

Representations Of Conflict Scenes In Assyrian Art

Farah Hussein Kadhim¹ , Assistant Professor, Salam Hameed Rasheed²

¹University of Babylon, Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Artistic Education, Babylon, Iraq.
hs_fl_fa@yahoo.com

² University of Babylon, Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Artistic Education, Babylon, Iraq. ²
salamhameed72@gmail.com

Abstract

The present study tackled representations of conflict scenes in Assyrian art by analyzing the religious, political, environmental, ideological, and social dimensions from which the conflict scene emerged. That was represented in the aesthetic structure of cylinder seals, obelisks, stone panels, and statues during the Assyrian era. The methodology of the research is devoted to presenting the research community, the research tool that includes collecting data, and samples of (3) sculptural works that covered the limits of the present study. The two researchers intentionally adopted the descriptive analytical approach for the purpose of analyzing the samples. The results of the present study show that the intellectual reflections of the Assyrian sculptor have contributed to the diversity of conflict scenes at the level of stereoscopic or prominent sculpture. There were various technical and directorial treatments in an attempt to portray and represent these intellectual reflections and referred them to a symbolic sign that has a tangible physical presence.

Keywords; conflict, Assyrian art, Mesopotamia, Assyrian sculptor

1. Introduction

The ancient man was bound by the obsession of fear and survival, which was the basis of man's struggle with the cruelty of the life surrounding him/her. So, man resorted to writing down this conflict and documenting it in the form of scenes and drawings on the walls of caves. Practicing art by man is a natural thing that has been found with the existence of the human species and has appeared since its appearance on the surface of earth. The art products left by man during ancient times documented an important aspect of artistic level and the conditions in which man lived in addition to the economic, social, and intellectual life.

The civilization of Mesopotamia is one of the historical civilizations that possesses the oldest and most diverse indigenous arts. This ancient civilization consists of several eras affected by one another. The first of them is the Sumerian era, the Akkadian era, the Babylonian era, the Assyrian era, and the last is the Neo-Babylonian era. Each era has its own artistic style, on which the influences of the society in which it appeared are evident.

The Assyrian era is considered one of the prosperous ages in Mesopotamia. Artists enjoyed a kind of freedom expressing their personal feelings in creating their artworks. They tried to represent the religious, political, social, economic, and other concepts that led to a number of conflicts that Various artistic

products influenced the artist's production, in which scenes of conflict were represented through cylinder seals, murals, models, ivory, and other works of art.

In light of the foregoing, the problem of the present study revolves around the idea of the representations of conflict scenes in Assyrian art.

Conflict was originally a conflict between two people, each trying to overcome the other with his/her physical strength, such as the struggle between athletes (Sulaiba, 1982). It may also be the conflict between countries in war (Mustafa, et al, 2011). Conflict is a dialectic for transgression and conservatism in literary production (Alloosh, 1985).

Terminologically, it is a comprehensive concept that is similar to the quarrels and conflicts that occur between individuals. The results of these conflicts differ according to the different parties and their capabilities. Some of them have a clear result, which makes the control of the winning party greater and more comprehensive with the absence of opposing party. This is what actually happens between languages since immemorial time until now. Some of them are completely equivalent so that all parties maintain their capabilities and features that allow them to survive and stand firm (Abu Alfaraj, 1966). It is a state of conflict between the wills of two or more parties according to behavioral patterns out of a conscious and rooted opposition to the contradiction existing between them about values, interests, and goals that are often difficult to reconcile (Fahmi, 1990).

Philosophically, For Kant, conflict represents every contradiction in which the mind falls when it searches for an unconditional matter, to which all conditional matters are related (Sulaiba, 1982). As for Hegel, contradiction is concentrated at the core of every truth, provoking a permanent conflict in all Things. So, conflict means movement and impulsion as nature is in constant activity and development in continuous impulse (Alsadr, 2006). Conflict

is procedurally defined by the two researchers as the crystallized scene in technical issues in light of the values, goals, and concepts that represent the frame of reference for the conflicting parties.

