Assyria and Babylonia

A. Kirk Grayson

The printed version of this paper is dedicated to the memory of Jack Finkelstein, a distinguished Assyriologist and innovative thinker with whom I was fortunate enough to be able to discuss many subjects over the years and from whom I have learned much. It is a tragic irony that the one area in which we had some disagreement, but always along objective and cordial lines, should be included in this paper which was presented orally barely a month before his sudden death. Jack had been aware of my views for many years and was prepared to respond in the true spirit of scholarly discussion; I wish I could present here Jack's side with his acumen and vigour but this is obviously impossible. Nor, after some reflection, have I altered the wording of the relevant portions of the paper for Jack, I am sure, would not want that.

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1 I am indebted to various people who attended the seminar and offered criticism and advice on this paper. In particular I am grateful to Professor Hoffner who, through formal exchange and private conversation, inspired me to pursue avenues which otherwise would have remained unexplored. It was a most fruitful interchange of ideas. I also wish especially to thank Professor Van Seters and Miss W. de Filippi for their astute observations.
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Part A
General Considerations

The first matter that requires some consideration is that of the cultural predecessors of the Assyrians and the Babylonians, the Sumerians, for the cultural continuity from Sumer to Babylonia and Assyria is a fact of prime importance. Although there were some differences between the earlier and later cultures as a result of ethnic and linguistic change, in many respects Assyrian and Babylonian ideas and institutions are Sumerian ideas and institutions in new garb, the new garb being a different language, Akkadian. Ideas about the past in Assyria and Babylonia were inherited from the Sumerians and, despite some alteration, their essential Sumerian character continued to be recognizable. In the discussion of historiographical genres we shall find only a few innovations in Assyrian and Babylonian times.

A corollary to the Sumerian axiom is the close similarity between Assyria and Babylonia. Since the Assyrians and Babylonians were common heirs of Sumerian culture and since the dominant ethnic strain in each was the same in the early period, they were really sister civilizations. They even shared the same language, Akkadian, albeit in two different dialects.

On the other hand there were differences between Assyrian and Babylonian civilization. Many of these differences were conditioned by ecological factors peculiar to their respective geographical positions. The effect of these factors was to make each civilization distinct from the other in certain aspects of their political, economic, and social organization. There were also changes and new developments within each culture during the course of their histories. Babylonia and Assyria endured for approximately fifteen hundred years and during this long period each experienced various fortunes and misfortunes that inevitably had some effect on their particular outlook. In our consideration of ideas of the past we must watch for basic assumptions shared by the two civilizations and for features peculiar to one or the other.

Part B
Former Studies

During the century or more since Assyriology was born, surprisingly little has been done in the area of historiography. There have been a few general surveys of "historical texts" such as that presented by Weber in 1907. But detailed studies by competent scholars have been few and far between. The first to do serious research in this field was Olmstead who, in 1918, published a valuable article entitled "Assyrian Historiography". In this paper Olmstead established the principle that the earliest record of an Assyrian campaign was more reliable than any later recension. It is an obvious principle but this was the first time it had been explicitly stated and documented. Significant as this contribution is, however, it is concerned with the practical problem of the manner in which an historian should use his source material and has nothing to say about the attitude towards the past on the part of the authors of the Assyrian royal inscriptions.

In 1923 Mowinckel published his "Die vorderasiatischen Königs- und Fürsteninschriften: Eine stilistische Studie". This study was largely concerned with the style of the royal inscriptions and a comparison with biblical material. At the same time Mowinckel made some important form critical observations. Despite these major contributions, Mowinckel's article left much to be desired and in 1924 Baumgartner drew attention to some fundamental faults. Nowhere had Mowinckel even mentioned Olmstead's work although it had appeared some years earlier. Moreover, the Norwegian scholar used a very limited corpus of royal inscriptions and failed to recognize the wide variety of forms in the genre. This led him to serious misconceptions, viz. his views on the origin of royal inscriptions and the development of the temporal clause. In his short critique...
of Mowinckel, Baumgartner made some important observations of his own. Specifically his treatment of the origin of reports of military conquest in Assyrian royal inscriptions is still valid.

Thus far our survey of former research has been concerned with work on royal inscriptions and it is fitting to mention notable editions and studies of specific groups of such texts. In the area of Assyrian royal inscriptions there is Streck’s edition and study of Ashurbanipal inscriptions 11 and Tadmor’s edition of the texts of Sargon II 12, Tiglath-Pileser III 13, and Adad-erarri III 14. Also of importance are the studies of Berger 15 and Schramm 16 and the relevant comments in my translation of Assyrian royal inscriptions 17. For Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions there is the study and text edition of Langdon 18, which is now being replaced by Berger 19. The royal inscriptions of Nabonidus have been the subject of a special article by Tadmor 20. Although Sumerian royal inscriptions are not within the purview of my paper it is worth noting two recent analyses by Hallo 21 and Solbesser and Kupper 22.

The nature of some of the objects upon which royal inscriptions are inscribed has received some attention in the past. In 1917 Kraus 23 published a study of the “clay cone” in ancient Mesopotamia 24. The form of these objects had been briefly discussed earlier by Andrae 25, but Kraus dealt with all the relevant cones, inscribed and uninscribed, and traced the origin of this phenomenon back to procedures accompanying sales of property. More recently Ellis 26 has published a study of all foundation deposits, inscribed and uninscribed. His analysis of the variety of forms of inscribed foundation deposits and their treatment of their origin, purpose, and development, is invaluable for a study of royal inscriptions. Finally, Levine’s work on the form of inscribed Assyrian steles has filled a major lacuna in this area 27.

Moving from royal inscriptions to chronographic texts a work that stands out is Jacobsen’s edition of the Sumerian King List 28, which is a model of careful philological research and historiographical inquiry. Jacobsen presented not only a complete edition of the text, based on numerous copies, but also a thorough inquiry into the meaning and assumptions of the Sumerian King List and its compiler. Jacobsen was able to show and document that the ancient author’s guiding principle was the linear continuity of kingship in Mesopotamia. According to this assumption, at any given period in history there had been only one king in ancient Sumer; there had never been two contemporary kings on the thrones of two different city states. The principle is non-nonsense but the recognition of its existence by Jacobsen provides an important insight into ideas about the past in ancient Mesopotamian society. His historiographical research on the Sumerian King List continued after the publication of Jacobsen’s book and...
particularly worthy of mention are studies by Kraus, Finkelstein, HaIs, Sollberger and Westenholz. Poebel conducted research similar to that of Jacobsen on the later Assyrian and Babylonian king lists. Although he never lived to see his work completed, the results he did publish provided important conclusions about the origin, purpose, and development of these texts. More recently Roellig has presented a form-critical analysis of the Assyrian and Babylonian king lists and in his work he has concentrated on the Assyrian King List. There have been several special studies of the Assyrian King List (and related fragments) and among the more notable of these are the publications of Weidner, Gelb, Landsberger, Kraus, Finkelstein, and Brinkman.

Some work has been done on historiographical questions with regard to Babylonian Chronicles in publications of various texts by King, Gadd, Smith, Wiseman, and Millard. In my book Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles I have presented an analysis of all chronographic texts, as well as text editions of the chronicles and the comments on chronographic texts in Part C (below) are based on this analysis.

An eminent position among earlier studies of ancient Mesopotamian historiography is occupied by Guterbock's lengthy article on the historical

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28 W. Roellig, "Zur Typologie und Entwicklung der babylonischen und assyrischen Königslisten", in M. Dietrich and W. Röll (eds.), Isin mithuri. Festschrift W. von Soden (AOAT 1; Neukirchen-Vluyn 1968) 265-277. Roellig's approach to the subject differs from the one I took in Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles (TCS 5; Glikesstadt/Loft Valely 1973); our conclusions sometimes differ. For details see ABC p. 5 and Addenda.


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tradition of the Babylonians and Hittites 34. In this article Guterbock was concerned first with a proper categorization according to genre of various ancient texts which were historical in nature and his basic categories are still used today. He also grappled with larger issues raised by these texts, such as the excessive popularity of a few individuals in the third millennium e.g. Sargon of Akkad; the question of the historicity of some of them (e.g. Gilgamesh); and the development of this literature both in later Babylonia and Assyria and among the Hittites. It was a monumental essay to which any subsequent work in this area must owe a great debt.

Of the three genres of Historical-Literary texts that will concern us in Part C, only one has received much attention since Guterbock's time. This is the group of texts called "prophecies". Weidner, Böhl, Zabat, Gadd, Grayson and Lambert, Hallo, Biggs, and Borges 35 have all concerned themselves with these texts and there has been some debate on the nature of the genre and its setting in ancient Near Eastern literature. The recent publication of significant new text material by Borges has resolved one of the basic issues, the alleged connection between the prophecies and onom literature. It is now established that there is no substantive relation between the genre and prognostic texts. Another crucial question involves apocalyptic literature. That the prophecies represent a kind of early apocalyptic literature has now been confirmed by the publication of the Dynastic Prophecy in my book Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts 36. In this same book I have discussed not only the prophecies but also the other genres of Historical-Literary texts and this study forms the basis of my comments in Part C (below).

All of the research mentioned so far is basic to any inquiry into Assyrian and Babylonian ideas about the past. But no study concentrating on that central issue has yet been written. There are very few 37. There is an essay by Speiser on "Ancient Mesopotamia" in a volume entitled The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East 38. Here for the first time we have a study which is concerned with basic ideas about the past in

34 H. G. Guterbock, "Die historische Tradition im ihre literarische Gestaltung bei Babylonien und Hethitern bis 1200", ZA 42 (1934) 1-91 and 43 (1938) 45-149.


36 BILU 1978.


38 E. A. Speiser, Idea of History. Also see his article "Geschichtswissenschaft" in RLA 8, pp. 216-229.
Sumerian, Assyrian, and Babylonian civilization. Speiser took as his thesis that the elementary concepts, including ideas about the past, established in Sumerian texts remained constant with only minor changes throughout Assyrian and Babylonian history. The core of Speiser's principle is sound but, as I have stated above (Part A), Assyrian and Babylonian ideas are distinctive enough to merit special study. Nevertheless, Speiser's portrayal of ideas about the past current at the beginning of Assyrian and Babylonian civilization is valuable as a background to our enquiry.

In 1953 Finckelstein published a paper entitled "Mesopotamian Historiography". The author followed the thesis of Johan Huizinga: "History is the intellectual form in which a civilization renews account to itself of the past". Finckelstein selected omen literature and more specifically historical omens as the intellectual form in ancient Mesopotamia that answers most closely to Huizinga's description. The author dismissed such texts as king lists and royal inscriptions as "not directly relevant to the subject of the historiography of Mesopotamia" and devoted most of his paper to a discussion of historical omens and chronicles. I cannot agree with Finckelstein on the relationship between historical omens and chronicles (see Part 1). Neither can I accept a total exclusion of king lists and royal inscriptions from any comprehensive study of ancient Mesopotamian historiography for they are certainly relevant to ideas about the past in this ancient society. But these areas of disagreement must not overshadow a major contribution of this study which is Finckelstein's authoritative treatment of the historicity of historical omens (see below p. 190 and n. 219).

Finally, W. G. Lambert has briefly touched on the question of the idea of history in ancient Mesopotamia in two articles. Here he was concerned with the fundamental philosophy and theology of the ancient Mesopotamians and a comparison with ancient Israelite thought. Lambert expressed a very negative opinion, viz. that no ancient Mesopotamian text can be called "historical".

It should now be apparent from this survey that little has been done in the way of historiographical analysis of these texts about the past and even less has been said about the ideas of the past inherent in these documents.

The documents with which we are concerned in this section form part of what Oppenheim has called the "stream of tradition". This term applies to texts which are "literary" in the broad sense. Documents not in the stream of tradition were the legal, administrative, and epistolary texts of everyday life and these are excluded from this study. Although these latter are vital for the modern historian attempting to reconstruct ancient history, in general they do not shed any light on the attitude of the Mesopotamian to his past.

Oral tradition is an area that needs hardly concern us at all for among the written works to be discussed there is rarely any link with an oral background. The appearance in laxur sources — Greek, Latin, Aramaic, and Arabic — of stories about Assyrian and Babylonian figures such as Semiramis and Ahhiyrq suggests the existence of an oral tradition (and possibly also written version) in Aramaic which never found its way into the Assyrian and Babylonian literary stream. The fact that these tales survived into later times and were given literary expression in various foreign languages is significant for our topic (see Part 1).

