

## Levantine “I Am” Monuments

Sometime during the Late Bronze Age, a new kind of inscribed artifact emerged in the Levant, one that spoke for itself with the voice of a king. This was not entirely unprecedented; monumental inscriptions had been presented as first-person accounts for centuries prior to the emergence of “I Am” monuments. However, the specific combination of communicative strategies displayed in these artifacts – their monumental discourse (Assmann 2011, 149–51) – was unique. Most importantly, the designation for these artifacts was entirely new. Rather than being designated by the name of a king or by a label for the epigraphic support, the inscription on these artifacts simply began “I am . . .” These monuments were thus no longer objects that had been inscribed by other entities, nor were they simply the bearers of messages from kings. Rather, “I Am” monuments were presented to communities as though they were subjects – interactive entities speaking for themselves as an “I.” This fundamentally changed how communities viewed these artifacts and interacted with them. From an ancient Levantine perspective, these monuments had the potential to transcend any symbolic function that might be ascribed them and become instead substitutes rather than representations of the elite speaking in the inscription.<sup>1</sup> While it would take some centuries for these monuments to

<sup>1</sup> On “I Am” monuments, the inscription is the primary piece of evidence that allows us to label them. This was the key to the monuments’ function as a substitute for a person rather than as a representation of them. However, in the ancient world, most of the community experiencing “I Am” monuments could not read them for themselves, though there is evidence to suggest that these inscriptions were read aloud by specialists. Instead, many would encounter “I Am” monuments as visual and tactile media, so the iconography, epigraphic support, and ritual emplacement and engagement with these monuments were often carefully crafted to buttress the function and message of the inscription. Ultimately, these artifacts were encountered as mixed media that communicated to audiences through a variety of strategies that were not easily disentangled (Hogue 2022c, 15–18).

gain popularity, they would eventually become the premier monument type in the Iron Age Levant (Hogue 2019b).

What did these “I Am” monuments have to do with the Decalogue? In this study, I will argue that they were the model for its discourse. While the Decalogue as we know it is not inscribed in stone, it nevertheless evokes the experience of encountering a stone monument. This is partially accomplished by the narrative surrounding the Decalogue, which contains depictions of stone monuments and the rituals surrounding them. But this is also accomplished by the wording of the Decalogue. In the next chapter, I will argue that most of the verses in the Decalogue draw on phraseology and tropes common to Levantine “I Am” monuments. By utilizing this tradition of verbal discourse, the composers of the Decalogue presented it as though it were an “I Am” monument, even apart from the narrative surrounding it. As stated previously, the Decalogue is an “I Am” monument made of words. In this chapter, I explore the discourse of “I Am” monuments in historical sequence to promote a richer understanding of the communicative strategies on display in the Decalogue.

#### THE CONTOURS OF A HISTORY OF “I AM” MONUMENTS

It is important to stress at the outset that the label “I Am” monument is more a functional designation than a formal reference to genre. Monuments of this type include memorial inscriptions, dedicatory inscriptions, funerary inscriptions, and hybrids of those genres, but they function in roughly the same way and share a common monumental discourse. All of these monuments provoke an imagined encounter with the individual presented as speaking in the inscription’s opening lines. That person was thus reembodyed or given an alternative physical manifestation in the form of the monument (Belk 2013, 481–84). By reembodying a significant individual for a particular audience, these inscriptions promoted social formation on the basis of that encounter (Hogue 2021a). Broadly speaking, this was the function adapted by the Decalogue, but this function was accomplished by different discursive strategies throughout the history of Levantine “I Am” monuments.

I should also justify my use of “Levantine” as opposed to other regional, cultural, or linguistic labels. “Northwest Semitic” and “Hieroglyphic Luwian” are often used to designate corpora of inscriptions, but these are both linguistic/epigraphic descriptors and thus unsuitable for describing nonlinguistic elements of monumental discourse. “Syro-Anatolian” does better at providing a regional label, but even as

the definition of this region is expanding, it is never used to include southern Levantine polities like Israel or Moab. “Syro-Hittite” suffers from the same regional restrictions and also implies a further limitation to the successor polities of the Hittite Empire. While the Hittites did provide significant grist for the mill of Levantine monumental discourse, they were not its sole progenitors. Their successor states also wielded significant influence over a much larger region than the empire previously covered. In contrast to these other labels, “Levantine” implies a broad regional association for this monumental discourse without limiting it to the northern Levant or to particular linguistic or epigraphic traditions.

Furthermore, approaching “I Am” monuments as a broad Levantine phenomenon will allow me to construct a larger comparative corpus than any previous studies have utilized. Most importantly, this makes it possible to consider Northwest Semitic, Hieroglyphic Luwian, and even Akkadian inscriptions on “I Am” monuments in concert. These corpora are admittedly in very different languages written in substantially different writing systems. That is where the differences end, however. There is mounting evidence that these linguistic differences were actively bridged through calquing and borrowing of major poetic devices, tropes, and themes (Masson 2010, 53; Yakubovich 2010, 396; 2011, 181; 2015; Melchert 2010; 2021; Aro 2013, 234–38; Hogue 2019b; 2019c). There are also clear cases of the adaptation of Hieroglyphic Luwian-inspired orthography and iconography in Northwest Semitic and Akkadian inscriptions (Hamilton 1998, 222; Bunnens 2005; Struble and Herrmann 2009, 20; Gilibert 2011, 82).<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the ritual engagement with and spatial distribution of the inscriptions are not significantly different but rather point to a shared tradition of monumental discourse (Gilibert 2011, 5–18, 115–37). Eva von Dassow is thus absolutely correct to conclude that the separation between these corpora is not one of cultures but of disciplines (Dassow 2020). The different linguistic codes used in various “I Am” monuments were unique expressions of the same underlying monumental discourse (Mazzoni 1997, 301; von Dassow 1999, 249; Bunnens 1999, 615; Bunnens 2000, 16–17; Novák, Prayon, and Wittke 2004, 2–4; Gilibert 2011, 9; Sanders 2013, 51; Herrmann, van den Hout, and Beyazlar 2016, 70).

<sup>2</sup> The close relationship between these corpora despite their use of different languages is also suggested by the existence of at least two trilinguals: ARSLANTAŞ and INCIRLI (Hawkins 2000, 246; Kaufman 2007). These monuments include inscriptions in Hieroglyphic Luwian, Akkadian, and a Northwest Semitic dialect (Aramaic in the case of ARSLANTAŞ and Phoenician in the case of INCIRLI).

### Method: Dimensions of Meaning Affordance

But what, precisely, was the monumental discourse of Levantine “I Am” monuments? As stated before, these monuments exhibit three discursive dimensions: verbal, aesthetic, and spatial. Verbal discourse primarily includes the content of a monument’s inscription: its language, semantics, poetics, and any other aspect of the monument experienced through reading. Aesthetic discourse includes any aspects of the monument experienced as visual or tactile media: its material, orthography, iconography, epigraphic support, and any associated artifacts. Spatial discourse includes any aspects of the monument experienced in terms of location or locomotion: its emplacement on both a local and regional scale, its architectural context, and the practices of engagement it affords, especially rituals (Hogue 2022c; see also Watts 2013; Thomas 2014, 50–51). These types are differentiated mostly for heuristic purposes; they were utilized in concert by ancient artisans and audiences and are sometimes difficult to disentangle.

Together, these dimensions of monumental discourse made particular horizons of meaning available to a monument’s users. They facilitated communal sense-making and meaning-making (Hogue 2021a). In the case of “I Am” monuments in particular, all of these dimensions primarily facilitated an encounter with the monument’s *agent*. By this term, I refer to the fictionalized version of the monument commissioner encountered through the monument (Hogue 2019b). In ancient West Asia, many monuments were understood as extensions or reembodiments of their commissioners, rather than as representations. That is, these monuments were actually experienced by their original audiences as though they were persons, not objects. They were ontologically equivalent to the person encountered through the monument (Bahrani 2014). Levantine “I Am” monuments accomplished this in historically dynamic ways through their verbal, aesthetic, and spatial discourses. The rest of this chapter will provide an historical overview of these strategies.

### Corpus

While I will only present a few case studies in the historical overview comprising the rest of this chapter, I have considered a much larger corpus in constructing this history. Here, I will discuss the corpus in its entirety and point the reader to additional resources concerning each monument

I include. “I Am” monuments first appeared in the Levant during the Late Bronze Age and they continued to be produced until the Hellenistic period.<sup>3</sup> However, the differences evinced by “I Am” inscriptions from these periods as well as the distribution of evidence suggest that the monumental discourse imitated by the Decalogue should be sought among the inscriptions of the Iron Age. Note especially that production of “I Am” inscriptions in the Levant decreased considerably after the eighth century (see Fig. 1).

Accounting for all known Levantine “I Am” Monuments produces a list of ninety monuments, the vast majority of which date to the Iron Age (see Appendix 1 for complete list with references). See Figure 2 for the locations of the Iron Age monuments on this list that were discovered in situ. As much as possible, this study will contextualize the

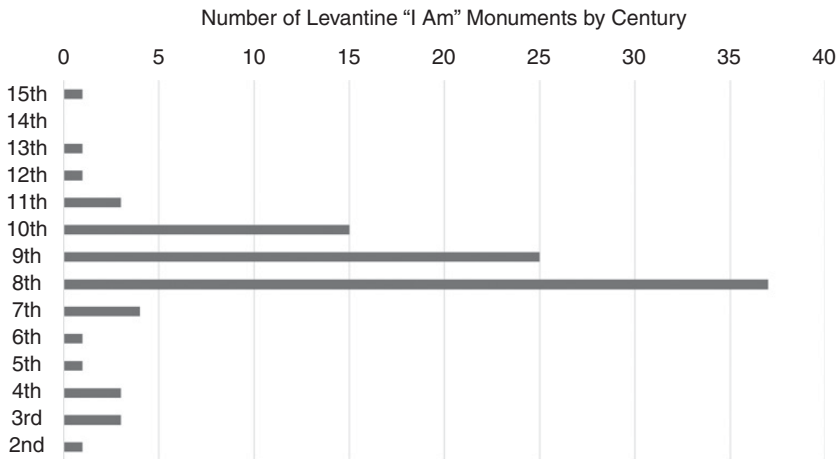


FIGURE 1 Chart showing the number of Levantine “I Am” monuments by century.

<sup>3</sup> Only four “I Am” inscriptions survive from the Late Bronze Age. One of these – ZA 31 – is a brick inscription from Kassite Babylon that may not be related to the Levantine tradition (Bartelmus 2010, 149–50; Abraham and Gabbay 2013, 186). The Idrimi Inscription likely served as inspiration for the adaptation of the “I Am” formula in the two Hittite examples, and these directly inspired emulation in the neo-Hittite and other Levantine polities. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the Hittites adapted Idrimi’s formula to best suit preexisting Hittite monumental discourse, and that Hittite discourse could not be uncritically emulated by the neo-Hittites as they were no longer projecting an ideology on an imperial scale.

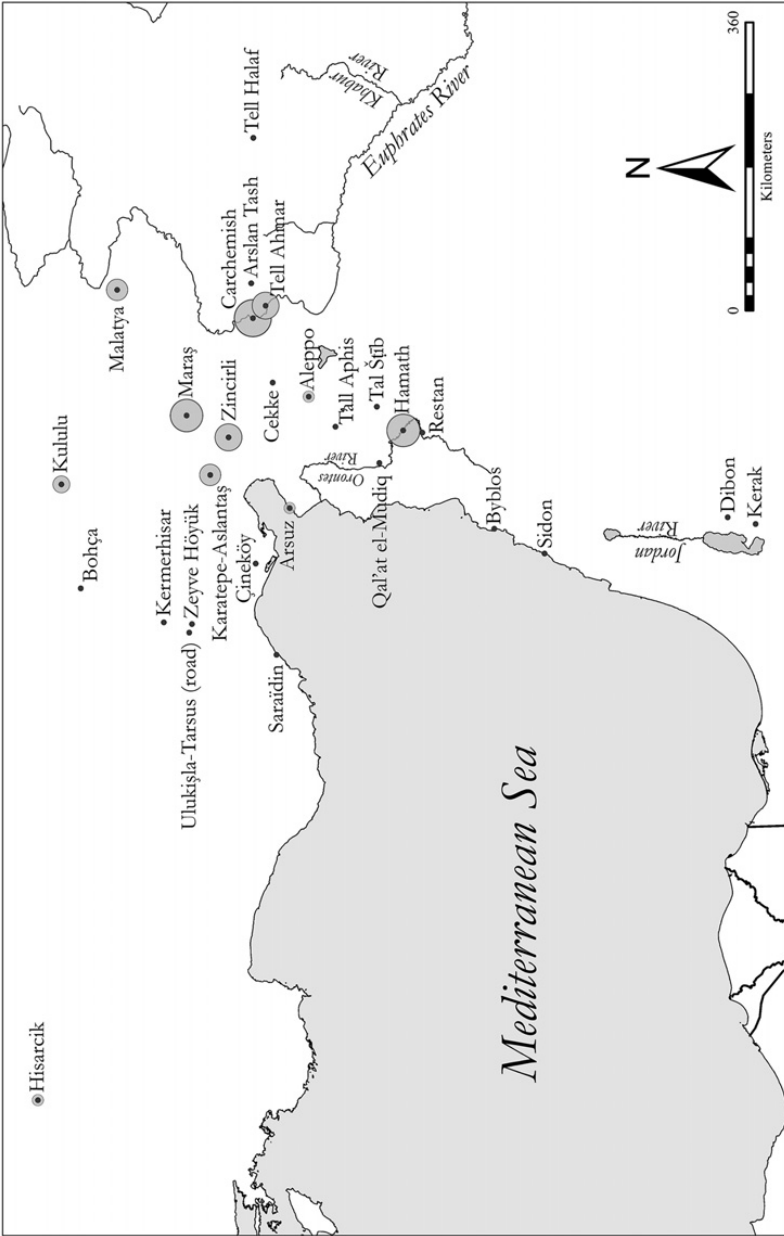


FIGURE 2. Map showing the sites of Iron Age and Persian period Levantine “I Am” inscriptions discovered in situ. The size of markers indicates the number of independent inscriptions discovered there. Map by Amy Karoll.

monumentality of the Decalogue within the monumentality of these artifacts. Where it is helpful, these artifacts will be compared to the broader corpora of Northwest Semitic inscriptions and Hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions with which they share the most in common. Neo-Assyrian monuments will also provide an important comparative body of evidence for some periods in the history of these inscriptions (Na’aman 2006; Sanders 2009, 120–22; Dobbs-Allsopp and Pioske 2019). My corpus excludes, however, Akkadian “I Am” inscriptions from Mesopotamia, which merely adapt the “I Am” formula to head otherwise standard Mesopotamian monumental inscriptions (Hogue 2019a, 337–38).