Since the first creation, man has been in a constant struggle, deep thinking, and continuous attempts to elicit specific results and special inferences for different developments in fields and images (Alhusseini,). Conflict is a human characteristic linked to an activity of man and his/her continuity, existence, and movement. Before Almighty Allah created Adam, peace be upon him, he said to the angels: "I am going to place in the earth a caliph" (Al-Baqarah: 30). This means that his movement is to the ground. The goal behind it is that person commits sins and sheds blood, the movement is down (Ayyoub). The first conflict was between the powers of evil represented by Satan and the powers of good represented by the human being whom Almighty Allah created in the best form with goodness. This conflict ended with the exodus of man from Paradise. This conflict ended with the death of one of the brothers. Man has been striving hard in continuous attempts towards subjugating and harnessing the powers of nature in order to complete the manifestations of existence and achieve happiness and perfection in order to give life the requirements of strength, order, and stability. It exposes man to different types of conflict (Alhusseini). Conflict continued after that to include situations that man lives in that lead to continuous conflicts, which are the result of psychological and biological activities (Fae'q, 2003). For example, hunger is a situation that causes a conflict in which the individual struggles because of the strong need for food and the strength of commitment to social conditions for satiation. Man is in a constant struggle striving to cross thorny and rugged paths fraught with troubles, surrounded by difficulties and obstructed by obstacles. The purpose of those efforts and this hardship is man's insistence to preserve existence and to ensure its continuity in a way that suits

preparations, tendencies, and demands (Alhusseini).

The present study is due to the fact that intellectual and conceptual space has its extension in the structure of the ancient Iraqi man, represented by representations of conflict scenes in the Assyrian art, and the migrations of these conflict scenes to works embodied in artistic and stylistic applications that characterized the ancient Iraqi art. This topic constitutes an intellectual and cultural need for researchers in the field of studies that research approaches, repercussions, and influences. This constitutes intellectual, historical, aesthetic, and artistic importance that can add new knowledge, as well as knowledge of the culture of the ancient Mesopotamian society. It sheds light on an important era that witnessed prosperity in the civilizations of Mesopotamia. It also sheds light on the scenes of conflict and the popular artistic topics in that period, to understand the mechanisms of these arts' operations. The research problem requires clarification and interpretation.

The present study aims to identify the representations of conflict scenes in the Assyrian art. However, there are many limitations for the current study as following:

- The present study is limited to studying representations of conflict scenes in Assyrian art. It includes (prints of seals, stone and pottery slabs, murals, obelisks, and ivories).
- Temporal limits: the present study is limited to the Assyrian era (2000-612 BC).
- Spatial limits: Sculptural works of the Assyrian art in ancient Iraq.

2. Conflict: an approach in Assyrian art

In ancient historical times, Mesopotamia witnessed ancient civilizations. The Assyrians were a branch of the eastern (Semitic) island people, who had settled north of Mesopotamia, Al-Jazira region since an early historical period. Their name is

attributed to their capital or their protective deity, Ashur. They were mentioned in the cuneiform texts since the era of the dawn of the dynasties with the name of Subarites. Their area was called Subarto, but the Assyrians avoided this name. They continued to be called by it, especially by the kings of Sumer, Akkad, and Babylon (Salman, 1992). The conflict was very violent between the ruling dynasties at the beginning of this era in order to control the trade routes and agricultural lands. This conflict continued for a period that exceeded two centuries, during which Assyria started to progress towards independence gradually (Al-Shaikhali, 1990). In the Neolithic period, Assyria included agricultural settlements. The ancient Iraqi man lived a primitive life depending on what he/she hunted from animals and what could be collected from fruits and wild grains until life changed from collecting food to producing it after being guided to agriculture and the domestication of animals. The challenges of nature were less severe, which made man live simple life for a long time until the signs of a mature civilization began to appear in the southern part of Iraq and its influence extended to the north (ibid). As for the artistic aspect of this era, it was distinguished by a number of characteristics that highlighted the uniqueness of the Assyrian sculptor with his works that are not matched by other works in the field of visible models, which are represented by the shapes of winged bulls and large statues of gods and kings, to the side of the obelisks that the Assyrian artist was famous for at that time" (Mustafa). One of the Mamluks who ruled the Assyrian Empire was King (Shalmaneser) III, who succeeded his father (Ashur Nasir Pal), who spent his reign (35) years in a series of continuous military campaigns that made him the master of the Near East, Western Asia, the Arabian Gulf, and the coasts of the Red Sea. In the last days of his life, one of his sons rebelled against him, supported by (27) cities. He entrusted his second son (Shamash-Adad) to put down the revolution that sparked a civil war and fierce conflicts that lasted four years before its elimination. King (Shalmaneser) III died (Rue, 1977). This king found in one

