended family, servants, slaves, and un-related housemates.

The Old Assyrian family that survives in our records is primarily a merchant family, with biological bonds tied again by shared business interests. Family ties were emblematic of the trust needed for business partners, and Assyrians generally preferred working with their relatives, and regardless of shared blood, would use familial language to describe their relationships with their colleagues. An easy showcase of the depth of the equivalence between family and business is in language: the Assyrian family was called the *bēt abim*, and this was also the terminology used for the paternal house, presumably where ancestral tombs were located, as well as for the family business.[33] Familial harmony was important for the Assyrians, but unsurprisingly, this ideal did not always enter reality.[34] Families could have honorable or dishonorable reputations and preserving their family's good name was important for them.[35]

In the Assyrian tongue, "father" also meant "boss," and "son" meant "employee." The man of the household, the *pater familias*, was also head of the family firm. His wife doubled as a business partner who was responsible for managing the firm in Aššur whilst he was away. His sons, and if he was successful, male members of his extended family, would become his employees and address him as their father.[36] The Assyrian merchant might have a second wife in Anatolia, called his servant woman (*amtum*). Men of all statuses married Anatolian women, and

[32] Hertel 2014:27, citing Özgüç 1986:14; Hertel 2014:39.
[33] Veenhof 2014:341-350.
[34] There are countless examples of family in-fighting. One example is TC 3 112 (WAW 42 231):9-14, where a mother writes to her sons: "Why are you and your brother quarreling among each other about your silver and your gold? Who is quarreling with whom? Am I then the one who is going to cure you (of this behavior)?"
[35] Veenhof 2014:358. Veenhof includes a quote from the unpublished Kt n/k 1372:13–15, provided to him by Çeçen: "Let your family be honored and let me also be honored."
[36] Hertel 2013:27-28.

sometimes Anatolian women were the primary wives of Assyrian men.[37] Some men settled in Aššur in old age and continued managing their businesses from home whilst younger relatives or employees did the traveling.[38] The Assyrian merchant would not take his Anatolian wife home to Aššur, instead divorcing her if he retired to Aššur.[39] Other times, men settled in Kaneš or in other Assyrian *kārum*. When the *pater familias* died, the family under his authority would acknowledge his successor as their new father.[40]

In merchant families, the women were the most consistent occupants of the family home and were responsible for guarding the home and valuables stored within.[41] They also kept the house in good repair and managed the members of the household.[42] While this role was most often filled by wives, sometimes elderly women, probably widows, managed the house of their sons or nephews.[43] Women could also be homeowners.[44] Women did travel to Kaneš fairly frequently, joining their husbands or fathers abroad.[45] A married woman was meant to live in her husband's home, but the transition between households was not always easy.[46] When a new bride did not integrate well into the household of her husband or when the marriage broke down, she would leave her husband's home, either by her own choice or because he evicted her.[47] In such emergencies, Assyrian women relied on their birth families to support them, which could create challenges for women in merchant families who might be living far from their paternal home. Instead of marrying, young women might become *gubabtum* (consecrated women) and remain with their paternal family.[48] The duties expected of Assyrian women were articulated by a letter an Assyrian woman wrote to her sister, Šalimma, who left her husband's house in Aššur to live with their mother in Kaneš after her father's death: "Why are others managing your children and your household while you are staying over there?"[49] Šalimma did not return to Aššur, despite her sister's pleas, and numerous letters from her husband demanding her return. Widows who sold their house sometimes continued to live there until their death, their residence outlined in the sale contract.[50] While children normally stayed with their mother, sometimes Assyrians would pay others to raise their child; this practice was called *tarbītum*. [51]

The biological family were not the only residents of an Old Assyrian house. Slave ownership was common in the Old Assyrian Period, though the number of enslaved people varied

[37] Lumsden 2008:35.
[38] Veenhof 2014:343.
[39] Lumsden 2008:35, citing Jensen 2003:172.
[40] Hertel 2013:343.
[41] Michel 2023:106; CCT 4 13b (WAW 42 218); BIN 6 1 (WAW 42 305.)
[42] AAA 1/3 1 (WAW 42 146); CAHIJ 07:248-49, 253-56 (WAW 42 266.)
[43] Veenhof 2014:349.
[44] WAW 42 236.
[45] Fattori 2024:78.
[46] AAA 1/3 1 (WAW 42 146.)
[47] WAW 42 233:7–8; AAA 1/3 1 (WAW 42 146); Biggs 1996.
[48] Veenhof 2014:357.
[49] Fattori 2024:8; KT 8 206:31-33; Veenhof 2014:346.
[50] WAW 42:236; WAW 42 51(Sadberk 28)
[51] AKT 5:141.

depending on the household and most slaves served as domestic laborers.[52] Furthermore, Assyrian merchants could engage people by a *be'ulātum* contract wherein a person entered someone's service for a period in exchange for money.[53] People could also be pledged to households, where they were referred to as *erubbatum,* from *erābum* "to enter a household." It is difficult to tell if these people lived in the debtor's house as terminology suggests, or if they lived elsewhere.[54] Most enslaved people had Assyrian names, suggesting most were either Assyrian or renamed as part of their enslavement.[55] Alongside the enslaved were also free servants. Houses could also have tenants.[56] There were also times that houses had unrelated co-owners; in one text four men buy a house in Kaneš together, one of whom had an Assyrian name, the rest Anatolian.[57] Naturally, family homes were also the place where guests were entertained and stayed when visiting.[58]

The amount of time individual Old Assyrians spent in their Assyrian home versus living abroad both varies and is sometimes difficult to determine. Generally, Old Assyrian merchants and their family members traveled often, and at times their houses stood empty.[59] When there was no one staying within a house, it would be sealed shut. Members of the family remained obligated to their paternal house regardless of their location, something their stationary family members were quick to remind them. The family, family house, and the family business were deeply intertwined, disaster for one would quickly lead to disaster for the other, and protecting the three was the merchant's primary concern.

2.2 Houses

The physical reality of the house is important in understanding Household Religion: where might the most vulnerable or sacred areas of the home be located, where did familial life concentrate, and what religious considerations might have been taken when constructing or moving into a home. Was there any difference in Assyrian homes and those abroad, physically or spiritually?

Assyrian merchants who are well-known in the archives normally owned two houses, one in Aššur and one in Kaneš. Home ownership was important to them for both financial and social reasons. Assyrian woman Ababa wrote to her husband Kuliyā:

> [5–7] [Ur]gent! Why did you release silver to Ennanāt-Aššur? [8] You put trust in his outward appearance, [9–10] but [he] has neither house nor child, and still you released the silver![60]

Ennanāt-Aššur was not someone who could be trusted, because he was unrooted. We see house-ownership as a status symbol when Lamassī complained to her husband Pūšu-kēn:

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[52] Dercksen 2014:105.
[53] Larsen 2014:296-298.
[54] Hertel 2013:267.
[55] Dercksen 2014:105.
[56] BIN 6 20 (WAW 42 199):22-27.
[57] Hecker 2008:104.
[58] TC I 78.
[59] Michel 2023:103.
[60] KT 5 11 (WAW 42 228):6-10.

“Since you left, Šalim-ahum has built two houses; when will we be able to do (the same)?”[61] A respectable Assyrian man owned at least one home, and a truly great man owned several. Assyrians were also meant to respect the space of their neighbors, the same Lamassī also complained that her neighbor built a new wall against her home, encroaching onto her property.[62] Lamassī lived in Aššur, and was writing to her husband abroad; her letters show Pūšu-kēn’s responsibility to the family house in Aššur, even when he’s living in Kaneš. The history of a particular house was sometimes notable: in KT 6a 191b Šalim-Aššur was given both Ašdu's house and its legacy, perhaps involving burials under the floor of the house or the care of the household deities.[63] Unfortunately, the city where this house was located is not indicated, though bodies were sometimes buried under houses in Kaneš.

The location where the house was located could affect religious practice within its bounds. The Assyrian and Anatolian cityscapes were spotted with smaller religious buildings, which were sometimes in neighborhoods built beside personal dwellings. While non-residential buildings in Assyrian neighborhoods have not been identified from archeological digs, they are sparingly referenced in the archives.[64] Assyrian Ennam-Aššur described his experience with one in a letter to his colleague Pilaḫ-Ištar:

9. *[…] šu$^{?}$-um-kà* | *be-et*
10. *gu$_5$-mu-ur-tim* | *ša iš-ḫa-ra*
11. *a-ṣé-er* | *be-tí-a*
12. *im-qú-ut-m[a]* | *be-tí-a*
13. *i-dí-ma* | *i-na ki-dim*
14. *wa-áš-ba-ku*[65]

9-13 The *k/gummurtim* house of Išḫara fell onto my house. My house was knocked down;14 and I live outside.

Ennam-Aššur’s house was not in Kaneš; Kuzuoğlu suggested he lived in another Anatolian city, perhaps Turhumit.[66] Whilst the neighborhood’s religious buildings do not feature in letters aside from extraordinary circumstances like the above, these buildings must have been an important element of Assyrian religious and daily life. They were also, clearly, a hazard. These neighborhood religious buildings could affect the physical form of the home in more subtle ways as well: Müller-Karpe discovered that residential houses in Kaneš, and the nearby town Šamuha, had doorways orientated towards where the sun is at solstice. He theorizes this might be because a religious building in the town was built with such orientation, and the rest of the buildings matched.[67] Assyrian households in Anatolia would have different religious structures in the neighborhood, but for now whether this had any importance to them can only be speculated.

[61] RA 59 159 (WAW 42 147):30-35.
[62] CCT 3 20 (WAW 42 166):35.
[63] KT 6a 191b:11-12: *É áš-du ù wa-ar-kà-sà.*
[64] Hertel 2014:34.
[65] Kuzuoğlu 2016:36.
[66] Kuzuoğlu 2016:37.
[67] Müller-Karpe 2024:232.

Archaeological records of Assyrian homes mostly come from Kaneš. There, the Assyrian-owned houses are identifiable by the contents of their archives and are otherwise indistinguishable from houses owned by their Anatolian neighbors. Assyrian-owned houses in Kaneš were enclosed on both sides by other buildings in uneven blocks which shared walls, and, including their walls and courtyard, were on average 92 meters squared with a deviation of 34 m^2.[68] They varied widely in size, from two-roomed houses of 20-30 m^2 to houses as large as 250 m^2.[69] Most houses had three main sections in their layout, likely the closest to the door was public-facing, the middle the living quarters, and furthest where the archive and storerooms were located.[70] The most frequent layout was a single-story rectangular home with six rooms, arranged around a central room called the *ekallum*, with a stairway leading to a flat roof.[71] As seen in Figure 1 below, houses tended towards the rectangular, usually included a central area with a hearth, and usually only had a single entrance, which created a protected backroom for storage. When houses had two stories, the first was where the storerooms were located, and the living quarters were likely upstairs.[72] Within the houses stood supportive wooden beams, which were sometimes taken and sold.[73] These houses did not have windows, so any natural light must have come from door or roof.[74] Notably, one house in Kaneš included a room with a blocked doorway where an owner of the house was buried in a large cist-grave.[75]

[68] Hertel 2014:26; Larsen 2015:35.
[69] Hertel 2014:26.
[70] Özgüç 1964:36.
[71] WAW 42:237; Özgüç 2004:446.
[72] Michel 2023:107; Hertel 2014:39.
[73] ATHE 36 (OAA 1 68):16-19.
[74] Özgüç 1964:36.
[75] Özgüç 1964:36.

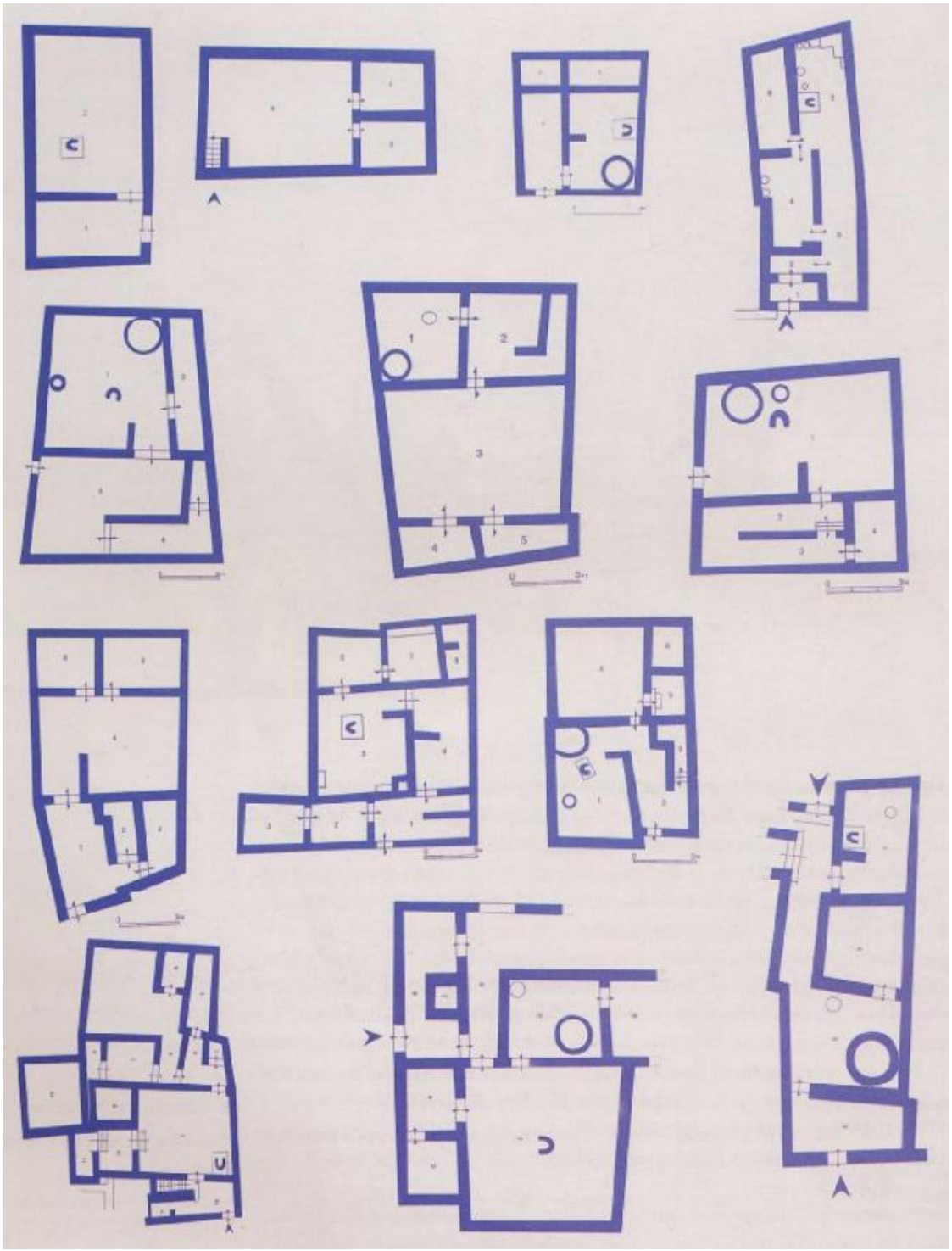

Figure 1 Layouts of houses on Level II of the excavations at Kaneš (Özgüç 2004:58.)

While Old Assyrian houses within Aššur are unexcavated, we can extrapolate more details from their archives, and comparison to contemporary Old Babylonian houses. Assyrian merchants would use their houses in both Kaneš and Aššur as a place to stockpile goods for sale, as well

as a place to conduct business meetings.[76] Consequently, the house was a vulnerable location for merchants and household robbery was common.[77] The archive and other valuables of a home were stored together in a saferoom, usually on the second floor, and this room was sealed.[78] The tablets would be sorted into boxes or baskets and labeled accordingly.[79] There were several words used for these saferooms, including *maknukum*, *maṣṣartum* and *huršum*.[80] *Maknukum* derives from the verb *kanāku*, "to seal," and must have referred to a sealed room.[81] I think it likely that *maknukum* did not refer to a specific room in the home, but any room (or possibly object) that had been sealed shut. *Maṣṣartum* was a versatile word which could also mean guardsman, garrison, detention, or watch, and it is only the Old Assyrians who used it to describe a room.[82] The *maṣṣartum* referred to a specific room within the house that held valuable objects, including silver, gold, and tablets.[83] The *maṣṣartum* was sealed.[84] Based on the number of texts ordering that items be deposited within a *maṣṣartum*, telling of seizing the contents of someone's *maṣṣartum,* or attempting to do so but finding the *maṣṣartum* empty, it was a specific room in the house that could be identified even when nothing was stored within.[85] The *huršum* was a type of kitchen or storage room that could be entered and sealed.[86] In one letter a person was detained in a *huršum*, and the *huršum* was occasionally in a separate building from the rest of the house.[87] Some houses had several different types of saferooms.[88]

If there was an area of their home with religious significance, the Assyrians did not say. Contemporary Old Babylonian houses typically had a cultic room where most important burials and cultic installations were located. This room was the least easily accessed room of home and was possibly called the *išertum*.[89] The family archives were often found in a room adjacent to the cultic room.[90] Michel looked at the rooms in which archives were found and determined that these rooms were deep within the house, far from the front entrance.[91] Assyrians kept their archives in boxes in a saferoom, and if they followed the same traditions of the Babylonians, their cultic area may have been beside or within the *maṣṣartum*-room.

A feature of Assyrian homes with particular symbolic importance was the home hearth. There was usually a fireplace in the central room in Kaneš houses, which was what Assyrians likely

[76] Michel 2023:102; TC 3 161.
[77] Michel 2023:105.
[78] Larsen 2008:82.
[79] Larsen 2008:87.
[80] Michel 2023:109.
[81] CAD M:138.
[82] CAD M:333-340.
[83] TCL 21 270.
[84] CCT 3 30.
[85] CCT 5 8b.
[86] CAD H:256.
[87] KT Hahn 23; CCT 3 28b:12.
[88] Michel 2023:117-8.
[89] Tricoli 2014:62.
[90] Tricoli 2014:48.
[91] Michel 2023:123.

meant when they referred to their home hearth.[92] The home hearth was a reoccurring emblem in Assyrian and Babylonian texts, symbolic of the family's wellbeing. The Old Babylonians would exclaim that "the home hearth has gone out" to refer to trouble in the family.[93] The Assyrians used similar references:

> "Your father's sister is dead. Our brothers say: "There is no heir. Let us take away the house ourselves." Set out and come here when you have heard the letter. They have turned your father's house into an extinguished fireplace."[94]

In this letter, death and conflict between family members have led to the house being as an extinguished hearth; in contract the lit hearth represented vitality and stability. An Assyrian incantation describes the devastation caused by the Evil Eye as so: "She dispersed the ingathered fireplace of the man's house. She brought about the ruin of the noisy household." [95] Again, the home hearth going out means the family is endangered.[96]

The Assyrian house represented the wealth and wellbeing of the family. A respectable Assyrian family should own a house, or several, that matched their status. The Assyrians had multiple words (and types of) saferooms within the home, showing the importance of protecting the goods stored within, and the threat of robbery. It is possible that the saferoom and cultic room were close to each other, in the most secure area of the house, and most difficult to access by outsiders. The house could have been constructed with religious dimensions in mind, and the central room of the house and its hearth were symbolically important. The exact physical differences between Assyrian-owned houses in Kaneš and Aššur are difficult to determine from the current evidence, but the fact that Assyrian-owned houses in Kaneš were indistinguishable from Anatolian-owned homes suggests there were architectural differences.

