

THE ASSYRIANS: THE HISTORY OF THE MOST PROMINENT EMPIRE OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

sons and daughters like kids. Just as the squeak produced by this door pivot, so may you, your women, your sons and daughters never rest nor sleep, not even your bones should stay together.” (Prichard 1992, 535-40).

The grim and graphic language of the oaths was reinforced by the knowledge of what happened to previous peoples who the Assyrians slaughtered in the past. Any ruler who was under Assyrian hegemony only needed to read the oath he signed to realize what results he could expect if he decided to rebel. The oaths also therefore served as a psychological weapon against potential rebels.

Assyrian Kingship and Religion

The concept of kingship was at the center of Assyrian society, and like most ancient societies, it was inextricably enmeshed with religion. The Assyrian king was never deified like the pharaohs in Egypt, but absolute royal power became part of the development of kingship in Assyria and was linked to the acquisition of empire (Kuhrt 2010, 2:505).

Although not divine, the Assyrian king was chosen and allowed to rule by the divine, and as texts relate, he was also given the ends of the earth. Numerous Assyrian texts refer to the king as the “King of the Universe,” as in this example from the reign of Esarhaddon: “Esarhaddon, king of the universe, king of Assyria,

