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CANONICAL AND OFFICIAL
CUNEIFORM TEXTS:
TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF
ASSURBANIPAL'S PERSONAL
TABLET COLLECTION

WILLIAM L. MORAN HAS MADE important contributions to our understanding of both Biblical and cuneiform literatures, but he has always recognized the fundamental differences between them. His keen sense of literary integrity and extensive knowledge of modern criticism have kept him from being led into the enticing trap which ensnares those who see cuneiform writings only through the veil of the Bible, and take the modern view of the Biblical literatures as being some sort of norm for ancient Near Eastern disquisitions.

Historians constantly struggle with the antinomy of trying to delineate the past exactly, but having to do so in modern terms, so that their readers will understand. As the great historian of English law Frederick William Maitland put it, "Simplicity is the outcome of technical subtlety; it is the goal not the starting point. As we go backwards, the familiar outlines become blurred; the ideas become fluid, and instead of the simple we find the indefinite."¹ Applying the concept of "canonicity" to cuneiform literature is an instance of imposing a perspective based on an understanding of the Bible on cuneiform remains, the employment of a precise term (or at least one which *now* has an exact meaning) where a vague one would be appropriate.

In a recent contribution to the subject of "Canonicity in Cuneiform Texts," F. Rochberg-Halton studied the meaning of canonicity for those texts,² reaching the conclusion, with M. Civil,³ that this term as used of the cuneiform corpus must be restricted to "text stability and fixed sequence of tablets within a series."⁴ In addition to surveying the generally accepted meaning of the term canonicity, she reviewed "the stabilization and standardization of tradition," "authority and authorship," and made her views concrete by studying "an *aḫū* text from *Enūma Anu Enlil*," which she had

¹F. W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond* (Cambridge: University Press, 1897), p. 3.

²*JCS* 36 (1984 issued 1985) 127-44.

³M. Civil in *MSL* XIV, p. 168.

⁴Rochberg-Halton, *JCS* 36 (1984) 129.

recently edited.⁵

The term "canon," from which "canonicity" derives, comes into English from the Latin of the Catholic Church. Classical Latin had used the word in the general meaning "model or standard," as we know from Pliny's use of it to refer to the model statue prepared by Polycleitus of Sicyon.⁶ In Greek, from which Latin had borrowed *canon*, *κανών* referred to a "reed," and came generally to refer to a "straight rod."⁷ Greek also utilized *κανών* metaphorically to mean "rule, standard," including legal "rule."⁸ The Greek term, in turn, goes back to the Semitic vocable found as קנה "reed" in Hebrew, *qanû* in Akkadian, *qn* in Ugaritic, *qn*⁹ in Phoenician, and also in Aramaic, etc. and it has reference to measuring and defining there, as well.

English, like medieval Latin, uses the word "canon" in a general meaning "rule," but has largely narrowed it to such rules when they stem from the Church, rather than secular government. In Europe, "canon" (i.e. church) and "civil" (Roman) law are distinct, and the *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte* has a *kanonistische*, as well as a *romanistische Abteilung*. These institutional overtones color the terms "canonic" and "canonical" when they are used of literature. In English "canonicity" is, then, an issue usually related to sacred scripture: a canon is a closed, well-defined body of works viewed as authoritative, usually because they were divinely inspired.

We are in general accord with Rochberg-Halton's views of "canonicity," once having written, "as normally understood, 'canonicity' is a concept at odds with the principles which governed the transmission of texts in Mesopotamia and elsewhere in the ancient Near East."⁹ The normative, divinely-sanctioned, quality of the term "canon," is not—so far as we can see—justifiably used of ancient near Eastern materials.¹⁰ Anyone who wants to understand the implications of the term "canon" as

⁵The text has appeared in *Language, Literature and History: Philological and Historical Studies Presented to Erica Reiner*, edited by Rochberg-Halton, American Oriental Series, vol. 67 (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1987), pp. 327–50.

⁶Pliny, *Natural History*, Book XXXIV (xix) 55.

⁷Latin *canna*, from Greek *κάννα*, "reed," is clearly related.

⁸For studies of the legal terminology, cf. F. Schulz, *History of Roman Legal Science* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946/1967), p. 66 n. 3 and A. Berger, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, NS vol. 43, pt. 2 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1953), p. 379.

⁹Lieberman *Loanwords* I, p. 26 n. 66.

¹⁰Prohibitions on adding or subtracting from the contents of the "law," such as can be found in Deuteronomy iv 2 are a different matter.

W. W. Hallo uses the term "canonical" for texts passed through what Rochberg-Halton, following A. Leo Oppenheim, calls in the "stream of tradition." His idiosyncratic usage is consistent, and seems to entail none of the overtones inherent in the usual application of the term. While we

applied to literary texts need merely read the "canon criticism" which is current among some Biblical scholars, such as Brevard S. Childs, to be convinced of the inappropriateness of the conception to cuneiform materials. Such criticism investigates the history of interpretation of a text as a means to determine its meaning, an approach which would clearly have been incomprehensible in the ancient Near East.

Basing herself on a reading of letters and a "catalogue" of neo-Assyrian date, Rochberg-Halton concludes that there were three "'streams' of textual transmission": the texts labelled *iškaru*, those labelled *aḫû*, and the oral tradition, designated as *ša pî ummâni* "according to the master" when it is cited.¹¹ There can be little doubt that the last category, the citations of scholars (even when collected into *šut pî ummâni*, "oral lore of a master" and written onto a tablet), is somehow different in nature from that normally found in written tablets (cf. below), but a crucial question which must be posed is what distinction is being made when an ancient text or tradition is called *aḫû*. Rochberg-Halton translates *aḫû* as "extraneous," and explains that she uses that word "in its first sense of 'coming from outside,' that is, extrinsic, rather than its secondary although perhaps more commonly used sense of 'not being pertinent' or 'superfluous'."¹²

Rochberg-Halton grants W. G. Lambert's holding that there is no evidence for the creation of an "authoritative" body of cuneiform works, but suggests that a distinction between "the *iškaru*, or official, series,"¹³ and texts labelled *aḫû*, "external" can be made. She suggests that these terms *might* have distinguished "authoritative" from "non-authoritative" scholarly works,¹⁴ but concludes after further investigation that there is not any such distinction between the groups of texts so designated.¹⁵

Rochberg-Halton's article thus comes as a welcome corrective to the usual (implicit) comparison with the Biblical "canon" which has, we think, provided an unfortunate model which has mislead cuneiformists, an imposition on Mesopotamia's *Eigenbegrifflichkeit*. Indeed, the Biblical texts themselves do not conform to the conception that is behind the term "canon."¹⁶ A comparison of *aḫû* with the etymologi-

regret his choice of words, his categorization of cuneiform texts into "monumental," "archival," and "canonical" may not be faulted on this basis.

In addition to the literature on "canon" cited by Rochberg-Halton, cf. the articles in R. von Hallberg, ed., *Canons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

¹¹JCS 36 (1984) 130.

¹²Ibid.

¹³JCS 36 (1984) 138.

¹⁴JCS 36 (1984) 135.

¹⁵JCS 36 (1984) 144.

¹⁶In his *Torah and Canon* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), James A. Sanders has argued convinc-

cally-similar Aramaic term *brayta* used for Tannaitic materials not included in the *Mishnah* seems more apposite than one with the Biblical "canon." Such materials, though not included by Rabbi Judah in his *Mishnah* are nonetheless repeatedly cited in Talmudic discussion. They are thought no less authentic and indicative because he did not include them in his compilation.

It seems likely to us that the repeated translation of *ahû* as "non-canonical" (or even "apocryphal") by cuneiformists is a result of their use of a false model for the relationship between a series and what is "outside" of it. If one thinks of the *ahû* materials as an appendix or excursus, rather than as materials excluded by the compiler(s) of a text, one may approach a more accurate model. Writers show a great deal of leeway in deciding what to put into an appendix and what to keep in the main body of a composition. Such decisions are commonly arbitrary, at least as viewed by a reader, and the relationship between materials labelled as *ahû* and those not so designated seems similarly vagarious to us.

Another somewhat similar term has been used to describe cuneiform literature, or at least that part of it which made its way into Assurbanipal's collections, namely the word "official." C. Bezold used the word when he described the ownership note impressed on Qyunjiq tablets in large characters which marked them as belonging to the palace of Assurbanipal.¹⁷ Likewise, while rejecting an identification of *ahû* texts as non-authoritative, Rochberg-Halton refers to texts prepared for the so-called "library" of Assurbanipal as "official," and many others have used the word.

To our mind, this term has much of the force and import of the conception behind the term canonical. When one speaks of the "official" Neo-Assyrian recension, the implications are quite clear: the government of Assurbanipal prepared (or at least chose) a particular form of a text which it considered definitive, and it gave its stamp of approval to that text.

There is, of course, no lack of official texts. That is, texts which have an official sanction and some sort of governmental force. These include treaties and contracts, which are commonly given such force by a governing authority or by an agreement between the parties involved. Tablets sealed with an official seal are made official by that act, just as the impressing of an individual's seal on a contract turns it into a binding text, one whose content can be enforced in court. There can, as well, be officially-sanctioned copies of literary texts. The sanctioning body can consist of a

ingly concerning the use of the term canon, which he considers to be a group's viewing a body of texts as having "authority and invariability." He writes that a "canon begins to *take shape* first and foremost because a question of identity or authority has arisen, and a canon begins to *become unchangeable* or invariable somewhat later, after the question of identity has for the most part been settled" (p. 91).

¹⁷Bezold, *Cat.*, vol. I, p. 5. On the colophons of Assurbanipal, see below.

library or group of scholars, as in the case of the Greek texts preserved in the Royal Ptolemaic library in Alexandria,¹⁸ or it can be a group of priests or temple, as in the case of the *Torah* scroll kept available in the Temple in Jerusalem.¹⁹ The choice of a translation can also come to have an official nature, as it would have if one fringe-candidate in the U.S. presidential elections of 1960 had been successful in his attempt to have the country adopt the King James translation of the Bible as the basis for its laws and morality. Likewise, "official" translations of treaties between states which use different languages are common enough, though one of the versions is commonly designated as definitive.

Was Assurbanipal's library at Nineveh an "official" library? A. Leo Oppenheim is cited to substantiate the claim that "apparently the approval of the king was required for preparation of new series for the Neo-Assyrian library at Nineveh."²⁰ All that Oppenheim had written, however, was that Assurbanipal "himself decided which tablets were to be put into the library and which to be omitted."²¹

Oppenheim had based his assertion on two letters: *ABL* 334 and *CT* XXII 1.²² Both of these letters are now in the British Museum. The first was excavated at Nineveh and the second purchased by the museum from an antiquities dealer, along with other tablets from Borsippa in Babylonia.²³

[1] From the letter *ABL* 334 (K 22), Oppenheim cited lines r 4-13: *DUB^{pa}-a-ni 'x-ni' / LUGAL EN-ia lul-si-ma / mim₂-ma ša₂ pa-an LUGAL maḥ-ru a-na ŠAG₄^{bi} / lu-še-ri-id : mim₂-ma ša₂ pa-an LUGAL : la maḥ-ru / la ŠAG₄^{bi} u₂-še-li / DUB^{pa}-a-ni ša₂ ad-bu-ub / ana UD^{me} ša-a-ti a-na ša₂-ka-nu ta-a-b'i*, which he translated "the king, my lord, should read the ... tablets and I shall place in it (i.e., the library) whatever is agreeable to the king: what is not agreeable to the king, I shall remove from it; the tablets of which I have spoken are well worth to be preserved for eternity."²⁴ Oppenheim wrote that this "clearly refers to the library of Assurbanipal," and

¹⁸Cf. P. M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972/1984), vol. I, pp. 320-35 on the library at Alexandria (with references in the notes in vol. II).

¹⁹Cf. Saul Lieberman, "Texts of Scripture in the Early Rabbinic Period," in his *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 2nd ed. (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1962), pp. 20-27, esp. p. 22 n. 18.

²⁰*JCS* 36 (1984) 143 with n. 70.

²¹A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization*, revised edition completed by E. Reiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 244. There is no change in page or content from the first edition (1966). Comparable assertions can be found in his "The Neo-Babylonian Preposition *LA*," *JNES* 1 (1942) 369-72, at pp. 371-72.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 378 n. 22.

