

LETTERS FROM MESOPOTAMIA

Official, Business, and Private Letters on Clay Tablets from Two Millennia

Translated and with an Introduction by

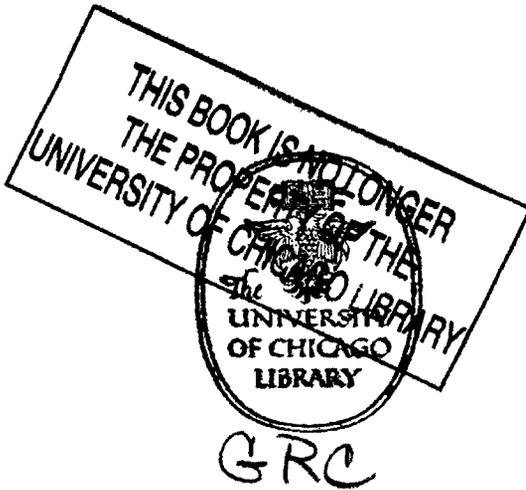
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Foreword

This book contains the translations of one hundred and fifty letters written in Akkadian on clay tablets. The earliest date from the time of King Sargon of Akkad (about 2334–2279 B.C.), the latest from the period of Persian domination over Mesopotamia (beginning 539 B.C.). The tablets come either from Mesopotamia proper or from regions to the west, even from as far as Asia Minor, Cyprus, and Egypt.

I have selected these letters from many thousands of published clay tablets of this type to provide a panoramic view of Mesopotamian civilization during this extended span of time. My purpose in making such an anthology is to convey a more intimate and varied image of this civilization than that offered by the readily available translations of Akkadian epic texts, royal inscriptions, and law codes. Although the selection is, ultimately, subjective, two guiding principles were adopted: I chose the atypical rather than the typical to reproduce, however inadequately, the kaleidoscopic diversity of life as mirrored in these documents; and I concentrated on letters that are reasonably well preserved and that do not urgently require comment and elucidation. This has limited my selection, and thus the picture offered conveys by no means all the richness and variety of the material at our disposal. In an attempt to compensate for this shortcoming, I have added a bibliography of translated Akkadian letters (p. 201) for

readers who wish to obtain a better coverage of the information preserved in these letters from Mesopotamia.

To assist the untutored reader in understanding the complex background of the letters, a condensed survey of Mesopotamian civilization, its sources, and its development is presented as the first part of this book under the title "The Measure of Mesopotamia." The essay "Can These Bones Live?" introduces the second part and should bring home the difficulties and the challenge of the search for an adequate translation of Akkadian texts. The glossary of persons, places, and technical terms (p. 213) will help to identify events and personalities mentioned in the translated letters.

My main debt of gratitude is to Dr. Maurits N. van Loon, Oriental Institute, University of Chicago. He selected the illustrations—which I wanted to show features of individuals rather than the hieratic anonymity of the representations of Mesopotamian gods and kings—and also took charge of the map presented here. For the reading of the manuscript I am indebted to Erica Reiner and for that of the proofs to Dr. R. D. Biggs.

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Abbreviations

AAA	Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology
AbB.	F. R. Kraus, <i>Altbabylonische Briefe</i>
ABL	R. F. Harper, <i>Assyrian and Babylonian Letters</i>
AfO	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
AIBL	Academie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, <i>Compte rendu</i>
AIPHOS	<i>Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves</i>
AJSL	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures</i>
AO	<i>Tablets in the collections of the Musée du Louvre</i>
ARM	<i>Archives royales de Mari (autographed copies)</i>
ARMT	<i>Archives royales de Mari (texts in transliteration and translation)</i>
ArOr	<i>Archiv Orientální</i>
AS	<i>Assyriological Studies (Oriental Institute, University of Chicago)</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BE	<i>Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania, Series A: Cuneiform Texts</i>
BIN	<i>Babylonian Inscriptions in the Collection of J. B. Nies</i>
BiOr	<i>Bibliotheca Orientalis</i>
CCT	<i>Cuneiform Texts from Cappadocian Tablets</i>
CT	<i>Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets</i>
EA	J. A. Knudtzon, <i>Die El-Amarna-Tafeln</i>
Fish	T. Fish, <i>Letters of the First Babylonian Dynasty in the John Rylands Library, Manchester</i>
HSS	<i>Harvard Semitic Series</i>
IBoT	<i>Istanbul Arkeoloji Müzelerinde Bulunan Boğazköy Tabletleri</i>

xii ABBREVIATIONS

JCS	Journal of Cuneiform Studies
JEA	Journal of Egyptian Archaeology
JEOL	Jaarbericht van het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Genootschap "Ex Oriente Lux"
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society
KAJ	Keilschrifttexte aus Assur juristischen Inhalts
KAV	Keilschrifttexte aus Assur verschiedenen Inhalts
KBo	Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi
KUB	Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi
MAOG	Mitteilungen der Altorientalischen Gesellschaft
MCS	Manchester Cuneiform Studies
MRS	Mission de Ras Shamra
MVAG	Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatisch-Aegyptischen Gesellschaft
OECT	Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Texts
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications
OLZ	Orientalistische Literaturzeitung
Or NS	Orientalia Nova Series
PBS	Publications of the Babylonian Section, University Museum, University of Pennsylvania
PEQ	Palestine Exploration Quarterly
PSBA	Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology
RA	Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale
RAI	Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Compte rendu
REg	Revue d'égyptologie
RHA	Revue hittite et asianique
RT	Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l'archéologie égyptiennes et assyriennes
TCL	Textes cunéiformes du Louvre
TCS	Texts from Cuneiform Sources
TIM	Texts in the Iraq Museum
UET	Ur Excavations, Texts
VAB	Vorderasiatische Bibliothek
WZJ	Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena
YOR	Yale Oriental Series, Researches
YOS	Yale Oriental Series, Babylonian Texts
ZA	Zeitschrift für Assyriologie
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft

PART I

The Measure of Mesopotamia

A SURVEY OF MESOPOTAMIAN
CIVILIZATION

Where is the knowledge we have lost
in information? T. S. Eliot

INTRODUCTION

The state of Iraq and other adjacent regions of today's Iran, Turkey, and Syria contain the core of that part of the ancient Near East in which Mesopotamian civilization held sway from the beginning of the third millennium B.C. into the first millennium A.D. Mesopotamian civilization also exercised influences of varying reach and intensity beyond—at times far beyond—the present borders of these nations.

Instead of the customary linguistically oriented expressions (Sumerian, Sumero-Akkadian, Assyro-Babylonian civilization), in this essay I shall use the term "Mesopotamian civilization," which I consider both more exact and wider in scope. I use this term just as we may use the term "European civilization" when striving to express the unity represented by the aggregate of Europe's individual civilizations that confronts us as we view them in their

totality against the backdrop of the non-European world. Thus, the designation "Mesopotamian civilization" emphasizes its inherent unity without minimizing the diversity that the several distinct regional formulations and the multiphasic development of that civilization produced within the geographical and temporal limitations mentioned.

The history of the region is expressed in the names of many peoples: Iraqis, Turks, Arabs, Byzantines, Greeks, Kurds, Persians, Arameans, Assyrians, Hurrians, Amorites, Babylonians, Sumerians, and Proto-Sumerians have been identified in the area and we will undoubtedly be able, sooner or later, to attach names to their predecessors and to more of their contemporaries. They all searched there for more and better soil, for a water supply more reliable than that which the grudging sky yielded; they looked for protection against the raging seasonal floods, dug canals, erected dykes and other constructions to guide and store the precious water. They discovered and domesticated—or introduced—many plants and animals to make Mesopotamia livable. Of what importance are languages, religious concepts, political beliefs, art, or literature for the understanding of the history of a region where living conditions are precariously balanced between abundance and catastrophe, where settled life is constantly threatened by the floods, by the incessant inroads of the desert into arable land, and by the progressive deterioration of any tilled soil?

In contrast to the monolithic unity of the Egyptian landscape, a considerable variety of specific "landscapes" characterizes the regions where the civilization of Mesopotamia flourished. Along the rivers we find fertile, oasis-like stretches such as those that appear here and there on the Tigris and its tributaries, and especially on the Euphrates, wherever the formation of the river banks makes agriculture by irrigation possible. The flatlands and the narrow valleys, between the parallel chains of hills which ascend in ever higher ranges from the piedmont plains along the Tigris to the alpine tops of the Zagros Mountains, enjoy sufficient rainfall to assure annual cereal crops and to produce an abundance of fruit trees. In the plain between and beyond the two great rivers

are widely scattered areas where the local topography and the nature of the soil allow man, by the grace of the weather god, to raise cereals, although the crops vary considerably in yield and quality with the amount of rain and the care given the fields. Large tracts of land between the sown fields and the barren desert offer grazing grounds for flocks of sheep and goats, even for cattle, depending on the season and the region. Agricultural possibilities on a smaller scale are offered to Mesopotamian man in the form of date palm plantations along the middle and lower course of the Euphrates and by the extremely fertile oasis-like "islands" that appear here and there along the dry and denuded flanks of the mountains. In such areas (Dêr, Khaniqîn, and others), seasonal torrents can be made invaluable to agriculture and horticulture. Swampy land along rivers and canals, which emerges annually after the passing of the flood, is also able to yield a plentiful harvest of vegetables and summer crops without sustained man-made irrigation.

Each of these landscapes supports specific crops, and each crop requires specific skills and care. Their needs in manpower, as well as the timing of their productivity, differ widely. The combination of these factors determines the economic potential of each landscape, and hence its density of population and standard of living, both of which in turn affect neighboring areas. Only in rare instances do the landscapes exist in isolation, however. Normally regions like the banks of the Euphrates above Sippar, the plain watered by the canals fanning out downstream from Sippar, or the land between the Tigris and the foothills of the Zagros Mountains are composed of two or more landscapes that form symbiotic economic and political units.

The effectiveness of the symbiosis and the direction given by the dominant landscape and its crop determine the internal structure of the regional unit, and eventually its political potential. The overall social and economic organization of such a unit is decisively influenced by its ecological constitution; obviously, a predominance of small-scale garden plots which produce vegetables from spring into summer, or of large fields planted in fall with cereals, or of date groves that represent long-term projects,

or of herds that have to be moved seasonally—often over long distances—to stay in pasture will create specific economic, social, and political conditions. Each ecological situation entails a labor force of a certain size and skill, and a certain type of capital investment and of economic integration to utilize the crops, whether barley, dates, sesame, or wool. Moreover, each calls for a different relationship between the owner of the land and those who use and work it. In this way, the dominant landscape in a particular locale tends to give that political unit its economic characteristics.

In this connection, it should be stressed that it is largely by chance that we know, today, about the economic life of any specific region of Mesopotamia. Our sole source of information is the corpus of clay tablets dealing with economic matters and reflecting more or less adequately the workings of the bureaucracy that handled crops and recorded rations and wages. The use of bureaucratic methods as such, however, depends on the socioeconomic organization required by the nature of the crop. Where records were not considered essential, we remain ignorant of the practices for growing, harvesting, and handling crops, even when large-scale transactions must have taken place. Much more complicated business was transacted with purely operational devices and without written records than we suppose.

As a rule, one encounters in such economic texts long lists of rations given out to men, women, and sometimes children; contracts with seasonal workers; records of tax arrangements of all kinds; documents concerned with the renting of fields and gardens; records referring to the handling of staples and materials within large organizations—the palace, the temple, or the army. It is customary to use this mine of information as evidence for or against “Staatskapitalismus” in Mesopotamia, or to point out the role and importance of private enterprise and the economic weight carried by clanlike or manorial organizations (temple or palace). I would rather see the evidence analyzed in relation to particular forms of economic integration rooted in specific landscapes, whose symbioses within given political units are largely responsible for the bewildering picture presented by the economic tablets from Mesopotamia. This approach would provide a convenient frame

of reference for a more penetrating analysis of well-defined text groups and would also account for the fact that as many modes of economic integration coexisted in the Mesopotamia of our studies as do now in modern Iraq. There, the basic landscape-conditioned economic situation did not change significantly until the recurrent revolutions of the 1950's, and it may well be seriously doubted whether the economic structure will ever become divorced from the landscape of the region by a lesser miracle than intensive industrialization.

Large-scale cereal agriculture in Mesopotamia—whether based on rain or irrigation—necessarily leads to a “storage economy.” This means that throughout most of the year rations must be doled out to those who work the fields, regardless of the specific social or legal status of the workmen and regardless of whether the temple, palace, moneylender, bank, or a welfare agency is distributing the dole. Practiced on a smaller scale, cereal agriculture in Mesopotamia inevitably results in the indebtedness of the farmers; their eventual bankruptcy reduces them to “sharecroppers” for absentee landowners, moneylenders, banks, or—nowadays—government agencies. Outside of the irrigation areas, or in such localities where costly irrigation installations are not necessary, small agricultural villages and family holdings supported by diversified crops (cereals, vegetables, dates, and flocks) can eke out a living if not hampered by the tax and corvée demands of a distant administration.

This situation accounts for the fact that, in ancient Mesopotamia, the capitalist as entrepreneur dares to invest in land for cereal production only in times of peace and security because of the amount of work and men needed seasonally to ensure the water supply, to do the field work, and to process the crop; by and large he seems to prefer to support date-growing, or if much capital is involved, to join corporations of overland traders. These traders, having come to terms with the political powers (sedentary or nomadic) of the surrounding areas, nearly always succeed in maintaining a thin but tenacious network of trade contacts between the “units” in Mesopotamia, and also with those foreign regions that furnish either raw materials (stones, metal) or luxury

items (spices, timber, slaves). Thus it is primarily up to the exponents of the storage economy, such as temple administrators and rulers who are interested in such imports, to stimulate overland trade. They alone can produce in their workshops, staffed by serfs, the goods (textiles) to be exported in exchange for raw materials which Mesopotamia does not provide, and their stores alone are large enough to tide them over crop failures. Only such cities (e.g., Mari) or tribes who participated effectively in overland trade could rely on barley imported along the Euphrates because they alone had the silver to make this trade in staples lucrative for the producers and merchants involved.

This geographic, economic, and social situation had definite historical consequences. Throughout the entire political history of the states based on such constellations of landscapes and larger units, a persistent instability is evident in the duration and extent of the realm. This instability and the repeated change of capitals—Ur, Kish, Isin, Larsa, Babylon, in the south and Assur, Calah, Nineveh in the north—give the impression that a centralized territorial state was never the native and natural form of large-scale political organization in Mesopotamia. It seems that in the south (Babylonia) small regions were preferred, typically a city with a corona of fields, gardens, pastures, and manors, while in the north (Assyria) the village type of political structure under an official of a distant ruler as “lord” held sway throughout the duration of its history. Larger assemblages became effective only when and where certain nonsedentary elements of the population attempted to create suprasedgmental power structures into which they coerced those engaged in agricultural pursuits whose interests were basically parochial.

Although such a statement holds true, in a general way, for both Babylonia and Assyria, essentially different driving forces seem to have been at work in these sister civilizations. It has to be kept in mind that in Babylonia all political units were surrounded by expanses of sparsely settled land inhabited by seminomadic and nomadic groups. Evidence suggests that all the politically active and aggressive kings were probably of nonurban extraction, whatever their specific linguistic backgrounds may have been.

Thus, the relation between ruler and subject in Babylonia often paralleled that between the nomads migrating through the landscapes and the city dwellers deriving their living from the agricultural installations around their walls, cooperating at times, conflicting at others. Unification in Assyria was more effective because of the absence of important, independent cities (see p. 8), and also because of the effective use of a royal ideology intimately linked with the "national" religion. This enabled the central administration to exact taxes, labor, and military services on a wider scale than was possible in Babylonia.

The dynamics of political life in Mesopotamia are often curiously overshadowed by the economic and political impact that the growth and staying power of the closed-circuit organizations of the temple and the palace provide. The autarchic household which generates these two essential institutions is basically neither aggressive nor even expansionistic. The lord of the household, whether god or king, serves as the central point of an economic circulation system, and the concept of loyalty as its unifying ideological principle. Royal planning bent on enlarging the sphere of the king's influence by diplomatic or warlike means is a type of political thought rooted, as has been suggested, in mainly non-Mesopotamian attitudes. When, however, this is combined with the economic weight of an efficient and self-supporting bureaucratic organization, imperialistic tendencies do not fail to materialize in Mesopotamia. Yet, although the semblance of a well-knit territorial state can, at times, be achieved by an energetic and mobile ruler, the native tendency toward local autonomy, which—as I have tried to show—is the expression of the inherent fragmentation imposed by the land, remains always latent, ready to reappear at the first sign of weakness in royal power. Whenever the central authority is unable to enforce the control exercised by its bureaucracy, the unity superimposed on landscapes, city-states, and home grounds of nomadic tribes vanishes with astonishing speed. The entire country then reverts to familiar and indigenous types of political integration.

The picture just outlined is complicated by a third element: the cities. The phenomenon of urbanization occurs in southern

Mesopotamia in a context of extensive cereal farming and intensive horticulture, supplemented by animal husbandry, while it remains conspicuously absent in the northern part of the region, where similar conditions exist. In the south, cities arise with startling speed in relative proximity to one another—often in clusters. Whatever reasons prompted this development—and we are not likely ever to understand adequately such a remote and complex process—it offered Mesopotamian man, who normally had no ties beyond his immediate family, a social context wide enough to provide him with a basis for self-identification and pride, a framework of intense social interaction, and a goal for his loyalty. It also supplied him with the basic economic, political, and intellectual necessities of life. The long life-span of these cities and their continuous influence on the political life of Mesopotamia (some remain important in the history of Mesopotamia for several millennia) demonstrate tellingly that they met an essential need.

On such complex substructures, Mesopotamian man evolved a civilization equal in range and endurance to any of the great civilizations in human history. As in all such phenomena, an inherent and pervading quality of style unfolds in the subsequent stages of the history of the civilization and dominates all its utterances and creations by imparting to them specific directions and definite formal features. Owing to the variables of contacts with other civilizations and of internal stresses, Mesopotamian civilization quickly achieved complexities in time and region. This “polyphonal” structure demands from every serious student the difficult and delicate task of relating any given culture trait to an intricately interwoven set of coordinates.

What, then, one is led to inquire at this point, was the driving force that brought into existence and preserved the artistic and intellectual coherence that held Mesopotamia together, gave it its existential individuality, maintained and revitalized again and again the vast body of traditions and attitudes that constituted the backbone of this civilization? My answer is: the scribe—the scribe who wrote and copied cuneiform signs on soft clay, the scribe who has left us all those records through which we are able to follow, however inadequately, this millennial development.

Although nearly half a million clay tablets have been found to date in Mesopotamia and adjacent regions, they represent only a fraction of what still lies in Mesopotamian soil. The utilization of this unique accumulation of data relating to a dead civilization is still far from complete, and yet, after somewhat more than a century of Assyriological studies, the information obtained illuminates much of the history of Mesopotamia through nearly three millennia. Equally important is the light the tablets have shed on several neighboring civilizations, from Elam in southern Iran to Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, Cyprus, and even Egypt. The main achievement of the Mesopotamian scribes lies in the continuity they maintained throughout the life-span of Mesopotamian civilization in spite of repeated social, political, and intellectual changes, rather than in the accumulation of written tablets which owe their preservation to the entirely accidental fact of the durability of clay, baked or sundried.

Clay tablets are by no means the only extant evidence for the study of Mesopotamia. The first book of Herodotus ("Klio," 177–200) with its description of the city of Babylon and of Babylonia and the works of the Greek writers of the period after Alexander the Great—a rich source left largely untouched by modern Assyriologists—provide such evidence, as does the Babylonian Talmud. For, although it was written nearly half a millennium later, it too could contribute substantial information if Assyriologists were in the position to utilize its material judiciously. Quite apart, and unrivaled in importance, remains the Old Testament. Not only is the history of Mesopotamia in the first millennium B.C. illuminated by that unique collection of written records, but much of what happened during the preceding half millennium in the area around Palestine is reflected in it.

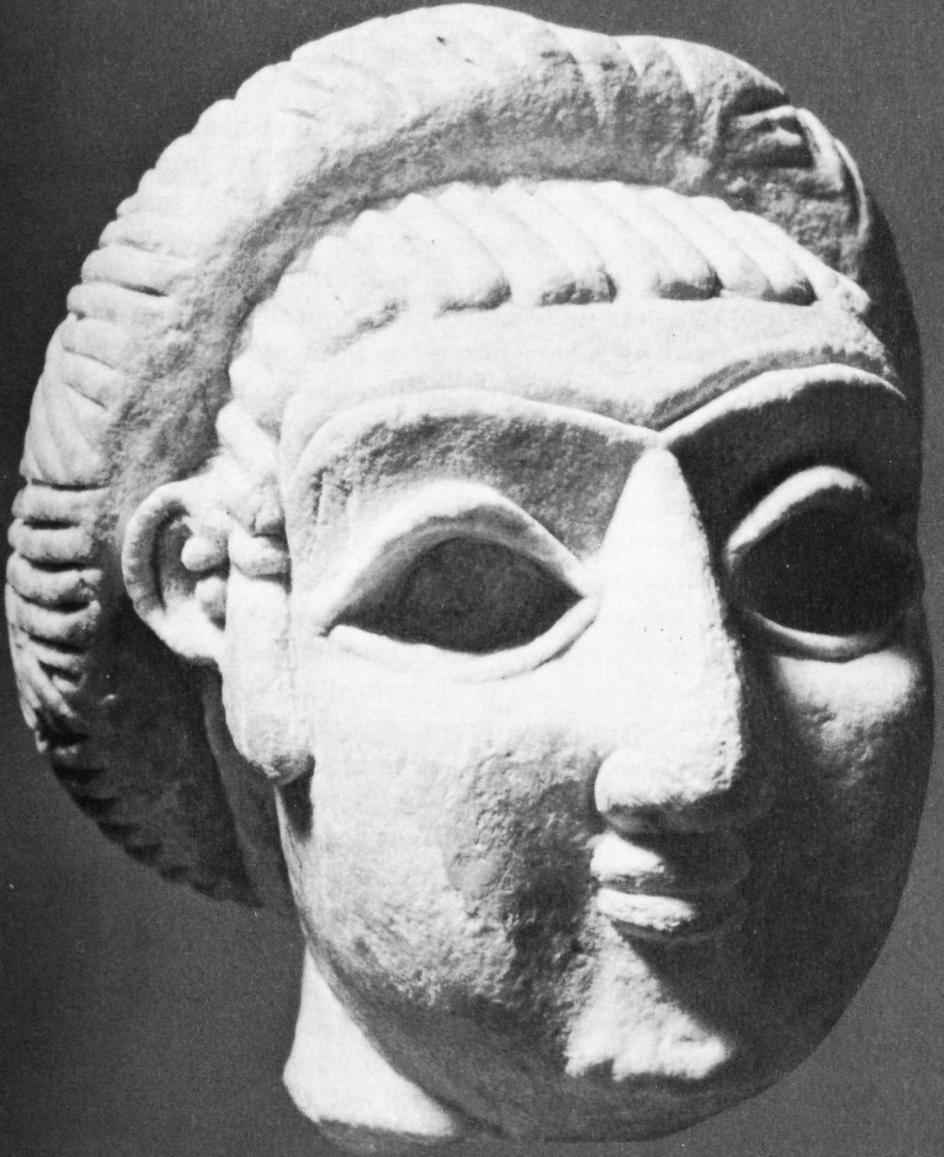
Thus, from documents written in many languages, coming from the homeland as well as from neighboring countries, Mesopotamia emerges as an important and great civilization early in the history of mankind. Although difficult to fathom and to appreciate across the gap of time, complex and alien in its functioning, remote because of the difficulties presented by long-dead languages, we find this civilization as aware of its own image,

as focused and purposeful in its aspirations, and as consistent in all the facets of its self-expression as any of the later great civilizations. It is the fascinating task of the Assyriologist to try to dissect this civilization and to trace its structure, to muse about its functioning, and to recreate in his own imagination the life that once animated that organism.

A PANORAMIC VIEW

The appearance of inscribed objects of clay and stone in southern Mesopotamia ended a long sequence of prehistoric horizons which archeologists distinguish into specific cultures on the basis of such artifacts as potsherds, bricks, small stone and metal objects d'art, traces of architectural structures and their decorations. Such inscriptions appear before the middle of the third millennium B.C. and those dating from the last third of the same millennium unequivocally reflect the functioning of a full-fledged civilization which we designate as Sumerian on the basis of the language of these texts. Inscriptions in Akkadian, a Semitic language, are attested from the end of the third millennium on. In the meantime, polities develop in a growing number of urban sites, from Eridu in the far south to Kish in northern Babylonia. In such polities, sanctuary-centered religious institutions vie with emerging royal aspirations, and city dwellers conflict with nonurban elements of a different social organization. In such cities, architecture, literature, and technology quickly reach a degree of sophistication we have reason to admire, although insufficient evidence prevents us from adequately appreciating the full breadth of this development.

With the advent of rulers who use both languages—Sumerian and Akkadian—in their inscriptions, military and eventually political expansion become dominant features. A number of characteristic achievements of the rising Mesopotamian civilization are brought to the northeast into Elam and beyond, to the northwest along the two rivers—the Euphrates and the Tigris—to such centers as Mari and Assur, and, quite likely, also to regions



HEAD OF A WOMAN. Limestone, Sumerian, Early Dynastic II,
probably from Khafaje, Sin Temple.
(*Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; gift of E. S.
David, 1949.*)

where such influences have not yet been traced. The possibility that, and the extent to which these penetrations might represent a reversal of an earlier situation, in which the west and the mountain region had affected or stimulated certain Mesopotamian developments during crucial prehistoric phases, need not be our concern here.

After its short-lived imperial glory at the end of the third millennium, during which it was ruled by kings in the city of Akkad, the heartland remains by no means static but goes through an internal evolution customarily referred to as the "Sumerian renaissance" or Neo-Sumerian period. The collapse of the far-flung political organization of the succeeding kingdom, centered in Ur, returns Mesopotamia to its preferred articulation into distinct states. The next half-millennium shows the effects of two counterpointed developments, political and intellectual. In political life, the city-states Isin, then Larsa, and eventually Babylon make several sustained attempts to achieve hegemony. That of Babylon, highlighted by the name of Hammurapi (1792-1750 B.C.), proves the most effective, although it is soon followed by a prolonged decline in Mesopotamian political power.

The many-sided intellectual development, which blossoms forth at the time of the leadership of the cities Isin and Larsa, is not affected by the political reverses of the post-Hammurapi period and even survives to a considerable extent the vicissitudes of the subsequent "Dark Age"—a convenient term for a gap in documentation that extends over more than two hundred years after the collapse of the Hammurapi Dynasty. The fruits of this intellectual flowering are a large collection of Sumerian literary texts (what is preserved amounts now to more than ten thousand lines), several textbook collections dedicated to the teaching of Sumerian (Sumero-Akkadian lexical and grammatical texts, Sumerian texts with interlinear Akkadian translations), and the beginnings of an Akkadian literature of which we have, so far, only a few fragments. At the same time, Mesopotamia's technique of writing on clay, its methods of training scribes, its bilingual literary tradition (Sumerian and Akkadian) are diffused throughout the entire Near East; from Elam and the Bahrain Islands (in

the Persian Gulf) to the Hittite kingdom in central Asia Minor, to the west (between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean coast), and to Cyprus and Egypt, scribes communicate in more or less adequate Akkadian until the third quarter of the second millennium.

Socially and economically, Mesopotamia, in this period, is beset by unrest; the repeated efforts of kings to offer remedies to their impoverished subjects illustrate the deterioration of living conditions. Technology undergoes a period of stagnation, although the scarcity of archeological and philological evidence may hide certain developments (such as the rise of glass technology). The generally poor quality and uniformity of the numerous art works produced in this period, such as figures in the round and seal engravings, confirm the impression of stagnation.

Leaving Babylonia for a moment in the eclipse of the Dark Age, we direct our attention to a sister civilization centered in Assur, on the middle course of the Tigris. There we observe, soon after the "imperial" interlude of Babylonia, an incipient new focus of political power, against a background of archeological sequences as complex and as old as, if not older than, those of the south. The ensuing developments are poorly documented but we have sufficient evidence to assume a civilization in the making. Its institutions, political outlook, language, and artistic production are similar enough to those of the concurrent formulations in Babylonia to be considered parallel, yet are so intriguingly different in detail, as well as in mood and scope, that they demand an explanation. Again, we need not be concerned here with the theories advocating an ethnic, an economic, or a geographic determinism for this purpose; suffice it to stress that Assyria becomes the center of political and cultural influence after emerging from the Dark Age during which it, too, had disappeared for several centuries. It reappears somewhat changed but clinging to an intrinsic individuality in the face of the increasing Babylonization of the Mesopotamian civilization whose influence, at that period, extends throughout the entire Near East. The end of the second millennium sees the rise of Assyria as the foremost military power. After a series of spectacular successes, interspersed with

periods of political impotence, the Assyrian Empire ends with the destruction of Nineveh in 612 B.C.

In Babylonia, foreign (Kassite) rulers occupy the throne for four or more centuries in the second half of the second millennium. During that period, the well-entrenched native (Old Babylonian) tradition and the alien (mainly Kassite) influences, difficult even now to define and gauge, are both affected by the stirrings of internal developments which are to come to fruition in the first millennium. Politically, the last centuries of the second millennium hold for the region conflicts with Assyria and a constant decline of power. Culturally, they seem to reflect a stagnation that again may well be only apparent, owing to the scarcity of texts available.