While on the subject of late historiographical material in a language other than Akkadian let us consider Berossos. Berossos was a Babylonian priest of the third century B.C. who wrote a history of Babylonia in Greek. His book has not survived and the work is known only from isolated quotations which have been passed down by many different pen and through various languages. We have, then, no conception of the overall nature of the work and its sources. Nonetheless, the fact that such a composition did exist is significant as will be shown in Part 1.

The historiographical texts will be discussed under the headings Royal Inscriptions; Chronographic Texts; Historical-Literary Texts.
Royal Inscriptions

There has never been a comprehensive analysis of Assyrian and Babylonian royal inscriptions. This section, therefore, is much longer and more fully documented than the sections on Chronographic "texts and Historical-Literary Texts" 44.

Assyria 45

1 Commemorative Inscriptions

Commemorative inscriptions were composed to commemorate the deeds of the king and in the case of Assyria, this meant particularly building activity, military action, or both. This large group of documents may be divided into Annalistic Texts and Display Texts.

A. Annalistic Texts

Annalistic texts contain narration of military campaigns arranged in chronological order and they are primarily in first person (in contrast to chronicles which are in third person) 46. Annalistic texts are unknown among Sumerian or Babylonian royal inscriptions; they are, apparently, an Assyrian innovation which first appears in the later Middle Assyrian period 47. In Display texts if military endeavours are included at all, the description is not arranged along chronological lines. There are two categories of annalistic texts, those that contain the narration of one specific campaign and those that are collections of two or more campaign narratives.

44 In the present analysis of Assyrian and Babylonian royal inscriptions I have concentrated on Assyrian texts from the beginning down to the early Neo-Assyrian period (including the reigns of Ashur-reshi-an II); these are the inscriptions I know best from my work on Aki I and II. I have performed included the later Assyrian and all the Babylonian material but my analysis is not as complete.

45 In this discussion Assyrian history has been divided into the following time periods: Early Old Assyrian = Beginning to Eribum II (c. 1814 B.C.); Late Old Assyrian = Shamash-Adad I to Bel-Adad I (c. 1323-1064 B.C.); Early Middle Assyrian = Ashur-unna III to Mutalki-Sinakku (c. 1363-1333 B.C.); Late Middle Assyrian = Ashur-reshi-Ish II to Tiglat-pileser II (c. 1132-1055 B.C.); Early Neo-Assyrian = Ashur-Can II to Ashur-nasiri V (c. 934-748 B.C.); Late Neo-Assyrian ("Sargonid") = Tiglat-pileser III to Ashur-balilt II (c. 741-689 B.C.); normally only one or two examples from each period of a particular form will be quoted. I have omitted royal texts — see E. Bloedhorn, Stellung und Vorschrift a f f a s s y r i a c h T u r k e y (Birmin 1984); E. P. Weinberg, Afi 17 (1954-56) 162-167; and J. N. Postgate, Neo-Assyrian Royal Grants and Decrees (Studia Pohl: Series Major 1; Rome 1986).

46 For a valuable discussion of the "ichform" see S. Mowinckel, Ensilari-terrion Geshel, pp. 297-299.

47 See now H. Tadmor, Essays and Studies, pp. 209-213.

1 Annalistic Accounts of One Campaign

Inscriptions with accounts of only one campaign are attested only in the Neo-Assyrian period although they must have existed earlier, since collections of annalistic accounts are known from the later Middle Assyrian period. Texts narrating one campaign were engraved on prominent rock surfaces in the region of the respective campaign or on stelae purposely erected in that area. Each was intended as a visible monument commemorating a successful expedition. A relief of the king's figure and divine symbols commonly accompanied the inscription. In form (IA1) such a text begins with an invocation of the gods; this is followed by the subject (royal name and epithets) 48, and an annalistic narrative of the campaign. The text might conclude with a description of the erection of the stele and curse formula 49. An invocation introduction is also known for one type of annalistic collection (see IA2b below) and is unique to Assyrian annalistic accounts; it is unknown in Sumerian and Babylonian royal inscriptions.

2 Collections of Annalistic Accounts

Collections of Annalistic Accounts of campaigns are known from the later Middle Assyrian through the Neo-Assyrian periods. They were inscribed on a variety of objects of clay (tablets, cylinders, and prisms) 50 and stone (slabs and stelae). Some of the objects, particularly those of stone, were placed in prominent positions in temples and palaces where they could be seen and read. Others were deposited in foundations and other structural parts of a building, where only the gods and a future prince doing renovation would see them. These collections display two main forms. One (IA2a) is an obvious type. It begins with the subject (royal name and epithets) followed by the annalistic narration, description of building activities, and blessings. In addition a statement regarding the king's commission by the gods might be inserted after the subject and curses and a date might be added after the blessings 51. The other form (IA2b) has in this order, an invocation of the gods, the subject (royal name and epithets), and annalistic narration. Optional extras are a statement regarding the king's commission inserted after the subject and,

48 The invocation and subject may at the same time be descriptions of the relics.

49 Examples of this form are Early Neo-Assyrian, Afi 2, CII 11 (Ass. III); Late Neo-Assyrian, Afi 2, §§ 259-268 (Senn.) and §§ 174-581 = Berger, Assh. § 65. An exception among annalistic accounts of one campaign is a text of Sennacherib (Afi 2, §§ 253-257 and 362-371). This is a narration of Sennacherib's first campaign inscribed on a clay cylinder. The form is subject, annalistic narration, description of building, and a blessing.

50 I follow the formal distinction between "cylinders" and "prisms" propounded by Ellis, Foundation Deposit, pp. 109ff, which is that the inscription on cylinders runs parallel to the axis while on prisms it runs perpendicular to the axis. Royal inscriptions were inscribed on prisms only in Assyria, never in Sumer or Babylon.

51 Examples of this form are: Late Middle Assyrian, Afi 1, XXII, 1 (Ashur-ba-kala); Early Neo-Assyrian, Afi 2, XCI, 1 (Ass. III); Late Neo-Assyrian, Afi 2, §§ 253-254 and 23-428 (Senn.) and Afi 2, §§ 763-560 (Ass.)
after the annuistic narration, a description of building activities, a prayer, blessings and curses, and a date. This form is the same as that for accounts of one campaign and, as I have already pointed out, seems to be an Assyrian innovation.

A third form (IA2c) is very rare. It begins with a dedication to a deity and is followed by the subject (royal name and epithets) and annuistic narration. To this might be added a description of building activities, blessings and curses. The dedicatory form (cf. HI Dedicatory Inscriptions below) also appears in Assyrian Display Inscriptions (IB1) and IB2) and is well known from Sumerian and Babylonian (IB below) royal inscriptions.

Different collections of annuistic narratives of campaigns were made at various times and in various cities during a given reign. The later in time the collection was compiled, the more the campaigns that could be included. The tendency in these compilations was to abbreviate the narratives of earlier campaigns while later campaigns would be described in more detail. Such a trend is best illustrated by the annuistic texts of Senacherib.

B Display Texts

The texts included under this title are commemorative inscriptions without annuistic narration; military campaigns are mentioned they are not normally described in chronological order but, most commonly, they are grouped according to geography. The name "Display" is inaccurate since, like the annals, while some of these texts were intended for display others were buried in the desert or other parts of a building. But the term has gained popularity and, faute de mieux, will be used in this analysis.

Display texts were inscribed on a wide variety of objects of clay (tablet, cylinders, cones, bricks), stone (slabs, blocks, and steles), and rock faces in situ and precious metals. The inscriptions divide naturally into two groups, those that include military conquests and those that do not.

Examples of this form are: Early Neo-Assyrian, AR1, XXVI, 1 (Shallum); XXVII, 11 (Shalmaneser I); Late Old Assyrian, AR1, XXVI, 11 (Pul); Late Assyrian, AR1, XXIV, 1, 10 (Ashur-nadin-apli II); XXIV, 1, 4-8 (Shamsi-Adad V); Late Neo-Assyrian, AR1, XXVIII, 1, 1-3 (Assarhaddon); AO 29 (1858-83, 98 (Soann)). Some texts of Ashur-nadin-apli II (AR2, 1, 1-3) have an elaborate introduction but essentially follow this form. The almanacs of Tiglath-Pileser I which also has this basic form, see below.

There are two examples: Early Neo-Assyrian, ARAR, 1, §§ 735-728 (Ashur-Adad V); Late Neo-Assyrian, AR1, XXIV, 1, 1-3 (Assarhaddon); AO 29 (1858-83, 98 (Soann)).

The name "Display Inscription" is Prunktscrift in German, seems to have been first used by Schrader and later taken up by Öz. The name "Display Inscription" Tadmor, I, 53 (1973) 111. Tadmor prefers the label "Summary Inscription" which he has traced back to Schrader's original term "Reichschronik.

There are a few texts that fall neither into one category nor another. They have a form common to both types and display military conquests but only in a general terms. E.g. AR2, CI, 37 (Ass. II).

1 Display Texts Without Military Conquests

The most common form (IB1a) is the obvious one: subject (royal name and epithets) followed by a description of building activities. A number of optional elements are also known: a temporal clause (content varies) may follow the subject; a statement of purpose: "for my life" etc. may be included in the building description; and the text may conclude with a list of conscription of building activities. Additional optional elements are a prayer, blessings, and curses. Regarding the dedicatory form see the discussion of IA2c (above).

2 Display Texts With Military Conquests

Several forms are attested among these texts of this group. The simplest pattern (IB2a) is the royal name followed by epithets including a description of the military activities. Optional additional elements are a prayer, blessings, curses, and a date. This form is attested from early Middle Assyrian to Late Neo-Assyrian times.

A second form (IB2b) is an expansion on this basic type. It begins with the subject (royal name and epithets) including military conquests and is followed by a narration of military activities. In texts of this kind there is not always a clear demarcation between the military exploits and the military narration. To this basic form might be added a building description, a prayer, blessings, and curses.

Examples of this form are: Early Old Assyrian, ARI, XXVI, 1, 1 (Shallum); XXVII, 11 (Shalmaneser I); Late Old Assyrian, ARI, XXVI, 11 (Pul); Late Assyrian, AR1, XXIV, 1, 10 (Ashur-nadin-apli II); XXIV, 1, 4-8 (Shamsi-Adad V); Late Neo-Assyrian, AR1, XXIV, 1, 1-3 (Assarhaddon); AO 29 (1858-83, 98 (Soann)). A brief statement regarding the treatment of conquered peoples (Akkadian) is added to two texts from 11th-shuma — ARI, XXVI, 1, 1 and 2. Two texts of Esarhaddon follow the basic form of IB1a; but one — Borger, Assy. §§ 2 — adds a narration of ports after the subject and the second — ibid., § 11 — in addition adds a description of the victory.

One example from the early Neo-Assyrian period is ARI, CI, 16 (Ass. II). A very short and broken text from the early Old Assyrian period, ARI, XXXIII, 5, may be of this type. Otherwise the form is attested only in the Late Neo-Assyrian period, e.g. YOS, 1, No. 13 (Soann). Borger, Assy. § 47. An interesting form of display text without military conquests is ARI, XXVI, 1, 10 (Arik-din-ili) which consists of the subject (royal name and epithets), ophet regarding building, and a curse. Except for the curse this is the same as the form of commemorative labels.

One commemorative inscription of Esarhadon — Borger, Assy. § 53 — is a form identical with one of the Babylonian commemorative form. The form is otherwise unattested in Assyrian.

Examples of this form are: Early Middle Assyrian, ARI, 1, LXXXV, 1, 1-2, 3, 8, 10, 13, 15, 16 — see § 380 (Adn. I), LXXVIII, 3 (Tn. I); Late Middle Assyrian, ARI, 2, LXXVII, 1, 17 (Tgl. I); Late Neo-Assyrian, AR2, §§ 116-123 and 136-139 (both Soann). No example from the early Neo-Assyrian period is yet known.
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included, after the subject, a relatively lengthy and detailed narrative of the war against Hanigalbat. The experiment proved successful and evolved into a form (C2B2) in which military narration was placed immediately after the subject. In the reign of Shalmaneser I (1278-1244 B.C.) a less fortunate innovation appeared. The scribes inserted a temporal clause with details of military achievements into the subject (the form is basically that of C2B2). After a relatively long description of campaigns the subject was resumed but the thread of thought had been interrupted and, to the modern reader at least, the result is confusion. Unhappily this clumsy arrangement continued to be used for a time and is attested in some inscriptions of Tukulti-Ninurta I (1243-1207 B.C.).