of his palace's murals of some of his wars and struggles on the main gates of the palace, which were carved on thin sheets of copper in which the artist chose the language of reality in his formation of themes within the scene and his keenness on the smallest details that took place in those historical events to faithfully depict those terrifying moments that he experienced. The state is in an atmosphere dominated by death and tragedies that are doomed to destruction (Hassan).

3. Indicators of the theoretical framework

1. The scenes of conflict in general represent the issue of the struggle of good with evil and the strong with the weak. These topics are considered among the most contemporary topics that the Mesopotamian man in general and the Assyrian artist in particular in his life have documented in different ways through artistic achievements specific to the nature of the development of each era.
2. The conflict scenes varied between a real and tangible conflict and sometimes an invisible internal conflict within the human soul. It is like an imagined conflict in the human mind of the Assyrian sculptor.
3. The characters in the conflict scenes are real characters that have a clear influence (such as heroes) or they may be inspired by the thought of the old Iraqi man. They sometimes express his ideas with the symbols that form the idea. These characters may be real or abandoned (legendary) to embody his idea.
4. Scenes of conflict appeared in the ancient Mesopotamian times as a result of conflicts and disputes between countries over agricultural lands and export and import corridors of precious stones and other minerals that the Mesopotamian artist needed in the manufacture of his artworks. These

conflicts emerged more during the Assyrian era.

5. The scenes of conflict in the Assyrian artworks were embodied largely through the idea of controlling the ancient Iraqi human mind, which is the fear of hidden powers beyond his ability, demons, and submission to the gods to live in peace.

4. The procedures

4.1. The research sample and community

The time period covered by the present study (2000-612 BC) produced a huge number of different sculptural products that could not be statistically counted. Representations of conflict scenes in Assyrian art were intentionally selected. Three sculptural artworks samples were selected. The selection was made according to the following justifications:

1. Choosing the works that most reflect the scenes of conflict in the Assyrian art.
2. The difference in the time of their production.
3. The sample includes stereoscopic and relief sculpture works.
4. Exclusion of works with recurring themes.

4.2. The research method

The two researchers relied on the descriptive approach in the style of content analysis to analyze the research sample in line with the objectives of the present study.

4.3. The research tools

In order to obtain the objectives of the present study, which is to identify the representations of conflict scenes in the Assyrian art, the two researchers built a content analysis tool.

4.3.1. Validity of the tool

To make sure that the content analysis form is suitable for analyzing what it was developed for, the two researchers relied on the validity of the content, for the contents of the form in terms of its inclusion of the elements of conflict and includes objectivity, personality, dialogue, and structural treatments, and the applications of conflict scenes in sculptural work. The two researchers presented the content analysis form in its initial form to a group of (5) experts specialized in the field of arts and plastic education specialists to express their opinion on the validity of the contents of the form to analyze what it was developed for. After collecting the analysis form from the expert professors, the design of the form was modified to be in its final form with a percentage of 94% agreement according to Cooper's equation, which is a degree that gives the analysis high apparent validity.