From that time on, Aramaic-speaking tribes begin to make their presence increasingly felt between the Mediterranean Sea and the Euphrates, a region coveted by Assyria, and in the open spaces between the old cities in central and southern Mesopotamia. The acculturation of the Arameans in the west takes place under the influence of several civilizations and therefore poses for us special problems yet to be solved. In the plains between the Zagros ranges and the Arabian Desert, that is, Babylonia proper, and downstream along both rivers to the Persian Gulf, the Arameans achieve a coexistence with the natives which is in line with the perennial tension of the region, that between the cities and the open country. The process of gradual Aramaization greatly affects the internal political developments in Babylonia, and eventually, its subsequent history, especially in its relation to Assyria. With the beginning of the first millennium, another period still imperfectly known, we can observe the stages of a slow ascent which eventually brings Babylonia to the acme of its political power. This is achieved in the middle third of that millennium and is known as the Chaldean Period, highlighted by the rule of Nebuchadnezzar II (604-562 B.C.) of biblical fame. Economic prosperity increases, adding splendor to the fame of Babylon, which now spreads again to the fast-expanding horizons of the world. The subsequent Persian conquest of Babylon (539 B.C.) is customarily taken by Assyriologists as a valid excuse for

terminating their interest in the history of Mesopotamian civilization.

A NEW EVALUATION

The realization of the essential unity of Mesopotamian civilization creates the need for a new evaluation of the facts and developments presented above. The complex process that makes up what we call the history of Mesopotamian civilization, with all its diachronic and synchronic interrelations, defies smooth and simple presentation. An expedient approach is usually chosen; the areas without sufficient or direct attestation are disregarded, and a patchwork of facts is presented, culled from whatever period seems most accessible. This process yields a picture of what amounts to a "never-never-land" of Mesopotamia. Against this static background, military and political events are exhibited with gusto to provide the dynamics needed to mark history into periods of flowering, decay, and renascence, to use biological terms or into those of ascent, culmination, and decline if geometrical terms are considered more acceptable. I plan to apply a different gauge when taking the measure of Mesopotamia.

My approach represents a drastic simplification and, at the same time, a dangerous complication, because I reduce the depth of the developments by removing all political history from immediate consideration. Instead, I turn my attention to the cultural continuum, the mainstream of the social, intellectual, and technological traditions that form the substructure of Mesopotamian civilization beneath the glittering surface of names and events, the conspicuous accents of glamor and misery. The irregularities in the broad front on which this continuum advances, pushing certain sections ahead of others, will inevitably yield distortions in the simplified picture obtained from my chosen point of view. This simplification allows us to view the entire known development in several well-defined levels or phases based on a new evaluation of the social, intellectual, and technological traditions of Mesopotamia.

In this scheme, the social traditions come first in the articulation of the cultural continuum in Mesopotamia. They are revealed in language, behavior (living and eating habits), secular contacts (reactions to age, sex, and power differentials, including economic integration), and also in whatever may be subsumed under the all-too-generous heading "religion." Next in importance, I consider the intellectual traditions, manifested in literary creations, in that relatedness to reality which expresses itself in scientific interests, and in the self-interpretation of the civilization, that is, in the creation of its own image of man. Technological traditions, effective on the two levels of subsistence and prestige techniques, are to be interpreted according to their material prerequisites and their economic consequences. All that, however, represents solely what I term the dimensions of possibility, whereas the dimension of realization is the product of ecological necessities, ideological pressures (such as attitudes toward change and foreign influence, the restrictive effects of religion), and, finally, of those irrational preferences which one might well call the individual style of a civilization.

I believe it will be more advantageous to present to the reader at this point the phases to be discussed and characterized later on, rather than to overwhelm him first with evidence and illustrations, and to draw conclusions only at the end. A presentation in the form of lists and diagrams would perhaps have been more effective; however, apart from being too pedantic for my taste, it would have imparted an unjustifiable rigidity to a treatment of cultural history that is still in the exploratory stage. I will begin by enumerating the five phases of Mesopotamia civilization I have singled out and named in a somewhat impressionistic way:

Phase One: The Basic Aggregate (The Substratum),

Phase Two: The Catalyst (The Sumerians),

Phase Three: The Transformation (The Rise of Mesopotamian Civilization),

Phase Four: Tradition and Experiment (Scribes and Scholars),

Phase Five: The Great Change (The Formation of the Legacy).

The Basic Aggregate (The Substratum)

Lack of evidence and uncertainty of interpretation of the existing evidence will always cloud the crucial beginnings. It will yet require much well-directed and sustained research to explore the breadth of the cultural aggregate that can be considered native to the region along the rivers emptying into the Persian Gulf, or, more precisely, to determine what portions of the available assemblage are pre-Sumerian. I frankly doubt that any archeological material will ever yield clear-cut information in this respect. The philologist who explores those words in Sumerian which, for a number of linguistic reasons, do not seem to belong either to that language or to Akkadian, will find himself with a considerable vocabulary at hand. It contains such essential designations as names of native plants and animals, of staples, raw materials, and basic crafts, of tools and manufactured objects. It will be only too tempting to organize this material so as to isolate an inventory of non-Sumerian techniques, cultural achievements, and practices. This avenue of research has repeatedly been tried in reconstructions of the prehistory of a language or of a family of languages, and its results have been, as a rule, tenuous and unconvincing. Interesting though such a list of words might be, it is not likely to help us much in tracing the boundary between Sumerian contributions and native constituents.

The fog is even more impenetrable when one concentrates on differences in subsistence technologies and social organization to contrast the settlements along the river banks and other high emplacements in lower Mesopotamia with those upstream and in the valleys of the Zagros in upper Mesopotamia where dry farming was practiced. Dating is essential here. Only the regions first mentioned underwent the change which started them toward urbanization, an event that may well have reversed the gradient of a culture differential. In other words, the south may have become a center of diffusion after a period of receptiveness to outside stimuli. In the phase under consideration, the inventory of domesticated plants and animals (as well as the techniques needed to utilize them) was probably known in the south to about

the same extent as in concurrent settlements on higher grounds and in the fertile valleys of southwest Asia—allowing always for adaptations and elaborations caused by specific environments. We seem entitled to assume the knowledge of raising cereals, of keeping pigs, goats, and possibly sheep, of utilizing reed and clay for shelter and storage; also of hunting and fishing, with their specific techniques; and of collecting edible plants. Metals and stones reached these settlements in increasing amounts through small-scale trading, pillage, and accident, and techniques for working these alien raw materials came with them. To enlarge the arable area near rivers, methods for engineering watercourses and water levels which must have been in use from the very beginnings of these settlements, were improved. Already then, a diet of barley (used for unleavened bread and beer), fish, and dates—and later on, linseed as an oleiferous plant—clearly set off Mesopotamia from the wheat-wine-olive oil constellation of the west. This sketchy characterization leaves several crucial points unexplored, such as the prehistory of the cultigen date palm and the use of bovines as draft animals.

Social organization and religious attitudes, like everything else that transcends the limitations of the archeological and iconographic evidence, remain beyond our ken. One may risk positing sanctuary-centered cults with human-shaped images served by “priests,” and such tensions as must have developed between settlers and roaming elements of the population, as well as conflicts between settlements of different size and power.

The crucial problem of this first phase—urbanization, its causes and its timing—cannot be solved. Despite its importance, urbanization as such is, in Mesopotamia, a phenomenon limited in time and extent. Since the old cities bear non-Sumerian names, urbanization belongs in the pre-Sumerian phase. Very few cities of any importance came into existence in Mesopotamia after this period.

If I turn at this point to what I call the catalyst phase, it is not for lack of topics, but because the evidence is so scarce that it can easily be made to fit any preconceived pattern. And much of what will be dealt with in the next section could as well belong to this

first phase. In many instances no definite line of demarcation can yet be drawn.

The Catalyst (The Sumerians)

Two basic assumptions will be made in positing this phase: that the ethnic group known later as Sumerian by its language is not native to Mesopotamia, and that many, if not the majority of the changes occurring between the foregoing phase and this one, which apparently brought about the "birth of a civilization," are due to the influences of this group. Both assumptions are admittedly tenuous. The first represents a dangerous simplification because we have no means of ascertaining whether those who wrote the third-millennium Sumerian documents were any more "Sumerian" than those who wrote in that language in the second millennium. A time lag between the spoken language and the language used for official purposes (such as votive inscriptions) is characteristic of the entire history of Mesopotamian civilization. Still, the fact that the system of writing used does not adequately fit the Sumerian language, plus the existence of the above-mentioned "foreign" words in both Sumerian and Akkadian texts, argues that with the Sumerians a new element had arrived on the Mesopotamian scene. This is possibly corroborated by a break in the sequence of archeologically determined phases in the first third of the third millennium.

The second assumption, which attributes much—if not all—of the change in the basic aggregate to that new element, should be considered a working hypothesis rather than a statement of cause and effect, although it is indeed tempting to dispose of the problems here outlined by simply crediting the achievements of the third millennium—its normative intellectual, social, and technological formulations—to the Sumerians as *deus ex machina*. The third millennium has been called, and not inappropriately so, the Sumerian Millennium.

It is, however, necessary to stress the possibility that a more complex situation may have prevailed, which would require a reappraisal of the entire social and population structure of this era.

Its social makeup is dominated by the political concept of a clearly formulated claim to rulership over foreign countries. So early a Sumerian king as Lugalannemundu attests to the importance of this claim for the first half of the third millennium. This tradition of political conquest or, to be more realistic, of raids for booty into the power vacuum around Lower Mesopotamia is hardly in keeping with the mood one is inclined to assume for the society of the Basic Aggregate Phase.

A different but equally important social factor is represented by the growth and subsequent staying power of the institutions I call here "landed sanctuaries." By this I mean cult organizations supported by extensive land holdings and serfs, organized ostensibly to provide an adequately maintained abode for the divine presence. Taken as an institution, the landed sanctuary represents a socioeconomic solution not likely to have evolved "naturally" out of a village-community type of social integration; rather, it testifies to a specific and extreme ecological situation. In southwest Asia landed sanctuaries seem typically to have developed in oases surrounded by land that could not support a sedentary population of any density, being either too arid or too swampy. This phenomenon is exemplified by the oasis sanctuaries of the first millennium and those that crop up later in and around the Arabian Desert, hardly as a new development but as a way to relate a sanctuary to a none-too-sedentary population. Similar solutions might be assumed for the third millennium in a pre-urbanization situation in Lower Mesopotamia and probably also in other regions. A further component in the development of Mesopotamia is the crystallization process that produced in Lower Mesopotamia a surprisingly dense accumulation of urban centers, which in turn introduced elements of rank, status, and power among the settlements, along with tensions that never subsided.

The interaction of these three components, quite apart from any effects wrought by either conquest or migration, may well have led to the transformation we call, for simplicity's sake, the birth of Mesopotamian civilization. The increasing power and size of the temple organizations may be related to the struggle

for hegemony among the new cities, and to the ensuing desire for conquests of regions that controlled access to coveted metals, timber, and stones. Other conflicts of interest must have produced tension between city and open country. The open country contained not only what we are wont to call nomadic elements, but also manor-centered, self-supporting holdings of tribal organizations with a cohesion surpassing that of the city-league tradition. Nor should the intra-city tensions be treated lightly, because the triangle of conflicting forces—temple, palace, city—must have been an effective generator of internal stress. The cities of Mesopotamia therefore exhibit a wide gamut of variations in social structure according to the fusion achieved between these opposing elements in the individual cities at given moments in time.

I shall not attempt to attach any linguistic, let alone ethnic, labels to the several distinct types of social integration singled out above. Evidently, there exists at least a three-cornered language contrast—Akkadian, Sumerian, and some substrate language. It should suffice to state that eventually the Sumerian language emerged as the medium for official and learned utterances. This development coincides to a remarkable extent with the increasing influence of kingship as an activating and determining factor in the political history of the region, with the increasing concentration of wealth (that is, land and serfs) in temples and palaces, with the development of a literary tradition from an earlier oral one, and with the emergence of the city as a corporate source of political power.

The developments of the third millennium are illuminated by the clay tablets that owe their existence to the application of an earlier system of writing to the Sumerian language. In constantly expanding areas of use, ranging from administrative records and votive inscriptions to sign and word lists, conjurations, contracts, and eventually to literary compositions, Sumerian texts appear in increasing number. Clearly, one has every right to term this civilization Sumerian if one only remains aware that such linguistic characterization refers to a phase of what is basically the civilization of Mesopotamia.



OFFICER ON ALABASTER STELE. From Nasiriyya, twenty-fourth to
twenty-second centuries B.C.
(*Courtesy of the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin.*)

It is very difficult to trace religious concepts, to establish political aims, or to gain a contemporary view of man and history by relying on the votive and display inscriptions of the period, with their narrow range of expression. Besides, our most explicit text material for the period before that of Sargon of Akkad comes, so far, predominantly from a minor center of political power, the city of Lagash, and tends therefore to limit our horizon dangerously. When projecting what we know from similar documents of the second millennium and then relating our texts to this frame of reference, we find that the phraseology, the general tenor and, last but not least, the purpose of the earlier documents are to a decisive degree in harmony with later texts. The style of the votive inscriptions exhibits everywhere the same concern with the ideal, however unattainable, and the past, however remote; and the royal titularies given are for the same reasons as little inclined to admit the realities of their setting as those of all later Sumerian and Babylonian texts of the same genre. The deity-ruler relationship is conceived along the same lines of pious formality as remain in evidence to the very end of Mesopotamian civilization. Still, discrepancies between the rare early texts and the mass of evidence produced during the subsequent millennium, and diversities in formulation and in subject matter which can be found in the earlier material all suggest that greater freedom from traditional patterns prevailed then. The elaborate presentation of the Stela of the Vultures (of king Eannatum of Lagash), the detailed reports of King Urukagina (of the same city) on his social reforms, or the historic preamble to the establishment of a border between Umma and Lagash (King Entemena) remain unparalleled literary achievements.

Technologically, the artifacts of the Sumerian Millennium represent, in the main, variations, elaborations, and perfections of techniques evolved during the previous phase. Pottery, stone work, and metallurgy, as well as architecture, all give the same impression. This should also be true for crafts such as weaving, woodworking, the use of leather, and so on, which leave no traces to the modern archeologist and unsatisfactory, although abundant, information for the philologist.

The Transformation (The Rise of Mesopotamian Civilization)

The presentation of this phase, the third, has to start with a discussion of its dating, because thereon hinges the basic assumption of the present essay: the interpretation of Mesopotamian civilization as a continuum structured in phases independent of the languages in evidence. Language differences—such as the shift from some substrate language to Sumerian, from Sumerian to Akkadian, and from the latter to some dialect of Aramaic—deceive and sidetrack today's Assyriologist as much as racial and ethnic differences did formerly. Language shifts in Mesopotamia seem to deserve only the linguist's attention. Bilingualism in Mesopotamia in specific periods and regions may be viewed either in terms of mutual intelligibility between Sumerian and Akkadian, in terms of teaching and research, or in linguistic preferences for specific literary themes and topics. The bilingualism in evidence in the third phase should be considered a *modus vivendi*, rather than the reflection of any change in population; it became in this phase a means of artistic and intellectual creation. The two languages, Sumerian and Akkadian, seem to have affected each other even in the formative periods of both traditions, that is, when their oral literary production was first committed to writing. The relationship therefore was not simply that between model (Sumerian) and imitation (Akkadian), but was enacted on the more subtle levels of transfer and adaptation, of sophisticated contrasting and even of conscious diversification of interest. It is not unlikely—although this means introducing an unknown factor—that a common source might have to be assumed to account for this convergence of traditions, because the parallelism does not apply solely to style patterns, topics, and motif inventories, but also to imagery—even to the choice of words and their specific connotations. One day, when we have a better linguistic understanding of the works of Sumerian literature of this period and can appreciate them adequately as artistic creations, the delicate relationship of the Sumerian language to the only slightly more recent Akkadian literary corpus will become more evident, especially if new finds increase our scanty knowledge of the latter.

I draw the demarcation line between phase two (the Catalyst) and phase three (the Transformation) at the end of the Dynasty of Akkad and before the rise of the famous Dynasty of Ur, conventionally called the Third Dynasty of Ur. This implies that I consider Sargon of Akkad and his successors as still carrying on the tradition of large-scale razzias to which Lugalannemundu's titulary refers and which, as a warlike institution, might be even older. An essential difference in kind and mood separates the rule of the kings of Akkad from that of the kings of Ur. It is true that the dominion of the latter could never have been realized without the example set by the earlier conquistadores. The control exercised over the empire by governors and a centralized administration from Ur seems to me to have been different from the political and military coercion applied by the kings of Akkad to obtain spoils from their conquests or to support military garrisons in strategic locations. The kings of Ur seem to have relied more on statesmanship and especially on the superior cultural level of their realm. They brought about an acculturation of the ruling layers in subjected regions and thus ushered in the phase during which the cultural expansion of Mesopotamia determined the face of the entire Near East. The same expansion was also internally effective in the acculturation of several waves of Semitic immigrants into Mesopotamia; these immigrants eventually took over the political legacy of the empire of Ur under the hegemony of, first, the city of Isin, then the city of Larsa, and, finally, Babylon.

The phenomenon just pointed out recurs time and again in the history of Mesopotamian civilization; rulers of non-Mesopotamian background, typically belonging to only recently acculturated groups, contribute energetically and effectively toward maintaining the cultural continuum once they assume political power. Such were the kings of the empire of Ur who took, after the Sumerian names of the first rulers, Akkadian names, those of the dynasties of Isin and Larsa with Akkadian and non-Akkadian Semitic names, the kings of the Hammurapi dynasty with yet other Semitic but likewise non-Akkadian personal names, the kings with Kassite names, and, eventually, the Chaldean kings of

the first millennium whose traditional names should not hide from us their Aramaic background. Mesopotamian civilization owes much of its vitality and persistence to these kings who exhibited such zeal and interest in the maintenance of a tradition they considered superior to their own.

Instead of assuming a short-lived and gratuitous Sumerian “renaissance,” I see in the growth of a corpus of Sumerian literature, as well as in the subsequent rise of Akkadian literary production, the transformation of the legacy of the preceding phase into a truly Mesopotamian civilization. The transformation as such stimulated and fostered the use of the Akkadian language for literary purposes—as against the utilitarian purposes for which it is already well attested under the kings of the Dynasty of Akkad—even though the scarcity of preserved texts prevents us from observing the unfolding of literary themes. The two events—the assembling of the Sumerian literary texts of the past and the growth of a literature in Akkadian, after centuries of recording mainly administrative texts, accounting ledgers, letters, votive inscriptions, and short conjurations in that language—represent the key achievement of this phase. Perhaps Šulgi, the long-lived king of the dynasty ruling from Ur, is responsible for this literary development; he likes to present himself as learned and thus parallels a similar claim of Assurbanipal, who strives to have the literary achievements of the past assembled and preserved.

During the Transformation Phase, the training of scribes by means of an ever extending curriculum was made the core of intellectual activities. The preservation of the Sumerian language, which was soon to go out of secular use, became the mainstay of the educational system. Word lists and grammatical texts supplied the means for keeping bilingualism alive and did so fairly successfully on a scholarly level. Another important factor comes into play during the rise of Mesopotamian literature: the royal court as the activating center of artistic and intellectual aspirations; it was far more effective than the temple in cultivating literary ambition and creativeness. Such diversified works as hymns in praise of the king, royal inscriptions relating the king to the deity in politico-religious terms, poetry for royal entertainment—

adventure stories of gods and heroes, disputations—seem to reflect court poetry at its best, and so do the tales from which evolve a self-image that pointedly sets off Mesopotamia and its civilization from the barbarians around it.

The preference for solemn and sophisticated hymnic compositions in the temple as well as at court is due to the fact that in Mesopotamia the temple was, like the palace, primarily a household; numerous hymns in praise of the “lord of the manor,” who by his very existence provides his servants with their economic *raison d’être*, reflect this mood. These religious hymns are neither inspired expressions of feelings nor artistically original creations, but rather are meant to express respect for and fear of the lord in tradition-bound terms that use an imagery derived from myth and folklore in monotonous variations. The royal hymns, on the other hand, have to please a living and capricious master and take cognizance of actual achievements, current fashions, and ideals. They are therefore likely to represent much better the aims and techniques of living Mesopotamian poetry.

Religious life in Mesopotamia remains concentrated in sanctuary-centered cults. A system of “inside” religious practices evolves in contrast to those enacted for the outside world. Adorations, ceremonial offerings of food, decorating images, and whatever purification rites and specific cult activities are required by tradition for an individual deity take place within the sanctuary, whereas occasional appearances and exhibitions of statues, even travels between sanctuaries (to express theological or, rather, political relationships between gods), display the pomp and splendor so dear to the community of citizens. No personal piety or emotional involvement is required, not even of the king or of the deity’s high priest. The common man’s relationship to his gods and goddesses is difficult to discern, although the extremely pious onomasticon would suggest not only personal piety but also a wide range in the intensity and nature of the god-man relationship of Mesopotamian man. We still fail, however, to see in what, if any, cultic acts or attitudes this personal piety found expression, apart from the selection of a given name.

In the realm of economics, or, rather, of the modes of economic integration, a somewhat arbitrary borderline has to be drawn between the Transformation and Sumerian phases. Three main levels of integration are discernible in the extant economic documents. The best attested is the internal circulation that obtains in the primary manorial organizations, the temple and the palace. The second level reflects the outside contacts of the same organizations as they materialize in intercity and overland trade. Documents of the third level originate in autonomous economic bodies ranging from collective agricultural organizations centered in families to what often constitutes *de facto* private enterprise inside and outside the cities. The distribution of the evidence in volume and importance varies with time and region, and accidental blackouts of information distort the picture.

The records of each level show special characteristics. The archives of the households of god and king are concerned with the movements of materials and finished products and with records of personnel. Wages or rations (according to the recipient's status) were accounted for in writing in Mesopotamia from the time when stylus and clay were first put to use. Whatever operational procedures for such transactions had been applied before will remain forever unknown. On the level of administered trade, that is, the activities through which the autarchic households obtained metal, stones, timber, and luxury wares from the outside, the evidence at hand is not too rich. The chain of intermediaries—traders, nomads, robbers—which links Mesopotamia with the regions producing these materials will never be reflected in the records of the administration of the manors. Even scarcer are clay documents from the third of the three levels. Generally speaking, the use of written texts for administrative purposes seems to stem from the practice of having officials take turns in administrative responsibilities. This creates the need for strict accounting and well-ordered archives. In less formal associations where administrative procedures are handled on the basis of personal trust, like that between master and servant or king and courtier, clay tablets and archival techniques seem to be the exception rather than the rule.

It is not adequate to characterize Mesopotamian political life as simply centered in the person of the king; even less so when one considers the long development that starts at the moment when, as the Sumerian king list puts it, "Kingship descended from heaven." This holds true for the entire history of Mesopotamia, although deceptively simple statements appear again and again in the royal inscriptions dealing with the royal titulary—whether realistic, imaginary, politically inspired, or styled as the self-presentation of the ruler to his deity. Beneath the rich and pompous wording of such texts, distinct political tensions are at work; different titles develop out of the exercise of royal power in an urbanized region as opposed to one in which the same power faces a tribal or a village-type society. Conflicts between "imperialistic" claims of kings and the city-king tradition become apparent, as well as the already mentioned intracity conflicts.

The task of the Mesopotamian king was aggravated by ecological and population problems. Soil deterioration due to overirrigation, and the need for considerable manpower to provide new irrigation facilities, or even to maintain the existing canals, directly jeopardized the economic basis of the realm. These same problems also fostered an anti-urban and anti-royal attitude in sections of the population which by tradition, or through lack of social or economic incentives, remained aloof from urban agglomerations and normally had to be forced to settle. The economic basis of the king's power must have been limited; the temple organizations, at least before the middle of the second millennium, seem to have been outside royal jurisdiction and taxation, and as early as this the city-dwellers successfully claimed important financial, service, and personal exemptions. In view of such severe limitations of the king's power of taxation, conquests and *razzias* were obviously the only possibility for additional revenues in spite of the risks involved. Dynastic difficulties and separatist tendencies stemming from the discontent of subjugated city-states and from sanctuaries outside the network of religious and political affiliations centered in the capital must have made a Mesopotamian ruler's life miserable, not to speak of the technical difficulties of administering a realm by means of a court organized along the

lines of a household held together solely by personal loyalty. The royal families residing successively in Isin, Larsa, and Babylon—and also, quite possibly, those of the Third Dynasty of Ur—had, however, come from that element of the population which was nonurban in background and outlook and seems to have been founded on a more extensive type of family organization and on more intensive personal contacts within the ruling circles, even over considerable distances. Both apparently produced an attitude instrumental in maintaining dynastic policies and led to the enhancement of the king's power and prestige. In contrast to the small families and the parochial orientation of the city dwellers, the nonurban segment of the Mesopotamian population seemed to have linked the self-contained "city-islands," which they surrounded like a sea, with one another and, ultimately, with the outside world.

Kingship, then, especially in post-Imperial Mesopotamia, presents itself as a political force resulting from two contrasting components: on one side are the far-reaching aspirations of the leaders of the nonurban groups, only superficially acculturated, with their resources in manpower and their intercity contacts; on the other are the prestige and appeal of the cities with their ideological, artistic, and scholarly traditions. At times, a fusion was achieved between the native legacy with its inherent traditionalism and the political drive of sheikhs experienced in trade, warfare, and plundering, who were open to innovations and experiments but sufficiently awed by the cultural supremacy of the old cities to assume the politically advantageous role of guardians of Mesopotamian tradition. Eventually Babylon was made the capital, became the intellectual center of the realm, and remained in this position for more than a millennium-and-a-half, although other old cities, even those at times politically eclipsed, managed to maintain themselves as long as, and—like Uruk—even longer, than Babylon.

At this point, only passing mention can be made of an important socioeconomic development, the accumulation of capital in private hands, that seems to be intimately related to the growth of the royal court in Mesopotamia and hence to have its root in this

phase. Its main development in Babylonia will be discussed below because it is best attested in the fourth phase.

Tradition and Experiment (Scribes and Scholars)

Two sets of problems related to the timing and to the locale in which the interplay between tradition and experiment took place characterize the fourth of the five phases. And again we are facing the basic difficulty, that of the irregularity in the advance of the cultural continuum.

As to the timing, I propose to draw the dividing line between the present and the preceding phase at the time, roughly, when the kings of the rising First Dynasty of Babylon took their city-state out of the intercity rivalries of Babylonia and succeeded in relating it to the political entities that emerged at that time between the Mediterranean Sea and the valleys along the Iranian plateau. This new setting of the political scene becomes evident as soon as we encounter among the rulers to the west of Babylonia the same Semitic non-Akkadian personal names that the kings of the First Dynasty (except the first two kings) begin to assume with Hammurapi. By that time, the center of political gravity in lower Mesopotamia had shifted to the northwest and eventually it became firmly established in Babylon.

The rule of Nebuchadnezzar I, at the very end of the second millennium, suggests itself as *terminus ad quem*. But it remains uncertain whether this king stands at the threshold of the last phase, the fifth, or terminates the fourth. We do not know enough of this crucial period to draw the line with certainty, yet there can be no doubt that the process of revitalization of Babylonia gains momentum at the turn of the millennium. There are other reasons that support the proposed phasing, such as the emergence of capitalistic enterprises during the fourth phase, the conservatism exhibited in its literary production, the rise of new divination techniques, the increased interests in mathematics, and so forth. They will be treated below in more detail.

Although the delimitations of the phase are thus more or less certain, the internal continuity as well as its subdivision into

periods within the half-millennium or more of its duration are difficult to establish. The already mentioned accidental gap in documentation, the Dark Age, hides from us the transition from a Babylon ruled by aggressive kings with West Semitic names to one in which kings with other foreign (Kassite) names reside. The centuries of Kassite rule, as well as those of the subsequent dynasties which follow each other in quick succession, are so poorly documented that our picture of the fourth phase suffers gravely from the inadequacy of its evidence.

The expansion of Mesopotamian civilization which I consider another primary characteristic of the phase under discussion poses the second problem. Whatever the third phase produced in specific traits of this civilization was carried in the fourth across the Near East in a manner essentially different from the diffusion that took place earlier and also from that prevalent during the fifth and last phase.

To study the conditions that favored this diffusion beyond the original confines of Mesopotamian civilization is not within the scope of this essay. Even the growth and internal development of the Assyrian formulation of Mesopotamian civilization must be excluded here because it does not bear directly on the internal development of the continuum, although it is to a large extent contemporaneous with it. Generally speaking, the influence of Mesopotamian culture traits on a specific substratum or neighbor civilization varies, of course, according to the duration and the intensity of the acculturation process, but both are conditioned by native reactions to imports and by the social and intellectual levels on which contacts take place. For the present purpose it should suffice to state that the most effective and, in fact, the characteristic influence emanating from Mesopotamia was in the field of writing technique—writing with a stylus on soft clay was readily accepted by the neighboring civilizations. Along with it, the language of Mesopotamia, including its built-in Sumer-Akkadian bilingualism, was taken over primarily for prestige but also for administrative purposes. Only in a few instances were literary texts in foreign languages written in cuneiform. The refusal of the Arameans, latecomers to the ancient Near

East, to accept the Mesopotamian way of writing spells the end of the expansion phase of Mesopotamian civilization in the last third of the second millennium.

