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Imaging Emotions. Emotional Communities of Mesopotamia and the Potential of an 'Emotional Turn' in the Study of Visual Cultures

The Emotional/Affective Turn and the Iconic Turn

Material images substantialize ideas and concepts. Hence, they store, communicate and evoke emotions. Emotions are not ephemeral and fuzzy phenomena; rather, they constitute bio-cultural constructs[1] that affect motivation, learning, decision-making and communication.[2] Emotions exercise considerable influence on political, religious, and social life, and they are shaped by it.[3] Thus, it is surprising that the so-called *emotional* or *affective*[4] *turn*[5] has not found its way decisively into

1 Karen Sonik explicitly argued against the terms "constructed" and "constituted" and advocates using the phrase "mediated" instead. See Sonik 2017, 223, note 13. Although I understand her arguments, I stand by the term "constructed", as it emphasizes the built-up and processual nature of emotions, their dependency on the elements, and the environment of their construction.

2 Cf. Izard 2010, esp. 369; Reisenzein – Müller 2012. Reisenzein described three functions of emotions that almost all scholars agree on: attention, information, and motivation. That does not include all areas in which emotions have an effect.

3 Cf. van Kleef 2009; Martel et al. 2004; Nussbaum 2015; Marculescu – Métivier 2018; Rosenwein 2002; Rosenwein 2007; Reddy 2001.

4 In contrast to anthropology, psychology, and the neurosciences, visual culture studies have often tended to call emotional phenomena "affects" rather than "emotions", which is understandable in English-speaking countries but confusing for German speakers, since both terms are by definition different. "Affects" in English often are understood as the umbrella term of feelings states of any kind, emotions, feelings, moods, desires and so on, while *Affekt* in German is by definition the short-spanned, often over-the-top emotional reaction to a certain stimulus. Karen Sonik (2017, 226) expressed her doubts that the fine-tuned psychologically based differences between affects and emotions as understood in psychology are of any help in the study of ancient Mesopotamian emotional worlds: "While a nuanced definition of what constitutes an emotion as opposed to, for example, an affect in Mesopotamia has the potential to be productively developed, the fine terminological distinctions that have been or are being attempted by psychologists, most still hotly contested, cannot in any practical or useful way be applied to the ancient contexts under study here – it is not yet clear, indeed, that they can be productively or even consistently applied to any context."

5 Clough et al. 2007.

Published in: Jacobus Bracker (Ed.), *Homo Pictor. Image Studies and Archaeology in Dialogue.* Freiburger Studien zur Archäologie & Visuellen Kultur 2. Heidelberg: Propylaeum 2020, https://doi.org/10.11588/propylaeum.709

material culture studies. Although approaches to 'emotionology' have been utilized by scholars of art history, image studies, Egyptology, and ancient Near Eastern studies,[6] to speak of an emotional turn in the material-culture-based disciplines is an exaggeration. Archaeologists still need to discuss how emotions and the visual world are intertwined and how archaeologists, for example as scholars of images, can contribute to this field.

The overall issue of emotions displayed in and evoked by visual culture (**Fig. 1**) affects the realms of psychology, philosophy, anthropology and linguistics. It calls for a comprehensive examination of both theory and method. Because this volume is not the place to do so, this paper will broadly cover issues of definitions and reasons for studying emotions in visual culture and related fields. It will focus on the links between emotions and images and how to approach these. Thus, a broad approach is taken to cover topics considered important for the entanglement of archaeological research, emotion, and image studies.

Emotions defined

Emotions have been subject of research from a broad field of studies, from philosophy[7] to psychology,[8] from linguistics or linguistic psychology[9] to literary studies,[10] from history[11] to ethnography/anthropology,[12] and from art history[13] to archaeology.[14] Yet we lack one common and shared definition of what exactly constitutes

6 See, e.g., Verbovsek – Backes 2015; Tarlow 2000; Tarlow 2012; Harris – Sørensen 2010a; Fleisher – Norman 2016; Sauer 2011, and Bilstein 2005; see also the art historically-based projects https://www.kunst.uni-frankfurt.de/de/forschung/projekte/fuehlen-und-erkennen-kognitive-funktionen-der/ (12.12.2018) and http://www.ts.uni-stuttgart.de/form_und_emotion/index.html (12.12.2018); the term "emotionology" is borrowed from Stearns – Stearns 1985.

7 Cf. Demmerling – Landweer 2007; Goldie 2010; Fink-Eitel 1994; Landweer 2004. See further the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Augustinus, Descartes, Spinoza, Hume, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre, Wollheim, Nussbaum, and many more.

8 Given the extent of the literature, an exhaustive overview of both psychological and neurological or neuropsychological literature is not possible. Thus, references to handbooks and anthologies are provided here: see, e.g., Mohiyeddini et al. 2013; Merten 2003; Meyer – Schützwohl 1997; Meyer et al. 2001; Hess 2018.

9 See, e.g., Ponsonnet 2014; Wierzbicka 1999; Johnson-Laird – Oatley 1989; Wilce 2009; Tissari 2016.

10 See, e.g., Huber 2004; Krebs – Krebs 1996; Fuchs 2003.

11 See Delumeau 1985; Stearns – Stearns 1985; Plamper 2015; Rosenwein 2007; Reddy 2001 and many more.

12 See, e.g. Röttger-Rössler 2004; Lutz – White 1986; Briggs 1970; Lutz 1988; Levy 1973; Rosaldo 1980 and many more.

13 See note 6.

14 See note 6.

Fig. 1: The Foolish Virgins (4+5) from the Dome of Magdeburg (Photo: Wolfgang Gülcker © CC-BY www.guelcker.de).

emotions. Scholars from psychology have provided us with countless definitions with respect to emotions,[15] and research in other disciplines has either added to this or has deliberately avoided classifications as "too restrictive"[16] or "excluding"[17].

Generally, emotions belong to the affective field; they are "complex mental phenomena"[18] and, as a generic human experience, emotion represents the core of a cluster of terms in everyday use. Yet as cultural scholars we should be well aware that semantics do matter and that even if we cannot agree on a mutual definition, we should be clear about our own point of view.

Despite its derivation from the Latin term *e-movere*,[19] the concept of emotion itself is quite recent and replaces what was referred to as *pathos*, *affectus*, desire, sentiment, or feeling. Basically, emotions are physically comprehensible links of

15 See Kleinginna – Kleinginna 1981 and Izard 2010; many psychologists seem to agree with Klaus Scherer's view on a component-process-model expressed, for example, in Scherer 1984. However, with respect to the study of ancient cultures, the most fruitful components seem to be the expression of emotions, the subjective feeling of emotions, and the responses to emotions – thus, emotional behavior. Any of these components can be modulated by culture and are thus not generic or universal.

16 Tarlow 20000, 713; Harris – Sørensen 2010, 146.

17 Ben-Ze'ev (2010, 42) states that "there is no single essence which is a necessary and sufficient condition for all emotions".

18 Ben-Ze'ev 2010, 41.

19 Rothermund – Eder 2011, 165.

cognition and bodily changes. They are triggered by a stimulus that can be real or imagined. Significantly for cultural disciplines, emotions incorporate socio-culturally determinable appraisals and evaluations.[20] They are consistently understood as vital for motivation, communication, and social interaction.[21]

And despite a long, yet not unchallenged tradition of philosophical thinking that treated emotions as the opposite of *ratio* and as the alluring counterpart of thoughtful decision-making processes,[22] psychology, neurology, and also philosophy have increasingly acknowledged the positive role of emotions in decision-making processes.[23]

Yet psychological theories already diverge when it comes to the question of basic, primary, or secondary emotions.[24] Surprisingly, we still lack final proof that all humans (and other closely related primates) have the same array of distinct primary emotions. Affective phenomena described in Anglophone contexts using terms such as fear, joy, anger, sadness, and disgust are often discussed.[25] With respect to this paper, it is a temporary, practical compromise to use these terms, not a satisfying and neat scholarly solution. Both anthropology and linguistics have convincingly shown that the translation of terms for emotion is a matter that should be conducted quite rigorously. As a consequence, these terms serve here as nothing more than mere starting points to describe cultural specifics and deviations.

Emotions: A research subject of Visual Culture Studies

We may know broadly what we study, but not so much why we study it, especially with respect to visual culture. The urgency and immanency to study emotions with respect to images goes way beyond the observation that visual emotional display is a matter of fact.

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20 Izard 2010, 370, stated, "[e]motion consists of neural circuits (that are at least partially dedicated), response systems, and a feeling state/process that motivates and organizes cognition and action. Emotion also provides information to the person experiencing it and may include antecedent cognitive appraisals and ongoing cognition including an interpretation of its feeling state, expressions or social-communicative signals, and may motivate approach or avoidant behavior, exercise control/regulation of responses, and be social or relational in nature."