A third experiment, which seems to be related to the unsuccessful one just described, is represented by the first true annalistic text, the Annals of Tiglath-pileser I (1114-1076 B.C.). Basically the text follows the pattern of 1A2b. The annalistic narration is divided by horizontal lines into a number of sections, each section covering one campaign, and the subject (royal name and epithets) is repeated (the epithets are different each time) in a special paragraph between the end of the narrative of one campaign and the beginning of the next. This is basically the same format as that used by the scribes of Shalmaneser I; the military narration has been inserted into the midst of the subject. But the scribes have eliminated confusion by not including the narration in the temporal clause; by the regular repetition of the subject; and by the systematic use of paragraph divisions (horizontal lines). Annalistic texts of subsequent reigns do not have precisely this format but they do exhibit the essential feature, the chronological narration of military events.

C. Commemorative Labels

Commemorative Labels are the same as Labels (see II below) so far as they are short texts denoting ownership. In addition, the commen-

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45 Examples of this form are: Early Middle Assyrian, AR1, LXXV1.3 (Adm. 1), LXXVII.5 (Tm. 1); Late Middle Assyrian, AR2, LXXVIII.13 (Tm. 1); Early Neo-Assyrian, AR2, C1.18 (Asm. 1); AR2, AR. 1 (Shalm. 11); Late Neo-Assyrian, AR1, 270-775 (Tm. 111). J. J. A. Berge, ASR, § 21. A unique text of Ass. 1 — AR1, C1.7. "Banquet scene," adds after the building section a narration of hunting and a menu of the banquet. Another unusual inscription, this time from the reign of Shalmaneser III — ARAB 1, §§ 673-678 — adds after a blessing a list of names of walls and gates. Examples of the form from the early Middle Assyrian period also show Assyrian influence — see below. Another unusual inscription, AR1. 1, §§ 173-177 (Puzur-Sin) begins with a temporal clause in which conquest of a usurper is narrated. One of the inscriptions left by Tiglath-pileser I at the headwaters of the Tigris, AR2, LXXV1.16, begins "Whit. the aid of DN."

46 Examples of this form are: AR1, C1.15 (Asm. 11) and ARAB 1, §§ 687-688 (Shalm. 11). Texts beginning with an invocation are rarely attested among the display inscriptions which include military requests (cf. IA1 and IA2B). Only two examples have come to my attention: ARAB 2, §§ 178-180 (Sh. 11) and §§ 231-234 (Senn.) A unique text is AR1, XXXIX,1 (Shamsi-Adad I). This inscription includes reference to the receipt of tribute and the erection of steles with a temporal clause. An inscription of Esarhaddon, J. J. A. Berlin, ASR, § 27, in which the king’s suppression of a rebellion and his accession to the throne are narrated, has a complex and unique form. An early text from Asur d a certain ITu, AR1, §§ 12-14, labels the inscribed object as "booty." Khalkuma speaks euphemistically of having established "the freedom of the Assyrians." — see AR1, LXXI,1 and 2 and cf. n. 69 above. Only with Shamsi-Adad I are there true statements of the receipt of tribute and the erection of steles — see AR1, §§ 128, c. § 142, and see XXXIX,4 (Puzur-Sin: AR1, §§ 173-177) boasts of defeating a descendant of Shamshi-Adad I. Further cf. n. 62. There is no further reference to military enterprises in Assyrian royal inscriptions, with the possible exception of AR1, LXXIV.2 which cannot be dated with certainty, until the reign of Adad-narrari I.
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orative labels add a brief statement regarding construction. The form of such a text is simple: royal name followed by epithets and one of these epithets records building activity ("builder of..."). Before the royal name might appear "Palace of" or "belonging to." Commemorative labels are found on a variety of objects, all of which were structural parts or furnishings of a building. The most common object is bricks. The text type is well known in Sumer and, since it first appears in Assyria in the reign of Shamsi-Adad I (1813-1281 B.C.), it was probably imported from the south at that time.

II Labels

Labels are short inscriptions which indicate ownership. These can consist of nothing more than the royal name although usually one or more epithets are added. In addition "Palace of" or "property of" might precede the royal name. The text type is an obvious one known both in Sumer and Babylonia, and it appears in all periods of Assyrian history. It can be inscribed on any royal property, such as the royal seal and royal weapons, and it is particularly common on vases and bricks. Beginning with the early Middle Assyrian period it was not uncommon to add the name of the particular construction to which structural objects belonged (e.g. "paving slab of the courtyard").

III Dedicatory Inscriptions

These are texts on objects dedicated by the king to a deity. The objects are of a cultic nature, such as ornamental nave heads or eyes of

of Assur-nasir-apli II (ARI 2, Cl. 1 — see HØr 33 [1976] 1381) as well as ARI 2, Cl. 2 and 3 (Ann. II) and cf. 2Cl. 1 (Ann. II).

Examples of this form are: Late Old Assyrian, ARI 1, XXXIX,2 (Shamsi-Adad I), LXX.1, (Assur-erari I); Early Middle Assyrian, ARI 1, LXXVI,32 (Shalman I); Late Middle Assyrian, ARI 1, LXXXV,16 (Assur-resha-Ildri); Early Neo-Assyrian, ARI 2, CIX,1 (Assur-erari II); Late Neo-Assyrian, ARI 2, CII,1 (Assur, Borger, Aššur, § 7). The short display inscriptions of the simplest type (B1a) are basically commemorative labels. But formally they are distinct from the texts under discussion.


Examples of this form are: Early Old Assyrian, ARI 1, XXXIX,16 (Enlil-Ishtar), LXXV,1 (Ann. II); Late Old Assyrian, ARI 1, XXXIX,7 (Shamsi-Adad I), LXXI,1 (Assur-nadin-ahhe II); Early Middle Assyrian, ARI 1, LXXX,6 (Assur-uballit I), LXXVIII,30 (Ann. I); Late Middle Assyrian, ARI 2, CIX,1 (Assur, Borger, Aššur, § 7). An unusual form appears on a seal from the very early Assyrian period — ARI 1, LXXV,16.

Examples of this form are: Early Middle Assyrian, ARI 1, LXXVI,28-34 (Ann. I), LXXVIII,32 (Ann. I); Late Middle Assyrian, ARI 1, LXXVI,10 (Assur-resha-Ildri I), ARI 2, LXXVII,22 (Ann. I); Early Neo-Assyrian, ARI 2, Cl. 46-47 (Ann. I). Some texts have instead "booby of..." — e.g., ARI 1, LXXXV,10, LXXVII,29, and cf. Borger, Aššur, § 5.

The term "voitive" has been applied by many Assyriologists to texts

precious store, or they can be structural parts, such as bricks or door sockets, of a temple. The inscriptions could be read by any who had the ability and access to the objects. Only two such texts are known from the old Assyrian period. Each begins with the royal name: and concludes with a verb of dedication; in between appears the dedication to the deity and the name or description of the object dedicated. This form disappears and in the Middle Assyrian period a pattern well known from Sumerian and Babylonian dedicatory inscriptions appears. Obviously the change has been brought about by influence from the south. The basic form of these later texts is: dedication, subject: (royal name and epithets), and verb of dedication.

IV Letters to the God

The Assyrian inscriptions called "Letters to the God" are an extremely interesting group of texts. The best known example is the letter of Sargon II (721-705 B.C.). The text is inscribed on a particularly large and well-preserved clay tablet and is a report of the king on his eighth campaign which is addressed to the god Assur, to the deity of the city Assur (who are not named), to the city of Assur and to its population. It is, then, more than just a letter to "the god." This point has been well established by Oppenheim who has, in addition, noted the features of the text which indicate it was read out orally in the city Assur during a ceremony held to celebrate the successful conclusion of the campaign. At the end of the inscription a list of the campaign's casualties (a total of six men) is provided, evidence that their corpses were being honoured in the ceremony. Thus this "letter" appears to be primarily a ceremonial do-

of this type but in JASOS 90 (1979) 529 I pointed out that the etymology of the word 'voitive' implies a vow and, since no vow is involved in the ancient Mesopotamian texts under discussion, the term is incorrect. They are certainly not 'voitive' or 'ex voto' inscriptions in the ancient Roman sense where a vow preceded the dedication. G. van Driel, JASOS 93 (1976) 268 has concurred with my view but J. A. Brinkman, Materials and Studies for Assyrian History 1 (Chicago 1976), p. 56, n. 179, has argued that 'voitive' in English usage has a wider connotation which includes a wish (for future benefit) and therefore aptly describes this genre. While recognizing the validity of this argument, I still think it is best to avoid the term 'voitive' and 'ex voto' for fear of confusion with a quite different phenomenon in Classical times.

ARI 1, § 14 and XXXIV,2.

Examples of this form are: Early Middle Assyrian, ARI 1, LXXVII,23 (Shalman I); Early Neo-Assyrian, ARI 2, LXXXVIII,13 (Assur-Ishubar). ARAH 1, § 728 (Shamsi-Adad V); Late Neo-Assyrian, Borger, Aššur, § 12.

ARA 2, §§ 130-178.

ment composed for oral presentation to a live audience upon a great state occasion, the conclusion of a major and profitable campaign. Presumably it was deposited at an honoured and secure place once that occasion was past.

A document which is similar to the Sargon Letter is known from Esarhaddon's reign. The beginning of the text is broken but the conclusion contains a list of casualties verbally identical with the list in the Sargon Letter and the general tone of the composition is similar to Sargon's text. There is also a fragment in the British Museum on which is preserved the beginning and end of a text very much like that of the beginning and end of the Sargon letter. From the reign of Ashurbanipal there is an inscription addressed to the god Ashur in which the king reports on military activities in various parts of the empire. The practice of kings and private persons writing letters to their personal gods is well attested in Sumer and Babylonia and this provides the general background to the Assyrian Letters to the God. Also of possible relevance is a letter from Mari in the Old Babylonian period which was written by Yasmah-Adad, son of Shamshi-Adad I. The name of the addressee is missing but it is clearly a deity and probably the god Dagan. In this letter Yasmah-Adad tries to exonerate himself and his family from any blame for a military campaign to place all responsibility for misbehaviour on the former dynasty at Mari which was defeated by Yasmah-Adad's grandfather. Only the military accomplishments of his grandfather are narrated. The document has only a general similarity, then, to the Assyrian Letters to the God. Basically this is all that is known about Assyrian letters to the God and their possible antecedents. There is simply not enough material yet to allow firm conclusions on these texts. Their fragmentary state, with the exception of the Sargon letter, precludes a form critical analysis and their origin and purpose remain to be established when more complete texts are available.

Babylonian royal inscriptions are similar to Sumerian royal inscriptions. At the beginning of the Old Babylonian period royal inscriptions in Babylonia could be written in either Sumerian or Akkadian or both (as bilinguals) but as the centuries passed the number of royal inscriptions in Sumerian gradually waned. In the later Old Babylonian and in the Middle Babylonian periods there are still a significant number in Sumerian but in the Neo-Babylonian era they are not so common. Nonetheless

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"ARAB 2, §§ 592-612 = Boeger, Asarh. § 68.
2. L. Langlotz, Babylonian Literatures (Pirro 1813) No. 169 edited by A. Ungnad, O.L.Z. 21 (1918) 73. See W. Schramm, En 3 2 p. 120, who dates it to the reign of Ashurnasirpal IV. H. Tadmor, JCS 12 (1968) 80-81 pointed out that the style of the fragment 82-321,131 (correct number?) was reminiscent of the Sargon letter; subsequently N. Na'anan, ASOR 214 (1974) 23-39, joined to this K 6205 and agreed that the style was like a letter to the god but E. F. Weidner in his case for ascribing the document to Sennacherib.

See M. Wipplert, WQG 7 (1973) 74-85 and note the reference in T. Bauer, Das Inschriftenwerk Assurnasipals I (Leipzig 1939), p. 80 r. 28n., to a god, speaking in the letters to the king in reply to the letters to the god, receive my petition" in r. 19. Ashurbanipal is praying to the god to help him against his enemies. This is, then, not the same kind of letter as those under discussion. It should be associated with royal letters and prayers such as E. Belling, "Kleinschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalte", VDOG 28 (Leipzig 1915-18), Nos. 128, 129 (both Tn. 1), and 13.