Wherever we find cuneiform tablets outside of Mesopotamia proper, whether in Susa, in Nuzi, in the Hittite capital, or in Syria (Qatna, Ugarit, Hazor), the best represented noneconomic text types are sign and word lists for the training of scribes and omen texts—that is, copies of the compendia dealing with special divination methods and techniques. This is not as strange as it may seem because the growth and increasing diversification of this literary genre, and the spirit of scholarly inquiry behind it, have to be considered the main intellectual achievements of Mesopotamia in the phase we are discussing. Hardly more than traces of antecedents exist in earlier stages of the cultural development. From such humble beginnings as short reports on a variety of ominous events (deformations found on the interior organs of sacrificial animals, births of malformed animals) and ominous happenings encountered and observed and from brief listings of related omens (i.e., descriptions with added predictions), the development leads to the creation of large and systematic collections of, at times, encyclopaedic scope. The addition of explanatory and variant glosses to such texts and the growth of editions with extensive commentary and even separate commentary texts as well as, eventually, theoretical discussions illustrate subtle but definite shifts in the method of interpreting omens. References in secular and literary texts likewise attest to the ever increasing intellectual and spiritual interest of Mesopotamian scholars and experts in divination for more than a millennium. It can and should be said that, apart from the dimensions of the basic units of the metrological system (units of time, weight, area, and capacity), no other Mesopotamian cultural achievement exercised such a lasting influence on the neighboring and later civilizations as did divination.

Hand in hand with this particular type of literature go the collections of mathematical problems and of systematically arranged medical texts, both again without precedent; a similar situation exists with respect to what Assyriologists customarily call “magic”

texts. Moreover, the entire gamut of the Sumerian word and sign lists is now being translated into Akkadian and, last but not least, a selective approach is introduced into the curriculum culled from the Sumerian literary heritage. The scope and extent as well as the principles underlying this selection cannot as yet be fully established, but they may become more evident as our knowledge of the texts broadens and deepens. The entire process is just one facet of that many-sided tendency toward standardization that begins in the first centuries of phase four.

This systematization and standardization in style, structure, and even wording produced a twofold effect up to the very end of Mesopotamian literary history. First, it established a corpus of literary and scholarly texts which served for the training of scribes and was, for this practical reason, copied so often through the lifetime and the spread of the civilization that such tablets are found every place where scribes were educated. Second, two distinct levels evolved within the literary tradition; one that consists of the just characterized "stream of the tradition," which embraces the curriculum of the scribal schools carrying the literary and scholarly legacy, and another of texts in which the artistic aspirations of the poet, the ideologies of the political writer, and the new theories of the scholar materialized. It stands to reason that tablets of the latter sort are isolated and therefore less likely, even if they survive destruction, to be discovered by the archeologist. Hence, although we have a pretty good idea about the topics and the variety of the texts which make up the scribal tradition, we cannot assume that we possess more than a fraction of the nontraditional literature of Mesopotamia. This is the more deplorable as the latter reflects more directly the spirit of living Mesopotamian art and scholarship, owing to the relative freedom granted to the scribes to give expression to their individuality and creativeness.

The standardization of the literary heritage in Mesopotamia should not be considered as an artistic or intellectual failure, a renunciation of creativity. Apart from ensuring a scholarly respect for ancient texts, it nurtured the desire to understand them and provoked a creative awareness of the intricacies of language



HEAD OF YOUNG LADY. In stone, Qal'at Sherqa, twenty-fourth to
twenty-second centuries B.C.
(*Courtesy of the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin.*)

and history, and thus actually stimulated interest in literary production.

The proposed line of demarcation separating the fourth from the third phase can also be supported from the socioeconomic angle. Although private enterprises in Mesopotamia always seem to have coexisted with manorial organizations, they become prominent in this period, especially to the north of Babylonia. Accumulations of capital in the hands of court officials and royal appointees in administrative positions had already begun to make themselves felt in the economy of the country toward the end of the third phase. These accumulations began, apparently, as a marginal procedure in the economic operations of the royal court, but had far-reaching consequences. The capital at their disposal enabled these officials either to participate directly in the lucrative import trade or to set up larger enterprises based on funds pooled for this purpose; they also supported the royal treasury by means of profitable short-term loans, or simply became moneylenders. Thus was inaugurated a tradition of capitalistic enterprise that subsequently led to the freedom of movement, the social mobility, the sharp economic disparities, and the recurrent unbalancing of the economic structure typical of such forms of capitalism. Although it was only intermittently effective in Mesopotamia, this system maintained itself primarily on the basis of the device of renting out surplus capital. This specific device—usury—made Babylonia famous all over the ancient Near East, especially since an entirely different attitude toward capital accumulation, its function, and utilization remained prevalent for a long time in the regions of the west (Syria, Palestine).

Contemporaneous with the just-sketched development in the Old Babylonian period was the diminishing economic role of the temple organizations and, in particular, the general deterioration of the country's economy. Reasons for this are difficult to evaluate, evidence being much too scanty. The ever present salinization of arable land and Hammurapi's projects of internal colonization suggest something like a rural exodus away from the cities, toward the freedom of open and unpoliced regions. The concentration of capital within the cities produced urban absentee landlords

for whom tenant farmers worked; furthermore, it led to increased moneylending which, in turn, drove farmers and tenant farmers either to hire themselves out to work in the fields or to join out-cast groups seeking refuge from the burdens of taxation and the payment of interest. Royal efforts to alleviate the plight of these perpetual debtors consisted in the remission of agricultural debts. This must once have been an emergency regulation, but it turned into an institution under the kings of the Hammurapi dynasty.

The larger cities continued to live mainly off suburban fields and gardens, thus leaving the open country (apart from a scattering of fortified villages in favorable locations) more and more to pastures and to the movements of the nomads. This and the ever changing irrigation patterns left Mesopotamia, even in antiquity, full of ruins, abandoned habitations, and silted-up canals.

Information about the downfall of the dynasty and the subsequent troubled period is still missing; by the time the archives speak to us again, several centuries after the collapse, an important change had taken place. The tablets found in Nippur refer unmistakably to large royal estates in that region, but those roughly contemporary from Ur show that the impoverishment of the south had remained unrelieved. The picture of the subsequent centuries should not, however, be painted in the gloomy colors customarily used. Already the efforts of Hammurapi and his successors to remedy the socioeconomic ills had indicated a conscious search for new departures. We may, therefore, see the large landholdings (including villages) that begin to appear in the charter documents after the Dark Age either as a conqueror's new approach toward an effective organization of the country or, possibly, as a renaissance of past or latent forms of organization that came to the fore when royal authority had suffered serious setbacks.

These developments provide my reasons for calling the fourth phase Tradition and Experiment. Whether the developments result from planned royal efforts or natural adjustments within the socioeconomic life, the new ways proved, on the whole,

successful. This is shown by the slow but steady improvement recognizable toward the end of the second millennium in Babylonia.

Although direct evidence, such as economic and legal documents, is not available to any considerable extent from either before or after Nebuchadnezzar I, the increased importance of the royal court, the literary revival, and the emerging new relationship with the ascending Assyrian power can be said to have rested on an economic foundation that evolved and functioned during the last centuries of the rule of the Kassite Dynasty and the transition to Nebuchadnezzar I. Some workable adjustment of the social and economic tensions between city-dwellers and tribal groups, between agricultural production and foreign imports based on the contemporaneous renewal of overland trade must have been achieved in Babylonia even before the Chaldean kings became the heirs to the vanished Assyrian empire, bringing spoils and tribute into Babylon and creating its proverbial splendor and luxury.

In the fourth phase, linguistic conditions in Mesopotamia pose problems of more than philological interest. Although it had disappeared as a spoken language, Sumerian, still taught and cultivated in several scribal schools, continued to be a source of loan words in certain literary genres of Akkadian, a phenomenon which, incidentally, is observable up to the end of Mesopotamian civilization. The influence of the Kassite language—the language of the kings who ruled the country for nearly half a millennium—is negligible; a few novel technical terms and a considerable number of personal names are all that remain. The role of the Aramaic-speaking section of the population remains too slight during this phase to be reflected in any text material. Akkadian proper, in its old Babylonian dialect, as it was used even before the beginning of this phase in royal inscriptions and in literary, scholarly, and administrative texts, undergoes a development that was eventually to divorce the language of the “stream of the tradition” from local dialects and the specialized idiom of administrators and legal scribes. In the fifth phase, the dialect usually called “Neo-Babylonian” emerges full-blown, but the general scarcity

of documentation in this phase prevents us from following its unfolding.

Not without reason has reference to the "religion" of this phase been omitted. A certain number of ruined buildings can be clearly identified as temples and temple towers; we also know a sizable number of seal cylinders with rather typical representations of deities and of acts which may be interpreted as cultic, but written documentation is extremely poor and offers little variety. In most instances, moreover, there is a lack of characteristic traits that could be assigned specifically to the fourth phase. The changes in the onomasticon alone can be taken to imply changes in the god-man relationship. The personal names of the post-Hammurapi period differ from earlier and later ones. Since the evidence comes predominantly from one site, Nippur, the changes might to some extent be locally conditioned.

In the realm of religious literature, we are dealing almost exclusively with texts pertaining to the "stream of the tradition," and it is therefore well-nigh impossible to find clear evidence for internal changes. The composition known only in first millennium copies and representing what is known as the "Epic of Creation" exhibits in style and content traces of a complex development that seems to have taken place during this phase. In the second place should be mentioned the texts describing in detail (though only fractions of them are preserved) the ceremonies constituting the ritual for the new Year's Festival as celebrated in the temple of Marduk in Babylon. The copies are late but they exhibit such a curious medley of ancient, new, and, at times, primitive practices that we may well assume that substantial elements of this compilation originate in the fourth phase. Both literary documents thus testify, although indirectly, to internal developments in Mesopotamian religion during this phase.

The Great Change (The Formation of the Legacy)

The fifth phase, which begins with Nebuchadnezzar I and ends sometime in the last third of the first millennium B.C. represents in my scheme the final transformation of this civilization.

Mesopotamia then underwent changes that were more important and far-reaching than those in any of the preceding phases; further, the impact of international contacts reached during the fifth phase a degree of mutuality not observed earlier, with the possible exception of the very first phase. While up to this point my presentation has always had to stress the differences as against the obvious continuum, I will now have to accentuate the latter in the face of deep and patent changes.

The essentially different nature of the fifth phase is hardly mentioned in Assyriological literature, although evidence for striking technological, economic, and social changes has been available for more than half a century. The phase as such has invariably been viewed as one of decadence and empty traditionalism. This view I contest emphatically. It is based on the language of the letters, legal texts, and so forth, of the period, which has been relegated by professional grammarians into the limbo of *spät-und-schlecht*, or on the historical events which have not elicited much interest, most likely because they pose almost no important chronological problems.

My reappraisal of Mesopotamian history and civilization in the first millennium is built on the recognition of the internal process that took place in this phase. I speak here of acculturation within Mesopotamia, in contrast to the expansive acculturation of the fourth phase. The results of this latter type of acculturation—the spreading of Mesopotamian culture traits into neighboring areas, especially in the northwest and west—were short-lived and superficial except for a restricted number of technical and religious terms which appear in the subsequent literatures of those regions and for the iconographic motifs which were left behind when the tide receded.

The acculturation of the Aramaic-speaking elements within Mesopotamia proper was achieved in the fifth phase. This internal process led to a genuine fusion between traditional and alien elements and to an extensive and effective transformation of the Mesopotamian continuum. In certain respects, this phase represents the climax of an evolution in which a number of major Mesopotamian intellectual achievements were cast into forms

readily acceptable by Babylonia's neighbors to the west and to the east, thus producing a cultural legacy whose effects were far-reaching and are in evidence even today.

The most important changes have not been recognized as such. They happened in the field of technology—to be more exact, in the field of food technology, normally the most conservative area in any culture continuum. Most prominent is the change from barley beer to an alcoholic beverage prepared from dates. This change presents itself, without any transitional stages, when the Neo-Babylonian administrative texts appear in the eighth century B.C. Such a shift in the nature of an essential item of the restricted list of foodstuffs, entailing not only the use of a different raw material but also the change of taste-determining ingredients, could have started and been fully carried through solely with a concomitant shift in the consumer population, or, at least, in a predominant layer of a previously static population. That such a change actually took place is corroborated by a replacement of the terminology referring to nearly all economically important parts of the date palm. The new terms differ completely from those used in texts dating from before the Dark Age. Appearing in contracts dealing with the renting of date groves or with other transactions involving the products of the date palm, these new words must belong to the language of the administrators and their tenants, poor orchardists who worked the groves for absentee landlords. Such people, it appears, constituted one of the layers of the Mesopotamian population whose language must have changed sometime before the new terminology makes its appearance.

Another change in eating habits seems already to have occurred somewhat earlier than the transition from phase four to phase five. References to fishing and to the role of fish as a staple diet begin to become rare during the second half of the rule of the Hammurapi dynasty in contrast to the frequency with which texts dealing with fishing and fish deliveries, are attested for the two preceding phases. When eating habits so natural to people living along the shores of large rivers, of a lagoon, and of the open sea change radically, one cannot but assume either a wave

of immigrants who abhorred fish, or that another cheap, easily available, and protein-rich source of food came newly within their reach. The latter possibility is not borne out by textual evidence.

These are not the only changes, technological or otherwise, related to the daily life of the common man of this period. There is also the disappearance of the pig as a domestic animal, the rarity with which milk and milk products are mentioned in administrative texts, and the appearance of new methods in fallowing fields and of new crops in large-scale agriculture, to mention only those changes that could be indicative of a displacement in population.

Moreover, two disturbances of a previously established equilibrium seem to have occurred in the social makeup of this phase. One is the lowering of the social status of women. They no longer appear as witnesses, as was the Old Babylonian practice, and they participate only under special circumstances in the legal transactions of their husbands. The other change concerns the status of slaves. Slaves are no longer adopted into families, as occurred in the earlier period, but are regarded as a capital investment expected to produce an income for their masters. They are practically free to do business or to rent out their services provided they pay a fixed income to their masters, who, in turn, often article them as apprentices to craftsmen to secure and increase their income. These two social changes go hand in hand with an unmistakable trend toward gentility among the free citizens. This is expressed in terms that designate "well-born" people and in the practice of mentioning a man's ancestor after identifying him by his own and his father's name.

The tradition that ensures for the inhabitants of the large cities of Babylonia (mainly Sippar, Nippur, and Babylon) special exemptions from royal taxes and services is attested sporadically as early as the third phase, but it achieved political importance only during the phase under discussion. That it happened at this point seems to be related to the wealth accumulated in the mentioned cities, a wealth which was the product of the overland trade that entered into a new period of expansion in the first millennium. The political tension between city and countryside in Babylonia

during the "Wars of Liberation" from Assyrian domination may have accentuated the development that led to the special position of the great cities.

Economically, the crucial change that took place in the first half of the first millennium all over the Near East and spread from there westward was the use of silver as a means of payment and as currency on all levels of transactions. Formerly, silver was used nearly exclusively—especially in private transactions—as a standard in relation to staples, other metals, and customary services. The actual use of silver in Mesopotamia in this period created not only economic freedom, but also fluidity in the distribution of wealth with its well-known consequences (see p. 39). Outside of the few still vigorously maintained old temple organizations (such as those of Sippar and Uruk), we now observe a turn toward capitalistic practices in dealing with money, unmitigated by the periodic royal interference in favor of indebted farmers which was characteristic of the Old Babylonian period.

Along with the enumerated shifts in technological, social, and economic conditions, the king's position is likewise markedly changed in the fifth phase. Here, the picture is far less clear, owing to the extreme conservatism of all royal utterances and references to royal acts. Actually, the kings of the Chaldean dynasty who fell heir to large sections of the Assyrian Empire assumed attitudes in war and peace that were previously attested only for Assyria proper. Conquest and its spoils fostered military aggressiveness and a display of wealth meant to enhance royal prestige. All in all, however, the ascendancy of royal power in phase five seems to predate the Chaldean period. This is suggested by the fact that a representative of the king is unfailingly mentioned as sitting on the board of high administrators who govern the great temples of Shamash (in Sippar) and of Ishtar (in Uruk), as well as by the Chaldean kings' levying taxes on the temple's income. This latter situation may be indicative of a relationship between temple and king that must already have been prevalent in the preceding phase. One might well speculate that the royal grants and charters from the end of the second millennium (and thereafter) entailed increased acceptance of some sort of royal control

over sanctuaries, although the texts speak only of exemptions for the temple and pass over with silence any obligations incurred by it toward the king.

On the other hand, the Babylonian king's position seems to have undergone certain changes difficult to pinpoint. For one, the sheikhs of the largest Aramean tribes downstream from Babylon and beyond the Tigris evidently played such an important role at the court and in the actual government of Mesopotamia that their names are mentioned in the "Synchronistic King List" along with the king's vizier, another late institution. Royal power was also encroached upon by the *de facto* independence of the largest cities of the realm, including the capital, especially in fiscal matters and in military service. Military service, as far as it was still incumbent on the rural population, could be and was bought off by the payment of a small tax in silver, destined to fit out a replacement soldier. Thus, the king obviously had to rely on mercenaries taken from the tribesmen of the plains, who seem to have come to represent the military strength of Babylonia. The throne had to depend on their active cooperation since the time of Nebuchadnezzar I and probably even earlier.

Turning to the intellectual sphere, one again meets the already mentioned dichotomy: carefully tended and maintained traditional texts side by side with new departures. Outstanding among the latter is the development of mathematical astronomy on the basis of carefully collected observations of specific phenomena, recorded ever since the eighth century or earlier. These observations led to the discovery of the periodicity of eclipses, of the rhythms in the risings and settings of the planets on the horizon and their relations to those of the sun. Eventually, mathematical methods were applied to the timing of these recurring events, which allowed the Mesopotamian astronomers to compute and to predict them with considerable accuracy. The methods devised during this phase lived on after the disappearance of Mesopotamian civilization. They were taken over by Greek, Sassanian, Byzantine, and Arabic astronomers and spread into India and probably farther east, either directly or in a fruitful combination with Greek astronomical methods. During this

phase, astrology (including the practice of making horoscopes) rose to prominence within Mesopotamia proper and was likewise eagerly accepted in the east and west.

In the extant cuneiform texts of that period, even in those concerned with the affairs of daily life, Aramaic loan words are rare. This suggests, in my opinion, a clear separation between a superficially acculturated, that is, Akkadianized layer of the population—a layer consisting of small capitalists or absentee owners of fields and orchards, of administrators of the estates of tribal nobles, of merchants, craftsmen, etc., including the scribes trained to serve them—and the thoroughly acculturated intelligentsia, the specialists and the administrators of the large temple organizations. Only the latter may be assumed to be intimately acquainted and imbued with the traditional culture of Mesopotamia and its literary expressions. The former knew just the uses of clay tablets and their writing system for practical purposes, but their scribes avoided Aramaic words and phrases for prestige reasons. The intelligentsia, on the other hand, also shunned Aramaic words, having created for themselves the image of a direct continuation of the native civilization.

Of course, the intimate interpenetration of the Aramean and the traditional Mesopotamian way of life must have created a complex, mosaic-like pattern that will forever remain difficult to trace; it affected temple and palace, soldiers and scholars, the city-dwellers and the rural elements, the stable as well as the nomadic elements of the population. Everywhere, however, there is clearly a tendency to keep the traditional lore of Mesopotamia, with its peculiar system of writing and pertinent language, alive. The few texts attempting to render Aramaic in cuneiform signs on clay are clearly experimental and exceptional. There were no "Aramean scribes" in Babylonia such as are mentioned (along with "Assyrian scribes") in the somewhat earlier texts from Nineveh. The reactions of the two sister civilizations to the engulfing Aramean "flood" were apparently quite different but the lack of evidence which still cloaks the political collapse of Assyria prevents our making more detailed comparisons.

A curious contrast can be observed in the literature of the fifth



HEAD OF RULER WITH INLAID IVORY EYES. Alabaster, Bismaya,
twenty-fourth to twenty-second centuries B.C.
(*Courtesy of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago.*)

phase. There is in evidence an increasing restriction on the topical material appearing on clay tablets, especially after the Persian conquest. Only a small array of literary texts, a limited amount of omen tablets (extispicy and astrology are best represented) and a group of tablets dealing with mathematical astronomy are known, while records, legal texts, and letters are about to disappear. In contrast to this, the countries around Mesopotamia show, either directly or indirectly, the increasing influence of Mesopotamian civilization expressed in the acceptance of certain specific literary and scientific achievements, which will be discussed presently. It is, however, likely that on writing materials other than clay tablets, and in some other language, substantial parts of the native tradition were maintained in Mesopotamia proper; the use of parchment and papyrus is well attested in contemporary clay documents.

To explain this contrast, I offer the following hypothesis: I propose that from the third century B.C., or even earlier, the ubiquitous Aramean element functioned as the carrier of intense intercommunication extending over the entire region under consideration. The several political entities in and around Mesopotamia, formed or supported by Arameans, seem to have been linked to one another and to outlying states by international trade contacts which were sustained by a hitherto unparalleled linguistic unity within the ancient Near East. Arameans in positions of political power and Arameans as soldiers and merchants spread a network of contacts throughout the kingdoms of that large region. Their influence eventually reached from the First Cataract of the Nile to the Pamir.

In Babylonia, where the Aramean element wrought the aforementioned change in the native cultural continuum, a genuine acculturation of this group seems to have taken place. Similar phenomena in the civilizations around Mesopotamia—as far as they have left their imprint in textual evidence available today—shall not be our concern here. In Mesopotamia proper, however, the Arameans deserve recognition as a creative element, apart from their role as military, political, and probably also as economic factor in the rise of Babylonia at the beginning of phase five.

Above all, they are to be credited directly with the sudden and persistent diffusion of a number of culture traits from Mesopotamia: the appearance of typically Mesopotamian eclipse and lunar omens in demotic texts from Egypt, and the coordination between the signs of the zodiac and certain plants and precious stones, a relationship which is first attested on clay tablets from Babylonia and then found in Greek papyri from Hellenistic Egypt (second century B.C.). One may also refer to the swift westward spread of Mesopotamian astrological lore after the middle of the first millennium, as well as to the methods and basic parameters of Mesopotamian mathematical astronomy. The diffusion to the west (mainly Syria and Egypt) is paralleled to a considerable degree by that to the north (Iran of the Sassanian kings, and eventually Byzantium) and to the east (India). In the last two instances, however, the extent to which the Hellenistic civilization shares with the Aramean the role of carrier cannot yet be determined. Generally, it follows the paths made by the Arameans who themselves came quickly under Hellenistic influence. Much work is yet to be done in these directions. The fortuitous fact that the Hellenistic papyri withstood the ravages of time in Egypt, while the evidence for the corresponding (Seleucid) period in Mesopotamia is totally lost except for what we can deduce from a few clay tablets, is responsible for the distorted view we have of these centuries, a view which the working hypothesis outlined above attempts to correct.

Such an Aramean "interstratum" maintained across the entire ancient Near East between the native substratum and its ever changing foreign rulers seems to me to offer a clue for the understanding of the international social and political situation in this region even prior to the Persian and Greek conquests. It may also explain the facility with which the fusion between the conquerors and the conquered was achieved, since the latter had already established the basis for a truly international civilization in the Near East. In other words, there existed in that region a readiness to incorporate new concepts from outside into the frame of the local tradition. This implies an increased awareness of foreign civilizations, that is, of attitudes toward life differing from one's own, and

the acknowledgment of the superiority of certain alien achievements, at least in specific ideological, scientific, or artistic respects. The time we are discussing is far from peaceful; empires rise and topple; conquerors come and go; the network of contacts becomes increasingly dense and pervades still more sections of the civilizations involved. During the period of Persian domination it reached the Mediterranean littoral and spread into Greece. When the Greeks took the dominion of the ancient Near East from the Persians, India became involved, and all contacts became even more intense and varied as to subject matter; the Greeks contributed to the rise of a "Eurasian" inter-continental civilization of which Babylonia was a "founding member."

In the fateful last centuries of the first millennium, the oldest characteristic of Mesopotamian civilization, writing on clay tablets, disappears. Administrative and legal texts are now written on papyrus and the tablets carrying the traditional learning and literature become extremely rare, although astronomical texts continue into the first century of the new millennium. Still, Babylonian civilization seems to have maintained itself, in a state of progressive encystment, for a considerable time afterwards (beginning of the first century A.D.). Strabo (*Geography* 16,1,16) describes this state tellingly:

In Babylonia a settlement is set apart for the local philosophers, the Chaldaeans as they are called, who are concerned mostly with astronomy; but some of these, who are not approved of by the others, profess to be genethliologists. There is also a tribe of the Chaldaeans, and a territory inhabited by them, in the neighborhood of the Arabians and of the Persian Sea, as it is called. There are also several tribes of the Chaldaean astronomers. For example, some are called Orcheni [i.e., natives of Uruk], others Borsippeni [i.e., natives of Borsippa], and several others by different names, as though divided into different sects which hold to various dogmas about the same subjects. And the mathematicians made mention of some of these men; as, for example Cidenas and Naburianus and Sudinus.

PART II

Can These Bones Live?

AN ESSAY ON TRANSLATING
AKKADIAN TEXTS

The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of dry bones, and caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live?

Ezekiel 37:3

The uniqueness of a civilization is produced and sustained by an interrelated concord of components; the original habitat, the temperament, and the disposition of its primary carriers combine with its “life history” to create that particular “style” in which the individuality of such a civilization materializes. This individuality is primarily expressed in the distribution of emphasis and avoidance and in the order of rank and value allocated to the overall inventory of its culture traits. How, then, can the individuality of a civilization—in this instance that of Mesopotamia—be described and conveyed to an outsider enmeshed in the workings of a different civilization?

Mesopotamian civilization is known to us, today, through discrete bits of documentary and archeological information, the number and variety of which is incredibly large and whose

interrelations are as intricate, multileveled, and complex as is to be expected in any of the great civilizations. It is customary to have these bits of information arranged and organized in such handy categories as language, history, art, social and economic life, religion, and so forth. Although this is immensely practical for reference purposes, for establishing the general trend of internal changes, for discovering lacunae in the information, I question whether such an arrangement is able to reflect the uniqueness and individuality of Mesopotamian civilization.

One would like to assume that any systematic presentation of the entire body of evidence—be it by means of translated texts or by pictures of physical objects, properly identified and described—will evoke in the mind of the reader an understanding of Mesopotamian civilization as an individual and unparalleled complex of specific data, embracing certain dimensions in time and space and held together by an inherent logic—in short, as a unique entity.

The by-now-familiar images of bearded Assyrian kings, ghost-eyed gods, curiously cut seal cylinders, and romantic ruins (and their time-bound modern reconstructions) may indeed impress us with their pronounced specific features, but it is an illusion to assume that they are able to communicate to us any more than the mere “surface” of the uniqueness of Mesopotamian civilization. It is surprisingly hard for the conscientious and discriminating archeologist and art historian to penetrate the barriers set up by the iconography, the technological traditions, and the mannerisms of the decorative overlay to reach the Mesopotamian artist as creator and interpreter of his civilization.

The philologist does not fare much better. He is only too easily tempted to flatter himself in this respect by assuming that texts and documents may offer reliable and adequate insights into Mesopotamian civilization and even an understanding of its workings. He may even pity the archeologist, who has at hand only the remains of fallen walls, countless sherds, and figural representations staring at him out of an alien, remote world, but not that wonderful means of direct communication with the past that a written and understandable language supposedly provides.

Is such an attitude valid? Can documents of any kind lead a priori to reliable information about a dead civilization—especially when the texts are not intended for us? Can they guide us through the intrinsic otherness of the cultural and social setting that created them, and can they reveal to us a functioning “cosmos”?

“They wrote on clay,” the phrase coined by Edward Chiera, accentuates solely the unique use of clay as the writing material characteristic of Mesopotamian civilization. Although the fortunate choice of a nearly imperishable carrier of information was essential for the survival of most of the documentation, it seems to be more to the point to inquire *what* they wrote on clay, once we have recognized the two basic achievements of their civilization, the invention or adaptation of a practicable system of writing, and the selection of cheap and durable writing material. Writing is never simply a means of communication; stylistic preferences and a variety of inhibitions and pressures deeply affect the content of the message as well as its veracity. As a means of communication, it is, moreover, influenced by the overall distribution of emphases that any given civilization is bound to exercise on all its formal utterances in its innate urge toward the realization of a self-image. While we may readily acknowledge such differences in emphasis between a modern civilization and Mesopotamia’s, their delineation remains extremely difficult, and the actual application of such understanding when relating the two civilizations is possible only on the level of approximation.

I hasten to add that there exists a considerable body of accessible historical facts and basic situations that do not become too obviously distorted when one simply utilizes today’s concepts and the less-than-adequate translation methods traditionally applied in Assyriology. Annals of all sorts, royal inscriptions on objects dedicated to the gods, and a good many incidental documents support not only a chronology of Mesopotamia, but, in a number of instances, a workable frame of historical reference in which to organize events, personalities, and general trends from the middle of the third to the end of the first millennium B.C. Law codes, royal edicts, and legal documents of impressive variety combine with an abundance of administrative records and letters, both

private and official, to rough out the functioning of the main social institutions and the role of the individual in that constantly changing society. Literary creativity reveals itself in an array of topical and stylistic preferences, and the preserved texts show forms of expression ranging from temple and court poetry to the re-creation of traditional myths and folklore material, sometimes even reflecting individual experiences. Our present knowledge of Mesopotamian civilization is the result of continuous scholarly activity during the past century, and there is still enough material for another century of such work, even if new tablets should not come out of the soil at the rate they did during these last decades.

