



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Killing humans and felling trees in Assyrian warfare iconography: a possible analogy between means of weakening the enemies?

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Abstract

Fighting many battles, the Neo-Assyrian kings also placed images of armed conflicts in their palaces. Soldiers and war horses have been thoroughly studied, however, few studies have examined the fate of plants in these scenes. Yet the Assyrians had no hesitation in felling trees, both to make their way and to weaken enemies. This paper therefore proposes to resume the systematic study of the destruction of plants in Assyrian war reliefs in order to gain a better understanding of trees in the visual staging of war. The study corpus is based on the war reliefs of Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal (7th century BC) in Nineveh as they bear witness to the repeated felling of trees, shrubs and plants. These actions seem to be closely linked to the killing of human enemies: when a soldier cuts down a date palm at its root, source of life, another decapitates an enemy, thereby depriving him of his vital impetus. If these two images seem to communicate both through their proximity in the image and their similar narrative character, is it possible to see a visual and discursive analogy in the closeness of the abused, killed and felled bodies?

Keywords

figurative motif, warfare iconography, trees, Assyria, visual analogy

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