### Historical Phases of Levantine “I Am” Monuments

I periodize the inscriptions in this corpus into six broad phases, only some of which will directly concern the Decalogue (see Fig. 3 for the distribution of monuments in these periods by epigraphic type). I have derived four of these phases from the diachronic presentation of monuments proposed by Alessandra Gilibert in her study of monuments from Sam’al (modern Zincirli) and Karkamiš (Gilibert 2011, 115–32). I propose here relabeling one of her phases, slight changes to some of her dates, and adding two additional ones to better account for Levantine “I Am” monuments from

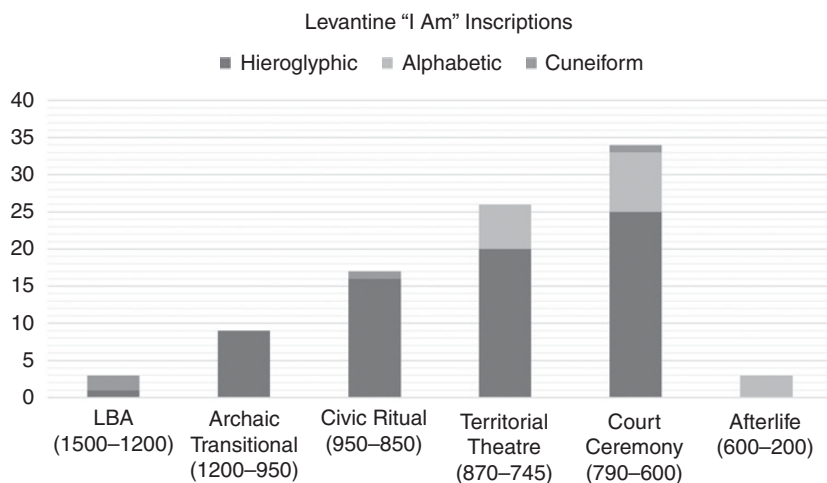


FIGURE 3 Chart showing the numbers of Levantine “I Am” monuments by epigraphic type and period.

other sites. The resulting periods are (1) the Late Bronze Age (1500–1200 BCE), (2) the Archaic Transitional period (1200–950 BCE), (3) the Age of Civic Ritual (950–850 BCE), (4) the Age of Territorial Theatre (870–745 BCE), (5) the Age of Court Ceremony (790–600 BCE),<sup>4</sup> and (6) the Afterlife of “I Am” monuments. The major breaks I make from Gilibert are as follows. I replace her “mature transitional period” with “the Age of Territorial Theatre.” As will be shown “The Age of Territorial Theatre” later in this chapter, this period was marked by a combination of territoriality and monumentality not seen before or after among Levantine “I Am” monuments. Also, because I am utilizing data from the southern Levant in addition to Gilibert’s from the northern Levant, it is possible to extend the Age of Territorial Theatre to 745 BCE. This results in a slight overlap with the Age of Court Ceremony, which should itself be extended at least to the end of the seventh century when the southern Levant underwent similar changes to those attested in the north in the late eighth. I also add the Late Bronze Age to account for the origins of “I Am” monuments as well as an afterlife period to account for their decline.

In the sections that follow, I provide a more detailed overview of the major historical phases of Levantine “I Am” monuments and the cultural interactions that shaped them. I will provide brief case studies of major monumental installations to illustrate the most significant discursive features of each period. This history of monuments will provide the baseline for constructing a history of the Decalogue’s monumentality in the rest of the book. My intent is to situate the Decalogue within these periods by determining when the discourse it utilized was in vogue in the Levant.

#### ORIGINS IN THE LATE BRONZE AGE: IDRIMI OF ALALAḤ

“I Am” monuments first appeared during the Late Bronze Age in North Syria. The earliest example is the statue of Idrimi of AlalaḤ. In the fifteenth century BCE, Idrimi, the King of AlalaḤ, erected a monument celebrating his rise to power.<sup>5</sup> The inscription originally appeared unique in the context of Bronze Age monumental inscriptions, leading A. Leo Oppenheim to conclude that it was “of a specific literary tradition, totally

<sup>4</sup> Gilibert’s periods, especially from the Age of Civic Ritual to the Age of Court Ceremony, almost line up (though not perfectly) with the Iron IIa, Iron IIb, and Iron IIc periods. However, because these periods in monumentality overlap with one another and cannot be perfectly attached to other archaeological dating schemes, I maintain Gilibert’s terminology.

<sup>5</sup> For a transliteration and translation of this and all other texts used for case studies in this chapter, see Appendix 2.



different in temper and scope than that of the ancient Near East” (Oppenheim 1955, 200). However, Edward Greenstein and David Marcus later demonstrated that many of the problems in the text disappear when it is connected to traditions such as those preserved in the Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitic inscriptions (Greenstein and Marcus 1976, 63 ff.). Idrimi’s monument was certainly innovative, but it began a trend that continued for over a millennium.

Idrimi’s monument is the earliest occurrence of an inscription opening with the words “I Am,” and this phrase was instrumental for integrating the monument’s verbal, aesthetic, and spatial discourse. The inscription opens as follows:

<sup>(1-2)</sup>*a-na-ku* <sup>m</sup>*id-ri-mi* DUMU <sup>m</sup>DINGIR-*i-lim-ma* ARAD <sup>d</sup>IM<sup>1</sup> <sup>d</sup>*be<sub>2</sub>-bat u<sub>3</sub>* <sup>d</sup>*iš<sub>8</sub>-tar<sub>2</sub>* NIN <sup>iri</sup>*a-la-la-ab* NIN; NIN-*ia*

<sup>(1-2)</sup>I am Idrimi, son of Ilī-ilimma, servant of the Storm-god, Hebat, and Ištar, the lady of Alalah, the lady, my lady.<sup>6</sup>

Already, this inscription reveals what would become the standard format of the “I Am” formula: the first-person pronoun followed by the agent’s name, genealogy, and titles. While there is some variety in the appositional information following the agent’s name, this material always serves to define the agent’s relationship to other significant figures and the monument’s users (Hogue 2019b, 87). This same format is seen throughout the history of “I Am” monuments.

But what was the significance of beginning the inscription with the word “I”? Other ancient West Asian monuments tended to open with the dedicator’s name or with a designation for the dedicated object (e.g., “stele” or “statue”) (Sanders 2009, 114). Beginning with the first-person pronoun instead foregrounds deixis. Deixis includes any relative parts of language that cannot be understood apart from their spatial, temporal, and personal contexts. In the words of Peter Stockwell, deixis is “central to the idea of the embodiment of perception” (Stockwell 2002, 41). The “I Am” opening implies a personal and spatiotemporal origin for the discourse that follows.

Most significantly, by opening with the pronoun rather than the agent’s name or epigraphic support, “I Am” monuments create a short-lived tension during which the users must quickly decide which coordinates to

<sup>6</sup> For a recent edition of the text see Jacob Lauinger, “Statue of Idrimi,” *Oracc: The Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus*. <http://oracc.org/aemw/alalakh/idrimi/X123456/html> (accessed July 10, 2017).

assign to the “I” in order to make sense of the artifact and its text. It is thus not the agent’s identification that comes first but his perspective, and the users are prompted to project into this perspective from the beginning of the text. This process is known as deictic projection, and it is the single most important function of the monumental discourse of these artifacts (Turner 1996, 100–101; Herman 1999, 539; Hogue 2019b). Deictic projection allowed users to “get inside” the text and take “a cognitive stance within the mentally constructed world of the text” (Stockwell 2002, 46). The users could thus “see things virtually from the perspective of the character or narrator inside the text-world” (Stockwell 2002, 47). This was how these artifacts created communities: by reshaping their users’ perspectives into that of the agent.

Deictic projection via the “I Am” formula provoked the users to imagine that the agent was actually present and addressing them through the monument. Kristel Zilmer argues that in monumental inscriptions “proximal deictic features,” like the first-person pronoun, “create an image of orality in the mode of expression” and “fulfill a gestural function and connect the written with the oral” (Zilmer 2010b, 138). Because the audience experiences the monument as speech, “there unfolds interaction similar to face-to-face communication that we would otherwise experience in oral contexts” (Zilmer 2010b, 147). This presentation “creates the image of an immediate encounter between the commissioners of the memorial and the audience” (Zilmer 2010b, 152). In other words, Levantine “I Am” monumental inscriptions begin with the agents gesturing to themselves, suggesting that they are present and speaking to the users of the monument. The use of the personal deictic element “I” actually produces the presence of the implied speaker by conjuring him within the imagination of the audience “as if he were standing right in front of us” (Sanders 2009, 114; 2012, 35). It textually reembodies him. Idrimi inventively paired this verbal discourse with the aesthetic discourse of his monument.

Idrimi’s inscription was carved on a statue of the king himself. Of the remaining “I Am” monuments, twelve more are statues or statue bases.<sup>7</sup> The “I Am” formula was carved across the mouth of the statue, emphasizing that it was meant to manifest the voice of that statue (Longman

<sup>7</sup> KARKAMIŞ A15b, MARAŞ 4, MARAŞ 14, MARAŞ 13, KIRÇOĞLU, PALANGA, ÇINEKÖY, the copy of the Azatiwada Inscription on a statue (KAI 26 C), the Zakkur Statue (KAI 202), the Hadad Statue (KAI 214), the Kerak Statue (KAI 306), and the Kapar(r)a Inscription.

1991, 60). Stephen Houston and David Stuart have argued that the similar use of personal deixis in Mayan monuments “accentuates the intimate oration directed to a living actor by a sculpted image” (Houston and Stuart 1998, 88; Houston 2006, 142). The inscription thus worked in tandem with the statue to mediate an encounter between Idrimi and his users (Aro 2013, 237). This function was already closely associated with ancient West Asian statues. As mentioned previously, from an emic perspective such artifacts were not understood as mere representations. Rather, the statue is better understood as a substitute or duplicate of Idrimi. It would have been understood as possessing its own personhood, which was equivalent to that possessed in Idrimi’s organic body. Zainab Bahrani argues that such artifacts should be understood as “ways of encountering that person” or “modes of presencing” (Bahrani 2003, 128, 135). That is, the statue itself was understood as an agent that could interact with its users. The “I Am” statement thus refers to the statue, which was indistinguishable from Idrimi himself (Aro 2013, 237).

The function of Idrimi’s statue can be further inferred from its spatial discourse. It was likely originally placed in a cultic installation, but it was buried by later users of the monument after it was destroyed by an invading force. This ritual interaction serves as further evidence that the statue was actually understood as a person from an emic perspective – as a duplicate of Idrimi himself. The “I Am” statement literally transformed the statue into Idrimi, rendering him present wherever the statue was (Hogue 2019b, 327). After its destruction, it needed to be ritually buried much as would be done for organic human remains. Most importantly, it is clear that the monument was socially powerful and continued to be received as such after its original production. This power necessitated a proper response by later generations. In sum, the “I Am” statement tied different “modes of presencing” together, creating a uniquely Levantine means of transforming artifacts into agents by reembodying the individual identified as the speaker in the inscription.

This innovation did not end at Alalah. It was later emulated by the Hittites. Tudḫaliya IV (ca. 1237–1209 BCE) had a seated statue produced in the style of Idrimi (Otten 1963, 17; Aro 2013, 241). His successor Šuppiluliuma II (ca. 1207–1178 BCE) then adapted the “I Am” formula in NIŞANTAŞ, a rock inscription in Hieroglyphic Luwian (Schachner et al. 2016, 31–32). This Hittite adaptation of the “I Am” formula is significant because it dislocated the formula from statuary. While a statue may have been erected alongside NIŞANTAŞ, no such statue has been found (Aro 2013, 244; Payne 2016, 293). Because the formula itself manifested the

presence of the king, a statue was not always necessary. This freer relationship between the verbal and aesthetic discourse of monuments characterizes the rest of the history of Levantine “I Am” monuments. Most surprisingly, Šuppiliuma’s inscription was duplicated in Hittite on a clay tablet in the context of an annalistic narrative – KBo 12.38 (Güterbock 1967, 76–81). We will return to a discussion of KBo 12.38 in the next chapter. Though separated by some centuries, it demonstrates that the literary use of an “I Am” inscription was not limited to the Decalogue in the Hebrew Bible.

We might suspect that “I Am” monuments would have disappeared along with the Hittite Empire at the beginning of the twelfth century. The most significant result of the Hittite adaptation of Idrimi’s practice, however, is that they raised it to a level of prestige that would not soon be lost. The practice was maintained and developed by the empire’s successors among the Iron Age Levantine kingdoms. From there, it spread throughout the Levant and even beyond it.

#### THE AGE OF CIVIC RITUAL: KATUWAS OF KARKAMIŠ

The Archaic Transitional period (1200–950 BCE) attests a dearth of “I Am” monuments. The tradition seems to have been just important enough during the twilight of the Hittite Empire to survive into the Early Iron Age. However, this monumental discourse was revived and reformulated in a big way at tenth-century Karkamiš. This began under the country-lord Suhis II at the end of the Archaic Transitional period, but it reached its zenith under his successor Katuwas at the beginning of the Age of Civic Ritual proper (950–850 BCE). This period was marked by the erection of large-scale urban monumental installations that facilitated massive public spectacles (Gilibert 2011, 121). This innovation laid the foundation for all subsequent developments in the discourse of “I Am” monuments.

Katuwas erected multiple “I Am” monuments in the Lower Palace Area of Karkamiš, six of which are complete enough to include in the corpus above. These are conventionally labeled according to their plates in the original excavation publication as KARKAMIŠ A2+3, A11a, A11b+c, A12, A13d, and A23. The associated inscriptions legitimated Katuwas’ role as ruler through his military victories, construction efforts, and his religious devotion to the Storm-god and other major deities of Karkamiš; they even explicitly narrate the triumphal processions the Lower Palace area was designed to facilitate (Pucci 2008b, 219–20). While these monuments are similar to earlier examples of “I Am” monuments, they also

attest unique strategies in their verbal, aesthetic, and spatial discourse that would impact further developments during the Iron Age. Especially with his theatrical emplacement of “I Am” monuments, Katuwas quite literally set the stage for everything to follow, so it is worth considering his monuments in detail as exemplary of general tendencies in the corpus.

### The Verbal Discourse of Katuwas’ Monuments

The verbal discourse of Katuwas’ monuments mostly consisted of ideologized narratives and injunctions. This always began with Katuwas’ fictionalized past. It is fictionalized in the sense that it is selectively recorded and given narrative structure so as to mean something to the monument’s users. That meaning is an expression of Katuwas’ ideology (Green 2010, 17–22). “I Am” monuments always ideologize memory. The narrative elements of the presented memory – whether characters, events, or places – are always evaluated by the agent speaking through the inscription. The agent’s perspective gives value to these narrative elements.

As in many other “I Am” monuments, Katuwas’ inscriptions positively evaluated his rise to prominence, building and rebuilding activities, and production of societal peace and prosperity. These activities are all legitimated on the basis of divine election, royal prerogative or affiliation, and popular acclamation (Knapp 2015, 45–51). Generally, the positive narrative elements of Levantine “I Am” monuments present the agent creating “heightened order,” in Douglas Green’s terms (Green 2010, 304–18). According to Green, agents “establish the matrix in which the ideal, blessed life of humans is to be lived” (Green 2010, 317). The ideal nature of Katuwas’ activities is further suggested by appeals to the gods of Karkamiš, who selected him for these duties and owe him blessing in response to his success.

The agent’s relationship to the divine sphere is a significant aspect of legitimation in “I Am” monuments. Throughout their history, “I Am” monuments appealed to divine election to legitimate the agent. The agent responded to this patronage by dedicating monuments and temples to the gods and by establishing rituals for them. Beginning in the tenth century, however, agents began to appropriate some divine prerogatives for themselves, including explicitly establishing monuments for their own primary benefit, instituting rituals to honor themselves, and utilizing curses to defend their own monuments and rituals rather than those of the gods. This is mirrored in the iconography, where images of the worshipping king disappear and are replaced by images of the king receiving worship.

Katuwas is one of the first examples of this royal appropriation of the divine. Essentially, in this period the agent claimed a sort of parity with the gods by emulating them (Denel 2007, 190; Gilibert 2015, 146–48).

Not all elements of Katuwas’ narratives were positively evaluated, however. Negatively evaluated narrative elements include battle accounts, the defeat of rivals, and defamation of inept predecessors (Green 2010, 146–49, 294–96; Payne 2012, 42–44; Knapp 2015, 51–54). All of these serve to construct the image of an “enemy” who embodies the opposite of the agent’s ideology within the narrative (Green 2010, 290). The agent sometimes speaks of this enemy in individual terms, making him a direct rival to the agent’s claim of ideological centrality. In other “I Am” monuments, rivals to the agent are often vaguely described as holders of the same social position as the agent (usually “king” in royal monuments), but other terms are sometimes employed (Green 2010, 287).<sup>8</sup> In the case of Katuwas, these rivals are competitors who appear to have arisen during his reign. Narratives such as these concerning the agent’s rivals and battle with them develop the trope of the agent as victor. This motif was “the basic indicator of greatness” in ancient West Asian inscriptions (Green 2010, 290). The agent’s narrative of defeating his rivals and overcoming his predecessors buttresses his ideology by means of contrast.