[92] Heffron 2022:3.
[93] AKT 11a:114.
[94] KT 6d 765:14-17.
[95] Barjamovic and Larsen 2008:147:5-6.
[96] Michel has also argued that CCT 3 25 (WAW 42 129):22-27 refers to a home hearth. The broken KT 11a 47 also references the home hearth, but little can be made of it.

3. Old Assyrian Religion

This chapter will introduce a few broad features of Old Assyrian religion that are important to understanding the particulars of Household Religion. We will start with Old Assyrian Religion in general, then examine the religious geography of Aššur and Kaneš, and finally briefly cover the relationship between worshippers and temples, particularly in the form of temple obligations.

Assyrian religion in the early Second Millennium was polytheistic with anthropomorphized gods and a large pantheon.[97] More specifically, in his work on Mesopotamian religion, Bottéro classified Mesopotamian Religion as Henotheistic, meaning they recognized the existence of many gods, but were particularly attached to only one.[98] For the Assyrians, it was the god Aššur who was always at the center of their devotion. Aššur was not a normal Mesopotamian god; he was a *numen locus,* the deification of the city, particularly of the rocky outcrop on which his temple was located. Aššur was king of the eponymous city, the human ruler only the governor (*iššiak).* Every Assyrian worshipped Aššur alongside their personal gods; he was called only Lord (*bēl*) or God (*ilum*), needing no elaboration. When listed beside other deities, he was always named first.[99] No myths about Aššur have been found. (The only major mythological text which includes Aššur is a Neo-Assyrian edition of the Babylonian epic *Enūma Eliš*, with the name of Marduk switched to Aššur when appropriate.) Similarly, Aššur had no family, when he does later acquire one, it is through his identification with Enlil.[100] At times Old Assyrians attribute personality traits to Aššur: “Let a good word come out of your mouth before the *kārum* like (those) of the god Aššur,” one writes.[101] The main characteristics attributed to Aššur in personal names which reference him was that he was a mountain, that he offered shelter and support, that he was one with the city, that he was trustworthy, and of his involvement in legal matters.[102] Lassen has recently raised that the common ‘bull-altar’ motif on Assyrian seals (see Figure 2) could depict the god Aššur, which would mean the god appears frequently on Old Assyrian seals.[103]

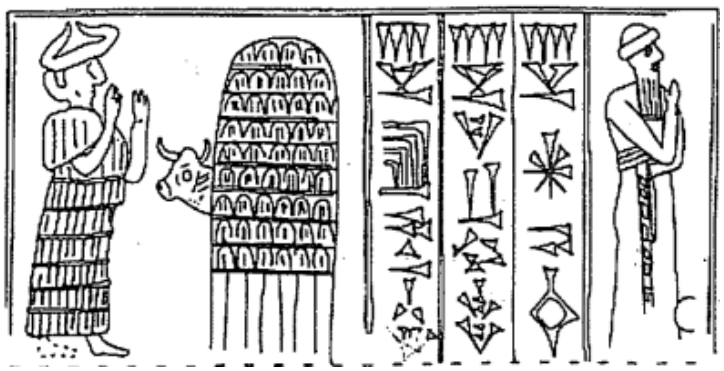

Figure 2 Seal of the God Aššur, accompanied by the 'bull-altar' motif. (Larsen 1976:128,163; Veenhof 953: 951 ff; Özgüç 2015:61.)

[97] Bottéro 2001:6.
[98] Bottéro 2001:41.
[99] Lambert 1983:83; Hirsch 1961:7.
[100] Lambert 1983:82.
[101] Kt 87/k 249b (LAPO 19 94a.)
[102] Kryszat 2021:250.
[103] Lassen 2017:180.

While Aššur was the most important Assyrian deity, other gods were popular with the Assyrians: according to a survey of Old Assyrian theophoric personal names, Aššur was significantly the most popular divine element in a name, followed in order by the gods Ištar, Suen, Adad, Anum, Kubum, Šamaš, and Enlil.[104] Approximately 45 gods total appear in personal names in the Old Assyrian Period.[105] Most of these gods were also popular in Babylonia, and their few preserved rituals often mirror ones found down South. Assyrians also worshipped deities from Anatolia and the West, and Assyrians living abroad would worship the local gods. When an Assyrian swore an oath with a foreigner, they would often swear by both Aššur and the foreigner's god. For example, an oath between an Anatolian prince and the Assyrians was conducted: "by Aššur, ^{d}IM, the Earth and the spirits of his ancestors, he raised his hand."[106] When the Assyrian merchant Pilah-Ištar divorced his Anatolian *amtum*-wife Walawala, the two divorcees and her brothers swore on Aššur, Anna, and the king of Kaneš.[107] The goddess of Kaneš, Anna, was a popular theophoric element in Assyrian names.[108] The Assyrians were pragmatic in the gods they honored, and expanded their devotion to any deities they found relevant for their needs.

Individual worshipers also had a Personal God or Family God with whom they had built a special relationship. Their Personal God would be the most important god to the worshipper after Aššur.[109] Whether the Personal God's relationship was with an individual worshipper or an entire family is debatable— while Assyrians often called their Personal God "my father's god," there were siblings who do not share the same Personal God.[110] The identity of the Personal God could be any pre-existing deity aside from Aššur. While Veenhof has claimed there is no evidence of Aššur ever being a personal/family god himself, there are a few occasions where Aššur and another god were referred to as an Assyrian's Personal Gods in plural.[111] Their relationship with their Personal God was important to the spiritual well-being of Assyrians; one Old Assyrian ritual text declared that those without Personal Gods were vulnerable to the demon Lamaštu.[112] The Personal God was sometimes invoked alongside ancestral spirits, both serving as protectors of the individual and family.[113]

3.1 Religious Geography

[104] Eidem, "In the Names of Aššur," 194.
[105] Kryszat 2021:238.
[106] FS Alp 64 (LAPO 19 87):29-35.
[107] ICK 1 32 (WAW 42 35):10-13.
[108] Kryszat 2021:241.
[109] Veenhof 2018; Hirsch 1961:35.
[110] Veenhof 2014:365.
[111] Veenhof 2014:366. For example, KT 6d 792:20-22: *IGI A-šur ù ^{d}IM i-li a-bi-ni lá-ak-ru-ba-kum*; KTS 2 52 (Innāya 65):13-15: *A-šùr il^{5}-kà ù MAR.TU il^{5}-kà KI li-id-gu^{5}-lá*; KT 4 50:22-23: *A-šùr ù I-šar-tum ili^{5} a-bi^{4}-a lu i-de^{8}-a.*
[112] BIN 4, 126 (LAOS 12 160):18-19.
[113] Veenhof 2014:365; KT 1 14:12-14; Kt 93/k 527 (Veenhof 2014:365):2-4; BIN 4 96 (WAW 42 236):18-22; Kt 91/k 139 (Veenhof 1998:123):26.

This section of the chapter will discuss the broader religious geography of the cities of Aššur and Kaneš. I use the term religious geography here for two reasons. First, it includes the natural alongside the man-made; and second, it includes religious architecture beyond merely temples. Knowledge of the broader religious geography of a city and culture can also help identify religious features of a house. The religious importance of Aššur is also worthy of consideration when thinking about the household religion of traveling merchants Aššur's importance. Could a house located outside the City ever be as religiously important as one within?

Setting that question aside, visiting temples in both Aššur and Kaneš was important for the religious practice of Assyrians. In Mesopotamian Religion, gods had a "home temple" where they were thought to reside, and the cities which housed their temples had a special relationship with their home god. These temples mirrored the layout of private homes.[114] Inside these temples, was a statue/icon that represented the god, and it was the job of priests to maintain it.[115] Old Assyrians often wrote of the importance of visiting temples. Concerned family members wrote to make sure their loved went to the temple to express proper devotion, and business partners promised to speak to the god for the sake of their correspondent. [116]

The temple which Assyrians most often spoke of visiting was the Aššur Temple, built on the highest point in the eponymous city.[117] Even for the Assyrians, the Aššur Temple was ancient, erected during the Early Dynastic Period, with even older remains beneath the foundation.[118] Early in the Old Assyrian Period, the *iššiak* Erišum reconstructed the Temple after it was destroyed in a fire, and it was probably his design the owners of our Kaneš archives knew. The Temple complex was monumental, including a Step Gate (*mušlālum*), courtyard (*qaššum*), chapel (*watmanum*), annex (*isārum*), beer house (*bīt ḫubūrē*), storehouse (*abūsum*), and interior (*kumum*).[119] This splendor was not without sacrifice for the people living in Aššur. On his self-aggrandizing inscriptions, Erišum explained how he found enough space for his monumental constructions: "With the god Aššur, my lord, standing by me, I cleared houses from the Sheep Gate to the People's Gate."[120] What happened to the people who were living in these houses, whose ancestors might have lied buried underneath, whose material wealth was secured by their home ownership? Erišum does not spare a word. The monumental project was not a single occasion: Erišum also wrote of building a temple to Adad, which, incomplete at the time of his death, was finished by Ikunūm, and a few generations later, Šamšī-Adad erected a temple dedicated to the gods Adad and Anu.[121]

The only Old Assyrian temple that has been excavated in Aššur or abroad is the Old Ištar temple. The Old Ištar Temple is one of the oldest known buildings in Aššur, built during the Ur III

[114] Bottéro 2001:115.
[115] Bottéro 2001:126.
[116] KT 8 253:16; KT 3 111:20-24; KTS 1 1b (WAW 42 229):16-22.
[117] Larsen 2015:89.
[118] Bär 2003:38.
[119] Hirsch 1961:48-49; RIMA 1 A.0.33.1.
[120] RIMA 1 A.0.33.2:33-39; A.0.33.11 is similar.
[121] RIMA 1 A.0.33.15; Larsen 1976:60.

period. Incredibly, a single vessel found within the temple dates to 3000 BCE.[122] The Old Ištar Temple resembled contemporary Sumerian temples, indicative of religious communication between the Assyrians and their southern neighbors. Within its ruins, archaeologists discovered some of the oldest evidence for Assyrian religion. These artifacts include: a stone plaque taken from Nuzi and inscribed with a dedication to Ištar from an otherwise unknown king;[123] a copper spear, dedicated to the god Be'al-SI.SI by a servant of the King of Kiš;[124] and an Old Assyrian woman dedicated an inscribed bronze vulva so that the goddess might protect her family.[125] In the Old Akkadian dedications, we see cross-cultural religious influence, entwined worship and warfare, and the *iššiak* casting himself as servant to the gods. We also see the reciprocal relationship between deity and worshipper characteristic of Mesopotamian religion, gifts given to the gods with the expectation that this will earn their favor.

In Kaneš, like Aššur, the worshippers physically looked up to the gods. Assyrians wrote of going up to visit the temples in Kaneš, suggesting they were on the city mound, and in the distance, the deified mountain Aškašepa, the highest peak in Anatolia, towered above.[126] Tablets currently published do not offer any evidence that the temples of Kaneš owned large plots of land. Local Anatolian gods with one or more attested priests (*kumrum*) in Kaneš included Anna, the goddess of the city, Ḫikiša, Ilalianta, Kubabat, the lord of battle, Nisaba, Pirwa, the Storm god, the Storm God of the head, and the Sun God.[127] Only temples to Anna and Nipas were mentioned in the archives.[128] Two presumed temples have been uncovered by archeologists, both on the city mound. These Anatolian buildings do not architecturally resemble contemporary Assyrian temples, which the Assyrians might have noticed from the exterior of the building, or if they had the opportunity, the interior.[129]

3.2 Temple Obligations

One of the most pertinent religious matters for Assyrians in their surviving archives is their financial relationship with the temples. Financial obligations to religious institutions could have a significant impact on the daily life of Assyrians, who might have had to adjust their own budgets and lifestyles to accommodate these payments. Old Assyrian temples were filled with riches, such as gold, silver, and tin, as well as religious artefacts left by worshippers.[130] Assyrian's temple obligations had a significant effect on their household: wealth that could have been spent elsewhere went to the temple, failure to satisfy the temple led to the house coming under spiritual attack, and items meant for the temple were often stored within homes. The ways that temples acquired and distributed this wealth are where they are best attested in our sources.

[122] Larsen 2015:87.
[123] RIMA 1 A.0.1001.
[124] RIMA 1 A.0.1002.
[125] RIMA 1.0.035.x2001, ex. 01 (WAW 42 122.)
[126] Gilan 2024:64; Larsen 2015:37.
[127] Dercksen 2004b:139.
[128] Dercksen 204b:139.
[129] Larsen 2015:36-37.
[130] Hirsch 1961:49.

Letters mention the *maṣṣartum* of Aššur, the treasury which was paid into by merchants.[131] Other letters might imply that silver was necessary to pray at the temple.[132] Large temples were businesses unto themselves, often possessing agricultural fields, domesticated animals, and workshops.[133] In addition to their own produce, temples stocked their treasuries with the gifts and *ikribū,* usually translated as votive offerings, of worshippers.[134]

Ikribū comes from *karābum*, "to pray," and was probably a loan or investment from the temples to Assyrian merchants.[135] These were long-term loans, possibly even inherited, and they could be held by women.[136] While these loan contracts are most often seen made with the temple of Aššur, most temples in Aššur and the surrounding area seem to have participated. The amount and form of the *ikribū* was inconsistent, while silver and gold were the most common form of wealth, the *ikribū* could also be in the form of lapis lazuli, statues, acorns, foreign fabrics, and so on.[137] The *ikribū* could include items practical for the temple, such as garments for the priests.[138] Merchants could hold *ikribū* from several different temples concurrently.[139] Unsurprisingly, not returning the offering could anger the gods.[140] Temples need not rely on divine anger, Assyrians could also have their possessions be seized by officials from temples or the city over their debt.[141] Temples did not even need a person to be in debt to seize their possessions: in Kt ck 446, private homes in Kaneš were searched for gold to give to the god Adad; Dercksen theorized this was a regular event.[142] On another occasion, Lā-qēp claimed that the debt of his *ikribū* has harmed his father's house and soul, and Aššur would be displeased if the debt from his *ikribū* continued to harm the family home.[143]

Along with the *ikribū* is the *niqi'um*, which can refer to either a sacrifice to the gods or a gift to another person, such as a gift to a neighboring king.[144] Sometimes whether the *niqi'um* is meant for a human or a god is ambiguous in the texts.[145] There are texts where small gifts of silver were given (*niqi'um*) to long lists of people, including women and children. Other times one of the many listed gifts is specified to have been given on the occasion when someone visits a temple.[146] Dercksen speculated these gifts were so the receiver could make sacrifices to the

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[131] TC 1 15 (OAA 1 48.)
[132] KT 4 63 (WAW 42 238); KT 6c 526.
[133] Veenhof 2004:551.
[134] Dercksen 1997:77.
[135] Dercksen 1997:77.
[136] Dercksen 1997:85; RA 59 34 (WAW 42 261.)
[137] Dercksen 1997:80; VS 26 11 (LAPO 19 114.)
[138] TPAK 1 211.
[139] TC 3 207 (WAW 42 121); KT 6e 1060 is a short memorandum with includes *ikribū* intended for Amurrum, Adad, Šarra-matēn, Suen, "^{d}KAL *ša ṭá-ra-dim*," ^{d}*e-lim*, Ea, Mišarum, Lamassum, Anna, Pabilsag, and Aššur.
[140] TC 3 85 (LAPO 19 90):22-24; TC 3 35 (WAW 42 246):15-19.
[141] KT 11a 71; ATHE 35 (OAA 1, 69.)
[142] Dercksen 2014:89.
[143] Kt n/k 1192 (Çeçen and Sever 2000:170-173):17-24, 35-38.
[144] OAA 1 11:15.
[145] For example: KT 3 105:8-14.
[146] KT 6e 1129:7-10; CCT 5 35d:9-12.

gods, possibly for a festival. Supporting this, in one text a woman is reported to be disappointed that she was not given a *niqi'um* during the *naṣbitum* festival in Aššur.[147] In another text, a long list of *niqi'um* gifts includes a single line where the gift is explicitly given for the sake of a sacrifice.[148] That the rest of the silver given in this text is not mentioned to be for the sake of sacrifice could imply they were not meant for that purpose: why specify one, and not the others? In one case, a cup worth an exceptional 15 shekels is given to Aššur-mālik as his *niqi'um.*[149] The phrasing of this suggests his *niqi'um* was something that required the cup, instead of the cup itself. Giving gifts to others for religious purposes is also attested in the letters.[150] Along with the gifts given when the recipient visited a temple, sometimes they were directly given to the gods. For example, KT 5 56, an archival document recording the whereabouts of a merchant's wool, included gifts (*niqi'um*) for the gods Suen and Anna.[151] Sometimes, a *niqi'um* could be made to a god to receive a blessing (*karābum*).[152]

Niqi'um are also found within the travel expenses; Assyrian merchants were often on the move, and sheep were sacrificed before, and perhaps during, their travels. Merchants would exchange gifts or silver, usually 1 to 2 shekels, to purchase these sheep.[153] This gift was meant to be reciprocal, and merchants would complain when they gifted silver for a sacrifice and a similar gift wasn't later given to them in turn.[154] One accounting text seems to list an astonishing 30 sheep as *niqi'um*![155] In another text, an Assyrian complains that 2 of his sheep were stolen and used for an offering.[156] He complains that he was not even given the food from this sacrifice, which suggests the sheep were normally eaten after being sacrificed.

While these payments are given to institutions and deities outside of the home, I consider the financial impact on Assyrians and their families to make these payments a less obvious, but no less notable, aspect of Household Religion.

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[147] KT 3 32; Dercksen 2011:63: "'(Our mother) says: Why do you (pl.) not give me a sacrifice during the *naṣbutum*."
[148] KT 6e 1129:30-31; AMMY 1990 104a (Dercksen 2011:footnote 10.)
[149] CCT 5 35d:3: *a-na ni-qé-šu a-dí-in.*
[150] KT 6e 1044.
[151] KT 5 56:8-13.
[152] CCT 4 6f (OAA 1 117.)
[153] Dercksen 2011:61-62; KT 6e 1130:13-17: *2 GÍN KÙ.BABBAR a-na PUZUR$_4$-a-šùr i-nu-mì a-na a-lim^{ki} i-li-ku ni-qí-i-šu a-dí-in*.
[154] Dercksen 2011:62; KTH 13; KT 6e 997.
[155] TC 3, 177.
[156] KT 9 18:34-36.

4. Religious Space in Houses

4.1 Assyrian Home Temples

This section will investigate the evidence for Old Assyrian Home Temples, here defined as an area in the house set aside for the gods where the residents of the household could worship and communicate with their gods. This could take the form of either a section or installation of a larger room, or a room dedicated solely to religious worship. We will first discuss what we might expect to find in such an installation and then look at texts which might be indicative of such an installation. We will be particularly focused on what city these temples were located in, their size, their shared characteristics, and what we can determine about their use.