But to be useful for the student of Mesopotamian civilization as a living and interrelated whole, these texts have to be understood in their substantive content and in their relation to a background that, in the main, is illuminated solely by more texts. They also have to be understood and analyzed as expressions of creative processes of unknown complexity that affect morphology, syntax, and vocabulary according to the requirements of a number of specific literary conventions and a poetic etiquette, both of which are again defined exclusively by what we have been able to extract from other cuneiform texts. There exists no native self-appraisal in Mesopotamian literature, no self-searching interest in, for instance, a critical evaluation of the present in relation to past achievements or future goals.

Direct archeological evidence or outside information on life and thought in Mesopotamia do not help much to cross the gap between ourselves and the texts. Accumulating more and more information will therefore never automatically provide the bridge to a fuller understanding of these texts; nor, to use the imagery of the passage from Ezekiel at the head of this essay, will it ever produce the sinews and flesh to cover the dry bones. Yet only a maximal understanding based on a careful processing of all available data, on their critical evaluation with respect to the text, and, above all, on individual intellectual initiative directed toward this very purpose can make these bones live again.

When, then, is a text adequately understood?

The touchstone establishing the understanding of any Akkadian text is its translation into a modern language in a way that makes the new wording a meaningful carrier of the original message. It is not enough to analyze and to describe the Akkadian language, its components, their functions and interrelations; nor is it enough—and I speak here from experience—to collect its words, neatly labeled as to semantic range and distribution. The former yields, at best, a complex and even unsatisfactory abstraction structured according to principles of mathematical logic, the latter something like a herbarium or a collection of dead butterflies—at any rate, a cemetery of words. A simulacrum of life, and surely not more than that, is within our reach only when we test the validity of both the grammar and the vocabulary in each given document, and when we derive from the protean elusiveness of the Akkadian text not only refinements and readjustments of those tools (grammar and vocabulary) but also insight into the context of which the document was a part. Only the comprehension of the background against which each text must thus be seen makes its understanding possible.

Ever since man realized that the cocoon in whose tangled layers he is held by his own civilization not only provides him with protection and stability, but also separates him from other entities of alien but similar nature, translation—in the widest sense of the word—has become an increasingly difficult problem with which he has had to wrestle as his horizon kept expanding. Much has been written about translating and translations, their importance, and their pitfalls; the linguistic gap has often been given sophisticated formulations in methodological discussions, but one aspect seems to have been neglected: the anthropological side. Language differences always, and by necessity, imply culture differentials, and such differentials are keenly felt and reacted to, although often not overtly, by those who translate and by those who read translations. This culture differential occurs within a group of related civilizations (which is the case when, for example, English poetry is rendered in Italian, or German philosophy in French) or between patently separate civilizations. There again, several possibilities are evident; these civilizations can be

historically related, as are the Greek and the Western, or the Hebrew and the Western, but they can also be as disparate as the Chinese and the Western. Added complications are created by time differentials within or between civilizations.

Translation bears the culture differential while attempting to bridge the language gap. It always brings to the fore whatever deep-seated emotional awareness exists of the tensions between the two civilizations, the "source" civilization, from which the text is taken, and the "target" civilization, in the language of which it is to be rendered. The gap compels the translator to realize the differential and to face an appraisal of his own civilization in relation to the foreign one.

Typically, the ensuing reaction is either to deny the existence of a gap or to refuse to cross it. The former leads to the age-old type of translation in which every word of the foreign language is considered to be in one-to-one correspondence with a word of the translator's tongue; the translator replaces unit by unit and sees in the quaintness of the text produced an adequate rendering of the otherness of the original. By resorting to literal translations, the translator indicates his own refusal to accept the existence of a gap between the two languages and, with it, of the gap between two civilizations. At times, this attitude is related to the culture-conditioned desire to stress the importance of a continuum, as with translations of Homer and of the Old Testament. Any deviation from this type of translation evokes intense reactions in those who subconsciously want to deny the existence of the gap. As is well known, every "modern" Homer or Bible translation elicits a flurry of excited book reviews angrily berating the deviating translator. Since the critic, like every serious student of these books, has to achieve for himself the precarious balance between his emotional relation to the message of the text and the scholarly demands he feels obliged to posit, every change jeopardizes his personal position and must emphatically be proved "wrong."

The resistance to crossing the gap between the two languages or rather, cultures, expresses itself in the setting up of philological and stylistic standards for translation that are so high and exacting as to be unattainable in practice; at the same time,

translations that fall short are rejected as unworthy of the original. This is, as a rule, the view of the speaker of the "source" language, who feels the subconscious need to deny to the "target" language, or rather the "target" civilization, the status and the ability to render adequately the message of the home civilization in form and in content. Thus the Chinese bewail the inadequacies of renditions of their poems in a Western language, the Russian speaker feels that the subtleties of his mother tongue suffer badly when they are made to carry across the gap, and so forth. At times such an attitude may also express the translator's deep-seated discontent with his own civilization, which he is inclined to consider inadequate to express what he likes the alien text to convey.

Of course, I have resorted to exaggeration to bring home my point. Translation of the Old Testament is more a political problem than a linguistic one. Translations of poetical works present a well-known and controversial problem for the linguist and the literary critic, let alone for those poets who are moved for whatever reason to tackle such tasks. Still, I insist, whether poems or reports on economic or weather conditions are involved, translating is not only beset by linguistic difficulties, but also by the emotional involvements it provokes in the translator and his reader.

The linguistic difficulties are not only those created by the differences in morphology, syntax, and vocabulary. To translate a text from a foreign language requires bridging the gap of the conceptual difference by means of that rare link, the much-searched-for *mot juste*, that accidental *réussite*, which only empathy can engender, and which, even optimally, can only approximate the original. Yet search and discovery, no less than labor and success, endow translating with undiminishable charm that never ceases for those who accept the challenge. And the battle knows no surcease; what constitutes a successful rendering in one instance is very likely to fall flat or jar awkwardly in another context. No adequate translation of a phrase or even a word can be applied again without care, because it would degrade the translation to the level of the one-to-one correspondences where words



HEAD OF YOUNG MAN. Alabaster, twenty-fourth to twenty-second
centuries B. C.
(*Courtesy of the Louvre, Paris.*)

are handled like tokens. Translation is indeed a "utopian" task, in the sense of the passage cited here from Ortega y Gasset:

To read a book, is, like all the other really human occupations, a utopian task. I call "utopian" every action whose initial intention cannot be fulfilled in the development of its activity and which has to be satisfied with approximations essentially contradictory to the purpose which has started it. Thus "to read" begins by signifying the project of understanding a text fully. Now this is impossible. It is only possible with a great effort to extract a more or less important portion of what the text has tried to say, communicate, make known; but there will always remain an "illegible" residue. It is, on the other hand, probable that, while we are making this effort, we may read, at the same time, into the text; that is, we may understand things which the author has not "meant" to say, and, nevertheless, he has "said" them; he has presented them to us involuntarily—even more, against his professed purpose.*

In translating from Akkadian we encounter two particular difficulties. One is the specific nature of the documentation, and the other the fact that Akkadian is what is commonly called a "dead" language. The latter difficulty is the minor one; if one does not care to penetrate through the writing to the spoken language (phoneme-inventory, stress distribution), the graphics quite adequately reflect, as a rule, morphology, vocabulary, and syntax. On the other hand, the constantly increasing corpus of linguistic material available in Akkadian creates, by its very rate of accumulation, a serious drawback. The exact meaning of any word in a specific context, the exact function of any form, and, above all, that of any feature of the syntax, cannot be tested by reactions elicited from a native informant, but can be confirmed or ruled out solely when, and if, new evidence becomes available, evidence that can actually prove a proposed interpretation right or wrong. This state of affairs gives a degree of instability to both the extent and the depth of our knowledge of Akkadian, and in turn, to our understanding of the entire civilization of Mesopotamia.

The cuneiform tablets exhibit, moreover, the effects of a good number of topical and stylistic restrictions, as is natural for any

* Jose Ortega y Gasset, "The Difficulty of Reading," *Diogenes* 28 (1959), 2-3.

formal literary expression. To a certain extent the pattern created by such restrictions facilitates the *prima facie* understanding of such texts. Thus, votive inscriptions, for example, readily offer their factual information, and historical records are as a rule styled to allow us insight into the basic situations to which they refer. Yet, the real difficulties of understanding still remain, although they are relegated to a background into which few feel the desire to penetrate.

The situation is different in texts whose style requirements are less stringent and where the situations reflected are neither as stable nor as well-defined as in the literary types just singled out. This is typically the case with letters, and therefore translations of letters, be they official, private, or business, pose special problems. Formularies exist, of course, for a number of letter types, but the discipline they impose on the wording is normally in evidence at the beginning of the text (introductory and salutation formulas) and affects the body or the end of the letter much more rarely. These formal features of the letters are very much time- and custom-bound and they easily allow any serious student to date quickly a letter or letter fragment in cuneiform; nevertheless they have hardly ever been the subject of the systematic and wide-ranging examination they well deserve. On the other hand, there are a number of instances in which the form of the letter has been used in Mesopotamia as a vehicle for prayers and other pious utterances, for royal pronouncements, for the expression of political and literary thoughts outside the confines of the traditional modes. This too would deserve serious scholarly investigation, especially since the genre seems to have been more popular within the Sumerian tradition of Mesopotamian civilization than later on. My interest in letters has consistently been toward those official, business and private documents that allow insights into the Mesopotamian society of such an immediateness as no other cuneiform texts of the same range of subject matter—no ration list or legal document, to mention the most typical representatives—are able to offer. The stylistic conventions of these letters allow the writer considerable freedom in presenting his case to the addressee, shifting from argument to argument,

changing topics, returning to previous points—in short, making the fullest use of the language as an instrument to convey a complex message. At the same time, the topical diversity of such letters, the lines of argumentation used to present pleas, to defend policies, to offer excuses, and so forth, illuminate both the writer and the addressee as human beings, shed light on their expectations and fears, and on the setting in which they live. Letters are thus far more revealing than the formalized historical and literary texts with their ideological narrowness and tradition-determined contents. Of course, the intended message and the actual wording of the letter are separated by a gap that can be considerable. The immediacy of the dictated or otherwise suggested content is bound to be hampered by the linguistic and stylistic inadequacies or propensities of the scribe who in this civilization stands typically between message and letter. His social relationship to the sender determines to a certain extent the degree of interference he can permit himself with the tone and even the content of the message. In this respect the functions of a scribe run the gamut from the all-important and efficient secretary who participates in the composition of a letter to the poorly paid town scribe who translates the inarticulate complaints of the poor and uneducated into the stereotyped eloquence of a petition or a begging letter. Again, our search for life communication is forestalled by the medium: letter and scribe.

To surmount or, to be more realistic, to attack such difficulties became a highly interesting challenge for me when I translated the letters that follow. Whether I have succeeded, by and large, in making some of these “dry bones” live again, is up to the reader to decide.

Letters in Akkadian cannot be translated as an exercise in grammar; the paratactic sentence structure of that language makes any such endeavor futile. One has to reconstruct from the data of the text its background and the situation that dominates the relationship between sender and addressee, and the translator has to provide stress, contrast, mood, and all other unwritten elements that make the written text a real and personal communication, in the light of that same reconstruction.

This is, at times, extremely difficult, and one cannot expect that any such reconstruction is the only solution to the riddle the naked wording of the letter often presents.

To make these letters "live," I have committed myself to a rendering of the Akkadian that should make it immediately understandable. This means that the artifices of the philologist (brackets, half-brackets, parentheses, question marks, ellipses) had to be mostly eliminated. The question mark, for example, is used exclusively to indicate that a translation is only a guess supported by the given context; an unintelligible word or short phrase is rendered by ellipses (. . .), missing and broken words or passages by brackets [. . .]. These are the only symbols permitted to distract the reader. I have also frequently omitted the customary parentheses in which Assyriologists like to enclose words that are essential for the understanding of a too "narrow" translation, and cannot be made to correspond to specific and overt features of the Akkadian text.

My translation is "broad," inasmuch as it is affected by my awareness of the gap between Akkadian and English grammar and syntax. Therefore I have, on occasions, accepted the necessity of rendering Akkadian verbs by English substantives and vice versa, of replacing pronouns by proper names and vice versa, of omitting and adding demonstrative pronouns and personal suffixes if the two languages differ in this respect, of supplying objects to elliptically used transitive Akkadian verbs, and of making those changes where necessary without attempting to indicate the differences between Akkadian and English by typographical means. In short, to recreate the thought sequence which carries the message of the letter and to make each letter into the meaningful and intelligible document the writer had in mind, I have taken certain liberties with the text. These liberties are, however, only superficial; they will easily reveal to the Assyriologist who cares to study the original the reasoning on which they are based. For the layman, any superficial lack of literalness will only serve to bring out fundamental fidelity of the English version of the letters.

The elusive qualities of style and mood are more difficult to

capture. I realize that all renderings cannot be considered equally adequate in these respects. In all my translations, however, the inspiring words of the patron saint of all translators, St. Jerome, have been before my eyes: *Non verbum e verbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensu.*

Translations

I Old Akkadian Letters

A SOLEMN WARNING
BEFORE THE INVASION OF THE
GUTI

A SOLEMN WARNING

This is from Iškun-Dagan to Puzur-Ištar:

You are bound herewith by the oath I swear by the gods Inanna and Aba, and the gods Ašširgi and Ninḥursag, and the oath by the life of the king and the life of the queen, that not until you (come here and) have seen me face to face must you touch either bread or beer, and that not until you have arrived here must you even sit down on a chair.

I.

RA 23 p. 25

BEFORE THE INVASION OF THE GUTI

This is from Iškun-Dagan to Lugalra:

Cultivate the field and watch over the cattle! And, above all, do not tell me: "The Gutu are around, I could not cultivate the

field." Man outposts at one-mile intervals and you yourself go on and cultivate the field! The men will go about their business(?). If the Guti attempt an attack against you, then bring all the cattle into town. Formerly(?) when the Guti men drove away the cattle I have never said a word; I have always given you silver (for the damages). But now(?) I swear by the life of King Šar-kali-šarrī that should the Guti men have driven away the cattle, and you cannot pay out of your own pocket, I shall give you no silver when I come to town. Now, won't you keep watch over the cattle!

I have already claimed from you the regular delivery of barley in piles.

This is a warning(?)—take cognizance of it.

2.

JRAS 1932 p. 269

2

Old Assyrian Letters from Anatolia

BUSINESS WORRIES
COLLECTING DEBTS

BUSINESS WORRIES

Tell Inâ: Ikuppîja, Ellil-bâni, and Aššur-taklâku send the following message:

We have heard here that the palace has put you in fetters, but we did not believe it until we learned of the official announcement. We closely questioned Iddissin, the transport agent of the house of Enna-Sin, and he declared: "They keep the boss in seclusion." For this reason we have sent word to Bêlum-bâni to take care of your affairs. You need not be worried about your consignment and that of the merchant. Bêlum-bâni must not stay (there) for even a day longer than necessary. Let us have a report from you lest we become worried.

Tell Amur-ilī: Addu sends the following message:

From here I will go to the town of Buruṣḫattum, together with the assistants of Aḫ-šalim, according to your instruction. Aḫ-šalim himself (confirmed this) here as follows: “I am going to send you together with my assistants.”

Ennānum has not yet arrived here; he is staying in the town of Tikurna.

Do not be angry with me for my delaying. Send me a donkey-load of tin and have it transported (into the town Buruṣḫattum) by the man Urā. Make up your mind, there, about your *šallam* donkey’s meeting with me in Buruṣḫattum so your decision (in this matter) can reach me (in time).

Please, dear brother, do not make me act on my own responsibility. The police stations are very strict (at the moment).

I plan to depart within five days.

4.

CCT I 44

A message from Uṣûpišqum: Tell Āmur-ilī and Puzur-Ištar:

I keep hearing reports that you have sent merchandise to Ina-Sin and to Inarawe. Both these men are dead! Although I searched for evidence for the arrival of any silver, there isn’t any. One of you should come here from where you are, or else the silver belonging to your father will be lost.

5.

CCT 3 40b

COLLECTING DEBTS

A message from Šilla-Labbum and Elani: Tell Puzur-Aššur, Amua, and Aššur-šamši:

Thirty years ago you left the city of Assur. You have never made a deposit since, and we have not recovered one shekel of silver from you, but we have never made you feel bad about this. Our tablets have been going to you with caravan after caravan, but no report from you has ever come here. We have addressed claims to your father but we have not been claiming one shekel of your



HEAD OF A WOMAN. Hair is painted black, with a blue ribbon.
Alabaster, twenty-fourth to twenty-second centuries B. C.
(*Courtesy of the Louvre, Paris.*)

private silver. Please, do come back right away; should you be too busy with your business, deposit the silver for us. (Remember) we have never made you feel bad about this matter but we are now forced to appear, in your eyes, acting as gentlemen should not. Please, do come back right away or deposit the silver for us.

If not, we will send you a notice from the local ruler and the police, and thus put you to shame in the assembly of the merchants. You will also cease to be one of us.

6.

TCL 19 I

Tell Aššur-rīšī, Šu-Bēlim, and Aššur-taklaku: Elani sends the following message:

Dear brothers, get hold of Išme-[. . .] and Aššur-nāda there: make them pay nine shekels of silver, and give the silver to Šu-Bēlim. Be sure, dear brothers, to give the silver to Šu-Bēlim, lest you cause annoyance to me and to him. When I stayed there, they (the two debtors mentioned) told me the following: "No sale can be made on the market." Today I hear, however, that many sales are being made on the market. Therefore, make them pay the silver and give it to Šu-Bēlim. Follow instructions, dear brothers!

Give the following message to Aššur-rīšī: "I have paid two and one-fourth shekels of silver for you, dear brother; give the same amount of silver to Šu-Bēlim, please.

7.

TCL 20 III

3

Old Babylonian Letters

FIGHTING THE BUREAUCRACY
TRADE
DAILY LIFE
LAW
AGRICULTURAL MANAGEMENT

FIGHTING THE BUREAUCRACY

Tell the governor of the Inland Region, whom the god Marduk keeps in good health: Dingir-šaga sends the following message:

May the gods Šamaš and Marduk keep you forever in good health.

I was very pleased when the god Marduk elevated you to high office. I said to myself, “A man has been elevated who knows me; he will do for me what I want. Even those officials around here who do not know me personally will now do what I want when I send them a message.

As to the case of the temple singer Nabium-mālik, a native of the town of Ḥabuz, the man made the following deposition to me. I quote him: “Nobody ever issued a summons for me to do service as a porter. Now the governor of the Inland Region

has sent me notice, and (after I refused) they took a slave of mine as a pledge.”

This man, Nabium-mālik, is a member of my household; he is not a stranger. He is already performing six other work-obligations, and he pays the fees incumbent on a high priest and a temple singer.

I am sending you herewith this tablet of mine; if you truly care for me, nobody must issue a summons for this man's household.

8.

Fish, John Rylands Library No. 1

Tell the boss, whom the god Marduk keeps in good health: Jantin-E[raḥ(?)] sends the following message:

May the gods Šamaš and Marduk keep you forever in good health. Stay well!

The people of the town of Ḥabuz have made the following complaint to me: “They issued a summons against us for such corvée work as is not our obligation and are bothering us all the time.” This is what they told me. [The . . . has once before claimed] from them the performance of this corvée work, but the king has heard their case, and since that corvée work is not an old duty of theirs, they have been exempted(?) from working on the boats. The king has ordered that they not be bothered from then on with respect to that corvée work. The information (in this matter) was given to you from sheer lack of pertinent knowledge. Take care of the matter; these people must not be bothered any more, nor should summonses be issued for them.

9.

Fish, John Rylands Library No. 13

Tell the governor of the River Region: Rapaš-ṣilli-Ea (the overseer of the *nadītu*-women of Šamaš) sends the following message:

May the gods Šamaš and Marduk keep you in good health.

For what reason have you detained Liwwir-ana-ilim, the slave of the *nadītu*-woman of Šamaš? He is neither a native of the town

Šaga nor a free-born person, but a slave of the *naditu*-woman of Šamaš. Release him, so she won't appeal to the king! Since the man was not born (in wedlock) to Riš-Šamaš, and his (adoptive) mother is a slave girl of a *naditu*-woman of Šamaš, why do you want to put him on the roll of the *rēdû*-soldiers? Really, the close (i.e. the district where the *naditu*-women live) is (always) being robbed!

10.

CT 44 53

Tell Sin-rīmenni Zababa-[. .] sends the following message

May the gods Šamaš and Marduk keep you in good health.

The agents of the king have seized him (my young man) in the town of Appašum and he is being detained in the house of Nūrum-līši. But this man wears neither the fetters (of a slave) nor the hairdo of a slave. I am sending herewith Adad-šarrum to you, do send that young man back to me.

11.

TIM 2 71

TRADE

Tell Ea-nāšir: Nanni sends the following message

When you came, you said to me as follows "I will give Gimil-Sin (when he comes) fine quality copper ingots." You left then but you did not do what you promised me. You put ingots which were not good before my messenger (Šit-Sin) and said "If you want to take them, take them, if you do not want to take them, go away!"

What do you take me for, that you treat somebody like me with such contempt? I have sent as messengers gentlemen like ourselves to collect the bag with my money (deposited with you) but you have treated me with contempt by sending them back to me empty-handed several times, and that through enemy territory. Is there anyone among the merchants who trade with Telmun who has treated me in this way? You alone treat my messenger with contempt! On account of that one (trifling) mina

of silver which I owe(?) you, you feel free to speak in such a way, while I have given to the palace on your behalf 1,080 pounds of copper, and Šumi-abum has likewise given 1,080 pounds of copper, apart from what we both have had written on a sealed tablet to be kept in the temple of Šamaš.

How have you treated me for that copper? You have withheld my money bag from me in enemy territory; it is now up to you to restore (my money) to me in full.

Take cognizance that (from now on) I will not accept here any copper from you that is not of fine quality. I shall (from now on) select and take the ingots individually in my own yard, and I shall exercise against you my right of rejection because you have treated me with contempt.

12.

UET 5 81

Tell Aḥuni: Bēlānum sends the following message:

May the god Šamaš keep you in good health.

Make ready for me the myrtle and the sweet-smelling reeds of which I spoke to you, as well as a boat for (transporting) wine to the city of Sippar. Buy and bring along with you ten silver shekels' worth of wine and join me here in Babylon sometime tomorrow.

13.

TCL 18 133

Tell Šamaš-magir: Igmil-Sin and Bitum-rabi send the following message:

May the gods Šamaš and Ninurta keep you in good health.

The overseer of the merchants of King Šamši-Adad, Iddin-Amurru, has given me a sealed document and told me (on that occasion) the following: "My lord (the king of Mari) has approached the town of Mankisum with the main body of his army, and I was ordered (to announce that) he will come here before the twentieth (of the month). Have this tablet brought to your lord (the king of Ešnunna), so he can quickly send an answer so

that our (text: my) armies can advance to the place he indicates and that both (armies) can join forces.”

I have given that tablet to Ili-iddinam, the son of Sin-muballit, and I am sending him herewith to you. If you yourself are detained hand both of them (the messenger and the sealed tablet) over to two trustworthy members of the merchant class; they should make haste so that my lord can hear (this message) and everything my lord orders (omitted: can be done).

PS: Šamši-Adad and his army are close; this report must go quickly.

14.

TIM 2 15

Tell Sin-iddinam: Šillī-[. . .] sends the following message:

I have written you repeatedly to bring here the criminal and all the robbers, but you have not brought them here nor have you even sent me word. And so fires started by the robbers are (still) raging and ravaging the countryside. Since you have not brought the robbers to me although I have sent you word repeatedly, I am holding you responsible for the crimes which are committed in [the country].

Tomorrow, I shall dispatch this sealed letter of mine; inform me [*break*].

15.

TIM 2 28

DAILY LIFE

Tell the Lady Zinû: Iddin-Sin sends the following message:

May the gods Šamaš, Marduk, and Ilabrat keep you forever in good health for my sake.

From year to year, the clothes of the (young) gentlemen here become better, but you let my clothes get worse from year to year. Indeed, you persisted(?) in making my clothes poorer and more scanty. At a time when in our house wool is used up like bread, you have made me poor clothes. The son of Adad-iddinam, whose father is only an assistant of my father, (has) two new sets

of clothes [*break*] while you fuss even about a single set of clothes for me. In spite of the fact that you bore me and his mother only adopted him, his mother loves him, while you, you do not love me!

16.

TCL 18 111

Tell my master: Your slave girl Dabitum sends the following message:

What I have told you now has happened to me: For seven months this (unborn) child was in my body, but for a month now the child has been dead and nobody wants to take care of me. May it please my master (to do something) lest I die. Come visit me and let me see the face of my master! [*Large gap*] Why did no present from you arrive for me? And if I have to die, let me die after I have seen again the face of my master!

17.

TIM I 15

Tell my father, whom the gods Gula, [. . .], Damu, and Urmašum keep in good health: Warad-Gula sends the following message:

May the gods Gula, Damu, and Urmašum keep my father in good health. Grow old in the office which you are now holding!

Because I have not reported to you due to my departure nor appeared before you, an attendant (lit.: chair-bearer) has put me under detention and has assigned an escort to me to proceed to Isin. I cannot possibly get away (from him) and appear before you.

Do not worry about me in any way.

I will pack the silver for which you have vouched on my account. It will be ready, and if the trip of Damu-apkalli takes place he will bring it to you. If not, I will myself depart to be with you within ten days after they have brought to the threshing floor the barley for which I am responsible.

I cannot sleep at night on account of worrying about you.

18.

TCL 18 152

Tell the Lady Elmešum: Sirum sends the following message:

May the gods Šamaš and Panigingarra keep you forever in good health for my sake.

Here is a way to show your sisterly attitude: although we have grown up together ever since we were youngsters, you have never thought of me, since you had that stroke of luck, with any present worth even the twelfth part of a shekel of silver. Also, the other day when you arrived and I got the *abarahhu*, you were not happy until you took (it) away from me, saying: "Later on, I will send you a good staff and a . . .," but you did not send (them) to me.

I also told you the following: "If the honorable Abi-Amurru, who married you, needs any logs, he should send me word and I will send him five logs."

I am now sending you a man (who travels overland) with the sacred barge of the god Adad. Send me by him one hundred locusts and food worth one-sixth of a shekel of silver. In this I will see your sisterly attitude toward me.

19.

YOS 2 15

Tell the Lady Alitum: Aplum sends the following message:

May the god Šamaš keep you in good health.

The ladies Lamassûm and Niš-īnišu came to me in tears, their heads bowed. They said: "You want to abandon us by going to Babylon without leaving us food for a single day!" When you receive my letter [send them thirty] *kor*-[measures of barley] in addition to the provisions which I have promised you for the girl.

They shed tears and urged me, saying: "Help me, this year I am on the brink of starvation." They (text: she) have made me give my consent concerning the payment of thirty *kor*-measures of barley besides the provisions for the girl. So do have thirty *kor*-measures of barley loaded on a boat for your sisters; otherwise, they will not quit complaining to us during the entire year.

20.

TCL 18 123

Tell Uzālum: Your son Adad-abum sends the following message:

May the gods Šamaš and Wēr keep you forever in good health.

I have never before written to you for something precious I wanted. But if you want to be like a father to me, get me a fine string full of beads, to be worn around the head. Seal it with your seal and give it to the carrier of this tablet so that he can bring it to me. If you have none at hand, dig it out of the ground wherever (such objects) are (found) and send it to me. I want it very much; do not withhold it from me. In this I will see whether you love me as a real father does. Of course, establish its price for me, write it down, and send me the tablet. The young man who is coming to you must not see the string of beads. Seal it (in a package) and give it to him. He must not see the string, the one to be worn around the head, which you are sending. It should be full (of beads) and should be beautiful. If I see it and dislike(?) it, I shall send it back!

Also send the cloak, of which I spoke to you.

21.

Sumer 14 pl. 23 No. 47

Tell my little Gimillum, whom my lord (the god Šamaš) keeps in good health: the *naditu*-woman Awat-Aja sends the following message:

May my Lord and my Lady (the goddess Aja) keep you for my sake in good health forever.

When I saw you recently, I was just as glad to see you as I was when (long ago) I entered the *gagûm*-close and saw (for the first time) the face of my Lady (the goddess Aja). And you too, my brother, were as glad to see me as I to see you. You said: "I am going to stay for ten days." I was so pleased about it that I did not then report to you on my situation; I did not want to tell you here personally what I used to write to you about, before, from a distance. But you left suddenly and I was almost insane for three days. I did not touch food or even water.

You well know the amount of barley which I received before, and which you yourself had sent me. (If we continue) in this manner we will not wrong each other and I will not die of hunger

with my household. Just send me the amount of barley which it was customary to send so that I can keep my household provided with food, that cold and hunger should not plague me (during the coming cold season).

PS: Have a heart, my dear Gimillum, let me not die of hunger. I was more pleased with you than I was ever with anybody else.

22.

Fish, John Rylands Library No. 4

Tell Bēlšunu: Qurduša sends the following message:

May the god Šamaš keep you in good health.