Surprisingly, battle narratives and the notion of the enemy were not ubiquitous in “I Am” monuments, at least during the Iron Age. Rather, this sort of rhetoric had to be developed at the same time that monuments were becoming more individualized. At the end of the tenth century and through the ninth, many Levantine rulers faced significant challenges to their authority and began to reconfigure their elite identity in response. As a result, “I Am” monuments became less and less concerned with connecting the agent to previous generations of kings, acts of building, and religious devotion to perpetuate the ancestor cult. Instead, monuments were increasingly individualized and drew attention to specific kings and

<sup>8</sup> Some inscriptions do provide specific individuals to fill this adversarial role, but even those still make use of the vague category. For example, the Kulamuwa Orthostat (KAI 24) first describes potential rivals as *mlkm’drm* “powerful kings” in line 5 and just *mlkm* “kings” in line 6, though a more specific enemy is subsequently identified. Similarly, the Karatepe inscriptions (KARATEPE 1/KAI 26) see Azatiwada defending his land from unspecified marauders (lines 15–19), and he also claims superiority over *kl mlk* “every king” (see lines AI:12 and AIII:4–6). While Meshah’s primary rival in the Dibon Stele (KAI 181) is the king of Israel, he claims more simply in line 4 to have been saved from *kl hmlkn* “all the kings.” In the Zakkur Statue (KAI 202), Zakkur’s enemies are described as an alliance of *mlkn* “kings” in line 5 and subsequently as *kl mlkn’l* “all these kings” in lines 9, 14, and 16. Only one of these kings is ever named.

their achievements in comparison to others (Gilibert 2011, 119–22; 2012; 2013, 53–54). Battle narratives did not appear in Levantine “I Am” inscriptions until the second half of the tenth century, and the inscriptions of Katuwas are some of the most important early exemplars. Nevertheless, some of his inscriptions and many more “I Am” monuments besides completely lack this trope.

Katuwas’ inscriptions all conclude with prescribed ritual actions for the users of his monument to carry out in response to his actions as well as curses on those who fail to do so. While the first-person narration implied an audience for the monument, it never directly acknowledged the presence of the users (Sanders 2009, 114). The users are directly acknowledged, however, by the use of injunctions. These injunctions consisted of instructions for ritually activating the monument, as well as demands that the monument and its operative elements be preserved: namely, the monument’s epigraphic support, the inscription, associated iconography, dedicated artifacts, and the agent’s name (Gilibert 2011, 109).<sup>9</sup> These prescriptions propose social practice and formation to the users in the form of the expressed wishes of the agents. Together with the ideology presented in the narrative, these injunctions propose a communal identity to those users who accepted Katuwas’ perspective and directions.

The propositions outlined in the injunctions revolve around maintaining the encounter with the agent and the means of reifying it (Gevirtz 1961, 158). The majority of these injunctions are therefore concerned with preserving and maintaining the monument (Gevirtz 1961, 140). These injunctions forbid the effacement, destruction, or usurpation of the monument (Gevirtz 1961; Tawil 1973, 477–78; May 2012, 4–5). Any of these actions would jeopardize the functionality of the monument, especially the production of an encounter with the agent. Any violence done to the monument was seen as a violation of the relationship it created and the identities it materialized, that of both the community and the agent (Levtow 2012, 311). The injunctions that require ritual engagement with the monument may also be understood as maintaining its functionality. The combination of ritual and monument increased the monument’s

<sup>9</sup> In a sense, all of these could be seen as shorthand terms for the monument at large as the inscribed surface, associated iconography, name, and any dedicated artifacts all alike embodied and materialized the agent and his relationship to the users (Levtow 2012, 316). In particular, the “name” referred to in the inscription likely referred to the inscription as a whole in some texts (e.g., *KAI* 10, 24, 26, and 202; see also *KAI* 61, 62, 201, 215, 222, 228, 258, and 309). This was also the case in some Hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions (Richter 2002, 199–204; Yakubovich 2002, 196).

communicative capacity (Gilibert 2011, 114). The injunctions describing associated rituals were intended to prevent the meaning and pathos of the monument from fading with time (Gilibert 2011, 133). No encounter could be imagined unless the monument and its associated practices were preserved. The maintenance of the monument was tantamount to the preservation of the agent himself (Levtow 2012, 316). Destroying the monument meant destroying the person it reembodyed (Ritner 2012, 395).

To ensure that his prohibitions were observed, Katuwas ended his inscriptions by invoking curses on any potential violators of the monument, especially any who would make themselves his rivals. The intent of such curses again was to extend and preserve the monument and the ideal community it proposed (Green 2010, 304–5). The curses typically threaten to remove from the violator any of the benefits the monument may have granted. They promise the destruction of the violator's name, posterity, and any other opportunity for remembrance (Levtow 2012, 316). Katuwas thus effectively threatens not only that the violator will be cast out of the community but also that they will even have their individual identity destroyed (Sanders 2012, 18–20).

While Katuwas' monuments do not explicitly include blessings for those who do follow his instructions, the curses imply that benefits await those who do not violate the monuments. Other Levantine monuments made these benefits explicit, however. Agents occasionally invoked the gods to provide the monument's users with an extension of the order created during the narrative. By implication, the agent thus asked for the users to be granted the same benefits he had won for himself (Green 2010, 318). The blessing most often requested by monuments is that of long life (Green 2010, 270–77). A long life would theoretically allow the agent to continue reifying his ideal domain and lifestyle (Green 2010, 304–5). Similarly, Levantine "I Am" monuments also tend to record a blessing of posterity (Green 2010, 151). The extension of these blessings to the users would promise them the ability to continue communally identifying with the agent and to receive any benefits he provided.

Like the inscription of Idrimi, Katuwas' inscriptions primarily functioned to textually reembody him by means of deictic projection, which also implied that the inscriptions were to be understood as his direct speech. Katuwas' monuments made this even more explicit than that of Idrimi due to the nature of the Luwian language. Every clause included the quotative particle *-wa-*, suggesting that the entire inscription is to be understood as quoted speech. It is notably appended to the first-person pronominal opening in most cases (e.g., *amu-wa-mi* "I-[quotative



particle]-[first-person reflexive particle]”), but because the entirety of the inscription is meant to be understood as direct speech, this particle appears in every subsequent clause as well (Payne 2010, 40). Katuwas carried this use of deictic projection even further, however.

As was the case in Idrimi’s inscription, Katuwas foregrounded his perspective using deixis, but this now became the governing aspect of the entire text (Hogue 2019b; 2019c; 2021a). This strategic use of deixis is especially obvious in Katuwas’ inscriptions due to the nature of the Hieroglyphic Luwian language in which they are written. It was a grammatical feature of Luwian – at least as realized in text – to begin every clause with a clitic complex. That is, the first word in every clause – often the conjunction *a* – was followed by a chain of clitics denoting various grammatical information about the clause. These clitics include conjunctions, reflexive particles, locative particles, and, most significantly, dative, accusative, and nominative pronominal clitics (Payne 2010, 40; Yakubovich 2015, 19). In other words, almost every clause in Hieroglyphic Luwian begins with much of the deictic information governing the clause. Thus, almost at a glance, the sophisticated user of the monument can determine the agent’s perspective by looking at the clitic chains opening each clause. The agent’s perspective is clearly foregrounded in every case.

Personal, temporal, and spatial deictic categories act as indexes and metaphors for ideological deixis, which I define elsewhere as “the use of linguistic referents to suggest relative distance from a core ideology” (Hogue 2018, 4). Personal and spatiotemporal elements of the text are evaluated based on their nearness to the agent, who is at the inscriptions’ ideological center (Liverani 1973, 186–91). Stockwell argues that such deictic elements “encode the social viewpoint and relative situations of authors, narrators, characters, and readers” (Stockwell 2002, 46). As such, Levantine “I Am” monuments utilized deixis to suggest social structures and hierarchies, even when they were not explicitly labeled. Katuwas structured his inscriptions around deictic categories to guide his monuments’ users into a positive relationship with him, as well as to warn them of the consequences of failing to accommodate his perspective. In other words, the text engaged the users deictically to coax them into accepting the agent’s ideology.

The imagined interaction between the users and the agent was predicated on the assumption of response (Herman 1999, 528–29; Zilmer 2010a, 138; 2010b, 147). As they had just observed the world from the agent’s perspective, the users were intended to respond to the agent’s

demands in light of that perspective. The text thus placed the users into a liminal state pending their response to the monument. The perspective of the user was thereby potentially transformed into that of the agent. The strategic use of deictic elements allowed not only the conjuration of the agent's perspective but also the reembodiment of that perspective within the users themselves.

### The Aesthetic Discourse of Katuwas' Monuments

All of Katuwas' inscriptions were inscribed on orthostats. Apart from the six monuments of Katuwas, this form was utilized in an additional fifteen exemplars from the corpus above.<sup>10</sup> Orthostats were stone wall slabs designed to protect the structures they adorned from environmental weathering. They originated as undressed protective elements of Levantine walls but were later co-opted for the display of monumental art. Even in their undressed form, however, their limited emplacement in temples, palaces, and city gates demonstrates that these unworked stones were fundamentally monumental and used to mark liminal space (Harmanşah 2007b, 72–76; 2011, 632). Orthostats provided unique opportunities for displaying aesthetic discourse. Unlike other monumental artifacts, orthostats could accommodate entire narrative progressions at their most sophisticated (Harmanşah 2007b, 81–84). The agent reembodied by the monument could thus be encountered in very complex relationships with other figures and places. Katuwas and his immediate predecessors took special advantage of this to radically shift the emphasis of Levantine monumental art. Abandoning the Hittite imperial models of earlier rulers, Katuwas instead used these orthostats to emphasize his own power (Gilibert 2015).

Even more significantly, as an architectural feature, orthostats were not easily distinguished from their architectural setting. Modern scholarship is careful to label these artifacts separately, and so it can be tempting to think of Katuwas' orthostats as six separate monuments. This may not have been the perspective of the ancient audience, however. Instead, Katuwas' six inscribed orthostats were parts of a greater whole, including not only the uninscribed orthostats beside them but also the monuments of his predecessors. Though each of these accomplished unique discursive

<sup>10</sup> The others are KARKAMIŞ A1b, KARKAMIŞ A6, ALEPPO 6, HINES, HAMA 1, HAMA 2, HAMA 3, HAMA 4, HAMA 6, HAMA 7, KARATEPE 1 (KAI 26 A and B), PORSUK, the Kulamuwa Orthostat (KAI 24), and the Bar-Rakib palace orthostats (KAI 216–18).

functions within the space, they were always encountered together as an assemblage. It is possible to analyze each as a monument, but we should also realize that these pointed to a larger built environment that was experienced by ancient users as a single monumental installation. As a result, an agent encountered through texts and images on orthostats was reembody within the entire space. Katuwas thus extended his presence throughout the Lower Palace area (Hogue 2021a, 12).

The ability of orthostats to distribute an agent's presence in space also allowed them to produce liminality. This function is most obvious in the portal orthostats of Katuwas: KARKAMIŠ A2+3, 11b+c, and A23. These were each carved on a set of two portal orthostats that functioned together. The effect of these paired orthostats was twofold. First, they revealed the agent's ability to distribute his presence and agency and to manifest them in multiple locations and forms. The creation of such monuments in the first place reveals the ancient conception that one individual's presence need not be singular; it could be multiplied, distributed, and divided (Harmanşah 2007a, 181; Bahrani 2014, 118–19). Orthostat pairs accentuated this multiplicity of presence even more than other monumental forms. While this repetition could theoretically be accomplished by other artifacts, orthostats were uniquely suited for this because they were architectural features of larger built environments. Second, as paired orthostats flanking portals, they allowed the agent to follow and address the processing user from either side of the portal. The repetition of the artifacts would remind the users of the rhythm of rituals attached to them (Bahrani 2014, 118, 132). Portal orthostats also took advantage of the liminality of portals to imply that crossing a threshold entailed making an ideological transition with the agent, a process that will be discussed more in relation to the spatial discourse of these artifacts.

The most sophisticated example of aesthetic discourse in Katuwas' monuments is the portrait that accompanies KARKAMIŠ A13d (Fig. 4). Like statues, portraits were seen as duplicating an individual's personhood and possessing an agency all their own (Bahrani 2003; 2014, 24–29; Aro 2013, 232). The portrait thus reembody Katuwas, serving the same function as the "I Am" formula in the inscription. In this case, however, this overlapping function was made explicit. The posture of Katuwas in the portrait consciously imitates the hieroglyph EGO (*amu*) "I." The portrait is in fact meant to be read as the first hieroglyph in the inscription – the first-person pronoun (Payne 2016, 289–90). In this case, the deictic statement "I am" (Luwian EGO *amu*-) was literally the image of the agent. Not only are image and text serving the same purpose in this example but



FIGURE 4 Monumental inscription of Katuwas complete with an “*amu*-figure” (KARKAMIŠ A13d). Exhibit in the Anatolian Civilizations Museum in Ankara, Turkey. The processing image of Katuwas is in fact the first hieroglyph in the Luwian inscription. Photo: A. Erdem Şentürk, provided courtesy of Tayfun Bilgin, [www.hittitemonuments.com](http://www.hittitemonuments.com), v. I.77.

the image is also the text.<sup>11</sup> The portrait thus directly evokes the voice of Katuwas, announcing “I am Katuwas” to his monument’s users. The result is a portrait that was emically understood as capable of speech; more than this, the portrait was speech (Hogue 2019b, 331; 2021a, 12–13). This portrait-as-hieroglyph (labeled EGO<sub>2</sub> or the *amu*-figure) was iterated at

<sup>11</sup> Generally speaking, treating “image” and “text” as separate artistic categories is a modern notion that was completely alien to the cultures under study. It remains helpful for heuristic reasons, but my separate treatment of verbal and aesthetic discourse should not be taken to reflect an actual distinction in the ancient context (May 2012, 4; Levtow 2012, 311–16).

other sites and even influenced the development of portraiture accompanying non-hieroglyphic texts (Bunnens 2005; Payne 2016).

The remaining five orthostats include no additional iconography directly accompanying the text as in KARKAMIŠ A13d. Nevertheless, the inscriptions themselves should also be considered part of the monuments' aesthetic discourse (Thomas 2014, 60–61). The writing was ultimately visually apprehended, and some users could not interpret the semantic meaning of the signs they were viewing. Writing on its own was symbolic of exclusive knowledge and social power, and, apart from being read, writing could function as “an image of itself” (Gilibert 2011, 120). While the framing of the text as direct speech may imply that it was meant to be read aloud, this was not the only function of the text. Texts were also used to authenticate and legitimate the monument and imbue it with symbolic power (Özyar 2013, 135–36). Inscriptions likely fulfilled this aesthetic purpose in general on “I Am” monuments, whether or not they were also read (Denel 2007, 186).

In addition to images directly accompanying inscriptions, however, we must also consider the greater artistic sequences surrounding Katuwas' monuments and the other artifacts that accompanied these. Katuwas' inscribed orthostats were only part of a much larger sequence of worked orthostats depicting processions of armed warriors, courtiers, male and female offering bearers, musicians, gods, and perhaps the queen of Karkamiš in addition to Katuwas himself (Gilibert 2011, 107–8). The images of the processors provide a model of the ideal user of the monument. They appear to participate in the processions and rituals surrounding the monuments and invite the monuments' users to join in (Özyar 2013, 134; Bahrani 2014, 132). In a sense, they embody the ritual and its ideal participants within the monument itself. Much as the text implies or prescribes beliefs and behavior for the users, these images project a particular social structure and identity to the users as well as a practice to be undertaken in response to that.