²³We are indebted to Julian Reade for information on the tablets acquired with the *CT* XXII 1 texts.

²⁴The translation cited above is that given by Oppenheim in his *Ancient Mesopotamia*, p. 378 n. 22 (which, like his translation in *JNES* 1, pp. 371-72 assumes that the king, not the writer read the

he asserted further that "the latter's concern with the content of his collection is illustrated in the famous letter CT XXII 1."²⁵

The letter published as CT XXII 1 is not a "real" letter.²⁶ It is, rather, a student's copy of a (practice) letter, or rather two students' copies of the same letter, for R. C. Thompson noted that his copy presented the text of two tablets currently in the British Museum: B.M. 25676 (98-2-16, 730) and B.M. 25678 (98-2-16, 732). These two tablets are identical, grapheme for grapheme and line by line, even as to the endings of lines, in so far as preserved, and they are, by and large well preserved, as a glance at the individual transliterations given below in the Appendix will show. The differences between them are confined to the fact that they were written by different hands on distinct clays, and the apportioning of the lines into the obverse, lower edge, and reverse of the tablets.

[2] In this school text, an *unnamed* Assyrian king writes to the scholars of Borsippa, asking that, in addition to various named texts, they send him *mimma tuppi u nēpešu ša ... ana ekalliya tībū* (35-39) "whatever tablet(s) and/or ritual tablets/paraphernalia would be good for my palace." The group of tablets which the British Museum purchased along with the copies of this letter include contracts from Borsippa from the time of Nabonidus and B.M. 25736, a letter written at Borsippa.

It is absolutely certain that the tablets referred to in these two texts were not being considered for inclusion in either an "official" library or one which contained

tablets). In his *Letters from Mesopotamia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 160, Oppenheim translated "I will read the [...] tablets to Your Majesty and whatever is acceptable to the king I will place in it (the royal library). Whatever is not acceptable, I have (already) removed from it. The tablets I have mentioned are worthy of being deposited (in the library) forever." Either understanding of the ambiguous verbal form can be made to support the contention that Assurbanipal decided on the contents of his library.

²⁵Like Oppenheim, others have assumed that this text was written by Assurbanipal, including E. F. Weidner, "Die astrologische Serie Enūma Anu Enlil," *AfO* 14 (1941-44) 172-95, at p. 178 with n. 37 (which refers to earlier literature); E. Ebeling, *Neubab. Briefe*, who treated the letter as no. 1 on pp. 1-2, M. Weitmeyer, "Archives and Library Technique in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Libri* 6 (1956) 217-38, at 228-29 (with a translation), S. Parpola, "Assyrian Library Records," *JNES* 42 (1983) 1-29, p. 11 with n. 40, M. Dandamaev, *Vaviloniskie piscy* (Moscow: Nauka, 1983), p. 15 and n. 36 on p. 181 (he provides a translation of the letter on p. 64), and J. M. Durand, in A. Barucq et al., *Écrits de l'Orient ancien et sources bibliques*, Ancien Testament, 2 (Paris: Desclée, 1986), p. 121 (with a partial translation pp. 121-22).

Parpola (*LAS* II, pp. 116-17) has followed G. Meier, "Kommentare aus dem Archiv der Tempelschule in Assur," *AfO* 12 (1937-39) 237-46 at p. 238, in considering that *ABL* 722 (= Parpola, *LAS* 116) deals with the instruction of scribes at school, since the type of tablet referred to (*luginu*) was used for teaching. Following their lead, we see no reason to connect this letter with the king's tablet-collecting.

²⁶P. Michalowski, "Königsbriefe," *RLA* 6 (1980), pp. 51-59 is unaware of this first-millennium copying of a (supposed) royal letter, but treats of most of the earlier such exercises.

(only) "canonical" works—or works in some "canonical" form. In the Babylonian letter found at Nineveh [1], Ninurta-aḫa-iddina writes to a king, who may—or may not—be Assurbanipal²⁷ and he consults him on whether certain tablets are to be included. Given the ambiguity of the verb forms in the passage cited, which may be read as first or third person singulars, it cannot be proved that the decisions were made by the king, and that Ninurta-aḫa-iddina had not already removed "unfitting" tablets from the library, as Oppenheim's later translation assumed.²⁸ Even, however, if we understand the passage as referring to the king's personally deciding what would be kept, it does not follow that tablets so selected became part of some "official" collection, as that word is normally understood. Whether they were "official" or not would depend on the *purpose* of the collecting carried out, and on that question, this letter gives us only a single criterion: whether they were worthy of being kept for posterity. We shall see that their colophons tell us that preserving tablets in Assurbanipal's name for the ages was one of the considerations which motivated the collecting of his library.

Such safekeeping by a king does not, however, make that which is collected "official," even if it does render the tablets collected "royal." If a prince collects stamps, his "royal" collection need never become an "official" one, but may remain private, even beyond his lifetime.

The selection process described by this letter [1] likewise militates against the view that the tablets which the king was to consider for inclusion were the subject of the special types of selection and textual verification which are implied by the term "canonical," as normally understood. If the tablets had been so selected, one might well have expected Ninurta-aḫa-iddina to mention the fact, but the colophons of the tablets he sent, colophons which would have noted the care with which the tablets were copied and checked and the provenance of the originals from which they were prepared might have left him thinking it unnecessary to summarize such matters. This, however, would refer only to the pedigrees of individual tablets, and we should have expected there to be some reference to the texts which had been included, to previous or future discussions of just what works were to be included in the collection(s) or where the copies were to be made and checked, rather than a casual refer-

²⁷So far as we can see, the only evidence on which one could decide who the king was would be the identity of Ninurta-aḫa-iddina. The latter is the writer of *ABL* 335, surely of *ABL* 336 and of *ABL* 797 and he is also mentioned in *ABL* 873 (Parpola, *LAS* 238). All of these letters whose addressees can be determined were written to Esarhaddon, and all but *ABL* 873 were inscribed in Babylonian, not Assyrian script. We have no way of determining whether the man of the same name mentioned as father of the scribe of K 4191 (*CT* XVIII pl. 38a) or in the legal texts from Nineveh is the same.

²⁸Given above, n. 24.

ence to tablets worthy of being kept. It is just such deliberations which are implied when we call some text "canonical" or "official" and they are clearly not present.

In the second letter [2], as well, there can hardly be any question of referring to "official" or "canonical" matters. Even if we ignore the fact that this Borsippa school exercise makes the (school-)masters of the city of Borsippa out to be superior to the Assyrian kings who had been their overlords, the mode of expression does not allow one to consider tablets which may have been sent in response to such a request to have been "official" or "canonical." The presumed royal letter-writer of this school text can hardly be asking for tablets which will become "official" when they reach him. He wants texts which will be helpful for his palace. They can hardly become "canonical" without having undergone some sort of examining and testing.

Moreover, it seems unlikely that Assurbanipal was really the Assyrian king referred to in the letter to Borsippa [2]. The text requests tablets "which are good for kingship" (*ša ana šarrūti tābi*, line 25) and for the palace [2], but as the son of Esarhaddon, grandson of Sennacherib, and descendant of Sargon, Assurbanipal surely had no need for texts of this nature. He would never have written that there were no such tablets in the land of Assyria (line 30), particularly given his dispute with his brother Šamaš-šum-ukīn whom his father had established as king in Babylon. Such an assertion would simply have been untrue. In fact, as we shall see, the reasons for Assurbanipal collecting tablets, at least in so far as those reasons were expressed in the colophons written on them, were quite different, and the king who wrote *CT* XXII 1 must be looked for elsewhere, if the letter is not to be completely dismissed as being mere Babylonian fantasy. Furthermore, there is not a single tablet in Assurbanipal's collection which says that it is based on a Borsippa original, even if there were such tablets at Nineveh,²⁹ and Assurbanipal had a special relationship with Nabû (the chief god of Borsippa) and put tablets in the scriptorium in Nabû's *Ezida* in Nineveh (see below).

What would have been required for a text to become "official"? Some of the ways that this could happen are self-evident: some office-holder could guarantee the validity of a tablet by affixing a sealing to it or merely by sending it in his official capacity; a king could promulgate a text by having copies of it sent to those it affected, etc. We know of no instance in which tablets of the type in question, i.e. texts which have been passed on through the Mesopotamian scholarly tradition are given such a stamp of approval.

What official would have been responsible for making such a decision regarding a text? It seems most likely that declaring a tradition or a traditional text fit and proper

²⁹Craig, *AAT* 5a, a tablet of Nabû-zuqup-kēna. For the provenience of his collection and other matters, see our "A Mesopotamian Background for the So-Called *Aggadīc* 'Measures' of Biblical Exegesis?," *HUCA* 58 (1987), 157–225, esp. pp. 204–17.

would have been done by an *ummānu*, or "master." This term is the same word as that used for the scholars to whom the sender of the Borsippa letter [2] addressed himself, but in Assyria, the official bearing this title seems to have had a special status. In some of the so-called Assyrian "king lists"³⁰ excavated in the city of Assur, in addition to recording the kings and additional information about them, an *ummānu* is identified. Thus,³¹ King List 12 (the Synchronic King List)³² gives Assyrian and Babylonian kings in parallel columns. Making allowances for the fact that kings in two countries did not start and end their reigns at the same times, the text aligns the rules of the two sets of monarchs (albeit in a somewhat inconsistent fashion), and for rulers perhaps starting as early as Tukulti-Ninurta I (1243–1207) an *ummānu* is listed, though the name is neither always recorded, nor always readable. King List 14³³ presents us with the name of the *ummānu* of the Babylonian king Marduk-zākir-šumī (ninth century), King List 15 (Synchronistic King List Fragment)³⁴ recorded (at the least) the *ummānu* of Enlil-nārārī (1327–1318), King List 17 (Synchronic King List Fragment)³⁵ recorded the names of Babylonian kings along with their *ummānus* and Assyrian kings with theirs.

Arguing from these uses of the word *ummānu*, O. Schroeder contended that the *ummānu* was the "secretary-in-chief" of the king,³⁶ basing himself on the fact that some of the individuals named as *ummānu* are designated as *rab tupšarri* "chief scribe" in other texts.³⁷ This understanding of the term is bolstered by the colophon

³⁰A. K. Grayson has conveniently presented complete texts of these in his contribution to the article "Königslisten und Chroniken" in *RLA* 6 (1980), pp. 87–135. We shall refer to the lists with his numbering; his study refers to the earlier treatments of the texts.

³¹Perhaps the names in the right hand column of King List 11 (*KAV* 18) listed the kings' *ummānus*, but the names are poorly preserved.

³²E. F. Weidner, "Die grosse Königsliste aus Assur," *Afo* 3 (1926) 66–76, also *KAV* 216 (reverse only). Cf. Parpola, *LAS* II Appendix N 1.

³³*KAV* 10 and *KAV* 13, which are apparently part of the same tablet, but not directly joined to one another; the *ummānu* recorded is given in *KAV* 10.

³⁴*KAV* 11.

³⁵*KAV* 182. Cf. Parpola, *LAS* II Appendix N 1a. Given what appears to be the uninscribed state of the right half of column (r) iii, it would seem that the list of *ummānus* for Babylonian kings was not very complete.

³⁶O. Schroeder, "ummānu = Chef der Staatskanzlei?," *OLZ* 23 (1920) 204–7. His understanding of the term is accepted by Grayson, who considered it "probably the king's chief scribe," *RLA* 6 (1980), p. 117, and by Parpola, *LAS* II, p. 448, who translates "scholar" (cf. *ibid.*, p. 270 ad 19).