E. F. Weidner suggested that VAT 9265 and possibly also the fragment K 14-767 were letters to the god by the king to the god which are not in the Sargon letter to the god. See AJFO 0 (1933-34) 3.01-104. However, J. Le Page, in R 36 (1939) 33, n. 4, noted that these were more probably written by divine. Cf. A. L. Oppenheim, JNES 19 (1960) 145, n. 22. J. Noegyrol, R 36, 33, n. 1, 285, proposed, however, that a third fragment, K 2764, was such a reply by the deity.


ARAB 1, XXXIX, 10"
even as late as the Chaldaean period scribes continued to write some royal inscriptions in the Sumerian language and even in Akkadian texts it was not uncommon for them to use an archaic script.

E. E. "I" and "II" royal inscriptions are attested for all but the latest periods. An obvious type (IA) is subject (royal name and epithets) followed by a description of building activities. This form is well known from Sumerian royal inscriptions and is also common in Assyrian royal inscriptions (IBI).

In Babylonian texts an optional insertion after the subject is a temporal clause: this usually describes the king’s commission, but in some texts a narration of military conquests appears. A prayer might appear at the end of the text.

Some inscriptions of this type are common in all periods.

Another form (IB) is also familiar from Sumerian and reappears in Assyria (IBIb): dedication (to a deity), subject (royal name and epithets), and building description.

The late Neo-Babylonian period is marked by a building type that bears the name of the king, but the building is not described in detail.

Some inscriptions of this type are: Early Old Babylonian, JRSA IVA10b (Enil-Bami and IVB11a (Rim-Sin I) (both in Sumerian); Late Old Babylonian, JRSA IVC6b ( bilingual) and IVc6 (Sumerian) (both Hammurapi); Middle Babylonian, IV R 36, No. 3 (Karkidina) in Sumerian) and A. Ungnad, Vorderasiatische Schriftenkunde der Königlichen Museen zu Berlin (Leipzig 1917), No. 43 (Merodach-Baladan I); Early Neo-Babylonian, JRSA IVC7b (Samsuiluna) some of the epithets describe military conquests.

The building description might mention the purpose of the building. Some inscriptions add the name of the king, but the building is not described in detail.

Examples of this form are: Early Old Babylonian, JRSA IV A5b (Lipit-Ishtar and YNB5) (Kudur-Nabû); Late Old Babylonian, JRSA IVC6b (Hammurapi) and IVF7b (Zimri-Lim); Middle Babylonian, I R 4, No. XIV, 2 (Kurigalzu, in Sumerian); Late Neo-Babylonian, VAB 4, Nbk. 18, 19; narration of military conquests appears between the subject and the building description. One inscription of Nabonidus, VAB 4, Nbk. 1, has a particularly complex form since it combines two different building accounts together with a narration of the circumstances which led up to the re-construction of one of the temples, Mulaš at Harran.
III Dedicatory Inscriptions

The form of these texts well known from Sumerian royal inscriptions and also attested in Assyrian (III), is straightforward: dedication (to a deity), subject (royal name and epithets), and verb of dedication. Two optional extras are the insertion of a purpose clause ("for his life," etc.) after the subject, and the inclusion of the name of the dedicated object before the verb. This type of inscription is attested in all periods and was inscribed on valuable objects, such as eyes of precious stone, dedicated to a deity. The texts could be read by anyone who had the ability and access to the object.

To sum up this discussion of the types of Assyrian and Babylonian royal inscriptions, the following conclusions can be drawn. There is some influence evident of Babylonian forms on Assyrian forms, a phenomenon which is typical of the relations between the two cultures in general. The first evidence of Babylonian influence appears in the reign of Shamsi-Adad I when features characteristic of Babylonian royal inscriptions appear in that king's texts. Shamsi-Adad is said to have spent some time in Babylonia which provides a suitable explanation of the phenomenon. Sometime during the Middle Assyrian period the dedicatory inscription, in a form typical of Sumer and Babylonia, first appears in Assyria and replaces another Assyrian type (see III above). From the time of Shamsi-Adad I through the Middle Assyrian period there is evidence of Babylonian influence on the phrasing and particularly on the royal epithets found in Assyrian royal inscriptions.

Another period in which Babylonian elements appear in Assyrian royal texts is the reign of Earradda. Earradda followed a policy of appeasement towards Babylonia which involved considerable building activity there and it was only natural that relevant inscriptions should follow Babylonian forms.

Looking beyond the confines of Assyrian and Babylonian civilization one seeks in vain, I think, for significant influence from foreign cultures.

118 Examples of this form are: Early Old Babylonian, IRS A IV 46 (Ahi-ushushu); Middle Babylonian, MDG 21 (Kurigalzu, in Sumerian) and G. Baccellati and R. D. Biggs, Civiliform Texts from Nippur, NS 17 (Chicago 1960) pp. 187. No. 55 (Nazi-maradu); Late Neo-Babylonian, VAT A 4, Nbk. 38. See the discussion of Assyrian Commemorative Labels (IC). Also see ARI I, XXXIX 1, and cf. n. 67 above.


120 Borger, Asarh. § 53 has a distinctive Babylonian form — cf. n. 63 and 107 above. There is even a text of Earradda written in Sumerian, Borger, Asarh. § 18.

Assyria and Babylonia on the royal inscriptions. It has been suggested that Assyrian annalistic narration owes much to earlier Hittite models. But there are no clear points of contact and it seems to me that it is quite possible that the Assyrian annals were an independent indigenous development.

Some of the forms which appear in Assyria and Babylon are Sumerian in origin while others are unique. Babylonian royal inscriptions are much closer to their Sumerian prototypes in form, content, and even language (since many are written in Sumerian). This fact is another example of a well-known phenomenon: the greater strength of the Sumerian cultural tradition in Babylonia. In Assyria developments independent of Sumerian prototypes are attested and, in content, a major innovation is the gradual development of narration of military achievements and particularly annalistic narration. This never appears in Babylonian royal inscriptions.

Royal inscriptions of Assyria, Babylonia, and Sumer had one of three main functions: to commemorate the king's deeds, to record his dedication of an object to a god, or to indicate ownership. The king was the focal point throughout these texts and beheld each and every inscription was his compulsion to boast, although pious overtones are very strong. Some
inscriptions were so placed that they could be read by any literate person who had the necessary access; others were deposited in the foundation or other parts of a building where, apart from the gods, only a later priest who renovated that structure would see them.

Compilation of Royal Inscriptions

The manner in which Assyrian royal inscriptions were composed is an area full of questions but lacking in answers. There are no ancient treatises on the subject and what information we have is based upon incidental evidence and reasonable surmise. In the case of source material available to the authors of royal inscriptions, it is apparent that they had and used Assyrian Chronicles, at least in the late Middle Assyrian period. Enough fragments of such chronicles are known to recognize their style and identify at least one long passage with a similar style in the Broken Obelisk. It is also known that they had booty or tribute lists and obviously these were used as source material for the lists which appear in the royal inscriptions.

A more difficult problem arises with the assumption that detailed "diaries" of the king’s campaigns existed and were used in composing royal inscriptions. The existence of such diaries has not, as yet, been established but two phenomena might suggest they did exist. One phenomenon is a type of text called "Neo-Assyrian Itineraries," the other has to do with a fluctuation of person in royal inscriptions.

Let us first consider the "itineraries." Two Neo-Assyrian documents are known in which is described in itinerary style an expedition with distances between stopping points noted. Neither the beginning nor end of either text is preserved and the purpose and occasion of each composition is unknown. If such records of campaigns were regularly made they may have been used as a source for the composition of royal inscriptions. But if we can judge from the fragments preserved, stylistically they are virtually unique and the information they contain is not of the kind normally found in royal inscriptions. The closest parallel is a few itinerary-like passages found in some royal inscriptions and in particular in the narrative of a special kind of campaign from the reigns of Adad-erari II, Tukulti-Ninurta II, and Ashur-nasir-apli I. The narration in these passages consists of monotonous and repetitive descriptions of travel from place to another with the tribute from each place duly noted. The phraseology is different from that used in the "itineraries" and where these latter texts note distances and, occasionally, such details as water supply, the royal inscriptions list booty. If such texts as the two "Itineraries" were commonly available they may have been used as a source for the composition of royal inscriptions and in particular in close conjunction with booty lists but it is not obvious that they did exist in such quantity nor that they were used in such a manner. The two "itineraries" do not really provide any evidence for the existence of "diaries".

Another phenomenon that requires discussion with regard to "diaries" is the inconspicuous fluctuation between first and third person in a few passages in Assyrian royal inscriptions. In some cases this fluctuation appears to be the result of a confusion of different sources. Thus in the Rimah stele

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114 Copies of some inscriptions were actually kept in a special kind of archive. At Babylon a significant number of copies of ancient royal inscriptions was discovered in one location and led to the conclusion that this was a "Schlossmuseum"—see E. Unger, Babylon (Berlin: 1970) 224-228 and cf. Berger, NAB p. 93 and n. 150. At Sippar copies of some very significant royal texts from various periods were found together—see J. J. Bagwell, JESOL 20 (1968) pp. 221 and cf. Ellis, Foundation Inscriptions, p. 105. These last named documents were concerned with temple endowments by royalty which is certainly why they were preserved. Another reason for preserving copies of royal inscriptions as well as copies of royal correspondence—see ARI 1, § 388—would be for use as models in academic schools.

115 Cf. R. Borger, JASS 30 (1970) 329 and Schellinger and Kupper, JESA pp. 3-74. The discussion by S. Movshen, Einleitung in die Schrift der Assyro-Babylonischen Inschriften, xxiii-xxvi, 1972, of the purpose of royal inscriptions is still useful although obviously dated. It has already been observed (n. 49 above) that this study is based primarily on Assyrian texts. This particularly is the case in the discussion of compilations or there is very little useful information on this subject for the Babylonian royal inscriptions.


119 See H. Tadmor, JGG 35 (1973) 141ff. and cf. Cogan, JGG 29 (1977) 102, n. 22. Royal diaries did exist in Egypt; they were records of each day’s activities during a campaign and were dictated personally by the king. See
of Adad-narari II, the entire text is in first person except one verb which always occurs in third person (imnhur "he received (tribute)"). The scribe was apparently using booty lists and incorporated the whole phrase each time without making the necessary grammatical change.

The reason for the fluctuation of person in other itinerary passages in royal inscriptions seems to be rather different. In the account of Shalmaneser III's campaigns on the Black Obelisk, the narration is in first person until the thirty and thirty-first year. At this point an officer of the king, Dayan-Ashtar, began to lead the army in the field and the narrative naturally shifts to third person. But almost immediately it shifts back to first person and then an incongruous fluctuation between third and first person continues through the remainder of the narrative. It seems obvious to me that the royal scribe, accustomed to writing such texts in the first person, had difficulty remembering that this passage was in third person since the subject was an officer of the king, not the king himself. Perhaps the same explanation lies behind the complete confusion of persons in the Annals of Tukulti-Ninurta II. In this text the person changes even within the account of one stage of the journey, a fact which surely excludes the possibility of carelessness of the scribe.

Yet another instance of fluctuation between first and third person, this time in an inscription of Adad-narari II, is known. The passage must have been originally from an independent inscription commemorating work on a palace at Apur. There are some grammatical curiosities in addition to the fluctuation of person. These curiosities may derive from the author's inexperience in abbreviating longer passages and he is possible he was also trying to confuse several sources. The same phenomenon appears in the Broken Obelisk. The author of this text has taken account from various sources with little or no effort to blend them together. The arrangement in columns 1 to 4 is in third person but the building descriptions in column 5 are in first person. Moreover, it was noted above that column 5 seems to contain a abbreviated entries from a chronicle.

From this discussion of the incongruous fluctuation of person in certain passages in Assyrian royal inscriptions it has become apparent that it would be an oversimplification to think of the peculiarity as arising in each case from the confusion of two sources, one in first person and one in third. There could be several sources of a variety of types behind a given royal inscription.

To return to our original question, whether or not there were "diaries" of campaigns, the answer must: he ambiguous. It is possible that such texts were written but to date none has been found and there is no clear evidence pointing to their existence.