Apart from the orthostats, other monumental artifacts were also integrated into this assemblage in the Lower Palace area. For example, in §20 of KARKAMIŠ A11a, Katuwas reports that he set up a statue of a god named Atrisuhas within the gate along with the orthostat. This divine statue was actually found in situ beside the orthostat. This massive seated deity is depicted enthroned atop two lions. This configuration drew upon a complex set of artistic associations, but most importantly it allowed Katuwas to associate himself with the divine sphere. The association of “I Am” monuments with divine images is attested more broadly. In such

examples, the intention of the monument must be to manifest the agent within the presence of the deities depicted alongside him (Hawkins 2000, Volume I:304). This practice is likely cognate with typical votive practice in Mesopotamia and the Levant, in which statues of supplicants were placed before divine images so that they were reembodyed in perpetual prayer (Graesser 1972, 43; Postgate 1994, 177; Shafer 2007, 146; Gudme 2012, 9; Bahrani 2014, 79). Katuwas’ integration of the statue of Atrisuhas into his “I Am” monument allowed him to be manifested perpetually in the presence of that deity. In addition, many of the orthostats in the Lower Palace area were accompanied by offering tables, cups, and depressions for offering food and libations. To better understand the importance of these artifacts, however, we must turn to their distribution in space.

### The Spatial Discourse of Katuwas’ Monuments

The integration of monuments into built and natural environments allowed them to tap into the power of the landscape as well as reshape it by imbuing it with new meaning (Yamada 2000, 295; Harmanşah 2007a, 180; Zilmer 2010a, 139; Kahn and Kirch 2014, 218–19). The distribution of monumental artifacts in specific places and the performance of particular rituals alongside them served to map the world proposed in the inscription and iconography onto that physical space (Gilibert 2013, 49). Levantine “I Am” monuments were erected in arenas of various scales that were united by their purpose of proposing a space for spectacles to conjure the presence of the agent. Typical small-scale theatres of “I Am” monuments were palaces, temples, and other clearly bounded sites of ritual interaction. Katuwas extended this logic to a larger scale by taking advantage of the urban layout of Karkamiš.

One of the key features of Levantine cities – especially those of the northern Levant – was that they were laid out in such a way as to demonstrate a clear hierarchy of space. City centers – such as those at Zincirli, Karkamiš, and Hamath – were typically walled off and accessible by means of central processional roads. The city center itself was further subdivided into ceremonial and residential regions, and the ceremonial area was dominated by the ceremonial plaza – a large-scale theatre designed for ritualized engagement with monumental art and architecture. This role was filled by the Lower Palace area at Karkamiš (Pucci 2008b). By erecting his many monumental orthostats on the boundaries of the Lower Palace area, Katuwas transformed it into a theatre. A “theatre”

is “any building, plaza, landscape, pilgrimage route, or other setting in which spectacles are performed” (Coben 2006, 223). The affordances and constraints of the Lower Palace area as well as patterns of traversal through it were inextricable elements of Katuwas’ monumental discourse.

Plazas like the Lower Palace area suggest the scale of the rituals to be carried out within them and can be analyzed to determine the number of users participating in them at any given time (Gilibert 2011, 104). Assuming a medium crowd density of 2.5 persons per square meter, at 3000 m<sup>2</sup> the Lower Palace area of Karkamiš could hold at least 7,500 users. Karkamiš’ total population has been estimated at 18,200, but it is also probable that 50 percent of this population was either under the age of twelve or over sixty-nine. Katuwas’ theatre could thus easily accommodate the most able-bodied segment of the adult population of Karkamiš. This was the group he most needed to target, given their potential to challenge his rule (Gilibert 2011, 103).

The Lower Palace area was an ideal space for staging spectacles that were intended to “constitute political subjects through the formal and codified enactments of relationships” (Inomata and Coben 2006, 4–5). Gilbert argues that such ceremonial plazas “should be analyzed as the material correlate of the ‘citizens’ as a generic political subject” (Gilibert 2013, 37–40). The mere production of the plaza projected the elite ability to mobilize capital and labor. In particular, it demonstrated the ability to mobilize the population of Karkamiš as a community (DeMarrais, Castillo, and Earle 1996; Glatz and Plourde 2011). In the Lower Palace area, Karkamiš’ inhabitants could “actually witness *the public* as a collective body which gazes, moves, and interprets together” (Hogue 2021b, 246). In addition to the inscriptions’ prescriptions of collective practice and the iconographic depictions of such practices, within the theatre the users actually beheld Karkamiš taking shape in the form of its denizens gathering together. Ideally, these people would thus be transformed from mere denizens into subjects and citizens.

Katuwas’ monuments utilized space to affect his monuments’ users in diverse ways, allowing him to propose a complex social structure to the resultant citizenry. The theatre provided a space for engaging the monuments to activate the encounter with the agent. First and foremost, users were invited to collectively gaze at and experience the monuments visually, perhaps even tactilely. These interactions were likely extended in an auditory direction as well. The texts on the “I Am” monuments may have been read aloud to the audience gathered in the plaza (Payne 2010, 40). In some cases, users would verbally respond to this reading using incantations and

other scripted pronouncements. Such a connection is implied by the use of formulaic language and deictic elements often indicative of oral performance. This is particularly true of the imprecations in such inscriptions, which seem to reflect a background in oral performance (Ramos 2016, 219). Iconographic depictions accompanying “I Am” inscriptions – those of singers, musicians, and dancers in particular – also imply that scripted performances were attached to these monuments (Denel 2007, 185). Later monuments from Karkamiš even record oaths that needed to be repeated before “I Am” monuments.<sup>12</sup>

The prescriptions in Katuwas’ inscriptions reveal that the monuments also received specific offerings and sacrifices. In KARKAMIŠ A11A §12, Katuwas establishes PANIS(-)*arali-si-na* “seasonal bread (offerings)” (Payne 2012, 67–68). In the neighboring KARKAMIŠ A11B+C §18, Katuwas demands a blood sacrifice, oxen and sheep, and bread offerings (Hawkins 2000, Volume I:103). Surprisingly, some of these offerings are targeted at Katuwas himself and his monument, revealing a strategy within Levantine monumental discourse more generally from this period of co-opting elements of ancestor cult and the worship of deities in order to introduce the agent into the realm of the gods. The Lower Palace area was equipped with multiple altars and indentations carved at the base of orthostats to act as receptacles for libations and other offerings (Ussishkin 1975, 95; Denel 2007, 189–90).

Food and drink offerings may imply that ritual feasting was connected to the Lower Palace area as well. Feasting involves imbuing communal acts of eating and drinking with special significance. In particular, feasting creates coherence among groups of people, while the manipulation of feasting practices allows elites to create and consolidate their power. Feasts also served as a means for multiple users to participate in offerings and to imaginatively socialize with the agent and other figures conjured by the monuments and rituals attached to them (Greer 2013, 3–5). The agent and the deities were also understood to participate in these feasts by means of incantations and sacrifices (Sanders 2013, 48–49). The feasting that followed these acts allowed the audience to become participants in the sacrifice and to relate directly to Katuwas. As a result, it was not only the elites presently manipulating the feast who consolidated their power, but the elites imagined in the preceding rituals – the gods and the agent in his distributed, reembodyed form – also claimed a place in the hierarchy above the users.

<sup>12</sup> See KARKAMIŠ A6 §§21–22 (Hawkins 2000, Volume I:127).



Of the various types of offerings provided for “I Am” monuments, only one appears unique in the Levantine context and deserves some special attention. This is the blood offering attested multiple times at Karkamiš. It might be inferred that offering animal sacrifices would involve blood, but only some texts explicitly prescribe that blood be offered before the monument. KARKAMIŠ A11B+c §18 prescribes an *asharimi*- “blood sacrifice” to the gods (Hawkins 2000, Volume I:103–6). The same type of sacrifice is prescribed in one of the fragments of KARKAMIŠ A29 with the Storm-god as the recipient (Hawkins 2000, Volume I:219). Another Karkamišean “I Am” monument, KÖRKÜN §7, prescribes an *ashana(n) tisa*- “blood offering,” again for the Storm-god (Hawkins 2000, Volume I:173–74). Curiously, though the agent is not a deity in any of these instances, it is specifically divine figures who receive this type of offering.

Outside of the evidence for blood ritual in the Hebrew Bible to be discussed in the next chapter, the only comparative to Karkamišean blood offerings comes from Bronze Age Emar. This is nevertheless an attractive comparative because, like Karkamiš, Emar was located in northern Syria and conquered by the Hittites; Emar may even have been directly administrated by the rulers of Karkamiš (M. Yamada 2020). As part of the seasonal *Zukru* festival, a blood ritual was performed with monumental stones. After a feast – which may imply earlier animal sacrifice – at least two aniconic stelae were rubbed with blood and the image of the god Dagan was made to pass between them. Daniel Fleming suggests that this practice was meant to conjure Dagan among the monuments thus manipulated (Fleming 2000, 86–87). This use of blood and monuments to reembody divine presence survived into the Iron Age.

Tying all of the above individual practices together were the spectacular processions carried out in the Lower Palace area. More than any other ritual element, these took special advantage of the space to communicate a particular ideology to the monument’s users. Both elites and non-elites were conceived of as participants, even if they might participate in different ways (Pucci 2008a, 121). During the Age of Civic Ritual, processions were for the first time centered specifically on the present ruler, rather than a deity or royal ancestor. This striking development likely reflects the growing instability of the region as territorial control became more difficult to maintain (Gilibert 2015, 147). As a result, military parades and triumphal processions became standard types of ritual processions as well as key elements of the accompanying monumental artwork (Denel 2007, 192; Gilbert 2011, 119–20).

Processions also molded the users more generally by disciplining the body – training it to move through space in a particular way and thus introducing it to social rules and roles (Hodder 2006, 96). The participant was not only bringing offerings or arriving at a dedicated space to feast. They were also walking as the agent directed and lingering where the agent wanted. In the words of Tim Ingold, walking in general is “an intrinsically social activity,” in which the walker’s movements “are continually responsive to the movements of others in the immediate environment” (Ingold 2004, 328). In the case of ritual processions attached to monuments, the users are responding to both the movements of their fellow processors as well as the depicted movements of processors in the accompanying monumental art. Even in cases where processors are not depicted, the users must always respond to what Mark Smith calls “the imagined materiality” of the agent present and processing with them (Smith 2016, 27). These aspects of the monuments direct the users to walk in particular ways, which had strong implications for the social roles the users filled. In other words, by directing the movement of the users, the agent socialized with them and molded them into a community subject to his direction. The locations of his monuments reveal the pattern of the processions carried out in *Katuwas*’ theatre as well as the social roles they were meant to create (see Fig. 5).

Upon entering *Karkamiš*, potential users of these monuments would find themselves on a processional road clearly leading to the citadel. They would first encounter *Katuwas* at the King’s Gate restricting entry to the Lower Palace area. *Katuwas* was manifested within the gateway by means of three “I Am” monuments – most notably the portal orthostats *KARKAMIŠ A11b+c* flanking the southern entrance of the gateway but also by *KARKAMIŠ A11a* and *KARKAMIŠ A13d* within the gateway. These gateway monuments point to the liminality affected by them. By encountering *Katuwas*’ perspective in this transitional space, the ideal user passing through the gate would be transformed by moving through the gateway.<sup>13</sup> Transition through the gateway was used to imply and promote ideological transition toward the perspective proffered by *Katuwas*

<sup>13</sup> I have adapted the term “ideal user” from Peter Stockwell’s description of the “idealised reader.” Any work of art – textual or not – can be interpreted in multiple ways. Though monuments could still function if they were not interpreted precisely as their creators intended, the monument-makers of Levantine monuments do appear to have particular interpretations in mind. The “ideal user” is thus the user that correctly interprets the monument and is transformed by it as the agent proposes. Of course, the real users probably only approached this ideal to various degrees (Stockwell 2002, 43).

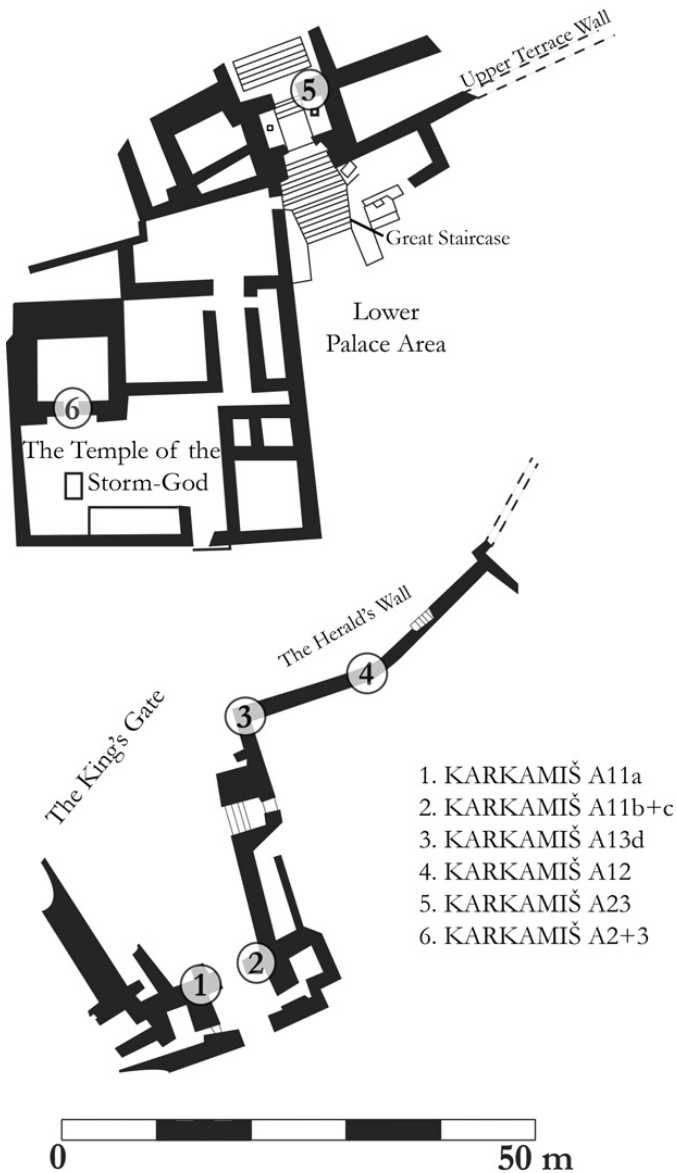


FIGURE 5 Map of the Lower Palace area of Carchemish showing the locations of *Katuwas*' "I Am" monuments. Map by Amy Karoll.

(Hogue 2021a, 11). It is most important to note in this regard that these three inscriptions are the only ones in which Katuwas gives instructions for the ritual processions to take place at the gate and in the ceremonial plaza beyond (Gilibert 2011, 110). KARKAMIŠ A11a even gestures to the temple of the Storm-god, which is the ultimate target of the procession (Pucci 2008b, 221). This procession and its associated rituals were the means of transformation for the users.

Significantly, this movement was often convoluted, requiring 90°–180° turns to access different tiers of the theatre (Pucci 2008a, 171; Gilbert 2013, 40). Upon passing through the gateway, the users of the monuments would come face-to-face with the temple of the Storm-god. Because this temple was raised on a temenos without a means of ascent on its southern side, the users would be unable to access it from this vantage point. Instead, they would need to turn 90° to the right, at which point their gaze would instead be invited to the Lower Palace area and the palace of Katuwas, both of which were bounded by decorated orthostats (Denel 2007, 181; Marchetti 2015; 2016). Continuing forward, the users would encounter Katuwas again in the form of KARKAMIŠ A12 on the boundary between the Lower Palace area and Katuwas' palace. This boundary contained no portal allowing access into the palace. Like the temple, the palace was completely inaccessible from this vantage point, and in fact there was no means of entry from the Lower Palace area. Thus, while the users could encounter Katuwas in the form of his monuments within the plaza, a clear hierarchy between them and the ruler was also demonstrated. They could not engage Katuwas so intimately as to enter into his palace. The placement of the monument in this case thus afforded a sense of otherness to the users and served to create a social hierarchy (Hogue 2021a, 13).