Archeologically speaking, there is currently little archeological evidence for cultic installations or home altars in the excavated areas of Assyrian homes in Kaneš.[157] Stone steles have been found in level 1b of the *kārum*, but there is little to suggest they stood in Assyrian-owned residences.[158] Assyrians would sometimes express concern about, or list, the contents of their house without mentioning anything that would obviously suggest the presence of a Home Temple or other religious artefacts, but this does not mean they were not present.[159] Assyrians also sometimes temporarily stored items that were intended to be given to a temple in their private homes, and while these items are clearly what would be expected to be found within a temple, their presence does not mean the house they were stored in had a Home Temple.[160] In KT 8 263 Šāt-Tašmētim wrote to her brothers Puzur-Anna and Šu-Suen, after their father's house in Aššur had been robbed, and asked them to come to her and help. She exclaimed: "If you love your ancestral god get moving and come here!"[161] Šāt-Tašmētim does not mention religious artifacts, but the robbery seemed to have harmed the family cult.

Determining whether an item is a religious artifact is difficult; one way is by the utility of the object, however not everything nonutilitarian is religious.[162] For example, a piece of art or a child's toy would be neither utilitarian, nor necessarily religious. Another way is by comparison:

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[157] Dercksen 2015:50; Veenhof 2014:368.

[158] The stone stele in Kaneš are discussed in Dercksen 2015. These stele were found in multiple homes in Kaneš, and one had a trough where libations could be poured. There is no evidence for such stele in Aššur, and they might have been a precursor to the Hittite *huwaši*-stones.

[159] RA 60 133 (WAW 42 57):38–41; CCT 4 40b + 41a (WAW 42 139):9-14; KT 6d 735 is a good example of a merchant only caring about the tablets in his house.

[160] This is likely the case in CCT 3 25 (WAW 42 129):22-32: "Concerning the linen and the belt for the god Amurrum that the son of Šu-Kūbum brought here, they are in his house;" and TC 3 106 (WAW 42 245):5-11: "Let your report come here whether Pūšu-kēn brought you or not 2 bull (figurines) for Ištar and Išḫara (and) 1 *kāsum*-vessel for Išḫara under my seal;" ATHE 8 (WAW 42 262): A temple collection for the god Bēlum in the house of Ali-ahum; TPAK 1 210: temple collection of Šarra-matēn to the house of Azu, son of Puzur-Aššur.

[161] KT 8 263:30-32, the phrase "li-BE-ti abikunu" is difficult, Veenhof chose to translate it as a combination of "ili+bētim," but this translation presents problems in other texts.

[162] Albertz and Schmitt 2012:59.

when similar objects are found within an explicitly religious space, or the item is surrounded by more obviously religious artefacts. While there are texts which mention explicitly religious items, evidence of religious artifacts in the home is not evidence for a home temple. Knowing what religious artifacts were in Assyrian temples could help determine what items could have been in Assyrian Home Temples. The best source for the contents of smaller Assyrian temples is SUP 7, a letter which documented a robbery of the temple of Aššur in the *kārum* in Uršu:

> [1-3] Say to the *kārum* of Kaneš: Thus says the *kārum* of Uršu: [4-5] In eternity it never happened (before)! [6-8] Thieves entered the temple of Aššur, and the golden *šamšum* [9-11] on the chest of Aššur, and the dagger of Aššur, [11-12] and the *mišurum*, they tore out. [13-17] The ax (*kalappum*), nails (*samrūtum*) and the *katappum*-containers were taken away. The temple was plundered; they left nothing.[163]

This temple held multiple divine weapons, vessels, and a *šamšum*-emblem (which will be discussed later) on the divine statue. Alongside this text, Assyrian devotional scenes on stamp-seals included offering tables, incense burners, and the Anatolian "fruit stand altars."[164]

There are a few shorter texts which are worth considering, before we dive into the longer texts which might suggest Home Temples. One is ArAn 10 38, which says: "I gave 1 shekel of silver to Buzua for his offering when Išḫara was placed in his house."[165] This short tablet probably refers to a statue of Išḫara which was transported between two private homes. The offering may describe a ritual made at the Home Temples. A similar ritual might be seen in CCT 4 6f:

1. *a-na a-šur-na-da*
2. *qí-bi$_4$-ma um-ma i-dí*-Ištar-*ma*
3. 5 GÍN KÙ.GI
4. *pá-ša-la-am*
5. *ku-nu-ki-a i-ku-pì-a*
6. DUMU *da-a-a*
7. *na-áš-a-kum*
8. *a-bi$_4$ a-ta*
9. *ni-iq-a-am*
10. IGI *i-li-kà*
11. *i-qí-ma qú-ru-ba-am*[166]

> [1-2] To Aššur-nādā, thus says Iddin-Ištar: [3-6] Ikūn-pīa, son of Dāya, [7] is bringing 5 shekels of p. gold under my seals to you. [9-10] Father, bring an offering before your god, [11] and pray for me.

This text described offerings made to an unnamed personal god. While Aššur-nādā's personal god could have a temple he is meant to visit, perhaps this referred to a ritual conducted before the statue of a god within Aššur-nādā's house.[167] If so, it would resemble the offering in ArAn 10 38. Worth mentioning are KT 3 77, which mentions 5 *guršum* (probably a type of furniture; according to CAD, a "peg" in lexical lists, and in the NA Period a type of room or a religious

[163] SUP 7.
[164] Mallowan 1993:385, citing Nimet Özgüç 1965.
[165] ArAn 10 38.
[166] CCT 4 6f.
[167] Veenhof 2014:368.

offering) under seal with household belongings and KT 11a 88**,** which mentions a *nappašum* (incense burner) made of wood and alongside barley and oil.[168]

Several interesting texts are found belonging to a group of family members. Ummī-ṭābat's sons wrote to her about the contents of the house after their father "against the will of the god, went to his fate."[169] The important objects were:

> "Protect it, be it cups of silver, the bronze objects, the *supannum*-vessels, or the tables, or a *qablītum*-vessels.[170]

One of her sons, Ennam-Ištar wrote two letters to her about objects kept in his *tamalakkum*-box. Despite the similarity of the letters, they must refer to different occasions. In KT 9a 71, he asks her to sell the items to release them from their debts, and in KT 9a 72, to entrust them to a man named Nanalī. If these letters are from around the same occasion, the objects in KT 9a 71 were what he chose to sell in a time of financial difficulty, and KT 9a 72, what he chose to keep.

> [3-6] There, open my *tamalakkum*-box, and take 3 cups and the small toggle-pin.[171]

KT 9a 72: "[4-5] Open my *tamalakkum*-box. [5-11] A toggle-pin with golden ornaments, a *nannaratum*, a cup of Šumiš, and the scepter of Šumiš." [172]

> 6. Albayrak and Erol theorize that *na-na-rá-tám* might relate to the word *nannaru*, which means "illuminating," and was used as an epithet for Ištar and Suen, and might have been a religious artefact.[173]
>
> 9 and 11. The phrase "*ša a-na* Šu-*mì*-iš" in lines 9 and 11 might refer to a person named Anašumiš, Šumi-Ištar**,** or Šumiš. However, this might also refer to a hitherto unattested material or deity.

Ennam-Ištar had a *tamalakkum*-box which holds specific cups, toggle-pins, and a scepter. These objects served to materially store wealth, as evidenced by their sale in KT 9a 71. Tables and these types of vessels were used as religious artifacts, and the silver and bronze are broad enough to contain further relevant items. Assyrian Aššur-liṭṭul's belongings included:

> "1 *kāsum*-cup, its *kippum* (handle or circumference) made of gold; a sheath, its weight is 15 shekels of gold; 2 1/3 minas 6 shekels of *ṭīrum*-silver."[174]

Weapons are seen among the temple artefacts in SUP 7, however there is no evidence in this text that these were religious artifacts. Unfortunately, this ambiguity remains in most records of Assyrian household items.

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[168] KT 3 77:28-32; CAD G 141; KT 11a 88:4-7: (With) the 1 mina of silver of you brought to us, I will possess barley, I will possess oil. I will possess a wooden *a-na-pí-ší-šu-[nu]*.

[169] KT 9a 75:19-21.

[170] KT 9a 75:10-13

[171] KT 9a 71:3-6: *a-ma-kam ta-ma-la-ki-a pu-ṭù-ri-ma* 3 *kà-sà-tim ù tù-dí-tám ṣa-ḫa-ar-tám le-qé-ma ki-ma.*

[172] KT 9a 72:4-11: *ta-ma-lá-ki-a* [5] *pí-tí-ma tù-dí-tám* [6] *ša ki-ru-a-tim* [7] *na-na-rá-tám* [8] *kà-sà-am* [9] *ša a-na* Šu-*mì-iš* [10] *ú ḫa-ṭá-am* [11] *ša a-na* Šu-*mì-iš.*

[173] AKT 9a:118.

[174] Donbaz 2004:186:'5-'8; CAD K:399.

4.1.1 Home Temple 1

Šu-Ištar was a priest of Ištar who had homes in both Aššur and Kaneš. This potential home temple was located in his Kaneš home, which was inhabited by, at various times, his *amtum*-wife Watniašwe, his sons Nimar-Ištar, Aššur-imitti, and Aššur-rabi, and their servants and slaves.[175] Šu-Ištar also had a wife and daughters who lived in Aššur.[176] After his death, the house was inherited by his son, Aššur-mitti, a priest of Sin.[177]

> "1-3 To Šu-Ištar, the priest of Ištar, this is what Aššur-lamassi, Nimar-Ištar and Adad-rabi said: 4-12 The day the son of Aplum arrived we chased Aššur-rabi and the daughter of Inah-il out of your house in accordance with your written order; then, we brought your *amtum*-wife Watniašwe and your son Aššur-imitti into your house and she is in possession of the attributes of priesthood.
> 13-19 Aššur-rabi went to the colony and said: "My father sent me a message to leave the house. Select for me five independent traders (*bēru*) so that I can entrust the goddess and her jewelry (*šukuttum*) and leave."
> 19-22 The colony selected five independent traders for him and he entrusted the goddess and her jewelry (*šukuttum*); she is fine. 23-30 […] the jewelry of the [goddess], be it silver or gold [or meteoric iron] or *sādum*-gold ... – the selected men wrote (it on) a tablet and gave that to your *amtum*-wife. A second tablet, a copy of it, is at the Office of the Colony.
> 31-35 A dispute arose among your *amtum*-wife, Nimar-Ištar, Aššur-imitti and Ewrimuša, who are in possession of your house, and the taboo (*asakkum*) of the goddess has been heard. 36-40 They went to the colony and the colony sent the same men as previously selected to take care of the goddess; they checked the jewelry (*šukuttum*) of the goddess (with this result):
> 40-50 12 earrings of meteoric iron; 1 ½ shekel, a (representation of a) pudendum (*uru'um*) of gold; 2 beads (*zimizzum*) of gold of two-thirds of a shekel; half a mina of silver: toggle-pins; 17 stars (*kakkabum*) of silver; a mace (*kakkum*) of 5/6 shekels of silver; (beads of) either *sādum*-gold or lapis lazuli weighing 35 shekels, (forming) the string of beads (*šukuttum*) on her chest – all this is lost. 50-51 The colony cross-examined [them] and they replied: "Yes, we took (it).""[178]
>
> Line 12. Attributes of priesthood: (*ku-um-ru-tám*).
> Line 35. *Asakkum*, or "taboo" can refer to consecrated items, in this case, the goddess's jewelry.[179]

Šu-Ištar's house in Kaneš was raided to settle his debt, but none of the items seized are the above objects.[180] Dercksen theorized that these objects might not appear as seized for Šu-

[175] Dercksen 2015:44.
[176] AKT 11a:40.
[177] AKT 11a:44.
[178] Dercksen 2015:38-39.
[179] Dercksen 2015:42, citing CAD A/2 327a. The *asakkum* is also found in KT 11a 119:12-17.
[180] Dercksen 2015:45, citing Kt 88/k 972, Kt 88/k 971, and Kt 88/k 970.

Ištar's personal debts, because they might have belonged for the entire colony.[181] There is no evidence of a temple for Ištar in Kaneš, however, there was one for Išḫara, who might have been considered equivalent.[182] Dercksen suggested that Ištar's *huppum*-emblem, absent in this text, might have been part of the *šukuttum*.[183]

4.1.2 Home Temple 2

KT 6b 468 was found in Ennam-Aššur's archive in Kaneš and documents the contents in a house that belonged to a man identified only as Kura's son. This text was previously treated by Larsen and Barjamovic in 2008 and revisited by Larsen in 2013. As Ennam-Aššur lived in Kaneš, this house was most likely located there. The items and their formation described in this text are clearly religious in nature. However, not all the items listed were likely part of this Home Temple, the later objects such as the wax tablet and the accounting record were probably unrelated. The reason Kura's son's house was opened is unclear, but the items here do not seem to have been seized, merely documented. Perhaps Kura's son has died, and this is recording the property that should be transferred to Kura.

1. *[… p]á-šu-ru ša IGI i-li$^{?}$-šu*
2. *1 ku-sí-um ša IGI*
3. *A-šùr 1 kà-sú-um*
4. *ša IGI ša-ru-ma$^{!}$-té-en*
5. *2 ŋa-WA-ru ša-ṭá-áb-té-en*
6. *1 kà-sú-um ša KÙ.BABBAR*
7. *ú ší-ku-tù-um*
8. *ša IGI ú-ku-ur*
9. *5 kà-ku-ú*
10. *2 qá-áb-li-a-tum*
11. *1 li-bu-um ša KUG.BABBAR*
12. *1 ni-kà-sú ú 1 ṭup-pu-um*
13. *ša is-ku-ri-im*
14. *[…] ša DUMU Ku-ra*
15. *[i-nu]-mì e-kál-lu-šu*
16. *[En]-um-A-šur ip-té-ú*
17. *[…]-at Ku-ra*
18. *[… zi]-ib*
19. *[IGI] Ku-ku-wa*
20. *[IGI Ma]-nu-ki-ì-lí-a*[184]

[181] Dercksen 2015:46.
[182] Dercksen 2015:45 and 47.
[183] Dercksen 2015:46.
[184] KT 6b 468.

[1-4] […] tables before his gods. 1 chair before Aššur. 1 *kāsum*-vessel before Šarru-matēn. [5-8] 2 *hawiru*-vessels of salt, 1 silver *kāsum*-vessel, and a *šíkkutum* before Ukur. [9-10] 5 weapons, 2 *qablītum*-vessels, [11] 1 "heart" of silver, [12-14] 1 account[?], and 1 wax tablet. All of this is of Kura's son. [15-18] When Ennum-Aššur opened his house, they left [...] Kura. [19-20] Witnessed by Kukuwa and Mannum-kī-iliā.

Line 5. Kouwenberg's Old Assyrian vocabulary lists *ḫawārum* as a type of container, and Barjamovic and Larsen also tentatively translated it as such.[185]
Line 7. *Šikkutum:* either a flask or a string beads.[186]
Line 8. Ukur was the vizier of Nergal. He will appear again in another potential Home Temple text.
Line 12. In the Old Assyrian Period, *nikkassu* likely referred to a merchant's calculating device.[187] In the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Periods, it could refer to property, either in wealth or as part of an estate. In the Old Babylonian texts TCL 10 4a: 30 and TCL 11 173: 3, the *nikkassu* was an emblem of Šamaš.[188] While Larsen suggested this *nikkassu* was an emblem, I think it was more likely the first option in this text, more related to the wax tablet than the earlier religious artefacts.
Line 17. Dercksen suggested this could be Kura's wife [a-ša]-at or Kura's amtum-wife [a-ma]-at, in which case, she was the one who left the artefacts behind ([té]-zi-ib) in Line 18.

4.1.3 Home Temple 3

Kt 90/k 504 comes from the mostly unpublished archive of Ikuppi-Aššur in Kaneš. This text was previously translated in 2023 by Çeçen and Kahya in "Kutsal Nesneler: Kült Eşyalarının Listelendiği Bir Kültepe Tableti (Kt 90/k 504)."

1. *[… pá]-šu-ru ra-bi-ú-tum*
2. *[š]a IGI : i-le-e : Ú-ku-ur*
3. *[s]à-ma-lu-um ša ta-as-kà-ri-nim*
4. *ku-sí-um ù sí-kà-tum ra-bi^{4}-a-tum*
5. *ša [Ú]-ku-u[r] 2 pá-šu-ru*
6. *š[a I]GI A-[n]a : 2 ṣà-pu-um*
7. *[… š]a sà-ma-lá-tum*
8. *[… r]a$^{?}$-bi-tum SIG$_{5}$-tum*
9. *[… s]í-im-tum*
10. *[…]-um sú-sú-lu-um*
11. *[s]a lu-a-ší-im : 2 ta-ha-ni-nu*
12. *[ṣ]í-li-a-nu ša KÁ DINGIR-lim*

[185] Barjamovic and Larsen 2008:153; Kouwenberg 2019:148.
[186] AKT 6b:276.
[187] Dercksen NABU 2015:note 9.
[188] Kouwenberg 2019:162; CAD N:223-230.

13. *[…] ta-ra-áb-zi-nu*
14. *2? Ku-ur-ta-lu : pí-ri-ku-um*
15. *ša A-na : ta-ma-lá-ku-um a-na*
16. *[…] 2 e-šu : qá-áb-li-a-tum*
17. *[…]-ir-šu-um ṣa-he-er-tum*
18. *[p]á-al-za-ha-nu : 2 e-ṣú-ú*
19. *[…]-ú-e : ki-nu-ma: 2 qú-pu-ú*
20. *[… sà-m]a-lá-tum lá ša*
21. *[…]-tim*
22. *[…]-lu-um : 1 ku-sí-um*
23. *[it-qú]-ru-um? ša e-ṣí-im*
24. *[a-na] 10-e-šu : ta-ma-lá-ku-ú*
25. *[ša] ṭup-pè-e : ku-nu-ku-a*[189]

1-2 […] large tables before the gods; Ukur. 3-5 A boxwood *samālu*-vessel, a chair, and large flasks (*sí-kà-tum*) of Ukur. 5-7 2 tables before Anna. 2 *sappum*-bowls, [....] of *samālum*-vessels. 8 […] large, rare 9 […] *simtu*-object.10-11 A *sussulu*-chest of garbage? […] 2 *tahaninnu?* 12 Envelopes of the Gate of the God. 13 […] *tarabzinu?* 14-16 2 *kurtalu*-vessels, a *piriku*-symbol of Anna, a *tamalakkum*-box, 16 2 *qablītum*-vessels, 17 a small […] 18 *palzahannu*-pedestals? 2 wooden 19 […] *kinuma*? 2 *quppu*-boxes, 20 [....] *samālum*-vessels without 21-22 […] 1 chair.23-25 A wooden [spoon/ladle] and 10 *tamalakkum*-boxes with tablets under my seals.

Line 4. *Sikkâtum* is nail/peg in Kouwenberg's Old Assyrian dictionary.[190]
Line 9. This is the first attestation of the *simtu* in Kültepe texts.[191]
Lines 10-11. The *sussulu* was a chest meant to store food. Çeçen and Kahya think "*lu-a-ší-im*" was derived from the verb *la'āšu* (to dirty) and that *tahaninnu* was an Anatolian loan word.[192] It could also be related to the word *taḫḫû* (substitute).[193]
Line 12. Çeçen and Kahya theorized that the line referencing the "tablets of the gate of the god" meant that the location where the artefacts were stored in this text was also where the artifacts for the oaths taken at the gate of the god were stored.[194]
Line 13. *Tarabzinu* is unknown.
Line 14. Çeçen and Kahya think *kurtalu* was related to the Hittite word *kurtal/kurtalli,* which meant "a woven container, basket, fence, box, or chest."
Line 14. *Pirikku* is a "divine symbol," and was also part of the Old Babylonian lexicon.[195] *Pirikku* also appear in BIN 6, 97, İnnāya 149, and CCT 4, 43a.