In seeking possible sources for the royal inscriptions the Letters to the God must be considered. The text type is poorly attested but two documents, at least, were certainly reports to the god of individual campaigns. These are the letters of Sargon of Ashur which were composed for oral presentation in a state ceremony. Now the rhetorical features of these texts which were designed to please and impress a live audience, exclude them as probable sources for the royal inscriptions. Rather it seems to me the scribes would use the same sources for the Letters to the God as for other royal inscriptions and arrange and edit the source material to suit the style of the particular composition. But a good deal more material on the Letters to the God must be available before definitive statements can be made.

It is manifest that some royal inscriptions were compiled from earlier texts of the same king. The later annalistic texts of, for example, contain abbreviated versions of the earlier campaigns. Sometimes scribes would use inscriptions of preceding monarchs as models. This was particularly the case when a foundation inscription of an earlier king had been discovered during renovation.

An interesting phenomenon occurs in the use of earlier royal inscriptions as a source for later compositions in the same reign. Time and again it can be shown that the figures for such items as booty, conquered cities, and troops were increased in subsequent recensions of the same narrative during the reign. Another interesting phenomenon, recently noted by

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128 The same kind of error appears in the Syncronistic History (ABC Chron. 21) iv 12 where the scribe has copied imnhur "received" from a royal inscription of Shamsi-Adad V without changing the form to third person to suit his chronicle style.
131 It also rules out the possibility of a source in which daily entries were made by a scribe who was careless about grammatical sequence.
132 AR/CI 4, XCl 2, §§ 419-23.
133 In lines 33 and 35 infinites are used as finite forms [see J. Ar. Sot 26 (1961) p. 73] and possibly Id'-in in line 28 is also an infinitive (error for iskun — see ABC Appendix D no. Adad-narari 11). The main verb seems to iskun — see ABC Appendix B no. Adad-narari 11. The main verb seems to be iskun — see ABC Appendix B no. Adad-narari 11. The main verb seems to be.
134 In Sargon's letter to God (AR/CI 2, § 175) the booties from Musasir include "1,238" sheep in a later text (AR/CI 2, § 22) this increases to "1,238" sheep. For further comment see
Stone engraving presented peculiar problems and required specialized techniques. There is an ancient pictorial representation of a stele being sculptured and inscribed, but little is known of the actual process. Tadmor has recently suggested that occasionally scribes working in stone used stock phrases as "space fillers." For some reason there was a predilection for the use of Babylonian sign forms by Assyrian engravers. The biggest problem with stone was the correction of an error. Occasionally the scribe would chisel out the mistake but frequently he simply left it, hoping no doubt that no one would ever notice.

Two important questions that remain largely unanswered are who these scribes were and where they worked. Oppenheim has attempted to reconstruct a picture of the financial and social status of astrologers during Neo-Assyrian times and this picture may be approximately valid for an Assyrian or Babylonian royal scribe working on royal inscriptions. Such a scribe was provided by the king with a house, a field and the labours required to work it. In addition he expected special favours from the king or, at least, felt compelled to requite them. There is also some indication that scribes in at least one Assyrian city had feudal obligations. The scribe's place of work must have been somewhere in the palace of one of the major cities. Here the prototypes for provincial inscriptions were composed on clay tablets and sent to the relevant cities to be copied out on the actual objects to be placed in the buildings under construction.

This was the most practical procedure since it eliminated the need to transport large amounts of texts, a particularly onerous task in the case of inscriptions on stone. Copies of the "exported" texts were kept in the central palace. That texts were copied at the actual location is not just surmise for in a letter of the Sargonid period the writer asks the king to have prepared and sent to Der a text which can be copied and deposited in the walls of the temple. It is possible that or occasion, for special reasons, the normal procedure was reversed and final exemplars prepared in the central scribal quarters. Thus in a letter from the Caldeaean period the king instructs his official in Ur to deposit the inscribed stelae he is sending in the temples. No details are available with regard to the

Reliability of Royal Inscriptions

One matter that remains for consideration is the reliability of Assyrian and Babylonian royal inscriptions as source material for the modern historian. Babylonian royal inscriptions are primarily records of building activity and on the whole seem to be reliable. The extensive construction at Babylon claimed by Nebuchadnezzar II in his inscriptions is borne out, at least in general scope, by the number and size of structures from his period found by the German expedition to Babylon. On the few occasions when military enterprises are mentioned in Babylonian royal inscriptions the terms are usually so general as to be virtually useless to the modern historian. The Babylonian royal inscriptions provide an official view of the state religion but it is necessary to have a critical eye when using them as a source on this subject.

Assyrian royal inscriptions contain reasonably accurate records of building activities, a fact which is again supported by archaeological excavation. They are also a major source of information about official religious cults. The record of military achievements in the Assyrian texts require special comment: since there are fundamental features of which any modern historian of Assyria must be aware before attempting to use them as a source. The difference between annalistic and display texts should be constantly observed for it is obviously essential that the modern scholar know whether the military narration in a given passage is arranged chronologically or not. The matter of recension is another vital question. In the later eras there are frequently several different recensions of the same campaign and instead of the earliest recension being considered the most accurate must be observed. This is not to say that the earliest account should be accepted at face value. Even the first recension is the result of editing, selecting, and omitting various sources.

C. J. Gadd, Iraq 15 (1953) 120, and 16 (1954) 189ff., believed this was normal practice, basing his view mainly on a note at the end of an inscribed cylinder recording the restoration of the temple at Uruk by Sargon II which says: "Copy of an inscription, sent from the palace of Assur. Copied and collated" (gaburET assur kalullu dolu ëlul kalulan bari). He interpreted this to mean the "copy" was sent but the passage is ambiguous and could mean either the copy (gabur) or the original (mumur) was sent.

Details of dimensions, location, and passage of years since the previous renovation may not be accurate. See P. E. Berger, NBR p. 89 and 111f. 113d. Cf. P. R. Berger, NBR, p. 99.

A. T. Olmstead, Historiography (op. cit. n. 4) passim.

Assyria and Babylonia

A careful critical approach to all military narratives in Assyrian royal inscriptions is de rigueur. One danger to watch for is omission. Sometimes the omission is merely the result of condensation. Thus in itinerary passages certain stages of an expedition may not be mentioned and the unwary modern reader, interested in historical geography, may be badly misled. But condensation was not the only reason for omissions.

It is a well-known fact that in Assyrian royal inscriptions a serious military set-back is never openly admitted. This cardinal principle was engraved in the Assyrian scribes' thought and prevailed in all his work. A simple method of dealing with a set-back was to omit it but, insofar as one can tell and by its nature this is difficult to control, this method was not commonly used. Another method was to garble the narration in such a way as to confuse the reader and hide the ignominious truth. This device was used by scribes of Sargon II in their treatment of the Assyrian set-back at the hands of Merodachbaladan II in 720 B.C. In a collection of annalistic accounts this first humiliating encounter has been woven into an account of a later battle (710 B.C.) in which the Assyrians were successful.

Yet another method was blatant falsehood and when the Assyrian scribes played this theme they pulled out all the stops. There is the famous case of the Battle of Halulie (69 B.C.). The most reliable account is a brief statement in the Babylonian Chronicle that the Assyrians, under Sennacherib, suffered a defeat and withdrew. But in the account of this same encounter in the Annals of Sennacherib, the scribes admit no such thing. On the contrary, they describe Sennacherib's victory and bloodthirsty vengeance on the defeated troops in the longest battle description preserved in Assyrian records.

These, then, are the basic considerations one must bear in mind when using royal inscriptions as an historical source.

Chronographic Texts

The Chronographic Texts have been discussed in detail in my book on Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles and the following is essentially a condensed version of that study. The term "chronographic" covers texts that have traditionally been called "king lists" or "chronicles". In

113d See E. Gordon, JCS 21 (1967) 86.
117a See A. K. Grayson, Studia Hammurapi, pp. 341ff.
117b Ibid. p. 342.
117c ABC Part I and Appendix A. For the king lists see Edward and Grayson, "King Lists" in RLA 5 (in press). Inevitably the passage of time since completion of the manuscript of ABC (1967) has allowed further development of my ideas; this is reflected in the present paper.
ancient Mesopotamian studies it is essential to have a term for both, since it is not always possible to categorize a given text as one or the other. This is the case, for example, with the document usually called the Assyrian King List. The beginning of this composition merely lists one ruler after another and could be called a king list; but later on there are some narrative sections which are really short chronicles. There are some chronographic texts, on the other hand, which have the characteristics of only a "king list" or a "chronicle". These terms require definition: a "king list" is a list of royal names with the possible addition of regard years and filiation; a "chronicle" is a prose narration, normally in the third person, of events arranged in chronological order.

Ancient Mesopotamian chronographic texts fall naturally into four main categories. These categories are distinguished by certain literary patterns or formulae and, in addition, it can be shown in most instances that the texts in any given category have other tangible connections with one another.

Category A

Two formulae are characteristic of Category A: "The year when..." and "N (were/are) the years of the king". A large number of chronographic texts have one or both of these formulae and within this group many texts are associated with one another for other reasons. The earliest texts are the date lists and these require a word of explanation. In ancient Mesopotamian documents were dated according to year names; each year was given a name which commemorated an important event. From time to time it was necessary to compile a chronological list of these names in order to keep their order straight. With these lists of year names, which are called date lists, there evolved a basic typeology. Each entry in the list began "Year when..." and at the end of each reign there was a summary, "N (were/are) the years of the king".

King Lists of Category A

At an early period extracts were made from the summary formulae of the date lists and thus evolved king lists. A transitional stage is represented by some date lists in which all the summaries of reigns appear together in a list at the end of the text; these are the first king lists of Category A. The earliest independent king lists of category A are the Larsa King

List and the Ur-Isin King List. The largest text is Babylonian King List A. The preserved portion of this badly broken text covers the period from the first dynasty of Babylon down to the late seventh century B.C. Another list, Babylonian King List C, is a short document which lists only the first seven kings of the second dynasty of Isin (c. 1157-1069 B.C.)144. The Uruk King List, in its preserved portion, covers the period from the late seventh century B.C. down through the third century B.C.144.

The king lists of Category A are so succinct and generally so badly preserved that it is difficult to find any answers to historiographical questions. The text type has its origins in date lists and like them the king lists and practical value for chronological reckoning. It would appear, although it cannot be proven, that the king lists eventually became running lists, a new entry being made at the end of each reign. This would not be true of the early portions of Babylonian King List A, however, where the dynasty of the Sutul is listed after the first dynasty of Babylon although it is known that the two were partly contemporaneous.

As to the reliability of the king lists, there seem to be no errors in the sequence of names but the numbers given, at least in the early portion of Babylonian King List A, should be regarded with some scepticism. Considering the number of times some of these texts must have been copied it is not surprising that the figures are not always accurate.

The Babylonian Chronicle Series

The Babylonian Chronicle Series also belongs in category A and probably has its origin in date lists. Texts in this series have the two basic formulae in common with date lists and the two kinds of texts are really not dissimilar. Indeed, one would assume that the date lists were chronicles if one did not know better145.


145 The major publication of each is YOS 1, No. 22 and JCS 8 (1954) 138f., respectively. Further see King Lists 1 and 2 sub "Königslisten" in RLA 5 (in press).
146 C. J. Gadd, CT 30, 24f. See now King List 3 sub "Königslisten" in RLA 5 (in press).
147 A. Poebel, AS 15 (1958) and see King List 4 sub "Königslisten" in RLA 5 (in press).
148 J. J. A. van Dijk, UVIB 18, pp. 53-60 and pl. 28a. See now King List 5 sub "Königslisten" in RLA 5 (in press).
149 The main problem with assuming a connection is the long chronological gap between the end of the period in which year formulae and date lists were regularly used (c. 1535 B.C.) and the beginning of the Babylonian Chronicle Series (747 B.C.). In the interval there are texts, nevertheless, of a similar type such as the Religious Chronicle and the latter portion of the Chronicle of Market Prices (further see ABC Appendix A and n. 16). Of special interest is the text usually called "Date List A" (CT 6, ff, etc. — see Ungnad, RLA 2, pp. 165-168) which is a compilation of the year names from the first year of Sumu-abum to the last year of Samsu-iluna. The extant copy is dated in the beginning...
The Babylonian Chronicle Series, when complete, began in 747 B.C. and continued down at least as far as the third century B.C. It was inscribed on a series of tablets of which only fourteen and one fragment have been preserved. The series may be subdivided into the Neo-Babylonian Chronicle Series and the Late Babylonian Chronicle Series. The dividing point is the Persian capture of Babylon in 539 B.C. After this time there are some stylistic changes in the series which make the later portion distinctive.