From the southern boundary of the Lower Palace area, users could make another 90° turn to the left to approach the great staircase on the northern end of the plaza. Here they would encounter Katuwas again in KARKAMIŠ A23 near a side entrance to the temenos of the temple of the Storm-god.<sup>14</sup> After a 180° turn, users could finally complete their procession to the temple of the Storm-god, where they would meet Katuwas one final time in a portal orthostat pair flanking the doorway to the temple's

<sup>14</sup> It is also possible that KARKAMIŠ A23 originally served as a portal orthostat in a temple of Kubaba, functioning analogously to KARKAMIŠ A2+3 in the temple of the Storm-god. If this was the case, this inscription was secondarily reused at the great staircase leading to the temple of the Storm-god (Gilibert 2011, 37).

cella (KARKAMIŠ A2+3) (Gilibert 2011, 50–51). These monuments mark increasingly intimate liminal zones culminating in the entrance to the temple's inner sanctum. By erecting them at these transitional spaces, Katuwas used his monuments to invite his users deeper into his proposed ideology. Finally, they ritually encountered him beside his patron deity, the Storm-god. By directing motion through the plaza in this way and creating patterns of engagement with the monuments encountered there, Katuwas' monuments facilitated the formation of groupness, otherness, and social hierarchies. These "I Am" monuments thus functioned not only to manifest Katuwas before his users and distribute his presence. They also created complex social structures in the city of Karkamiš. Successive periods in the history of "I Am" monuments saw these strategies expanded even further.

#### THE AGE OF TERRITORIAL THEATRE: MESHA OF MOAB

Many of the innovations of the Age of Civic Ritual continued into the rest of the ninth and eighth centuries, but some new and unique developments appeared during this time as well. For example, the first "I Am" inscriptions in Northwest Semitic dialects appeared during this time – the Moabite inscriptions of Mesha. The relationships articulated by "I Am" monuments were also becoming increasingly complex. For example, while the monuments of Katuwas had appropriated aspects previously restricted to divine monuments for depicting the ruler, monuments in the Age of Territorial Theatre created a new role for deities as increasingly active performers in "I Am" monuments. New means of motivating users to accept agents' ideologies also appeared. Most importantly, monuments during this time extended the logic of the ceremonial plaza to a territorial scale. Rather than delimiting portions of urban landscapes as theatres for political spectacles, some rulers now distributed "I Am" monuments to configure entire regions as though they were such theatres.

The monuments of the Age of Territorial Theatre are especially significant for the present study, because the best examples of "I Am" monuments from this period come from polities that interacted closely with Israel – namely, Moab, Hamath, and Aram. The Moabite king Mesha's revolt is narrated in 2 Kings 3. Within his own inscription, Mesha names King Ahab of Israel as his primary enemy. Mesha's monumental discourse may have been appropriated from the more powerful state of Israel from which he broke away (Sass 2005, 88; Sanders 2009, 124). The monuments of the Aramaean king Hazael – another named enemy of Israel during this

same period – employ the same discursive strategies as those of Mesha. The Hamathite king Urhilina provides an important new piece to this puzzle. Not only do his monuments shed light on many of the discursive patterns evident in Mesha’s monuments, but we know from Assyrian sources that Urhilina was an ally of Ahab. While the Bible never speaks of Urhilina by name, positive relations between Israel and Hamath are recorded (Younger Jr. 2016, 462–63). These rulers thus provide the best evidence for monumental discourse that was probably known and practiced by the Israelites. The following sections will present a test case of Mesha’s monuments, but I will explain these in light of other examples from this same period, especially those of Hazael and Urhilina.

### The Verbal Discourse of Mesha’s Monuments

For the most part, the content of “I Am” monuments remained unchanged in this new period from those of the preceding one. Nevertheless, there were some departures from the earlier period that are worth commenting on. The first shift that may be noted is that Mesha claims to be the king of a region rather than a city. Though he explicitly calls himself a Dibonite – a denizen of the city of Dibon – he claims to be king of Moab – a region consisting of multiple cities and territories in the inscription. This shift is even more striking in the case of Urhilina, who claims to be *i-ma-tú-wa/i-ni*(REGIO) REX “King of Hamath” where Hamath is marked with the determinative REGIO “country” rather than URBS “city.” Hamath was also the name of Urhilina’s central city, and he certainly could have claimed to be the king of the city of Hamath much as Katuwas claimed only to be the ruler of the city of Karkamiš. Instead, he expands the label of Hamath to an entire region. What is most important to note in both cases is that Urhilina and Mesha were proposing regional polities rather than simply describing them. By labeling these regions in this way, these rulers performatively brought those territories into being. By implication, they were projecting a political identity onto the denizens of those large territories, providing them with not only a collective geographical label but also a chief deity and language in the inscriptions (Sanders 2009, 114–18). The goal was to reconfigure the likely disparate peoples of those territories as subjects to the singular polities being proposed.

The wider reach claimed by the “I Am” monuments of this period in some cases necessitated longer and more varied battle narratives. In Mesha’s inscriptions, this also necessitated significantly more complex poetics. Unlike Hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions, Northwest Semitic inscriptions

could not reveal their poetics by means of clitic chains. Instead, they utilized a variety of rhetorical techniques to organize their discourse. Perhaps most simply, sections may be differentiated by the type of clause preferred and the clauses' average lengths (O'Connor 1977, 24–26; Hogue 2019c, 93). Section bracketing was also regularly accomplished by means of parallelism, chiasm, and inclusio. We should note that while more complicated scribal techniques underly such examples, they are still governed by ideological deixis in that they reveal specific information about persons and artifacts in the agent's environment and his perspective on them.

Mesha's Dibon Stele<sup>15</sup> expands the organizational principle of ideological deixis to perhaps its most sophisticated. This inscription was emplaced at Qarḥoh – Dibon's acropolis and the very center of Mesha's domain (Liverani 1973, 189–91; Ahlström 1982, 1:116; Routledge 2004, 147). The text itself identifies Qarḥoh as its center point, but then narrates Mesha's actions throughout all of Moab. In the inscription, Mesha sets out from Dibon and consolidates his power first in northern Moab and then in southern Moab (Routledge 2004, 142–43). The narration of events according to a geographic rather than a chronological pattern is a reflection of the monument's emplacement in a set location and targeting of a particular region. The basic principle of Mesha's evaluation of these zones is that the further a territory is from Qarḥoh, the more in need of taming it is. Mesha ultimately presents five tiers of space based on their nearness to his ideology: Qarḥoh at the very center, wider Dibon next, northern Moab, southern Moab, and finally the enemy lands of Israel and Judah (Green 2010, 306). The inscription thus provokes the users to imagine not only Qarḥoh as a socially formative place but all of Moab as well. Denizens of various regions of Moab are related to Dibon and Mesha in slightly different ways but all with the aim of subjection.

The relationship between the agent and his users was also framed somewhat differently during this period. In addition to celebrating achievements that primarily benefited themselves, the agents of this period also recorded works that they had undertaken to benefit their subjects. Mesha, for example, claims not only to have won battles, conquered territory, and built temples. He also narrates having built cisterns to provide water for his people. While Katuwas improved social order explicitly for his own benefit, Mesha claims to have acted on behalf of the people (Green 2010, 308–15).

<sup>15</sup> This artifact has also been called the Mesha Stele or the Moabite Stone. I have chosen the label "Dibon Stele" to better differentiate it from what I label the "Kerak Statue," which was also an "I Am" monument erected by Mesha.

This provided the users with increased motivation to accept the social structures proposed by Mesha.

Along the same lines, “I Am” monuments also began to more explicitly document the agent’s justice. While agents like Katuwas simply claimed that they were righteous, agents like Panamuwa I during the Age of Territorial Theatre actually gave his subjects moral proscriptions. In a striking parallel to the Decalogue, he forbids the users of his monument to murder (*KAI 214* line 26) or to lie in legal proceedings (lines 28–34) (Hogue 2019c, 93). Such injunctions served to define the relationship between the agent and his users in terms of social obligations. These prescriptions reified the same ideal order the agent claimed to have created in the narrative portion of the text. By leaving directions for the monument’s users to maintain or recreate that order, the agent extended the influence of his ideology into the daily lives of the users. Now instead of receiving instructions to be carried out in a ceremonial theatre, the users were given directions that applied at all times throughout the agent’s claimed territory.

Finally, the relationship between the agent and the divine sphere shifted in some significant ways. While Katuwas appealed to the gods of Karkamiš, they were never active players in his “I Am” monuments. In Mesha’s inscriptions, however, his god Kemosh speaks with him directly to guide his actions. For example, Kemosh tells Mesha *lk ’ḥz ’t nbh ’l ysr’l* “Go! Take Nebo from Israel!” (*KAI 181:14*) and *rd hltḥm bhwrwn* “Go down! Make war on Hawronen!” (*KAI 181:32*). Such divine injunctions were a means of demonstrating the close relationship between the agent and his divine elector (Green 2010, 167). In general, wherever divine speech is recorded in the corpus of Levantine “I Am” monuments, it is rendered in the form of second-person injunctions, thus using personal deixis to demonstrate the closeness between the deity and the agent. This discursive strategy appears in not only the Dibon Stele, but also the Zakkur Statue, TELL AHMAR 5, TELL AHMAR 6, and potentially BOYBEYPINARI 2. This shift is particularly relevant to the Decalogue. The most innovative aspect of the Decalogue is that its composers made Yahweh into the agent. The injunctions were rendered in the second person because that was the standard way to represent divine speech in “I Am” monuments.

### The Aesthetic Discourse of Mesha’s Monuments

Unlike the monuments of Katuwas, the aesthetic discourse of Mesha’s was remarkably simple. The Dibon Stele (Fig. 6) is completely aniconic apart from the text itself serving as an icon for many viewers. More broadly,





FIGURE 6 The Dibon Stele including the royal inscription of King Mesha of Moab. Exhibit in the Harvard Semitic Museum, Harvard University – Cambridge, MA, USA. This file is made available under the Creative Commons CCo 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication.

stelae actually are the most common epigraphic support for “I Am” monuments. Of the monuments included in my corpus, forty-five are stelae.<sup>16</sup> Of these forty-five, twenty are aniconic. Aniconic stelae are attested in all of the periods outlined in the historical schema proposed

<sup>16</sup> These are İSPEKÇÜR, DARENDE, IZGIN 1–2, MARAŞ 8, KELEKLİ, TELL AHMAR 5, ARSUZ 1, ARSUZ 2, BABYLON 1, TELL AHMAR 6, ALEPPO 2, BOROWSKI 3, TELL AHMAR 2, TELL AHMAR 1, KARKAMIŞ A12, MARAŞ 2, RESTAN, QAL’AT EL MUDIQ, TALL ŞTİB, HAMA 8, SHEIZAR, KÖRKÜN, the Mesha Stele (KAI 181), the Tel Dan Stele (KAI 310), the Yehawmilk Stele (KAI 10), the Katumuwa Stele, the Neirab Stelae (KAI 225–226), KÜRTÜL, KULULU 1, KULULU 2, KULULU 3, KULULU 4, ANDAVAL, BOHÇA, BOR, ÇİFTLİK, EĞREK, KAYSERİ, SULTANHAN, CEKKE, ADANA 1, KARKAMIŞ A5b, KARKAMIŞ A17a, and KARKAMIŞ A18a.

earlier and appear to be the most broadly attested form of “I Am” monument in geographic terms as well, occurring everywhere from central Anatolia to southern Transjordan. Also, accounting for nearly a quarter of all Iron Age “I Am” monuments, aniconic stelae are one of the most common epigraphic supports encountered. In addition to the Dibon Stele during the Age of Territorial Theatre, Hazael’s stele at Tel Dan appears to have also been aniconic, as are the stelae of Urhilina.

Nevertheless, aniconic stelae did not function solely as epigraphic supports. They also played a significant role in the overall function of the monument. At their most fundamental, stelae functioned as extensions and reembodyments of various objects, people, and deities (Graesser 1972, 35–37; Bonatz 2000, 32–64, 115–17, 156–57; Aro 2003, 317–26; Bloch-Smith 2006, 65; 2015, 107–11; Bahrani 2014, 43, 59–60). This is true across ancient West Asia for stelae whether they were inscribed or uninscribed, iconic or aniconic.<sup>17</sup> Even stelae that explicitly served to commemorate events still in some sense functioned as if they were standing in for people; their function as witnesses suggests that they exuded some sort of personal agency and were more than simple reminders (Graesser 1972, 41–51; McCarthy 1978, 174). In other words, the stele – like other ancient West Asian monumental artifacts – was a “mode of presencing” (Bahrani 2003, 137). They manifested individuals or groups in the minds of those engaging them. The addition of iconography or inscriptions to these artifacts served to make that function even clearer to their users by specifying who was reembodyed by the stele. But the use of aniconic stelae persisted even after the development of iconographic stelae. A variety of factors undoubtedly contributed to this, but one reason for this persistence was that the artifact itself accomplished the same function as the iconography even apart from it.

Another possibility should be kept in mind for the aesthetic function of stelae, however. The stelae may have been reembodying a deity in addition to the named agent. Of the twenty-five iconic stelae, four depict the agent alongside a deity<sup>18</sup> while a further eleven depict only a deity.<sup>19</sup> All of these depict the Storm-god rather than the agent. I have argued elsewhere that in

<sup>17</sup> It is also worth noting in this regard that “I Am” monuments were occasionally accompanied by uninscribed, aniconic stelae. See, for example, the plaza installations surrounding the Tel Dan Stele and KARATEPE 1/KAI 26 (Bloch-Smith 2005, 36; Davis 2013, 59–60; Özyar 2013, 123).

<sup>18</sup> ARSUZ 1, ARSUZ 2, DARENDE, KELEKLİ.

<sup>19</sup> ADANA 1, TELL AHMAR 1, TELL AHMAR 2, TELL AHMAR 6, BOROWSKI 3, ALEPPO 2, BABYLON 1, KÜRTÜL, CEKKE, KÖRKÜN, and KARKAMIŞ A17a.

statues similar to these stelae, the inscription manifests the agent while the image manifests the deity whose presence the agent desires to enter (Hogue 2019b). Given the emplacement of the Dibon Stele in the shrine to Kemosh in Qarḥoh, the stele may have been intended as a reemodiment of Kemosh in addition to or even instead of Mesha.

A similar possibility presents itself for Mesha's other "I Am" monument – the Kerak Statue. Not enough of this statue is preserved to say for certain what individual it is intended to depict, but other examples from the Age of Territorial Theatre may suggest that it was Kemosh. The aforementioned monument of Panamuwa I from this period was actually a statue of the Storm-god Hadad inscribed with an "I Am" inscription of Panamuwa. Similarly, though the inscriptions ÇINEKÖY, the Azatiwada Statue (*KAI 26 C*), and the Zakkur Statue (*KAI 202*) all record "I Am" inscriptions of human kings, they depict deities. All of these date roughly to the Age of Territorial Theatre, so the pairing of a human agent's inscription with the aesthetic reemodiment of a deity was a common cultural model during this period. The purpose was undoubtedly to manifest the agent alongside the deity (Hogue 2019b, 336). Given the cultic overtones of the Kerak Statue's inscription, it may very well have been a statue of Kemosh bearing an inscription of Mesha designed to conjure the two figures together.

Unfortunately, we can say little more about the aesthetic discourse of Mesha's monuments because neither was found in situ. Both seem to further buttress the relationship created between Mesha and Kemosh in the verbal discourse of the monuments. Given the described placement in shrines, we might speculate that these monuments were originally accompanied by altars and other cultic paraphernalia meant to facilitate ritual practices similar to those attached to Katuwas' monuments. Much more can be said about the spatial discourse of these monuments, however.

### The Spatial Discourse of Mesha's Monuments

The Age of Territorial Theatre probably saw the same kinds of ritual engagement as the Age of Civic Ritual (Gilibert 2011, 125–28). The major shift that occurred during this period was in the scale of those engagements. Rather than being limited to a single ritual locus or even a single urban theatre, "I Am" monuments were now distributed across regions. Complementary monuments were placed in different cities instead of different locations within the same city. As a result, a wider region was ritualized by treating different cities as though they were

ceremonial boundaries. This is why I label this period the Age of Territorial Theatre. Territories had themselves been reconfigured as theatres during this period. This development was contingent upon a performative territoriality that was united with monumentality during this period.

