ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

A solid statement? Imitating Babylonian kudurru-stelae in 8th-century BC Assyria

EDMONDS A. [1]*

[1] University Of Mnster, Mnster, Germany

*Corresponding author

Abstract

Few periods of Assyrian history are as hotly debated as that of the 8th century BC. Characterised by a lack of territorial expansion and the prominence of various high officials, some have imagined the era as one of weak kings and stagnation, and others of productive devolution and provincial consolidation. Central in understanding this period are an unprecedented array of monumental stelae of both high officials and members of the royal family. Although these have been understood hitherto as a solely Assyrian phenomenon, their iconographical resemblance to Babylonian kudurru-stelae has been noted.

This study re-investigates this phenomenon of Assyrian elite commemorative stelae, demonstrating that they are both iconographically and textually dependent on Babylonian *kudurru*-stelae. Moreover, the creation of boundary markers (*ta??mu*) between vassals in the west by Sammu-r?mat and Adad-n?r?r? III is shown to be a reflex of the same appropriation of *kudurru*-stelae. From these observations and other data, a new, Babylonian-inspired model of governance in early 8th-century Assyria is articulated, the repercussions of which are outlined in the talk's final part. In such a manner, the 'medium' of the kudurru-like stelae is demonstrated to have outstripped text's 'message' well before the pomp of the late Neo-Assyrian era.

Keywords

kudurru, materiality, Assyria

Session

4. The materiality of inscribed and figurative objects

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