³⁷The following are registered as *ummānu* in the king lists and given a suitable title in other texts: Gabbi-ilāni-ereš (King List 12 iii 17 and iii 19) known to hold the title *rab tupšarri* from the colophons of his descendants Nabû-zuqup-kēna (Hunger, *Kolophone* 293–313; on the latter see the article referred to in n. 29), and Ninurta-uballissu (Lambert, *BWL* pls. 55–57 [p. 220] iv 31 = Hunger, *Kolophone* 313 2, partly restored). Nabû-zuqup-kēna's son, the *ummānu* Nabû-zēra-lišir

of the well-known "Eighth Campaign of Sargon," which is the tablet of Nabû-šallim-šunu, ^{1u2}DUB-SAR *šar-ri* GAL ^{u2}₂ GAL G^rT¹-U ^{1u2}*um-ma-an* ¹LUGAL-GI-NA "great scribe of the king, chief scribe, secretary-in-chief of Sargon."³⁸

One might well have expected such an official not only to have overseen the activities of the chancery, but also reviewed the work of his underlings, and perhaps to have acquired tablets for the king's holdings and decided which tablets the latter should retain, but we have no record of any such activities, and these individuals were but rarely mentioned in colophons. None of the tablets of the *ummānu* Ištar-šuma-ēreš which record his title as *rab tupšarri ša Aššur-bāni-apli* "chief scribe of Assurbanipal" was designated as part of the palace collection,³⁹ and very few tablets' colophons which refer to Assurbanipal refer to any other individual (see below). If royal officials of this rank were involved in the acquisition of the king's library, then, they did so behind the scenes, putting the tablets into his collection(s) anonymously, without intruding any reference to themselves.

What is more, the chief scribes' personal tablets (i.e. those which bear their names which were never, so far as we know, made part of the palace collection) indicate their reliability by registering the pedigree of the *Vorlage*, and indicating its provenience and ownership.⁴⁰ This, along with the usual assurances as to the accuracy of the copying which are duly recorded on their tablets, is identical with what we expect to find in any colophon, so that there is no reason to assume that tablets owned or prepared for or by such functionaries had any "official" status.

(King List 12 iv 3 and King List 17 iv 4) was designated as *rab tupšarri* in two of the colophons of his son Ištar-šuma-ēreš (IV R 9 r 45 = Hunger, *Kolophone* 344 4 and 81–7–27, 69 cited in R. Borger, "Zum Handerhebungsgebet an Nanna-Sin IV R 9," ZA 62 [1971] 81–83 at 83, cf. Parpola, LAS II Appendix N 5), and probably to be restored in a third, CT XVI pl. 38 (r) iv 23'. The latter was likewise an *ummānu* (King List 12 iv 3 and iv 16 and King List 17 iv 5 and iv 6) and is designated as *rab tupšarri* in both his own tablets (IV R 9 r 43, K 3877 = Hunger, *Kolophone* 344 2, 81–7–27, 69 = ZA 62 [1971] 81–83 at 83, and surely also III R 66 [r] xii 33, plus CT XVI pl. 38 [r] iv 22', if we restore his name correctly there; cf. n. 40) and in *Urkunde* (ADD 444 r 11, cf. also ADD 448 r 11, collated *Assur* 2 [1979] 73). Kalbū (King List 12 iv 11 and King List 17 iv 2) is shown to have been in charge of Sennacherib's scribes and diviners by a letter (ABL 1216 r 2) written to Esarhaddon, though his title is not recorded (cf. Parpola, LAS II, p. 50). We know of no relevant information concerning the Assyrian *ummānus* Bēl-upaḥḥir (King List 12 iv 11 and King List 17 iv 3), [ME²-L]UH-ḥa-a (King List 12 iii 21) and Nabū-apla-iddina (King List 12 iv 2) who is probably the same as Nabū-bāni (King List 17 iv 1) or the Babylonian *ummānus* Qaliya (King List 12 iii 15) and MU-PAB (King List 14 i 10 and King List 17 iii 12).

³⁸ TCL III 428 = Hunger, *Kolophone* 26; the same man is designated as *tupšar šarri* in ND 1120 6, published by D. J. Wiseman, "The Nimrud Tablets, 1951," *Iraq* 14 (1952) 61–71, at p. 69.

³⁹ The texts are referred to in n. 37, above.

⁴⁰ CT XVI pl. 38 (r) iv 18'–19' (= Hunger, *Kolophone* 502). The chief scribe who owned this tablet is surely Ištar-šuma-ēreš, but his name and that of his father (but not their titles) are destroyed on the tablet.

The bureaucracy was, of course, involved in the acquisition of tablets, as the "Assyrian library records" studied by Parpola make clear.⁴¹ These administrative documents date from 647 BCE; the few records we have record the receipt of at least 1441 clay tablets and 69 multi-paged wood-and-wax tablets (polyptychs).⁴² Of these, at least 1062 tablets and 60 polyptychs were registered on tablets dated January 28 and March 26 of 647, i.e. within some seven months of the fall of Šamaš-šum-ukīn's Babylon to Assurbanipal.⁴³ Parpola would like to see at least some of these tablets as booty from the king's war in Babylonia, but the fact that Aššur-mukīn-palē³a, Assurbanipal's brother, was among the sources of tablets keeps him from thinking that the war was the only source of tablets.⁴⁴

In dealing with the destination of the tablets, Parpola cautiously speaks of "the royal libraries of Nineveh,"⁴⁵ and his caution is well-warranted by the evidence. If one looks through the neo-Assyrian colophons searching for the names of these supposed former owners of the tablets, one discovers that there is not a single tablet from Nineveh which can be shown by its colophon to have been referred to in these records, since the name of none of the individuals designated as sources of tablets in the records⁴⁶ can be found in a colophon.⁴⁷

This fact should not really surprise one, however, since, outside of five tablets,

⁴¹ S. Parpola, "Assyrian Library Records," *JNES* 42 (1983) 1–29.

⁴² Ibid., p. 5; Parpola estimates that the original totals of the tablets referred to about 2000 clay tablets and some 300 writing boards.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 11 with n. 38.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 12.

⁴⁵ On the other hand, his assumption that CT XXII 1 (ibid., p. 11 with n. 40) had anything to do with Nineveh, rather than another city (such as Assur or Kalah), is precisely that, an assumption.

⁴⁶ It is true that the Nippur exorcist Aplaya (source of a single tablet, see *JNES* 42, p. 14 ii 13' [1.4]) could conceivably have been the copyist of the fourth tablet U r a = *hubullu* whose colophon was published in Delitzsch, *AL*³, p. 90 (= Hunger, *Kolophone* 345), but that tablet (K 2016A + K 4421 + ..., see S. Langdon, "Miscellanea Assyriaca III," *Babyloniaca* 7 [1913–23] 93–98, at p. 94 and R. Borger, "Bemerkungen zu den akkadischen Kolophonen," *WO* 5 [1970] 165–71, esp. 169) was written earlier, during the reign of Esarhaddon, when Assurbanipal was crown prince, and the identification seems unlikely. The Aplaya found in K 14067 + Rm 150, one of tablet fragments assembled in W. G. Lambert, "A Late Assyrian Catalogue of Literary and Scholarly Texts," *Kramer AV* 313–18 (cf. S. Parpola, *JNES* 42 [1983] 28–29 and below, n. 119) probably was responsible for the copy of U r a = *hubullu* IV made for Assurbanipal, who is most likely the individual who wrote divination "reports" to the king from Borsippa, rather than the other man.

⁴⁷ The name [Nabū]-balāssu-iqbi (*JNES* 42, p. 19 iv 2' [2.8]) may well be found in the colophon of K 10595 (= Hunger, *Kolophone* 429; now joined to K 5174), which is a copy of *erše ma* lamentations (cf. *JNES* 42, p. 7 n. 23), but the individual in the administrative document had a father named [Nabū⁷]-apla-iddin, while the owner of the tablet would seem to have been the son of Bēl-iksūr.

No other personal name given in the "Assyrian library records" is listed in the index of Hunger, *Kolophone* or, for that matter, in a colophon indexed in Bezold, *Cat.* or Tallqvist, *APN*.

no individual other than Assurbanipal is ever mentioned in a neo-Assyrian colophon which contains the king's name. (No tablet with an Assurbanipal colophon is, apparently, *ever* dated with an eponym.) The earliest of the tablets which *do* mention Assurbanipal is the tablet written for him while he was crown prince which Delitzsch called "Ein Lehrbuch für den Prinzen Asurbanipal."⁴⁸ We now know that this tablet was simply a copy of the fourth tablet of the lexical series U r a = *hubullu*, listing wooden objects,⁴⁹ and, like the other tablets of the series, goes back to the second millennium or earlier. In three of the other tablets, IV R 9 (the famous Sumero-Akkadian Š u - i l a for Nana), K 3877 (which contains omens), and 81-7-27, 69 (an unpublished "religious text," with only a colophon and part of the catchline preserved), Assurbanipal is mentioned only because their owner was Ištār-šuma-ēreš, whose title was "chief scribe of Assurbanipal."⁵⁰ The last of these tablets with Assurbanipal's name in their colophons likewise contained omens, and the royal name, most likely, appeared in the colophon again as part of the tablet-owner's title.⁵¹

Since there is not any reason to think that these tablets were ever part of the collections of the king, they may be ignored when we consider the libraries associated with Assurbanipal. Although our knowledge of the physical distribution of Assurbanipal's tablets must remain "impressionist,"⁵² both as a result of the ancient destruction of the city and the fact that the nineteenth-century excavators failed to record find spots, some knowledge of the collections can be gained through a study of the colophons. These were reconstructed by M. Streck in his publication of the inscriptions of Assurbanipal,⁵³ and his survey of the evidence was supplemented to some extent in H. Hunger's study of Mesopotamian colophons.⁵⁴ While there can be no pretense that a more thorough presentation of the colophons is not a desideratum, our

⁴⁸For reference to this text, see above, n. 46. The title Delitzsch gave to the text can be found on p. 86.

⁴⁹Edited by B. Landsberger, *MSL* V, pp. 143-85, with some addenda in *MSL* IX, pp. 168-72.

⁵⁰The tablets are referred to in n. 37.

⁵¹45. K 8880 (= Hunger, *Kolophone* 343), with a colophon written in characters smaller than the rest of the tablet. We would restore the title of Nabû-šarra-ušur as [LU₂-GAL SAG] ša Aššur-bāni-apli, a title that this individual has in *ADD* 646 8, 25, and r 19. Since some of the other titles Nabû-šarra-ušur held included reference to the king, other restorations are possible.

⁵²J. Reade, "Archaeology and the Kuyunjik Archives," in K. R. Veenhof, ed., *Cuneiform Archives and Libraries*, Publications de l'Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul, vol. 57 (Amsterdam, 1986), pp. 213-22, at p. 222. C. Bezold's "Introduction" in volume V of his *Catalogue*, has much the same view, cf. also his "Bibliotheks- und Schriftwesen im alten Ninive," *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* 21 (1904) 257-77, and King, *Bezold Cat. Supp.*, pp. xi-xv.

⁵³Streck, *Asb.*, pp. LXXIV-LXXXII and 354-75. Streck letters the colophons he reconstructs.

⁵⁴Hunger, *Kolophone*; Hunger numbers the colophons, frequently conflating under a single number colophons which were kept separate by Streck.

comments will be based largely on these studies.⁵⁵

The colophons referring to Assurbanipal were written on tablets in three different ways: some were impressed *en large*, often with a stamp, which read "palace of Assurbanipal," followed by royal epithets,⁵⁶ two tablets had this "official note" painted onto them,⁵⁷ and the rest of the texts had colophons written, like the remainder of the tablet, with a reed stylus.⁵⁸ When the colophon was inscribed with a stylus, it was sometimes inscribed in script of the same size and ductus as the rest of the text, and sometimes it was written in a different hand, perhaps smaller or impressed more shallowly than the rest of the text.

The colophons refer to two different buildings in Nineveh: the "palace (*ekallu*)⁵⁹ of Assurbanipal," and the temple of Nabû. All tablets which were put into a *girginakku*, "library" or (probably better) "scriptorium"⁶⁰ according to their colophons, were put into the *girginakku* of the temple of Nabû,⁶¹ but these constitute a small percentage of the excavated tablets and only a few of the colophons.⁶²

The purpose of commissioning the tablets put into the Ezida, Nabû's temple, seems to be different from that of the palace tablets, in so far as the colophons make

⁵⁵R. Borger, "Bemerkungen zu den akkadischen Kolophonen," *WO* 5 (1970) 165-71 has added important comments to the work of Hunger.

In referring to individual colophons, as available, we cite Streck's letters, Hunger's numbers, and a single cuneiform publication as an example.