21 See above, note 2.

22 Schnell 2015, 149–150.

23 Landweer 2004; Damasio 2004.

24 For an insightful overview, see Reisenzein 2000; see also Ortony – Turner 1990, 329: "Thus, the question 'Which are the basic emotions?' is not only one that probably cannot be answered, it is a miscredited question, as though we asked, 'Which are the basic people?' and hoped to get a reply that would explain human diversity"; for a strong supporter of the basic emotions, see, e.g., Ekman 1992; Ekman 1999; for the wheel of emotions, a multidimensional model, see Plutchik 1991.

25 See, e.g., Ekman 1994; Ekman 1999; or Plutchik 1991.

Cultural shaping of emotion (Fig. 2)

Primarily, the reason why scholarly debate should focus on the links between emotions and images is based on emotions' cultural construction or shaping. Many scholars have shown that emotions are, at least partly, cultural constructs[26] with collective dimensions, especially considering their interpersonal effects.[27] Thus, ancient emotional life-worlds need to be taken into account in order to reconstruct how these societies constituted themselves. This concerns the expression of emotions and decision-making processes on both an individual and a collective level; it, thus, penetrates all aspects of social life in ancient societies.

Assuming that emotions are bio-cultural processes,[28] I side with those who acknowledge the innate and transcultural emergence of emotions *in toto*, but also argue that the processing of emotions is culturally specific. Emotions are externalized in language, in non-verbal communication, in performances, and in material culture. Thus, the study of the cultural dimension of emotions is pivotal in understanding societies and their change.

The collective, the emotional regime, and emotional communities

Thus, emotions, despite their primary nature as experiences of individuals, reach out into the realm of the collective, making them worth studying for scholars of ancient societies. In this respect, the issue of collective emotions has been hotly disputed.[29] In accordance with Maurice Halbwachs' concept of the collective memory,[30] I see collective emotions as not being expressed in bodily form in and of themselves but based on the emotions, appraisals, and thinking of the individuals of a group.[31] These individuals become involved in collective emotions of any kind because they

26 Positions on the degree of the social construction of emotions have been diverse, ranging from the solely constructivist view such as that of Rosaldo to the more integrative perspective such as that of Röttger-Rössler; see, e.g., Rosaldo 1984; Röttger-Rössler 2004; Engelen et al. 2009; Lutz 1988; Lutz – White 1986; Levy 1984.

27 On the collective dimension of emotions, see, e.g., Scheve – Ismer 2013; Gilbert 2002; Salmela 2014; on interpersonal effects, see, e.g., Overbeck et al. 2010 (for additional literature, see there).

28 Engelen et al. 2009.

29 E.g., by Margaret Gilbert in the case of guilt (Gilbert 2002), by Bryce Huebner applying theories of the extended mind and pledges for "genuinely collective emotions" (Huebner 2011, 89–118); see also Scheve – Salmela 2014.

30 Halbwachs 1985.

31 The question of collective emotion as experienced physically and collectively is beyond the scope of this work. See Gilbert 2002; Huebner 2011, esp. 92; Schmid 2014.

are embedded in a group that shares religious, political, or ideological values and that also shares information via communication.

A similar and well-known concept with respect to the collective levels of emotions has been provided by historian Barbara Rosenwein, who coined the term "emotional communities". These are based on social, professional, religious, or political communities and "adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value – or devalue – the same or related emotions"[32] (see also **Fig. 2**). Like William Reddy, who established the term "emotional regime",[33] Rosenwein addressed the fact that some emotional communities can gain more in importance than others. In this vein, Reddy emphasized the overruling and normative power of the dominant regime[34] (see **Fig. 3**).

Both emotional communities and regimes are only possible because emotions are cultural phenomena. They can be filtered, subdued, exaggerated and emphasized, or amplified and minimized; as Robert Levy stated, they can be hypocognized and hypercognized when it comes to verbal expression.[35] That in turn makes it quite likely that they also can be hyper- or hypocognized by means of non-verbal communication, which also applies to images (**Fig. 4**). In this vein, the question of the facial display of emotions in Mesopotamia has been discussed broadly,[36] yet not conclusively, and will be discussed later when it comes to the display of emotions in visual media.

Identity and emotions

As cultural phenomena of collective relevance, emotions also come into play in the creation of identity. Jack Barbalet wrote that an emotional climate was a

> set of emotions or feelings which are not only shared by groups of individuals implicated in common social structures and processes, but which are also significant in the formation and maintenance of political and social identities and collective behavior [...][37]

32 "They value and express emotions differently, and can compete to each other" (Rosenwein 2002, 842); cf. Rosenwein 2007, 2: "More than one emotional community may exist – indeed normally does exist – contemporaneously, and these communities may change over time. Some come to the fore to dominate our sources, then recede in importance. Others are almost entirely hidden from us, though we may imagine they exist and may even see some of their effects on more visible groups."

33 Reddy 2001.

34 Plamper 2010, 39–51 "die Reihe normativer Emotionen und die offiziellen Rituale, Praktiken und emotives, die diese ausdrücken und einprägen; eine notwendige Grundlage eines jeden stabilen politischen Regimes". Cf. Reddy 2001, 129.

35 Levy 1984.

36 See, e.g., Bonatz 2017; Wagner-Durand 2017; Zwickel 2017; Zwickel 2012; Schroer 2017.

37 Barbalet 1999, 159.

Fig. 2: Detail from *Dame mit Kind*, 1855, F. G. Waldmüller, LWL Museum für Kunst und Kultur Münster (Photo: Wagner-Durand).

Thus, and in consideration of the collective dimension of emotions, with respect to both collective and individual decisions and behavior, emotion plays a role in the creation of self-understanding and therefore identity. The modes by which individuals value and express emotions are part of their group behavior and thus of their identity. This identity and the emotional life-worlds associated with it become externalized to express and to communicate and reaffirm this identity. Therefore, images created within certain social constraints and requirements mirror the *Zeitgeist* and thus also emotional climates as part of this *Zeitgeist* (**Fig. 5**). With respect to certain emotional communities, to which one adheres and in which these images can be embedded, expressions and appraisals of emotions can differ. Competing value systems of emotions can produce contradicting visual expressions of emotion, as they

Fig. 3: German women welcome Hitler, October 1938 (unknown photographer; Frevert 2011, Fig. 7).

can produce different coping strategies and thus different material manifestation of these strategies.

Hence, the list of reasons for studying emotions in ancient societies in general and in images in particular is abundant. As emotions have such a considerable impact on human life and as they have a social and political dimension, their study is of utmost importance with respect to ancient cultures. In this respect, images represent one of the most communicative material sources for emotions, their expression, their cultural construction, their collective meaning, and their use. Why this is the case and how this varied relationship between (material) images and emotions is constructed will be discussed in the following section.

Fig. 4: Professional Mourners: Thebes, Wall painting, grave of Ramose, 18. Dynasty (Wikipedia: The Yorck Project (2002) 10.000 Meisterwerke der Malerei (DVD-ROM), distributed by DIRECTMEDIA Publishing GmbH.).

The relationship between images and emotions

The relationship between images and emotions is complex, manifold, and versatile. Yet at least three of the basic links between material images (thus pictures in their broadest sense, both in the round and flat) and emotions will be discussed here. They will elucidate the scholarly potential for the use of the emotional turn in the study of ancient visual cultures. These three links are as follows:

1. Images communicate emotions.

They do so in quite different ways, which I, more or less artificially, separate into the "direct display of emotional states" and the "communication of emotions by metaphors, atmospheres and the like".

2. Images themselves evoke emotions.

Images have the power, if not the intrinsic function, to communicate emotions.[38] They literally make feelings happen in the observer.

3. Images link emotions and the collective.

38 See, e.g. Kruse 2003, 42.

Fig. 5.1: Banlieue of Paris (Zeitonline, 11.4.2005 [24.03.2020]); 5.2: Refugees Welcome Action of We'll Come United, soccer game of the FC St. Pauli (https://www.facebook.com/welcomeunited/photos/a.1880220365561919/1909797715937517/?type=3&theater [24.03.2020]).

Images' functions are manifold. As they are both expressive and communicative media, they can potentially reach collectives via the display and the evocation of emotions. They can, e.g., visually embody the *Zeitgeist* and thus also the emotional climate of a time; they can be used as tools of emotional regimes to control collectives

by emotions, and they can be the material manifestation of widespread collective coping strategies.

Communication of emotions via images (1.)

The communication of emotions via images appears to be one of the most obvious links between both entities. If humans can be shown via images, so can their emotions.

Images as the display of emotional states

Thus, images potentially display emotional states. While the general assumption of a visual display of emotions via images seems beyond doubt, uneasiness arises when diving deeper into this matter. This starts with the widely acknowledged but heavily criticized theory of a natural and transcultural display of human emotions on the face or in gestures and postures.

Images displaying uncodified (natural and/or universal) facial and bodily displays

The idea of the transcultural bodily display of emotions has come a long way, from Theodor Piderit[39] and Charles Darwin (1872) on the interpretation of Warburg's *Pathosformula* (see below) as transcultural[40] to Friezen's and Ekman's[41] theory of the universal facial display of the basic emotions.