Each text consists of one or more entries, each entry covering one regnal year. The events recorded revolve around the Babylonian king and are almost exclusively of a military or political nature. Religious phenomena are rarely mentioned. In terms of content, then, these are the Babylonian equivalent of the Assyrian annals.

The source of information seems to have been a detailed running account of Babylonian history contained within astronomical diaries. An astronomical diary records the events of half a specific year and is divided into sections, each section covering events of one month. Most of the phenomena noted are of an astronomical or meteorological nature but at the end of each monthly section there are statements about market prices, the height of the river, and political and military matters. These entries are obviously based on regular day-by-day observation and recording. There are a number of factors—phraseology, typology, content, and chronology—which indicate that the Babylonian Chronicle Series is a collection of extracts from the relevant portions of the astronomical diaries.

There are now some questions. Who compiled the astronomical diaries and why did they do so? Who extracted information from them to compose the Babylonian Chronicle Series and why did they do this? The question of who these scribes were and what their social and financial position was is difficult to answer for the very good reason that there is little information in our source material. As noted earlier, Oppenheim has recently attempted to reconstruct from the meagre evidence a picture of astrologers during Neo-Assyrian times and this picture may be generally valid for the reign of Ashur-iddin-sin, sixty-five years after the last entry. Surely there was no practical purpose for a list of years, the latest of which was sixty-five years earlier. Rather than a date list, is this text not a history of the rise of the first dynasty of Babylon?

141 This is the beginning of the reign of Nabu-nasr (747-734 B.C.). There is evidence outside of these chronicles that detailed chronological records began to be kept in Babylonia in his reign. On this so-called "Nabu-nasr Era" see ABC pp. 13f.

142 ABC Chronicles 1-13b.

143 See ABC pp. 13f.

The extraction of material to form the Babylonian Chronicle Series must have had different motivations, although this motivation is difficult to define. There is no clear propagandistic flavour to the chronicles. Unlike the Assyrian scribes the Babylonians neither fail to mention Babylonian defeats nor do they attempt to change them into victories. The chronicles contain a reasonably reliable and representative record of important events in the period with which they are concerned. Can we then conclude that these documents are the product of a sincere desire to keep a brief and accurate record of Babylonian history for its own sake? It is at least possible.

Other Chronicles of Category A

Apart from the fourteen texts of the Babylonian Chronicle Series there are four chronicles remaining in category A, the Esharhaddon, Shamash-shuma-ukin, Akku, and Religious Chronicles. Of these, the Esharhaddon


146 It is important to recognize this distinction. If the motive behind each was the same—cf. W. G. Lambert, 975 17 (1972) 71 — then there was no need to extract the material to form the Babylonian Chronicle Series.

147 In cases where other sources have a different version of events the account in the Babylonian Chronicle Series should be regarded as closest to the truth. This is particularly the case when conflicting testimony is found in Assyrian records. See A. K. Grayson in Studies Landsberger, pp. 340-342.

148 If a direct line with date lists could be established (see n. 160 above) it would shed light on this problem. It would mean the scribes had come to recognize that the date lists had value other than as chronological reference works.

149 ABC Chronicles 14-17 respectively.
and Akkum Chronicles have derived their information entirely from the
running account of Babylonian history contained in the astronomical
diaries. The author of each had a specific purpose. The Earhhaddu Chron-
icle is a rewriting of Babylonian history intended to show Earhhaddu,
an Assyrian king who occupied the Babylonian throne simultaneously,
and Babylon in a better light; by omitting or altering disgraceful facts.
The author of the Akkum Chronicle was interested in only one thing:
occasions when there was an interruption of the chief festival of the Baby-
lonian year, the Akkum, and the background to these interruptions.

The Shmash-šulmu-ukin Chronicle contains a collection of extracts
from various reigns. Most concern the king after which the text has been
named and these entries were taken from the running account of Baby-
lonian history. But other entries come from an entirely different and
unknown source. The eclectic nature of the contents and the small size
of the table, indicate it was intended for private use but I have been
unable to determine what this use was.

The Religious Chronicle typologically belongs to category A but the
date of its content (eleventh and tenth centuries B.C.) is much earlier than
that of the Babylonian Chronicle Series. The events noted in this text
are of a rather curious nature. They include the appearance of wild ani-
mal.s in the city, the reported movement of statues, and interruptions
of the Akkum. Although at first glance these phenomena may appear to
be significant for prophecistic, there is no evidence that even apodoses
were ever compiled from these records. This text may be simply a record
of events that seemed important to the author and the fact that the events
do not strike us as momentous as those recorded in the Babylonian Chronicle
Series is a subjective and modern view.

Eponym Lists

While the early Mesopotamians named their years after important
events, the Assyrians named each of theirs after an eponym or luna. The
luna was a little assumed by a different high official each year, the officials
following one another according to a definite order. The Assyrians composed
lists of these eponyms in chronological order for the purpose of dating.
In some of these lists a cursor, note on a military event — e.g. "(campaign)
against Damascus" — would be added. The source of these notes and their
rationale are unknown. There is no evidence of whether the idea of using
eponyms for dating is indigenous to the Assyrians or whether it was inspired
by the early Mesopotamian year names. The eponym lists have formulae

116 For a more detailed discussion of the eponym lists see ABC Appendix A.

similar to that typical of category A but this could be pure coincidence
and there is no evidence to associate them with other texts in category A.

Category B

The formula typical of texts in category B is an obvious one — "The
king ruled for N years". Most of the texts which share this phraseology
exhibit other connections with one another.

Sumerian King List

The Sumerian King List must be included in our discussion not only
because the latter portion of the text touches on the early second millen-
nium but also because it is the prototype of other documents in category
B. The text is a list of rulers with the number of years they reigned and
other bits of information about them. The kings are arranged according
to dynasties. The source material used by the author varied but included
year formulae and literary texts. The kings and dynasties are arranged
sequentially and no indication is given of any synchronisms although it is
known from other sources that many kings and dynasties were contem-
nporaneous. The author of the text was working on the principle that king-
ship descended in one line and could only reside in one city-state at one
time. This view seems to be attested in other sources from the early Old
Babylonian period.

Dynastic Chronicle

Two texts which are closely related to the Sumerian King List are the
Dynastic Chronicle and the King List of the Hellenistic Period. The Dyn-
astic Chronicle is a late version of the Sumerian King List for it has exactly
the same form and style including whole sentences in Sumeri-
ian. The context of the text is curious for, in addition to the usual list
of rulers and regnal years, it includes a description of the flood (it was
merely noted in the Sumerian King List) and, in a much later period,

116 The edicta principis of the Sumerian King List is by T. Jacobsen, AS 1 (1939) For further bibliography see n. 30 above and ABC Appendix C.

In the word "dynasty" is not used in Assyriology in its usual sense of
"ruling family" but to translate Sumerian bala and Akkadian pailu. This is
a term for the total number (even if only one) of kings, regardless of descent,
of one area at one given period of time. See J. R. Kraus, ZA 50 (1952) 10,
2.

For a discussion of bala see W. W. Hallo, JCS 14 (1960) 88-96 and J. J.
Finkelstein, JCS 20 (1966) 1-106. For pailu see H. Talmon, JCS 12 (1958)
26-33.

117 See W. W. Hallo, JCS 14 (1960) 88-114 and JCS 17 (1963) 112-148

118 ABC Chronicle 18. A new piece of this chronicle has been published
by W. C. Lambert in Synecdoche Biblior et Mesopotamian, F. M. Th. de L.
records the burial place of several kings. These features may provide clues to the author's purpose and the Sitz im Leben of the document but I have been unable to determine what these might be.

King List of the Hellenistic Period

The King List of the Hellenistic Period is a list of kings of Babylonia from the time of Alexander the Great to the Arsacid period (second century B.C.) 116. Is it is recorded the name of each king, the number of years he ruled, and the date of his death. The author of the document used the same basic formula characteristic of the Sumerian King List and, in fact, consciously modelled his text after that early document 117. Thus this text appears to be more than merely a chronological aid; it seems to represent an attempt to incorporate these foreign rulers into the native idea of a linear descent of kingship.

Babylonian King List B

Little can be said about this list of the kings of the first dynasty of Babylon and the dynasty of the Sealand 118. It has a literary pattern similar to that characteristic of documents in category B but otherwise there is no reason to associate it with these texts.

Proto-Elamite Canon

The list of ancient Mesopotamian kings compiled in Greek by Ptolemy in the second century A.D. no doubt goes back to a Babylonian source 119. This assertion cannot be proven but is at least supported by the fact that Ptolemy’s list begins with Nabu-nasir (747-734 B.C.) for it is known that a major development in chronological recording took place in that reign 120. The fact that the canon has a literary pattern similar to that of texts in category B could be pure coincidence, particularly since entirely different languages are involved.

117 This is revealed, as Sachs and Wiseman observed, by the use of the Sumerian phrase “u nr n i.g2” “he exercised sovereignty for N years”, the phrase regularly used in the Sumerian King List, rather than the Akkadian equivalent. Moreover, even the form of the sign AG is archaic; it is not the form found in late Babylonian documents.
118 Principal publication: P. Rust *MVAG* 2 (1897) 240. See King List 7 sub “Königlisten” in RLA 5 (in press).
119 See King List 8 sub “Königlisten” in RLA 5 (in press).
120 On the “Nabu-nasir Era” see above n. 161.

Assyria and Babylonia

Assyrian King List

The Assyrian King List is a list of kings of Assyria beginning in earliest times and coming down as far as the reign of Shalmaneser V (726-722 B.C.) 121. The list is divided into sections. In each of the early sections are listed the names of several kings but thereafter each section includes only one king, his filiation and length of reign. In a few cases a short chronic notice appears and each of these concerns a violent seizure of the throne.

The question of source material for the early portions of the list is complex. Relevant is a text published by Finkelstein which contains a genealogical list for the first dynasty of Babylon 122. Several names in the earliest portion are identical with or similar to names in the earliest section of the Assyrian King List. On the other hand names that appear later on in the early portion of the Assyrian King List can be identified from contemporary inscriptions found at Ashur as ancient rulers or that city-state.

It seems reasonably clear now, as Landsberger suggested before publication of the Babylonian genealogical list 123, that the earliest portions of the Assyrian King List represent a conflation of two main sources, a list of ancient indigenous rulers of Ashur and an Amorite genealogical list. The period when this conflation took place would be the time of Shamshi-Adad I. Later the scribes began to make regular entries in the list at the death of each king 124. Thus it appears that originally the document was intended to justify Shamshi-Adad’s claim to the throne. The impetus to compile the list in later periods could have at least two causes: the document was a useful chronological aid and it supported the belief that kingship in Assyria descended in a continuous line with virtually no disruptions 125.

Category C

The formula of the texts in Category C (royal name followed by narrative) is an even more obvious one than that of category B and if it were
not for the fact that the three texts in the group all come from the early period and two of them have passages in common, this would be no reason to associate them. One of the three texts, the Tunmu Chronicle, is a chronological record of kings who restored the Tunmu shrine at Nippur. It is exclusively Sumerian and need not concern us further.\textsuperscript{180}

Weidner Chronicle

The Weidner Chronicle is a narration of events beginning at least as early as the Early Dynastic Period (first half of the third millennium B.C.) and coming down at least as far as the reign of Shulgi (2044-2047 B.C.)\textsuperscript{181}. It is unique among chronicles written in Akkadian both because of the early date of its content and because of the mythological introduction which is fragmentarily preserved. The text is exclusively concerned with the importance of the city Babylon and its patron deity, Marduk. In particular it is concerned with the provision of fish for Marduk's temple. The whole point of the narrative is to illustrate that those rulers who neglected or insulted Babylon, Marduk, and the fish cult had an unhappy end, while those who cared for these fared well. The text, then, is a blatant piece of propaganda written as an admonition to contemporary and future monarchs to pay heed to Babylon and its patron deity. The most likely date of composition seems to be in the period of the second dynasty of Isin, a time when Babylon was once again the capital and Marduk was for the first time being officially recognized as chief of the pantheon. It is unknown what source material was generally used by the author although in one or two cases he may have used omen or other collections.\textsuperscript{182} On the other hand, the Weidner Chronicle was a source used by the compiler of the Chronicle of Early Kings.