189 Kt 90/k 504 (Çeçen and Kahya 2023:95-96.)
190 Kouwenberg 2019:167.
191 Çeçen and Kahya 2023:97.
192 Çeçen and Kahya 2023:98.
193 CAD T:49.
194 Çeçen and Kahya 2023:99.
195 CAD P:397.

Line 18. *Palzahannu* could relate to the Hittite word *palzaha/palzahha/palzašha*, which meant “wooden pedestal, base, statue pedestal.”[196]
Line 19. *Quppu*-boxes were sometimes used for donations at temples.[197]
Line 19. *Kinuma* is difficult. *Kânu* means to be reliable, true, or permanent. *Kanānu* means to twist, coil. A *g/kannu* is a wooden rack, a small container, or a fetter.[198] In this case, *kinuma* is likely a verb describing an item that was in the broken part of the tablet.

4.1.4 Home Temple 4

The text Kt b/k 93+167 was found in the archive of Amur-Aššur, which unfortunately has not yet been studied in-depth.[199] Kt b/k 93+167 was published recently by Erol and describes potentially cultic objects that were delivered to Assyrian Puzur-Aššur. [200]

> “[1-15] 1 mina 6 2/3 šeqel [ağırlığında[?]] *emūqum*-nesnesi; […] *zimizzu* boncukları; *HA-ZA-buzatan*-nesneleri, onların ağırlığı 18 1/6 šeqeldir. 16 ½ šeqel (ağırlığında) hematit taşından kadeh; 1 mina (ağırlığında) kuş (biçimli) kadeh; 1 mina 10 šeqel (ağırlığında) yay; ahşap kısmıyla birlikte 1 mina 15 šeqel (ağırlığında) *gubgubu*-eşyası; 1 mina 59 šeqel (ağırlığında) boğa başı biçimli kadeh; (kabza) topuzu meteor demiri ve altından bir büyük hançer [……] [1’-4’] İki […] yüzük, onların ağırlığı 2 šeqel [… …..] 12 šeqel onun ağırlığı; toplam 4 yüzük, onların ağırlığı 10 šeqeldir. [5’-6’] (Bütün bunları) Puzur-Aššur’a teslim ettiler.”[201]

Line 2. *Emūqum* usually referred to power or an army, but here, was an object. The *emūqum*-object occurs in other Assyrian texts.[202]
Lines 7-8 and 13. These lines have a *kāsum*-vessel of a bird, and of a bull. These must be rhyton, which archeologists have found in number in Kültepe, but have not been attested in any other Assyrian texts.[203]
Line 9. The bow (*tilpānum*) is not seen in other Old Assyrian texts, but in the broader Mesopotamian sources, it could serve as a divine symbol.[204]
Line 10. The *gubgubu*-object, not otherwise attested in the Old Assyrian archives, was an ornament of precious stone.[205]
Lines 14-15: A knob made of gold and meteoritic iron, here on the hilt of a dagger.[206]

[196] Çeçen and Kahya 2023:100.
[197] Çeçen and Kahya 2023:100.
[198] CAD K:142, 154, 159.
[199] Erol 2022:316.
[200] Erol 2022:315.
[201] Kt b/k 93+167 (Erol 2022:316-317.)
[202] Erol 2022:316.
[203] Erol 2022:319.
[204] Erol 2022:319.
[205] Erol 2022:319, citing CAD G:122b.
[206] Erol 2022:317.

4.4.5 Home Temple 5

This text was first published by Smith as CCT 2, 36a in 1924 and re-examined in 2001 by Michel as LAPO 19, 301. CCT 2, 36a is a letter between Assyrian merchant Pūšu-kēn, who lived in Kaneš, and his wife Lamassī who lived in Aššur. Pūšu-kēn and Lamassī are both well documented, and the objects described in this letter are not found in any other accounts of their property. Most intriguing here is the table of Anna, which draws comparison to the tables found in the above texts. However, this text is the least convincing of the potential Home Temples.

> "[1-2] Ainsi (parle) Pūšu-kēn: dis à Lamassī.
> [3-8] Dān-Aššur t'apporte 1 mine 15 sicles d'argent dro<its d'entrée> en sus, taxe de consignation réglée à mon sceau, soit pour les quelques étoffes de Šūbultum qu'elle m'a envoyées: ainsi ton argent t'aura été totalement versé. [9-26] 20 mines de cuivre de bonne qualité representant les offrandes votives (du dieu) Bēlum, 2 bols-*supānum* de bronze, 14 autres pièces dans un récipient-*mašqaltum*, des noix pour moitié intactes, pour moitié *pour (faire) de l'huile*, un autel du (dieu) Ana, du lin, 5 vêtements de prêtre à la façon de Talhad d'une valeur de 1/3 mine d'argent, (montant pour des) bracelets, ou une ceinture pour le serviteur, leur poids étant de 2/3 mine 2 ½ sicles, en outre cet enfant et la servante, tout cela, Dān-Aššur te (le) conduit. Je t'en prie, tu ne dois pas livrer l'enfant à quiconque, il doit grandir à l'intérieur de la maison.
> [26-33] Lorsque Dān-Aššur repartira par ici, remets à Dān-[Aššur] ses bracelets et la ceinture en plus du 1/3 mine d'argent que je lui avais donné, et au total, qu'il effectue des achats pour une mi[ne] d'argent (et) qu'il (les) fasse sortir pour moi (de la Ville d'Aššur)." [207]
> Line 11. *Mašqaltum* could mean payment, here Michel translated it as container. [208]
> Line 13. A *tassakkum*-vessel, previously seen in Old Babylonian texts and associated with oil.[209]
> Line 14. Literally, "a table of Anna."
> Line 15. The *epattu*-garments appear a few times in the Old Assyrian archives and were also from Talhad in CCT 1 32 and OIP 27, 62. In later periods the garments are later thought to be sacred because of resemblance to the Hebrew *ʾēpōḏ* (אֵפוֹד) and Syriac *peḏtā*.[210]

4.5.6 Discussion of Home Temples

The most common element in these texts are tables and chairs placed before the gods, but unfortunately tables and chairs are very common pieces of furniture, and we cannot determine

[207] CCT 2 36a (LAPO 19 301.)
[208] LAPO 19:429; Kouwenberg 2019:158.
[209] LAPO 19:430.
[210] CAD E:183, citing Brockelmann Lexicon Syriacum:557b.

the presence of other potential home temples from their inclusion.[211] Indeed, tables are often used as representative of evert feature within a house, even in contracts. For example: "Ikuppiya has bought the house of Ababa for 2 minas of silver. Neither furniture, nor a chair, nor a table, (nor) anything else shall be [taken out]."[212] Similarly, one inheritance instructs to: "Protect them, whether they are cups of silver, the bronze items, the *supannum*-vessels, the tables, or the *qablītum*-vessels."[213]

That said, there are a few suspicious references to the furniture in the broader archive: in KT 11a 17, tables used as a pledge, and CCT 4 1b includes a quality table worth 10 shekels.[214] Tables are also a common element in Assyrian religious art: the Hatched Table was commonly seen before gods in devotion scenes on seals, and on a figurine mould excavated in level 2 of the *kārum* in Kaneš.[215] Sometimes the table had four legs, two curled in on each other, usually the table was depicted as small enough for only a single vessel. The chair the god sat upon while receiving worshippers was usually a backless stool, also hatched.[216] In one case, the god is depicted standing on top of the Hatched Table.[217] In Figures 3 and 4 you can see depictions of an offering table in Assyrian seals. The table is small and round, standing between the worshipper and a seated deity, and covered with offerings. In Figure 3, a bird, perhaps a rhyton, is on top of the offerings. In the texts here, tables were found before "his gods" in KT 6b 468; large tables before the gods and two tables before Anna in Kt 90/k 504; CCT 2 36a has the table before Anna.

[211] An example is Prag I 705: "[1-4] In the will of our father, the *subrum* and household goods of the house in Kaneš [5-7] are mine, be they *qablitum*-vessels, tables, forks, *šugarriā'um*, [8-9] *zamaltum*-vessels, or leather." Here, the tables seem to be listed as an example of common houseware, instead of holding significant value. Kt c/k 1510 is another example, as is CCT 4 40b + 41a (WAW 42 139.)

[212] Belleten 55 308f (WAW 42 52):1-8.

[213] KT 9a 75:10-13: *lu qá-qí-dum ša* KÙ.BABBAR *lu* UD.KA.BAR *ú sú-pá-ni lu pá-šu-ri lu qá-áb-li-a-tum ša-ṣí-ri.*

[214] KT 11a 17; CCT 4 1b:11.

[215] Emre 1993:170; Kayseri Museum 84/259; Özgüç 2003 fig. 342.

[216] Özgüç 2003 fig. 358, fig. 365, fig. 361.

[217] Özgüç 2003 fig. 307.

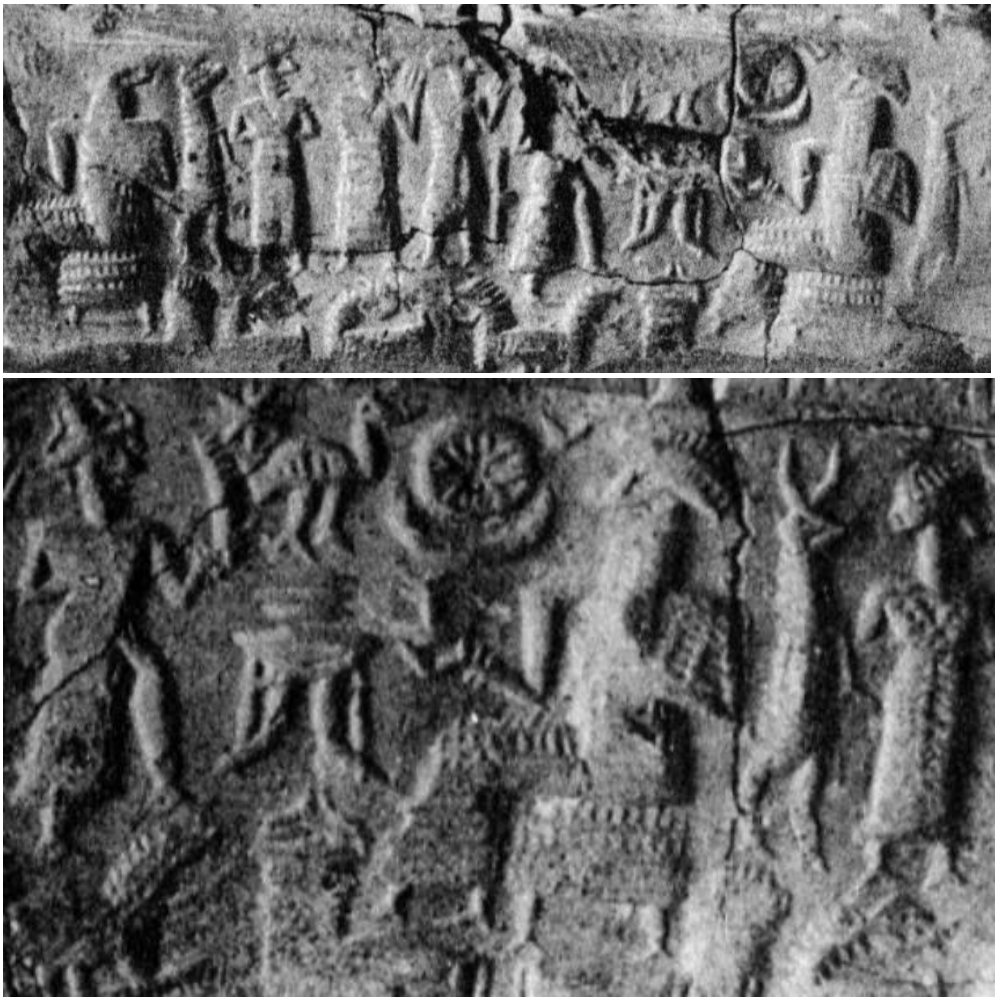

Figure 3 Two seals found on a tablet in Kaneš (BIN 4 110.)

Figure 4 Seal belonging to Old Assyrian merchant (KT 5 30 CS 1082)

The most common formula on Old Assyrian seals is the Presentation or Introduction Scene, wherein iconography incudes the worshipper meeting a seated god.[218] The seated god often holds a cup in an outstretched hand, and the worshipper is raising their left hand in a gesture of prayer. There is often a small table covered in offerings before the god. While the table has a mostly consistent design, the chair on which the deity sits varies considerably. Figure 5 depicts an examples of the classic cushioned chair, with other depictions showing slight variations on the number of cushions.[219] Figure 6 is a common variation, where the chair and god are on a raised platform, and there are three layers of cushion. Figure 7 shows a variety of examples of chairs without cushions.

Figure 5 (JNES 67, 093e)

Figure 6 (KT 5 30 CS 1081)

[218] Lassen 2012:58.
[219] Özgüç 2001 329.

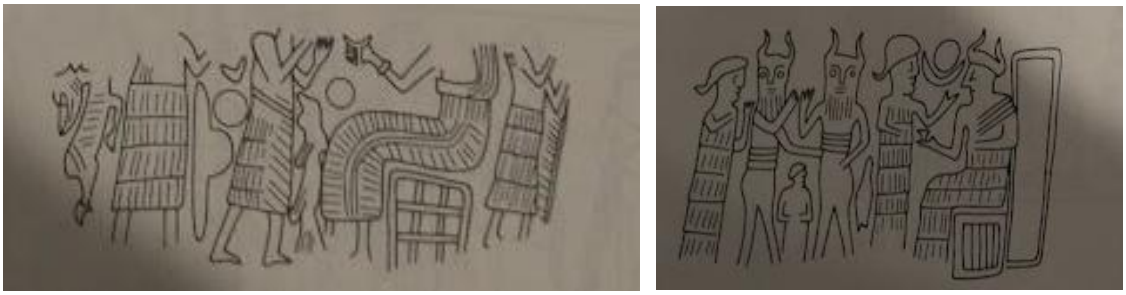

Figure 7 An assortment of chair styles (Özgüç 2001 CS 30, 4, 154, 88.)

There are more fantastical variations on the chair, such as Figures 8, 9, and 10, where the god was seated on an animal (which could have, if reflected by a real chair been specially designed to resemble one.)

Figure 8 JNES 67, 093 (P384825) seal impression b

Figure 9 (Özgüç 2001 CS 86.)

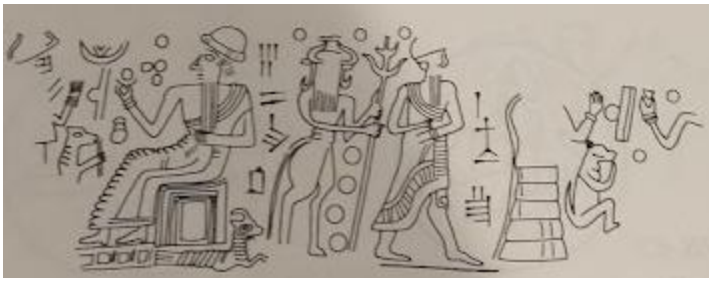

Figure 10 (Özgüç 2001 CS 44.)

While the amount of furniture is significant, the tables and chairs seen in artwork were not large. They could have fitted in a rather small room or section of the house, despite the number of items within. It does seem clear that the design of the chair was not important, and the table, while more consistent in form, is not always included before the god. Across these texts, there is never a name given for the room where these objects are located.

Another common element in the texts might be the (*sí-kà-tum/ ší-ku-tù-um)* in Kt 90/k 504:4 and KT 6b 468:7, which I believe to refer to the same item. This was attested before the god Ukur in both texts. The word could translate as “perfume flask” or possibly the *šikkutum*, a type of jewelry.[220] *Šukuttum* was a type of jewelry often found with *gubabtum*-women, and is in Anatolica 41 38f.[221] Yıldırım suggested that “*šukuttu*,” came from *šakānu*, “to put, place, attach,” and from this, that it could be a divine symbol or emblem women could either wear or place in temples.[222] The *šikkatum* was also seen in a letter between women about a robbery. This letter was sent to Anatolia from Aššur, and the correspondents are not well known in the archive:

> “[28–29] Ali-ahum brought me 1½ shekels of silver [29–34] 1 comb, 2 *šikkatum*-bottles that have been filled of oil, and concerning the *šikkatum* in which a golden […] was put inside, have (all) disappeared from our house; I don’t know how. [34–37] The son of Hannanārum brought you a sash. Our Ennum-ilī brought you a tunic. [37–39] A silver *šikkatum*-bottle, 2 garment pins, earrings […], a *muššum*-jewel—send me all that I left.”[223]

Weapons are a common theme in these tablets. Kt c/k 18 and Kt 94/k 670 both have weapons (*kakkum*), the second has five, and Kt b/k 93+167: 9 has a bow (*tilpānum.*) In the Old Assyrian Period, weapons could serve as divine emblems, most obviously seen with the dagger (*patrum*) of Aššur, though TC 3 93 mentions oaths sworn on the weapons (*kakkum*) of Aššur.[224] A *kalappum*-axe was listed among the plundered objects from the *kārum* Ursu.[225] Weapons were also forged to be given as offerings, for example, a bronze sword engraved with a dedication to the god Nergal of Hubšal was found in a private collection.[226] Naturally, weapons are found among the valuable belongings of merchants.[227] Ikūnum and Amur-Šamaš’s father kept 2 axes in sealed *tamalakkum*-chests along with his gods.[228] Later among his belongings, 1 hatchet (*pāšum*) is listed in less intriguing circumstances.[229] Weapons, while practical, had a clear devotional use for the Assyrians. Weapons were also found as grave goods: a copper battle-axe and a shaft-hole axe were both found in cist graves in the *kārum*.[230]

Cultic vessels are a common element in ritualistic texts, and the archaeological excavations in Kaneš have revealed numerous objects of interest. In Özgüç’s article “An Anthropomorphic vase from *Kārum* of Kaneš" he discusses vessels unearthed in Kaneš designed to resemble human heads.[231] A large collection of rhytons have been found. No Old Assyrian word for rhyton

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[220] AKT 6b:276.
[221] Dercksen 2015:40.
[222] Yıldırım 2013:261.
[223] BIN 4 85 (WAW 42 221.)
[224] Richardson 2021:31.
[225] SUP 7.
[226] Güterbock 1965:197.
[227] CCT 4 20a (WAW 42 210.)
[228] Kt m/k 69b:18-20.
[229] Kt m/k 69b:24-25.
[230] Özgüç 1954:69.
[231] Özgüç 1992:426.

is known.[232] In other cities the word for this is *bibrû*, but the Old Assyrians simple refer to them as cups. Özgüç believes these anthropomorphic or animalistic vessels to be clay copies based on vessels of precious metal used in temples.[233] However, these hypothesized "original" vessels have never been found. The most common words for vessels are *kāsum*, *qablītum*, and *supānum*. The *supānum*-vessels, as the others, could be either cheap or expensive depending on material. Family members and merchants could exchange silver and bronze *supānum*-vessels to transfer wealth.[234] Assyrians have listed *supānum*-vessels among the valuables in their homes.[235]

The *kāsum*-vessels are found in lines 2 and 7 before the gods in Kt 94/k 670, and as rhyton in Kt b/k 93+167, lines 7-8, and 13. *Kāsum* means "cup," and has a few remarkable occurrences: in Prag I 657:17, it is made of gold; in TC 3 271:7, it is part of an *ikribū*, meaning it could serve as a way of storing and distributing wealth; and in KT 4 35, Ennanāt-Aššur owns multiple *kāsum*.[236] *Kāsum* could be quite valuable.[237] Most interesting is a text where Šū-Aššur's belongings at the time of his death included the "The 4 *kāsum*-vessels of his house," which were his gift.[238]

Qablītum-vessels (or boxes) were ubiquitous in Assyrian households, usually used for storage and transportation, and just as *kāsum*-vessels, they were sometimes extravagant. They appear above in Kt 94/k 670: 10 and Kt 90/k 504: 16. In BIN 4 90, where Lamaša asks that the following objects she sealed in her home be entrusted to her father-in-law, Pūšu-kēn: "[9–11] 7 *qablītum*-containers of silver, 2 *qablītum*-containers of copper, [12-13] 11 *zamālātum*-utensils, and 1 piece of boxwood."[239] KT 4 35, the same text with the interesting *kāsum*-vessels, there is a *qablītum* of boxwood.[240] Assyrians sometimes stored pieces of boxwood (*taskarinnum*) with their precious items.