It is Ekman's and Friezen's prime theory on the facial expression of emotions that has had a scholarly, economic, political and pop-cultural impact.[42] In several studies, psychologists have shown that the display of certain so-called basic emotions was very often correctly identified by individuals with low or even no contact with globalized visual media.[43] Since then, a decoding system has been developed that

39 Piderit et al. 1989.

40 See, e.g., Sütterlin 2009, 164–165; for a discussion of the *Pathosformula* as universal or not, see Krois 2011.

41 See, e.g., Ekman – Friesen 1971; Ekman 2003; Ekman – Friesen 1972.

42 As such, Ekman himself is the prototype for the character of Dr. Cal Lightman, played by the actor Tim Roth, in the television series *Lie to Me* (Fox Television). He has authored popular books (e.g., Ekman 2010) and collaborated with Pixar for the film *Inside Out* (2015).

43 See, e.g., Ekman – Friesen 1971.

increasingly concentrates on micro-facial features to eliminate any misinterpretation arising from cultural or deliberate distortions.[44]

Whether or not one agrees about the existence of such an uncodified and transcultural display of emotions, the search for corresponding images in Mesopotamian art is quite frustrating. Consistently, many scholars have argued against the existence of an emotional facial display in Mesopotamia in general.[45] And indeed, faces offer little evidence of emotions to modern observers. Still, the lack of such an allegedly uncodified display does not equal the lack of emotional expressions. It simply reflects our own socialization and limits in reading these faces.

Images are signs or sign clusters that are always based on certain conventions that have to be learned and known in order to decode the sign(s). The same semiotic approach applies to non-verbal communication and therefore to the display of emotions that can be deliberately hypocognized (subdued) or hypercognized (exaggerated). The corresponding display can be culturally shaped and communicated by conventionalized signs that first need to be decoded in order to understand their meaning. These signs or group of signs can be communicated via the face or the body as a whole: a codified bodily display of emotions (see below). The border between codified and non-codified display is blurry and far from distinct. Thus, in some cases, the visual display of affective states in images is neither entirely codified nor entirely transcultural. This applies, for example, to the depictions of 'emotional' animals,[46] as can be seen in the cow that turns the head 'lovingly'/'affectionally' to the calf (e.g. **Fig. 6**),[47] in the lion roaring in pain or anger (e.g., the orthostat reliefs of Ashurbanipal, British Museum Inv. 124886, N. Palace, room S'),[48] or in the crying cow in Egyptian Art (limestone coffin relief, tomb at Deir el-Bahari, Cairo, Inv. CG 47267, IPIAO #306)[49]. This world of animalistic affective display contrasts with an allegedly emotionless world of humans: the raw wilderness versus the tamed civilization.[50] Yet it does not necessarily simply compare an emotional to an emotionless world, but it artificially contrasts the world of exaggerated animalistic affective states with a life in which emotional display is domesticated and conventionalized – displayed by signs, not by affect. The same can be said of tears, which we tend to think are the unfiltered result of an emotional or sensory feeling. In contrast to Egypt (see, e.g., Egyptian mourners with tears dropping, tomb of the vizier Ramose: TT55, Theban

44 Ekman 2005.
45 See note 36.
46 See Kipfer 2017, 14; Zwickel 2017; Cornelius 2017, 130–131.
47 Fontan – Affanni 2018, cover and 154.
48 Curtis et al. 1995, 28.
49 Schroer 2008, 104.
50 See, e.g., Novák 1999, 286.

Fig. 6: Furniture plaque showing a mother cow suckling a calf, ca. 9th–8th century BCE, ivory, Syria, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 57.80.05 (© MET).

Necropolis, ca. 1411–1375 BCE, **Fig. 4**),[51] we do not know of any Mesopotamian image showing human tears. Yet, as put forward by Silvia Schroer, these Egyptian depictions of crying are expressions of distinct cultural roles.[52] Still, I argue that these roles' visual, verbal and non-verbal forms of expression are based on conventions established in emotional communities about which emotions to display and how to display them. We are still able to identify exactly these expressions because they have either transcended time or because they are based on transcultural features that we share across time and space.

Yet it is more complicated than that: rules of display in texts can be different from rules of display in images. Thus, we know of no depictions that show humans crying in Mesopotamia, although that could be due to the poorly preserved coloring. It heavily contrasts with the textual sources that willingly inform us about tears and crying in Mesopotamia.[53] Ashurbanipal cries in front of Ishtar, yet he is never

51 Grave: Kampp 1996, 262–265.

52 Schroer 2017.

53 For terminology related to tears and crying in emotional contexts, see Jaques 2017, 195–196; for crying as a cultural protocol in Mesopotamia, see Zgoll – Lämmerhirt 2009. There is no gender divide in crying and tears in Mesopotamia. See Harris 2000.

depicted as crying in images. Thus, the choice of media plays an important role in the communication of emotional states.

Another example that moves in the twilight zone between cultural conventions and biological bodily transculturalism is the menacing and smiting posture often adopted by a god or king. The aggressive nature of that posture is beyond doubt since the person assuming it is often equipped with a weapon and/or a shield (e.g., the bronze statuette from tomb 4 in Megiddo);[54] one could probably speak of a *Pathosformel* in the Warburgian sense or of an emotive (see below). Since the posture and gesture are known from Egypt to Mesopotamia, they are certainly transculturally applied, yet we are not sure about their meaning and possible connected emotions, as one can think of both the aggressiveness and anger that could be incorporated into the figure and the fear and threat that it should convey. Othmar Keel once argued that the smiting figure did not convey emotions and spread fear but was meant to magically spread the power of the (Egyptian) king into the realms of the conquered land.[55] However, this function is only made possible by the transmitted meaning inherent in this posture and gesture of menacing and smiting; the threat is obvious and it is likely connected to both fear and anger as basic emotions.

Images displaying codified facial display and bodily expressions (Fig. 7)

When we turn to the codified display of emotions in images, the field opens up into endless possibilities. Images as sign accumulations transmit meaning beyond physical material visibility. They encode whatever is inside, what is beyond the visual human experience. Therefore, any state of mind can be communicated by a sign. These signs can take different forms, whether facial, bodily, or other.

In order to not be overwhelmed with the vast options,[56] we briefly turn to the textual sources in Mesopotamia. While the texts place the seat of emotions inside human beings, in the inner part and in the heart,[57] written sources also prove that the body and the face were meant to express certain feeling states; as such, the body

54 Seeden 1980, 112 no. 1737: Jerusalem, Archaeological Museum, Rockefeller collection 1078.

55 Keel 1972, 274.

56 I have argued for the development of a methodical approach on another occasion, see Wagner-Durand forthcoming.

57 See Wagner-Durand 2020a; Jaques 2017.

Fig. 7.1–3: Gudea of Lagash, 22. cent. BCE, Inv. 59.2; Votive Statue, 2750–2650 BCE, Inv. 40.156; Bronze Head, 2300–2000 BCE, Inv. 41.100.80 (all © MET).

may tremble,[58] the face can take on a certain color such as white or pale[59] – it can, for example, turn red in relief or happiness[60] – and pain can darken the face.[61] Accordingly, to obscure or hide the face means that one hides either the truth or one's feelings.

58 "42' [*Ea*] *šar apsî uṭṭâ* (or: *liḫdâ*) *pānīša* 43' [*uša*]*sḫipši* (or: [*liša*]*sḫipši*) *benna tēšâ ra'ība* 44' [*i*] *tter* (or: [*l*]*itēr*) *ḫurbāssa* 45' *I*]*d puluḫtaša iddâ* (or: *idâ*) *elīš* / 42' ff." "[Ea], king of the *apsû*, darkened her face, [He over]whelmed her with *bennu*-epilepsy, confusion, (and)trembling. Her terror having become excessive, [*a* [Riv]er cast her (own) fear upon her." Translation and transcription from Abusch 2016, 362; cf. Schwemer 2017: Maqlu VIII, 41 (manuscripts).

59 The face turning pale is a reaction whose cause is not always unequivocally clear; see, e.g., incantation against witchcraft: "21' *īmurka-ma kaššāptu īruqū pānūša* 22' *u ša*[...]*ša*? 23' *iṣlimā šaptāša*" "The witch beheld you and her face turned pale, and her [...] *became* [...] , her lips grew dark." Translation and transcription from Abusch – Schwemer 2011, 169; 187, text no. 7.8: 3 lines 21'–23. Face color as an omina and most likely an expression of the divine mood are connected in a passage of the series *šumma ālu*; see, e.g., Sallaberger 2000.

60 "r3 […] *a-ki da-ba-bu* r4 *an-ni-ú* DÙG.GA *ep-ši-tu an-ni-tu de-iq-tu* r5 *ša* LUGAL *be-lí e-pu-uš-u-ni áš-mu-u-ni* r6 *a-mur-u-ni* ŠÀ-*bi i-ṭi-ba-an-ni ib-tal-ṭa* r 7 *am—mar ša* GUD-MEŠ *in-ti-ṣi pa-ni-ia er**-*qu-tú** r8 *i-sa-a-mu ki-i an-ni-ma ina* ŠÀ *da-ru-te* r9 *ša* LUGAL *be-lí-ía* LUGAL *be-lí lu**-*pa-ar-ši-man-ni* / r3 ff" "[…] When I heard this friendly speech and saw the kind deed that the king, my lord, had done, my heart became happy and grew as strong as a bull's, and my green face turned red (with pleasure). If only the king, my lord, lets me grow old in exactly this way during the eternal life of the king, my lord!" Translation and transcription from Parpola 1993, no. 227.