As you have certainly heard, the open country is in confusion and the enemy is prowling around in it. I have dispatched letters to Ibni-Marduk, to Warad- . . . , and to yourself. Take a lamb from the flock for the diviner and obtain a divination concerning the cattle and the flocks, whether they should move into my neighborhood; if there will be no attack of the enemy and no attack by robbers the cattle should come to where I am—or else bring them into the town of Kish so that the enemy cannot touch them. Furthermore, bring whatever barley is available into Kish and write me a full report.

23.

TCL 17 27

LAW

Tell the officials and administrators: King Samsuiluna sends the following message:

You have answered to what had been written to you concerning an investigation about the silver and the gold that was taken from the (storehouse called) “House-of-Plenty” and concerning the checking on what had disappeared, as follows: “We have investigated the administrators, stewards, and the anointed priests already five or six times but they have not given us any lead. We also have questioned the [doorkeepers] who have stayed overnight in the cella [and the . . .] who have stayed overnight



HEAD OF A PRIEST. Limestone, twenty-second century B. C.
(*Courtesy of the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin.*)

in the cella, those of the temple of the god Ninurta who <scribe forgot: abandoned> their official stations, two doorkeepers, the wife and the daughter of the doorkeeper of the courtyard, the one who belongs to the "House-of-Plenty." In that (critical) night, the doorkeeper together with his two females [was posted] in the "House-of-Plenty" apart from a number of [. . .]. And one steward, the one who opened the latch, we <arrested> and are holding."

This is what you wrote me. Now when you have read this tablet of mine, Lu-Ninurta, you yourselves, and the administrators [and] anointed priests should take the doorkeepers and the one steward and also the officials who have not been at their official stations and come here to Babylon. [The judges] need not come here, they should make a decision only in the case which I have assigned to them.

24.

PBS I/2 12

Tell Aḫu-kīnum: Awīl-Amurrim sends the following message:

Immediately after you left for the trip, Imgur-Sin arrived here and claimed: "He owes me one-third of a mina of silver." He took your wife and your daughter as pledges. Come back before your wife and your daughter die from the work of constantly grinding barley while in detention. Please, get your wife and your daughter out of this.

25.

UET 5 9

Tell the mayor and the aldermen of the city: Samsuiluna-šarrum sends the following message:

May the gods Šamaš and Marduk keep you in good health!

I am sending you this tablet of mine (to warn you): Nobody must come near the house of the woman dream-interpreter Ummī-waqrāt. I have bought that house and all its bricks. If somebody so much as touches a brick of it, I will go to court against all of you as provided by the pertinent ordinance of my lord (i.e., King Samsuiluna).

26.

TIM I 3

Tell Sinnī: Your sister Akatija sends the following message:

May the gods Enlil, Ninlil, and Ninšubur keep you for my sake in good health forever.

For the god who would make me see your face again, (I would gladly provide) incense with lavish hands.

For three years the field has not been thirsting for water, and I myself have been in good health, and the field is now full of barley.

You are the sun, let me warm myself in your rays; you are the cedar, in your shade let me not be burnt. Why (should I worry)? Where there is a field belonging to my father, there is sustenance for me!

Now, I have (acquired and) am raising a boy, telling myself: Let him grow up, so that there will be somebody to bury me. But the merchant confronts me now with the demand: Hand over to me the “pestle” (to indicate that the boy legally belongs to the merchant)!

27.

BIN 7 41

Tell the boss: Sin-nādin-aḥḥī sends the following message:

May the gods Šamaš and Marduk keep you in good health forever. Stay well, stay healthy! May your protective god allow only good things to happen to you. I am writing to you to learn about your well-being; may your well-being be lasting, before the gods Šamaš, Marduk, and our lord, King Ammišaduqa.

In regard to the lawsuit between Sin-rīmenni and his brother Ibni-Adad which I have investigated in Sippar-Jahrurum, and concerning which I have handed down to them a sealed tablet containing an agreement (which) you have sealed with the seal of the high priest of Šamaš and the high priest of Aja, and your own seals, (I know that) the sealed tablet with this agreement was in the possession of Sin-rīmenni. When this Sin-rīmenni went to his fate, his brother Ibni-Adad made claims against the estate of Sin-rīmenni. Now, if the seal of the high priest of Šamaš and of the high priest of Aja and also your own seals are contested, whose seal can be accepted (as incontestable)? They should bring that

Ibni-Adad before you; challenge him, he should be made to make a statement under oath so that he will no longer make any claim against the estate of his brother Sin-rīmenni.

28.

PBS 7 90

Tell Luštammar-Zababa and Bēlānum: Ḫammurapi sends the following message:

As to Sin-ana-Dammar-lišû, the son of Manīnum, whom the enemy has taken prisoner: deposit ten shekels of silver in the temple of Sin for the merchant dealing with his case, and (thus) get him released.

29.

YOS 2 32

Tell my father: Your daughter Bēlessunu sends the following message:

May my Lord (Šamaš) and my Lady (Aja) keep you in good health forever for my sake.

With regard to the affair of the slave who uttered a blasphemy against the son of his master and was then kept in prison, I want to say as follows: May I beg(?) my father to think it over and have them release him.

I am now sending you Asqudānum (with this letter). I have (previously) sent a garment (for Asqudānum), but they have not given it to him, although he is the one my father loves. I am now sending this man and (this time) my father should take care (of this matter).

I am constantly praying for you to my Lord and my Lady with washed hands.

PS: I wish my father would give me that slave as a gift.

30.

PBS 7 60

AGRICULTURAL MANAGEMENT

Tell the boss: Šunuma-ilū sends the following message:

May the gods Šamaš and Marduk keep you in good health

forever. Stay well, stay healthy! May your protective god allow only good things to happen to you. I am writing to you to learn about your well-being; may your well-being be lasting before the gods Šamaš and Marduk.

I have written you previously asking you to deliver to me ten *kor*-measures of barley for seed, and ten *kor*-measures of dry bran as feed for the plow bulls; why have you delivered only five *kor*-measures of barley and five *kor*-measures of dry bran so that for lack of seeds my plow bulls were idle for two days? From here the distance to the field is so great that I was unable to send dry bran there. Is it because I am not able to pay (now) that you have done this to me?

I am sending herewith this request of mine. Give another five *kor*-measures of barley and the (missing) five *kor*-measures of dry bran to my man Sin-bēl-dumqi so that he should not be fined. Write me whether I should return the barley in kind or do whatever else you will ask me to do up to the counter value of the barley.

31.

PBS 7 66

Tell Lugā: Sin-putram sends the following message:

May the gods Enlil and Ninurta keep you in good health.

Lugatum moved his bulls to the fortified area in order to plant sesame, and (my man) Ubar-Lulu was going along with them as ox driver. One of the bulls in his care died, so they came to me with this dispute; I questioned the ox drivers who accompanied Ubar-Lulu, and they declared as follows: "The bull strayed away (from the herd) to eat grass; he fell down and died." I said: "Go to Nippur, to the city where there are judges; let them decide your case!" The judges in Nippur gave them their decision and handed Ubar-Lulu over to the Garden Gate in order to take the oath there. Lugatum, however, is not accepting this decision. Please take good care of Ubar-Lulu so that he does not suffer a loss.

32.

PBS 7 7

Tell Nūr-Šamaš, Awēl-Adad, Sin-pilab, Šillī-Adad, and the overseer of the ten-man team: Šamaš-nāšir (the governor of Larsa) sends the following message:

This is really a fine way of behaving! The orchardists keep breaking into the date storehouse and taking dates, and you yourselves cover it up time and again and do not report it to me.

I am sending you herewith this letter of mine; bring these men to me—after they have paid for the dates. And also the men from the town Bad-Tibira [*end broken*]

33.

YOS 2 113

Tell my lord: your servants Enlil-bāni, Sin-abī, and Sin-kāšid send the following message:

As to what our lord has written to us concerning the releasing of irrigation water, (we report that) the water has not yet reached us. Our ditches are cleaned out. Should Utu.si.sa withhold water from us when the water comes, we shall report to our lord.

34.

TIM 1 6

4 Letters from Mari

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE
REALM
WAR AND PEACE
THE COURT

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE REALM

Tell Yasmaḥ-Addu: Your father, Šamšī-Addu, sends the following message:

I have listened to the messages you have sent me. You have asked me about the waiving of all administrative and legal claims incumbent on the northern tribes. (I answer:) It is not appropriate to waive these claims. Should you waive the claims against them, their relatives, the Rabbaya tribes, who are (now) staying on the other side of the river Euphrates in the country of Yamḥad, will hear (about this preferential treatment) and be so angry with them that they will not come back here to their home grounds. Therefore do not waive the claims against the northern tribes under any circumstances. (On the contrary), reprimand them severely in the following terms: "If the king goes on an expedition, everybody down to the youngsters should immediately assemble. Any sheikh

whose men are not all assembled commits a sacrilege against the king even if he leaves only one man behind!" Reprimand them in exactly this way. Under no circumstances should you cancel the claims against them.

Now to another matter: When I sent you orders concerning the allotting of the fields along the Euphrates as well as the taking over of these fields by the soldiers, you asked me the following: "Should the auxiliaries from Ḫana who live in the open country take over fields from among those (who live) along the Euphrates, or not?" This is what you wrote me. I have asked Išar-Lim and other experts for advice, and it is not advisable to reallocate the fields along the Euphrates, or even to check on (the rights of the present holders). Should you allot anew and check (on these fields) there will be too much complaining. Under no circumstances should you reallocate the fields which are along the Euphrates. Every man should keep his holding exactly as in the past. The fields must not become mixed up. Check only on the fields of those who died or ran away, and give them to those who have no fields at all.

At the waiving of claims itself, be most rigorous and have the soldiers ready. The waiving you perform should be well checked.

Also, the Ḫana auxiliaries who live in the open country should keep the fields which are along the bank of the Euphrates just as they did before.

Furthermore, as to what you have written me about having many large boats built together with the small ones, one should construct (only) large boats [whose capacity is ten or thirty for(?) the (very) large ones. Moreover, wherever these boats go, they will always be available to you to carry your own barley.

35.

ARM I 6

Tell my lord: your servant Baḫdi-Lim sends the following message:

I have been waiting now for five days for the Ḫana auxiliaries at the place agreed upon, but the soldiers are not assembling

around me. The Ḫana auxiliaries did come out of the open country but they are now staying in their own encampments. I sent messages into these encampments once or twice to call them up, but they did not assemble; in fact, it is three days now and they still are not assembling.

Now then, if this meets with the approval of my lord, one should execute some criminal kept in the prison, cut off his head, and carry it around outside the encampments as far away as Ḫutnim and Appān, so the soldiers will become afraid and will assemble here quickly.

As to the urgent message which my lord has dispatched to me, I will quickly send on a contingent of troops.

36.

ARM 2 48

Tell my lord: Your servant Yasim-Sumū sends the following message:

With respect to the barley boats which are to collect (barley) in the city of Emar (I report that) they could not collect it at a better moment than right now. The harvest time is here but they (the boats from Mari) are not arriving to load the barley for the palace. And for the next five months boats will not be able to collect barley (here).

Now either they (the boats from Mari) will have arrived here after (the barley) is collected, then one could fill up only 2 boats with barley so that not (all) should have to return (to Mari) empty—or, if my lord finds this proposal more acceptable, he should send me 5 minas of silver; then I myself and the merchants (of Mari) living in Emar will hire 10 boats of 300 *kor* capacity (each), [co]lle[ct barley] and dispatch thus 3,000 *kor* of barley to Mari. Then one should give either to Idinyatum or to another official 600 *kor* of barley for the 5 minas of silver at a rate of $2\frac{1}{2}$ *kor*-measures per shekel so that the 5 minas of silver return to the palace. The wages for the 60 *talilu*-men of the crew (needed) are $2\frac{1}{2}$ shekels per man, hence $2\frac{1}{2}$ minas of silver which amounts to 300 *kor* of barley. And the balance of 2,100 *kor* barley should go into the palace.

If that silver is to come here, two expert scribes and ten trustworthy persons should come with it.

May my lord send me an answer to my letter.

37.

ARMT 13 35

Tell my lord: Your servant Kibrī-Dagan (the governor of Terqa) sends the following message:

The gods Dagan and Ikrub-El are fine; the city of Terqa and the districts are fine.

Now to the matter at hand: the very day I sent this tablet to my lord I had an extispicy made concerning the harvesting of the barley in the lowlands around Terqa, and the extispicy was propitious for up to three days. So I quickly assembled the entire city down to the youngsters and sent them out to harvest the barley in the lowlands. Moreover, I provided well-to-do citizens of Terqa with food, and placed them in the police outposts, giving them strict orders (to be on guard against brigands).

Now, as my lord has already forewarned me, the soldiers from the country Yamḥad who are stationed in the town Šalabbatim appeared here, and I had an extispicy made (on that occasion); the prognosis was propitious. So I reprimanded them in the following terms: "You have to stay in the town Mulḥē until the barley of the lowlands has been gathered in!" This is what I said to them, but they did not obey me; isn't it said(?) [...] no soldiers are to enter the town of Terqa? Yet they do not obey and are staying at the edge of the town. Now, my lord should send an unequivocal order to the general of these soldiers so that the soldiers will remain in the town of Mulḥē.

38.

ARM 3 30

Tell my lord Yasmaḥ-Addu: Your servant Asqudum sends the following message:

Tarīm-Šakim himself arrived here on the very day I came to Terqa, and I asked him the following: "Did Zunān perform the

extispicies concerning the well-being of the country and that of the fortress?" He answered me: "He did not."

During the ceremony of the waiving of the claims performed this month, I returned with him to Sagarātīm and made extispicies concerning the well-being of the town Sagarātīm during the next six months. The extispicies were favourable. As soon as I arrive I shall make (extispicies) in the fortress built by my lord—also in Terqa, Subrum, and Mari and I shall immediately send complete reports to my lord.

By the way, when I made (an extispicy) in Sagarātīm at the monthly offering as well as at the offering performed for my lord, I found the following features: the left side of the "finger" (of the liver) was split, the middle "finger" of the lungs was bent(?) toward the right: a sign predicting fame. Rejoice, my lord!

39.

ARM 5 65

Tell my lord Yasmaḥ-Addu: Your servant Ila-Salim sends the following message:

The king gave me a chariot; this chariot broke at its middle section due to my constant traveling from the flatlands to the mountains and back. So now there is no chariot available for me to ride in when I have to go places. If it so pleases my lord, may my lord give me a chariot.

I shall surely bring order into the land before my lord arrives. I am the servant of my lord. May my lord not withhold a chariot from me.

40.

ARM 5 66

Tell my lord: Your servant Baḥdi-Lim sends the following message:

Yesterday a young man of Iddin-Dagan's came to me; I heard his report and went myself to the weir; him, however, I sent on to my lord. I was at the weir and all is well. The upper switching point made of stone, the one my lord had made, is (still) under



HEAD OF UR-NINGIRSU, SON OF GUDEA. Alabaster, Neo-Sumerian,
from Lagash, ca. 2100 B.C.
(*Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Rogers Fund,
1947.*)

water, the water flowing one cubit high over the stone, [but the . . .] is intact. The water has demolished, at the middle weir, the lower embankment downstream from the causeway but less than one reed length of it has collapsed. I cut through the stone weir and the water fell at the middle weir so that work has already started on repairing the embankment of the weirs. There is no reason whatsoever for worrying; all is fine. The stone weir and the switching point of stone which my lord made are fine. My lord should not worry.

41.

ARM 6 I

Tell Kibrī-Dagan (the governor of Terqa): Ḥammištammār sends the following message:

I received the letter which you sent me. You wrote to me as follows: "Send me these natives of Terqa, wherever they are (at the moment), if there is any lawsuit pending against them!" This is what you wrote to me. I had these two men (from Terqa) confront your man, and said to them: "Answer (his accusations)! If you are slaves, if you are in debt, or if there is either a lawsuit of the palace or a lawsuit of Kibrī-Dagan pending against you, I shall have no mercy on you and shall extradite you." They took the stand and argued with your man, and he was unable to refute them.

Now, can I decently arrest freeborn men and extradite them to you? It would only shake any confidence my district has in me.

42.

ARM 2 94

Tell my lord: Your servant Baḥdi-Lim sends the following message:

The body of a small child which was hardly one year old was found lying in front of the old dike which is upstream from the lower ditch openings(?) on the embankment of the river (Euphrates). The body of the child was cut open at its waist and the [contents] of its chest were placed on its head and it was [mutilated] from head to foot. Nobody can tell whether it was male or female.

Nothing is left from its middle down to its lower end. The very day I heard this report, I resorted to strict measures; I questioned the overseers of the city quarters, the craftsmen and the harbor(?) people, but neither any owner of this child nor its father or mother nor anybody who could [shed light] on this incident came forward. The very same day, I sent Bēlī-lu-dāri to my lord with this news. Also during the seven days since I sent Bēlī-lu-dāri, I have done much questioning but [*end broken*]

43.

ARM 6 43

Tell my lord: Your servant Kibrī-Dagan (governor of Terqa) sends the following message:

My lord has sent me an order to go to Mari to appear before the junior *ugbaltum*-priestess. I have to direct work here (in Terqa) and the field on which I am directing work is in actual danger; in fact, the (situation at the) field is difficult and troublesome. If I stay here myself right now I can certainly keep the entire crew together, but once I have dropped the work and have left, the crew will disperse, the work will be abandoned, and the country of my lord will be in dire need of irrigation water.

May my lord go without any worry and kiss the feet of the god Dagan who loves him, while I get the work done here (in Terqa). I just cannot possibly leave (for Mari).

44.

ARM 3 8

Tell Šunuḫraḫalū: Yasim-Sumū sends the following message:

In the matter of the naming of the (current) year you have informed me as follows: “(Name of the year:) year (after that) in which king Zimrilim presented a great throne to the god Dagan.” That throne, however, has so far not been presented. I am sending along a tablet addressed to the king (saying): the name of the year is: (year) in which Zimrilim went to the aid of Babylonia, (and) for a second time (marched) against the country of Larsa.

Draw the king's attention to this tablet and write me whether it is all right or not.

And do write me likewise the news about Ātamrum.

45.

ARMT 13 47

WAR AND PEACE

Tell my lord: Your servant Yarīm-Addu sends the following message:

Two officials of King Ḥammurapi, Ṭāb-eli-mātim and Sin-bēl-aplim, who for a long time were staying in the city Maškanšabra, have arrived here in Babylon; four men from Larsa, riding on donkeys, are escorting them. I obtained intelligence of the message they are carrying (from the king of Larsa); they are supposed to tell (Ḥammurapi) the following: "As to the soldiers for whom you keep writing me, the reason why I did not send them to you is that I have heard that the enemy's intentions are directed against another country. But I am still holding the soldiers in readiness; should the enemy turn against you, my soldiers will come to your aid. On the other hand, should the enemy turn against me, your soldiers should come to my aid." This is the message which King Rīm-Sin (of Larsa) sent to Ḥammurapi (of Babylon).

Ḥammurapi has also written to Rīm-Sin to inquire about the well-being of those natives of Mutiabab who had fled from the war and entered Yamutbal, and he (Rīm-Sin) has assured him as follows: "Don't you know that I love my life (by which I have sworn an oath); should I get in touch with one or the other of these men in my country, I will set their minds at ease and [send] them back to you." This is what Rīm-Sin has written to Ḥammurapi.

Now to another matter: Šimetagup has held back the messengers of the vizier of Elam for four days, so that they (would not reach) Zimra-Ḥammu. Then the tax-comptroller Sin-iddinam came out of the palace and allowed these messengers to enter the warehouse where the boat is, but Šimetagup, who [. . .]; they

had already arraigned(?) him three times and had confined him to his own special quarters(?) and also cut down his rations. Now they [. . .] compensation to these messengers [*end broken*]

46.

ARM 2 72

Tell my lord: Your servant Baḥdi-Addu sends the following message:

The second group of the Ḫana auxiliaries has arrived here. Both the first and second group of Ḫana auxiliaries are fine. There is no sickness, nothing untoward whatsoever. Also the baggage train(?) is fine. My lord should not worry in any respect.

By the way, in all expeditions which I have observed there was much griping. Now, in this expedition, I have been watching for it, and there is no griping, none whatsoever. Everything is laughter and play. They are as happy as if they were in their tents. My lord's servants yearn for nothing else but fighting battles and defeating the enemy. Be happy, my lord!

47.

ARM 2 118

Tell Yasmaḥ-Addu: Your brother Iṣme-Dagan sends the following message:

The men of the Awlānum tribe assembled here, their entire contingent, under Mār-Addu, in order to give battle. We fought at Tu[.]wi and I inflicted a severe defeat on them. Mār-Addu and all the tribesmen of the Awlānum are dead; also their slaves and their clients are killed. Not even one of the enemy escaped with his life. Rejoice!

48.

ARM 4 33

Tell Yasmaḥ-Addu: Your father, King Šamši-Addu, sends the following message:

I have given you copper to produce . . . -objects. Now, send word to Mari as soon as you get this order, so that they

quickly bring me the finished . . . -objects made of the copper I gave you.

Now to another matter: Take four hundred able-bodied soldiers from among the Ḫana auxiliaries, whose obligations you intend to waive, to place them at the disposal of the palace administration. Two hundred men, one detachment, of these soldiers should be from well-to-do families, and two hundred men, another detachment, should be poor fellows. I myself will take good care of the poor fellows from the palace, while the well-to-do men will be provided for by their own families. But do waive the obligations of the Ḫana auxiliaries quickly. Discuss it with Yarim-Addu and then assemble them either at the town Gaššim or at Šunem, wherever drinking water is available. The soldiers from the embankment of the Euphrates should assemble in the town Sagarātim. The campaign is set for the beginning of the month and you yourself will go with me as I already wrote you; be fully equipped and ready for action.

49.

ARM 2 I

THE COURT

Tell my lord: Your servant Baḫdi-Lim sends the following message:

The city of Mari, the palace, and the entire district are fine.

Now to the matter at hand: I checked on the members of the (royal) household; of four hundred members only one hundred men are provided with garments while three hundred are without garments. I questioned Bāli-Eraḫ and Mukannišum on account of the men without garments, and Mukannišum answered me as follows: "This is not my duty, Bāli-Eraḫ has to give them garments." And Bali-Eraḫ answered me as follows: "I provided garments for one hundred of the corps, and my assignment is only one hundred; the balance Mukannišum has to provide with garments." This is what they answered me.

It so happens that Šidqī-epuḫ is now in the presence of my lord. My lord should instruct Šidqī-epuḫ (what to do) and he should

give me the necessary orders to provide the members of the household with garments.

50.

ARM 6 39

Tell Yasmaḥ-Addu: Your brother Išme-Dagan sends the following message:

The medication which your physician applied to me in a dressing is extremely good. The wound has begun to disappear; and slowly, slowly, the medication is about to remove it. Now, I am sending to you with this letter the physician Šamši-Addu-tukultī; let him have a look at that medicine and then send him back immediately.

51.

ARM 4 65

Tell my lord: Your servant Yakim-Addu sends the following message:

A short time ago I wrote to my lord as follows: "A lion was caught in the loft of a house in Akkaka. My lord should write me whether this lion should remain in that same loft until the arrival of my lord, or whether I should have it brought to my lord." But letters from my lord were slow in coming and the lion has been in the loft for five days. Although they threw him a dog and a pig, he refused to eat them. I was worrying: "Heaven forbid that this lion pine away." I became scared, but eventually I got the lion into a wooden cage and loaded it on a boat to have it brought to my lord.

52.

ARM 2 106

Tell Yasmaḥ-Addu: King Aplahaḥanda (of Carchemish) sends the following message:

There is now ice available in Zirānum, much of it. Place your servants there to watch over it so they can keep it safe for you. They can bring it to you regularly as long as you stay there. And if no good wine is available there for you to drink,

send me word and I will have good wine sent to you to drink. Since your home town is far away, do write me whenever you need anything, and I will always give you what you need.

53.

ARM 5 6

Tell my lord: Kibrī-Dagan (the governor of Terqa) sends the following message:

With respect to the jars of wine which the king has given me order to take for Ātamrum from the (passing) boats of the people of Emar, I had all the jars of wine which were on these boats brought out—Mannu-balum-Šamaš, the butler of Ātamrum was there along with me; they selected 90 of these jars of wine and returned the balance of the jars of wine, those not [acceptable].

Now I had these 90 jars of wine loaded on a boat and assigned an especially careful boatman to Mannu-balum-Šamaš from the household of Ātamrum.

54.

ARMT 13 126

Tell Yasmaḥ-Addu: Your father, King Šamši-Addu, sends the following message:

The current month is Addaru; when the sixteenth day comes the New Year's festival will be performed. The envoys of the ruler of the city of Ešnunna are already present. As to the [. . .]-ceremony, let your teams of *damdammu*-mules and horses come here to the New Year's festival; the chariots and harnesses for the horses should be new. They will pull (the chariot) during the New Year's festival and will then be returned directly to you.

Your animals should depart for here the very day you receive this message without even waiting for next morning.

55.

ARM I 50

Tell my lord: Your servant Kibrī-Dagan (governor of Terqa) sends the following message:

The gods Dagan and Ikrub-El are fine; the city of Terqa and the district are fine.

Now to the matter at hand: as I recently wrote to my lord, I had extispicies made concerning the house in which the *ugbaltum*-priestess of the god Dagan should live, and my extispicies were propitious with regard to the house of the former *ugbaltum*-priestess. And since the god has thus given me a positive answer I have started to bring that house into good repair and to . . . its enclosed part. The *ugbaltum*-priestess whom my lord will bring to Dagan can now live in this house.

56.

ARM 3 42

Tell my lord: Kibri-Dagan (the governor of Terqa) sends the following message:

The gods Dagan and Ikrub-El are fine; the city of Terqa and the district are fine.

[*break*] This is what he saw in his dream: (the god said) "Do not rebuild this temple in ruins; if this temple is rebuilt I will make it fall into the river (Euphrates)." On the day after he had had this dream, he did not tell it to anybody. The next day he had again the same dream; this is what the god said: "Do not (you, people of Terqa) rebuild this temple; if you rebuild it I will make it fall into the river!"

Here I am sending to my lord a piece from the hem of his garment and a lock of his hair (as surety of his truthfulness).

Since that very day, the man (who had the dream) has been sick.

57.

ARMT 13 112



HIGH PRIEST. Wall painting, Tell Hariri, eighteenth century B.C.
(*Courtesy of the Louvre, Paris; Palais de Mari, Cour 106, Fragment B.*)

5

Middle Babylonian Letters

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
THE COURT OF THE KASSITE
KINGS

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Tell Naphururiya (= Amenophis IV), the great king, the king of Egypt: Your brother Burnaburiaš, the great king, the king of Kara-Dunyaš (= Babylonia) sends the following message:

I and my house, horses, chariots, officials, and my country are well indeed. May everything be likewise well with my brother and his house, his horses, chariots, officials, and his country.

I have not been well ever since my brother's messenger arrived here, so none of the messengers (of foreign kings) ate food or drank beer at an official banquet at which I was present. You may yourself ask your messengers (whether this is so), and they will tell you that I was not feeling well, that I nearly lost my life, and that nothing could help me. But when I was not feeling well my brother did not send me his good wishes. Anger against my brother filled me, and I (asked your messenger): "Has my brother

not heard that I am sick; why then did he not send me his good wishes? Why did he not send a (special) messenger to visit me?" My brother's messenger answered me this: "Egypt is not near enough so that your brother could hear about you and inquire concerning your health, but it is a faraway country. Who would tell your brother about your sickness so that he might quickly inquire concerning your health? Could your brother possibly hear that you are sick and not send you a (special) messenger?" I said to him: "Is the country of my brother, the great king, far away or nearby?" And he said to me as follows: "Ask your own messenger whether the country is not far indeed. And that is why your brother has not heard anything about you and did not inquire after your health." Now, after I have asked my messenger and he told me that it was indeed a long road, I am no longer filled with anger against my brother.

Since they told me that there is everything in my brother's country and that my brother is not in need of anything, (know that) in my country there is likewise everything and I myself am not in need of anything. We only send each other messages inquiring about good health, the policy of good relations which we both have taken over from earlier kings. This is the situation which should be permanent between us. [I shall send messengers] to you with my greetings [and you . . . *considerable gap*] but now you have detained my messenger. I have already given instructions to your messenger and have sent him away; (now) instruct my messenger quickly so that he can leave. Since they told me that the road is dangerous, the water scarce, and the weather hot, I could not send you many fine presents, but I did send to my brother four minas of beautiful lapis lazuli as a token gift; I have also sent five teams of horses to my brother. When the weather improves, a messenger of mine who will leave later on will bring many fine presents to my brother. My brother should also write to me for whatever he needs and they will bring it to him from their proper storehouses.

I am engaged in a (special) undertaking and therefore I send this message to my brother; my brother should send me much fine gold so that I can use it for my undertaking. But my brother

must not leave the gold which he is going to send me to some trustworthy official (to be handled); my brother must see (to) it personally, seal it, and then send it on. The gold which my brother sent before—and this was so because my brother did not see it and it was only a trustworthy official who sealed it and dispatched it—when I put forty pounds of that gold, as they brought it, into the kiln, nothing came out (after heating)!

My messenger Şalmu, whom I have been sending to you, has been robbed on two of his journeys. First, Biriya-maza (of Damascus?) robbed him, and on his second trip Pamaḥu[. . .], your own governor over a region well within your realm, robbed him. My brother [should take up] this specific case. As soon as this messenger of mine appears there before my brother, Şalmu should likewise appear before my brother. They should make their reports to my brother and one should compensate him for the losses he suffered.