Many words for specific vessels are only mentioned one or twice in the record. Guichard created a glossary for the names of vessels in Mari texts (1999), which is some use to identify the Kaneš varieties. The contents of the Kaneš house left behind by Aya after her death serve a good demonstration of the array of vessels that could be found in an Assyrian household:

> "[1-4] 10 grooved stands, 1 stand for a sieve, 2 duck-shaped figures with lamp wicks, 1 stand for *sappum*-bowls, 5-6. 2 *ṣurṣuppum*-containers, 3 *supānum*-bowls of Kaneš-type, a measuring cup of 2 sila, 7-10. a measuring cup of 1 sila, 9 *haburrum*-vessels, one among them is a *sappum*-bowl with a handle, 11-13. 18 *šāhum*-pitchers, 4 large and 4

[232] Erol 2022:316.
[233] Özgüç 1992:427.
[234] CCT 3 20 (WAW 42 166):11-12.
[235] KT 9a 75:11; CCT 4 20a:8.
[236] KT 4 35:27: *a-šé-ni-šu kà-sà-tim*.
[237] CCT 5 35d; CCT 5 41b.
[238] RA 59 23 (Innāya, 246):56-57: *4 kà-sà-tim ša i-bé-tí-šu ri-ba-ší-a-ni.*
[239] BIN 4 90 (WAW 42 223):9-13. *Zamaltum* occur often (ex. CCT 3 20:13; JSOR 11 117 11:13; TUM 1 16), but exactly what they are in unknown. CAD Z:34. "Vessel" is an assumption I made based on context. Boxwood is also among precious household items in CCT 4 36b-37a.
[240] KT 4 35:25-26: *a-ma-kam qá-áb-li-tám ša ta-aṣ-kà-ri-ni-im.*

small *hublum*-vessels[?] 14-15. 6 *sappum*-bowls with metal bands, 5 *kunakkium*, 16-18. 2 *zuršum*-cups, 5 *hutūlum*-vessels, 2 *ašhalum*-vessels, 2 *mušālum*, 19-22. 3 stripped *sappum*-bowls, 1 *agannum*-large bowl, 1 *šakanum*, 1 spoon; 23. in total 1 talent, 40 minas of bronze (objects)."[241]

Another text which demonstrates the variety is ICK 2 344:

1. *3 ṣú-ur-ṣú-pá-tum*
2. *2 ša-pì-il$_5$-ta-an*
3. *ma$^{!}$-as$^{!}$-la$^{!}$-aq-ta-an*
4. *2 it-qú-ur-an*
5. *1 ú-ur-za-nu*
6. *[...x] sà-pu*
7. *[…]-tù-um*
8. *[...] na-aḫ-lu-pu*
9. *[…]-qá-ra-tum*
10. *ša 3 SÌLA*
11. *1 ma-áš-qá-al-tum*
12. *ša 3 SÌLA 1 ma-áš-qal-tum*
13. *ša sú-kà-lim*
14. *10+5 sà-pu ša mu-sà-r[e]*
15. *4 ḫu-du-lá-tum*
16. *3 ⌜ša⌝-ḫa-tum*
17. *2 zu-ur-ša-[an]* [242]

[1-3] 3 *ṣurṣuppum*-vessels, 2 *šapiltum*-stands[?], a *maslaqtum*-pot, [4-5] 2 spoons, 1 *urunzannum* [6-7] […] *sappum*-vessel(s), […] [8-10] […] *naḫlupum*-vessel(s), […*dī*]*qārum*-vessel(s) of 3 *qu'um*-measurements [11-13] 1 payment of 3 *qu'um*-measurements of Sukkallum. [14] 15 *sappum*-vessels of belts, [15-17] 4 nets, 3 *šāḫum*-vessels, 2 *zuršum*-vessels.

Line 1. The *ṣurṣuppum*-vessel is a "container with teat-shaped protuberances," found in Mari texts and Sumerian lexical lists.[243]
Line 2. The *šapiltum* usually referred to the lower or inner part of vessel, but here it is attested alone. Perhaps a part of a vessel, or a vessel stand.[244]
Line 16. According to the CAD, the *šāhum*-vessel was: "a drinking or cooking vessel, usually metal," and it was occasionally used in rituals in the Old Babylonian and Mari texts.[245]
Line 17. *Zuršu*-vessels are also attested in Mari texts. The name probably refers to their shape.[246]

[241] WAW 42 135.
[242] ICK 2 344 (Ka 878.)
[243] CAD Ṣ:261.
[244] CAD Š:452.
[245] CAD Š:105; RA 35 2:27.
[246] CAD Z:167.

Many of the vessel typologies here appear in both texts. It is likely that the contents of other houses with recorded inventories included these vessels, but they were folded into the bronze objects or household utensils, instead of listed individually. The unwieldy rhyton excavated in Kaneš would have been difficult to use in daily life, but other types of vessels could been used in either sphere. The vessels found in these lists were likely a combination of those used for religious tasks, those for domestic, and those which could serve as both. Figures 11 and 12 below depict just a few of the impractical vessels found in the *kārum*. Figure 11 is a fruit stand with a bull's head, which bears resemblance to the Assyrian bull-altar. Figure 12 is a highly decorated goblet in the same shape as the ones often held in the hands of the seated deities in the above inscriptions.

Figure 11: Özgüç 2004:156. A fruit-bull with a bulls head found on Level II of the kārum.

Figure 12 Decorated fruit-bowl from Level II of the kārum. (Özgüç 2004:163.)

What can we gather from all this? Most of the objects found within potential Home Temples are rather small, including most of the furniture if we take their depiction on seals into account. There are no obviously “required” utensils, and in both archeological finds and artwork the design of the vessels vary. Every god present had either a “table” or a “chair” before them, but whether they had another physical representation (such as a statue or emblem) is mostly unclear. The other objects are varied, but often include weapons, jewelry, vessels, and boxes. The quality of the object, its price, rarity, or beauty, might be more important than the type of

object it is. There is no obvious link between specific deity and their inclusion in the Home Temple, or the objects before them. There are houses where more than two gods (Aššur and the family/personal god) have space. The location of these temples is often unclear, but the majority seem to be located in Kaneš. It is possible that, particularly in the case of Šu-Ištar, some of these were small temples devoted to gods that were not otherwise accessible abroad and available to the public. However, the presence of Anna in several of these texts (if those temples were located in Kaneš) make that function less plausible, but not impossible.

Figure 13 Bronze statuette of a goddess found in a private home in the kārum of Kaneš. (Özgüç 1986:174, 179; Kt 82/k 110)

4.2 Divine Images and Emblems in Houses

This section will discuss the evidence for divine images in Assyrian-owned houses, with particular focus on their importance in practice and their portability. Broadly speaking, there were two types of divine depictions in Mesopotamia: those which illustrated the divine, and ones which were inhabited by the divine. An example of the first would be stamp seals decorated with images of gods, an example of the second would be the statues of the gods cared for in temples. There was a significant difference in the way worshippers approached these types of divine images; sealed envelopes with images of gods on them were broken as a matter of use, while the statues in temples were equivalated with the god depicted. Images of the divine were not by nature divine themselves, and these non-divine depictions could be broken or stolen without incurring divine wrath. While divine emblems are most attested in the context of legal use, in the Old Babylonian period, they were also used in inner-household disputes.[247]

The most common image of the divine in Assyrian homes must have been seals and the tablets carrying their imprints. Several volumes could be devoted to depictions of gods and divine symbols on Assyrian cylinder seals, so for the sake of brevity, we will not discuss them in any detail here. Most Old Assyrian seals were uninscribed, so perhaps not the result of a personalized commission, and the seals were reused, sometimes by people with no connection to the original owner.[248] However, seals were found in burials and were probably worn on their owner's body as an amulet.

4.2.1 Statuettes and Figurines

The excavations in the *kārum* of Kaneš have uncovered statuettes and figurines of gods, including images of divine couples and families.[249] Statuettes of nude goddesses have also been found in the *kārum*. One such statue, Kt 82/k 110,

[247] Richardson 2021:38-43.
[248] Ricetti 2018:379.
[249] Emre 1993:172-173.

was bronze and only 1.3cm by 4.7 cm, with a headdress in Old Babylonian style (Figure 13).[250] The textual evidence for these statuettes and figurines only mentions occasions when they are to be brought to a temple, which does not square with the amount of physical evidence in homes. For example, in the texts discussing the illness of Bēlātum, the disaster starts when a "divine statuette" is not treated properly.[251] There is no obvious reference to these figurines within documents dealing with inheritance or debt-seizure. One possible example of a divine emblem is found when Tarām-Kūbi, an Assyrian woman, was in a significant amount of distress, starving in an empty house. Whilst recounting her woes to her husband, she mentions: "And for the temple collection (*tapḫīrum*), I gave an emblem (*šu-ri-nam*) from […]"[252] Alabaster idols have been found in Kültepe houses, dating to the *kārum*-period, of seated women, both dressed and nude, on backless stools. These could be goddesses or worshippers.[253]

4.2.2 *Šamšum*

The *šamšum* (solar medallions) are the divine emblems most common in the Old Assyrian archives. The *šamšum* were small pendants of precious material, usually gold, worn around the neck. *Šamšum* were used throughout contemporary Babylonia and Syria, as jewelry worn by god-statues, royalty, and members of the court.[254] They were also used in medical rituals; for example the Old Babylonian text YOS 12 15 involved dedicating *šamšum* to Šamaš when ill and returning it to the temple when cured. In the Old Assyrian period, a golden *šamšum* was placed on the chest of the divine statue of Aššur in his temple in Ursu.[255] While Old Assyrians usually associated these artifacts with Aššur, they were more linked with their namesake in the South.

In the Old Assyrian period, the *šamšum* usually appear as temple dedications, not household artifacts or personal jewelry.[256] For example, Aššur-idi, a loudly religious Assyrian merchant, commissioned a *šamšum* of 1 mina gold for Aššur from his *ikribū*.[257] He characterized that this *šamšum* as clearing (as in, from debt) his son from Aššur.[258] This passage is remarkably similar to the Old Babylonian *šamšum* medical rituals: Aššur-idi promised a *šamšum* to the temple for the sake of his son's life, and now he must repay the debt to preserve his child's life. His son does not seem to be taking this as seriously as his father, possibly arguing that they do not have enough money. A family conflict over different levels of religiosity is an old story. In another letter, we learn the same Aššur-idi dedicated a *šamšum* worth 13 shekels of silver to the god Ilabrat, probably his personal god.[259] *Šamšum* were also dedicated to the goddesses Tašmētum

[250] Kt 82/k 110; Kt z/k 41; Özgüç 1986:174-175.
[251] RA 59 165 (WAW 42 254):11-12: *ma-za-zi-im DINGIR.*
[252] CCT 3 24 (WAW 42 128):19–21. The *šu-ri-nim* is an uncommon artefact.
[253] Özgüç 1957:76.
[254] Michel 2016:319.
[255] SUP 7.
[256] Another example is in KT 6e 1083:3-6, where a golden *šamšum* worth 3 mina of silver is owed to Aššur as part of an *ikribū*. Also in TC 3 57 (WAW 42 293):18–20.
[257] CCT 4 2a (OAA 1 19.) In OAA 1 33, Larsen speculates Aššur-idi's religiosity and claims to pray could indicate he held a priestly office. I'm not sure about this, because we have lots of letters from him, but none referencing him holding such a position, as we see with other priests.
[258] Pa 10 (OAA 1 20):22-23: Literally, "*šumīka akrub."*
[259] BIN 6 30 (OAA 1 21.)

and Anna in unpublished texts.[260] The *šamšum* might also appear in the broken text AnOr 6 7, where it was possibly made of *amuttum*-iron instead of gold. Iron was a rare material for the Old Assyrians, with a price equivalent or higher to gold.[261]

One text describes the creation of a *šamšum*, done in the House of the *Kārum*. The reason the *šamšum* was created in the House of the *Kārum*, and why the creation was watched over, is not specified.

1. *[...] 20 3 1/2 ŠE KÙ.BABBAR*
2. *[…] UDU a-na É a-šur*
3. *áš-qúl 1 1/6 GÍN KÙ.BABBAR*
4. *a-na UDU i-nu-mì*
5. *i-É kà-ri-im [...]*
6. *ša-am-ša-am*
7. *i-ma-aḫ-ri-kà*
8. *e-pu-šu-ni*
9. *GÍN [...]-na-tim*
10. *a-ší-ri-ki-im*
11. *ú-kà-in 1 1/3 GÍN KÙ.BABBAR*
12. *a-na UDU ša ku-ba-ba-at*
13. *áš-qúl*[262]

"[1-3] I paid 23 ½ grains of silver for sheep for the Temple of Aššur. [3-5] 1 1/6 shekels of silver for the sheep when, [6-8] in the House of the *Kārum*, they made the *šamšum* in your presence. [9-10] I confirmed 1 shekel of […]. [11-13] I paid 1 1/3 shekels of silver for the sheep of Kubabat."
Line 9. Ulshöfer believes this broken word might be *su'enātim*, "moon disks".[263]

The *šamšum* were small and transportable, the heaviest we see is only 3 minas, about 1.5 kg.[264] They are usually not seen in situations where they could have been personal objects of devotion, at least at the time they appear in the archive, but as gifts to the temples.

4.2.3 Golden Gods

The golden gods were small figurines, weighing less than 3 grams. Assyrians would also refer to them only as "the gods." The size and material of the gods are clear in the text. Their small size made them portable, practical for the mobile Assyrian traders.[265] Gold might have been a notably important material for the Assyrians. One Old Assyrian law forbade trading gold to a

[260] Michel 2016:320, referencing Kt 91/k 154 (provided by Veenhof) and Kt 93/k 948.
[261] Michel 2016:320.
[262] ICK 1 139.
[263] APU 81.
[264][264] Michel 320
[265] Dercksen 2015:48.

non-Assyrian, punishable by death.[266] Practical reasons for this law and the resulting punishment are difficult to imagine. The Assyrians also had a custom of covering the face of the dead with sheets of gold.

An artefact which Dercksen believes could be one of the golden gods was found in Level 1b of the *kārum* at Kaneš, in an area with no obvious relevance.[267] This god, Figure 15 below, was detailed on a 4.1 x 3 cm piece of golden foil, which was once attached to a sturdier supporting material.[268] The god is Anatolian in style, wields an axe, and is accompanied by a lion. Kulakoğlu suggests this might be the Hittite war-god ZABABA, who was portrayed with similar iconography in the Hittite Period. The deity's garments resemble those worn by both the lead statues found in Kaneš, and gods in later Hittite depictions. A mold for a real axe resembling the one seen here was found in a workshop in level 2 of the *kārum*.[269] Whilst this golden god fits the weight and material suggested by the texts, every owner of the golden gods was Assyrian, and this god is portrayed in Anatolian style. Assyrians did carry cylinder seals in Anatolian style, worshipped Anatolian gods, and bought goods from Anatolian artisans. An Assyrian could have commissioned the god from an Anatolian, who used the local style. Figure 14 below could also fulfill the criteria for the golden gods; this item is a golden emblem with a depiction of the 'bull-altar,' which Lassen has theorized might depict the god Aššur.[270] It was found in one of the few excavated Old Assyrian graves in the eponymous city.

Figure 14: Ass. 7036i, a small golden emblem found in Aššur Grave 12 (Lassen 2012:183, citing Hockman 2010.)

The golden gods were most attested used as pledges. As seen in TC 1 30, where four shekels of golden gods are included in a list of debts, and in KT 8 186, an unknown speaker said, in reference to someone who owed him silver: "I have the gods as claim on you."[271] One archival tablet documenting several different transactions and settlements included a case where Kannūtum, the wife of Ilī-bāni, owed a tablet proving she was the rightful owner of ½ mina of *pašallu*-gold and 1 ½ mina of silver. If she did not provide a tablet proving this, then the writer of the memorandum has the gods against her.[272] These gods seem to explicitly belong to a woman, not her

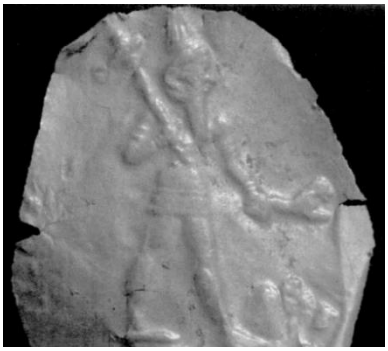

Figure 15 (Kulakoğlu 2008:14; Kt 06/k 168) A golden folio with a depiction of a god (Kulakoğlu 2008:14; Kt 06/k 168)

[266] Kt 79/k 101 (Dercksen 2014:88.)
[267] Dercksen 2015:48; Kulakoğlu 2008:14 and 18.
[268] Dercksen 2015:48.
[269] Kulakoğlu 2008:15-17.
[270] Lassen 2017:180.
[271] TC 1 30:23-24; KT 8 186:25-26.
[272] KT 5 51:25-26: *i-le i-ṣé-ri-ša-a i-šu.* The same text later mentions having "50:10+5 ŠE KÙ.BABBAR *ša i-li-šu ša a-šùr-i-mì-tí,"* which is difficult conceptualizing as a divine figurine. Perhaps it refers instead to an

husband. In another letter, Puzur-Aššur asks Dan-Aššur and Ušmaya to check the weight of a shipment of tin from Akiya when it arrives. If they find there is not enough tin, they should put the gods against Akiya.[273] In a settlement between Assyrian woman Kapsiya, and the family of Hanana, if evidence of a claim is found, Kapsiya will have a claim on "her" for "the gods." In this case, "her" was probably a member of Hanana's family.[274] Across these examples, we see the gods belonging to Assyrians of either gender. The number or weight of the gods is not always specified, which raises the question of how the debtors intended to determine that the owner of the gods handed all of them over.