61 K. 890: "07-8 *ina* UD-*me ḫi-lu-ia-a e-tar-pu-u pa-ni-ia* / *ina* UD-*me ú-la-di-ia it-ta-ak-ri-ma* IGI.2-*ia*" "On the day of my labor pains, my face was overcast; on the day I gave birth, my eyes were clouded." Translation and transcription from Livingstone et al. 1989, no. 15.

Fig. 8: Male Statuette from the hoard of Tell Asmar, detail of the head, Early Dynastic period (Frankfort 1939, Pl. 2).

Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty
Line o 373–376: you shall not smear your face, your hands, and your throat with [...] *against* the gods of the assembly, nor tie it in your *lap*, nor do anything to undo the oath.[62]

K 890
Line o 1 -2: Why are you cast adrift like a boat in midstream, your crossbars broken, your tows cut; your face veiled, you cross the river of the Inner City?
o 11: When Belet-ili heard this, she veiled her face You [......], why do you keep praying to me?[63]

62 "o 373 *šum-ma sar-bu šá* <*ina*> UGU DINGIR-MEŠ *ša pu-uḫ-ri* 374 *lu pa-ni-ku-nu lu* ŠU.2-*ku-nu lu na-pul-ta-ku-nu* 375 *ta-pa-šá-áš-a-ni lu-u ina si-qi-ku-nu* 376 *ta-rak-kas-a-ni šá ma-mit pa-šá-ri te-ep-pa-šá-a-ni*." Parpola 2007; Parpola – Watanabe 1988, no. 6 = Grayson – Novotny 2014, no. 212 (Succession Treaty).

63 "o 1-2: *a-na mì-i-ni ki-I* GIŠ.MÁ-*e ina* MURUB$_4$ ÍD-*e na-da-ki*" and "o 11 ⸢^{d}*be-lit*⸣—DINGIR-⸢ME *ki**-*i** *ta**⸣-*áš-mu-ni tuk-tal-li-la pa-ni-šá*." Translation and transcription from Livingstone et al. 1989, no. 15.

Furthermore, the eyes can express emotions such as anger[64] and the face can be illuminated by brightness and light, which are colors that indicate the qualities of happiness and joy.[65] I argue that shining and brilliance out of the joyous divine experience is an emotional quality that we can observe on the faces of certain statues and figurines/statuettes with their wide-open eyes; this might originally have been expressed by both its distinct coloring and the rendering of the eyes. This phenomenon starts at the latest with the *Beterstatuen* of the Early Dynastic period (**Fig. 8**), if not with the statuettes of the *Priesterfürst* or *Mann im Netzrock* (e.g., Alabaster statuette, torso, alabaster, Eanna district, Uruk, IM Inv. 61986)[66]. Both fearful awe and joy in the divine presence can be read into these depictions. In turn, the eyes can also be understood as being active parts of the statue, turning the gaze towards the divine.[67]

After all, emotional signs on the face of any visually depicted being in Mesopotamia are generally less ostentatious than one hopes for. Moreover, Mesopotamian visual culture is dominated by the depiction of faces from the side, the *en-face* mode being restricted to mythical or threatening figures.[68] Yet, the display of emotions on the face is much more easily conveyed with frontal depictions, which is why studies of facial emotions show the frontal view of a person's face.

The expression of the facial display of emotions in Assyria or in Mesopotamia *in toto* still lacks detailed and sound analyses, especially big data analyses, to securely exclude the existence of emotional facial expressions. Only by setting up an exhaustive diachronic database of faces in two- and three-dimensional modes of depiction in combination with their archaeological and visual contexts will it be possible to consider correspondences between details of depiction and possible emotion display.

It goes without saying that emotional display is not confined to the face but can be seen throughout the whole body. Aby Warburg coined the famous term *Pathos-*

64 " ⸢DINGIR⸣-[MEŠ] ⸢GAL⸣-MEŠ *šá* AN-*e* KI.TIM *a-ši-bu-tu kib-ra-⸢a-ti⸣* o 473 *ma-la ina ṭup-pi an-ni-e* MU-*šú-nu zak-⸢ru⸣* o 474 *lim-ḫa-ṣu-ku-nu li-kil-mu-ku-nu* o 475 *ár-ra-tu ma-ru-uš-tu ag-giš li-ru-ru-ku-nu*." "May all the grea[t go]ds of heaven and earth who inhabit the universe and are mentioned by name in this tablet, strike you, look at you in anger and curse you grimly with a painful curse." Translation and transcription from Parpola – Watanabe 1988, no. 6 = Grayson – Novotny 2014, no. 212 (Succession Treaty).

65 See, e.g., incantation text 39: "*līmurū'inni-ma liḫdû pānīšunu*" "may their faces be joyous at my sight". Abusch – Schwemer 2016, 26, text 3.4: 2. or 76: "*irtī id'ipū šidaḫ pānīya itbalū*" "(who) have pressed my chest, have taken away the healthy glow of my face" Abusch – Schwemer 2011, 303, text 8.4. See also the Cyrus Cylinder line 18 "The people of Babylon, all of them, the entirety of the land of Sumer and Akkad, (as well as) the nobles and governors, bowed down before him (and) kissed his feet. They were happy at him being king (and) their faces shone." Finkel 2013, 42; cf. Schaudig 2001, 552; 555.

66 Vogel, Fig. 20.1.

67 Selz 2018, esp. 365; see also Winter 1991, esp. 64.

68 See Selz 2018, 372.

formel.[69] These formulae – often modes of body language – condense and express emotional states. Warburg himself described them as "Antique formulas of intensified physical or psychic expression" and "external signs" for "a state of excitement or inner emotion".[70] Freedberg understood *Pathosformeln* as "the outward movements of the whole body [that...] convey inner emotion",[71] and Böhme saw them as a culturally patterned *eloquentia corporis.*[72] In this vein *Pathosformulae* are by no means universal; rather they are culturally immanent ways to express emotional states.

This concept can be related to Ekman's and Friesen's idea of so-called emblems as signs of non-verbal communication, defined as movements that "have a set of precise meanings which are understood by all members of a culture or subculture".[73] Emblems, however, are too broad in what they encode and too restricted in how they encode it.[74] The same is true for their concept of illustrators – gestures that illustrate speech – that may be connected to emotions but are not emotion specific. This concerns, for example, *favete linguis* gestures and other movements of communication with the divine **(Fig. 9)** such as the gestures and movements *appa labānu* "to stroke the nose" and *ubana taraṣu* "to extend the finger and point".[75]

The *Pathosformel* in turn seems to be limited to a later time frame and scholars have divergent interpretations of it. Thus, one can utilize William Reddy's concept of the *emotive*. William Reddy introduces the concept of the emotive in accordance with the terms "performative" and "constative" from speech act theory. Emotives are, according to Reddy, the attempt to feel what is claimed to be felt and to evoke

69 An excellent discussion of *Pathosformeln* is found in Impett – Moretti 2017.

70 Warburg – Forster 1999, 555 +141, originally from Dürer and *Italian Antiquity*, 1905, and Sandro Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* and *Spring. An Examination of Concepts of Antiquity in the Italian Early Renaissance*, 1893.

71 Freedberg 2010, 349.

72 Böhme 2010, 10: "die zu Bilder und Figuren geronnenen Interferenzen zwischen Affektenergien und kulturellen Verarbeitungsmustern"; Agamben called *Pathosformeln* "[…] an indissoluble intertwining of an emotional charge and an iconographic formula in which it is impossible to distinguish between form and content […]" (Agamben – Heller-Roazen 1999, 90); Becker stated that these formula appear "as manifestations of collective psychological distress" (Becker 2013, 10).

73 Ekman 2004, 39.

74 "Emblems may repeat a word as it is is said, preface a word in a flow of speech, provide a separate comment related to the words spoken or occur as a sole reply. Emblems may be iconic […] or aribtraly coded" (Ekman 2004, 40). Ekman's and Friesen's distinction between emblems and illustrators, namely movements that illustrate speech (Ekman 2004, 41), will not be applied here; rather, the term "emblem" is slightly changed to a shared term for all gestures, postures, body movements able to express feelings, or feeling-related actions.

75 See Magen 1986; Gruber 1980.

Fig. 9: Worshipper, Larsa, Paris, Louvre Inv. AO 15704 (Photo: Wikimedia Commons).

exactly these emotions.[76] Emotives are not really unconscious; rather, they are intentionally performed to create a congruence between expression and emotion.[77]

Therefore, I call forms of intentional iconic emotional display visual *emotive*s and define them as socially conventionalized expressions of emotional states communicated by non-verbal signs in the form of gestures, postures, clothing, color, paraphernalia, and more. Visual emotives are dependent on the emotional community and the overall climate in which they are actually performed and visualized in images. In the case of elite visual culture, they will often be coherent with the respective emotional regime.