4.5. Analyzing the samples

4.5.1. Sample (1)

Artwork Title: Lions Hunting

Material: marble stone

Size: Height: 95 cm

Artwork date: Assyrian era

Belonging: The British Museum



The sculptural work shows a mural that is performed in a horizontal rectangular shape, which includes the theme (the hunting of lions) of the second Assyrian king (Ashur-Nasir-Bal), who occupied with his chariot drawn by three horses the largest area of the sculptural scene. He directs his sword to a lion that attacks him. One of the king's soldiers who stand behind him drags the lion by the tail. Two of them appear striking with the gong or (cymbal), while a shriveled lion appears under the feet of the horses of the king's chariot led by a driver who pulls the horses bridle strongly and holds in his right

4.3.2. Stability of the tool

The two researchers extracted the stability of the tool through analysis with external analysts, and re-analyzing by the researchers with themselves, with a time difference of two weeks. Applying the (Scott) equation, the results appeared as follows:

The researchers with themselves 95%, between the first analyst and the researchers 91%, between the second analyst and the researchers 87%, between the first and second analysts 87%.

4.4. Statistical Means

The two researchers used Cooper's equation to extract the percentage of agreement among experts for the paragraphs of the form. They used the (Scott) equation to calculate the stability of the analysis tool.

hand a whip. In his stone mural scene, the sculptor depicted a subject that had long been the focus of the Assyrian kings at the time, which is the idea of hunting, as a topic with deep symbolic connotations in the Assyrian thought. On the other hand, he declares the king's readiness to rule the country as the brave and unbeatable leader. Therefore, these practices turned out to be similar to the rituals of the king as the representative of the gods. They also appear as a kind of fun sport for him to show his skill and strength in hunting, as well as adorning the king (Ashur - Nasir-Bal) the second with a flower (bibon), a

symbol of purity, a sign of fertility, prosperity and good condition.

From these symbolic contents. The sculptor proceeds to adorn his structural theme interpreted through his imagination in a beautiful narrative style that shows the extent of the dialogue between the king and his entourage and his method of hunting. The proportionality between its parts and their differences among themselves show the anatomical details of the muscles of the body, especially the muscles of the leg, which were greatly exaggerated, to express physical strength and complete masculinity. Hair and eliminated without suffering.

4.5.2. Sample (2)

Artwork title: The Winged Bull

Material: white marble stone

Size: Height: 3m

Artwork date: Assyrian era

Belonging: The Iraqi National Museum

The sculptural work embodies a large mural that shows a compound shape of the torso of a bull with five legs, the wings of an eagle, the head of a human with thick medium-length hair, a long beard with several layers, and he wears earrings in his ears, and puts the horned crown on his head. The Assyrian sculptor treated his legendary figure in a manner with symbolic connotations. He paid attention to the minute details, both from the anatomical and the decorative terms. The human head appeared with real and realistic features, committed to complete symmetry. As for the hair, only small tufts appeared from it in the form of a half ring distributed repeatedly over the entire forehead area and two thick tufts on both sides of the shoulders. The beard flowed on three levels of fine and coarse tufts on the chest. On the human head, there is a large serrated crown from its upper edges, containing two pairs of symmetrical horns, a symbol of divinity in the ancient Iraqi

beard styling is in relation to human figures. Front and lateral hair is in relation to animal figures. The sculptor attained the highest levels. The honest and realistic expressive power in carving the faces of lions is to show the feelings of tragedy and pain through the curved and diagonal lines with sharp angles for all parts of the stabbed lion, which were affected by the artificial and forced conflict. The features of the human faces indicated horizontal lines that suggest calm and distance from psychological emotions to clarify the strength of the Assyrian king that exceeded the power of the lions so that it was



thought, which distinguishes statues of gods from statues of humans. The ears decorated with earrings were symbolically formulated by the sculptor. The Assyrian sculptor set out from the intellectual content of mobility and social effectiveness that believed in myths and forces of absolute power to respond to the dangers threatening them at all times. The sculptor moved away from everything that is traditional and familiar in art. The five legs suggest movement forward and backward based on optical illusion that is perceived with insight. Likewise, the artist combined life, art, acting and uncles into one fabric. This statue represented a struggle between what is natural and what transcends imitation. It was liberated from sensory constraints. The Assyrian sculptor created a mythical bull that moves with four legs. The existence of the fifth leg is only for the purpose of giving a shape that represents the gods. So, it constitutes a conflict between the natural form and the symbolic form.