The golden gods of Ilī-pī-uṣur, documented in the Kaneš archive of Assyrian messenger Kuliya, present a complex case across two tablets.[275] The first text which mentions the golden gods is a memorandum in which Kuliya and two other men owe a debt to Aššur-mālik. son of Kurara. Aššur-mālik gives them the 20 golden gods of Ilī-pī-uṣur as pledge, under the seals of the 3 *bēru*-officials.[276] 10 months later, these golden gods were mentioned again, now in the hands of an unknown party who is holding the 20 golden gods of Ilī-pī-uṣur as pledge over Kuliya and his partners.[277] How Ilī-pī-uṣur's gods ended up being held over Aššur-mālik, then held over the three people he pledged them to is unclear. Veenhof theorizes that Ilī-pī-uṣur is dead at the time this tablet was written due to the appearance of his attorney and sons, but that doesn't answer the rest of the problems here.[278] This is the only known occasion where "*i-lu*" is written with the logogram *DINGIR* instead of syllabically when referring to the golden gods.

Not all the golden gods we see were being used as pledge. The inheritance of Ikūnum and Amur-Šamaš's father included "1/3 shekel of his god(s)," the 1/3 shekel possibly referring to their weight.[279] When Assyrian Zukua sent some of his precious belongings away, we see them: "1 *tamalākum*-box, with 1 2/3 mina, *kāsum*-vessels of silver, 5 ½ shekels, gods of gold, all this I sealed and gave you for safe-keeping.[280]

A letter between presumed family members which was found in the archive of Šalim-Aššur, their circumstances are unclear but dire.[281] Ennam-Aššur reported that he asked a woman named Maka for money to give his family. Maka replied:

> "[8-10] "Until your brothers have grown up, you all will not see any tablets; also, I shall not give you any furnishings. [11-12] As for Tataya and yourself, who has caused you worry?" I

ikribū amount. If that is the case, it opens the possibility that several of these mentions of "gods" might instead refer to *ikribū* silver or gold.

[273] KT 6d 756:12: "*i-li i-ṣé-ri-šu id-a.*"

[274] KT 5 40:26-28.

[275] AKT 5:13.

[276] KT 5 46:12-15: *20 i-lu-ú mu-nu-tám ša KÙ.KI ša ili$_5$-pì-ú-ṣú-ur a-na ša-pár-tim na-du-ú i-lu-ú i-ku-nu-uk 3 be-re-e kà-an-ku.*

[277] KT 5 35:5-10.

[278] AKT 5:134.

[279] FS Larsen 286ff:18: *1/3 GÍN i-lu ša a-bi$_4$-ni.*

[280] KT 6c 592:10-14.

[281] AKT 6d:62-63.

(Ennam-Aššur) answered: [13-14] "Bring them to me - the golden gods! Let us seal them so they may bring them to her."[282]

This is a difficult text. The reason for the golden gods to be sealed and transported is unclear, as is their intended destination. A shaky hypothesis is that Maka was the one who currently had possession of some of the belongings that were left to Ennam-Aššur and his siblings, possibly from their father, but she will not give them their inheritance until they grow older. In this case, the golden gods would be a part of this inheritance, perhaps included in the furnishings Maka mentions she does not intend to give them yet. That would make Ennam-Aššur's response to her refusal make sense: he is asking for a small portion of the belongings, perhaps to sell or pledge to tide them over, or perhaps for cultic reasons.

Another relevant text is Kt 2001/k 325a, a court record from the 1b period.[283] The merchant Šalim-Aššur had died, and his Anatolian son-in-law Ḫamala from Mada now owns his house. Šalim-Aššur's daughter, and Ḫamala's sister-in-law, the *gubabtum*-woman Ziki, was allowed to remain in his house as an *arhālum*. In his edition of this text, Albayrak theorizes that Šalim-Aššur might have had an Anatolian wife, because of the Anatolian element "-elka" in the name of Ziki's sister Ḫaršumelka.[284]

> "[19–22] If Ḫamala and his wife treat Ziki badly, or a second *arhālum* enters the house, [23–30] Ḫamala will give her in her father's house the gold gods of her father, her jewelry, one from the three servants active in trade, one slave-girl, one donkey, and all her belongings, and then she will leave (the house) and go to her brothers."[285]
>
> "[43-50] After the death of their sister Ziki, the priestess, Šamaš-bāni, Amur-lštar, Šumi-Aššur, and Aššur-šamšī, the sons of Šalim-Aššur—Hamala will release to them tablets, memoranda, and valid deeds of their father Šalim-Aššur."[286]

There's no mention of her brothers inheriting the golden gods should she die.

Across all these texts, the golden gods appear mostly as a means of preserving and passing wealth. They are held in number and are the property of either gender. Their physical location does not seem to be tied to the paternal home, or to a particular family. There is no convincing evidence they held any cultic significance aside from their name in the texts, but that does not mean they did not have such use. They were small and weighed very little, and would have been easy for merchants to bring with them on their journeys. In fact, all of the divine representations we have discussed in above are, when their size is clear, small enough to be easily transported.

[282] KT 6d 788:1-14.
[283] Albayrak 2004:10.
[284] Albayrak 2004:10.
[285] Albayrak 2004:2.
[286] Albayrak 2004:2.

5. Household Rituals

This section of the thesis will investigate the Old Assyrian performance of Household Rituals. Rituals performed within the family home are a way of reinforcing and expressing the values of the family.[287] Throughout this chapter, we will see Assyrians use Household Religion as a way of keeping the family together, even as they are physically far apart. Failing to provide for the gods or the paternal home results in divine anger, which can devastate the family. Even living abroad, the Assyrian merchant's religiosity or lack thereof will have repercussions on his family back in Kaneš. There are also ritual occurrences for which the worshippers physical presence seems to be required.

There are three main places where evidence for Old Assyrian household rituals can be found—incantation-texts, records of ritualistic purchases, and personal letters. While the latter two can be easily imagined, the first needs introduction. The Old Assyrian corpus currently contains only 11 incantation-texts, found in five private archives.[288] Wasserman, Barjamovic, and Michel all concluded that these texts were utilitarian objects intended for private use.[289] Barjamovic claims that the lack of reference to a professional practitioner or ritual instructions in these texts supports the idea that the magic was performed by laypeople. [290] Barjamovic also claims, due to the differences between the same incantations despite them being found close by, these were transmitted mainly orally, and written down perhaps as part of the magic.[291] Whilst some of the texts were found in Uzua's house, which has been hypothesized to be a potential schoolhouse, the potential school-texts were found outside Uzua's archive room, and the incantation-texts were found in inside.[292] Wasserman and Zomer claim that magic was mostly domestic in the Old Babylonian and Old Assyrian Periods.[293]

There is not much evidence for rituals in the household involving the help of a specialist.[294] However, Assyrian religious officials could hold their position whilst still living at their family home and remaining involved in the family business.[295] The Old Assyrian word for priest was *kumrum*, which was used for priests of both Assyrian and Anatolian gods. Little is known of what their religious duties entailed. Assyrians living abroad in Kaneš remained generally aware of the prominent priests working in Aššur, so they must have held an influential place within the Assyrian community.[296] Other religious positions found in the Old Assyrian archives include the *qadištum*-women, temple slaves (*zarikum*), musicians (*nu'ārum*), female diviners (*šā'iltum*), and female haruspices (*bārītum*), and possibly the *waqqurtum*-priestess (the uncertainty is because

[287] Schmitt 2012:426
[288] Barjamovic 2015:68.
[289] Wasserman and Zomer 2022:12; Barjamovic 2015:71; Michel 2004:417.
[290] Barjamovic and Larsen 2008:150.
[291] Barjamovic 2015:59.
[292] Wasserman and Zomer 2022:7; Barjamovic 2015:66.
[293] Wasserman and Zomer 2022:28.
[294] Schmitt 2012:418.
[295] Dercksen 2015:45
[296] Dercksen 2015:45.

waqqurtum can also be a personal name).[297] The locations where these people worked is often unclear. Commonly found in the Assyrian texts were the *gubabtum*-women. While *gubabtum* is sometimes translated as "priestess," Michel prefers "consecrated woman," because much of the *gubabtum*-woman's function remains unclear.[298] The *gubabtum*-women were usually the eldest daughters from wealthy families, who remained unmarried and worked in the family business of their paternal home.[299] Larsen and Barjamovic speculate that the *gubabtum*-women could have specialized in private religious affairs.[300] The number of identified *gubabtum*-women indicates that dedicating a daughter to the gods must have provided a notable social or religious benefit.

In his work on Household Religion in the Levant, Schmitt classifies four types of household rituals in the ancient Levant: those associated with the calendar, those involving ritual taboos, those that are on specific occasions, like petitions and vows, and finally, those involving the human life cycle.[301] This section of the paper will use Schmitt's classifications of household rituals as structure.

5.1 Calendar Rituals and Observances

Religious festivals were often celebrated in both the home, and outside, though unfortunately we do not know the specifics of any Assyrian religious festivals. So far, festivals are attested for the gods Anna, Nipas, Usūmum, and Parka, with possible festivals of Ḫariḫari and Tuḫtuḫāni.[302] These are all Anatolian deities, the festivals recorded when used as payment deadlines. Assyrians rarely mentioned festivals held in Aššur, as they used the eponym system to date intra-Assyrian transactions. We see a possible reference to a festival for an Assyrian god on a tablet where an Anatolian man tells an Assyrian woman that he will repay her "*ina ša Bēlum*."[303] While Assyrians usually use *bēlum* to refer to Aššur, the number of Anatolians involved in the transaction (making up all the witnesses as well as one of the actors) leaves the evidence this was an Assyrian-held festival unconvincing. Assyrians wrote of hurrying home to see Aššur's statue but never mentioned this was for an occasion. The time of major festivals might have been well known enough that the writers felt no need to mention their approach, or perhaps Assyrians did not put much stock into the attendance of religious events. Assyrians did use religious phraseology to mark the passage of time.[304]

[297] Hirsch 1961:57-58; CCT 1 17b (ARK 130):20; ICK 1 156:14: *nu-a-ri-im ša* ^{d}*IŠKUR*; Barjamovic and Larsen 2008:150; BIN 6 93 (WAW 42 226):20: *ša-il*^{5}*-tám*.
[298] Michel 2009:148.
[299] Michel 2009:157-159; Fattori 2024:81; Michel 2009:157; Veenhof 2014:357.
[300] Barjamovic and Larsen 2008:8.
[301] Schmitt 2012:489.
[302] Hirsch 1961:51-52; KT 8 161b:9; KT 3 6:12; KT 3 22:28-33; KT 7a 213; St Alp 35 (WAW 42 85a):16; KT 6e 960:6-8; ICK 1 24 (WAW 42 189); KT 8 209:13; KT 10 13b:15.
[303] Bayram 1990 458 (WAW 42 185):4-5.
[304] KT 6e 1090:12-13; KT 6b 411:8-9.

5.2 Religious Taboos

Religions can have restrictions on certain behaviors; in Ancient Israelite religion, we see religious restrictions involving diet, sexual acts, and physical cleanliness.[305] Not all taboos in a culture are necessarily religious: in CCT 6, 14, a man is slandered because he did not give another man bread to eat, nor did he anoint him with oil. This is clearly a terrible accusation, the letter repeats the accusation four times in disbelief, but whether this was a religious taboo or merely a social one is unclear.[306] Luckily, the Old Assyrians are often very explicit about what the gods find improper, and the displeasure of the gods was often cited when discussing criminal, immoral, or poor behavior. Veenhof found that when Old Assyrians invoked their personal gods, the three actions they were most frequently asked to perform were to witness (*naṭālum*) actions, to know (*idāʾum*) the truth of what occurred both physically and within people's hearts, and to reject (*nadāʾum*) those who act wrongly.[307] According to more general Mesopotamian beliefs, humans could not understand the will of the gods, though it was their duty to try.[308] Evil came from the disobedience of that nebulous will.[309] If you suffer, you must have committed a sin, even if you cannot recall any transgression.[310]

Reputation was the Assyrian trader's livelihood; their letters often complained of malicious rumors, and they carefully tracked favors owed and received.[311] The misdeeds that would lead to divine rejection included failing to follow a business deal, not taking care of their family and homes, or generally not acting like proper gentlemen.[312] For Mesopotamians, there were two main causes of misfortune in the world: abandonment by the gods, and witchcraft, and the second often followed the first.[313] It was important for the Assyrians to keep the favor of the divine, so they do not turn away and leave them vulnerable to malevolent magic.[314] Rumors that a man fell into disfavor (*nadāʾum*) with the gods were harmful to a person's reputation, and followingly, livelihood. When rumors spread that Kulumā was rejected by both Aššur and his boss's god, he wrote a letter claiming this was malicious slander, allegedly spread by his boss's servants.[315] Facing misfortune, Assyrians might assume the cause is an angry deity. When a shipment of copper was delayed for a year, Aššur-imittī exclaimed: "Aššur has taken away our lives!"[316]

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[305] Schmitt 2012:420.
[306] CCT 6 14 (Veenhof 2010a)
[307] Veenhof 2014:367.
[308] Bottéro 2001:60.
[309] Bottéro 2001:188.
[310] Bottéro 2001:189.
[311] Dercksen 2014:60.
[312] KT 3 64:16-17; KT 11a 110:16-17: "May Aššur and your god watch over them;" KT 9a 61:27-32; KT 6a 233:10-14; KT 6b 426; KT 11a 124; TPAK 1 47:17-18: Aššur-nādā is accused of refusing to bring Šu-Kūbum's servants to him; Šu-Kūbum proclaims: "May Aššur and Ilabrat know this!"
[313] Absuch 2002:29; Misfortune was not always attributed to the displeasure of the divine. In ATHE 37 (OAA 1 66):3-4, Aššur-nada wrote to his brother: "Against the heart of the gods, misfortune has befallen me."
[314] Absuch 2002:37.
[315] JCS 14 007 4 (LAPO 19 141.)
[316] KT 11a 102:20-21: *na-áp-ša-tí-ni iš-tí A-šur e-ṭí-ir.*

The breaking of oaths and the failure to take care of one's family were not only moral failings, they were also religious ones. For example, one royal inscription declared that anyone who told a lie within the *mušlālum,* an area in Aššur where oaths were sworn, should be destroyed and their house should come to ruin.[317] Such a curse was made in KT 6b 347 where Ennam-Aššur said to his cousin Ennam-Suen, who has failed to repay him for four years: "May Aššur and the gods of our fathers reject you, since you stood ready to separate me from my father's breast!"[318] This letter was also sent to five other acquaintance, asking them to check if Ennam-Suen is replying to his letter, seemingly a passive-aggressive way of announcing to everyone how he's been wronged. Ennam-Aššur and Ennam-Suen were family and close coworkers, and both remained part of the family firm. Unfortunately, Ennam-Aššur would die before this fight was settled, leaving it unknown how this would have impacted their relationship. There are several similar occurrences. One Assyrian man angrily threatened his alleged slanderers that: "You wrote things about me that are not good to the god."[319] Assyrian woman Waqqurtum wrote to her brother Buzāzu:

> "[18–22] Act so that you please the god(s) and the spirits of the dead, and that I not be ruined!"[320]

The threat of committing a religious infraction was used to keep Assyrian merchants inline, to keep them from committing fraud and running away with the profits, and to keep them from abandoning their distant families.

5.3 Occasional Rituals

5.3.1 Prayer, Lamentation, Thanksgiving

Assyrians would promise to pray (*karābum*) for the sake of a correspondent.[321] Usually, they intend to pray before (*mahar)* a god, presumably the statue of the god within a temple. As to the physicality of prayer, in the Old Ištar Temple in Aššur, archeologists uncovered statues of worshippers in eternal prayer. These figures were male and female, sitting and standing, and most had their hands crossed in front of their chest or lap, a pose used for prayer in other periods.[322] As for the contents of the prayers, there is only one known prayer-letter from the Old Assyrian Period, written by an Assyrian woman to her goddess Tašmētum.[323] Some Assyrians were not above using the promise of prayer to help their own interests. In KT 2 22, the overseer

[317] RIMA 1 A.0.33.1:39-47.
[318] KT 6b 347:5-7.
[319] AfO 31 015 (Donbaz 1984):19: *ša a-na* DINGIR *lá dam-qá-ni ta-áš-tap-ra-nim.*
[320] BIN 4 96 (WAW 42 236.)
[321] KUG 39:17-18. A clear example of this is an Assyrian woman writing "*IGI A-šur lá-ak-ru-ba-kum*," to a male correspondent.
[322] Bär 2003:91.
[323] Ass 13058h (WAW 42 242.)

(*waklum*) offered to pray for Assyrians before Aššur and his personal god if they did his business for him.[324] In another letter, Šīmat-Aššur wrote her brother Aduma:

> "13–14 You are my brother; help me with some silver, even a single shekel; 14–15 then I will pray for you to my god Aššur."[325]

Most references to prayer involve visiting a temple and praying before the statue of the god. Was visiting a temple necessary for prayer, or did Assyrians also pray in their households? In one letter, Ištar-baštī wrote to a man of unknown relation: "I will pray there for you to Ištar and Ištar-ZA-AT."[326] Perhaps there were two different temples to Ištar she intended to visit, or the temple had statues to both versions of the goddess. KT 2 40 raises the possibility that prayers might not have always been done at a temple. There, an Assyrian man told his sister: "Pray for me before Aššur and your god!"[327] Her personal god was unlikely to share a temple with Aššur, so if done at a temple, this would have required praying at multiple locations. This is certainly not out of the question, her personal god might have been one with a temple in the city, or a small shrine she could visit. However, it is also possible he was asking her to pray within their home shrine, which would have included Aššur and her personal god. Assyrians did invoke the gods outside the home, hoping the gods were watching over them. This, discussed below, could be considered a type of prayer, less formal than a visit to a statue, but still an important element of their faith.

5.3.2 Omens

Communication with the divine was not a one-way street; the gods declared their will through omens and dreams, and the ideal Assyrian listened to these divine words and followed their commands. The communication within dreams must have usually occurred within the home. Assyrians would consult a dream interpreter (*šā'iltum*) when they needed her services to understand the divine messages. Whether the *šā'iltum* conducted her practice at an office, at her own home, or on call, is unknown. One Assyrian woman wrote to another during a time of distress:

> "15-19 Since I went to Waḫšušana, my heart has fallen ill nearly five times! 20-23 There, ask a female dream interpreter (*šā'iltum*), and may you send your message here."[328]

This could mean that there were no *šā'iltum* in Waḫšušana, as the first woman needs the second to visit the *šā'iltum* and send her the information she learns. The woman with access to the *šā'iltum* was probably in Kaneš, as that is where the letter was found.

A reoccurring theme in Assyrian letters is the (younger) members of the family disregarding the orders of the gods, to the dismay of their relatives. Aššur-idī, a deeply religious man, lectured his son Aššur-nādā:

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[324] KT 2 22 (Çeçen 1991:48-49.)
[325] KT 4 63 (WAW 42 238.)
[326] ICK 1 28b (WAW 42 241):13-15.
[327] KT 2 40 (WAW 42 240):13-14; There's a similar expression, interestingly written by a man, in KT 2 22:19-20: "*IGI A-šur ú i-li-a a-kà-ra-ba-ku-nu-tí."*
[328] BIN 6 93 (WAW 42 226):15-23.