Ancient Levantine territories were malleable. James Osborne argues that territorial sovereignty was not evenly distributed but rather "expressed and experienced as a patchy and highly variegated phenomenon across the landscape" (Osborne 2013, 775). During the Age of Territorial Theatre, Levantine elites utilized "I Am" monuments to express territory and manipulate how it was experienced. Green argues that Levantine monumental inscriptions often narrated a ruler's creation and reconfiguration of space. The conquest of new cities and territories as well as the building, refurbishing, and reinforcing of cities and particular buildings feature prominently in these narrations. Most importantly, the emplacement of a monument complemented – and I would argue reified – the ruler's configuration of space (Green 2010, 307–16). Seth Sanders thus argues that Levantine monumental inscriptions configured territories performatively (Sanders 2009, 118). That is, these inscriptions were not merely verbal descriptions of a polity's territory, as though it were a preexisting reality. Rather, they were proposing, performing, and thereby enacting territory. These inscriptions aimed not to describe but rather to bring about territorial sovereignty. While the verbal discourse of these inscriptions was undoubtedly important toward this end, it was not the only performative means of reifying territory. Far more significant was the spatial discourse of these artifacts.

Of course, peripheral monuments like those of Mesha, Hazael, and Urhilina were ubiquitous in ancient West Asia, but their function was not consistent historically. For example, Ömür Harmanşah argues that peripheral monuments allowed rulers to appropriate "local places of power to configure the edges of their imperial territories" (Harmanşah 2017, 48). This practice was similar to what I have noted for Mesha, but with one important difference. The Late Bronze Age examples used by Harmanşah illustrate elite claims on places of power, but not necessarily enactments of simultaneous control of multiple regions. Mesha's monuments, however, assume control of a region – Moab – in addition to key sites within it. This performance of a regional sovereignty may have been partially appropriated from contemporary Assyrian monuments (Sanders 2009, 120–22).

Assyrian peripheral monuments in the ninth century explicitly combined territoriality with monumentality. While most Assyrian monuments

were centrally installed in capital cities, there was also a significant practice of peripheral monument-making, especially in newly subjugated cities. This was especially true of the reigns of Assurnasirpal II and Shalmaneser III (Shafer 2007, 133, 141). According to Ann Shafer, their peripheral monuments “consistently marked the important culminating or transitional points in the[ir] campaigns” (Shafer 2007, 136).<sup>20</sup> These were sometimes treated as markers of cosmic boundaries between the civilized Assyrian polity and the outer chaotic world (Yamada 1999, 10–12; 2000, 295–96). More significantly, the erection of peripheral monuments allowed the Assyrian king to distribute his presence throughout the frontiers of his territorial polity. Through his reembodiment in the peripheral monument, the king and his ideology could be present on the frontier, engaging in perpetual ritual practice to transform that border place into a location aligned with the urban core. At the same time, monuments within the urban core would recapitulate these materialized rituals, tying the core and periphery together through a complex network of complementary monuments and the king’s shared presence in both places (Harmanşah 2007a, 195). Ultimately, the concerted use of peripheral and central monuments allowed the Assyrian kings to transform “the geography of the empire” into “a narrative map, a spatial narrative” (Harmanşah 2007b, 84). At least two of Shalmaneser’s monuments were erected in Levantine cult centers and were intended to enact the populace’s submission to the sovereignty of Assyria (Yamada 1999; 2000, 390–97). Perhaps inspired by this cultural model, Levantine elites took this sort of spatial discourse a step further by drawing upon their own tradition of erecting multiple monuments in ceremonial theatres.

Two complementary “I Am” monuments erected by Mesha have been discovered (Fig. 7). As already noted, the Dibon Stele was set up on Dibon’s acropolis. The Kerak Statue was erected at Kerak in southern Moab, which according to the inscription on the Dibon Stele was the

<sup>20</sup> This function of the placement of peripheral monuments is also reflected by their literary integration into royal annals. Aššurnasirpal II described the erection of monuments at the end of campaigns nine times in his annals. This was significantly expanded by his successor Shalmaneser III, whose annals and inscriptions include over fifty descriptions of monument-making (S. Yamada 2000, 274–75). A similar practice is attested among the Hittites. Šuppiluliuma II recorded the erection of mountain monuments to commemorate both his subjugation of Cyprus and his father Tudḫaliya IV’s victory over Cyprus before him. In KBo 12.38, he even concluded the conquest account with a Hittite translation of the full text of the associated monumental inscription (Güterbock 1967).

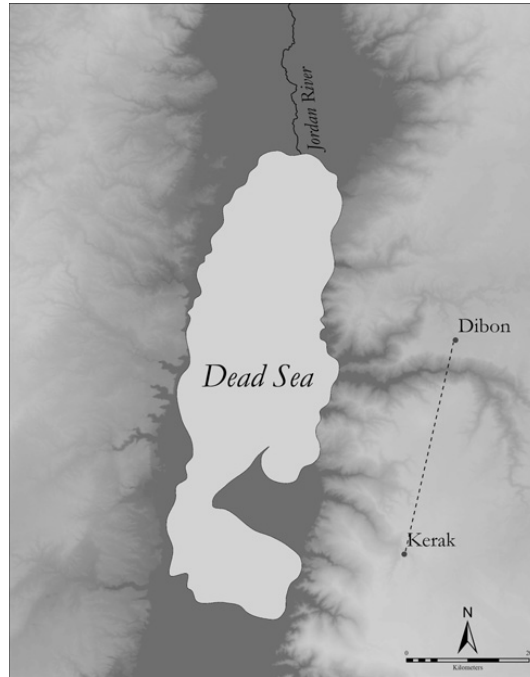


FIGURE 7 The territorial distribution of Mesha’s “I Am” monuments in Moab. Map by Amy Karoll.

space within Mesha’s territory that was most in need of subjection. Mesha thus tied these two spaces together, projecting his Dibon-centered ideology into the peripheral zone of Kerak (Routledge 2004, 192; Shafer 2007, 147–48). Much as Katuwas enacted a theatre for social transformation by means of a monument in the temple of the Storm-god and complementary monuments in the surrounding plaza, Mesha paired a monument in the temple to Kemosh in Dibon with a complementary monument in Kerak on the southern frontier of his territory. The implication is that the theatre for Mesha’s social formation is the entire territory thus marked and enacted. Kerak became a liminal space – like the gateways and other portals in ceremonial plazas – facilitating transition into Mesha’s territorial theatre and therefore his perspective. As the ceremonial plaza was the “material correlate” to a city’s subjects, Mesha transformed all of Moab into the correlate of his polity’s subjects (Routledge 2000, 235–45; Gilbert 2013, 39 N. 19). The territoriality proposed in his monuments is enacted by their cross-regional distribution.

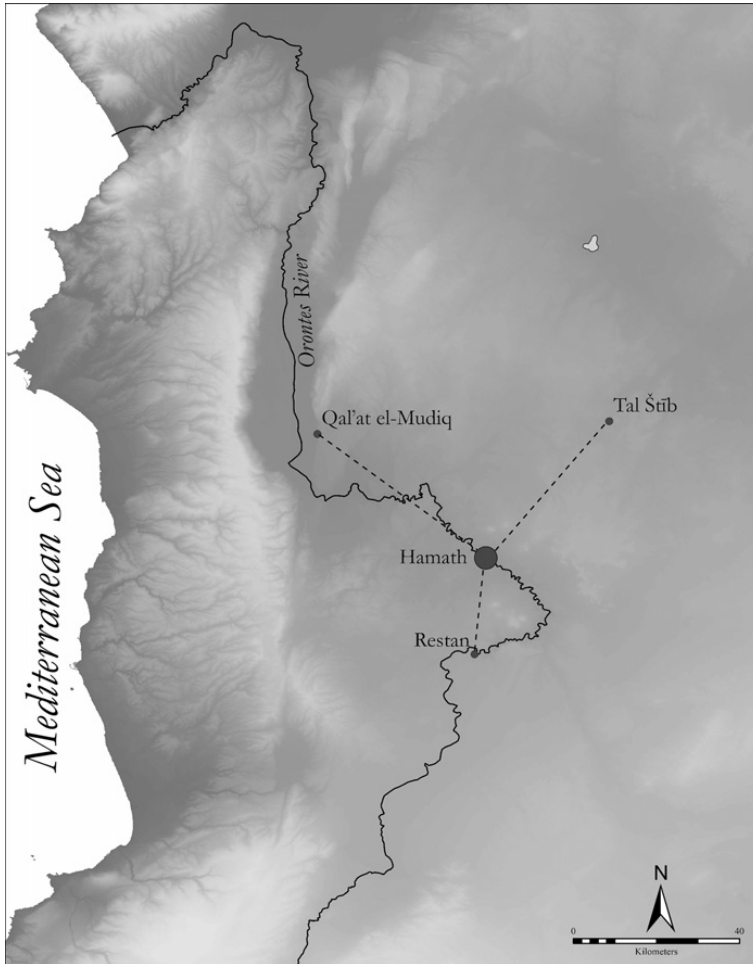


FIGURE 8 The territorial distribution of Urhilina's "I Am" monuments in Hamath. Map by Amy Karoll.

This innovative use of monuments to performatively constitute territory was not unique to Mesha. Most significantly, Urhilina of Hamath paired "I Am" monuments in the city of Hamath with duplicate monuments in his frontier cities (Fig. 8). QALAT EL MUDIQ was erected 46 km northwest of Hamath. TALL ŠTĪB was installed 41 km north-northwest of Hamath, while RESTAN was placed 26 km south of the capital city (Gonnet 2010, 97; Payne 2012, 59–61). Another copy of these inscriptions, HINES, was discovered out of context in northern Iraq. A similar

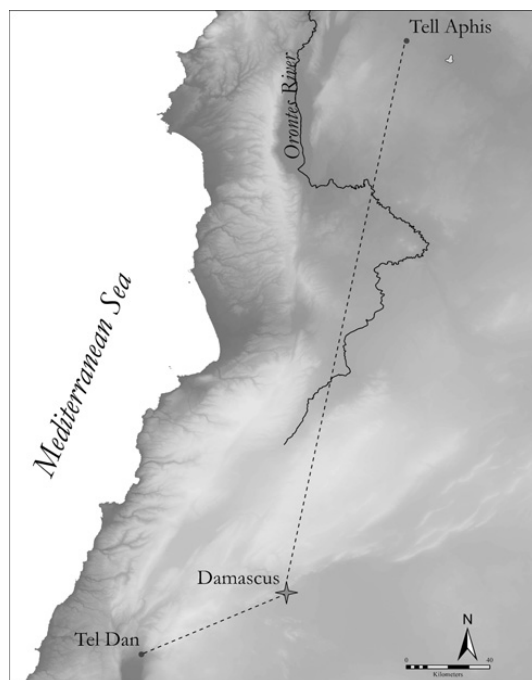


FIGURE 9 The territorial distribution of Hazael’s “I Am” monuments in Aram. Map by Amy Karoll.

strategy seems apparent for the monuments of Hazael in Dan and Aphis, which were undoubtedly complementary to monuments in Damascus (Fig. 9). Hazael’s model was later followed in Aphis by Zakkur (Hogue 2021b, 252). Further north, Panamuwa I of Zincirli erected a monument in Gerçin 7 km northeast of Zincirli that was modeled after monuments in the capital’s acropolis, suggesting a similar complementarity to that expressed by Mesha’s monuments (Gilibert 2011, 125). Even Kamani of Karkamiš may have engaged in a similar practice with his erection of the Cekke Stele approximately 68 km west-southwest from his monuments in the same ceremonial plaza utilized by Katuwa a century earlier.

Mesha’s monuments – as well as those of Urhilina – were further tied together through cultic parity. While the monuments of the Assyrians and other Levantine polities like Sam’al tended to devote their monuments to unique local deities wherever they were emplaced, Mesha and Urhilina devoted all of their monuments to the same deity: Kemosh in Mesha’s case and Ba’alat in Urhilina’s. The erection of these monuments in different



geographic locations thus did not simply tie the core and the periphery of these burgeoning territorial polities together. These monuments specifically bound those areas together as part of a larger implied pilgrimage network. As argued by Coben, theatres could take the form not only of plazas but also of “pilgrimage routes” (Coben 2006, 223). The appropriation of pilgrimage routes by elites to claim territorial control is attested elsewhere in ancient West Asia in various periods (Ristvet 2008; 2011). But Mesha and Urhilina crafted their territories by establishing new pilgrimage networks centered on a single important deity. They thus transformed the regions marked by their monuments into territories that were defined by devotion to a specific deity, giving rise to a form of monolatry in the process (Hogue 2022b). This use of “I Am” monuments to enact a special relationship to a specific deity during this period is particularly important to keep in mind when considering the Decalogue. This may explain why the biblical composers utilized this form in particular to depict the origin of Israel’s relationship to Yahweh.

#### THE AGE OF COURT CEREMONY: BAR-RAKIB OF SAM'AL

Levantine monumental discourse evolved significantly beginning in the late eighth century. While multiple factors were undoubtedly at work, the most important one to keep in mind was the resurgence of the Assyrian empire under Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 BCE). This king reorganized the Assyrian polity and expanded it, pushing its direct influence into the Levant for the first time in a century. The impact of Assyria’s expansion is observable in Levantine culture throughout the rest of the eighth and seventh centuries (Crouch 2014b, 8–82). As a result, Levantine elites had to reconfigure how they presented themselves in order to appease – and sometimes react to – the neo-Assyrian imperial program. In general, “I Am” monuments became much more limited in scope at this time and tended to focus on legitimating Levantine elites to other elites. Accordingly, new monumental installations tended to appear in restricted environments in royal centers. In addition, many productions from this period represented a shift in practices of monument aggregation. While new monuments had always been erected in the vicinity of old ones to gain legitimacy by association, the Age of Court Ceremony saw new monuments consciously reframing earlier artifacts and even subverting them.

These shifts in Levantine monument-making are best illustrated by the royal monuments in the citadel of Sam'al. Outside the gate to the citadel stood a colossal ruler statue without an inscription dating to the early

ninth century. It was a generic monument to the dynasty – in fact, it is identical to a colossal ruler statue found at Karkamiš dating to the same period – with no specific identity presented or necessary (Gilibert 2011, 77–79). Within Sam'al's citadel gate stood the Kulamuwa Orthostat – a late ninth-century “I Am” monument of Kulamuwa in which the identified king not only proclaimed his victory over or manipulation of foreign kings (including the Assyrian king). He also disavowed his predecessors at Sam'al (Gilibert 2011, 83–84). Deeper within the citadel complex stood the “I Am” monuments of Bar-Rakib, who ruled Sam'al as a vassal of Tiglath-pileser III in the late eighth century. Bar-Rakib's monuments exhibit an Assyrianizing tendency in both their appropriation of Assyrian models and their apparent acquiescence to Assyrian subjection. Nevertheless, they also drew upon earlier Levantine models, including Kulamuwa's defamation of his predecessors. However, in this case, Bar-Rakib consciously adapted Kulamuwa's monumental rhetoric and integrated his monuments into the environment of the Kulamuwa Orthostat to disavow Kulamuwa. This simultaneous incorporation of Assyrian models and metacommentary on past Levantine practice are some of the defining aspects of the Age of Court Ceremony.

### The Verbal Discourse of Bar-Rakib's Monuments

The resurgence of the neo-Assyrian empire under Tiglath-pileser III resulted in significant changes to the language of kingship. During his reign, many of the polities of the Levant became tributaries or vassals of Assyria. Among Tiglath-pileser III's political reforms, he sought to consolidate his power by restricting that of his governors and vassals, including their monumental discourse (Shafer 1998, 32–33; 2007, 135; Yamada 2014, 44). According to Shigeo Yamada, Assyrian monuments of this period changed by “ascribing the prerogative in the military and administrative enterprises ideologically solely to the king,” as opposed to his governors or vassals (Yamada 2014, 47). As a result, the monumental texts of Levantine kings of this period had to grapple with the presence of a power greater than the king as well as the near impossibility of deriving legitimacy through open warfare, which may have invited the ire of the Assyrian king. The rivals in monumental discourse therefore transformed from “enemies” into “brothers.” They might be depicted as envious or obsequious toward the agent, but they were no longer openly denounced (Green 2010, 211–19, 229–31, 296–97). Beginning in the Age of Court Ceremony, battle narratives essentially disappeared from Levantine “I Am” inscriptions, and any mentions of

martial prowess were relatively brief. Bar-Rakib noticeably avoids defaming any foreign kings, who are now either his fellow vassals or his overlord the Assyrian king (Green 2010, 293–97; Gilibert 2011, 86–88).