These visual emotives, *Pathosformula*, emotional emblems, or however you would like to call them, are culturally specific. Therefore, they need to be correctly identified, which is heavily dependent on the sources at hand. One debatable attempt is to identify situations in the visual record that are basic/prime by their nature of which – because of their basic nature – trigger very similar emotions. Based on the premise that the appraisal of emotions in these situations is correct, related

76 Reddy 1997, esp. 331–332,

77 They are both functionally descriptive and self-exploratory (*selbsterkundend*); see Plamper 2010, 42. Reddy himself later expands the verbal emotive to include the possibility of visual display.

emblems and gestures can be described and then re-identified in contexts where the emotional appraisal is more uncertain. This approach has several pitfalls. First, even if the situation was appraised[78] in the same way then as it is now, that does not guarantee that the reactions that should be expected were actually displayed due to dominant emotional rules. Second, the image is the outcome of a thoughtful process in which emotives are carefully selected and shown according to the messages that were to be communicated.

For example, with respect to Assyrian warfare depictions, one generally has to differentiate between the Assyrian army and the enemy. As tools of propaganda, and far from reality, Assyrian soldiers are never shown with any display of fear or a fearful reaction when confronted with the terror of battle, yet the enemy takes flight or hides. The battle of Ulai (see, e.g., the SW palace cycle of room XXIII, Nineveh, esp. slab 1–3),[79] for example, shows several poses and gestures in which the enemy is under the threat of death and reacts accordingly, either begging for death in the face of what could happen otherwise or cutting their own bows as a symbol of defeat and submission. The enemy is pushed to the banks of the river; the soldiers stumble, fall, and raise their hands to their heads in defense and in despair.

The lack of scholarly consensus is evident concerning the appraisal of emotions in the case of throne-room relief 8 of the NW palace of Ashurnasirpal II[80] (**Fig. 10**). It shows the king's troops entering a defeated city. Women stand on the pinnacles of the city walls. They raise their arms to their chests, their palms opened towards the sky. Zainab Bahrani[81] argued that these women were mourning and wailing about the defeat of the city. Natalie May,[82] however, suggested that they joyfully welcomed the troops as 'liberators'.[83] To resolve this debate, written sources can provide valuable insights. Named gestures and postures can be identified, described, defined, and compared to the visual sources. In the context of the above-mentioned opened palms, scholarly debate has centered around the phrase *upnī petû,*[84] literally "opening the fist".[85] Mayer Gruber connected the gesture to begging, submission, sup-

78 Third, the appraisal itself is as culturally specific as the emotional expression itself.
79 Barnett et al. 1998, 381b–383b: London, British Museum Inv. 124801a–c.
80 Meuszyński 1981, pl. 1: B8; London, British Museum Inv 124546; 124547.
81 Bahrani 2001, 125.
82 See May 2012, esp. 474–477: *erāb āli*.
83 See Wagner-Durand 2018.
84 In this vein, some of the gestures might be read in this sense. It is convenient to subsume the one mention of *idī petû*, open the hands/pray (Gruber 1980, 60) under *upnī petû* since there is no possibility yet of differentiating the visualization of both gestures.
85 Discussed by Ciferalli 1998, 223–224; Wagner-Durand 2018; Gruber 1980, 60–84: Similarly applicable is the phase *qāta/i našû*, lift the hand(s) Yet *qāta/i našû* only refers to communication between humans and goes back to raising the hand to the sky/gods; see Gruber 1980, 62.

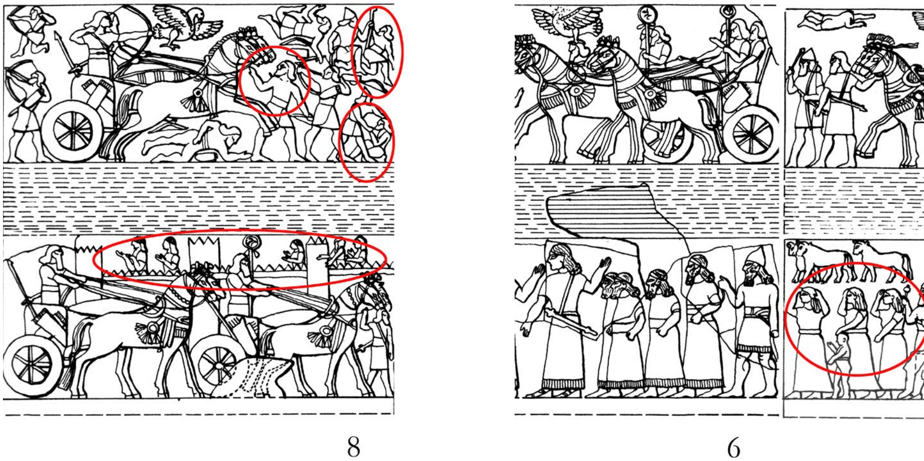

Fig. 10: Gestures of non-verbal communication in Assyrian reliefs that can be related to highly emotional situation, throne room B, NW-palace, Nimrud, the reliefs 5 + 8 (after Meuszyński 1981, pl. 1).

plication,[86] and entreaty,[87] but it also meant that one opens the hand to receive and refers to interhuman and human-divine encounters.[88] Thus, an association between the depiction and the phrase *upnī petû* is not unlikely. The act of submission or the expectation to receive, however, does not equate with sadness, with the wailing Bahrani saw in relief 8. It also does not include joy, as May proposed. In the Neo-Assyrian realm, the act of submission is closely connected to fearing someone – in western thinking to awe – and thus the gesture can also be understood as the act of submission in fear that is rightly owed to the king of Assyria. Thus, the appraisal of the situation is culturally determined and can lead to interpretations far from Assyrian life-worlds.[89] Thus, methodological issues connected to the identification of visual emotives, especially in the form of gestures and postures, are manifold. Besides the already named challenges and the potential polysemy, the images regularly translate four-dimensional movements into two-dimensional depictions. Since this

86 Gruber 1980, 50–59, esp. 54; 59, often connected this to the realm of begging and submission.
87 Gruber 1980.
88 Gruber 1980, 60–61; 64–65.
89 Another possibility of identification in terms of the socio-cultural evaluation of emotional cognition, is the identification of stimuli and associated emotional reactions with the help of written sources. By identifying these stimuli and situations in the visual accounts, gestures and body language can be analyzed and probably attributed to a certain emotion that the texts reveal as to be expected and not that which we think are to be expected. See Wagner-Durand 2017.

translational act is blurred, we are left with images that must be retranslated into the four-dimensional performative emotive act.[90]

Another form emotives can take are metaphors.[91] The emotional metaphor has been the subject of studies for societies in Ancient Israel[92] and Mesopotamia. Whether such metaphors have a visual application, however, has not been extensively treated yet.[93] Still, it is clear that Mesopotamians communicated via metaphors. Two simple examples illustrate this notion. First, Mesopotamian rituals often work via metaphors: a cult commentary for the New Year festival vividly exemplifies how to understand the ritual performances, and what each performance, object or person signifies in the world of the creation myth *Enūma eliš*.[94] Second, cuneiform signs are often derived from pictograms and some constitute more or less visualized metaphors. M. Jaques emphasized that the Sumerian sign combination for anger, *urgu*$_2$ is the combination of the signs for mouth (KA) and fire (IZI); she also proposed that Sumerian *nimin*, which combines the signs of heart and fire, ŠA$_3$ and IZI, should be understood as jealousy (see **Fig. 11**).[95]

Some written metaphors are quite appealing to modern recipients, immediately evoking images in the mind. King Sennaḫerib, for example, described the fearful flight of those who did not obey him with the words:

> Sennaḫerib 16 i 24-26:
> While they were abandoning their settlements, they flew away alone like bats in crevices to inaccessible place(s) […][96]

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90 While overviews of Mesopotamian history or religion tend to indiscriminately use texts from both the early third and the late first millennia, emotional communities, climates, and regimes surely changed during this time, as did connected emotives of any kind.

91 The concept of the metaphor applies to a collective perception of emotion. It does not necessarily display an individual emotion, but can also communicate emotion in its wider sense.

92 Wagner 2006; for the vessel as a metaphor in the Levant, see Kipfer – Schroer 2015.

93 See, e.g. the workshop at the 61st RAI, Researching Metaphor in the Ancient Near East: Perspectives from Texts and Images, organized by Ludovico Portuese and M. Pallavidini.