58.

EA 7

Tell Nipḥuririya (= Amenophis IV), the king of Egypt: Your brother Burnaburiaš, king of Kara-Dunyaš (= Babylonia) sends this message:

I am well. May everything be well indeed with you, your house, your wife and children, country, officials, horses and your chariots.

Ever since my fathers and your fathers arranged friendly relations with each other, they have sent fine presents to each other and have not refused each other any reasonable demand. But now my brother has sent only two pounds of gold as a present for me. Indeed if there is much gold (in Egypt), do send me as much as your fathers did, in case there is little gold, send me half of what your fathers did, but why in the world did you send only two pounds of gold to me? Just now I have much work to be done on the temple and I am very anxious to do it. Do send me therefore more gold and write me what you want from my country so that messengers can take it to you.

During the lifetime of my father Kurigalzu, all the rulers of Canaan wrote to him, saying, “We would like to march toward

the border of the land (of Egypt) and invade it and become your [allies]!” But my father wrote to them as follows: “Perish the thought of your siding with me! If you become enemies of my brother, the king of Egypt, or join forces with somebody else, wouldn’t I go out and make an expedition against you because the King of Egypt is on my side?” Thus my father did not listen to them for the sake of your father.

Now it was not I who sent the Assyrians, my own subjects, to you; they act according to their own decision. Why did they travel to your country? If you care for me, they must not do any buying there; chase them away empty-handed!

PS: I have sent as a present for you three pounds of genuine lapis lazuli and also five teams of horses with five chariots.

59.

EA 9

THE COURT OF THE KASSITE KINGS

Envelope: A letter of Kalbu to his lord (the *guenna*-official of Nippur).

Tell my lord, the perfect, the gorgeous, the offspring of heaven, our protective angel, the expert and effective warrior, the light among his brothers, the shining gem, the trust of all important persons, endowed with nobility, the provider for scholars, the table laden for all people, outstanding among his peers, to whom the gods Anu, Enlil, and Ea, and also the goddess Bēlet-ilī, have granted a treasure of graces and riches—tell my lord: Kalbu, who is dust and but your favorite slave, sends the following message.

How could all this happen although I have entrusted myself fully to my lord while Etel-pû, the son of Ušbula, is [. . .] to him? While I am detained in [. . .] outside of the town of Mannu-gir-Adad, they are settled on the fields of the Lord of all Countries (i.e., the god Enlil). [I complained to . . .]: “They have cut off my access(?) to water.” The [estates for which] I am responsible, be they settled or abandoned, (and) those which belong to the Lord of all Countries (Enlil), all suffer(?) on account of the water

situation. Even the town of Mannu-gīr-Adad, which the king, who loves you, and you, my lord, have given me as a holding is abandoned for lack of water. Would that they had given you either rain from the sky or a good flood from underground! The town which my lord has given me as a grant is abandoned for lack of water! Where should I go (to live) next year? And what about the town's gate (sheathed) with copper, the sheep, and the two-year-old ewes which have been grazing these fields from the time of the *guenna*-official of your father Nazi-Enlil until today!

And now my lord has abandoned(?) me and [they have turned against(?)] me; now they have come to me and asked me for the [city gate(?)], the sheep, and the two-year-old ewes. From where should I take (all this) so that I can hand (it) over? Moreover, the son of [. . .], the governor, came to your servant and said: "Should the city gate suffer damages, you will have to pay double indemnity."

My lord should also look into the case of your servant, Ina-Ekur-rabi, whom I have recommended(?) to my lord in my stead.

I have been abandoned in my misfortune. Ina-Ekur-rabi should return quickly, or else I myself will have to come to my lord. When I wrote (previously) to the king, he did not give me permission (to come).

60.

BE 17 24

Tell my lord: Your servant Erība-Marduk sends the following message: I am ready to die for my lord. This is (the message) for my lord:

As to my lord's plan to come to Nippur, of which he has sent me word: when I made an extispicy, the ominous features indicated that my lord may go elsewhere, but they were not favorable for traveling to Nippur. The [. . . -exta] were interconnected(?), and so I say to my lord: It means bad health for the king. But if my lord still wishes to go to Nippur he must make the following declaration: "I shall not leave Kar-Enlil because of ill health," (and go unofficially to Nippur).

As to the physician whom I sent to my lord, my lord should

send him back here. And I say further to my lord: Of whatever the prince has eaten I am sending (samples) to my lord, just as I informed (you previously).

61.

PBS 1/2 58

Your servant Mukallim: I am ready to die for my lord.

The daughter of Ayaru was feeling well during the first watch of the night and fell asleep after midnight—after I had already dispatched my messenger to my lord—and she woke up at the crack of dawn. Nobody has touched the dressing which they always put on her at night. They put a bandage on her at dawn after she woke up, when she asked for it. Although she was feeling very well before, she does not feel well now. I shall try to learn more about the situation, will see [how she feels] and then send my messenger.

62.

BE 17 47

Your servant Mukallim: I am ready to die for my lord.

The singers, male and female, and the entire household of my lord are fine.

The same disease has now affected the girl Eṭirtu.

The daughters of Kurû and of Aḥuni are fine, their health is good. Should my lord so order, they can both leave and attend school again.

The abscesses of the daughter of Muštālu are healed. She does not cough any more, although she was coughing before.

The abscess of the daughter of Ilī-ippašra, which persisted, has now formed a scab, and her (sore) nostril has become better.

The[...] and the nape of the neck of the woman Bitti [hu]rt her.

The daughter of Ḥutterme is fine; (the man) [...] -muballit is going to give (her) a potion.

Half of the abscesses of the Aramean woman still persist.

The abscesses on the ribs of the daughter of the woman Babati persist, and she is also coughing.

Tell my lord: Lamzini sends the following message [*break*]

63.

BE 17 31

6

Letters of the Amarna Correspondence

ROYAL LETTERS

PROTESTATIONS OF LOYALTY

PASSPORT FOR A MESSENGER

ROYAL LETTERS

Tell Intaruda, the man in charge of the town of Akšapa: The King (of Egypt) sends the following message:

I am sending you herewith this letter to command you: Be on guard, hold the city of the king which is your responsibility.

The king is now sending to you this Ḫanni, the son of Mairiya, the Overseer-of-the-Yard-of-the-King in Canaan. Listen very carefully to whatever he orders you to do, so that the king will not find fault with you. Do listen carefully to every word he tells you and do it well and carefully. Be on guard, be on guard, do not be negligent! Be prepared for the arrival of the archers of the king, with much food at hand, wine, and great quantities of everything needed.

Beware; he will arrive there very soon, and he will cut off the head of any enemy of the king.

PS: Be assured that the king is as well as the sun god in the sky; his soldiers and his chariotry are in very, very good condition.

64.

AO 7095 (RA 19 105)

Tell [...] the man in charge of the country Ammia: The King (of Egypt) sends the following message:

I am sending you herewith this letter to command you: Be on guard, hold the city of the king which is your responsibility.

Send your daughter straightaway to your king and lord; also send your presents: twenty healthy slaves, silver-coated chariots (and) fine horses. Then I, as your king and lord, shall address you, saying: What you have given to the king as a present in addition to your daughter is good.

Be assured that the king is as well as the sun god in the sky; his soldiers and his chariotry are in very, very good condition.

65.

EA 99

Tell the King of Egypt, my brother: Your brother the King of Alašia (Cyprus), sends the following message:

I am well, my household, my wife, my sons, my officials, my horses, my chariots—also everything in my land—are very well. And so may my brother be well, also your household, your wives, your sons, your officials, your horses, your chariots—and everything in your land—be very well.

Dear brother, herewith I send to you, to Egypt, my messenger together with your own messenger. My brother should not take it to heart that I am sending herewith only five hundred pounds of copper—I am sending this solely as a present for my brother—because, my brother, it is so little. I swear that pestilence, the disease of my lord Nergal, was in my land, and has killed all the people of my land, so there was nobody to produce copper. So my brother should not take it to heart (that it is so little copper). Send back quickly your messenger together with my messenger, then I will send you, my brother, all the copper which my brother



HEAD OF SOLDIER. In white stone, Tell Hariri, eighteenth century
B. C.
(Courtesy of the Aleppo Museum ; photo, Schneider-Lengyel.)

wants. Dear brother, you used to send me (ordinary) silver in great quantity, but now give me fine silver, my brother—then I, in turn, will send to my brother whatever my brother wants.

Now to another matter: Give me, my brother, the bull my messenger will ask for, and dispatch to me, my brother, oil that is perfumed, two *kukkubu*-jars of it, and, my brother, also send me a diviner who is an expert in the behavior of eagles.

Now to another matter: People of my country are complaining about my timber which the King of Egypt is taking away. Would that my brother [pay(?)] its price(?).

Now to another matter of a similar nature: A man from Alašia died in Egypt; his belongings are in your land but his son and wife are here with me. My brother, collect(?) the belongings of these people from Alašia, and give them to my messenger.

Do not take it to heart, my brother, that your messenger has been staying in my country for three years; (it was) because the “hand” of Nergal (i.e., pestilence) was in my country; even in my family, there was a child of my wife’s who died. My brother, now dispatch your messenger and mine, unharmed and quickly, since I have sent my brother a present.

Now to another matter: My brother, please send me the silver for which I asked you, and there should be a lot of it, my brother. My brother should also release the belongings for which I asked you, and my brother should fulfill all my wishes; then I will fulfill all the wishes which you, my brother, will express to me. Do not align yourself with the King of the Ḫatti land and the King of Šanḫar. I, on my part, have returned twofold to you whatever presents messengers have brought to me. Your messenger has always come to me in safety(?), and my messenger to you also in safety(?).

66.

EA 35

PROTESTATIONS OF LOYALTY

To the king, my lord, my god, my sun: A message of your servant Abi-milki (of Tyre):

Seven times and again seven times I prostrate myself at the feet of Your Majesty—I, the dust under the sandals of Your Majesty. My lord is the sun (god) who rises over all the countries, day after day, according to the ordinance of the sun god his gracious father, whose sweet breath gives life and (which one) craves(?) when he is hiding, who makes the entire country rest under (the protection) of his mighty arm; who thunders in the sky like the storm god so that the entire country trembles at the sound of him.

This is the message of a slave to his master after he had heard what the kind messenger of the king (said) to his servant upon arriving here, and (felt) the sweet fragrance that came out of the mouth of Your Majesty toward his servant. And he was craving(?) the king's fragrance before the arrival of the messenger of Your Majesty. How should one not crave(?) for a fragrance which one's (text: my) nose remembers (so well)? And indeed, I was extremely glad when the fragrance of the king wafted towards me and there was a festival(?) every day because I was so glad. Is not the entire world happy when it hears the kind messenger (who comes) from the very presence of my lord. Also the entire country was in awe of my lord when it heard about the sweet fragrance and the kind messenger who had come to me. If Your Majesty would have said "Rise up against a great army!" this servant would have said to his master: "Aye, aye!" I am carrying on my heart and my back the command of Your Majesty. The sun rises over anybody who listens to Your Majesty and obeys him in his place of office, and who craves(?) the sweet fragrance from the mouth of his master, but the city of him who has not listened to the command of your Majesty is (as good as) lost and his house is lost; his fame is gone forever in the entire country. Now look (at me), a servant who has listened to his master, his city is fine, his house is fine, his fame is to endure forever.

You are the sun that rises above me and the wall of bronze that towers (around me). And for this very reason and on account of the mighty arm of Your Majesty, I rest secure.

This is what I have (still) to say to the Sun, my father, Your Majesty: When will I see Your Majesty face to face?

Now I am guarding for Your Majesty Tyre, the great city, waiting until the mighty arm of the king extends over me to give me (from the mainland) water to drink and wood to warm me.

As to other matters: Zimrida, the king of Sidon, has been writing every day to that criminal Azira, son of Abdi-Ašratu about everything he hears from Egypt. This I had to write to my lord for it is proper that he know about it.

67.

EA 147

Tell my king, my lord, and my sun: Your servant Labaya, the dust upon which you step, sends the following message:

Seven times and again seven times I prostrate myself at the feet of the king, my lord, and my sun.

I have heard the message that the king has sent me; who am I that the king should lose his land on account of me? If it pleases my lord, I am a loyal servant of the king and not disloyal or rebellious. Also, I do not withhold my tribute, nor do I withhold what the regent who is set over me demands of me. Really, people are slandering me; damage has been done to me, yet Your Majesty has not investigated my (alleged) crime. If any, this, then, is my crime that I declared publicly when I entered the city of Gazri: "The king has taken away all I possess, but where are Milkilu's possessions? Yet I know that Milkilu's misdeed (is worse) than mine!"

Now to another matter: As to the king's writing me about Dumuya: I did not know that Dumuya used to consort with the *Hapiru*-brigands; wouldn't I have handed him over to Addaya (if I had known)?

Now to another matter: I swear that if the king wrote to me (demanding) my own wife, I would not withhold her, and if the king ordered me: "Plant an iron dagger in your heart and die!" I would indeed execute the command of the king.

68.

EA 254

Tell the king, my lord, my god, my sun: Your servant Yaḥtiri, the dust under your feet, sends the following message:

Seven times and again seven times I prostrate myself at the feet of my lord the king.

Now to the matter at hand: If it pleases my lord, I am a loyal servant of His Majesty. I look around in this direction and in that; no ray of hope is visible, but when I look upon Your Majesty, everything is in light. Sooner would a brick in a wall move away from under its fellow brick above it than they would move me away from (my position at) the feet of Your Majesty.

Your Majesty may ask Yanḥamu, his regent (about my loyalty). He brought me to Egypt when I was a child, and there I served Your Majesty. My position was at the gate of the city of Your Majesty. Your Majesty should ask his regent whether I am holding the city gate of Gaza and the city gate of Jaffa securely. I am ready to go with Your Majesty's archers wherever they go. And so here I am with the yoke of Your Majesty on my neck, and I bear it (gladly).

69.

EA 296

Tell the king, my lord, my god, my sun, the very breath of life for me: Zimridi, the official in charge of Sidon, sends the following message:

Seven times and again seven times I prostrate myself at the feet of my lord, my god, my sun, the very breath of life for me. May Your Majesty be assured that the city of Sidon, Your Majesty's obedient servant, which he has entrusted to me, is well.

My heart rejoiced when I heard that Your Majesty has sent a message to his servant. I hold my head high and my eyes shine when I hear the command of Your Majesty.

Your Majesty should also know that I am in readiness, expecting the arrival of Your Majesty's archers; I am ready in every respect, as Your Majesty has ordered.

Your Majesty should also know that enmity against me is very, very great. All the towns which the king has placed under me have joined the *Ḥapiru*-brigands. Would that the king place me under the protection of the man who will lead the archers of the king, so that I might reclaim the towns which have joined

the *Hapiru*-brigands and put them under me again. Then I would be able to serve my lord the king just as our forefathers did before.

70.

EA 144

Tell the king my lord: Your servant Tagi sends the following message:

Seven times and again seven times I prostrate myself at the feet of Your Majesty.

If it pleases Your Majesty, I am the servant of the king; I have tried to have the caravans assembled by my brother but he was nearly slain, so the caravans for Your Majesty cannot possibly be dispatched. Do ask the regent whom you installed whether my brother was not nearly slain. On the other hand, please, all our eyes—also my eyes—are upon you; everywhere our lives are in your hands, whether we go up to heaven or descend into the netherworld.

Now I am still trying to have assembled here by a friend of mine the caravans for Your Majesty. Your Majesty may be assured that I am serving the king and that I am doing my duty.

71.

EA 264

Tell the king, my lord, my sun: The loyal servant of the king, Biridiya, sends the following message:

Seven times and again seven times I prostrate myself at the feet of Your Majesty.

Your Majesty should be informed about his servant and his town.

Notice that I myself am plowing in the region of the town Šunama, and I myself bring the corvée workers along. But know that the other officials, who are of the same rank as I, do not plow, as I do, in the region of the town Šunama, nor do they bring the corvée workers along. It is I, alone, who bring corvée

workers from the town of Jaffa. And there are likewise some who come from the town Nuribda.

Your Majesty should know what is going on in his city.

72.

AO 7098 (RA 19 108)

Tell the king, my lord, my god, my sun: Your servant, the dust under your feet, Milkili, sends the following message:

Seven times and again seven times I prostrate myself at the feet of the king, my lord, my god, my sun.

Your Majesty should know of the deed which Yanḥamu has done to me since I left Your Majesty's presence: Now he demands of me 2,000 shekels of silver, saying: "Hand over to me your wife and your children, or I will slay you!" The king should know about this deed. Would that Your Majesty dispatch here the chariotry and take me under his protection; otherwise, I am lost.

73.

EA 270

Tell my lord the king: Your servant Rib-Addi (of Byblos) sends the following message:

Seven times and again seven times I prostrate myself at the feet of my lord the king. May the Lady of Byblos give strength to Your Majesty.

When your Majesty tells me: "Be on guard for yourself and for the city of the king which is your responsibility!" (I ask:) With what soldiers should I be on guard for myself and the city of the king? Formerly I had a garrison of the king's and the king gave me barley from the country Yarimuta for them to eat, but now Aziru has repeatedly made razzias against me and there are no cattle, and I, personally, do not even have sheep and goats(?). Aziru has taken away everything. There is no barley for me to eat, and the serfs have deserted to towns where there is barley for them to eat.

Moreover, why has the king set me up as a regent here (if not to combat the enemy)? The regents of the other towns, however,



MUSICIAN SLAVE BOY. Clay plaque, Tell Asmar, twentieth to
eighteenth centuries B. C.
(*Courtesy of the Louvre, Paris.*)

belong from head to toe to them (i.e., the tribe of Abdi-Aširti). Should I, myself, also hand over my cities to Aziru as he wants me to do? But for what purpose should I make an alliance with him? What are they, these dogs, the tribe of Abdi-Aširti, that they act in any way they want and make the towns of the king go up in flames?

74.

EA 125

Rib-Addi (of Byblos) says: Tell my lord the king:

Seven times and again seven times I prostrate myself at the feet of my lord the king.

Indeed, I have heard Your Majesty's message, and my heart was very happy. My lord should hasten the dispatch of the archers as much as possible. I swear we are as good as dead and the city of Byblos is as good as taken if Your Majesty does not dispatch the archers. Until these last few days we have been paralyzed (with fear); up to these last few days they kept saying: "There won't be any archers coming." Although once already I sent a message asking for help, and the archers indeed marched out and took Abašunu prisoner. And now people said: "He has not sent us a message and we will be conquered," and indeed the enemies are scheming to take the city of Byblos, planning as follows: "If we seize the city of Byblos, we will be powerful." Please, realize that if they seize Byblos, they will indeed be powerful, and there will be nobody who could march out against them.

So, I am on guard day and night for the city of Byblos, the city of the king. Whenever I try to reconquer the open country, people desert to take the land for themselves, and nobody is available to guard the city of Byblos, Your Majesty's city.

My lord should hasten the dispatch of the archers or else we are as good as dead. If my lord sends me only a written message, they (the people of Byblos) will know that they are lost. Those who tell the king: "There is pestilence in the country!" want to commit a crime. Your Majesty should not listen to the words of other people, there is no pestilence in this country; it is as healthy as ever. And my lord well knows that I am not given to writing

flatteries to my lord. None of the officials here likes the idea that the archers should march out when the situation (here) seems quiet to them, but I do want them to march out or else it will be very bad for me. Would that Your Majesty come out and inspect the lands and take all of them over again. Realize that the very day you come out, all the lands will be on the side of Your Majesty. Who can stand up against the soldiers of the king?

Your Majesty must not abandon (us) for another year to the tribe of Abdi-Aširti. You know them well, they are all after Your Majesty's land. Who are they, anyway, that they dare to commit crimes and to kill the regent (gloss: the *sukina*) Piwiri?

75.

AO 7093 (RA 19 102)

Rib-Addi (of Byblos) says (as follows) to the king, his lord, the sun of all countries:

I fall on my face at the feet of my lord the king seven times and again seven times.

Twice I have written for a garrison but it was not granted. Your Majesty did not listen to the words of his servant. I also dispatched my messenger to the palace but he returned empty-handed; there was no garrison available for him. And the members of my household have also seen that no silver has been given to me; they insult me just as do my colleagues, the officials, and they despise me. Moreover, when I went to Hammuniri (of Beirut), my brother, who is younger than I, turned to open rebellion, planning to hand over Byblos to the Abdi-Aširti tribe. When my brother saw that my messenger had come out (of Egypt) with empty hands and that there was no garrison with him, he despised me, and for this reason committed the crime of driving me out of the city. May Your Majesty not forget the deed of this dog!

Now then, I cannot possibly come into Egypt. I am old and a severe disease affects my body; Your Majesty should know that the gods of Byblos have turned away(?) from me and that my disease has become chronic, although I confessed my sins to the gods. For this reason, I cannot come before your Majesty. And so

I have dispatched my son, a servant of Your Majesty, to come before Your Majesty. May the king listen to the report of his servant and give (him) archers so that they can take back Byblos and prevent the wicked army and the tribe of Abdi-Aširti from entering it. But, Your Majesty's archers are needed to take the city. Consider that there are still many people in the city who are loyal to me, and only a few wicked people are there. As soon as the archers march out (from Egypt) and this becomes known, the city will return to Your Majesty the very day the archers arrive. Would that my lord knew that I would die for him!

While I was in the city, I held it for my lord; my heart was set on Your Majesty. I would not have given over the city to the Abdi-Aširti tribe, like my brother, (who) has rebelled only in order to hand it over to the tribe of the Abdi-Aširti tribe. Your Majesty must not forget the city. I swear there is very much gold and silver there, and all kinds of precious things in its temples. Should they conquer it, then Your Majesty may do with me, his servant, what he wants, and give me the town of Buruzilim as a residence.

At the moment I am with Ḥammuniri (in Beirut). When all the cities rebelled, Buruzilim likewise rebelled, so I became afraid (there too) of the tribe of the Abdi-Aširti. When I went to Ḥammuniri it was on account of the tribe of the Abdi-Aširti, because they became too strong for me and also because the breath from the king's mouth was not with me. I am telling my lord: "See, Byblos now belongs to them, much royal property and the possessions of our fathers from of old are in it. Should the king turn away from the city, all the cities of Canaan will cease to belong to him."

The king must not turn away (from the city) on account of this act (of my brother). Now, your servant, my son, has been dispatched to Your Majesty. The king should let him return quickly with soldiers to take the city again.

If Your Majesty should have mercy on me and return me to the city, I will hold it as before for Your Majesty. If Your Majesty [does not return me to it] and [one separates] the city of Byblos from Buruzilim [*break*]. How long can I stay with Ḥammuniri?

Would that Your Majesty act promptly on the request of his servant and dispatch soldiers as quickly as possible to take the city.

Your Majesty must not turn away on account of this terrible deed which was done to Your Majesty's lands. Would that Your Majesty hasten archers to come here and to seize the city as quickly as possible. Should people say to Your Majesty concerning the city, "The city is (too) strong," (I assure you:) it is not strong enough (to resist) the army of Your Majesty.

76.

EA 137

PASSPORT FOR A MESSENGER

A message to all the kings of Canaan, the subjects of my brother (the King of Egypt). Thus (says) the King (of Mitanni):

I am sending herewith my messenger Akiya to the King of Egypt, my brother, on an urgent mission (traveling as fast) as a demon. Nobody must detain him. Bring him safely into Egypt! (There) they should take him to an Egyptian border official.

And nobody should for any reason lay hand on him.

77.

EA 30

7

Letters from Ugarit

KINGS, PRINCES, AND
AMBASSADORS

KINGS, PRINCES, AND AMBASSADORS

Tell the King of Ugarit, my lord: Your servant Takuhli (the ambassador of Ugarit to the Hittite court) sends the following message:

Twice seven times I prostrate myself before my lord, even from afar.

While here everything is well for the (Hittite) king and myself, someone should inform me whether everything there is well with Your Majesty.

What is this, that you keep writing to the (Hittite) king as follows: "Herewith I am sending you lapis lazuli." The king has become very angry; he got hold of me and said: "Is this man making fun of me, that he keeps picking up such stones from the ground and sending them to me, declaring, 'I am sending you herewith lapis lazuli?'" Is this true, is what you have sent to the (Hittite) king (supposed to be) lapis lazuli?

I wish you had not sent anything and had not selected such stones (*incomprehensible West Semitic gloss added*) and sent them to the king, and that you had not made the king so angry with you.

Now, try to find good lapis lazuli somewhere and send it to the king so that he will not be angry with you any more.

Furthermore, when I (recently) was very sick—I was within an inch of dying, but now I have recovered from my sickness—the god Abšukka of the city Irḫanda appeared to me and asked me to become his “associate.” Now, everybody who wants to perform the sacrifice to this god, which establishes his status as an “associate” (of the god), has to bring many gifts, especially blue-purple wool. Hence, my lord should send me blue-purple wool. If my lord does not send me blue-purple wool, who else will give it to me? (That is), if my lord does not want to give it himself.

78.

MRS 9 RS 17.383, p. 221

A message from the Sun (the Hittite king): Tell Amištamri (king of Ugarit):

When the man from Ugarit and Šukku met before the Sun in court, Šukku declared as follows: “His boat was smashed by (hitting) the harbor wall,” while the man from Ugarit declared as follows: “Šukku smashed my boat on purpose!” The Sun gave the following decision: “The chief of the sailors of Ugarit should make a declaration under oath (about the matter), and then (if the man from Ugarit is shown to be innocent), Šukku must pay him full damages for the boat and the goods that were in the boat.”

79.

MRS 9 RS 17.133, p. 118

A message from the King of Carchemish: Tell Ibirānu, the king of Ugarit:

Good health to you!

Here is Talmi-Tešup, the charioteer of the Sun (the Hittite king), coming to you. He will inspect your infantry and your

chariotry to establish how many there are. Put all the soldiers and the chariots which have been assigned to you by the palace in good order. The Sun will make a count. The Sun must under no circumstances be angered—(this is a matter of) life and death.
80. MRS 9 RS 17.289, p. 192

A message from Prince Piḥawalwi: Tell Ibirānu (king of Ugarit), my son:

Here everything is well with the Sun.

Why have you never appeared before the Sun (the Hittite king) since you assumed the kingship over Ugarit, or why have you never sent your messengers here? Now, the Sun is very angry on account of this. So send your messengers in great haste to the Sun. Also, dispatch presents for the king together with presents for me.

81.

MRS 9 RS 17.247, p. 191

A message from Prince Aliḥešni: Tell the King of Ugarit:

Good health to you; may the gods protect your good health.

As to your frontiers, concerning which you have written, this is what the palace has given you as instructions: "All the borderlines which Armazitti has established for you should remain exactly where they are. Nobody is to change them." Now Ebina²e is coming to you together with Kurkalli, and they will set up the (new) borderlines for you.

82.

MRS 6 RS 15.77, p. 6

A message from Ḥišmi-Sin: Tell my brother, the governor of Ugarit:

Good health to you; may the gods of Ugarit protect your good health.

I have not written to you for such a long time how I am because I no longer live where I used to, but I am now staying in the country of the Hittites. This is the reason why I have not written

to you about how I am. Now you should send me a report about how everything is going with my brother.

Concerning other matters: the Sun (the Hittite king) has held out the prospect of great favors to Iltahmu if he should follow me here.

A man in the service of my father is now coming to you; he wants to make purchases in Ugarit. Nobody should put obstacles in his way; no customs official should make him pay duty. Be kind enough to look after him until he has made the purchases.

83.

MRS 6 RS 15.33, p. 15

8

A Letter from the Hittite King

A LETTER FROM THE HITTITE KING

A message from Ḫattušili, the great king, the king of Ḫatti land, your brother: Tell Kadašman-Enlil, the great king, the king of Kar-Dunyaš (i.e., Babylonia), my brother, the following message:

I am well, my palace, my wife, my children, my soldiers, my horses, my chariots, also everything in my land, are well indeed. May all be well with you, may your palace, your wives, your children, your soldiers, your horses, your chariots, and everything in your land be well.

When your father and I established diplomatic relations and when we became like loving brothers, we did not become brothers for one day only; did we not establish permanent brotherly relations based on equal standing? We [then] made the following agreement: We are only human beings; the survivor shall protect the interests of the sons of the one of us who has gone to his

fate. While the gods have kept me alive and preserved my rule, your father passed away and I mourned him as befits our brotherly relationship. When I had done what is proper(?) after [the death] of your father, I dried my tears and dispatched a messenger to the land Kar-Dunyaš, and sent the following message to the high officials of Kar-Dunyaš: “If you do not keep the son of my brother as ruler, I shall become your enemy, I will go and invade Kar-Dunyaš; but (if you do, then) send me word if an enemy rises against you or if any difficulty threatens you, and I will come to your aid!” My brother was a youngster in those days and so I assume that no one ever read these tablets to him; now these old scribes are not alive any more, and none of the tablets are even kept in archives so that they could be read to you now.

