Imperialistic expansions (and the cosmogonic beliefs that go along with them) are generally built on the dead bodies of both their woebegone enemies and a certain part of their own populace. The last few years have witnessed a flurry of publications on the means that Mesopotamian societies adopted in order to represent these acts of state violence and calibrate them with state-oriented cosmogonies of one kind or another.\(^2\) In contrast to these discussions of the representation of warfare and death in the ancient Near East, I would like to root my own discussion of warfare (and in particular its role in the acquisition of raw materials) in the theoretical matrix provided by Bruce Lincoln’s work on cosmogony, urbanism, the ethics of kingship, and royal embodiment. Lincoln’s work continually stresses that the cosmogony and the ethics of the state are deeply intertwined:\(^3\) the ritual, political and military activities of the

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\(^2\) Bahrani 2008; Noegel 2007; Richardson 2007 and the papers in Porter 2005.

\(^3\) Lincoln 1986; 1999; 2007. Zainab Bahrani (2008, 10–13) does take a first step toward integrating the cosmogonic dimension of state-sponsored violence into larger discussions of just war theory, but largely in terms of visual culture. For recent comparative work on the legal aspects, see James Turner Johnson 2005, and for the history of international law in the ancient Near East, see the series of papers by Amnon Altman in Journal of the History of International Law between 2004 and 2010 (Altman 2004; 2005; 2008; 2009a; 2009b; 2010; these papers are collected in Altman 2012, *non vidi*); the topic is not dealt with substantially in Cohen and Westbrook 2000, but it is implicit in the extensive literature on international treaties. The language of “cosmogony” (cosmos creation and recreation) is used here in line with Lincoln’s work; cosmogonies necessarily both refer back to cosmological models and result in instantiated cosmologies, but in speaking of “cosmology” we generally presuppose a static model of the universe that does not require on-going maintenance and revivification. In order to avoid these presuppositions, I describe any activities of the ruler or the urban center that bring into being or maintain the cosmos as cosmogonic.
king establish a zone in which both correct ritual practice (calibrating the micro- and the macrosocial as well as disjoint ontic realms) and just behavior (including both legal remedies against unjust behavior within this zone such as the Codex Hammurabi as well as models of just war against external enemies) are brought into being in opposition to the chaotic world outside the realm. But in addition (and here lies the specific importance of Lincoln’s framework as a whole), his work formulates three zones of signification in which this type of cosmos building and calibration takes place: “the individual human body or microcosm . . ., the macrocosm, or the universe writ large . . ., and the entity intermediate to individual and cosmos—the mesocosm, if you will—human society.” In this paper I focus on how the acquisition of raw materials for monumental architecture mediates between the macrocosm and the urban center as mesocosm; links between the microcosm of the ruler’s body and the universe as macrocosm were certainly present as well, but would direct us away from this volume’s theme.

The best known example of this type of multimodal ritual/architectural/mythical complex in Mesopotamia is the New Year Festival celebrated in the core cities of the Neo-Assyrian state. This ritual complex included all manner of cosmogonic significations from warfare and procession to ritual and the recitation of cosmogonic mythology (Enuma Elish) and, crucially, it brought into being a zone of cosmogonically rooted, ethical ordo that legitimated the military and other extractive activities of the Neo-Assyrian state. Similar complexes of ritual, architectural and military practice arose in each of the imperial centers in Mesopotamia as they sought to align the different zones of signification that were available to them: (i) the concrete, visible space of ritual and architecture, (ii) the cartographic

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4 For the “ideological” side of the equation, see Pongratz-Leisten 2001; 2002; Wiggermann 1996; Liverani 2001a, 91–96 (“Conquest as a Cosmic Organization”). For the more practical aspects (no less ideological of course), see the discussion of “the central zone as model” in Michalowski 1987, particularly 64–67. The papers collected in Richardson 2010, though presumably germane to these issues, are not yet available to me.

5 Lincoln 1986, 4. For a recent treatment of the primary materials, see Badalanova 2008. The three spaces defined by Lincoln also fit very nicely into recent discussions of architecture, embodiment and various forms of power, see Meusburger 2008 and the case studies in Maran et al. 2009.

6 For recent papers that summarize major components of this ritual complex, see Pongratz-Leisten 1994; 1997; Weissert 1997; Maul 2000; Dick 2006; Zgoll 2006. For corresponding practices at the periphery and their motivating ideology, see Tadmor 1999; Shafer 2007. See Cancik-Kirschbaum and Johnson 2013 for a new model of how regular offerings to the temple of Assur in the Middle Assyrian period were used to map cultic festivals into the geographical horizon of the Middle Assyrian state.