It should particularly be noted by anyone using the studies of Streck and Hunger that the former did not consider the information at the beginning of the colophon (which gave the site of the *Vorlage*, and referred to the copying, collating and checking, etc.) relevant to his interests. Where Hunger has relied on Streck, such information is, consequently, missing. Our use of Assurbanipal's colophons has not been based on a complete review, but we hope it will stimulate one, and that future editors of texts with an Assurbanipal colophon will no longer simply refer to Streck, but will provide precise details.

⁵⁶Streck, *Asb.* a = Hunger, *Kolophone* 317. The stampings have some orthographic variants and are disposed over one or two lines. This is what Bezold (above, n. 17) called an "official note."

⁵⁷A photo of DT 273 (the black of which has now partly faded to red) has been published by Reade, "Archaeology" (above, n. 52) and the colophon of K 10100 (photo *ibid.*), likewise bears the "official note," and, in so far as preserved, reads "[pa]lace of A[ššur-b]āni-[apli ...]."

⁵⁸Streck, *Asb.*, p. LXXII, Bezold, "Bibliothek" (above, n. 52), p. 275.

⁵⁹This word is written E₂-GAL (for instance on K 3977, *CT* XXVII pl. 28a) or KUR (e.g. Sm. 12, *CT* XIX pl. 24).

⁶⁰D. Arnaud, "Religion Assyro-Babylonienne," *Annuaire*, École pratique des hautes études, V^e Section 76 (1977-78) 183-93, at 184.

⁶¹Was this *girginakku* the place where tablets for Assurbanipal's collection were prepared?

⁶²Streck, *Asb.* n = Hunger, *Kolophone* 327 = *CT* XVIII pl. 37, Streck, *Asb.* o = Hunger, *Kolophone* 328 = IV R² 53 (Streck refers to two more tablets with the colophon), Hunger, *Kolophone* 338 = RA 17 (1920) 139 (additional instances in RA 64 [1970] 188 8 and Borger, *HLK* II, p. 114), and Hunger, *Kolophone* 339 = K 8501 (+) K 10600 (RA 64 [1970] 188 8).

the objectives clear. The tablets put into Nabû's temple were put there "for" the "life" of Assurbanipal, i. e. to cause the god Nabû to favor him. These colophons, in fact, elaborate the benefits to be given to the king at great length, though the specifics of divine benefaction are not of interest in the present context. The practice of making tablets and dedicating them to Nabû's temple is well-known in Babylonia, as well as Assyria.⁶³ (In accord with his claims to scholarship, Assurbanipal like his predecessors invokes the god Nabû in the colophons of some of the tablets put into his own palace, and seems to have considered himself to have a special relationship with him, as is evident from the well-known dialogue between Assurbanipal and Nabû.⁶⁴)

On the other hand, the tablets which are for the palace of the king are either so designated without any purpose (as is the case with the oversize and inked colophons), or specify quite a different set of goals. The objectives named are: *ana tāmarti šitassīšu*⁶⁵, "for my review in perusing," *ana tāmarti šarrūtiya*,⁶⁶ "for my royal review," *ana taḥsisti tāmartišu*,⁶⁷ "for study in his reviewing," *ana taḥsisti šitassīšu*,⁶⁸ "for study in his reading," and *ana tamrirtiya*,⁶⁹ "for my examining."⁷⁰ In all cases, the person referred to by the pronoun is Assurbanipal. That is, the colophons which indicate the purpose of the collecting of tablets by Assurbanipal all show the library to have been his personal collection, gathered in his palace for his

⁶³Cf. Hunger, *Kolophone*, p. 157 s.v. *Ezida*.

⁶⁴Livingstone, *Court Poetry* (below, n. 40) No. 13, cf. F. Pomponio, *Nabû*, *Studi Semitici*, 51 (Rome: Istituto di Studi del Vicino Oriente, 1978), esp. pp. 80–83. The dialogue was most recently published in copy as Craig, *ABRT*, pp. 5–6, and is edited by Streck, *Asb.*, pp. 342–51, further bibliography and additional materials can be found in Borger, *HKL* I, p. 522 and II, p. 276.

⁶⁵Streck, *Asb.* c (= IV R² 6) and d (= CT XVIII pl. 30) = Hunger, *Kolophone* 319, and Streck, *Asb.* q = Hunger, *Kolophone* 329 = Köcher, *BAM* VI 574.

⁶⁶Streck, *Asb.* b = Hunger, *Kolophone* 318 = CT XI pl. 32.

⁶⁷Streck, *Asb.* i (= BMS 11) and k (= IV R² 55) = Hunger, *Kolophone* 323, and Hunger, *Kolophone* 336 (= Laessøe, *Bit Rinki*, pl. II, no. VII), for which cf. Borger, *WO* 5 (1970) 167–68, and also cf. Hunger, *Kolophone* 337 (*tāmartišu* restored).

⁶⁸Hunger, *Kolophone* 324 = Loretz–Mayer, *Šu-ila* 73.

⁶⁹Streck, *Asb.* r = s = Hunger, *Kolophone* 330 = 331 = *WO* 5 (1970) 168. The colophon of K 2061A+ (cf. above, n. 46) was also written *ana tamrirti Aššur-bāni-apli*. Cf. further, Borger, *WO* 5 (1970) 169, who restores the colophon of K 2380 (*ŠRT* pl. 3) to read in the first person singular, but such a restoration is uncertain.

⁷⁰Whatever the precise meaning of *tamrirtu*, the meaning of the verb from which it is derived (*murruru*) is somewhat clarified by CT 54 106 (in part, = ABL 1321), where the scribe writes (11) *ka-lu-u₂-tu ug-da[m-mi-ir i]’š-ka-ru un-dir-ri-ir* "I completed the (texts concerned with) lamentation-priesthood, I examined the assignment/series," which would seem to assure that the activity is one which takes place after something is finished.

It seems most likely to us that the reference is to Assurbanipal's examining of the works of others, particularly, at least sometimes, the advice directed to the king by aides based on their readings in the scholarly literature and observations of phenomena which that literature said was portentous.

own study. A formal analysis of these purpose clauses reveals some interesting features: all refer to the king with a personal pronoun, and all of the verbal nouns governed by the preposition *ana*, "for," are based on a *t* form of the verb: the first two on the unadorned stem (G) of the verb *amāru*, "to see," and the others on the stem with a doubled second radical (D). The first /t/ in such forms is the /ta/ affix so well known in the verbal system which forms a "middle" or "reflexive." This affix was originally a demonstrative pronoun meaning "the aforementioned," and in this case it referred to Assurbanipal. These two formal features of the purpose clause make it seem appropriate to characterize the collection as the "personal" holdings of Assurbanipal.

Yet another colophon says, of a tablet for/from the palace collection, that "I (Assurbanipal) wrote it in a gathering of experts," *ina taḫurti ummāni aštur (assur)*.⁷¹ This seems to suggest that some of the holdings in the collection may also have been prepared by the king himself.

It is well-known that Assurbanipal considered himself to be learned. In the colophons, he says that, unlike earlier kings, he achieved the highest levels of scholarship (*nisiq tupšarrūti*),⁷² and he made great claims to learning elsewhere,⁷³ while the scribe Balasi refers to teaching him in a letter addressed to his father.⁷⁴ The scholarly letters addressed to him show his actual interest in such matters, and partially confirm his claims. S. Parpola has argued that part of one of those letters, CT 54 187,⁷⁵ "clearly implies that the king in question possessed a copy of *Enūma Anu Enlil* which he would (and could) consult personally whenever necessary."⁷⁶ Since no other Sargonid king laid claim to such knowledge, Parpola concludes that the king in question must have been Assurbanipal.

We know from Oppenheim's studies of the "reports" of observations on which divination was based that the king sometimes cross-examined his correspondents with respect to the sightings.⁷⁷ It seems reasonable to conclude that Assurbanipal's

⁷¹Streck, *Asb.* b = Hunger, *Kolophone* 318.

⁷²Streck, *Asb.* c = d = Hunger, *Kolophone* 319.

⁷³See particularly the first section of AB VIII pls. xxxiv–xxxix, treated by Streck, *Asb.*, pp. 252–71.

⁷⁴ABL 604 (+) CT 53 582 = Parpola, *LAS* 34 (+) 49, see Parpola, *LAS* II, p. 39 ad r 6ff.

⁷⁵Our collation of this tablet in 1985 showed the *š[u]* of line 5 in Parpola's copy and edition (Parpola, *LAS* II 513) now to be completely lost, and provided the reading of the first word of r 4, where we find [... DUB]^{75a}-*šu₂-nu*

⁷⁶Parpola, *LAS* II, p. 347 (Discussion), with references to other letters. Parpola concludes that Assurbanipal's claims to expertise "can well have more truth in them than a critical modern reader would a priori be inclined to think."

⁷⁷A. Leo Oppenheim, "Divination and Celestial Observation in the Last Assyrian Empire," *Centaurus* 14 (69) 97–135, at 119–20.

Adad-šuma-ušur wrote the king with slightly different information in another letter, *ABL* 652, part of which reads in Parpola's translation:⁹⁴

What the king, my lord, wrote to me: "Is (the month) good? Aššur-mukin-palēja should come up to (see) me, (and) Sin-per³i-ukin should come with him. Could he join him? They are (now) separated", let them come up together: Ajaru is a good month, it has numerous good days.⁹⁵

In another tablet, one which was in the *form* of an *u²iltu*-report, Adad-šuma-ušur cited the evidence for his claim that there were numerous good days in the month. Parpola published this tablet as *LAS* 332, and in his translation,⁹⁶ it reads:

- 3' [ki-i] DIĜIR-ME-ni i-pa-la₃-u-ni
 4' [ana s]u-le-e da-me-eq
 5' UD-ME DUG₃+GA-ME ša LUGAL be-li₂ «ŠU₂»
 6' iq-bu-u₂-ni
 7' UD 10-KAM₂* UD 15-KAM₂* UD 16-KAM₂*
 8' UD 18-KAM₂* UD 20-KAM₂*
 9' UD 22-KAM₂* UD 24-KAM₂*
 r1 UD 26-KAM₂* PAP 8 UD-ME
 2 ša ITU GUD ša
 3 a-na e-peš ši-bu-ti
 4 pa-la-aḥ DIĜIR ta-ba-a-ni
 5 UD 10-KAM₂* ina de-ni ma-ger
 6 [UD] 15-KAM₂* še-⁹⁶NUMUN¹ šuk-lu-lu
 7 [UD] 16-KAM₂* hu-ud lib₃-bi
 8 [UD 1]8-KAM₂* za-ku¹-tu₂ pu-šu-ur
 9 [UD 20-KAM₂*] MUŠ li-duk
 10 [a-ša₂-re]-du-tu₂ DU-ak
 11 [UD 22-KAM₂* ta]-ab ina e-peš ši-bu-ti
 (rest lost)

⁹⁴*LAS* I 145, p. 113.

⁹⁵The text of this part of *ABL* 652 reads:

- 5 ... ša LUGAL be-li₂
 6 [iš]-pur-an-ni ma ta-ba-a
 7 [ma] ¹AŠ+ŠUR-GIN-BAL-MEŠ-ia
 8 [a-n]a pa-n[i¹-i]a le-li-ia
 9 [ma ¹di³ir3]0-¹NUNUZ¹.GUD¹in¹ is-se-šu₂
 10 [le]-li-[a] šu-u₂ is-sa-he-iš
 11 ma¹ [li]-zi-iz-zi par-su
 12 i[s¹-sa]-he¹-iš-ma le-lu-u-ne₂
 13 ¹ITU¹.GUD¹ ur-hu ta¹-a-bu šu-u
 14 UD-MEŠ-šu₂ DUG₃+GA-MEŠ ma-a²-da in Parola's collation.

⁹⁶*LAS* I, p. 285.

- The 10th day: favourable in court.
 The 12th day: favourable in street.
 The 15th day: perfect seed.
 The 16th day: joy.
 The 18th day: make cleaned (barley) ready!
 The 20th day: should one kill a snake, one would attain a leading position.
 The 22nd day: favourable in court; (fit for) undertaking an enterprise.
 The 24th day: joy.
 The 26th day: good news.
 The 28th day: entirely favourable.
 The 29th day: one should kill a snake.
 The 30th day: good omen.