Chronicle of Early Kings

The Chronicle of Early Kings is a narration of events which occurred in Mesopotamia from the reign of Sargon of Akkad (c. 2334-2279 B.C.) to the reign of Aga III (c. 1450 B.C.)\textsuperscript{183}. Source material for the early part of this chronicle, which is about Sargon and Naram-Sin, was provided by omens\textsuperscript{184} and the Weidner Chronicle. The majority of the omens used are found in an omen collection and the relevant portion of the chronicle

\textsuperscript{180} Principal publication: Sollberger, \textit{JCS} 16 (1963) 40-47.

\textsuperscript{181} ABC Chronicle 19.


\textsuperscript{183} ABC Chronicle 20.

\textsuperscript{184} For new omen material see Reiner, op. cit. (p. 187).

is really a selected and edited version of these omen apodises with the addition of some information from the Weidner Chronicle. Source material for the later portion of the chronicle is not so obvious but in at least one instance it may have been a year date.

The purpose of the Chronicle of Early Kings is not apparent. The early sections on Sargon and Naram-Sin are, presumably, the product of the scribe's interest in putting together omen apodises in chronicle form. But why he should have done this and why he should have added the later reigns is not known.

Category D

Texts in category D are synchronistic texts from Assyria. In these documents the names of contemporary rulers of Assyria and Babylonia are juxtaposed.

Synchronistic History

The Synchronistic History is a concise narration of Assyro-Babylonian relations from the first half of the fifteenth century B.C. to the reign of Ashur-narrari III (810-783 B.C.)\textsuperscript{185}. It is divided into a number of paragraphs, each paragraph covering the relations of one Assyrian king with his Babylonian contemporary or contemporaries. The document was composed toward the end of the reign of Ashur-narrari III or shortly thereafter. It was a time when Assyria's power was in eclipse and Urartu's in the ascendant. Babylon obviously took advantage of the situation and encroached upon Assyrian territory. The author wrote his document to castigate the Babylonians for their actions and he chose to do so by means of a legal fabrication. He claimed there was an ancient boundary between the two nations, to which they both had agreed, and described the history of alleged violations of that boundary by Babylonia. Each act of aggression resulted in defeat at the hands of the Assyrians. The obvious conclusion is that the Babylonians should desist from their current encroachments for they will assuredly be defeated once again.\textsuperscript{186}

The author drew extensively upon Assyrian royal inscriptions for his source material and his bias and his propagandistic motivation led him to omit or distort important facts — all Assyrian humiliations.\textsuperscript{187} In addi-

\textsuperscript{185} ABC Chronicle 21.

\textsuperscript{186} For a Sumerian text, the famous Etemenak cylinder, see ABC pp. 331.

\textsuperscript{187} In \textit{ABC} p. 54 I stated that the author of the Synchronistic History used royal inscriptions as a source but H. Tadmor, \textit{Essays in Hebrew}, p. 211 and p. 28, believes that the Assyrian chronicles were a source used in common for both the Synchronistic History and royal inscriptions. This proposal has much to be said for it although a firm conclusion must await discovery of more extensive Assyrian chronicle material, a fact which I stressed in \textit{ABC}.
tion, there are a number of errors in personal names in the text. On the whole, therefore, it is a very unreliable source for a modern historian.

Synchronistic King List

The Synchronistic King List is a list of Assyrian kings with the names of their Babylonian contemporaries juxtaposed. In addition, the name of the Assyrian ummânû “vice-chancellor” is frequently included. The list of rulers begins early in the second millennium and comes down to Assurbanipal (663-627 B.C.). The origin and purpose of the list are unknown.

Miscellaneous Chronographic Texts

Chronicle P is a fragment of a Babylonian document which narrated events during the Kassite period. It is a curious text in that it includes a lengthy extract from a Babylonian historical epic. Not enough of the chronicle is preserved to determine its origin or intent.

The Chronicle of Market Prices contains entries of prices for certain goods during a few reigns scattered over a long period of time. There seems to be no relationship between the prices noted and actual prices attested in contemporary documents or idealized prices immortalized in contemporary royal inscriptions. The text is similar in style to relevant entries in astronomical diaries and may be closely related to those texts. But nothing definite is known of its origin or purpose.

The Eclipsi: Chronicle contains brief entries on a variety of subjects over a long period of time but there is no clear evidence of the rationale behind it.

Finally, the existence of Assyrian Chronicles must be acknowledged although little is known about them. Small fragments of five different chronicles from the Middle Assyrian period are preserved. There is evidence that Assyrian Chronicles were used as source material for royal inscriptions.

Historical-Literary Texts

The term “Historical-Literary” covers a general group of texts which are literary in the narrow sense of that word and which are concerned

187 King List 12 sub “Königslisten” in RIA 5 (in press). More than one type of Synchronistic King List is known but types other than the one under discussion are very fragmentarily attested — see King lists 13-17 sub “Königslisten” in RIA 5.

188 ABC Chronicle 23.

189 ABC Chronicle 24.

190 See the relevant portions of ABC and the Addenda.


mainly with historical or natural events rather than with mythological or supernatural occurrences. Within this general category three basic genres can be discerned: Prophecy, Historical Epic, and Pseudo-Autobiography.

Prophecies

An Akkadian Prophecy is a prose composition consisting of a number of “predictions” of past events. It concludes with either a “prediction” of phenomena in the writer’s day or with a genuine attempt to forecast future events. The author, in other words, uses vaticinium ex eventu to establish his credibility and then proceeds to his real purpose which might be to justify a current idea or institution or to forecast future doom for a hated enemy. The predictions are divided according to reigns and often begin with some such phrase as “a prince will arise”. Although the kings are never named it is sometimes possible to identify them on the basis of details provided in the “prophectic” description. The reigns are characterized as “good” or “bad” and the phraseology is borrowed from omen literature. There is some evidence that the genre has its roots in Sumerian literature. Comparative material is also known from Egypt in the form of the Admonitions of Ipu-Wer and the Prophecy of Neferti.

Five Akkadian prophecies are known: the Dynastic Prophecy, Text A 192, the Urk Prophecy 193, the Marduk Prophectic Speech and the Shulgi Prophectic Speech 194. All of these works exhibit the basic characteristics already described. In addition, the documents may be subdivided with the Dynastic Prophecy, Text A, and the Urk Prophecy: one group and the Marduk and Shulgi Prophectic Speeches in another, for the latter are in the form of an address in the first person while the former are in the third person.

The Marduk Prophectic Speech was written during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I (c. 1125-1104 B.C.) and was part of the morentious religious


193 U 13 132, p. 87 and Tafel 25.

movement of the time, the elevation of the god Marduk to kingship over the gods. The author "predicts" the three occasions in the past when Marduk's statue had been carried off by a foreign invader. Then he "predicts" the return of the statue in his own time and the peace and prosperity which ensued.

The purpose of the Shulgi Prophetic Speech is not so apparent since the text is badly broken, particularly towards the end. The Speech concludes about the time of the fall of the Kassite dynasty or possibly as late as Nebuchadnezzar I. The cities Nippur and Babylun with their inhabitants have a prominent role and one wonders if the text was intended to lend prophetic support to claims of these cities to privileged status in a period when these privileges were being challenged.

The Urk Prophecy is concerned solely with the city Urk and its welfare. It concludes with a prediction that the kings of Urk will rule the world in a period of plenty. There is no clue to the date of this chauvinistic composition.

The Dynastic Prophecy contains a "prediction" of the Fall of Assyria and Rise of Babylonia, the Fall of Babylonia and Rise of Persia, and the Fall of Persia and Rise of Macedon. The concluding portion of the document is poorly preserved but may have contained a prophecy of the Fall of Macedon. If so, this real attempt at prediction could be an expression of anti-Selucid sentiment in Babylonia. Of great assistance in identifying specific reigns in the Dynastic Prophecy is the inclusion of numbers of years the unnamed monarchs ruled.

Although the fifth Akkadian prophecy, Text A also includes figures for the length of reign, the tablet is poorly preserved and there is no certainty when to date the context nor what the purpose of the composition was.

Akkadian Prophecies are not similar to biblical prophecy but they are similar to a certain kind of Jewish Apocalyptic. In style, form, and rationale there is a striking resemblance to sections of the Book of Daniel (8:23-25 and 11:3-45). The anonymity of the rulers, the phrase "a prince will arise", and the use of "第一时间 ex eventis" are all features they have in common. Moreover, the concept of the Rise and Fall of Empires in the Dynastic Prophecy, an idea with its roots in the dynastic tradition of Mesopotamian chronography, is also found in the Book of Daniel. Thus there is a very close relationship and the Akkadian Prophecies seem to represent an early stage in the development of ancient Near Eastern Apocalyptic.

Historical Epics

Akkadian Historical Epics are lengthy poetic narratives about the activities of kings. In contrast to other Akkadian epics the events described are essentially concerned with human rather than mythological figures. While the epic form is Sumerian in origin, the historical epic seems to have been an Akkadian phenomenon. In fact, the genre is apparently not known in Hebrew, Egyptian, or Hittite. There are three main groups of historical epics: Early Historical Epics, Assyrian Historical Epics, and Babylonian Historical Epics.

Early Historical Epics

The best preserved text is the Kigl of Battle Epic, a composition about Sargon of Akkad's alleged expedition to Anatolia, Sargon is the hero of the tale and is portrayed as having conducted a most arduous and successful campaign. The existence of a merchant colony in Anatolia, which is assumed in the narrative, would appear to be anachronistic since there is no clear evidence that such a merchant colony existed before c. 2000 B.C. and this provides a tentative terminus ante quem for the recension of the tale. A terminus ante quem may be provided by the early Old Babylonian date of a similar story, which may be another version of this epic, from Tell Harmal. The composition could be based on legendary material passed down from Sargon's time and could incorporate legendary material about other heroes. Copies of the epic or closely related compositions are known from Old Babylonian to Neo-Assyrian times and from sites both within and without Mesopotamia (Amarna and Boghazkoy). There was even a version in Hittite.

The Naram-Sin Epic is poorly attested but enough is preserved to recognize that it was a poetic narrative of Naram-Sin's conquest of Apis. Naram-Sin is known by its origin or date. A fragment of an epic in which the Fall of Ur (c. 2000 B.C.) was described was found at Ur but nothing can be said about the text on the basis of the one small piece.

Assyrian Historical Epics

Only two Assyrian Historical Epics are known, one of Adad-narari I.

most of the text is still missing. In the preserved portion the defeat of Assyria and the coronation of Nabopolassar is described and it is reasonable to assume that the entire epic was about Nabopolassar and the foundation of the Chaldaean Dynasty. The god Marduk is acknowledged throughout as the vital force behind these events.

The Verse Account of Nabonidus has the general form and style of a Babylonian historical epic but is unique in that it is essentially a religious-political tract. It was written in the interests of the Marduk priests at Babylon with the intention of discrediting and castigating Nebonidsus for his alleged sacrilege towards their cult. In addition it was written to curry favour with the Persian conquerors who are said to have behaved properly towards Marduk.

The Babylonian historical epics are tendentious works. In each prevails the theme of the supremacy of Marduk over the gods and the ill fate that befalls a Babylonian king who neglects his worship. It is clear, then, that the authors of these epics were partisans and perhaps priests of the Marduk cult at Babylon. All the textual material is known from late copies, most of which came from one school or library. It is very difficult to establish dates for the original completion of the epics but the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I (c. 1125-1104 B.C.) is a likely possibility for the texts about the second millennium. The Chaldaean epics must obviously be dated later than the events they describe. The Nabonidus Verse Account was certainly written shortly after the fall of Babylon in 539 B.C. The fact that late copies of all these epics are extant is a clear reflection of the Babylonians' endeavour in the Persian and Seleucid periods to preserve their cultural heritage.