4.5.3. Sample (3)

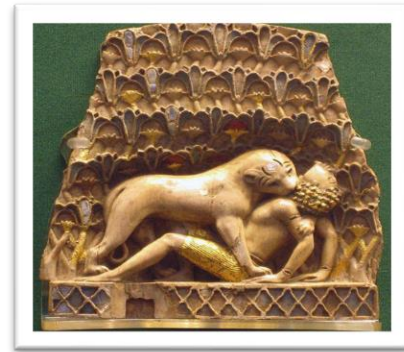
Artwork title: A lioness pounces on an Ethiopian

Material: ivory, gold, colored paste and colored stones

Size: /

Artwork date: Assyrian era

Belonging: The Iraqi National Museum



This artwork, which was found inside the palace of (Ashur Nasir Pal) in Nimrud, represents a strange scene. It represents a scene of a lioness pounce on a man who appears from his divisions to be (Nubian) or (Ethiopian). Her left hand was wrapped around his neck in preparation for a bite. The Ethiopian victim appears wearing short shorts, with thick lips, short and curly hair, and he is in a state of complete surrender to the lioness. The lioness has soft and curved lines that show a state of tension and turmoil in order to express the intensity of the conflict between the two elements, and notes the extent of the Assyrian artist's ability to show the anatomical details of the two shapes in a professional manner, in addition to the size of the shapes that is consistent with the work floor and shows the rhythm of the work through the repetition of curved and arched lines. The Assyrian sculptor was interested in the details of the man's face, who seemed to be oblivious to his inevitable fate. The Assyrian artist was keen in carving ivory, depicting the characters as if they were in a state of movement. The movement of the Ethiopian character appears as if it were in a state of movement backwards. The lioness suggests movement forward as if it were in a state of constant rush towards the victim. The scene of the conflict in this ivory was represented by a clear struggle between the predator and the hero, that is, between the powers of evil and the powers of good. But, this time, it seemed to end with the victory of the lioness over the hero, who seemed to be

in a state of surrender after a bitter struggle. The lioness and the lion were portrayed by the Assyrian sculptor in the case of defeat to show the power of the victorious king in many of the Assyrian murals. The sculptor shows it in this ivory in a state of victory, defeat for the hero. The struggle here is of another kind in the artist's thought that resulted from a number of concepts. It shows the hidden metaphysical powers that the ancient Iraqi man always tried to avoid by offering sacrifices or confronting them in order to survive and achieve the philosophical dimension of existence. But, in this scene, the conflict ended in nothingness, which is death. This ivory and other Assyrian ivories are considered artistic models that represent human thought. It is also noted that the Assyrian artist locked up his freedom and had no opportunity to represent the strategic topics in the Assyrian thought, which require wide photographic spaces to narrate the life and religious events related to the activities of kings. Their small size Makes them effective means of educating with the different other. The aesthetic idea in this ivory is the artist's ability to deal with this magical material. The artist deliberately activates the expression in the system of forms in terms of the aesthetics of ivory. This material is characterized by the cohesion of the atoms of its substance and the glossiness of its surfaces. Its rarity and the beauty of its color please the onlookers. The artist was able to show the forms in relation to and proportionality among their parts, and between them in the scene of conflict, as well

as to clearly show their movement in harmony with the idea of the subject. He was able to achieve balance and harmony in the construction of the sculptural scene. The sculptor relied on the technique of engraving the marked shape and then digging it with a chisel and then filling the hole and grafting it with stones and red or black glue to highlight the shape with colored geographical borders on the ivory surface.