From Adad-šumu-ušur.⁹⁷

Two ancient scholars thus wrote the king with incompatible citations of the tradition. A study of the preserved texts relating to the question of which days of the month Iyyar were indeed favorable is enlightening. We have organized these data into the chart given as Table 1.⁹⁸ The various types of tablets which indicated whether a

⁹⁷Parpola transliterates Bu. 91-5-9, 156 as:

- 1 UD 10-KAM₂ ina de-nim ma-ger
 2 UD 12-KAM₂ ina SILA ma-ger
 3 UD 15-KAM₂ ŠE-⁹⁸NUMUN ŠU-DU₇
 4 UD 16-KAM₂ ŠAG₄ ḪUL₂-LA
 5 UD 18-KAM₂ za-ku-tu pu-šu-ur
 6 UD 20-KAM₂ MUŠ ḪE₂-EN-GAZ SAĜ-KAL DU
 7 UD 22-KAM₂ in de-nim ¹ma-ger¹ e-pe-eš A₂-AŠ₂
 8 UD 24-KAM₂ ŠAG₄ ḪUL₂-LA
 r1 UD 26-KAM₂ bu-su₂-ra-a-tum
 2 UD 28-KAM₂ ka-liš ma-ger
 3 UD 29-KAM₂ MUŠ ḪE₂-EN-GAZ
 4 UD 30-KAM₂ ¹GEŠKIM¹ SIG₅
 5 ša ¹di³ir¹ŠKUR-MU-PAB

(*LAS* I, p. 284).

⁹⁸The data on which this Table is based are published as follows: VAT tablets in *KAR* II and *MIO* 5 (1957), IM tablets in *Sumer* 8 (1952) and 17 (1961), with the ND piece. K 12000h was published in *ZA* 18 (1904–05). In the notes giving spellings, the letters and hemerologies are not included in the designation "texts." O. Pedersén, *Archives and Libraries in the City of Assur*, 2 parts, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis Studia Semitica Upsaliensis, 6 and 8 (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1985 and 1986), has been consulted for help in dating tablets from the excavations at Assur (all VAT tablets).

Text type: Date (century): Provenance:	Letters 7 unkn. Adad-Šum- ur writer 1140 332 652	Tables 5 Bab. Elam "14"	8/7 "Bab." Assyria "14"	9/8?	Extracts 7/8 Assyria	7	13	5 Bab. Ass.	9 Ass.	14 Bab.	Hemerologies 8/7 Assyria
Day Prediction											
1 favorable ¹⁰³	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2 favorable ¹⁰⁴	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5 he should get a wife, ¹⁰⁵	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6 he will grow old ¹⁰⁶	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
he should get a wife, ¹⁰⁶	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
he will grow old, ¹⁰⁷	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
he will be satisfied ¹⁰⁸	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8 notable: favorable ¹⁰⁹	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10 in court: favorable ¹¹⁰	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
notable in court: favorable ¹¹²											
god in the street: favorable ¹¹³											
12 in the street: favorable ¹¹⁴	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15 perfect seed ¹¹⁵	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
16 joy ¹¹⁶	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
17 free the grain ¹¹⁷	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
18 free the clean (barley) ¹¹⁸	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
20 he should smite a snake, ¹¹⁹	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
he will achieve first rank ¹¹⁹	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
22 good for ... enterprise ¹²⁰	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
in court: favorable...enterprise ¹²¹											
24 joy ¹²²	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
25 hemerologies only ¹²³	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
26 news ¹²⁴	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
27 news ¹²⁵	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
28 completely favorable, ¹²⁶	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
news ¹²⁷	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
29 he should smite a snake; ¹²⁸	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
completely favorable ¹²⁹											

30 the sign is good ¹³⁰ completely favorable ¹³¹	0	+	[]	[]	[]	+	r ₊ ¹	+	[]	[+]	+	[+]	[]	+	+	+	
Number of favorable days	8*	12	++ ¹³²	>9	>7	[]	15	>9	>3	>6 (15)	>9	15	9*	1[5]	>2	14	>12 >13

N.B. Omissions of second clauses of predictions are not noted, though those clauses are set off by a comma; the temptation to correct numbers has been resisted.
+ = noted as favorable: in Letters by number and recording of prediction; in Tables by recording of number; in Extracts by listing day and prediction (as given at left); in Almanachs by presence and comparison with ancient interpretation of predictions; in Hemerologies by comparison with other materials (additional predictions are not taken account of).
o = not included / = contradicted by prediction [] = lost number r¹ = partially lost number § = noted as favorable for divine contact in Hemerologies
[+] = apparently noted as favorable, with different prediction (in Hemerol.) {+} = noted as favorable; prediction uncertain ~ = prediction as at left, recorded second
[?] = noted as favorable, = 1 or 2; 5 or 6 * = total noted in text (other totals calculated) > = greater than

Table 1. Summary of Predictions for Month of Iyyar

⁹⁹Not preserved, but labelled at the bottom of the column as having been prepared for Nazimurruš, after copies in seven listed Babylonian cities. The preserved Assyrian tablet is that which forms the basis of the column immediately to the right. J. Marzahn has kindly collated VAT 9663 iv 25 for us. H. Hunger, following W. G. Lambert, read the word following the 7 as *al-pi-kaš-ir*; Laessle read *ul-ma-a-ni*, and R. Labat apparently read *DIUB ...*. We asked whether a reading *DIUB-pa-ni*; *DIUB-MEŠ-ni* was possible, and Dr. Marzahn wrote that the character following the 7 is UM or DUB, not URU or AP, that reading the last grapheme is problematic, and that the second wedge copied by Ebeling is a break. His collation is given in Figure 1, below. The word seems most likely, then, to have been *unmāni* or *tuppani*. ¹⁰⁰Labelled at the bottom of the column as after an Assyrian original. ND 5591 vi is not preserved for this month. ¹⁰¹If K 12000h and VAT 14280 are part of the same tablet, as has been suggested, the columns should be combined and the total be as given below. J. Marzahn kindly checked the size of VAT 14280 for us and J. Finkel provided a photocopy of K 12000h. These data do not seem to exclude the possibility that the two fragments were part of the same tablet, as proposed. If they were to be brought together, they might even join. ¹⁰²The restorations of the numbers of the days are based both on the ordering and on the predictions. Most likely, there should be a + opposite day 6. ¹⁰³The texts have Akkadian *magir*, spelled AS and SE. ¹⁰⁴The texts have Akkadian *magir*, spelled SE-GE and AB-SE-GE-DA. ¹⁰⁵The texts have Akkadian *aššata liriš ussabbar* (< *ulabbar*), spelled DAM HE₂-TUK LIBIR-RA, DAM TUK, and, possibly, 'D'AM HE₂-TUK 'L'IBIR-RA'. ¹⁰⁶The texts have Akkadian *aššata liriš*, spelled [D]AM HE₂-TUK, DAM HE₂-TUK (transliteration only), DAM TUK, and, perhaps, 'D'AM-HE₂-TUK. ¹⁰⁷The texts have Akkadian *ussabbar* (< *ulabbar*), spelled LIBIR-RA. ¹⁰⁸The text has Akkadian *libbašu iab*, spelled ŠAG₄-BI DUG₃-GA. ¹⁰⁹The texts have Akkadian *kabtu magir*, spelled IDIM AB-SE-GE-DA, IDIM SE-GE, and IDIM AS. ¹¹⁰The text has Akkadian *ina dini magir*, spelled *ina* DI SE. ¹¹¹The texts have Akkadian *ina dini magir*, spelled *ina* DI AS. ¹¹²The text has Akkadian *ina dini magir*, spelled IDIM *ina* DI AS. ¹¹³The text has Akkadian *ina dini magir*, spelled IDIM *ina* DI AS. ¹¹⁴The texts have Akkadian *ina dini magir*, 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day was or was not favorable (or can be so interpreted) are distinguished in the chart, and the indications given in the letters are included for comparison. The different types of texts included "Tables" which record only the numbers of the days which were favorable, "Extracts" which list favorable days and briefly indicate the nature of that quality, and "Almanachs" which include both the favorable and unfavorable days of a month with the same brief remarks on their qualities. The letters cite from these sources, to which we have added the "Hemerologies" which come from a tradition which gave more extensive information on each of the days of the month. The summarizing boldface horizontal line shows that the traditions as to how many days of each month were favorable according to the published texts are not uniform.

It should be noted that VAT 9963 was careful to list the favorable days twice: in column iv where they reflect a Babylonian *Vorlage*, and on the reverse, where they were cited from an Assyrian tablet. Even if all of the information relevant to the Babylonian tradition for the month is lost from the text, the double listing shows that the traditions from the North and the South were not in agreement.

If the correspondence took place on the ninth of the month,¹³³ and the letters refer only to subsequent dates, we could account for the non-mention of days 1 or 2, 5, 6 and 8 in the correspondence. This would mean that Adad-šuma-ušur reported exactly the listings of favorable days we know from the contemporary *STT* 301, and the presumed join of K 12000h plus VAT 14280, as well as the Babylonian *Almanach*, V R pls. 48–49.

Before one acted based on knowing the traditions for the favorable days of Iyyar, a decision as to which tradition was to be followed had to be made. So long as the king let advisors decide, *ad hoc*, which version to use, he was at their mercy. Even with the best of intentions, their advice could not be the mechanical result of reading the tablets.

This case makes it clear that *nolens volens*, one had to choose between variants when applying predictive traditions. It shows that divination was not any simple matter of observing "signs" and interpreting them by automatic, unmediated, reference to a uniform handbook. So long as experts controlled the choice of which part of the tradition was to be applied in a particular instance, they could manipulate the outcome and manage the king's decisions.

*
* *

¹³³This is the surmise of Parpola, *LAS* II, p. 131, who dates *ABL* 652 to May 6, 669 or April 19, 670. He argues that the letter was addressed to Esarhaddon, since it refers to the king's children, and tries to exclude other possible years.

Assurbanipal collected his tablets in order to remove power from the hands of such consultants and retain it himself. His ability to check prevented advisors from choosing between variant traditions in order to affect royal decisions or willfully misrepresenting the scholarly tradition, and it therefore gave him independence from whims and plots in the court.

For the astute advisor, there was a way to try to get around this. He could inform the king that he was not citing what was in the tablets, but an oral tradition. This is precisely what Ištar-šuma-ēreš did. In *ABL* 519, Ištar-šuma-ēreš wrote that the omen he quotes is "not from the series (but) is from the oral tradition of the masters,"¹³⁴ as Parpola translates.¹³⁵ Ištar-šuma-ēreš himself was a "master," an *ummānu*, during the reigns of both Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal.¹³⁶

It was possible to turn such oral lore into written form, and there are tablets with Assurbanipal's colophon which are designated "oral lore of a master," *ša pī ummāni*.¹³⁷ In *ABL* 519, then, Ištar-šuma-ēreš may, in some sense, have been telling Assurbanipal where he could check his quote.

Verifying that the message found in an omen was not merely the result of happenstance in the medium which reveals it is a problem for any system of divination. In Mesopotamia, it is well known that extispicies were commonly carried out twice, to check their accuracy. During the rule of the Sargonids in Assyria we have indication of another method of checking and interpretation: one could divide the diviners into groups, get separate answers from each, and then compare the answers.¹³⁸ When Sennacherib wanted to discover the reason for the death of his father Sargon, he divided¹³⁹ the seers into four,¹⁴⁰ and he (or at least the author of "The Sin

¹³⁴The Akkadian reads:

(r) 1 *šu-mu an-ni-u la-a ša EŠ₂-GAR₃-ma šu-u*
2 *ša pī-i um-ma-ni šu-u.*

¹³⁵Parpola, *LAS* I 13, p. 10; cf. Y. Elman, "Authoritative Oral Tradition in Neo-Assyrian Scribal Circles," *JANES* 7 (1975) 19–32.

¹³⁶See above, with nn. 37 and 39.

¹³⁷Srećek, *Asb. u* = Hunger, *Kolophone* 333 (= Rm. 2, 126, of which a partial cuneiform copy is available in Bezold, *Cat.*, vol. IV, p. 1648; Hunger, *Kolophone*, gives the full text), II R 59, 15, and above, n. 78.