The poetics of Bar-Rakib's inscriptions changed in similar ways. While they utilize the same rhetorical strategies as earlier monuments, they use them for quite different purposes. Broadly speaking, the most popular structure encountered for Levantine "I Am" monuments is the bipartite inscription. Bar-Rakib's first palace orthostat (*KAI 216*) exhibits this format, probably in imitation of the Kulamuwa Orthostat (*KAI 24*). In this form, the inscription is divided into two clear rhetorical units differentiated by ideological deixis. The first unit is usually concerned with legitimating the agent. It may focus solely on negative material presenting the agent's ideology in terms of contrast, or on presenting the agent's positive interactions with those near to him. The second unit of these inscriptions consists of injunctions. These are focused on an implied or explicit "you," addressing the users themselves in their present time and place. The medial deictic "you" implies a liminal state with respect to ideological deixis. The users were placed between the agent and his enemies, pending their acceptance or rejection of his perspective. Such a structure was previously proposed by Michael O'Connor and Mario Fales for the Kulamuwa Orthostat and by Dennis Pardee for the Katumuwa Stele, which was also discovered at Sam'al. Green has also observed it in the Zakkur Statue (*KAI 202*). Even a cursory look through all the Luwian and Semitic exemplars of "I Am" inscriptions, however, will reveal that the bipartite format and derivatives of it are ubiquitous (O'Connor 1977, 23–26; Fales 1979, 7–9; Pardee 2009, 63; Green 2010, 124–27, 166–69, 223–25).

Bar-Rakib utilized the bipartite format to put his users into a liminal state, but it was not the same sort of liminality proposed by his predecessors. Whereas the earlier Sam'al king Kulamuwa, for example, situated his users between him and his foreign enemies, Bar-Rakib positioned his users between himself and Kulamuwa. In the second unit of his first palace inscription (*KAI 216*), Bar-Rakib explicitly denounced this earlier period of Sam'al's history. Instead, he invited his users to enter a new period defined by him. This is especially clear in lines 16–20:

by . ꜥb . lyšh . l'bh̄y . mlky . šm'l . h' . byt . klmw . lhm . . . w'nh . bnyt . byt' . znh

"There was no good palace for my fathers; all they had was *that* palace of Kulamuwa . . . but I built *this* palace."

Notice the disparaging tone Bar-Rakib creates through his use of deixis. Kulamuwa's palace is explicitly not good – a perspective further

emphasized by Bar-Rakib’s use of the distal particle *h’* “that.” By contrast, *byt’ znh* “this palace” of Bar-Rakib must be a good alternative. Utilizing rhetoric like this to both imitate and depart from earlier tropes of “I Am” monuments, Bar-Rakib invited his users to reject the more independent past of Sam’al in preference to its status under Bar-Rakib as a vassal to Assyria (Hogue 2022c, 48). The aesthetic and spatial discourse of these monuments present the same argument.

### The Aesthetic Discourse of Bar-Rakib’s Monuments

Bar-Rakib’s monuments are all orthostats adorning the new palace he built on the acropolis of Sam’al. Three of these were inscribed, and fragments of more inscribed orthostats have been found. These are accompanied by many uninscribed orthostats as well. On the one hand, the scenes on these orthostats clearly derive from Levantine models; they are markedly similar to those of Katuwas and Kulamuwa. On the other hand, Bar-Rakib drew upon Assyrian cultural models to a greater degree than Levantine elites in prior periods. While this hybridization at times seems to reinforce both traditions, it also undermines both.

All of Bar-Rakib’s inscribed orthostats are paired with portraits of the king (Fig. 10). He is shown both processing and seated while receiving supplicants. Both scenes are known from Karkamišean monuments. A key



FIGURE 10 Bar-Rakib’s Second Palace Orthostat (KAI 217). Exhibit in Das Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin. Photo: Courtesy of Richard Mortel ([www.flickr.com/photos/prof\\_richard/40208720312/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/prof_richard/40208720312/)). Licensed under CC BY 2.0.

departure, however, is that while the processing portraits like that of Katuwas also functioned as a hieroglyph for the first-person pronoun, this was impossible for the alphabetic inscriptions of Sam'al. Nevertheless, a portrait based on the hieroglyph EGO<sub>2</sub> was included, nor was Bar-Rakib the first to adapt the hieroglyph for his portrait. The Kulamuwa Orthostat is accompanied primarily by a relief image of the agent that is clearly modeled on the Karkamišean examples of EGO<sub>2</sub> but with no linguistic value (Gilibert 2011, 82). Bar-Rakib simply appropriated this practice from Kulamuwa and the models he used at Karkamiš (Gilibert 2011, 87–88). Noticeably, the writing on the monuments does not overlap the portrait, unlike the typical practice of Assyrian monumental portraits (Bunnens 2005). This lack of overlap was required by Levantine monuments, because the portrait was treated as part of the text. Their relationship was further highlighted by their shared function; both text and image served as reembodiments of Bar-Rakib, allowing him to imaginatively appear before his users, whether they were literate or not.

The portrait was not the only element of Bar-Rakib's "I Am" monuments appropriated from Luwian hieroglyphs, however. Even though all of his inscriptions are alphabetic and written in a dialect of Aramaic, they are carved in raised relief in clear imitation of the Hieroglyphic Luwian scribal practice of neighboring Karkamiš. This is true of all Sam'alian monuments. The use of this style points to the prestige of aligning the monument with the traditions of Karkamiš, while the use of Northwest Semitic dialects point to the conscious attempt to differentiate Sam'al from the neighboring kingdoms and perhaps to break away from their influence (Hamilton 1998, 222; Struble and Herrmann 2009, 20; Gilbert 2011, 82). The choice of an orthography – perhaps even more than the choice of a language – visually branded a community (Sebba 2015). The raised relief of Bar-Rakib's Aramaic inscriptions, for instance, prompted a very different social constitution than the incised Aramaic of Hazael's inscriptions in the prior period. This aesthetic feature of the text prompted its viewers to ascribe Bar-Rakib (and his predecessors) the same prestige as the internationally recognized monuments of Karkamiš, which influenced not only the monuments of other Levantine kingdoms but also those of the encroaching Assyrians.

While Kulamuwa's earlier monument was arguably already Assyrianizing, Bar-Rakib took this appropriation of elements from Assyrian art to a new level (Gilibert 2011, 82). Bar-Rakib's third palace orthostat (*KAI* 218) shows the king seated on an Assyrian-style throne and receiving a supplicant (Gilibert 2011, 86). Centered above the scene is a staff bearing a crescent

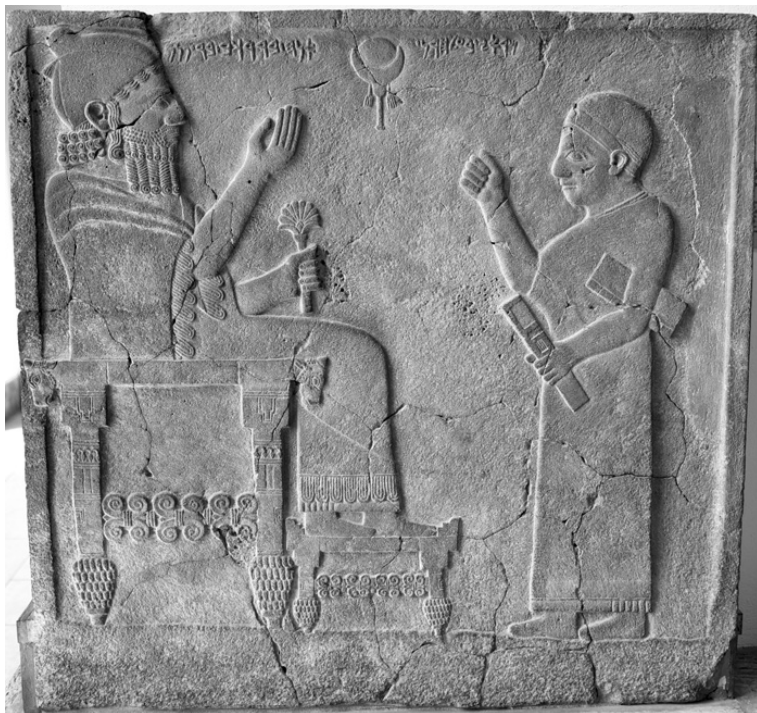


FIGURE 11 Bar-Rakib’s Third Palace Orthostat (KAI 218). Exhibit in Das Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin. Licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0. Photo: Courtesy of Osama Shukir Muhammed Amin ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sam%27alian\\_basalt\\_wall\\_relief\\_depicting\\_Prince\\_Barrakib,\\_8th\\_century\\_BCE.\\_Pergamon\\_Museum.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sam%27alian_basalt_wall_relief_depicting_Prince_Barrakib,_8th_century_BCE._Pergamon_Museum.jpg)).

moon – an icon for the moon-god *Sîn* (Fig. 11). Above that, the inscription reads in full: *mr’y. b’lhrn. ’nh. brkkb. br. pnm[w]* “My lord is Ba‘al-Ḥarrān (i.e., ‘the Lord of Ḥarrān,’ an epithet for *Sîn*), I am Bar-Rakib son of Panamuwa.” The inscription and the accompanying appropriation of Assyrian iconography show a clear deference to the Assyrian suzerain. *Sîn* was the god before whom loyalty oaths were sworn, so the textual and iconographic reference to him on Bar-Rakib’s monument was a means of displaying his vassalage (Green 1992, 20–21, 34–39). In fact, two Assyrian stelae (the Antakya and Pazarcik stelae) erected by Adad-nerari III in the Levant to negotiate border disputes between local kings include the same staff icon for *Sîn* of Ḥarrān to indicate his role in securing the contracting parties’ loyalty (Hätinen 2021, 251–52). Bar-Rakib’s repetition of this iconographic motif in effect indexed his loyalty to Assyria.

However, those viewers familiar with Levantine artistic tradition (as well as Mesopotamian artistic tradition, for that matter) would recognize that Bar-Rakib retained the traditional seat of the Levantine king, which during Katuwas' time had been appropriated from the gods. While Assyrian iterations of this scene depicted those subject to the loyalty oath supplicating before Sin, as in the Antakya Stele, here the one receiving supplicants is the enthroned Bar-Rakib, who sits on an Assyrian throne, no less (Hogue 2022c, 40–41). Even while Assyrian pressure in the Levant greatly reshaped the monumental discourse in the region, Levantine elites resisted this pressure in creative ways. This practice of creatively subverting while also accommodating Assyrian traditions will reappear in the later modifications of the Decalogue, especially in the context of Deuteronomy.

### The Spatial Discourse of Bar-Rakib's Monuments

While there was some overlap between the Age of Territorial Theatre and the Age of Court Ceremony, the spatial discourse that characterized each could not be more different. While Mesha had expanded the logic of a ceremonial theatre to encompass an entire region, Bar-Rakib and his contemporaries restricted it to intimate, elite-oriented spaces. This shift seems primarily linked to Assyria's resurgence in the region, so it is worth considering Levantine interactions with Assyria more broadly before focusing on Bar-Rakib in particular.

After Tiglath-pileser III came to power in 745 BCE and began incorporating Levantine polities into his empire, the connection between monumentality and territoriality in the Levant completely disappeared. This was a type of monumental discourse that Tiglath-pileser and subsequent Assyrian kings reserved for themselves (Shafer 1998, 32–33; Yamada 2014, 44). Tiglath-pileser III revived the practice of erecting peripheral monuments at frontier zones that marked the territorial limits of Assyria (Shafer 2007, 135). His inscriptions attest the erection of ten such monuments, but only one of them was set up in the Levant at Gaza (Yamada 2014, 36; Suriano 2014, 402). The vast majority of Tiglath-pileser III's monuments were erected in his palace, however, and this shift toward greater centralization was mirrored in the Levantine monuments of the same period (Gilibert 2011, 130–31; Yamada 2014, 33–34). This was a culmination in the development of Assyrian court culture that had begun under Assurnasirpal II.

Though he had erected important examples of peripheral monuments, Assurnasirpal II's grandest construction was a new capital city and palace

at Kalḫu (biblical Calah, modern Nimrud). Massive spectacles were held in the city on a yearly basis, during which foreign dignitaries were required to deliver tribute to the Assyrian court and participate in ceremonial feasts (Barjamovic 2011, 31–35, 40–48; Bahrani 2014, 116). Though these processions and feasts included large numbers of participants, they were generally restricted to local and foreign elites. The restriction of access to these festivals served to broadcast the supreme power of the Assyrian king as well as to integrate elites into his hierarchy (Barjamovic 2011, 60). Somewhat surprisingly, the court ceremonies at Kalḫu continued even during the eighth century. Prior to the imperial resurgence, emissaries from Sam’al, Karkamiš, Malatya, Cilicia, Israel, and possibly even Judah are attested on wine lists from Kalḫu as participants in the court ceremonies held there (Aster 2016, 181–87). Even though Assyria was not currently exercising direct rule over the region, some of these kingdoms may still have been paying it tribute. Israel, however, may have in fact been Assyria’s ally during this period, rather than a vassal (Na’aman 2019). It is possible that exposure to these ceremonies inspired Levantine kings to imitate Assyrian court ceremonies back home. Such an imitation may be seen in Jeroboam II’s distribution of wine to clan leaders in Israel, for example. This wine was not sold but rather gifted to nonroyal elites to ensure their loyalty to the king. This practice shares much in common with the strategy of wine distribution in Kalḫu at the same time (Nam 2013).

The motivation for Levantine royals to target nonroyal elites in their polities was twofold. First, after the resurgence of the Assyrian empire, many Levantine rulers now had an overlord to appease. Second, because nonroyal elites had grown in power significantly during the eighth century – even to the point of successfully appropriating monumental discourse “that had previously been the exclusive prerogative of the royalty” – Levantine rulers had a greater need to legitimate themselves in the eyes of these elites (Gilbert 2011, 126–28).<sup>21</sup> These elites now posed an existential threat to their rulers (Denel 2007, 187; Green 2010, 294–97; Yamada 2014, 44). Accordingly, at sites like Sam’al there was an increase in new monument production to promote consent among nonroyal elites. This mirrors the development of Assyrian practice at this time. When Tiglath-pileser III rose to power, he significantly curtailed the power of Assyrian elites as well as newly subjugated Levantine rulers.

<sup>21</sup> For examples of elite emulation of royal monuments, see the Azatiwada Inscription (KARATEPE 1/KAI 26), the Neirab stelae (KAI 225–226), and the Katumuwa Stele.



This was paired with an upsurge in monument erection undoubtedly intended to promote consent among these increasingly disenfranchised elite groups (Gilibert 2011, 130–31; Yamada 2014, 31–34).

In order to more specifically target elites, the spatial discourse of “I Am” monuments during the Age of Court Ceremony tended to be marked by segregation. Former ceremonial plazas were subdivided, with their boundaries guarded by newly erected “I Am” monuments, and accessible only by the elite. Depictions of processions in these areas increasingly show only elite participants. Though larger civic spectacles may have continued to be performed around older monuments, newer ones were the domain only of society’s higher echelons. Though rituals may have included aspects restricted to elites in the past, this restriction was more openly emphasized beginning in the eighth century. Even Katuwas’ plaza at Karkamiš was repurposed to host spectacles targeting only elite denizens of the city. The same secondary segregation of an acropolis is attested at Sam'al, Tel Dan, Tell Halaf, and Tell Tayinat, suggesting a far-reaching shift in regional monument-making practices (Pucci 2008a, 174; Gilbert 2011, 128–31; Greer 2013, 135–36). While the “I Am” monuments in these contexts continued to reembody the king speaking through them, they now reembodyed him only before a restricted elite audience, rather than before his polity’s denizens at large.