94 SAA 3, no. 37: 29-34 (CT 15, 43f. = K 3476) "29 The *kurgarrû*s who play the battlefield, rip off […], beat clappers, halloo, lift up […] each other, twitter [and …], are [the …]s, who s[et up] a clamour against Illil and Anu, poured out their sheen on them, broke their [*win*]*gs* and [cast them down] to the Abyss" / obverse 2"9' LÚ].⸢KUR⸣.GAR.RA-MEŠ *ša tu-šá-ri i-ma-li-lu mì-il-ḫu i-*⸢*mal*⸣-[*la-ḫu*] 30' [*kis*]-⸢*ki*⸣-*la-te i-maḫ-ḫa-ṣu ia-ru-ra-te* ⸢*ú*⸣-[*saḫ-ḫa-ru*] 31' [x x] ⸢x⸣ *šá a-ḫa-meš i-mat-taḫ-u-ma ú-šá-aṣ-ba-ru* [x x x] 32' [^{d}x] ⸢x⸣MEŠ-*e šu-nu-ma ša ina* UGU ^{d}BE ^{d}1 *ri-ig-mu* ⸢*iš*⸣-[*ku-nu*] 33' [*me*]-⸢*lam*⸣-*me-šú-nu ina* UGU-*ḫi-šú-nu it-bu-ku i-*⸢x⸣-[x x x] 34' [x] ⸢x⸣MEŠ-*šú-nu ú-bat-ti-qu a-na* ZU.AB [ŠUB-*šú-nu*]" Livingstone et al. 1989, 94.

95 Jaques 2017, 195.

96 "i 24 *da-ád-me-šu-un e-*⸢*zi*⸣-[*bu-ma*] 25 *ki-ma su-tin-ni ni-gi-*[*iṣ-ṣi*] 26 *e-diš ip-par-šú a-šar la* ⸢*ʾa*⸣-[*a-ri:*" Novotny 2012, 111. This topos is confined to Sennaḫerib's inscriptions (see, e.g. no. 16: i 25; 17: i 20, 22: i 18; 23: i 16).

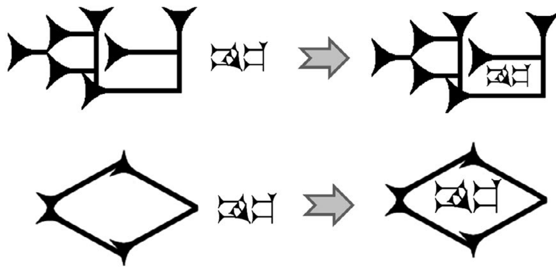

Fig. 11: above: KA and IZI; below: ŠA3 and IZI.

Unfortunately, this metaphorical passage is not confined to a certain population; it refers to all people from the upper to the lower sea, and thus covers literally every geopolitical entity possible. The imagery of his orthostats is also not unambiguous. Pure flight and hiding scenes, in contrast to fight and flight sequences, are absent under his rule. Yet, king Ashurbanipal's account of the Chaldeans' flight into the southern marches or of the hiding of Elamites in the reed are at least reminiscent of this metaphor.

Yet another metaphor, from a Neo-Assyrian dream vision, comes to mind. The horrified prince dreamed of the netherworld. He finally woke up und described his feeling state:

> I woke up like a man who has let blood, who roams alone in a reed thicket, whom a runner catches up with, so that his heart pounds, (r 30) or like a just matured young boar, who has mounted on his mate, and whose innards inflate so that he gives out wind from his mouth and backside, (r 31) he became inflamed with lamentation and called out, "Woe, my heart!" He flew into the road like an arrow, scooped up into his mouth the dust from street and square, continually letting out terrified shriek, "Woe is me!"[97]

97 SAA 3, no. 32 (VAT 10057= ZA 43, 1ff.): reverse "29 *a-gal-ti-*⌜*ma*⌝ *ki-ma eṭ-li ta-pi-ik da-me šá ina ṣu-ṣe-e i-di-ši-šú it-tan-al-la-ku* EN—*bir-ki ik-tùm-mu-šú-ma i-tar-*⌜*ra*?⌝*-ku* ŠÀ*-bu-u-*⌜*šú*⌝ 30 *ù ki-ma lil-li-di* ŠÁḪ *ṣe-eḫ-ru šá ina* UGU *sin-niš-ti-šú e-lu-ú* ŠÀ*-bu-šú it-tan-am-pa-ḫu* TU$_{15}$ *a-*⌜*na*⌝ KA*-šú ù* EGIR*-šú it-te-ni-iṣ-ṣi* 31 *ka-bit-tu ú-šá-aṣ-ri-iḫ-ma* u_8*-a* ŠÀ*-bi i-qab-bi ina su-ú-qí šil-ta-ḫiš ú-ṣi-ma ep-ri* E.SÍR SILA.DAGAL.LA *a-na* KA*-šú ú-sa-ap ri-ig-mu gal-tu iš-ta-nak-kan* u_8*-a a-*[*a*]." Livingstone et al. 1989, 76. The whole dream or rather netherworld vision of a Neo-Assyrian prince gives several metaphoric impressions of emotions, see, e.g., reverse "13 *a-ra-al-lu ma-li pu-luḫ-tu i-na pa-an* DUMU NUN*-e na-di ši-iš?-šú dan-nu* [x x x *ina*] *a-bu-sa-ti-ia iṣ-bat-an-ni-ma a-na maḫ-ri-šú ú-qar-*[*ri*]*-*⌜*ban*?⌝*-ni* 14 [*a*]*-mur-šú-ma i-tar-ru-ra iš-da-a-a me-lam-mu-šu ez-zu-ti is-ḫu-pu-u-ni* GÌR.$_2$ DINGIR*-ti-šú* [GAL]*-*⌜*ti*⌝ *áš-šiq-ma ak-mis a-zi-iz? i-na-ṭa-al-an-ni-ma ú-na-a-*⌜*ša*?⌝ [SAG].⌜DU?*-su*⌝ 15 [*ri*]*-*⌜*gim*⌝*-šu ú-dan-nin-am-ma ki-ma* UD*-me* ⌜*še-gi*⌝*-i ez-zi-iš e-li-ia i-šá-as-si šab-bi-ṭu si-mat* DINGIR*-ti-šú šá ki-ma ba-áš-me pu-luḫ-tu ma-lu-ú*" / "The nether world was full of terror; a mighty silence lay before the crown prince […]. He took me by my forelock and pulled me in front of him. 14 I looked at him and my bones shivered! His grimly luminescent splendour overwhelmed me, I kissed the feet of his great divinity and knelt down. Then I stood up, while he looked at me, shaking his head. 15 He raised his voice, crying out like a howling storm in fury against me and drawing toward me the sceptre, which is so fitting to his godhead, and which is as dreadful as a viper, to kill me." Livingstone et al. 1989, 72–74.

Despite the controversy over the translation of this passage, the written metaphor clearly recalls the Elamites hidden in the reeds (e.g., British Museum Inv. 124932, N-Palace, room F, Nineveh)[98] and the Babylonians taking refuge in the southern marshes (e.g., British Museum Inv. 124774, SW palace, room XX VIII, Nineveh).[99]

Thus, metaphors and body language can of course be convergent. Vivid emotional metonyms and metaphors concern, for example, the gods. The Assyrian hymn of Ninurta praises the divine warlord as an "01 Angry furious storm, whose roaring voice 02 destroys mountains and disturbs the sea,", as a "viper, snake, dragon with raised paw 010 when he raises his eyes angrily 011 heaven is confused", as

> r6 covered with anger clad in fear r7 imbued with a terrifying appearance decorated with a terrible (ni$_2$ gal) aura, r8 who stretches the shadow of his fear over the mountains r9 he demolishes the lands with the lifting of the pupils of his eyes.[100]

Contemporary images of Ninurta are – like all divine images of larger format – rare. A singular pair of orthostats from his temple entrance in Nimrud shows the god (presumedly) slaying a mythic winged creature. This account only allows guesses about the terrifying appearance of his terrible, divine aura. Unfortunately, we lack the once lavish coloring that conveyed messages of emotional states: The Sumerian word ḫuš, for example, used in the bilingual hymn means angry as well as reddish.[101] Another form of metaphor that comes along with senses and feelings is the body-nature-metaphor. Gudea Cylinder A states:

98 Barnett 1976, 40, Pl. XVII.

99 Barnett et al. 1998, 340b.

100 Neo-Assyrian Bilingual Hymn of Ninurta KAR 97: "01 ud šur$_2$ ḫuš gu$_3$ šeg$_{10}$-ga-a-⸢n.i⸣ [...] / [...Akkadian broken] / 02 ḫur-saŋ i$_3$-gul-gul e-ne ab-ba i$_3$-lu$_3$-⸢lu$_3$⸣ / [...Akkadian broken] / 03 eden-na šeg$_{10}$ gi$_4$-gi$_4$ PA-ra sig$_3$-sig$_3$ / [...Akkadian broken] (shortened and heavily broken) / 07 e$_2$-saŋ-dim$_3$-me-er-e-ne-ra /*ana e$_2$-saŋ-dim$_3$*-[*me-er-e-ne*] / 08 ama$_5$ la-la-zu ḫul$_2$-le-eš kur$_9$-ba-ni-ib / *maš-ta-ku la-li?-[ka el-ṣi-iš e-ru-ub*] / 09 umun mir-ša$_4$ ḫu-luḫ-ḫa muš ušumgal šu zig$_3$-ga / EN *šib-bu gal-tu* [...] / 010 i-bi$_2$ ḫuš il$_2$-a-ni / *ša ez-zi-iš i-na*-⸢šu⸣ [...] / 011 an-na al-suḫ$_3$-suḫ$_3$-ḫa ki-a al-sig$_3$-sig$_3$-ga / AN^{u_2} *iš-šu-u$_2$* KI [...] (shortened, partly broken) / r3 du$_5$-mu saŋ-kal ša$_3$-ab ḫul$_2$ den-lil$_2$-la$_2$-ke$_4$ / *ma-a-ru a*-ša-*re-du mu-ḫa*-[*ad-di lib$_3$-bi* ša ^{d}EN.LIL$_2$] (shortened) r6 šur$_2$ gu$_2$ e$_3$-a ni$_2$-ni$_2$ teŋ$_3$ mur$_{10}$-mur$_{10}$-a / *ḫa-lip uz-zi la-a-biš* [...] / r7 ni$_2$ ḫuš ri-a ni$_2$ gal šu tag-ga / *ša ra*-šub-*ba-ta ra-mu-u$_2$* [*na-mur-ra-ta zu*-ʾu-*nu*] / r8 ni$_2$ ŋissu-zu-bi kur-ra la$_2$-e / *pu-luḫ-ti ṣi-li*-šu *a-na* [KUR *tar-ṣa-at*] / r9 ŋeš-nu$_{11}$ igi il$_2$-la-a-ni kur-kur-ra dag-ga / *ni-iš nu-ur* IGI-MIN-*šu$_2$* IRI. IRI [*i-naq-qar*] / r12 kalag-ga zabar šur$_2$ ḫuš ma-al-la / *dan-nu na-a*-ši *ul-me*-[...] / r13 ^{ŋeš}mitum šu-nu ḫe$_2$-du$_7$-a / *ša me-ṭu i-na qa-ti*-[*šu* ...] / r14 tumu ka-ka-na ^{d}nun-bar-ḫuš-gin$_7$ al-dib-dib-be$_2$ / *ša-ar* ⸢*pi*⸣-[*i-šu* ...] (shortened)." Translation and transliteration according to the BLMS project on http://oracc.ub.uni-muenchen.de/blms/corpus (17.06.2019).

101 Huš: 435x: ED IIIb, Lagash II, Ur III (Old Babylonian), *wr. huš; huš$_2$* "furious, angry; (to be) reddish, ruddy" Akk. *ezzu* in: http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/nepsd-frame.html (13.06.2019).

> I 1-9: On the day when in heaven and earth the fates were to be decided, Lagaš raised its head high in full grandeur, and Enlil looked at lord Ninĝirsu with approval. In our city there was perfection. The heart overflowed with joy, Enlil's heart, a river in flood, overflowed with joy, and just as the Tigris brings sweet water, so Enlil, whose will is an enormous flood, sparkling, and awe-inspiring, came to a sweet decision.[102]

The metaphor goes in both directions: landscape and built space become anthropomorphic and anthropomorphic beings become like landscape. The city of Lagash turns into a human; it becomes embodied and thus acts accordingly – it feels like a human and behaves like a human. The god's inner part, in turn, is compared to a body of water in the form of a container that holds water and that can overflow. Thus, the heart is filled with the emotion joy, and that emotion is so abundant that it cannot be held any more. The overflowing vessel in visual culture is well known since at least the Akkadian period. A statue of Gudea himself is fashioned with an overflowing aryballos (statue N, Louvre Inv. AO 22126).[103] Probably deities with overflowing vessels are shown on the heavily broken basin of Gudea (Istanbul[104]). So-called acolytes hold such vessels and feed water buffalos on the Akkadian seal of Ibni-Sharrum (Louvre Inv. AO 22303),[105] yet interpretative acts cannot be confined to emotional metaphors but also indicate abundancy. Moreover, metaphors of overflowing vessels and fluids are also known from medical contexts and refer not to positive happenings but to illnesses.[106]

Still, despite how difficult it may be, the search for visual emotives in Mesopotamian imagery is mandatory for any *Bildwissenschaften* of ancient emotions, let alone to be able to understand how emotional communities expressed themselves, how these expressions changed over the course of time, and how emotional regimes used certain emotives to express their agendas.

Thus, face, body, colors, and other symbols can display and communicate emotions. The same applies for overall situations. As part of our embodied memory, we link emotions with certain situations and performances; thus, the depiction of the

102 "A1.1 ud /an ki\-a nam tar-[re]-/da\ 2. (A1.2) /lagaš\[ki]-e me gal-la [saĝ] an-še$_3$ mi-ni-ib$_2$-il$_2$ A1.3 den-lil$_2$-e en ^{d}nin-ĝir$_2$-su$_2$-še$_3$ igi zid mu-ši-bar 4. (A1.4) iri-me-a niĝ$_2$-du$_7$ pa nam-e$_3$ A1.5) šag$_4$ gu$_2$-bi nam-gi$_4$ A1.6 šag$_4$ ^{d}en-lil$_2$-la$_2$ gu$_2$-bi nam-gi$_4$ A1.7 šag$_4$ gu$_2$-bi nam-gi$_4$ A1.8 a-ĝi$_6$ uru$_{16}$ nam-mul ni$_2$ il$_2$-il$_2$ A1.9 šag$_4$ ^{d}en-lil$_2$-la$_2$-ke$_4$ ^{id2}idigna-am$_3$ a dug$_3$-ga nam-de$_6$". Cited after etcsl Text 2.1.7 (http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.1.7#; http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=c.2.1.7&display=Crit&charenc=&lineid=c217.1#c217.1 [12.06.2019]).

103 Suter 2000, 330: Statue N, Fig. 5; Edzard 1997, 56: Statue N; discussed as a fake: Johansen 1978, 49–59 (Alster).

104 Edzard 1997, Gudea 58.

105 Collon 2005, no. 529.

106 See Steinert 2013.

distinct situation is also meant to communicate certain emotions. In the case of Assyria, the emotions are the ones that the political regime wanted to convey.

This mode of emotional communication is based on the interplay between individuals, the material world, and emotions. Accordingly, Harris and Sørensen have developed an approach to emotions in prehistory in which the concept of atmosphere plays a crucial role. The atmosphere[107] is based on the material world and is perceived by human agents according to their attunement to the world.[108] Such an atmosphere can be materialized in images. These images are fashioned to address the observer on basis of his or her assumed attunement to the world and how he or she would emotionally react when looking at the images. With respect to elite emulations of visual culture, firmly established emotional regimes are therefore able to create distinct atmospheres by and in images and thus evoke desired emotional responses.

As has been said, visualized atmospheres not only encapsulate emotions but also release them. Thus, we turn to the ability of images to evoke emotions, to literally make somebody feel something.

Images evoke emotions and make feelings

Images' potentials to evoke emotions are manifold but often are dependent on the phenomenon of empathy, which is the *conditio humana* by which humans more or less voluntarily feel or know what others might feel.[109] The visualization of sensual stimuli, of pain and fear or joy and happiness, can release the very same emotion or the remembrance of this emotion in the recipient. However, empathy does not equal sympathy. The appraisal or evaluation of the situation and the emotion resulting from it are both part of what Sørensen and Harris call the affective field: the relationship between the agents, both humans and non-human, in the production of emotions.

107 For atmosphere and a more differentiated view on a phenomenological approach, see Harris – Sørensen 2010, esp. 152. While Sørensen and Harris rarely address the issue of the senses, they are well aware of their entanglement in the creation of atmospheres and with respect to attunement. The authors address this issue explicitly; see Harris – Sørensen 2010, 19.

108 Harris – Sørensen 2010, 151–152. The term originally used by Husserl was *Bestimmtsein*, In Harris' and Sørensen's application of the term, it also refers to "the means by which the moods and emotions of others are […] disclosed to people […] therefore, attunement is also how people notice, observe, perceive and recognize moods and emotions in themselves and others." Harris – Sørensen 2010, 151.

109 Yet the individual's own experience of the very same situation is not a *sine qua non* for empathy. For example, when seeing a man beaten or hit in his crotch area, even women tend to crouch.