> "Why do you continue to act contrary to the divine teaching and thus aggravate your faults? Have you forgotten the command of the gods? Why then does the command of the gods not seem important to you?"[329]

In another letter to the same son, Aššur-idī continued this tract:

> "[6-8] Please heed the words of the gods! Do not renounce the decision that the god has drawn up for you. [9-10] If you renounce it, you will perish!"[330]

Aššur-idī was not the only Assyrian to write about the importance of listening to divine commands. Ummatiya wrote to her close relative Šu-Ištar about communications from the god Aššur:

> 19. *áš-ta-na-pá-ra-ku-ma*
> 20. *a-šur* | *uš-ta-na-ad-kà*
> 21. *lá ta-ša-me* | *ù a-ni*
> 22. *a-šur* | *e-na-ni-kà*
> 23. *li-il$_5$-qé-ma*
>
> [19-20] I keep writing you to tell you that Aššur is constantly warning you! [21-23] You do not listen and thus may Aššur have mercy on you.[331]
>
> Line 22. *Enēnu* can mean favor or sin, while *ennānu* means prayer or supplication.[332] Whichever the meaning, Šu-Ištar's failure to listen to Aššur remains a problem.

Assyrians warned their relatives that they must listen to the gods, or face catastrophe. These letters were written because the gods were being ignored.

Assyrians often failed to follow or even ignored the word of the gods. This is seen in the letters between Assyrian siblings Uṣur-ša-Ištar, Šīmat-Suen, and Akatiya. The three were from a prominent Assyrian family, with royale ties.[333] When their father died, Šīmat-Suen and Akatiya were living in their paternal home in Aššur, while Uṣur-ša-Ištar was abroad. The two sisters wrote their brother a letter, demanding that he return to Aššur and set their father's affairs in order.

> "[4–5.] What have you done to your father's house? [5–6] Your sister you have treated badly, [7–9] and, moreover, there you have caused the death of one or two! [10–11] (Divine) Aššur keeps on warning you concerning your moves….
>
> [24–25] Save your life with the help of (divine) Aššur!"[334]

Uṣur-ša-Ištar not fulfilling his filial duties has apparently caught Aššur's attention, and his failure to return was angering the god. Uṣur-ša-Ištar did not return, and shortly after Akatiya also died. Šīmat-Suen wrote again to Uṣur-ša-Ištar and told him:

> "[23–24] Seize the foot of Aššur, your lord, and [25–26] save your life! [26–27] And put your father's house in order, lest it be ruined."[335]

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[329] TC 3 94 (LAPO 19 162.)
[330] CCT 4, 1a (OAA 1 13); In Aššur-idī fashion, similar complaints can be found in TC 3, 93 (LAPO 19 253) and HUCA 39 12-13 (LAPO 19 262.)
[331] KT 11a 86:19-21.
[332] CAD E:169; CAD U-W:162.
[333] WAW 42:398.
[334] Belleten 59 13 (WAW 42 237); Cappadocian Journal of Social Sciences 9:465-66 (WAW 42 272.)
[335] Cappadocian Journal of Social Sciences 9:465-66 (WAW 42 272.)

The stakes have risen, by not pleasing Aššur, Uṣur-ša-Ištar's life seems to be endangered. Šīmat-Suen's fear for the paternal home could be either spiritual or due to more earthly concerns. Yet Uṣur-ša-Ištar still doesn't come.

> "[3]How long do you fail to come, and [4–6] for how long will I sweat on account of the house and the furniture? [6–8] Why don't you come and put in order the house of your father?"[336]

He disregarded the displeasure of both Aššur and his sister. In these letters, we see the orders of the god being used as a rhetoric device to make the recipient act, and not one that always led to action being taken. Uṣur-ša-Ištar seems to remain unconcerned over the anger and even threats of the god. Did he not take the references to divine anger literally?

When brothers Ennam-Aššur and Ali-ahum were in danger of losing their father's votive offering:

> "Take care to confront the City and act so that the votive offerings for Aššur are not lost, get a tablet from the City stating that the lapis lazuli must be converted to silver and until the votive offerings are brought… Also, hire an attorney and have him leave together with Aluwa and save our lives. For these votive offerings our father died."[337]

Larsen theorizes the last line was referring to divine punishment. [338] Ennam-Aššur sent multiple letters to Aššur about these votive offerings, clearly settling this issue was immensely important.[339] In another case, Šu-Ištar is accused of purchasing contraband, "a taboo of the gods of Kaneš."[340] The *kārum* denounced his crimes (*arnum*) and evilness (*šillitum*), and divination (*bārûtu*) was not helping his defense. His life was dependent on clearing what he claimed to be a misunderstanding, and both he and the *kārum* responded by communicating with the gods and/or religious establishment.

Omens and curses were a concern for the Assyrians, and at times, entered the domestic. One incantation text found in the archive of merchant Irma-Aššur means to protect against the Evil Eye, found alongside an incantation for childbirth.[341] In this text, the Evil Eye has attacked the household, invading when the occupants are at their most vulnerable.

> "Oh, eye, eye! *alušitu*-eye! Truly – a malicious *birru*-disease! Truly – carried away sleep! Trembling! She dispersed the ingathered fireplace of the man's house. She brought about the ruin of the noisy household. She has seized. She has seized the cow from the shed. She has seized the sheep from the watering place. She has seized the young man from prayer. She has seized the maiden in dance. She has seized the child from the nurse's embrace. You are the evil eye!"[342]

An idealization of the household, centered on a fireplace, with livestock and servants, dancing women, praying men, and loved children, is under attack. The mention of the "noisy household" could mean that the household gods and ghosts were disturbed, as is the case in other texts,

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[336] Cappadocia Journal of Social Sciences 9:466-67 (WAW 42 274.)
[337] KT 6a 230:27-38.
[338] AKT 6a:376.
[339] At least seven times, according to his claims in KT 6a 233.
[340] KT 11a 119:12-17.
[341] Wasserman and Zomer 2022:7.
[342] Kt 94/k 520 (LAOS 12 150.)

but here it seems more likely to refer to a fully occupied, lively home.[343] Sleep is the most vulnerable time for a person, where they are most open to attack.

Ancient Medicine is often interlinked with religious rituals, and as discussed earlier in this thesis, the reason behind illness is the displeasure of the gods or the result of demonic influence. Several of the ritual texts found within the *kārum* were against sickness. Fs Larsen 395-420 was against bile, Kt 91/k 502, published in two parts as LAOS 12 169 and LAOS 12 31, provides two incantations against gastrointestinal problems.[344] The incantation against bile, LAOS 12 1, provides instructions for a clear way to cure the disease, giving the ill person beer bread, thyme, and salt.[345] The other two sickness incantations are also easily performable with objects found around the home, if they are meant to act out the incantation. [346]

5.3.3 Illness and Health

All of the above come together when disease infests the household. We see this when Pūšu-kēn fails to properly fulfill his duties to the gods, and his family members consequently suffered from disease.

> "Say to Pūšu-kēn: thus (say) Tarīš-mātum and Bēlātum. Here, Bēlātum fell ill because of the silver of the votive offerings! We are plagued by the demons and spirits of the dead! You are our father, you are our master; you must not deliver the silver to the boys! Because of the divine statuette, the god plagues our father's house! Urgent! If you are (truly) are our father, do what you can to repair your reputation (by seeing to it) that the boys are treated in this way because of the votive offerings."[347]

This is also an example of how the *ikribū* could affect the home. If you want to keep your home in order, you must keep the gods pleased, in this case by giving gifts to the home of the gods. The "divine statuette" mentioned here must have been meant as a votive offering for the temple. Tarīš-mātum and Bēlātum suffer disease, spirits of the dead, and demons because the gods were not satisfied by their offerings. This is described as Pūšu-kēn earning a poor reputation with the divine, they have seen his poor actions. And so, the angry divine enters the domestic sphere.

Pūšu-kēn's family tried to figure out how to earn the god's forgiveness. In BIN 4, 22, Šāt-Aššur further claims the entire house is now sick, and tells Pūšu-kēn to exalt the gods if he goes to Aššur.[348] In a short, broken text, Šalimma suggested that Bēlātum should do something (perhaps speak) with the female diviners (*bārītum*) and the demons (*utukkum*) in Aššur.[349] Tarīš-mātum and Bēlātum wrote again to Pūšu-kēn, saying the situation has grown dire:

[343] Bodi 2021:32.
[344] Wasserman and Zomer 2022:62.
[345] LAOS 12 1.
[346] LAOS 12 169; LAOS 12 31.
[347] KTS 1 24 (WAW 42 254.)
[348] BIN 4 22 (WAW 42 124):3-7.
[349] KT 6d 786.

> "4–7 The girls of Puzur-Ištar and Uṣur-ša-Aššur have fallen ill and are dying. 7–8 We went to the female dream interpreters (*šā'iltum*) 8–9 and the god said thus: 9–10 "Do not wait on the *ikribū*!" 11 You should take it away from them."[350]

However, they have consulted the gods (via *šā'iltum*) and have found a solution. Notably, they go to the dream interpreters, which suggests the *šā'iltum* were visited, instead of performing house-calls. Tarīš-mātum and Bēlātum proceeded to ask Pūšu-kēn if they should do as instructed or not, confirming whether they should follow the *šā'iltum*'s instructions, meaning not doing as they said was a conceivable option. The situation seems to worsen even further, and Tarīš-mātum and Bēlātum write to a long list of Assyrian men asking that they make sure Pūšu-kēn helps them:

> "1–8 Say to Pūšu-kēn, Puzur-Ištar, Uṣur-ša-Aššur, Ilabrat-bāni, and Iddin-Ištar; say to Puzur-Ištar, Uṣur-ša-Aššur, Ilabrat-bāni, and Iddin-Ištar: thus (say) Tarīš-mātum and Bēlātum. 8–9 You are our brothers. 9–12 Because of the silver for the votive offerings of our father, here, Bēlātum fell ill, 13–15 and we are plagued by the demons and spirits of the dead! 15–18 Turn there to Pūšu-kēn so that he sells as much tin and textiles as he can, 19–22 and seals the silver and sends it here, thereby saving your lives and ours! 22–24 Here, the god plagues your father's house! 25–27 Over there, nobody should touch a single shekel of silver of your common fund, not even one shekel! 28–31 As for the tin and textiles that we sent, until they can be converted into silver, they should remain in the house of Pūšu-kēn!"[351]

The entire network is implored to make sure that the gods are satisfied, as they have learned it is the lack of payment which has caused this terrible illness.

Pūšu-kēn's family were not the only ones struck with disease for not respecting the *ikribū*. Akitiya wrote of a similar situation, saying she is miserable, and tells her male family members: "5–7 You have no right to claim authority over the silver of the votive offerings. 8-13 In addition to my own misery, also your boy is unable to raise his head due to the "hand of the god.""[352] She asks them to deposit the owed silver, then see the god Aššur "in good standing."[353] In yet another text, illness is caused by shorting the gods, and *šā'iltum* were consulted, here the *bārītum* (female diviners) and the *eṭammū* (spirits of the dead) are also consulted.

> "1–3 Say to Imdī-ilum: thus (speak) Tarām-Kūbi and Šīmat-Aššur. 4–6 Here (in Aššur) we consulted the women dream interpreters, the women diviners, and the spirits of the dead, and (their answer was: 7 the god) Aššur keeps on warning you; 8–10 you love money (so much that) you despise your own life! 10–12 Can't you comply with (the god) Aššur's (wishes here) in the city (of Aššur)? 13–14 Urgent! When you have heard the letter, (then) come here, 15 meet (the god) Aššur face to face, and 16–17 save your life! 17–19 Why don't you send to me the proceeds from my textiles?"[354]

Across these letters, a clear pattern emerges: the god is not paid, the merchant ignores the god's warning, illness infects the family home, the women living at home consult female experts

[350] KTS 1 25a (WAW 42 256.)
[351] RA 59 165 (WAW 42 255.)
[352] WAW 42 265:5-13.
[353] WAW 42 265:21-24.
[354] TC 1 5 (WAW 42 252.)

of divine communication, the gods say to repay them, and the women plead with their male family member to do so.

There are a few cases which are not part of this pattern. Disease was not always the fault of offending the gods, as seen in this letter from Damiq-pī-Aššur:

1. *a-na i-na-a ù a-dí-da*
2. *qí-bi$_4$-ma* | *a-na i-na-a*
3. *qí-bi$_4$-ma* | *um-ma SIG$_5$-pì-i-a-šùr-ma*
4. *É-et-kà ša-lim* | *mì-ma*
5. *li-ba-kà lá i-pá-ri-id*
6. *a-na ša am-ru-ṣú-ni mì-ma*
7. *i-na li-bi$_4$-kà lá ta-ša-kán*
8. *a-šùr ù il$_5$-kà* | *qá-tí*
9. *i-ṣa-áb-tù-ma* | *áš-tí-lim*[355]

[1-3] To Innāya and Atīda, to Innāya: thus says Damiq-pī-Aššur: [4-5] Your house is well, don't trouble your heart with anything. [6-7] Do not put anything on your heart because I was sick; [8-9] Aššur and your god seized my hand, and I was well.

There is no clear action on Damiq-pī-Aššur's part, no mention of any plea to Aššur that was answered. While there were Assyrian rituals that involved healing the sick, whether one was used is unnamed. Interestingly, it is Innāya's god who allegedly healed Damiq-pī-Aššur, not his own. Damiq-pī-Aššur is not a known relative of Innāya, nor did he work under him.[356] However, other texts place the agency on the part of the human, who has to ensure the gods are pleased enough that they will act to save them.

The disease can also be caused by the divine, but not because of any fault on the part of the worshipper. There are two Old Assyrian incantation texts regarding the goddess/demoness Lamaštu, whose attacks bring disease upon the weaker members of the family. BIN 4, 126 is one of the very few Old Assyrian texts which relates a mythological story. Though brief, tells how Lamaštu was cast from the sky by her father Anum due to her evil nature. Lamaštu is described wearing no clothes and having loose hair, clearly as a subversion of what was expected from the Assyrian women. Lamaštu's victims are described as the godless people, children, and babies.[357] She was also a threat to young men and lions, signifying her great power. Whilst Wasserman and Zomer identify BIN 4 126 as an incantation, the text fails to mention any way to protect against the goddess, instead merely articulating her danger.[358] The second text, Or. 66 61, is an incantation written on a clay tablet with a handle that could serve as an amulet. Mesopotamians wore such amulets around their necks or hung them in the house. [359] This amulet is the only known of its type from both the Old Assyrian and Old

[355] CCT 4 14b:1-9.
[356] The same Damiq-pī-Aššur appears in AKT 6.
[357] BIN 4 126 (LAOS 12 160.)
[358] Wasserman and Zomer 2022:389.
[359] Wasserman and Zomer 2022:16.

Babylonian Periods.[360] The text on Or. 66 61 describes Lamaštu harming both the young and old, and living outside in the alfalfa-grass.[361]

5.3.4 Other Occasional Rituals

There are a few texts which could involve ritual but are too devoid of context to be neatly categorized. One short text might involve prices paid to people for a possible religious ceremony includes:

> "5 shekel for Imdī-ilum, 1/2 shekel for the priest (*GUDU*^{4}), 1/6 shekel for the singer, 1/8 shekel for the barber, 1/8 shekel for … (*ša ab ki tim*)"[362]

The barber might be present here because head-shaving could be a devotional act. A text about a wedding celebration mentions a woman shaving her head for the gods, so barbers were sometimes relevant for performing acts of devotion.[363] KT 8 345 details purchases made over time that seem to have ritualistic aspects, possibly for ceremonial meals. Of particular note is lines 7-8, which mention "a *kannu* in front of a chair."[364] *Kannu* could refer to a wooden rack, a metal pot stand, or a small container usually made of stone or precious metal, a rope, or a fetter.[365] Throughout the text different purchases are made at different times of the year, including at the time of festivals.[366] Another text describes what might be an Anatolian ritual that involved "drinking from the cup of your gods."[367] Sacrificing, and subsequently eating, animals was a regular ritualistic occurrence: When Ilī-bāni's will ordered his sons to continue to care for their *gubabtum* sister, part of their duties included: "from their (meat) offerings, they shall give breast cuts to (her)."[368] The *litum*-ritual is discussed in Dercksen 2011, and involved a ritualistic meal, involving sheep and flour. The *litum* was described as something someone "made," and took place at a specific time, probably during religious festivals, and probably took place at the temple.[369]

5.5 Transition Rituals

Childbirth would have been a fraught time for Assyrian woman due to the physical risks to their own health, as well as that of their child. Three of the Old Assyrian incantations involve birth, suggesting they may have been spoken by a lay-person, or kept near the woman as an amulet when he gives birth. All invoke the goddess Šassūr and her daughters, goddesses of birth only attested in this context.[370] The birth canal is referred to as the Araḫtum-canal in two of the incantations, which betrays their southern origin. In one incantation, the possibility of a

[360] Wasserman and Zomer 2022:16.
[361] Or. 66 61 (LAOS 12 162.)
[362] KT 8 133.
[363] ArAn 5 9f (WAW 42 14):61: "Our sister shaved her head for divine Ištar."
[364] KT 8 345:7-8.
[365] CAD K:154.
[366] AKT 8:461.
[367] KT 7a 294/t.
[368] ICK 1 12 (WAW 42 56):31–33; Dercksen 2011:66.
[369] Dercksen 2011:65; BIN 4 145.
[370] LAOS 12 11.

miscarriage is mentioned: “If it is a miscarriage – rejected by its god.” [371] Miscarriage is understood here as a birth that the gods decided was not fated to be. This sentiment might have helped parents with the sorrow a miscarriage can bring.

After birth and death, marriage marked one of the largest times of transition in the lives of Assyrians, especially for the women, who became members of a new family. Betrothal was marked by a gift exchange between the two families.[372] The location of the wedding might have been important; in some letters Assyrians emphasized the wedding should happen in Aššur.[373] However, Assyrians did sometimes marry outside their hometown.[374] Weddings could be long and expensive celebrations. In ArAn 5 9f, the brother of the bride entertained her husband-to-be, their new father-in law, and his friends, spending 81 ½ shekels of silver. He provided a large feast for them, including an ox, sheep, honey, hazelnuts, wine, and beer. He also bought new clothes for himself, his sister and the *amtum*-women.[375] Whether some of his expenses could have gone towards a ritual related to the wedding is unspecified, but certainly possible. The most intriguing part of the text is the ending, where:

> “[59-60] I invited our father-in-law and his friends at the *šaparrum*, and [I paid x shekels for] 7 jars (of beer), 1¼ shekel for a sheep, ¼ shekel for firewood, 15 grains for zu[x x]. [61] Our sister shaved her head for divine Ištar.”[376]

Michel wondered if the last line involves the bride becoming consecrated, as head-shaving before consecration is attested in the Old Babylonian period and at Emar. This would mean she was a *qadištum*, who do marry in Old Assyrian texts.[377] Assyrian women wore head-coverings after an unknown age or milestone.[378] Perhaps this was a metaphor for removing her head-covering when she married, or an otherwise unattested ritual to Ištar. The *šaparrum* was the “place of the throw net,” which was the symbol of an Assyrian deity in Kaneš.[379]

The marriage contract of Anatolian woman Hašušarnika and Assyrian man Puzur-Šamaš, where she was to be his *amtum*-wife, discussed the process should they divorce. If they divorced and he was found at fault, he would pay her one shekel of silver. If she was at fault: “she shall leave (the house), drawing out the garment pin (of her cloth).”[380] Günbattı said this might have been the pin given to her by her husband when they married.[381] While *amtum*-wives were not enslaved, this could be comparable to KT 8 156 where a slave changing owners was symbolized by cutting the *hāmum*.[382] In both separation was done both legally and through a symbolic separation of clothing.