Bar-Rakib’s monuments were used alongside preexisting monuments in Sam'al’s urban landscape to transform it into a spatial narrative of his reign (Fig. 12). As was the case at Karkamiš, upon entering Sam'al individuals would find themselves on a processional road leading to the acropolis and the ceremonial plazas beyond. Because users had to approach the acropolis from the south but the citadel gateway was located in the northeast, the acropolis would be visible well before users could actually access it. Before passing through the citadel gate, users would encounter the colossal ruler statue mentioned earlier and perhaps some larger scale public spectacles staged there (Gilibert 2011, 95–97). The ceremonies held beyond the gate were significantly more intimate, however.

Upon passing through the citadel gate, elite visitors to the acropolis would find themselves directly in front of the Kulamuwa Orthostat and Kulamuwa’s palace. During the reign of Kulamuwa, this is where the elite procession ended. During the reign of Bar-Rakib, however, after entering the acropolis, visitors still had to traverse the entire width of the acropolis twice and pass through another portal before reaching Bar-Rakib’s palace. This is because Bar-Rakib had divided Zincirli’s citadel in half, with

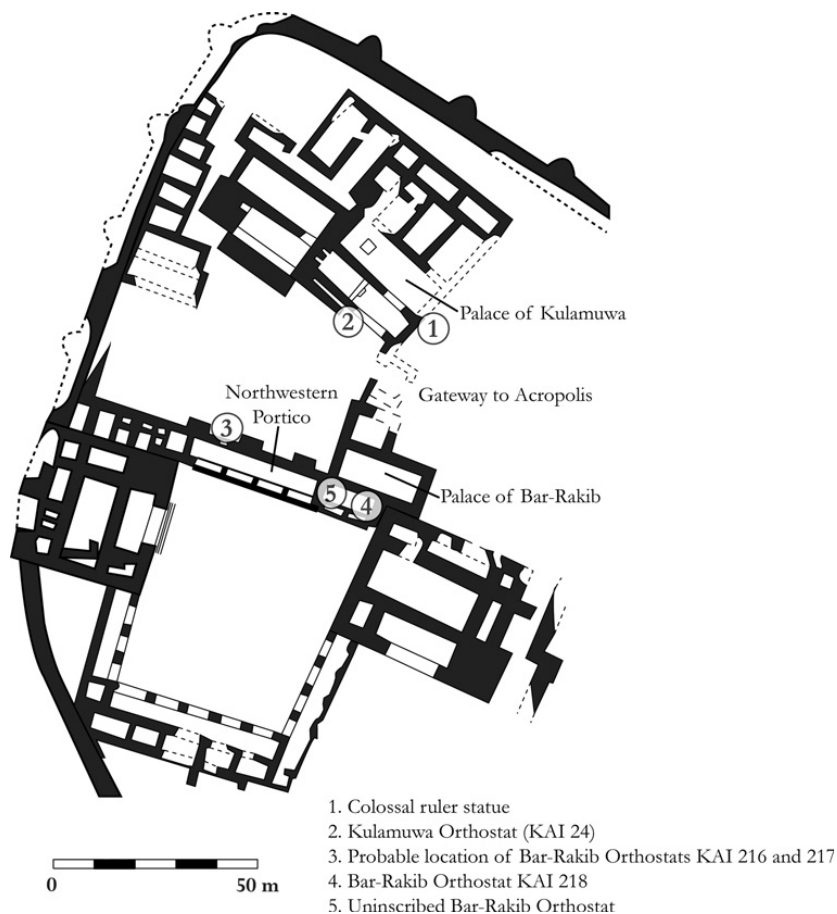


FIGURE 12 Map of the Zincirli Acropolis showing major monumental installations. Map by Amy Karoll.

a new portico leading into an enlarged version of the old palace complex. This segregation of the acropolis was clearly symbolic, because Bar-Rakib's new buildings were built over the top of previous citadel fortifications and actually weakened them. The dividing walls Bar-Rakib had constructed thus served no defensive purpose (Pucci 2008a, 39). The portico Bar-Rakib constructed was an enlarged version of the entry facade into Kulamuwa's palace, but it opened into an open-air courtyard covering the citadel's southern half (Gilibert 2011, 88). This southern courtyard was approximately 240 m<sup>2</sup>, meaning that it could only hold about 600 participants – a significant departure from the theatre of Katuwas.

Flanking the gateway into the southern plaza, the users would come into contact with twin portal orthostat inscriptions of Bar-Rakib (*KAI* 216 and 217), which legitimated his reign on the basis of his loyalty to the Assyrian king and his construction of the massive new palace. The inscriptions explicitly refer to the Kulamuwa Orthostat, drawing on its semantic tropes and even deictically gesturing to the old palace (Gilibert 2011, 87–88; Hogue 2022c, 47). Bar-Rakib’s monuments reembody him at this location in particular in order to guide his users into his newly constructed palace and wave them away from the palace of Kulamuwa, as it were.

Upon entering the southern plaza and processing back to the eastern side of the acropolis, the users would finally be able to enter the palace of Bar-Rakib and encounter him again in a final short “I Am” monument (*KAI* 218) that flanked the doorway, paired with an uninscribed orthostat (Gilibert 2011, 85–87). The visitors encountering the orthostats would thus actually process with Bar-Rakib into his palace where he received them and feasted with them (Gilibert 2011, 87). Passing through each of these portals implied a growing intimacy with Bar-Rakib, who appeared at each major waypoint to persuade the processors to continue their journey into the palace and the ideological perspective it indexed (Hogue 2022c, 47).

While the restriction of access to these orthostats to elites imitated Assyrian practice and various aspects of Bar-Rakib’s monuments cast aspersions on Sam’al’s pre-vassal period, the spatial discourse is nonetheless subversive for those users familiar with Levantine cultural models. The spatial discourse of Levantine monuments was often centered on temples, as were Katuwas’ procession to the temple of the Storm-god and Mesha’s focus on the temple of Kemosh. Bar-Rakib’s convoluted and segregated procession ultimately ends in his own palace, however. As was the case with his monument’s aesthetic discourse, this is a somewhat subversive hybridization of Levantine and Assyrian practice. Even as a vassal king, Bar-Rakib had nevertheless claimed the position of a god, much as he had done in his aesthetic discourse when he appropriated and subverted an Assyrian audience scene usually centered on the god *Sîn*.

#### THE AFTERLIFE OF “I AM” MONUMENTS

As a result of Tiglath-pileser III’s imperial ambitions, both Assyrian and Levantine monumental discourses changed significantly (Green 2010, 294–97; Yamada 2014, 48). This only intensified under the Sargonids in the seventh century, and the Levantine polities that had not been

incorporated as provinces during this time took to radical reformulations of their ideologies and identities (Crouch 2014b, 8–104). Most importantly, new “I Am” monuments nearly ceased to be erected during the seventh century and are very sparsely attested in the centuries afterwards in the Levant. Notably, Hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions disappeared altogether in the seventh century.

Some aspects of “I Am” monuments were appropriated abroad, however, allowing the “I Am” formula to live a new life in Mesopotamia. The Assyrians adopted the form during the seventh century and may have restricted its use among their subjects. In general, the Assyrians sought to restrict monumentalization practices among their governors and vassals in order to solely claim what they saw as a royal prerogative (Shafer 1998, 32–33; 2007, 135; Yamada 2014, 44–47).<sup>22</sup> The formula appeared in forty-six neo-Assyrian inscriptions from the seventh century at precisely the time when it was on the decline among Levantine polities. It appeared in a further four neo-Babylonian inscriptions and once more in the Behistun inscription of Darius the Great.<sup>23</sup> These Mesopotamian examples of “I Am” inscriptions were the last examples of the form’s use in royal inscriptions or even in emulations of royal inscriptions (see Fig. 13 for the historical distribution of these monuments).<sup>24</sup> Because these monuments only adapted the formula, however, and otherwise followed standards of Mesopotamian monumental discourse, they are unlikely to have inspired the Decalogue.

<sup>22</sup> This rule is most interestingly demonstrated by some of the few exceptions to it. In 780 BCE, the Assyrian governor of Til-Barsib – formerly a center in the polity of Masuwari – erected his own “I Am” inscription in Akkadian, Luwian, and Aramaic. While the erection of this monument by an Assyrian elite and his use of Akkadian cuneiform points to Assyrian pressure in the region, the fact that this official rather than the Assyrian king erected the monument speaks to the relatively weak hold of the crown on the region during this time, especially when compared with the later reforms of Tiglath-pileser III (Younger Jr. 2016, 362–65). Even more significant in this regard are the effectively royal inscriptions of Suhu, which were only erected during a very short period at the end of the ninth and beginning of the eighth century BCE when Assyrian control of the region was not very strong (Zaia 2018, 207–8). Four such inscriptions from the eighth century adapted the “I Am” formula (Na’aman 2008, 223–34). Apart from these five examples from the eighth century, the “I Am” formula did not appear again in cuneiform until the Assyrian kings themselves adapted it.

<sup>23</sup> For the neo-Babylonian examples, see Nabonidus 23, 49, 56, and 2001 (Weiershäuser and Novotny 2019). For an edition of the relevant lines of the Behistun Inscription, see Benedict and von Voigtlander (1956).

<sup>24</sup> Note that this chart includes the examples from Alalah and Kassite Babylon discussed briefly earlier as well as a regent’s inscription from tenth-century Assur that is otherwise not relevant to this study (Novotny and Tushingham 2017).

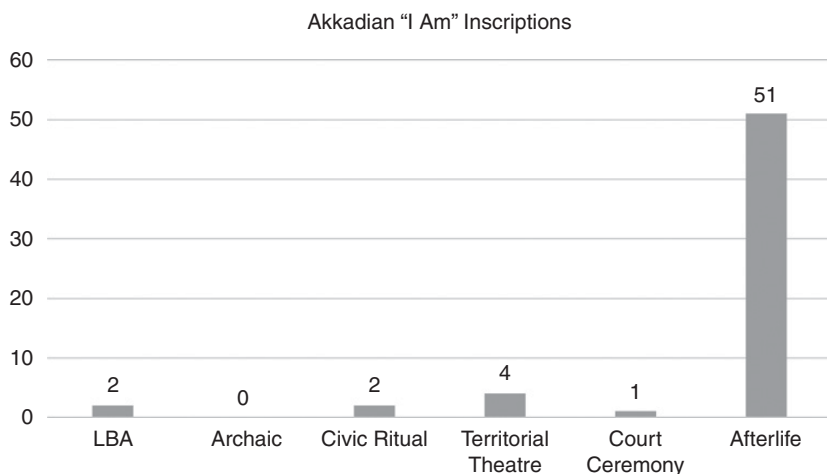


FIGURE 13 Chart showing the distribution of “I Am” inscriptions written in Akkadian by historical period.

The subsequent “I Am” inscriptions in Northwest Semitic dialects from the Persian and Hellenistic periods were mostly funerary monuments and increasingly dissociated from royalty. The Tabnit Sarcophagus (*KAI* 14) from Sidon and the Yehawmilk Stele from Tyre were the last royal Levantine “I Am” monuments in the Persian period, and both exhibit marked differences from those of earlier periods. Hellenistic exemplars are limited to two in Phoenician from Cyprus,<sup>25</sup> three Phoenician–Greek bilinguals from Athens,<sup>26</sup> and one Aramaic–Greek bilingual that was found in Armazi, Georgia (Metzger 1956). Some of these inscriptions include nothing but the “I Am” formula, and those that are longer are only expanded by brief dedications of the monument. These features as well as the lateness and far-flung distribution of these inscriptions suggest that they should be treated as a new type of monument indicative of a new monumentality, even if they derive some of their discourse from earlier Levantine “I Am” monuments. As such, it is highly unlikely that the Decalogue derived its rhetoric from these late inscriptions or from the earlier Mesopotamian appropriations. The Afterlife period is primarily worth considering in order to eliminate it as a possible temporal setting for the Decalogue’s composition.

<sup>25</sup> These are Kition Funerary Inscription B 1 (*KAI* 35) and B 38 (Amadasi Guzzo and Karageorghis 1977, 48–51, 86–87).

<sup>26</sup> These are *KAI* 53, 54, and 59. For an engaging study of *KAI* 54 with references to the other two, see Stager (2005).

THE PLACE OF THE DECALOGUE IN THE HISTORY  
OF "I AM" MONUMENTS

In the chapters to follow, I will argue that the Decalogue's composers and editors drew upon features of the monumental discourse discussed in this chapter. The phraseology of the Decalogue repeats many of the tropes of "I Am" monuments, most notably the "I Am" statement but also typical injunctions and poetic strategies. While the Decalogue as it exists now is not inscribed in stone, the narrative surrounding it in the Hebrew Bible imagines it as such. Furthermore, the narrative explicitly connects the Decalogue to depictions of artifacts like stelae, which were the most common epigraphic supports for "I Am" monuments. We will also find that the narratives depict the Decalogue in spatial contexts akin to those attested for Levantine "I Am" monuments, such as its peripheral setting in the book of Exodus or its implied centralization in Deuteronomy. Considering the Decalogue alongside the corpus of "I Am" monuments will thus allow us to make new judgments regarding its translation and interpretation as well as that of the surrounding narratives.

As we have just seen, however, the monumental discourse of "I Am" monuments was not static but rather highly dynamic. It changed semi-regularly during the centuries of its use, sometimes in drastic ways. Therefore, it is not enough simply to compare the Decalogue to this corpus of artifacts and conclude that it was communicating in similar ways. Instead, it must be compared to them in historical sequence. After all, as argued in the Introduction, discussing monumentality ultimately amounts to "empty words" unless it is historically situated (Wu 1995, 4). That is why this chapter has focused on constructing a history of monuments to act as a backdrop for an analysis of the Decalogue's monumentality.

As I admitted in the Introduction, analyzing the Decalogue using an art historical framework does necessitate addressing the thorny issue of dating. However, it also provides a novel means of approaching this problem. The cultural model of monumentality from which the Decalogue derives had all but died out in the seventh century and essentially ceased to be a meaningful way of constituting communities. Even if it were possible to recover that lost monumental discourse, there is no conceivable reason for the composers of the nascent biblical texts to imitate it. If the Decalogue were composed as an "I Am" monument in the Afterlife period, it would communicate next to nothing to contemporary audiences by drawing upon forgotten political rhetoric that had since been stripped down and repurposed for grave markers. In the following chapters, I will show that

the Decalogue instead derived its monumental discourse from earlier periods in the history of Levantine “I Am” monuments. Engagement with the text began by drawing upon the cultural expectations attached to such monuments at the height of their popularity. Furthermore, because the Decalogue, like the Nine Tripods, was ultimately a monument made of words, it was edited over the course of its transmission. In the chapters to follow, I will argue that some of this editorial activity can be periodized based on the historical changes in monumental discourse discussed earlier. This is yet another reason why a history of monuments is essential to a study of the Decalogue within this framework. It provides an external rubric for dating portions of the biblical text.

There is one key way in which the Decalogue is unlike “I Am” monuments, however, and this too will be discussed later in this book. Unlike other “I Am” monuments, the Decalogue survived their demise in the seventh century. While it adapted key aspects of the verbal, aesthetic, and spatial discourse of ancient Levantine monuments, this text continues to be engaged even now. By drawing upon the discourse of “I Am” monuments especially, the Decalogue was presented as more than a text. It was a reembodyment of Yahweh, speaking with his very voice. Nevertheless, because it was preserved as a text in portable, reproducible form, it retained that significance well after its models had been forgotten. While “I Am” monuments ceased to be productive cultural models in the seventh century, the Decalogue evolved into something else that purported to contain the very words and presence of a significant individual – Scripture.