Affective field, attunement, and atmosphere[110] *(Fig. 12–13)*

This affective field unfolds within the above-mentioned atmosphere. Thus, emotions evoked in observers by images are not uniform but depend on the observer and his or her attunement to the world. Thus, the same image can evoke sadness, hate, disgust or even satisfaction. Yet, as already mentioned above, images are created, distributed and made visible in ways that the attunement of people is foreseen and anticipated. And thus, the desired effect is achieved as widely and predictably as possible. Emotional climates that arise in certain times can change this attunement, even if it may only be for an instant, but emotional regimes shape this attunement to a more stable level of expectable reaction.[111] Any ritual performed will create a certain atmosphere based on the given setting, whether it is the time of day or the spatial surroundings and the times used, that may appeal to almost all human senses, evoking a certain smell, taste, sound, sight, and movement. Feelings that are associated with these sensory impressions can be re-evoked and can be part of the ritually created atmosphere. Building rituals, for example, involved a certain range of people such as the exorcist (*âšipu*), the lamentation-singer (*kalû*), the musician (*nāru*), and the diviner (*bārû*),[112] who in turn are part of the created atmosphere. The ritual of removing the former/first brick that initiated the rebuilding of a collapsed sanctuary or building, for example, evoked a certain physical environment, by dressing the building, by performing the ritual act in the ruins, by setting up an offering table, by producing smells with seeds, wine, milk, honey, beer, and oil, and by singing incantations.[113] Considering the link to the past, ritual acts as such were crucial acts in Mesopotamian life-worlds; one can get a glimpse of the emotional setting that might have been associated with such acts, soaked in tension and the fear of failure, and the release and even joy when the ritual was successfully performed.

Images as agents according to Alfred Gell[114] *(Fig. 13)*

All of these observations depend on images being representations. Most people will be familiar, however, with the notion that culturally images may not be perceived as signs and representations – what we think they refer to – but as actual presences.

110 Wagner-Durand 2020a.
111 Images also take the observer by surprise.
112 Ambos, 222.
113 Ambos 227 (O 174:13–19, BE 13987:14–23).
114 Gell 1998.

Within the ontological framework[115] of a world that perceives objects, animals, plants and so forth as animate and active, images can be perceived as agents in their own right.[116] The issue of whether the Akkadian *ṣalmu*, the Sumerian ALAM/N, provisionally translated as "image", was perceived as an active being has been widely discussed in the field of ancient Near Eastern studies[117] and is adopted here.[118]

Based on this perception of images, recipients experienced certain emotions when confronted with them. The most ostentatious examples in the realm of Mesopotamia are images of the kings, the gods, and certain so-called *Mischwesen*/composite beings. With respect to the textual evidence, we can positively ascertain that the image of the king released awe, if not plain fear in the observer. The cult statues, indicating the presence of the gods, born in heaven, made on earth,[119] rightfully called for *puluḫtu*, fear, but also released joy in the believer. '*Mischwesen*' and alike were sometimes meant to be alive, threatening and protective at the same time. The colossal, often winged and composite door-creatures of the palace were of an active nature, spell-bound to the palace by the king.[120] Thus, Esarhaddon stated:

> 17–25 '[I had stone *šēdu*s and] *lamassu*s, [whose appearance] repels [evil, placed to the right and the left of their gate(s) as protectors of the walk (and guardians of the path of the king] who [made them. I had] the palace skillfully [built of interlocking lime[stone] [and cedar], for [my lordly] pleasure. I set [up] inside it tw[in] copper *lammassu*-statues, with each pair looking (both) forward and back[ward].'[121]

Thus, images can be perceived as active agents, agents that are entities that have certain properties, characteristic traits, and purposes. Due to these purposes, these entities or images can evoke emotions (or even display emotions).

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115 Descola 2005; Descola 2010; Descola 2015.

116 Such a worldview is surely more applicable to Mesopotamia than the ontology of naturalism which Philippe Descola proposes for modern western societies (Descola 2005; Descola 2010; Descola 2015). See also Wagner-Durand 2020b.

117 See, e.g., Bahrani 2003; Wagner-Durand 2014; Morandi 1988; Selz 2004; Winter 1992; Berlejung 1998.

118 See Wagner-Durand 2020b.

119 See, e.g., the Mīs pî incantation (Walker – Dick 2001; Wagner-Durand 2014).

120 Maul 2000; Wagner-Durand 2020b; Wagner-Durand 2015.

121 Col. V 17 (41) [ALAD$^{\text{meš}}$ *u*] ⸢$^{\text{d}}$LAMA⸣$^{\text{meš}}$ 18 *ša*$_{2}$ NA$_{4}^{\text{meš}}$ (42) [*ša*$_{2}$ *ki-i pi-i šik-ni-šu*$_{2}$*-nu* (43) *ir-ti lem-ni u*$_{2}$]*-tar-ru* 19 (44) [*na-ṣir kib-si mu-šal-li-mu* 45 *tal-lak-ti* LUGAL] 20 *ba-*[*ni-šu*$_{2}$*-nu* (46) ZAG *u* GUB$_{3}$ *u*$_{2}$*-ša*$_{2}$*-aṣ-bi-ta* (47) SI.GAR-*ši-in*]... $^{\text{munus}}$. $^{\text{d}}$LAMA $^{\text{meš}}$ URUDU *maš-ša*$_{2}$-[*a-ti*] 24 (53) *ša*$_{2}$ *a-ḫe-en-na pa-na u ar-*[*ka*] 25 (54f) *ina-aṭ-ṭa-la ki-la-ta-an qe*$_{2}$*-reb-ša*$_{2}$ ⸢*ul*⸣-[*ziz*]. Leichty 2011, 40-41; see also Borger 1956, 62–63: §27 Episode 27 B. lines 41–54. See also Bahrani 2003, 166.

Fig. 12: Evoking fear: Impaling the enemies, Central-palace, Nimrud, mid. 8th cent. B.C., London, British Museum Inv. 118903 (from Barnett – Falkner 1962, Pl. XXXIX).

Images as Bildakte *according to Hans Bredekamp*

The image as an agent leads us further to the so-called *Bildakt* of Bredekamp, who understood the *Bildakt* as "eine Wirkung auf das Empfinden, Denken und Handeln [...] die aus der Kraft des Bildes und der Wechselwirkung mit dem betrachtenden, berührenden und auch hörenden Gegenüber entsteht".[122] Yet, I am convinced that the power of the image does not inhabit the image itself, as Bredekamp postulated when he spoke of its innate power.[123] In contrast, humans permit these powers to be exerted on them; thus, the *Bildakt* offers, at least to me, no solution that goes beyond an ontological approach. Actually, the image is perceived as active because of the media used, the content shown, the form taken, the structures in which it is embedded, and the attunement of people to the world of things.

122 Bredekamp 2015, 52.
123 The so-called *Eigenkraft der Bilder.*

Fig. 13: Human-headed winged lion (*lamassu*), ca. 883–859 BCE. Gift of John D. Rockefeller Jr., 1932, Accession Number:32.143.2 (© MET).

Images link emotions and the collective

Whether one follows a theory of agency or of *Bildakte*, both also concern the relationship between images, emotions, and the collective. Images link emotions and the collective in many ways. As such, they can be mirrors of the emotional climate of a certain time. This climate can be short- or long-lasting; it can be in accordance with the emotional regime or in contrast to the established emotional attunement.[124]

In studying Mesopotamian antiquity, emotional climates should be divided into two broader fields. Emotional climates of long-term persistence are based on a mutual consent on how emotions are evaluated, expressed, and thought of; how the world is perceived by emotions; and how a distinct emotion literally feels like. This emotional climate is like the tapestry and the background noise of emotional understanding. This climate is generally mirrored in images, such as the hunting or the battle scenes of the Assyrian kings that persist until the end of the empire.

The short-term climates are not necessarily deviations; they can be culminations of the existing climate, as may be the case in the battle of Ulai (see above), the so-called garden scene (British Museum Inv. 124920, room S', N-Palace, Ashurbanipal)[125] or the extended royal hunts (N-Palace, rooms C, S, S').[126] They communicate more intensively to the observer, ensuring more protection, more fear, and more power: they exaggerate. Other climates can be found in the banquet scenes only known from Sennaḫerib (B), exerting contrasts to the culture of violence and to the exercise of royal rituals.

Where to go…

Theoretical and methodological matters concerning visual emotionology go way beyond what can be covered in the scope of such a paper. It can merely serve as an illustration and as plea for the potential of the study of emotions in material culture in general and in visual culture in particular. Therefore, the emotional turn within the iconic turn of ancient visual culture is not a matter of *l'art pour l'art*. It unfolds mechanisms of power, ways of thinking, and modes of feeling. To study the emotional realm of images means to get a better understanding of ancient emotional life-worlds in general and of the changes in social settings, the ways of political maneuvering, and the way in which all of these are materialized.

124 The use of the term attunement is borrowed from Harris – Sørensen 2010, 151–152.
125 Barnett, 1976, 57, pl. LXIV.
126 Barnett 1976, 37–38 (room C), 49–52 (room S), 53–59 (room S').

To do so, several paths can be taken. In all these, it is immanent to differentiate between ancient and modern evaluations and expression of emotion. The shaping of emotional display, be it in images, in texts or in any other material culture is up to many factors of social learning and appreciation, of emotions embodied, of communities and social climates. Images, as means of condensed meaning, of expression and communication and of evocation as well as suppression of emotions represent an invaluable source to reveal the handling of vertain emotions in distinct groups to a distinct time. As such, the diachronic view – the look across social boundaries and media – the glance at neighboring cultures and regions, will enable an understanding of similarities, differences and changes in emotions' iconography across social groups as well as time and space.

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