I have written to them about these things with the best intentions, while (your vizier) Itti-Marduk-balāṭu, whom the gods have unfortunately made to grow nearly 3,600 years old, who has never allowed friendly words to come out of his mouth, wrote me words as follows, and hurt me deeply by his words: “You do not send us messages as if we had the same status, but you take us to task as if we were your servants!” Let me ask my brother: in what respect did I take them to task as if they were my servants? When did the people of Kar-Dunyaš ever put pressure on the people of Ḫatti, and when did the people of Ḫatti ever put pressure on the people of Kar-Dunyaš? I did write them with the best intentions, concerned that they protect the offspring of my brother Kadašman-turgu, and still Itti-Marduk-balāṭu sent me such an answer! What evil things have I written to them that Itti-Marduk-balāṭu can write such things? Here is exactly what I wrote to them: “If you do not keep the son of your lord as ruler, I certainly will not come to your assistance if an enemy attacks you!” But I did not take the words of Itti-Marduk-balāṭu seriously; in those days my brother was only a youngster and that evil man Itti-Marduk-balāṭu talked in any way he wanted. Why should I take his words seriously?

Now I speak directly to my brother, because my brother has written me that I have stopped sending my messengers to him. I had to stop sending my messengers because the Arameans are



LADY IN PROFILE. Open-work ivory plaque with inlaid glass pupil, probably a furniture inset. Megiddo, Palestine, fourteenth to twelfth centuries B. C.

(Courtesy of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago.)

hostile. How, then, is it that you too, my dear brother, have stopped sending your messengers on account of the Arameans? Is it because the power of your kingdom, my dear brother, is so restricted? Or rather, heaven forbid, has Itti-Marduk-balātu again made utterances before my brother which are unfriendly to me, and has my brother stopped sending messengers for this reason?

In the country of my brother there are more horses even than there is straw. Should I then have had your messenger met by a thousand of my chariots? Should I have dispatched them to meet him already in Tuttul (at the border of Babylonia) and turned away the Arameans?

If my brother is worried and thinks: "The King of Assyria will not permit my messengers to pass through his country," know that the King of Assyria with all his infantry and his chariotry cannot measure up to the infantry of your country. Certainly, your messenger can by force alone [pass through the country of Assyria]! Who is that King of Assyria who holds your messengers back and allows my messengers to pass through time and again? Does the King of Assyria stop only your messengers so that you, my brother, cannot get through to my [country]?

Dear brother, you are a great king and you are [...] in success! See here, my dear brother, I keep on sending you my messengers due only to my love for you, but my brother does not send me his messenger. [Your Babylonian officials] do not know (any more what happened in the past), but should my brother send me a message, I retain every word. [Only if two kings] are hostile to each other do their messengers not travel constantly back and forth. Why have you stopped your messengers?

Let me tell my brother the following, with respect to the messenger of the King of Egypt to whom my brother referred in his letter: Ever since your father and myself established diplomatic relations, and became like brothers, we agreed to the following: We are brothers, meaning that we are to be in hostile relations with each other's enemies and in friendly relations with each other's friends. When it happened that the King of Egypt and I got angry with each other, I informed your father, Kadašman-turgu, saying: "The King of Egypt has become my

enemy,” and your father answered as follows: “Should my brother march against Egypt, I will march with you; indeed, I will march personally with my infantry and my chariotry, as many as are available to go out with me.” Ask your officials now, my dear brother; let them tell you how much infantry and chariotry your father actually promised to march out with me. [*The next twenty lines of the obverse and the first ten lines of the reverse are too broken to establish a continuous text.*]

The King of Carchemish has decided the lawsuit of the merchants against them. My brother should send me another messenger at once; otherwise, I shall dispatch to him their adversaries in the lawsuit, and then my brother can give his verdict. As to these words that you have written me, “They kill my merchants in the land of Amurru, of Ugarit, [and of . . .],” I declare: They do not kill anybody in the land of the Hittites, but they do kill people in the land of [. . .]. If the king hears about such a thing, they seize the killer of such a person and hand him over to the brothers of the murdered man. His brothers take the monetary compensation for the murdered man and they perform the expiatory ritual on the murderer, through whose act a life was taken. But if the brothers do not want to accept a monetary compensation, they execute the man who has taken a life. If, however, a man who has committed a crime against the king escapes into another country [and is caught there], it is not customary to execute him; dear brother, make inquiries and let them tell you that this is the reason why they do not execute political criminals but could execute a merchant [. . .]. How am I to know whether they will actually execute the . . . merchants? Now let the brothers of the merchants who have been killed come here so that I can investigate their case.

And I have more to say to my brother, concerning Bantišinni of whom my brother complained to me, “He keeps uttering curses against my country.” Bantišinni told me after I had questioned him: “People from the land of Akkad (= Babylonia) owe me 180 pounds of silver.” Right now a servant of Bantišinni is about to come to my brother so that my brother can decide his case in court. As to the curses which Bantišinni has pronounced

against your country with invocations of the gods in the presence of your messenger Adad-šar-ilāni, if my brother does not believe Adad-šar-ilāni, then your servant who (also) heard Bantišinni cursing your country should come here and accuse him in court. And I myself will put pressure on Bantišinni to be present; Bantišinni is a subject of mine! And so when he cursed my brother, didn't he also curse me?

And I have more to say to my brother, concerning the physician whom my brother has dispatched here; people accepted him and he performed cures on them(!) but a disease befell him. I took great pains with him and I performed extispicies for him, but when his time came he died. Now one of my messengers will take the physician's servants along (to Babylon) and my brother should question them, and they will tell about the cures which the physician used to perform. The presents(?) I had given their [master] have disappeared, however; they are afraid on account of this and so they will suppress any mention of it before my brother. My brother should know that the chariot, the wagon, the horses, silver, and linen which I gave to the physician are written down [. . .] and I have sent the tablet directly to my brother so that my brother can have it read to him. But the physician died when his appointed time(?) caught up with him. I would never have thought to detain the physician, in view of the fact that when they received during the reign of my brother Muwatalli a conjuration expert and a physician (from Babylon) and detained them, I was the one to argue with him saying, "Why do you want to detain them?" telling him that it is not according to custom to detain (such persons); and now I should have detained your physician? Of the former [experts] whom they had received here, only the conjuration expert died [. . .]. The woman he married here was of my own family and he was held . . . but if he had said, "I want to leave for my native country," he could have gone right away. [Why!] I should have held back a famous physician of Mar-duk!

And I have still more to say to my brother: I have heard that my brother has grown into a man and often goes out to hunt. I am very [pleased] that the god Adad has thus made the name of

Kadašman-Turgu, the offspring of my (deceased) brother, famous. And so I say: "Go ahead now, and make a razzia into the land of the enemy (i.e., Assyria)," and I would like to hear how many of the enemy my brother has slain. And I would like to say to my brother: "They used to call [your father] a king who prepares for war but then stays home." Did they not always say this of him? [...] my brother; you should not stay at home. Go out into enemy country and defeat the enemy! Once you have gone out (and have been victorious) go on to a country that is many times larger than that.

[Thirty more lines of the letter are too damaged to yield more than a glimpse of the topics discussed, such as Ḫattušili's need for a carver of stone reliefs—for a translation see Landsberger Sam^cal 113 n. 269—for fine horses, and for good lapis lazuli.]

84.

KBo 1 10, KUB 3 72, and KUB 4, p. 49b, 50a

9

A Middle Assyrian Letter

THE HOUSEHOLD OF THE
ASSYRIAN KING

THE HOUSEHOLD OF THE ASSYRIAN KING

Tell Maʿnaya, [. . .], Aššur-bēli-šallim, and [Aššur-zuqupanni]:

My representatives Mušallim-Aššur, Bēl-litēr the [. . .], Nabium-bēlu-damqu, and Sīqī-ilāni will be coming to you carrying the cylinder seals to (reseal) the entrance of the warehouse, and also the cylinder seal showing a *lahmu*-monster for resealing the chests. Get everyone together, open the storehouse, and have the chests taken out and placed before them. They should take as many as they can carry of the garments which are in the chests under my seal, or of the garments which the merchant Aḫu-ṭābu has returned to me. Put your cylinder seals on whatever has been returned, and send me back the seal cylinders. Write down on documents to be sealed a list of the garments which have been taken away, and deposit the sealed documents in the chests.

Open the warehouse and take out for me twenty pounds of *kalguqqu*-dye and twenty pounds of *kalakkūtu*-mineral. Open the lean-to and take out one jar of *yarzibnu*-perfume . . ., open the room of the aromatics and take out [. . . containers with] *emdu*-spice. Seal them with your seals and send them to me. They must be brought to me personally. Reseal all the chests and warehouses with my seal cylinders and send them back to me under your own seals. Write your tablets as follows: they have taken so-and-so many garments from the chest, so-and-so many from the regular deliveries have not been received, so-and-so many are from the garments which Aḥu-ṭābu has returned to me—and send all the tablets to me.

Take out one staff from the chest with the bows and send it to me. (Date follows)

85.

KAV 98

10

From the Archives of Nineveh

COURT AND COURTIERS
PORTENTS AND RITES
SOLDIERS AND DIPLOMATS
THE KING AS JUDGE

COURT AND COURTIERS

To the king, my lord (Assurbanipal), from your servant Adad-
šumi-ušur:

Good health to Your Majesty! May the gods Nabû and Marduk
give many, many blessings to Your Majesty.

When Aššur, the king of the gods, designated Your Majesty
to rule Assyria as king, and when the gods Šamaš and Adad con-
firmed by reliable oracles that Your Majesty should rule as king
over all the countries, the great gods of the entire cosmos brought
about during the reign of Your Majesty a happy rule with days
and years in which law and order prevail: there are copious rains,
abundant flooding of the rivers, favorable prices, and reconciliation
of the gods; there is much piety and the temples of the gods
are well provided. Old men dance with joy, young men sing happy
songs, women and young girls happily learn to do what women

do; they go into confinement and bring forth boys and girls, and the births are easy.

Why, then, since Your Majesty has pardoned persons condemned to death for their crimes, and has released those who for many years had been imprisoned, and since those who had been sick for many days have gotten well, the hungry have been sated with food, the lean have become fat, and those who had been destitute have been clad in sumptuous garments—why then should I and my son Arad-Gula, among all those happy people, remain restless and in low spirits? Only recently has Your Majesty shown his love for Nineveh by telling the prominent citizens: “Bring me your sons, they shall become servants at my court!” If this son of mine, Arad-Gula, could become a servant at the court of Your Majesty, serving together with these same people, then we too would be as happy as all other people are; we would dance and bless Your Majesty.

I am very devoted to Your Majesty, but none of those who do service in the palace care for me. I have no friend among them, none to whom I could give a present which he would accept and then intercede on my behalf. May Your Majesty take pity on his servant, so that among all the people I alone may not remain unhappy; may those who wish me ill not gloat over me.

86.

ABL 2

To the king, my lord (Assurbanipal), from your servant Adad-šumi-ušur:

Good health to Your Majesty! May the gods Nabû and Marduk bless Your Majesty. All is well with the personnel of the armory; they are in good spirits.

May all the great gods whose names Your Majesty has invoked make Your Majesty himself profit by these good words and by the very blessings which Your Majesty sent (in his last letter) to me, his dog and servant, the old man living in his household; may they make powerful foreign countries bless Your Majesty, and pray day and night, morning and evening, to the great gods of the entire cosmos, the gods of Assyria, the gods of Babylonia,

and of all the other countries, for the well-being of the person of Your Majesty and the sons of the king, and to grant Your Majesty thousands and thousands of years of happiness and well-being.

Now I know that if the magic operations of your servant under the guidance of the gods Ea and Asalluḫi succeed, it will be solely on account of these very blessings which your Majesty has sent to his servant.

87.

ABL 9

To the king, my lord (Assurbanipal), from your servant Bēl-iqīša:
May the gods Nabû and Marduk bless Your Majesty.

The servants of my lord's household to whom Your Majesty has given out new assignments this very day, to wit: Tabalay, the son of Bēl-Ḥarrān-aḫa-uṣur whom Your Majesty has elevated to the rank of commander of a regiment, Nabû-sākip whom Your Majesty has elevated to the permanent rank of third-man-on-the-chariot, and Amri-Marduk whom Your Majesty has elevated to the rank of a (royal) attendant—these three men are all drunkards! When they are intoxicated, nobody can make them turn their iron daggers away from an adversary.

I have written herein to Your Majesty what I know about the matter. Your Majesty should act as he likes.

88.

ABL 85

This is the balance of the message contained in the previous letter:

May the royal rule of Your Majesty be as pleasant as water and oil for all the countries, and may Your Majesty shepherd them forever and ever. I am but a dog, blessing Your Majesty. May all the gods whose names I have mentioned in my invocation accept and grant all the blessings which I have addressed in this letter to Your Majesty; may they give a thousand times more to Your Majesty.

But let me stand in front of Your Majesty, blessing Your

Majesty; let me do obeisance wholeheartedly with my arms up-lifted; and when my arms will have become too tired, I will use all my strength to keep my elbows up in an attitude of reverence! Who does not love his benefactor? In a song from Akkad it is said: "All the people look expectantly upon you, O my shepherd, on account of your sweet words!"

89.

ABL 435

To the king, my lord: Your servant Bēl-ibni. I would gladly die for Your Majesty. May the gods Nabû and Marduk bless Your Majesty.

The reason I did not come before to Your Majesty is that there were persons who went from Elam to your royal father and spread calumnies about me in order to further their own interest. There is somebody who hates me and he has contrived evil things against me and written them from Elam to the palace. Because I heard of it and became afraid I did not come (to court).

Yet I still want to serve Your Majesty. Your royal father always pardoned those who in the past had committed crimes; [whatever] calumnies are being told before the king [I have not committed any crime] . . . [*break*] . . . [me who always acts] according to the command of Your Majesty they must not [make] forget my loyalty to Your Majesty. So let it be pronounced by Your Majesty yourself that I do not have to be afraid of Your Majesty. Would that [Your Majesty consider me again] one of his servants, that an official acknowledgement of my status as a servant of Your Majesty come forth so that I will not be treated with contempt any more by my fellow Babylonians and will not have to [bow] my head in shame. If I see one such acknowledgement of Your Majesty we will all take new courage, and we all—I myself, my brothers, my sons, and my friends—we would go and kiss the feet of Your Majesty and do service for Your Majesty.

Let me hear the decision of Your Majesty and let me have confidence again.

90.

ABL 793



BEARDED HEAD. Painted clay, Aqar Quf, fourteenth to thirteenth centuries B. C.
(Courtesy of the Iraq Museum, Baghdad.)

To the king, my lord (Assurbanipal), from your servant Kabtia:
Good health to Your Majesty!

As to the ceremony of the taking of the loyalty oath in Babylon, concerning which the king has inquired, (I report that) I was indeed not present. When Aššur-rāmim-šarri brought here the order sealed with Your Majesty's ring, my brothers and I had already left, and we were together(!) on duty in the land of Araši. On the date of the loyalty-oath ceremony I had not yet returned. So I went to see the palace overseer; he took me along with him and, surrounded by the images of your gods, I took the oath of loyalty to Your Majesty, in Nippur as well as in Uruk. And I should not believe in the oath sworn to Your Majesty? If they say: "Let his soldiers, their sons, their wives, as well as their own gods, participate in the oath sworn to you," then indeed, after the witnesses have assembled, I myself will participate in the oath-taking in Babylon, but only upon instructions from Your Majesty.

91.

ABL 202

To the king, my lord (Esarhaddon), from your servant Arad-Nanā:

The best of health to Your Majesty! May the god Ninurta and the goddess Gula give Your Majesty happiness and physical well-being.

Your Majesty keeps saying to me, "Why do you not diagnose the nature of this sickness of mine, and why do you not prepare appropriate medication?" Up to now, when I talked with the king, he did not inform me about his symptoms. But now I have sealed and dispatched a letter; they should read it to the king, to inform Your Majesty. If it is agreeable to Your Majesty, the diviner should perform whatever ritual is appropriate.

The king should apply this lotion (sent with the letter). If indeed this fever leaves Your Majesty, it will be on account of that lotion of oil. I have already made it two or three times for Your Majesty. The king will recognize it. Should the king say, "They should do it the next morning," this disease will drag(?) on. When they bring the bandages to the king, let them put them

on crosswise as they have already done once or twice before. Should I come and give instructions myself? By all means, the king must sweat because of the application. I am sending herewith these phylacteries to Your Majesty; the king should place them around his neck. At the same time, I am sending a salve; the king should be treated with it on the days that are indicated(?).

92.

ABL 391

To the king of all countries, my lord (Assurbanipal), from your servant Kudurru:

May the city of Uruk and its temple Eanna bless my lord, the king of all countries. I pray every day to the goddess Ištar of Uruk and to Nanâ for the well-being of Your Majesty.

The physician Iqīša, whom Your Majesty has sent to heal me, has indeed restored my health. May the great gods of the entire cosmos keep on blessing Your Majesty, and may they make the throne of Your Majesty as stable as the heavens. I was about to die and Your Majesty has given me life! Many are the kind deeds which Your Majesty has done for me. So I left in order to see Your Majesty personally, thinking: "If I go and see Your Majesty in person, I shall get still better." But the Chief Baker of the king made me return to Uruk while I was already underway, saying: "The army commander has brought from the palace an order concerning you sealed with the king's sealing ring. You should go back with me to Uruk so that he can give you orders," and he made me turn back to Uruk. Your Majesty should know this.

93.

ABL 274

To my lord, the king of all countries (Assurbanipal), from your servant Nabû-ušabši:

May the city of Uruk and its temple Eanna bless my lord, the king of all countries. I pray every day to the goddess Ištar of Uruk and to Nanâ for the well-being of Your Majesty.

The flocks of the temple and of the Puqudu settlement are grazing in the region of the Ru²ua tribe; they have two shepherds,

one from the temple and one from the Puqudu settlement. They brought here three white horses; their trappings are of silver. This is what is written on the bronze "turner" belonging to the harness: "[Property(?) of] Tammariti, a [gift] of the *teppir*-official of the king of Elam for Ištar of Uruk." The horses which they brought are now kept here. In obedience to Your Majesty, I did not give them to the temple.

I am sending herewith the shepherds who brought the three horses to Your Majesty. I sent to Your Majesty the bronze "turner" as soon as I read the inscription on it.

Your Majesty should do as he likes.

94.

ABL 268

To the king, my lord (Assurbanipal), your servant Adad-šumi-ušur.

Good health to Your Majesty! May the gods Aššur, Sin, Šamaš, Bēl, Nabû, and Nergal bless Your Majesty many times.

The sun did not have an eclipse, it let (the computed event) pass by.

The planet Venus will reach the constellation Virgo; the heliacal rising of the planet Mercury is near; there will be a hard rain and the storm god Adad will thunder. Your Majesty should know (all this).

Nobody has reminded (the king) about Arad-Gula, a servant of Your Majesty; he is dying of a broken heart. It is in the power of Your Majesty to bestow grace(?)—Your Majesty is one who has granted mercy to many people.

95.

ABL 657

To the king, my lord (Esarhaddon), from your servant Adad-šumī-ušur:

Good health to Your Majesty! May the gods Nabû and Marduk bless Your Majesty.

As to Your Majesty's asking me, "Is this a propitious time for the crown prince Aššur-mukin-palēya to appear before me; and, if

twenty of our men come with him, should he appear together with them or alone?" I answer: They should appear only together in audience. It is excellent; this is the month of Abu and it has many favorable days. I am dancing with joy. It is an extremely propitious time for appearing in audience before Your Majesty. Your Majesty will then be looked upon by all the great gods. The shadow cast by Your Majesty is favorable beyond anything. So, let them appear in audience, let them move about in the sweet and favorable shadow of Your Majesty, and Your Majesty will be happy with them, and even their grand-children will eventually move about Your Majesty in exactly the same way. As it has been said by someone: "The *amēlu* is the shadow of the god, just as the shadow of the *amēlu* is the common man." (Note that *amēlu* means "king" (here) because he is the likeness of the god.

96. ABL 652

A communication from the daughter of the king to the lady Aššur-šarrat:

Why do you not write me any letters, why do you not send me any oral message? Isn't it in reality because people might say: "Perhaps that one (i.e., the writer of this letter) is higher in rank than she." After all: I, Šerua-ēterat, am the eldest daughter born in the official residence to Aššur-etel-ilāni-mukinnī (= Esarhaddon), the great and legitimate king, king of the world, king of Assyria, while you are only a daughter-in-law, the lady of the house of Assurbanipal, the eldest son of the king born in the official residence of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria.

97

ABL 308

To the king, my lord (Esarhaddon), from your servant [Adad-šumi-ušur]:

Good health to Your Majesty! May the gods Nabû and Marduk bless Your Majesty.

Your Majesty has done on earth what cannot be done even in heaven, and he has taught us a lesson. You have clad your (younger)

son in royal garments and handed over to him the kingship of the land of Assyria. Your elder son you have installed as king in Babylon; to your right and to your left [wherever] you look [... *break* ... the opponents(?) of] Your Majesty among the lesser kings (say that) the king has done no good to the country of Assyria. Now, the god Aššur has given you the world from the rising of the sun to the setting of the sun; look upon these gracious sons of yours and your heart will be happy. Your Majesty should put (any memory of such) unfortunate talk out of his mind [*end broken*]

98.

ABL 870

To the king, my lord (Sargon II), from your servant Ištar-dūrī:
Good health to Your Majesty!

I am now sending the two physicians, Nabû-šuma-iddin and Nabû-erība, concerning whom I have spoken to Your Majesty, with this messenger of mine to Your Majesty. Let them enter into Your Majesty's presence so Your Majesty can talk with them. In truth, I have not informed them, nor have I (even) been talking with them (before). It was arranged in the way Your Majesty ordered.

Šamaš-bēli-ušur has written to me from the city of Dēr: "There are no texts for the inscriptions available, so we did not place them inside the walls of the temple." I am now writing to Your Majesty asking that somebody write out and send me one copy of the inscription. They can then write the balance of the inscriptions in the same way and place them inside the walls of the temple.

Much rain has fallen and the crops are doing fine. Your Majesty should be happy (about this.)

99.

ABL 157

[*break* ...] May the gods Nabû and Marduk bless Your Majesty.

Today is New Year's day. May Bēl and Nabû assign the coming days of Your Majesty to success, and the coming years of Your

Majesty to the realization (of all his plans). May the fullest amount of happiness [*break*]

100.

ABL 959

To the king of all countries: Your servant Ninurta-aḥa-iddin. Well-being to Your Majesty! May the gods Nabû and Marduk bless Your Majesty. May the great gods establish the foundation (of the rule) of your offspring as (lastingly as) heaven and nether-world.

[*break*] I will read the [. . .] tablets to Your Majesty and whatever is acceptable to the king I will place in it (the royal library). Whatever was not acceptable, I have (already) removed from it. The tablets I have mentioned are worthy of being deposited (in the library) forever.

101.

ABL 334

PORTENTS AND RITES

To my lord, the king of all countries (Assurbanipal), from your servant Bēl-u[. . .]:

May the gods Bēl, Nabû, and Šamas bless Your Majesty.

If an eclipse occurs, but it is not observed in the capital, such an eclipse is considered not to have occurred. "The capital" means the city in which the king happens to be staying. Now, there were clouds everywhere; we thus do not know whether the eclipse did or did not occur. The lord of all kings should write to Assur and to all cities such as Babylon, Nippur, Uruk, and Borsippa. Possibly it was observed in these cities. The king should also watch out for the regular reports . . . [*break*] I have already written everything to Your Majesty concerning the portent of an eclipse that occurred in the months Addaru and Nis-annu. And as to the apotropaic rites for the eclipse which they have already performed, what harm can be done (even if the eclipse did not take place)? It is advantageous to perform the rites; the king should therefore not send (the experts) away.

The great gods who live in the city of Your Majesty have

covered the sky and have thus not shown the eclipse. This is what the king should know: to wit, that this eclipse has no relation to Your Majesty or his country. On this account the king should be happy.

PS: If the storm god Adad thunders in the month of Nisannu, (it means) the “small barley” crop will diminish.

102.

ABL 895

To the king, my lord (Esarhaddon), from your servant Nabû-ahhê-erība:

Good health to Your Majesty! Since this is a day of darkness (i.e., an eclipse), I did not send the customary blessings.

The eclipse of the moon moved from the eastern quadrant and settled over the entire western quadrant of the moon. The planets Jupiter and Venus were visible during the eclipse until it cleared. This is propitious for Your Majesty, and (portends) evil for the Westland.

Tomorrow I will send Your Majesty an (astrological) tablet dealing with eclipses of the moon.

103.

ABL 407

To the king, my lord (Esarhaddon), from your servant Balasī.

Good health to Your Majesty! May Nabû and Marduk bless Your Majesty.

As to Your Majesty’s inquiring of me: “Is there anything (unusual) in the sky that you have observed?” I am very attentive, and who am I that I would not have reported to the king had I seen anything? But nothing (unusual) has appeared above the horizon, I have observed nothing.

As to the observation of the sun (in the expectation of an eclipse) concerning which Your Majesty has written to me, (I answer that) this is the month to observe the sun. Twice we will watch the sun, on the 26th of the month Araḥšamnu (and) the 26th of the month Kislimu. In this way we will observe the sun in two successive months.

As to the eclipse of the sun of which the king spoke, that eclipse did not occur. On the 27th I shall again make an observation and send a report.

PS: Your Majesty . . . has abandoned me, I am deeply upset, I have no report (to make).

104.

ABL 687

To the king, my lord (Esarhaddon), from your servant Balasî:

Good health to Your Majesty! May the gods Nabû and Marduk bless Your Majesty.

As to Your Majesty's writing me about the wording of the omen prediction as follows: "What is the meaning of "The king will come to naught together with his powerful officials'?" Experts must be put to work (on this problem). Predictions in omens depend on the months of the year; thus, one is not like the other; they take their meanings from their contexts. (In this case) the prediction of the omen means (actually), "He will come to naught."

As to that earthquake which occurred recently: there is nothing to it. One should however perform the ritual for an earthquake and thus your gods will make the bad portent bypass you (to wit the ritual called) "Ea-has-done-it-Ea-has-removed-it," because he (the god Ea) who caused the quake has also created the relevant (apotropaic) *namburbi*-ritual against it. There were no earthquakes in the times of the king's father and even his grandfathers, and I myself have not experienced earthquakes because I am too young. But this god (i.e., Ea) has given a warning to the king. The king should pray to the god with uplifted hands and recite the (apotropaic) *namburbi*-ritual and—I say—the evil will be averted.

105.

ABL 355

To the king, my lord (Assurbanipal), from your servant Mār-īštar:

Good health to Your Majesty! May the gods Nabû and Marduk bless Your Majesty. May the great gods grant Your Majesty long-lasting life, well-being, and peace of mind.



HEAD. Lightly baked clay, with hair and beard tinted black. Shush,
Iran, early first millennium B. C.
(*Courtesy of the Louvre, Paris.*)

As to Your Majesty's writing to me: "The month Ulūlu is an intercalary month; you must not perform the ritual this month," (I report): The . . . entered Babylon on the night of the sixth day. The god Nabû left two days before him. On the fourth, the fifth, and the sixth days, the sacred doors of the gods Bēl and Nabû remained open, and sacrifices were performed. As soon as I read the order sealed with the king's ring, I gave the order (to stop the ceremonies); they will perform the balance of the ritual of the month Ulūlu in the coming month, just as Your Majesty has ordered me.

106.

ABL 338

To the king, my lord (Esarhaddon), from your servant Marduk-šakin-šumi:

Much good health to Your Majesty! May the gods Nabû and Marduk bless Your Majesty.

In reply to Your Majesty's writing to me concerning the white ceremonial robes: "How many days should I keep on wearing them?" the king should wear them on the 20th and the 21st; two days are more than enough. On the 22d he can dress normally (again). And Your Majesty should, as he usually does, act exactly as directed.

As to the written order of Your Majesty, Kēnu-na'id will certainly die from bitter rage when he reads it. Indeed, Bēl and Nabû have extended their gracious hands toward Your Majesty.

Yesterday I wrote a report concerning my failure to make an observation; today, I am still afraid and dejected.

107.

ABL 379

To the king, my lord (Esarhaddon), your servant Nabû-nādin-šumi.

Good health to Your Majesty! May the gods Nabû and Marduk bless Your Majesty many times.

As to Your Majesty inquiring of me: "Write me what pertains to the ritual we are to perform," (I reply) that it is said in its

(apotropaic) *namburbi*-section as follows “the seventh day he (the king) stays in the ceremonial reed hut, purification rites are performed for him, his ritual is like that performed for a sick person. During the (preceding) seven days will be recited *šullakkū*-prayers which are (to be said with uplifted hands) to the gods of the night, as well as apotropaic *namburbi*-rituals of a general nature. During the seven days he is to sit (on the floor) in the ceremonial reed hut, he recites benedictions for his personal god and his personal goddess.”

Should the king be told: “Do it today!” (I declare) the 8th day (of this month) is (more) appropriate for performing the ceremony.

108.

ABL 370

To the king, my lord (Esarhaddon), from your servant Balasī:

Good health to Your Majesty! May the gods Nabû and Marduk bless Your Majesty.

As to Your Majesty’s request addressed to me concerning (the incident with) the ravens, here are the relevant omens: “If a raven brings something into a person’s house, this man will obtain something that does not belong to him. If a falcon or a raven drops something he is carrying upon a person’s house or in front of a man, this house will have much traffic—traffic means profit. If a bird carries meat, another bird, or anything else, and drops it upon a person’s house, this man will obtain a large inheritance.”

May the gods Nabû and Marduk bless Your Majesty. May they give Your Majesty long-lasting life, old age, extremely old age.

I have slaves in the province of the Chief Butler; I have fields and gardens there. But the servants of the Chief Butler have illegally taken away my gardens and chased my people off. The people [whom] they have chased off [. . .] have run away [. . .] they do not release [. . .]. [May] the king [have] mercy. May they [. . .] appoint a guardsman and [may] they make him [guard the fields and gardens].