Pseudo-Autobiographies

Pseudo-autobiographies are narratives cast in the form of royal autobiographies. The phenomena described are mainly military in nature with legendary overtones. The literary form originates in the Sumerian period. No examples of such texts are known in Hebrew or Hittite but in Egyptian a composition about Djoser is similar in form. It must be admitted that there is not yet sufficient text material to establish firmly the existence

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(c. 1306-1274 B.C.) and one of the kings of Assyria and Babylonia which ended in the conquest of Babylonia and the defeat of its king, Kushtilishu. The theme throughout is the sinfulness of the Babylonian monarch and the righteous indignation of his Assyrian counterpart who, when finally compelled to do battle, fought with unsurpassed courage and skill. This is really a panegyric of the king, in poetic narrative style, probably written at the end of the war to celebrate its successful conclusion.

Babylonian Historical Epics

Several Babylonian Historical Epics are known but most are preserved only in a very fragmentary form. There are three epics about the kings of the second millennium and three epics about the Chaldaean kings in the first millennium. In addition there is the Verse Account of Nabonidus which is rather special.

The first of the epics about the second millennium kings concerns Kishgalzu and the preserved portion describes battles successfully fought by this king and his gifts of thanks to the god Marduk at the conclusion. The second epic, about Adad-shuma-usur, seems to describe a successful rebellion by officers and nobles of Babylon against Adad-shuma-usur. The cause of the trouble appears to be neglect of Marduk and Babylon. After the conflict the penitent king confesses his sins to Marduk and restores his temple. The third epic concerned with the second millennium is of Nebuchadnezzar I. Only the beginning of the text is preserved and in it is narrated the king's lament over the absence of the god Marduk from Babylon. The epic must have gone on to describe Nebuchadnezzar's heroic campaign to Elam and his victorious return to Babylon with Marduk's statue, deeds which are known from other sources.

Only one of the three epics of Chaldaean kings is sufficiently preserved to allow discussion and even for this epic, which is about Nabopolassar,

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of such a genre in Akkadian. There is really only one text, the Chaldean Legend of Naram-Sin, which is sufficiently preserved to allow analysis. The Chaldean Legend of Naram-Sin is a story of how Naram-Sin failed time and again to defeat invading hordes. The reason for this, according to the text, was his refusal to heed the omens. The story concludes with an exhortation to a later prince to learn from this tale of woe and conduct himself accordingly. It is a didactic document, intended to convince contemporary and future monarchs of the power of the diviner.

Part D
Ideas of the Past

Any attempt to synthesize in a few pages the attitude of the Assyrians and Babylonians towards their past is fraught with difficulty. The major problems have become obvious by this time and I need only summarize them and briefly mention one or two more. There is the Sumerian background; there are the differences between Assyrians and Babylonians; there is a time span of almost two thousand years; there are local peculiarities such as differences one might find in the attitude at Babylon and Sippar; and there is the possibility of differences of attitude on the part of "schools" or even individuals. In the subsequent synthesis all of these basic considerations must be kept in mind.

The Assyrians and Babylonians we are abundantly interested in the past and the reasons for this interest, which largely go back to Sumerian times, were multiple. A common motive was the use of the past for propagandistic or didactic purposes. Causes could be furthered and ideas disseminated by means of compositions about former times. The Synchronistic History, the Weidner Chronicle, the Nalunisus Verse Account, the Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I, the Chaldean Legend of Naram-Sin and the Prophetic Speeches of Marduk and Shulgi are each examples of the past being used to justify and further a specific doctrine or view. The Babylonian Historical Epics are certainly tinted with works and a reason for their composition, or at least for the recension of the versions that are preserved, may have been the championing and spread of the tenet of the supremacy of Marduk.

Chauvinism, a phenomenon closely related to propaganda, is a strong element in some of the texts just mentioned, particularly the Synchronistic History and the Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I. The fact that most of the Babylonian Historical Epics are known from copies of the Persian or Seleucid period suggests the possibility that they represent an attempt to encourage national pride.

The Dynastic Prophecy may embody an even stronger sentiment — hatred of the Selenecian hegemony — if its concluding portion actually does forecast doom for the Macedonians. Berossos, on the other hand, in choosing to write in Greek shows a sincere interest in teaching the Macedonians about Babylonian history. Thus propagandistic and didactic reasons lie behind a large number of Assyrian and Babylonian compositions about the past.

Another motive evident from our study of the historiographical genres is found in the legendary figure the "superhero". It is a well known phenomenon in both oral and literary tradition that on occasion special circumstances at a particular point in time and exceptional capabilities of a particular human being fuse to produce a hero who performs astounding deeds which became enshrined in legend. In Mesopotamia such a figure was Sargon of Akkad. By the same token Naram-Sin represents a kind of anti-hero in that he suffered incredible catastrophes. Each of these figures came to be embodied in a complex legendary tradition that eventually, in its written form, was embodied in a variety of literary forms.

For Naram-Sin, there are no less than five different literary compositions attested and they represent three different genres. See: A. K. Grayson and E. Sollberger, RA 70 (1976) 123-128. In content, these are connections between the various texts but the narrative of each is distinct. In addition, Naram-Sin is an important figure in chronicles and historical inscriptions and some of his royal inscriptions were preserved in royal copies. Further see H. G.
A practical side to the interest in the past of the Assyrians and Babylonians, as well as of the Sumerians, is abundantly evident. This appears in the date lists, king lists, and Assyrian eponym lists, all of which were intended as calendrical or chronological aids. Another practical use of history was in the realm of divination. The diviners occasionally used "historical" references as omen apocryphes. Thus an omen on the liver might be interpreted as "The omen of Sargon who marched to the West Land and conquered the West Land" or "The omen of Naram-Sin who marched against Apishal, he reached the wall, and captured Rib-Adda the king of Apishal".

The historical omens are often anecdotal and even bizarre: "The omen of Rimush whose servants killed him with their cylinder seals". This reminds one of popular historical reminiscences as found in schoolboy's history ("King Alfred burnt the peasant's tarts") and nursery rhymes ("The grand old duke of York, he had ten thousand men"). The content of such sources is not very informative for the modern historian but the reliability of the facts can hardly be questioned, a point which Finkelstein has convincingly demonstrated. A Mesopotamian diviner living at other times in other lar is might have written: "The omen of Absalom who was killed while hanging from the thick branches of a great oak"; "The omen of sultan Mip Arlan who died tripping over his head"; or "The omen of King Edward VII who was removed from his throne when he fell in love with an American divorcee".

The astronomical and astrological uses for it appears that they were used as a source of new omens by the astrologers. The extraction of the sections on political and military history from these astronomical diaries to form the Babylonian Chronicle Series had different motivation and, as I have already suggested, this may have been recognition of intrinsic value in a concise and accurate record of Babylonian history.

Related to Assyrian and Babylonian ideas of the past is their concern that certain matters should be remembered in the future. It was this concern that prompted the writing of royal inscriptions, particularly the commemorative texts. A frequent theme in the commemorative inscriptions is that the recorded deeds surpass anything done by earlier monarchs. The royal inscriptions are really eulogies, with pious overtones, to future peoples of the king's accomplishments.

Passing on from the reasons which inspired Assyrians and Babylonians to write about their past, there are features of this interest and of their view of the world in general which deserve our attention. In the ancient Mesopotamian Weltanschaung natural and supernatural matters were tightly interwoven. Any disruption among the gods had its immediate effect upon earth for the gods constantly moved in both celestial and mundane spheres. Each god had one or more specific areas of activity and these were delineated by simal, a term we usually translate as "fates" or "destinies". Within his designated area or areas any god could act freely. Thus the god Ea was responsible for clever deeds and was called upon whenever cunning was required. Shamash, the sun god and supreme judge, was invoked whenever justice was in question. All events on earth had their origin in and were controlled by heavenly powers. Causation, the bogey of modern historiographers, was no problem to the ancient Mesopotamians; all things were ordered by the gods.

To the ancient Assyrian and Babylonian, past, present, and future were all part of one continuous stream of events in heaven and earth. There was a beginning in the distant past, but there was no middle or end. Gods and men continued as infinitum. There is no evidence in Babylonian thought of any eschatology nor is there any place for a critical view of history.

Assyriologie Internationale (Paris 1966) pp. 69-76. A link between these chronicles and divination is more apparent than real. The early section of the Chronicle of Early Kings is certainly extracted from omen collections, but as in the case of the Babylonian Chronicle Series, the motive surely must be unrelated to divination. Otherwise why would the prophets be omitted?

The Tukulti-Ninurta I Epic, the only Assyrian Historical Epic sufficiently preserved to allow study, seems also to be commemorative in nature since it was apparently written to celebrate the successful conclusion of the war with Babylonia. A; the same time there is an element of self-justification inherent in the work. The Assyrian letters to the god seem to have their reason d'être in the king's sense of need to render an accounting to his god and subjects. It is possible that this motive was behind the royal inscriptions but it is not as apparent.

See DHLT p. 21, n. 34.
The central position of the king and his relations with the gods are salient features of the historiographical texts. In particular the monarch’s building activity is a predominant concern of the royal inscriptions throughout Assyrian and Babylonian history. In addition, in Assyria the military endeavours of the king very early attract interest while in Babylonia this becomes a feature only in the late period, in the chronicles. There is, of course, a correlation between the period when the interest in military activity appears and the period when each nation was an important military power.

Another characteristic worthy of notice is the attitude towards kingship displayed in these texts. The concept of dynasties appears very early, in the king lists, and is an idea peculiar to Babylonia (as opposed to Assyria). This dynastic view involved belief in the linear descent of kingship and is attested in Babylonia as late as the Hellenistic period. The concept of the “rise” and “fall” of empires, which appears in the late period in the Dynastic Prophecy, is an aspect of this dynastic theory. In Assyria the dynastic idea never appeared; the Assyrians viewed their monarchy as one continuous royal line.

There are other features of interest. The legal fiction embodied in the Synchronistic History reflects the importance of law in ancient Mesopotamian society. The portrayal of reigns as “good” or “bad” in the Prophecies is a concept from the realm of divination. The accretion to central figures of legendary material from various sources is a universal phenomenon and not peculiar to Assyria and Babylonia. Finally, the custom of selecting “important events”, all of which focus on the king, has its origin in the third millennium in dat lists and is the principle still followed by the Babylonian chronicles in the first millennium.

The question arises whether there are certain periods in Assyrian and Babylonian history when there is a pronounced interest in the past. This is the case in at least two instances. In Babylonia about the time of Nebuchadrezzar I (c. 1125-1104 B.C.E.) monumental religious developments were taking place and a need was felt for historical justification for these which apparently resulted in the composition of some of the works discussed in Part C. Another period was the Hellenistic Age when Babylonians, dominated by foreigners, attempted not only to preserve their dying culture but also, if my suggestion with regard to the late copies of the Baby-

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Assyria and Babylonian Historical Epistles is valid, to promote a sense of pride in themselves. It should be remembered with regard to periods of particular interest in the past that in the mid-eighth century B.C. a decision was taken to record details of astronomical and mundane events in a systematic manner.

A word must be said at this point about relations with foreign cultures. There is no evidence of foreign influence, if we exclude Sumerian civilization, on the Assyrian and Babylonian interest in the past or its mode of expression. On the other hand, there is some indication of an Assyrian and Babylonian impact on other cultures in this sphere. Urartian royal inscriptions are clearly modeled after, and frequently in the same language as, Assyrian royal inscriptions. It would seem that Elamite royal inscriptions were also influenced by ancient Mesopotamian form. Copies of historical-literary texts about Sargon have been found in Egyptian (Amarna) and Hitite (Boghazkoi) territory and, in the latter case, similar works about Naram-Sin have also been discovered. There were even versions of these texts in the Hitite language found at Boghazkoi. Finally, a link between the Akkadian Prophecies and ancient Near Eastern apocalyptic has been established.

A matter which requires discussion is the fact that there is no word in Akkadian, nor in Sumerian, for “history”. But neither is there a word for “literature”, “theology”, “jurisprudence”, “science”, etc. This lack points to a basic difference in outlook between modern Western man and the ancient Assyrian and Babylonian. The learned lore of the ancient Mesopotamians certainly included all of the subjects just mentioned but his conceptualization and categorization of learning was different. An indication of this may be seen in the ancient lists.

The ancient Mesopotamian scribes compiled extensive lists of names — lists of plant names, lists of animal names, lists of professional names, lists of god names, even lists of personal names. These lists had practical value for the ancient scribe and were used much like a modern dictionary.