¹³⁸The comparable technique of dividing those seventy who translated the Pentateuch into Greek and comparing their results, which gave rise to calling their work the "Septuagint," is well known from Bab. Megillah 9a; cf. M. Higger, ed., *Massekhet Sofrim* (New York: DeVe-Rabanan, 1937; Jerusalem: Makor, 1970) I 7 (pp. 101–5) and p. 18 with parallels.

¹³⁹As Thorkild Jacobsen reminds; cf. Landsberger, *Brief*, p. 22 n. 30.

¹⁴⁰Winckler, *Sammlung* 2 52a–53 (K 4730); see H. Tadmor, "The 'Sin of Sargon'," *Eretz-Israel* 5 (1958) 150–63 (in Hebrew), with a photograph of the tablet on pl. 3, rev. 8. A. Livingstone, *Court*

of Sargon" who speaks in his voice) advises his son, Esarhaddon, to separate them into three or four.¹⁴¹ When the separated groups¹⁴² agree,¹⁴³ one is sure that the message was intended. Esarhaddon tells us in his inscriptions that he used this technique, putting the augurs into separate groups¹⁴⁴ and getting a single answer from the enquiry.¹⁴⁵ This method eliminated not only the possibility of misunderstanding accidental phenomena in the divining medium as messages, but prevented the experts from conspiring in their interpreting of the messages.

Assurbanipal took this royal effort to rest control of such matters from the experts a step further, by learning how to interpret the written sources himself. The process, as evidenced both by his education and by his collecting tablets, began during the reign of his father Esarhaddon, who was, doubtless, behind it. The appropriation of this hermeneutic aspect of the process of divination was the prime purpose behind Assurbanipal's collecting tablets, a conclusion which accords well with Oppenheim's suggestion that, at its core, the collection consisted of divination texts and texts designed to protect against any untoward events they might forecast.¹⁴⁶

To this core were added numerous other traditional texts, of a "literary" character. The scholarly letters allude to and refer to such texts, as well.¹⁴⁷ Such additional tablets were needed by the king in case he wanted to check such citations against the

Poetry and Literary Miscellanea, State Archives of Assyria 3 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1989) 77–78 (No. 33), presents a transliteration and translation based on the article of H. Tadmor–B. Landsberger–S. Parpola, "The Sin of Sargon and Sennacherib's Last Will," *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin* 3 (1989–90) 1–51.

¹⁴¹Ibid., rev. 8–9.

¹⁴²Ibid., rev. 11–12: *bāri ša aḥennā purrusu*; apparently to be restored obv. 21.

¹⁴³Ibid., 22: [pā] 'e'-da iššaknu. This restoration and reading follow Landsberger (above, n. 139).

¹⁴⁴BA 3 (1898) 287–98 r 22 // 299–309 r 5, treated in Borger, *Esarh.*, §53 r 22 on p. 82: *qātāte aḥennā ukin-ma*.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., the next line: *terēti ki pī eštēn indaḥḥarā-ma ēpulū'inni annū kēnu*.

¹⁴⁶Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, p. 20. As we have noted, our conclusions are confined to those tablets which can be shown actually to have been part of Assurbanipal's holdings. Given the way that the tablets were excavated and reached London, this means that we refer only to those tablets which bear his colophon. Other tablets, such as those he donated to Nabû's *Ezida* temple at Nineveh, and tablets which do not mention his name at all cannot be considered to be part of his holdings.

¹⁴⁷See also ABL 24 = Parpola, *LAS* 172 r 12, cf. Parpola, *LAS* II, p. 162 (concerning the rituals accompanying an incantation from *Utukkū lemniūti*), ABL 614 = Parpola, *LAS* 132 r 9'–10', cf. W. G. Lambert, *BWL*, p. 315 ad 143–7 and Parpola, *LAS* II, p. 120 (adapting a passage from the "Counsels of Wisdom"), ABL 355 = Parpola, *LAS* 35 r 9, cf. Parpola, *LAS* II, p. 41 (using a ritual phrase), and cf. ABL 6 = Parpola, *LAS* 125 r 1, which Parpola thinks "a direct adaptation of the poetical language of the royal inscriptions," Parpola, *LAS* II, p. 112, as well as CT 53 155 = Parpola, *LAS* 321 r 8–11, which Parpola holds to be an "abbreviated" "direct adaptation" of the blessing recited during Assurbanipal's coronation ceremony at Assur.

originals, and also to help him to show off his own learning when he wrote in response to his scholarly consultants.

The ability to check his correspondents' quotations of divination texts against original texts allowed Assurbanipal to correct imprecise citations, and the "practical" texts enabled him to know, independently, when his course of actions was correct. In addition, the experts' knowledge that the king or prince could check up on them himself would have curtailed any possible flights of their fancy. On short notice, the ruler could verify a quote or remedy without having to deciding between a correspondent in the field and an advisor present in court.¹⁴⁸

One might well have argued, based on the supposition that absolute rulers "own" everything in their realm that anything in the palace belonged to Assurbanipal, but one need not rely on such inference. A number of the tablets are designated as *tuppi* (~ *tuppu*) *Aššur-bāni-apli*¹⁴⁹ "tablet of Assurbanipal," or *u'ilti Aššur-bāni-apli*,¹⁵⁰ "broad tablet¹⁵¹ of Assurbanipal," instead of reading *ekal Aššur-bāni-apli* "palace of Assurbanipal," and some colophons simply start with the king's name.¹⁵² In at least one instance, the colophon says that, after writing, checking, and collating a "tablet of Assurbanipal," he put it in his palace.¹⁵³

A curse was put on anyone who carried off a tablet¹⁵⁴ or erased the king's name and substituted that of another.¹⁵⁵ Protecting a tablet by inscribing a curse is, of course, common in tablets owned by other individuals or deposited in temples.¹⁵⁶ At Nineveh, the imprecation safeguarded not only tablets labelled *ekal Aššur-bāni-apli*,

¹⁴⁸Even for those moderns who think Assurbanipal's claims to literacy exaggerated, it would seem that he could always ask a scholar to show him the passage in his collection where a particular phrase or omen was recorded, and have the latter read it to him. The ability to follow a written text when someone else is reading takes minimal skill, but would give pause to someone citing a written authority.

¹⁴⁹Streck, *Asb.* e = Hunger, *Kolophone* 319 = V R 33, and Streck, *Asb.* t = Hunger, *Kolophone* 32 = CT XVII pl. 30b; For a spelling with DUB²⁴, see the reference given below in n. 153.

¹⁵⁰Streck, *Asb.* u = Hunger, *Kolophone* 333, cf. above, n. 137.

¹⁵¹Parpola has shown that *u'iltu* refers to the shape of a tablet, not its function in recording a "report," Parpola, *LAS* II, p. 60 ad 7; the colophon cited in the preceding note confirms this.

¹⁵²Such as Streck, *Asb.* b = Hunger, *Kolophone* 318.

¹⁵³Streck, *Asb.* l = Hunger, *Kolophone* 325 = CT XX pl. 33.

¹⁵⁴Streck, *Asb.* c = Hunger, *Kolophone* 319, Streck, *Asb.* e = Hunger, *Kolophone* 319, Streck, *Asb.* f = Hunger, *Kolophone* 320 = Pallis, *Akītu*, pl. XI, and Streck, *Asb.* u = Hunger, *Kolophone* 333.

¹⁵⁵Streck, *Asb.* b = Hunger, *Kolophone* 318, Streck, *Asb.* c = Hunger, *Kolophone* 318, Streck, *Asb.* e = Hunger, *Kolophone* 319, and Streck, *Asb.* f = Hunger, *Kolophone* 320, Hunger, *Kolophone* 324, Streck, *Asb.* u = Hunger, *Kolophone* 333.

¹⁵⁶On these, see G. Offner, "À propos de la sauvegarde des tablettes en Assyro-Babylonie," *RA* 44 (1950) 135–43.

"palace of Assurbanipal," but also tablets which were his (*tuppi Aššur-bāni-apli*),¹⁵⁷ including a "broad tablet" of his (the colophon of which does not specify its having been put into the palace).¹⁵⁸

There is, then, no distinction to be made between tablets labelled as belonging to Assurbanipal and those from his palace. The latter are no more "official" than the former. The king did not collect the tablets as an "official", even if they were of use in his official duties, and it is hard to see how they can properly be described with an adjective of broader application than "royal." It seems quite unlikely that anyone from outside (say, a Babylonian scholar) would have been allowed to look at one of the king's tablets and copy it for his own purposes,¹⁵⁹ at least during Assurbanipal's lifetime.¹⁶⁰ His library was neither a reference nor a lending library.¹⁶¹

Some of the tablets in the king's collection were certainly carefully prepared, as is evident from the careful boring of holes into their surfaces. Such holes were apparently intended to keep tablets from exploding when they were fired. They were put in places which did not effect the writing: between columns, in the blank spaces between cuneiform graphemes and on the edges of tablets.¹⁶² Our impression from an incomplete survey of tablets with Assurbanipal's colophons is that such holes are rarer on tablets with the deeply-impressed "official" colophon than on other tablets. At any rate, the usual precise, clear, ductus of tablets in Assurbanipal's collections was not universal in tablets which were labelled as part of it.

Assurbanipal's colophons indicate, commonly, that an exemplar is a copy of a

¹⁵⁷Streck, *Asb.* e = Hunger, *Kolophone* 319.

¹⁵⁸It does not seem likely that this is merely a result of the fact that the end of the colophon Streck, *Asb.* u = Hunger, *Kolophone* 333 (cf. n. 137) is destroyed, since the colophons which record both a curse and their being placed in the palace (namely only Streck, *Asb.* b = Hunger, *Kolophone* 318 and Streck, *Asb.* c = Hunger, *Kolophone* 319) note their having been put into the palace before invoking the curse.

¹⁵⁹The Babylonian tablet DT 78 (of Achaemenid or Seleucid date), published by C. J. Gadd, *JCS* 21 (1967) 55 and H. Hunger, *AOAT* 1 (1969) 144–45 refers to Assurbanipal, but so much of its colophon is broken that it is not very enlightening. The colophon was given as Hunger, *Kolophone* 496.

¹⁶⁰The tablet published as E. von Weiher, *Uruk* II 46 seems to preserve the end of Assurbanipal's colophon, and was written in neo-Assyrian script, but the tablet was excavated in Uruk, and formed part of the holdings of Iqīša (cf. *ibid.*, p. 1).

¹⁶¹It may be noted that a number of Seleucid tablets from Uruk (cf. Hunger, *Kolophone* 91, 96, 97, and, perhaps, 424) provide for the timely return of tablets.

¹⁶²Since the edges of elegantly written tablets were rarely inscribed, they are not usually published, and only autopsy can determine the presence of such holes. As an example of holes on the edges of a beautifully-engrossed tablet, the eighth campaign of Sargon (published as *TCL* III) may be cited, though we have no reason to think that Assurbanipal associated his forebear's tablet with his collections.

particular *Vorlage*, just like other colophons.¹⁶³ Even the "official" impressed notes ("Palace of Assurbanipal ...") are, at least on occasion, preceded by an indication that the tablet was "written and checked against its original,"¹⁶⁴ and sometimes indicate that the original was a copy of Babylon,¹⁶⁵ or Assur.¹⁶⁶ Tablets with normally-written, rather than oversize, impressed colophons are said to be copies of tablets from Assur, Sumer and Akkad,¹⁶⁷ or just Assur and Akkad,¹⁶⁸ as well as Babylon,¹⁶⁹ while some merely indicate that they were copied from "old" tablets.¹⁷⁰ None of this indicates that there was anything special, let alone "official" about the contents of the king's collection.

An "official" text might well also be expected to have other characteristics which are missing from Assurbanipal's collection(s), such as uniqueness. There can be only a single "official" copy. At the very least one may expect multiple copies to indicate, in one way or another which was binding in case of any discrepancies. We have no such indications in any of the colophons, although sometimes more than one copy of a text belonged to the palace.¹⁷¹

The terms "canonical" and "official" can be used to refer to two different, but related, aspects of a text: the accuracy of its content, and the nature of the text as a whole. Recent Assyriological use of the terms has tended to refer to the constant contents of a text, its textual invariance, rather than to some consideration of which texts were standard. Ancient cuneiform scholars had interest in both of these questions.