5. The results and Discussions

The present study reached the following results:

1. The scenes of conflict were manifested in the ability of the Assyrian artist to adopt the realistic method in the embodiment of human bodies with political dimensions that escalated from their desired essential connotations.
2. The Assyrian holographic and prominent art expressed the artistic feelings formed in the thought of the Assyrian artist through the diversity of topics, which carry religious and political dimensions that represent the social structure of the Assyrians.
3. The religious dimension played an active role in representing the scenes of conflict in the artistic achievements of this era, by focusing on the idea of the invisible powers that govern control over political and social issues. Religion participated with history in documenting some war actions as in the sample model (2,1).
4. The scenes of conflict in this era were represented by the diversity of the topics of the artworks stemming from the thought of the Assyrian sculptor, which were established within the framework of the structure of the Assyrian society, such as a ceremonial political ritual, as in model (3), including what has political implications for documenting events and battles.
5. The Assyrian sculptor excelled in his artistic works. Most of these works showed the interest in the proportion

between the shapes in the scenes of conflict, as in samples (1,2, and 3).

6. The conflict scenes were represented in containing the shapes with complex bodies, whose image was inspired by the collective memory of the Assyrians, associated with the ancient Iraqi epics and legends. The sculptor created a mythical form half (human) and the other half (ox) as in sample (2).

6. Conclusions

In light of the results, the two researchers reached the following conclusions:

1. In its many forms, Assyrian art embodied the religious thought and the political dimension, by referring them to figurative systems of aesthetic value that is full of symbolization directed towards the absolute and invisible powers.
2. The intellectual reflections of the Assyrian sculptor contributed to the diversity of conflict scenes at the level of (stereoscopic or prominent sculpture). The technical and directorial treatments varied, as an attempt to portray and represent these intellectual reflections and referred them to a symbolic sign that has a tangible physical presence.
3. Some ancient Assyrian artworks are not necessarily imitating reality as it is. They may create or convey a different world.
4. The artworks embodied in the scenes of the conflict express the individual feeling of the sculptor and the collective unconscious. This is clear through the concepts that produced religious and other worldly (life) themes. They were represented in myths and works of a religious and social nature.
7. The old Iraqi sculptor dealt with the scenes of conflict, which were represented in the achievements with themes that express the unseen (legendary, natural) powers as recognized facts in the life reality, believed in them, and sought to immortalize them with his various sculptural achievements.

8. Recommendations

- Given the difficulty that the two researchers encountered in collecting accurate information for sculptural works, they recommend the competent authorities to make periodical books that carry pictures and shapes of ancient sculptural products documenting the measurement, belonging, and museum number of them, and working to publish them electronically within their own sites.
- To complement the interest, the two researchers suggest studying the influence of renewed scenes of conflict on establishing the formation of Assyrian artistic achievements.

References

1. Sulaiba, J. (1982). The Philosophical Dictionary: The Lebanese Book House, Volume 1, Beirut.
2. Mustafa, I. Al-Ziyadat, A. Abdulqadir, H. and Al-Najjar, M. (2011). The Intermediate Lexicon, the Arabic Language Academy, 5th edition, Cairo.
3. Alloosh, S. (1985). A Dictionary of Contemporary Literary Terms, Lebanese Book House, Beirut.
4. Abu Al-Faraj, A. (1966). An Introduction to the Study of Philology, Dar Al-Nahda Al-Arabiya, 1st edition, Beirut.
5. Fahmi, A. (1990). Repercussions of international conflict on regional conflicts, Bait Alhikma, Baghdad.
6. Alsadr, M. (2006). Our Philosophy, Al-Sadiq Foundation for Printing and Publishing, 1st Edition, Iran.
7. Al-Hussaini, M. Intellectual Conflict between Materialism and Spirituality, Dar Al-Warraq for Printing and Publishing.
8. Ayoub, S. Major Deviations, Alqura Aldhalima in the Glorious Quran, Dar Al-Hadi, 1st Edition, Beirut.
9. Fa'eq, A. (2003). A General Introduction to Psychology, The Anglo-Egyptian Library, Cairo.
10. Al-Shaikhli, A. The brief in the history of Ancient Iraq, Part 1.
11. Rue, G. (1984). Ancient Iraq, Translated by: Hussein Alwan, House of Cultural Affairs, Baghdad.
12. Salman, A. (1992). Iraq in Ancient History, Volume 1, Dar Al-Hikma, Mosul.