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[371] LAOS 12 9; LAOS 12 11.
[372] KT 6d 742; Belleten 56 670ff (WAW 42 7); VS 26 33 (WAW 42 50.)
[373] ArAn 1:6 (WAW 42 13); ArAn 1 9-10 (WAW 42 12.)
[374] KT 1 76 (WAW 42 20); ICK 1 3 (WAW 42 24.)
[375] ArAn 5 9f (WAW 42 14.)
[376] ArAn 5 9f (WAW 42 14.)
[377] WAW 42:64.
[378] KT 3 80 (WAW 42 16); KT 1 77 (WAW 42 15):3-4.
[379] WAW 42:65.
[380] KT 10 41a (WAW 42 32):16–19.
[381] AKT 10:91.
[382] KT 8 156.

5.5.1 Death Rituals

For Old Assyrians, proper burial, and subsequent care of the spirits of their ancestors was their filial duty. Religion can give humans a framework for approaching and understanding loss. The Assyrians sometimes spoke of death as being *la libbi ilimma,* against the god's desire, and other times, euphemized it as going to one's fate.[383] The rituals surrounding death offered proper channels to express their grief, and the comfort that they were continuing to protect their loved ones in their new existence. The death of the *pater familias* would also mark a time of uncertainty and transformation for the family cult, as one son would inherent its upkeep.[384] In *Family and Household Religion in Israel*, Albertz and Schmitt define two groups of ritual care for the dead: "(1) irregularly observed rites, such as burial and mourning rites; and (2) regularly or periodically observed commemorative rites and rituals."[385] In his book on Mesopotamian Death Rituals, Cohen claims: "The domains of death rituals encompass the activities surrounding the mourners, the corpse, and the ghost."[386] The most common death rituals in Mesopotamia broadly were the *kispum*, the name-speaking (*zakār šumīšu*) and the libation (*nāq mê*).[387] Whilst there is no mention of *kispum* in the Old Assyrian corpus, the ritual is found in the Old Babylonian and Mari texts.[388]

Nation hypothesizes that the *nasbītum* was the Old Assyrian term for the *kispum*, in his recent extensive treatment on the Assyrian ritual.[389] In brief, there was a great-*nasbītum* that occurred twice a year and part of the *nasbītum* included visiting the temple for a ritual called the *tamrum*.[390] Imagery of the ruined household and family often accompanied mentions of the *nasbītum*.[391] In both, the family is doing poorly, and the *nasbītum* is mentioned, but the texts are broken. In Kt a/k 478b:36-38, provided to Nation by Dercksen, a woman visited her paternal home for the *nasbītum*.[392]

In the corpus, we see hints that it was important to be in the location of the corpse following their death, and people would travel or cancel plans to ensure their presence. Akatiya wrote to her brother about the death of a woman: "Kanua went to her fate here. I will not come there because of her."[393] In another text: "His son is dead. We were unable to go to him."[394]

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[383] Michel 2008:182; CAHIJ 7:249-250.
[384] Hertel 2013:342.
[385] Albertz and Schmitt 2012:493.
[386] Cohen 2005:16.
[387] Bouso 2014:70. There are a few Old Assyrian texts which might reference the name-speaking, including BIN 4 22 (WAW 42 124):23-29 and VS 26 33 (WAW 42 50):'13.
[388] Veenhof 2014:364.
[389] Nation 2024:81.
[390] Nation 2024:88.
[391] Nation 2024:90. Referencing ICK 4 I 708; CCT 6 11b:27–33; KTS 1 34b.
[392] Nation 2024:91.
[393] CAHIJ 07: 249-250:23-25: *a-na-kam Kà-nu-a a-na ší-im-tí-ša i-ta-lá-ak-ma:a-šu-mì ša lá a-la-kà-am*.
[394] OAA 1 76:20-21.

Providing for the dead was an important concern for the Assyrians. Šīmat-Ištar wrote: “I am consumed by worries over the house, while I also have to provide for the gods (of the family) and the spirits.”[395] KTK 18:7 has “tomorrow, will any outsider give me even one single shekel of silver so that I can sustain our paternal home and the spirits of the dead?”[396] This money must have been so they could provide the proper ritualistic care, perhaps for sacrifices or oil. After Pūšu-kēn’s death, his family’s houses in Aššur, including their furniture, was seized by debtors. The family described this as an insult to the spirits, likely because it made it more difficult for them to provide for the dead.[397]

5.5.1.1 *Bikītum*

The *bikītum* was a mourning ceremony and/or ritual performed following a person’s death. To Veenhof, the name implied the ceremony involved “the hiring and perhaps feeding of wailing women.”[398] The *bikītum* appears most often when parties are discussing its payment. For example, after speaking of their family business, Ennam-Aššur asked his wife, Anna-anna about the amount of grain used to complete the *bikītum.*”[399] Anna-anna wrote him about his brother’s actions after his father’s death, probably the reply to the above text: “They gave 1/3 mina of silver for the *bikītum*.”[400]

The best documentation of the *bikītum* is found in the tablets regarding the death of Ištar-lamassī, daughter of Elamma. Ištar-lamassī was an Assyrian woman living in Kaneš. Her first husband was named Kun-ilum, and they had three children together: Iliya, Ilabrat-bāni, and Šīmat-Ištar, who was a *gubatum* in Aššur. Her second husband was an Anatolian named Lullu, son of Hapi. She and both her sons died within a short time, ten years after her second marriage.[401] We first see mention of her *bikītum* in a letter from family members in Kaneš to those in Aššur informing them of their passing, which states that Ištar-lamassī’s Anatolian husband Lullu paid to bust her son Iliya out of jail (presumably before his death,) and spent 27 shekels of silver to cover the cost of her and her sons’ *bikītum*.[402] A memorandum claims that 19 ½ shekels of silver from what Ištar-lamassī left behind were spent on the *bikītum* and another 7 ½ shekels were given to Lullu as repayment for bailing Iliya.[403] This adds up to the 27 shekels that the earlier text says Lullu spent on the *bikītum*, suggesting he was reimbursed from Ištar-lamassī’s own silver. Another text, which documents what became of Ištar-lamassī’s silver after her death, also mentions the *bikītum*.

8. DUMU-*ú ku-ni-lim me-tù*

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[395] Veenhof 2014:364.
[396] Veenhof 1998:123.
[397] CCT 5 8a (WAW 42 278):15-19; BIN 6 59 (WAW 42 280):8-9.
[398] AKT 8:268.
[399] KT 6a 225:26-27: *ma-lá ú-ṭù-tum a-bi-ki-tim i-gi$_5$-im-ru.*
[400] KT 6a 238:28-31: *1/3 ma-na* [...] ⌜*a-na*⌝ *bi$_4$-ki-tim i-dí-nu.*
[401] AKT 8:253.
[402] KT 8 180:34-36*: lu a-na bi-ki-tim ša um-mì-ki ù a-ḫe-ki 1/3 ma-na 7 GÍN KÙ.BABBAR ga-me-er*; This is also mentioned in KT 8 181:7-9: *iš-tù gám-ru-um ù ša a-na bi-ki-tim ša um-mì-ki ù a-ḫi-ki iṣ-ḫe-ru*.
[403] KT 8 184.

9. *lu a-na bi-ki-tí-šu-nu*
10. *lu a-ku-sí-im ša*
11. *um-mì-šu-nu ṭá-bu-im*
12. *a-ḫu-ni e-ru-bu-ni-ma*
13. 1/3 *ma-na* LÁ 1/2 GÍN KÙ.BABBAR
14. *lu a-bi$_4$-ki-tí-šu-nu lu a-na*
15. *ku-sí-im ša um-mì-šu-nu*
16. *lu a-na nu-a-im a-šu-mì i-lí-a*
17. 7 1/2 GÍN KÙ.BABBAR
18. *a-ḫu-bu-‹li›-šu i-ší-qí-il$_5$*[404]

[8] After the sons of Kunilim died, [9] be it for their *bikītum* [10-11] or for her chair, their mother (removal). [12]. Our brothers arrived. [13-15] 1/3 mina minus 1/2 shekels of silver be for their *bikītum* or for the chair (removal) of their mother, [16-18] or for the Anatolian because of Iliā's 7 1/2 shekels of silver for his debt was paid.

The cost of the *bikītum* of Ištar-lamassī and her sons was paid to Lullu, either by "our brothers" or someone named Ahuni, after they arrived in town. Ištar-lamassī's chair was removed, but her sons either did not have this part of the ceremony, or the cost was covered by someone else. That the chair-removal is included in the costs here but not mentioned in the rest of the documents around the funeral might suggest it was part of the *bikītum* ceremony.

Another text, which discusses the Ištar-lamassī and her sons, this time apparently paid for by eight Assyrians from the silver found in Ištar-lamassī's father's house, with no mention of Lullu, remarkably lists the expense of each aspect of the ceremony.[405]

"[1-2] From the 1/3 mina of silver that was Ilabrat-bāni's share, [3-6] we booked 2 shekels for the bewailing, 2 2/3 shekels of silver for wheat we gave to Lullu, [6-7] 2 jars of beer we took on the day of the bewailing. [8-12] On the second day we paid 3 ¼ shekels for 2 sheep; 3/8 shekel for firewood, ¼ shekel for *subārum*, [13-16] ¼ shekel for reed, 1/12 shekel for onions, 1/12 shekel for reed for the jars, 2 1/6 shekels for a 'naked' sheep; [17] 7 jars of beer we drew, 3/8 shekel; [19-23] on the second day 4 jars of beer we drew; 1 shekel of silver (for) the son of Aššur-dān and 1 1/3 shekel for Lullu, for wheat, we added; 7 /12 shekel for 2 jars of beer we paid; [24] 1 shekel silver we paid for a sheep."[406]

To complete the question of who was left holding the bill, we can assume that Lullu covered the initial cost as well as Iliya's debt. These eight men found the silver in Ištar-lamassī's father's house, which was her own inheritance, and sent it to Lullu via "our brothers" or a man named Ahuni. There is no mention of the chair removal in this text, even with the more detailed information about the expenses. According to this text, the *bikītum* itself only seemed to last a single day, and required booking, which suggests the involvement of professionals. The second day seems to center around a feast, with a meal of 4 sheep, 7 jars of beer, "*subārum*," onions, and possibly Lullu's wheat. Veenhof suggested that the firewood was used for cooking.[407] The sheep or beer could have also been part of an offering.

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[404] KT 8 184:8-12.
[405] KT 8 185.
[406] KT 8 188.
[407] AKT 8:266.

In one letter, we see "*bikītum*" refer to a state of being. Akatiya wrote from Aššur to her brother Uṣur-ša-Ištar, declaring: "I dwell in mourning."[408] She also asked that her brother clear their father's claims, presumably he was the one who died, and come visit her. Is the *bikītum* here referring to the ritual, or merely her grief? If so, does it also involve a period of mourning along with the ceremony?

Included in the *bikītum* expenses of Ištar-lamassī is the chair removal. In Scurlock's article, Soul *Emplacements in Ancient Mesopotamian Funerary Rituals*, she examines the chair in Mesopotamian funerary rituals. The chair was a stand-in for the dead, in place of a statue.[409] The chair removal is also seen in an unpublished text, recounted by Veenhof in AKT 8 and provided to him by Barjamovic, which discusses the price of a chair removal ceremony.[410] As seen earlier in this paper, chairs were also a common element in the Home Temples set before the gods, perhaps acting in place of a divine statue in that formation.

5.5.1.2 Water-pouring

There is evidence for a funerary/mourning rite involving the pouring of water. One man, Ilabrat-bāni, wrote to his mother-in-law about the death of his *amtum*-wife's mother, who was probably an Anatolian:

> "4–6 Unfortunately, the mother of the *amtum*-wife has died! 7–9 Take the *ezadum* for her, and let her pour water on the brazier. 10–11 Then, give her one or 2 pitchers of beer. 12 My ladies should be strong!"[411]
>
> Line 6. Michel suggested *ezadum* could refer to an offering or cultic vase, and revealed it was beside Išḫara in TuM 1, 7c; Kt 94/k 432 and 462.[412]

The beginning of accounting text TC 3, 155 includes an interesting expense:

1. *1/2 ma-na KÙ.BABBAR*
2. *a-na gám-ri-im ša ma-e*
3. *ta-ba-ki-im ga-me-er*[413]

> "½ mina of silver was spent on the cost for pouring water in total."

In a letter written by Ištar-Lamassī, she mentions that she will go out for water after mentioning the death of a slave, though their relation is tenuous.[414] Water pouring is also a common element in glyptic art.[415]

5.5.1.3 Burials

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[408] CAHIJ 07:250-251:9-10: *i-na bi⁴-ki-tim wa-áš-ba-ku.*
[409] Scurlock 2002, 2.
[410] AKT 8:261.
[411] WAW 42 248.
[412] WAW 42:369-370.
[413] TC 3 155.
[414] TC 3 103 (WAW 42 249.)
[415] Ricetti 2018, examples include: Te 303, 304, 307, 322-327; CS 142, 296, 325, 399, 662; St 35; cf. CS 211, 406, 571, 796.

There was no strict rule for Assyrian burials. Tombs were both extramural and intramural; the dead could be inhumated, buried in jars, or in cist tombs under the floors of houses.[416] The intramural burials are more relevant here, where the dead rested under the floors or within the walls of the family home.[417] In texts, burials and/or funerals were mostly discussed regarding their cost, which varied significantly.[418]

The dead were accompanied by a range of goods, and graves were reopened and reused, the objects within a grave sometimes were moved to accompany a newer occupant.[419] In Assyrian burials, the eyes, mouth, and occasionally breasts of the dead were covered in thin gold (and less frequently silver) strips.[420] The Assyrian dead were also buried wearing golden or gold-plated bracelets, rings, or diadems. This practice is not otherwise attested in Anatolia, and as a similar burial was found in Aššur proper, this must have been an Assyrian tradition.[421] Along with golden accessories, a wide array of objects were found in graves, including containers intended to hold food and drink, weapons, belt-buckles, cosmetic boxes, amulets shaped like animals, hair decorations, and beads.[422] Burials could also hold religious artifacts, such as divine statuettes.[423] However, from letters, it is the gold that most concerned the Assyrians. In the unpublished letter Kt a/k 478, an Assyrian woman wrote to her husband: “Don’t you hear that there is famine in the City? When I die from hunger you will bury me with silver!”[424] In CCT 5 37a, at the time of a woman’s death, the writer purchased a good textile, a garment, gold, grain, 1 sheep, and an *abnum*-stone.[425]

The dead being buried in the paternal house meant that keeping the house in the family’s possession was important, so the dead could be properly cared for. Protecting the house, and protecting the spirits of the dead was synonymous.[426] KT 5 38 might reference a house in Kaneš where someone is buried, that is in danger of falling out of the family’s control.[427] “Saving the spirits of the father” is a reoccurring concern for Assyrians which Veenhof believed was related to the paternal house, with the buried dead, falling out of the family’s hands.[428] In a similar vein, Michel translated a section of an unpublished letter from Akatiya, which includes “Take all the silver that falls into your hands and come here with the silver, then clear (i.e., remove the claims) on the spirits of our father and on our paternal house.”[429] In TPAK 46, the paternal home was in danger of being sold. The danger is described as such:

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[416] Bouso 2014:76; Michel 2008:184; Kale, Üstündağ, Özen, Özgü, and Kulakoğlu 2024:137.
[417] Bouso 2014:76.
[418] KT 5 40; TPAK 212; Kt n/k 204 (Veenhof 2014:364, courtesy S. Bayram); Hecker 2004b:54 (WAW 42 64):11-15; KT 6a 251; KT 6a 273; AKT 6a:433.
[419] Kale, Üstündağ, Özen, Özgü, and Kulakoğlu 2024:137.
[420] Larsen 2015:85-86.
[421] Özgüç 1986:25-29.
[422] Michel 2008:184; Özgüç 1986:36.
[423] Michel 2008:184; Özgüç 1986:33.
[424] Kt a/k 478 (Veenhof 1998: footnote 22.)
[425] CCT 5 37a (APU 523.)
[426] Veenhof 2014:364.
[427] KT 5 38.
[428] Veenhof 2014:364.
[429] Kt 93/k 74:36–40 (WAW 42:400, copying from Michel 2008f 190.)

17. *qá-tum ša* É *a-bi-ku-nu*
18. *ṣa-ba-tim* | *ú e-ṭá-me*
19. *ša a-bi$_4$-ku-nu* | *e-ṭá-ri-im* [430]

17-19 […] Instead of assisting the house of your father, and saving the spirit of your father (you keep writing about quarrels)."

The dead being buried at the paternal house made the location harder to replace, and also made it more important for a member of the family to be present to care for the spirits. That said, Assyrians would also bury their dead in their homes in Anatolia, and there is no evidence that a body was ever moved to a different city from where the person died. While the bodies interred at the paternal home bound the family to Aššur, they could also make the family similarly fixed to Kaneš or other Anatolian cities, as seen in KT 5 38. Journeying to the site of a funeral was also important to Assyrians, and when a loved one was buried while they were not present, they made note. While care for the dead, both their funerals and subsequent care for their spirits, seem designed to keep the family together, in practice the death of merchants often led to protracted legal battles between their heirs.

[430] TPAK 1 46.

6. Conclusion

The Assyrians had a religious obligation to their paternal home and to the Temple of Aššur. Several religious rituals seem to have required the physical presence of the worshipper at the scene, and Assyrians frequently implored their correspondents to return home and physically appear before Aššur and their family gods. This religious obligation, as well, perhaps, as their financial obligations to the temples, kept the Assyrian merchants bound to their home city, and paternal home, even if they had lived abroad for many decades. It is with this language of religious duty that Assyrian women ask that their husbands and brothers return home and help take care of their duties there. Assyrians used religious language and calls to the gods to influence the actions of their family members and business partners alike.

The paternal home had particular importance to Assyrians, because of either the Home Temple or the graves within, but these characteristics are also attested in their homes in Anatolia. Most of our possible Home Temples were located in Kaneš, whether they might have served as either public institutions where Assyrians from outside the home could gather, or private family shrines. Likewise, Assyrians were laid to rest near the city where they died, be it in Assyria or Anatolia. Despite this, the homes in Kaneš never seem to trump the importance of the paternal home in Aššur, perhaps due to size, location, or simply time. When Assyrians were asked to return home and see their father's god, they are never being told to return to Kaneš. Their duty remained to the paternal home, the spirits within, and perhaps the gods who guarded it.

In one sense, religion was a tool that bound the Assyrian merchant family together and ensured they would continue to protect each other and the family business no matter how far away they traveled. Assyrians had a mutually beneficial relationship with their gods, and to live well, they had to keep the gods pleased, and fulfill their religious duties to them. The stability of the Household was dependent on this relationship remaining a positive one, and no matter where an Assyrian traveled, if the gods were displeased, it would be the paternal home and those living within that would suffer. While this kept families together, it also left the people living within the city particularly vulnerable, should the travelers not care if they are facing divine anger back home. This could lead to conflict between family members about the importance of serving the gods and protecting the paternal home. The relationship between the Assyrians and their gods was part of the fabric that held families together, for good and ill.

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