The "Catalogue of Texts and Authors" edited by W. G. Lambert gives a listing of various works along with their sources.¹⁷² The god Ea is given as a source of texts such as the astrological series *Enūma Anu Enlil* and the body of texts used by lamen-

¹⁶³Cf. n. 55, above.

¹⁶⁴Cf., for instance, IV R 10 and BBR pl. X (Šurpu IV).

¹⁶⁵For instance, CT XXV pl. 17.

¹⁶⁶II R 10.

¹⁶⁷Streck, *Asb.* b = Hunger, *Kolophone* 318.

¹⁶⁸Streck, *Asb.* o = Hunger, *Kolophone* 328, and Hunger, *Kolophone* 336. Streck, *Asb.* n = Hunger, *Kolophone* 327 is written in accord with clay tablets and writing boards which are copies of Assur and Akkad.

¹⁶⁹Streck, *Asb.* r = s = Hunger, *Kolophone* = WO 5 (1979) 168.

¹⁷⁰Streck, *Asb.* u = Hunger, *Kolophone* 333.

¹⁷¹Such as tablet VI of Gilgamesh, where both K 231 (cf. Haupt, *Nimrodepos*, No. 21 at p. 41), and K 3990 (Haupt, *Nimrodepos*, No. 20, on p. 36, now joined to other fragments) are of the palace, according to the colophons (it must be admitted that the king's name on the latter tablet is lost, but can there be any doubt about the restoration?). Might they have been from different Nineveh palaces of Assurbanipal?

¹⁷²W. G. Lambert, "A Catalogue of Texts and Authors," *JCS* 16 (1962) 59–77.

tation priests, while other texts are said to come from "before the flood" or to have been dictated by a horse. This neo-Assyrian listing of texts seems to provide the names of many of the common works of cuneiform literary remains, and the registering of authors may have been designed to provide a pedigree which lent them authority.¹⁷³

Ancient scribes were likewise concerned with the textual accuracy of their work. This is clear not only from the colophons' assurances that the scribe has "reviewed and checked" his tablet, but from their righting of errors, whether those mistakes were incorrectly written words¹⁷⁴ or omitted graphemes, words, or lines in their copies.¹⁷⁵ The numbering of every tenth line and registering the total may well have kept copyists from omitting a line.¹⁷⁶ Their concern with accuracy is likewise evident from their careful marking of broken passage in the *Vorlage* with the designation *hepi*, "broken," the distinction between "new" and "old" breaks, and the indication of the extent of the damage.¹⁷⁷ Colophons, on occasion, express the hope that such lacunae will be completed.¹⁷⁸ Rarely, texts will include the indication of variants,¹⁷⁹

¹⁷³The tablet fragments assembled in W. G. Lambert, "A Late Assyrian Catalogue of Literary and Scholarly Texts" (above, n. 46) on the other hand, show by their form that they had some special purpose, even if that purpose is not clear. They seem not to have been a "catalogue" at all, note the graphemes (1 GAM) written at the left-hand margins of the columns of the fragments opposite the titles of some compositions.

This same pattern, as well as a comparable clay preserved in only a thin layer allow the addition of two more fragments (now joined to one another) to the remains of this tablet.

¹⁷⁴This is usually done by smoothing out the surface and writing the correction over it.

¹⁷⁵See W. W. Hallo, "Haplographic Marginalia," *Studies Finkelstein*, pp. 101–3. The technique for inserting matter mistakenly omitted was treated by A. J. Sachs at the 1975 session of the Assyriological Colloquium at Yale (ibid., Appendix in the footnotes). Sachs noted such corrections in tablets from Quyunjiq, first-millennium Nippur, Babylon, and Uruk, including both marginal and supralinear corrigenda, as late as the Seleucid era (Hunger, *Uruk* 94 11).

¹⁷⁶In addition to providing a control for the accuracy of texts, numbering the lines allowed one to judge how much work a scribe had done. Such an economic motivation for the numbering and counting of the lines in Greek papyri was demonstrated by K. Ohly, *Stichometrische Untersuchungen*, Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen, Beiheft 61 (Leipzig, 1928), cited by E. G. Turner, *Greek Papyri: An Introduction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), p. 95, who writes "[i]f they are present in a text, we may be sure the copy was professionally made and paid for."

¹⁷⁷Even in neo-Assyrian texts, this is nearly always spelled as *he-pi₂* (a traditional spelling where one finds *pi₁* elsewhere in the text). The dictionaries give occurrences s.v. *hipu*. CAD H, p. 196a suggests that an "old" break is one where the *Vorlage* read *he-pi₂*, which is eminently reasonable, even if it is possible to distinguish the ages of breaks by looking at them.

¹⁷⁸Cf. the seventh century Assyrian tablet *StOr* 1 [1925] 32–33 (= Hunger, *Kolophone* 498), which leaves the central part of some lines marked *he-pi₂ eš-su₂*, "newly broken." The colophons specifies that the text was originally on a frieze (*nēbehu*) and the copy from "broken tablets," and it expresses the wish that one who views it not back-bite: "Let him complete the break."

¹⁷⁹Variants are usually added in smaller script as supralinear "glosses." This practice already started in Old-Babylonian times, as is evident from the orthographic variant given in the oil-omen *CT* V

which seems to reflect the checking of more than one original,¹⁸⁰ and when copying old texts, they on occasion accurately mimic the script of the original.¹⁸¹

Usually, when Assyriologists speak of the standard character of texts, they are referring to textual constancy, and to the division of lengthy texts into tablets and series, but neither of these is really proof for the question. In the first place, "series" are *not* always divided into the same (number of) tablets,¹⁸² as we know from such texts as *Enūma ana bit marši āšipu illiku*,¹⁸³ or the commentary *Murgud = imrū =*

pls. 4–5 1, where all of the graphemes of *ha-pi₂pi₁-i'r₁* are written full-size, on the line, as is usual with Old-Babylonian "glosses."

¹⁸⁰It is possible, of course, that the listing of the provenance of a second *Vorlage* merely refers to the pedigree of the *Vorlage*. This could even be true for those texts copied from "tablets and old writing boards," such as Streck, *Asb. n = Hunger, Kolophone* 327.

¹⁸¹For instance, the neo-Babylonian copies of inscriptions published by E. Sollberger, "Lost Inscriptions from Mari," *CRR* 16 (1967) 103–7.

¹⁸²The colophon of the catalogue of Sa-gig, first published by J. V. Kinnier-Wilson from Nimrud tablet ND 4358, in *Iraq* 18 (1956) 130–46, esp. pl. XXIV, following p. 131, which was transliterated fully by W. G. Lambert in his "Ancestors, Authors and Canonicity," *JCS* 11 (1957) 1–14, 112 as Appendix V, with a translation of the first few lines of the colophon on p. 6, has now been re-edited by I. Finkel "Adad-apla-iddina, Esagil-kin-apli and the Series SA.GIG," in *A Scientific Humanist, Studies in Memory of Abraham Sachs*, eds. E. Leichty, M. deJ. Ellis and P. Gerardi, Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund 9 (Philadelphia: The Samuel Noah Kramer Fund of the University Museum, 1988 [1989]) 143–59, with the help of a new manuscript and collations of ND 4358. This text may be of interest for the question of the editing of cuneiform series. The information found in it has been compared with the colophons found on Nineveh copies of Uruanna = *maštaka* (now given as Hunger, *Kolophone* 321). The Babylonian manuscript makes it clear that the (presumed editorial) work on the cuneiform series *Enūma ana bit marši āšipu illiku* was done under Adad-apla-iddina of the second Isin dynasty (1068–47 B.C.E.).

The meanings of the significant terms in the colophons unfortunately remain uncertain. Kinnier-Wilson, followed by Lambert and Finkel, proposed an equation of SUR-G[IBIL] on the Nimrud piece with the Nineveh *za-ra-a*. While it seems reasonable to accept the equation with *za-ra-a*, it is hardly assured. We think that the latter word is to be read as *ša-ra-a*, for *šarra*, which we would derive from *šarāru*, "to tie together" (see *AHW* 1583b and note that the Nimrud colophon speaks of "threads" (GU-MEŠ, according to a collation cited by I. Finkel) which were "twisted" ('GIL'-MEŠ, *itgurūti*) or "crossed" ('GIB'-MEŠ, as K. Köcher, apud Finkel, p. 148 n. 38, proposes reading). What we suspect to be involved is merely a division of this medical series into tablets and sub-series, which would be comparable to the division of Uruanna into the "sections separated by dividing lines," *sadiri*, described by the colophons (Hunger, *Kolophone* 321). This contention cannot, however, be tested until more occurrences of the terms become available. At any rate, W. G. Lambert's translation of SUR-G[IBIL] as "authorized edition" (followed by Finkel) is unjustified, and in disagreement with Lambert's conclusion that "[t]here is ... no suggestion ... of a conscious attempt to produce authoritative editions of works" (*JCS* 11 [1957] p. 9). This line of the Nimrud colophon should perhaps be restored as SUR-B[II] (for *šarrašu*), which would then *not* accord with the occurrences of SUR in the tablet.

¹⁸³Labat, *TDP*, see his introduction, as well as the preceding note.

ballu on Ura = *hubullu*.¹⁸⁴ The supposed textual constancy of cuneiform tablets is likewise largely the result of a misimpression. If one compares the number of variants in a cuneiform historical text found in many copies or in a piece of Greek or Latin literature with the number of variants in a cuneiform "literary" text, there will be no overwhelming differences. Textual constancy over a long period of copying is, at any rate, merely a result of the care with which scribes approach their task, and when copyists are working on compositions written in a language of which they are not native speakers, they are likely to make few innovations. For first millennium Mesopotamia, this seems to have been the case, and surely many, if not most or nearly all, of the scribes who were charged with producing copies from old texts spoke Aramaic in their daily lives, rather than Akkadian.

What is crucial for the ascription of canonical or official status to a text and how we are to understand it is an answer to questions such as What text was a scribe trying to produce? Was he attempting to create a new version or merely to reproduce the one which lay before him? Did he feel free to change a text when he found it in error, or did its sanctioned nature leave him with the obligation of precisely parroting what was in front of him?

The answers to such questions are, perhaps, more complex than might appear at first glance, but the key to an approach is an understanding that the scribe was attempting to produce a "correct" text. If it was necessary to "improve" a text in order to get it "right," he would feel free to do so. As we have seen, in at least one case, a scribe expressed the hope that someone else fill-in what was missing. Such an attitude is incompatible with any contention that the traditional works copied by a scribe were "canonical" or that their texts had reached any sort of "official" status. Tablets in Assurbanipal's collections merely belonged to him, they did not bear his *imprimatur*.

APPENDIX: THE TABLETS ON WHICH CT XXII 1 IS BASED.

BM 25676 (= 98-2-16, 730) 69 x 35 x 15 mm.

- 1 *a-mat* L'UG¹AL *a-na* ¹*ša*₂-*du*-[*nu*]
- 2 *šul-mu* *ia-a-ši* ŠAG⁴_{ba}-*ka* *lu-u* [*ta-ab-ka*]
- 3 UD^{mi} DUB^{pi} *ia-mu*-*ru* ¹*šu*-*ma-a*
- 4 DUMU-*šu*₂ *ša*₂ ¹MU-GI-NA ¹*di*_{gir}+EN-KAR^{ir} ŠEŠ-*šu*₂
- 5 ¹IBILA-*a* DUMU-*šu*₂ *ša*₂ ¹Ar₂-*kat*₂-DĠIR-MEŠ
- 6 *u*₃ ¹*um*-*ma-nu* *ša*₂ BAR₂-SIPA^{ki}
- 7 *ša*₂ *at-ta* *ti-du-u*₂ *ina* ŠU^{II}-*ka* *ša*-[*bat-ma*]

¹⁸⁴Edited in *MSL* V-XI; Landsberger, despite his usual attempt to reconcile varying manuscripts into a quotable text, was forced to distinguish a number of "recensions."

- 8 DUB-MEŠ *ma-la* *ina* E₂-MEŠ-*šu*₂-*nu* *i-ba-aš*₂-[*šu*₂-*u*₂]
- 9 *u*₃ D[UB]-MEŠ *ma-la* *ina* E₂-ZI-D'A' [*šak-nu*]
- 10 *hi-pi-ir-ma* DUB-MEŠ ¹*ša*₂ GU₂-MEŠ *ša*₂ LU[GAL]
- 11 *ša*₂ *na-ra-a-ti* *ša*₂ UD-UD-MEŠ *ša*₂ ITI BARA₂
- 12 ^{na}4GU₂ *ša*₂ ID₂-MEŠ *ša*₂ ITI DU₆ *ša*₂ E₂ *sa-l'* *a'*-[*a'* A-MEŠ]
- 13 ^{na}4GU₂ *ša*₂ ID₂-MEŠ *ša*₂ *di-ni* UD^{mu}
- 14 ⁴naGU₂-MEŠ *ša*₂ SAG ^ēē^ēNA₂ LUGAL *u* *še-pit* L[UGAL]
- 15 ^ēē^ēTUKUL ^ēē^ēMA-NU *ša*₂ SAG ^ēē^ēNA₂ LUGAL
- 16 EN₂ ^{di}gi^{ir}E₂-A *u* ^{di}gi^{ir}ASAL-LU₂-HI *ni-me-qa*
- 17 *li-gam-me*-*ru-ni* *pu-uh-hu-ru*
- 18 EŠ₂-GAR ME₃ *ma-la* ¹*b'* *a'*-*šu*₂-*u*₂
- 19 *a-di* IM-GID₂-DA-ME-¹*š'* *u*₂-*n'* *u'* *at-ra-a-ti*

(lower edge)

- 20 *ma-la* *i-ba-aš*₂-*šu*₂-*u*₂
- 21 *ina* ME₃ GI *ana* LU₂ NU TE^ē

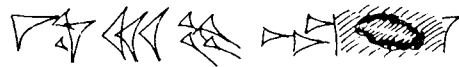
(reverse)

- 22 EDIN-NA-DIB-BI-DA E₂-GAL KU₄-RA
- 23 *ni-pi-ša*₂-*a-nu* ŠU-IL₂-LA-KAM₂-*a-nu*
- 24 *mal*₂-*ta*-*ru* *ša*₂ NA₄-MEŠ *u* (ERASURE, perhaps an erased *ša*₂, followed by [blank ?] space, enough for three more characters)
- 25 *ša*₂ *a-na* LUGAL-*u*₂-*ti* [*ta-a-bi*]
- 26 *tak-pir-ti* URU IGI-NĠIN-NA
- 27 *ki-i* *na-kut-ti* *u* *mim*₂-*ma* *hi-ši*-*ti*
- 28 *ina* E₂-GAL *ma-la* *ba-šu*₂-*u*₂ *u*₃ DUB-MEŠ
- 29 *aq*-*ru-tu* *ša*₂ *mi-dak-ku-nu*-*šim*-¹*m'*[*a*]
- 30 *ina* KUR AŠ+ŠUR^{ki} *ia-a'*-*nu* *bu-a-a-nim*-¹*m'*[*a*]
- 31 *šu-bi-la-a-ni* *a-du-u*₂ *a-na*
- 32 ¹u₂ŠAG₄-TAM *u* ¹u₂GAR-KU *al-tap-r*[*a*]
- 33 *ina* E₂ ŠU^{II}-*ka* *tal-tak-nu* *man*-[*ma*]
- 34 DUB^{pi} *ul* *i-kil-lak-ka* *u* *ki*-[*i*]
- 35 *mim*₂-*ma* DUB^{pi} *u* *ni-pi-šu*₂ *ša*₂ *a-na*-¹*k'*[*u*]
- 36 *la-aš*₂-*pu-rak-ku-nu*-*šu*₂ *u* *ta-tam-ra-m'* *a'*
- 37 *a-na* E₂-GAL-*ia* [*ta-a-bu*]
- 38 *it-ti*-²*i-im-ma* *i-ša*₂-*n'* *i'm-ma*
- 39 *šu-bi-la-a-ni*

BM 25678 (= 98-2-16, 732) 67 x 32 x 19 mm.

- 1 ¹*a-ma*¹ LUGAL *a-na* ¹*ša*₂-*d'* *u'*-*nu*
- 2 *šul-mu* *ia-a-ši* ŠAG⁴_{ba}-*ka* *lu-u* [*ta-ab*-¹*k'* *a*]
- 3 UD^{mi} DUB^{pi} ¹*a'*-*mu*-*ru* ¹*š'* *u'*-*ma-a*
- 4 [DU]MU-*šu*₂ *ša*₂ ¹MU-GI-NA ¹*di*_{gir}+EN-KAR^{ir} ¹ŠE¹Š-*šu*₂
- 5 ¹IB[ILA]-*a* DUMU-*šu*₂ ¹*ša*₂ ¹Ar₂-*kat*₂-D'IGIR-MEŠ
- 6 *u*₃ [¹*u*]²*um*-*ma-nu* *ša*₂ BAR₂-S[IPA]^{ki}
- 7 *ša*₂ *at-ta* *ti-du-u*₂ *ina* ŠU^{II}-*ka* ¹*ša*-*b'* *at-ma*
- 8 DU^BMEŠ *ma*-¹*l'* *a* *ina* E₂-MEŠ-*šu*₂-*nu* *i-b'* *a'*-*aš*₂-*šu*₂-*u*₂
- 9 *u*₃ DUB-MEŠ *ma-la* *ina* E₂-ZI-DA *šak-nu*
- 10 *hi-pi-ir-ma* DUB-MEŠ *ša* GU₂-MEŠ ¹*ša*₂ L'UGAL
- 11 *ša*₂ *na-ra-a-ti* *ša*₂ UD-UD-MEŠ *ša*₂ ITI 'BAR'A₂

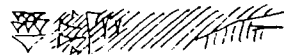
- 12 ^{na}₄[G]U₂ ša₂ I[D]₂-MEŠ 'ša₂ I^{TI} DU₆ ša₂ E₂ sa-la-a^{ra} A-MEŠ
 13 ⁿ₄[G]U₂ ša₂ I[D]₂-MEŠ ša₂ di-ni UD^{nu}
 14 [4 ^{na}₄G]U₂¹-MEŠ ša₂ SAĜ ^{ēē}NA₂ LUGAL u še-pi^{ti} LUGAL
 15 ^{ēē}TUKUL ^{ēē}MA-NU ša₂ SAĜ ^{ēē}NA₂ LUGAL
 16 [EN]₂ ^d[ēē]^{ti}E₂-A u ^dēē^{ti}ASAL-LU₂-HI ni-me-qa
 17 [li-ga]m-[m]e-r^{ti}u-ni^{ti} p[u-u]h-hu-ru
 18 [EŠ₂-GAR] 'M'E₃ ma-la ba-šu₂-u₂
 19 [a-di IM-GI]D₂-D'A^{ti}-ME-šu₂-nu at-ra-a-t^{ti}
 20 [ma-la i]-b[a]-aš₂-šu₂-u₂
 (lower edge)
 21 [ina MEŠ] G[I] ana LU₂ NU 'T^{ti}[E]^{ti}
 22 [EDIN-NA-D]IB-BI-DA 'E₂-GAL [KU₄-RA]
 (reverse)
 23 [ni-pi-ša]₂-a-nu^{ti} ŠU-IL₂-L[A-KAM₂-a-nu]
 24 mal₂-a^{ti}-ru ša₂ NA₄-MEŠ u [X? Y?]
 25 ša₂ a-na LUGAL-u₂-ti t^{ti}a^{ti}-[a-bi]
 26 'ta^{ti}k-pir-ti URU IGI-NIĜIN-'N^{ti}[A]
 27 ki-i na-kut-ti u mim₂-ma hi-ši^{ti}h-ti^{ti}
 28 ina E₂-GAL ma-la ba-šu₂-u₂ u₃ DUB-MEŠ
 29 aq-ru-tu ša₂ mi-dak-ku-nu-šim-ma
 30 ina KUR AŠ+ŠUR^{ki} ia-a^{ti}-nu bu-^{ti}a-a-nim-ma
 31 šu-bi-la-a-ni a-du-u₂ a-na
 32 ^{ti}u₂ŠAG₄-TAM u ^{ti}u₂ĜAR-KU al-tap-ra
 33 ina 'E₂ 'ŠU^{ti}-ka tal-ta^{ti}k^{ti}-nu man-ma
 34 'DUB^{ti} ul i-kil-lak-ka u ki-i
 35 'm'im₂-ma DUB^{ti} u ni-pi-šu₂ ša₂ a-na-ku
 36 la-aš₂-pu-rak-ku-nu-šu₂ u ta-tam-ra-ma
 37 a-na E₂-GAL-ia ta-a-bu
 38 it-ti-^{ti}i-im-ma i-ša₂-nim-ma
 39 šu-bi-la-a-ni



VAT 10503

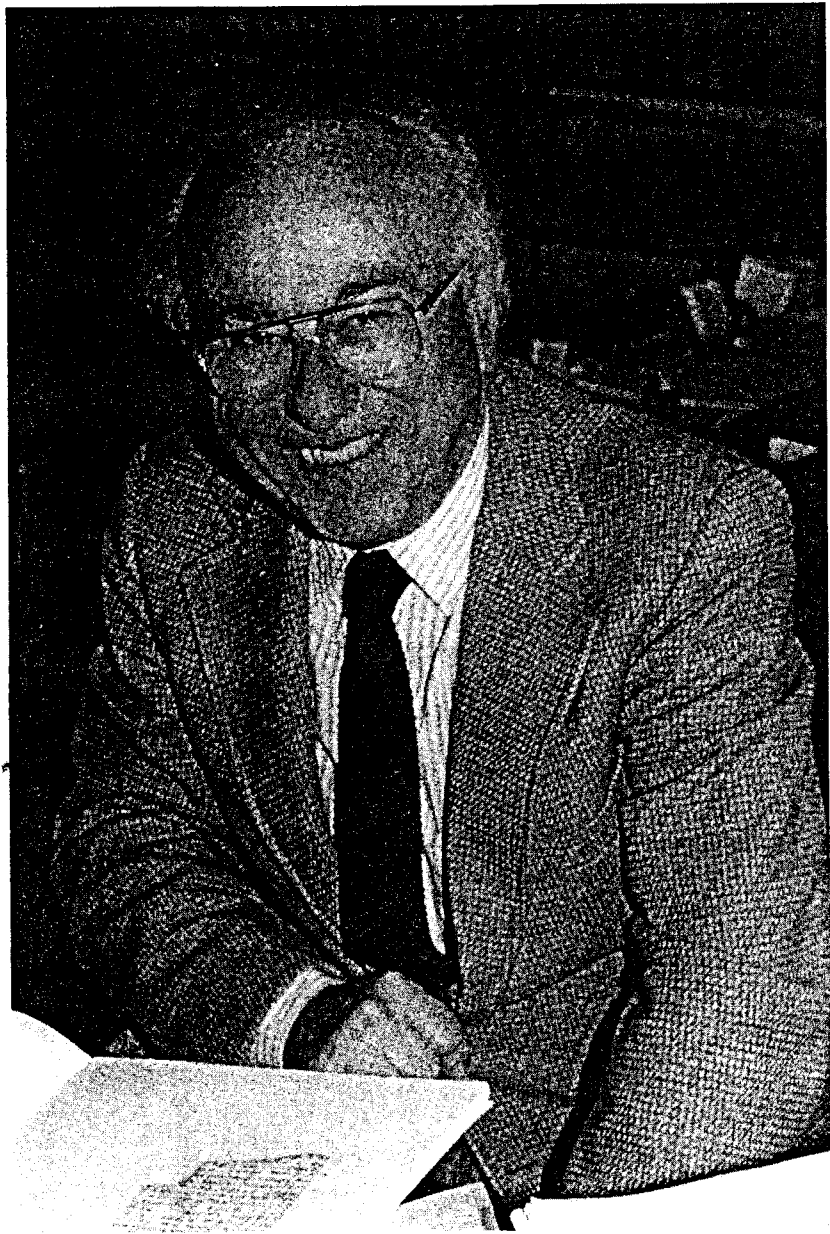


VAT 10564



VAT 9663

Figure 1



William L. Moran

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