109.

ABL 353

To the king, my lord (Esarhaddon): your servant Nergal-šarrani.

Good health to Your Majesty! May the gods Nabû and Marduk bless Your Majesty.

There exists an apotropaic prayer and also a ritual for that special *kamunu*-lichen which has appeared in the inner court yard of the temple of Nabû, and the *katarru*-lichen on the wall of the central storehouses. Adad-šumi-ušur will perform it tomorrow morning. He should perform it several times.

110.

ABL 367

To the king, my lord, from your servant [. . .]:

Good health to Your Majesty! May the gods Nabû and Marduk bless Your Majesty.

As to Your Majesty's writing me concerning the ritual, they should perform the exorcistic ritual exactly as Your Majesty did several times already. As to Your Majesty's writing me concerning the formulas to be pronounced, the king should watch the formulas carefully. The king should not eat what has been cooked on fire; he should put on the loose robe of a nurse; the day after tomorrow(?) he should go down to the river (to wash himself). The king should perform the ritual as he has already done several times.

111.

ABL 553

To the king, my lord (Esarhaddon), from your servant Nabû-nādin-šumi:

Good health to Your Majesty! May the gods Nabû and Marduk bless Your Majesty.

As to Your Majesty's order to me concerning a *namburbi*-ritual to counteract all sorts of untoward events: "Perform it (tomorrow) morning," (I answer): the day is not propitious. We will prepare it on the 25th and perform it on the 26th.

Your Majesty should not worry on account of that portent, however. The gods Bēl and Nabû are well able to make a portent pass by (the person whom it concerns) and they will make it bypass Your Majesty. Your Majesty must not be afraid.

112.

ABL 51

To my lord the crown prince (Assurbanipal), from your servant Nabû-šuma-iddina:

Good health to my lord the crown prince! May the gods Nabû and Marduk give great blessings to my lord the crown prince.

The city of Calah will prepare the bed for the god Nabû on the third of the month Ayaru. (On that date) the god Nabû enters the bedroom. On the fourth day the return of the god Nabû takes place. My lord the crown prince knows that I am the official in charge of the temple of your god Nabû; I have therefore to go to Calah. The god will set out from the threshing floor of the palace; those who are on the threshing floor of the palace go then to the garden. There a sacrifice will be performed. The chariot driver of the god comes from the gods' stable; he takes the god out and brings him back again; he himself goes on and any priestly apprentice who has a sacrificial animal performs the sacrifice. Anybody who brings an offering of as little as one quart of bread flour may eat in the temple of Nabû. These are the divine regulations; they must carefully observe them for the well-being of my lord the crown prince.

Whatever orders my lord the crown prince gives me (I shall execute). Let Bēl and Nabû, who will take part in the ritual of the sacred marriage in the month Šabaṭu, protect the life of my lord the crown prince; may they extend your rule forever.

113.

ABL 65

To the king, my lord, from your servant Nergal-šarrani.

Good health to Your Majesty! May the gods Nabû and Marduk bless Your Majesty.

The images of Nabû and (his spouse) Tašmētu enter tomorrow, the fourth day, toward evening, the bed chamber (of the temple). On the fifth day one serves them a royal meal; the *ḥazannu*-official (in charge of the temple) will be present; they bring the lion-headed (object) on a bier to the palace. From the fifth to the tenth day the gods stay in their bed chamber and the *ḥazannu*-official remains as guard (at its door). On the eleventh Nabû comes out

to have some exercise; he goes to the park, kills (there) wild bulls. He (then) returns and takes his (usual) place. He (then) [blesses] the king [*break*]

I am writing this to Your Majesty so that Your Majesty will know (about it).

114.

ABL 366

SOLDIERS AND DIPLOMATS

An order of the king (Assurbanipal) to the inhabitants of Babylon:

I am well. May you be in good spirits.

I have heard all these empty words which that unbrotherly brother of mine has told you, everything he has been saying I have heard. They are but wind; do not believe him! I swear by Aššur and Marduk, my gods, that I have not conceived in my heart nor spoken out all these evil plans with which he has charged me. It is only a trick he has devised: "I will make the good name of the people of Babylon, who love the king, as bad as my own." Yet I have not been listening to all this. Up to now, my thoughts have been solely about your brotherly relationship with the people of Assyria, and about your privileges, which I have confirmed. Now by all means, do not listen to his empty words, do not spoil your reputation which is so good in my own eyes and in the eyes of all the countries, and do not sin against the god!

And I know of another matter which you are worrying about: "Now the very fact that we have rebelled against him will be a charge against us." No! This is no charge; nothing matters but an excellent reputation. The fact that you have sided with my enemy should be only for yourselves like a charge against you, and a sin against an oath sworn before the god.

Now I am writing to you that you should not sully yourselves through this affair. Let me have a quick answer to my letter. This man, rejected by Marduk, should not make me break the agreement (confirming your privileges) which I made before the god Bēl!

In the month of Ayearu, the twenty-third day, eponym: Aššur-dūra-ušur (i.e., 652 B.C.). Šamaš-balassu-iqbi brought the letter.

115.

ABL 301

An order of the king (Esarhaddon) to the “Non-Babylonian” inhabitants of Babylon:

I am fine.

There is a proverb often used by people: “The potter’s dog, once he crawls into the (warm) potter’s shop, barks at the potter.” There you are, pretending—against the commands of the god—to be Babylonians, and what unspeakable things you and your master have devised against my subjects! There is another proverb often cited by people: “What the adulteress says at the door of the judge’s house carries more weight than the words of her husband.” Should you ask yourselves after I sent back to you, with seals intact, your letters full of empty and insolent(?) words which you had dispatched: “Why did he return the letters to us?” I am telling you that I would have opened and read whatever message my loyal and loving Babylonians had sent me but . . .
[*end broken*]

116.

ABL 403

An order of the king (Assurbanipal) to Bēl-ibni:

I am fine; be in good spirits.

With respect to what you have written me concerning the Puqudu-tribe who live along the canal, (the fact) that you reported and informed me was excellent. Just as somebody who loves the house of his master informs him about whatever he sees or hears, exactly so have you informed me.

117.

ABL 288

To my lord, the king of all countries, from your servant Nabû-šumi-lišir:

May the gods Nabû and Marduk grant my lord the king of all

countries a life lasting through many days and years, a just scepter and a permanent throne.

In reference to the order given to me by Your Majesty: "Write me everything you hear about the Arabs!" (I report): When that caravan started out from the region of the Nabateans, Ayakamaru, the son of Amme'ta', from the tribe of the Maš'ay, attacked them, killed people, and took booty. One of the members of the caravan escaped and entered a fortified outpost of the king. I am sending him herewith to Your Majesty; the king should hear what he has to say.

118.

ABL 260

To the king, my lord (Esarhaddon), your servant Aššur-šallim.

Good health to Your Majesty! May the gods Aššur, Šamaš, Bēl, Nabû, Nergal, Laz, Išum, Adad, and Ilubēr, the great gods of heaven and netherworld, bless Your Majesty a thousand times, also very much so the crown prince of Assyria and the crown prince of Babylon.

As to Your Majesty's giving me the following instructions concerning the guards who are posted in the border fortresses toward Urartu, the land of the Mannans, the Medes, and the land of Ḫubuškiya: "Give them this order (which is) to be strictly executed: 'Do not be negligent in your guard duties!' Also, their attention should be directed to refugees coming from the regions around them in such terms: should a refugee come to you(r posts) from the land of the Mannans, of the Medes, or from the land of Ḫubuškiya, you will hand him over immediately to a messenger of yours and send him on to the crown prince. And if it should happen that he has some information, you will talk it over with the crown prince, a report [should c]ome from you that a Mannan scribe [is to be sent to you] . . . ; he should write down what he (the refugee) has to say. They should seal (the report) with the cross-shaped stamp seal; Aḫi-dūr-enši, the commander of the troops of the crown prince, should send it to me at once by a swift messenger!" (I report that) right now two refugees have arrived here from the land of the Mannans, one eunuch

and one official; I have sent them to the crown prince. They have information.

119.

ABL 434

To the lord of all kings, my lord (Assurbanipal), from your servant Bēl-ibni:

May the gods Aššur, Šamaš, and Marduk bestow upon the lord of all kings, the king of all countries, my lord, happiness, well-being, a long life, and a long reign.

The day I left the Sea Land, I dispatched five hundred men, subjects of Your Majesty, to the town of Zabdānu with the order: "Guard the outlying command posts in the region of Zabdānu, make attacks against Elam, kill, and take booty." When they made an attack against the town of Irgidu—that town is four hours' march this side of Susa—they killed the sheikh of the Yašil tribe, Ammaladin, two of his brothers, three of his uncles, and two of his nephews; also Dalail, the son of Abiyadi², and two hundred citizens of that town, and, although this was a long distance for them, they took 150 prisoners. As soon as the sheikhs of the town Laḥiru and the Nugu³ tribesmen saw that my police troops were making more and more attacks on the other side, their (own), they became afraid, pledged themselves, and entered into an agreement of vassalage with Mušēzib-Marduk, my sister's son, a servant of Your Majesty, to whom I have entrusted an outlying command post, declaring: "We are now servants of the King of Assyria." They started moving all their available bowmen, [joined] with Mušēzib-Marduk, and marched against Elam. They put their hands on their [*break*], they arrived at the command post which I has assigned (to them), and I sent them on to Your Majesty, together with the booty(?) they had taken. They have the following news about Elam: "Ummanigaš, son of Amedirra, has rebelled against King Ummanḫaldašu, and the country from the town of Ḫudḫud as far as the town of Ḫādānu has sided with him. Ummanḫaldašu has assembled his armed forces. Now they are encamped opposite each other along the river."



ASSYRIAN ARCHER. Wall painting, Tell Ahmar, Syria, ca. 730 B.C.
(*Courtesy of the Aleppo Museum.*)

The man Iqīša, whom I have sent to the palace, knows all about their news; one should question him in the palace.

120.

ABL 280

To my lord the king (Esarhaddon[?]), from your servant the *guenna*-official of Nippur:

May the gods Enlil, Ninurta, and Nusku bless Your Majesty.

The king knows that I am very sick. Had I not been sick, I would have gone to the king to inquire about his health. So I am sending herewith my brother Bēl-usātu and ten well-born citizens of Nippur to inquire about the health of Your Majesty.

The king well knows that people hate us everywhere on account of our allegiance to Assyria. We are not safe anywhere; wherever we might go we would be killed. People say: "Why did you submit to Assyria?" We have now locked our gates tight and do not even go out of town into the . . . We are (still) doing our duty for the king; the envoy and the officials whom the king has sent here have all seen this and can tell the king about it. But the king must not abandon us to the others! We have no water and are in danger of dying for lack of water. The king, your father, wanted to give us the water rights for the Banītu-canal under this condition: "Dig an outlet from the Banītu-canal toward Nippur." [The . . .], however, refused us the water. The king should now send an order to Ubar, the commander of Babylon to grant us an outlet from the Banītu-canal so that we can drink water with them from it and not have to desert the king on account of lack of water. They must not say everywhere: "These are the inhabitants of Nippur who submitted to Assyria—and (when) they became sick and tired of the lack of water (they deserted)."

121.

ABL 327

To my lord the king (Sargon II), from your servant Aššur-dūr-panīya:

Good health to Your Majesty!

On the twenty-third day of the month Addaru, the chieftains

of the country of the Subareans left the town of Ša-birišu (for the capital). Should my lord the king ask: "Who are they?" I report: Yata², the commander of the garrisons of the frontier region toward the land of the Urartians; Abiyaqā, and other natives accompany him. Should Your Majesty ask: "How about the brother of the Second-in-Command, of whom they wrote in a previous letter that he will come?" the answer is: he did not go. Bag-Tešup is sick but others have gone to report (in his stead). They have written down on tablets as their report the names(?) of the royal serfs and of other natives of Assyria who deserted last year, and even three and four years ago, on account of the corvée work and the obligation to work as serfs of the king, and who have crossed over to the other side, and they are bringing (it) along; they will read it to Your Majesty. Only the people who recently escaped from doing work for the king will come back with them. Yata² is willing to give them (the earlier refugees) fields, orchards, and shelter, to set them up in his own country—they are, in fact, already settled there.

Those chieftains who have gone to report (will tell you that) the said Bag-Tešup is sick, and they will also say: "We went and checked ourselves." Now they are already en route, and I can say that the list which they will read to Your Majesty is incorrect.

Seven men, one mule, and three donkeys have left with the chieftains.

Your Majesty has given me these orders: "When the chieftains leave, Aššur-bēssunu should go with them." If Your Majesty still insists, Aššur-bēssunu may go; let them come to an agreement. Your Majesty should write me exactly what the orders are.

122.

ABL 252

Order of the king (Assurbanipal[?]) to Mannu-kī-Adad:

To you have been assigned as your charges 1,119 men together with their families, amounting to 5,000—not counting how many among them have died in the meantime and how many are still alive—they are destined for the infantry of the palace. Why then are you yourself transferring some to the fully equipped soldiers,

others to the elite soldiers, and still others to the cavalry, making them part of your own regiment? Do not think that when those come who are to check on the soldiers, you will be able to make arrangements(?) with them! I am now sending this message to you: "Summon them even if many of them are elsewhere, everybody whom you have sent out for a special task, they all have to be present for my officer when he checks on them!" I am now sending my officer; he will muster them.

123.

ABL 304

To the king of all countries, my lord (Assurbanipal): your servant Sin[. . .].

May the god Sin and the goddess Ningal bless Your Majesty. I am praying every day to the gods Sin and Ningal for the good health of the king of all countries, my lord.

Among the prisoners of war whom we took in the Sea Land and brought here, the inhabitants of the town Ekuš are the traditional retainers of my paternal estate who served, under your royal forefathers, my own father Ningal-iddin. There are, however, persons among the prisoners who only took refuge in Ekuš with friends. Would then Your Majesty inform the governor that he should grant them (the retainers) the protection of Your Majesty and comfort them? If they hear this they will be devoted to Your Majesty.

124.

ABL 920

To the king, my lord: your servant Išdī-Nabû.

Good health to Your Majesty. May the gods Bēl, Ištar of Nineveh, Ištar of Bit-Kidmuri bless your Majesty many times. May they give to Your Majesty happiness and good health. Everything is well with the service of Your Majesty.

Šummu-ilu, the son of Aramiš-šar-ilāni, the *mušarkisu*-official commissioned by the king, made the following declaration before me: "My father died in enemy country; the fifty soldiers under his command took thereupon 12 horses and left; they are

now bivouacking in the surroundings of Nineveh. I said to them: 'Even if my father is dead, why have you left the king's service and have gone away?'"

This man I have now sent into the presence of Your Majesty; Your Majesty should question (him) and he should tell Your Majesty what his case is.

As to that trader, the native of Carchemish, whom his own servants killed, not one of them escaped; we arrested all of them (thanks to) the divine protection (granted travelers) under the aegis of the two mother goddesses Ninlil (and) Šarrat-Kidmuri who love you.

I have sent (them) along to Your Majesty.

Should Your Majesty be nervous about Sippar, (know that) we have no anxiety (anymore).

P.S. Let me hear everything about the health of Your Majesty.

125.

ABL 186

To my lord the king, from your servant Nabû-rā'im-nišišu:

Good health to Your Majesty! May the gods Nabû and Marduk bless the king.

In the town of Sudanīna, they have checked (the cargo against) the writing board (the bill of lading) and taken into safekeeping the objects belonging to Umban-kidinnī which the third-on-the-chariot, Raši-ilu, brought down here on a boat. Everything is in order; nothing is missing.

126.

ABL 425

[beginning destroyed] Nabû-[. . .] said as follows: "[. . .] the king of Urartu. Why does Your Majesty constantly send me messages full of ill-temper, reproach, and anger; your father did not give me orders in such a manner even when they spoke unrepeatable slanders (about me) and were committing crimes right and left, up and down. Yet the king of all gods, sublime and noble, has handed over to you, his worshipper, the full extent of the inhabited world!

As to the lapis lazuli concerning which Your Majesty has written me as follows: "They should requisition it!"—does Your Majesty not know that lapis lazuli is now high in price and that the country would rebel against me if I had actually requisitioned it? Rather—if it pleases Your Majesty—let a large body of troops come here and let them requisition the lapis lazuli. And then the king must not consider it a crime (of mine) when I will not eat with them (the Assyrian soldiers), nor drink water with them, nor accompany them, nor even rise before your messenger, nor inquire of him about Your Majesty's health, when they come here.

PS: Written down from an oral deposition of [. . .].

127.

ABL 1240

THE KING AS JUDGE

To my lord the king (Assurbanipal), from your servant Nabû-balassu-iqbi:

May the gods Nabû and Marduk bless Your Majesty. May your god Nabû, who holds the stylus (to write on the Tablet of Life), allow your rule to last as long as heaven and netherworld.

How does it happen that I, who have made several appeals to Your Majesty, have never been questioned by anybody? It is as if the name of Babylonia were not in good standing with Your Majesty, or as if I had committed a crime against Your Majesty. But I have not committed a crime against Your Majesty; I merely went, before the hostilities, and conveyed an order of the king to Arrabi; although I said: "I am on business for the palace," he was so unscrupulous as to take my property away. He even arrested me and put me in fetters, and that in front of all the people. I then went and seized the feet of Your Majesty, humiliating myself unto death on that day, thinking of the saying, "Only those who are dead are in peace."

Ever since last year, nobody has given me anything to eat. Starvation and want have befallen me. I go to drink water at a

well, wash my feet (there), and come again to court to do my service for the king.

Some time ago I wrote a wooden tablet and sent it to the king; it ran as follows: "There are people here, my enemies, who are putting obstacles in my way—without the king knowing about it—and who say terrible things about me to the king so that the king should destroy me." Your Majesty should know that the same two men who took the gold jewelry from around my neck still go on planning to destroy me and to ruin me, and what terrible words about me have they made reach the ears of Your Majesty!

Then there is a second matter which is against the interest of Your Majesty, and Šarru-lu-dāru has done it. There is a royal edict as follows: "Nobody is allowed to dispose of booty in Babylonia without my permission!" But he, whose daughter (is married) to some Babylonian, a descendant of a shepherd, has committed a crime against Your Majesty more heinous than any committed in all the countries; he gave an order to turn over to him (the Babylonian) a field.

The king has put a special minister and a chief justice in charge of the country, telling them: "Make just decisions for my country." Time and again, before he had appointed said Šarru-lu-dāru as mayor, the chief justice handed down decisions in my favor and had a slave girl belonging to my father's estate seized as stolen property and turned over to me. When Šarru-lu-dāru came (into office), he reversed the judgment that was in my favor, and now my slave girl works without benefit to me and I am dying for want of water. I argued with him, but he is spreading many many rumors(?) about me in matters which I have never seen nor heard of nor known of, so that now when the servants of Your Majesty come together, those who used to talk with me (before) turn away.

By Marduk whose wrath is like that of the Flood Dragon, whose favorable look is like that of a merciful father, I swear that you (the king) are the overlord of all kings! Let them give me back my property and the property of my father's estate just as the chief justice has decided, and then I shall worship the king.

To my lord the king (Assurbanipal[?]), from your servant Aššur-ḥamatiya:

Good health to Your Majesty! May the gods Aššur, Ištar, Bēl, and Nabû bless Your Majesty.

A certain Nabû-ēpuš, (a priest of) the god Ea, has committed a theft in the temple Ekur; he has peeled off the golden rim(?) from the supplementary sacrificial table which stands in front of Ištar, and carried it off. The temple guard Nabû-nādin-apli caught him with (the gold) in his hands; [when he brought him] before me [the man] of Ea [denied everything. The guard,] however, asserted: "He has stolen it!" Again both men contradicted(?) each other. The king should question him (the carrier of the letter) with regard to both persons. Since the king has not, so far, ordered us to make an investigation, more thefts will be committed; both men are without any work to do, without anybody (to watch them), they will cover up (for each other). They will do great damage(?) in the temple Ekur. Now they are conspiring, saying to each other, "Let us do it this way!" When I talk to them they do not want to listen.

What I have heard, I have reported to Your Majesty, Your Majesty should act as he sees fit.

PS: Nabû-ēpuš, the one who committed the theft, is a temple singer; nobody but him has access (to the dais).

129.

ABL 1389

To my lord the king (Esarhaddon), from your servant Ibašši-ilu:

Good health to Your Majesty! May the gods Marduk and Šarpānītu bless Your Majesty. All is well with your temples.

I have made the images as Your Majesty has told me. I have also made the tiara of the god Anu as Your Majesty has told me. The sun standards about which I spoke to the king and the *ašannu*-objects have been made. As to what I told the king, "I have at my disposal twelve pounds of gold which came to the god Bēl as a gift," I have used all of it for rosettes and *tenšû*-ornaments for the goddess Šarpānītu. I shall now use the seal cylinders which Your Majesty has given me; they are suitable as

gems for the tiara of the god Anu, and your gems are also suitable for sun standards. But they are deposited in the treasury of the temple of Aššur, and nobody can open it without the permission of the chief administrator and of Nabû-ēṭir-napšāte. This is why I am writing this to Your Majesty; may the king send somebody of his own choice to open (the treasury) so that I can give the finished work to Your Majesty.

I am one who always blesses Your Majesty; I place my trust in Your Majesty. I have prayed to Marduk and Šarpānītu for the well-being, the happiness, the health, and the long life of Your Majesty. (I am sure that) it is against the will of Your Majesty that that no-good Marduk-zēra-ibni says horrible things about me just because he relies upon Arad-Nabû and Nādinu. But I put my trust in Your Majesty; may the eyes of the king be upon me.

PS: Marduk-zēra-ibni has opened the boxes sealed by Šum-iddin and has removed precious stones from them. The king should know this.

130.

ABL 498

To my lord the crown prince (Esarhaddon[?]), from your servant Šarru-na'id, the son of Bēl-rimanni, the chief administrator of the Bīt-Kidmuri temple:

May the god Aššur and the goddess Ištar bless my lord the crown prince.

The Chief Wine Steward has arrested me without authority given to him by the king or the crown prince; he has kept me imprisoned and robbed my father's house. He carried away illegally whatever my father had acquired under the protection of the king. He took one talent of silver in ingots as well as twenty pounds of silver in household utensils, gifts given to my father by the king and the king's mother. I used to receive food rations due to my father, but now I have been expelled from the . . . house. Would that the crown prince take care of the matter! Let me not die without the king's or the crown prince's knowledge!

131.

ABL 152

II

Neo-Babylonian Letters

THE ADMINISTRATION OF
THE TEMPLE
CULT AND KING
PRIVATE LETTERS

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE TEMPLE

A letter from Nabû-aḥḫē-šullim: To my brother Ibni-Ištar:

May the goddesses Ištar and Nanā ordain well-being and good health for my brother.

Be not negligent with regard to your duties. Thanks to the protection of the gods, I am well.

On the 22d of the month Šabaṭu I was released from duty and given orders to travel. Now, on the 6th of the month Addaru the images of the gods will leave on their processional journey, and I will leave, to travel with the gods, on the 5th of Addaru. I pray now to the gods on your behalf that you do not plan to come here; (instead) perform all the duties which you have to do there; also irrigate the fields of all the farmers, be not negligent with the draft bulls, and take one shekel of silver which has only one-eighth

alloy for each of the spare bulls which you have given to the farmers. Collect the silver for me so that I can give it to the official of the temple Esagila since I am held responsible for it here. (I repeat,) take one shekel of silver for each bull; if not [*break*] Have two bulls, [. . .] sheep ready for the presentation due in the month of Nisannu, and let them eat fresh fodder till then. Be not negligent with the sheep and goats of Mušēzib-Bēl; his lambs should likewise eat fresh fodder.

Nobody should touch the dates which are at the disposal of the oil-presser Šamaš-eriba without my permission.

As to the things which you have heard about [Ibni]-Ištar, the son of [. . .]-šum-ibni, there is nothing to them.

Do not be negligent with regard to your work and the work of the farmers. Don't you know that these are people whom one has to drive?

132.

YOS 3 9

A letter from Zēra-ukīn and Nabû-karābī-šime (or -išme): To our lords, the administrator, and Nabû-aḥa-iddin:

We pray every day to the gods Bēl and Nabû for the well-being of our lords.

Concerning the four hundred (measures of) barley, of which the lords have sent us word in connection with Nergal-aḥḥē-eriba, (I report that) he has given only three hundred, saying: "I owe no more barley and I will not give you any more barley than this." The lords should know this.

We have heard the instructions of our lords in which our lords sent us word concerning the man in charge of measuring barley, saying as follows: "He cheats when he measures." By Bēl and Nabû we swear that he has done nothing wrong in this respect. He has measured only once and not more (because) we said, "Do not measure any more, we are going to measure the barley ourselves." They have wrongly informed our lords. Let us hear quickly the instructions of our lords.

133.

YOS 3 13



MUSICIANS AT THE COURT OF KING ASSURBANIPAL. Alabaster relief,
Kuyunjik, ca. 640 B.C.
(*Courtesy of the Louvre, Paris; photo, Tel-Vigneau.*)

A letter from Nabû-aḥa-iddina: To my brother, the administrator:

May the gods Bēl and Nabû ordain well-being and good health for my brother.

There are no hired men here; they all left before the month Du²uzu. Also, the temple servants whom you keep sending to me have no provisions with them. They work for five days and then run away, while men hired by the month earn five shekels of silver per man and month. I know well that there is neither barley nor dates in the temple Eanna, but pay with silver in the inner city for barley and dates, and draw and distribute 36 quarts per man for 15 days. Also send the work teams here and have them do their work.

You are impatient, but I am likewise impatient, especially since you keep on saying: "I am coming myself [tomorrow] and will do the work." Once you have come you can do the work on your own responsibility. If you want to, send me word and I will leave. Then come here and do the work yourself!

134.

YOS 3 69

A letter of Eriba-Marduk: To my lord the (royal) commissary (of the temple Ebabbar):

May the gods Bēl, Nabû, Šamaš, and Aya ordain for my lord perfect happiness, good health, and a long life. Everything is well with the city, the temple, and house of my lord.

With respect to the silver needed for the harvesters concerning which my lord wrote me, I swear by Šamaš and Marduk that from the time my lord saw the chief administrator of Sippar until this moment, there were many of them and they made no difficulties—it did not really matter.

As to going to Babylon, concerning which my lord wrote me, it does not matter to me (whether I go or not). Please, my lord should ask Kinâ (about it).

As to the oxen, concerning which my lord wrote me, I have already dispatched to you a beautiful heifer—even before I set eyes on your messenger—and have announced it in a letter to my lord.

May the gods Šamaš and Marduk turn whatever you take up into a success. Let me hear a report about your good health.

135.

CT 22 No. 36

A letter from the imprisoned citizens of Uruk: To our lord, the administrator:

We pray daily to the Lady of Uruk and to the goddess Nanā for the good health of our lord, the administrator.

After we had assumed warranty for each other (to remain at the disposal of the authorities), Innin-zēra-iqīša, the son of Nergal-uballiṣ, and Nabû-šumi-ušur, the son of the chief administrator of Ninurta, Nabû-nādin-apli, ran away from us. So now people do not trust us any more. They say: "They (the persons mentioned) have fled to a foreign country." The lord must not relent day or night until he has brought these men from wherever they are and has sent them here in fetters. Our very lives are in the hands of our lord! The town crier should call a summons for them in the city, and the lord should send men into the surrounding region for them. My lord must not consider the lives of these two persons more precious than those of all of us. If nothing else can be done, the lord should at least send their brothers and even their sons here in fetters.

136.

BIN 1 49

A letter from Dumuq: To my lord, the administrator:

May the gods Bēl and Nabû ordain well-being and good health for my lord. I pray daily to Bēl and Nabû for the good health of my lord.

When the letter my lord gave me reached the (local) administrator, a good many of the priests became upset, saying: "Because you have detained the cattle they died for lack of fodder." When they said as follows with regard to the cattle: "Have the cattle which are his responsibility not (in reality) been hidden?" I told them: "All these cattle are indeed dead."

The cattle of Itti-Šamaš-balāṭu are our responsibility; he led them away in the month Tašrītu, but he did not give other cattle for those when he left for the open country.

Now, I shall deliver the cattle for which I am responsible, and my lord will soon have a letter from me.

137.

TCL 9 120

CULT AND KING

A letter from Šamaš-ʾidri and Itti-enši-Nabû: To our fathers, the administrator and Nabû-aḥa-iddin:

May the gods Šamaš and Bunene ordain well-being and good health for our fathers.

Itti-enši-Nabû tells me constantly: “The mantle of the (image of the) Lady of Larsa is threadbare, and we are short two head-dresses for our cult, one of purple-red cloth and one of purple-blue cloth.” Put yourself in favor with Šamaš! (It would be nice if our) lords would send us a mantle and two headdresses, one of purple-red cloth and one of purple-blue.

138.

BIN I 10

A letter from Madānu-[. . .] and Lābāši-Marduk: To our lords, the administrator and [. . .]:

May the gods Bēl and Nabû, the Lady of Uruk, and the goddess Nanā ordain well-being and good health for our lords.

Fire broke out on the second day of the month Duʾuzu, during the night, in the temple of Nergal. The secretary and Nabû-nāšir went there to see about it, and, thanks to the protection granted by the gods, everything in the temple is in good condition. We have transferred the images to the temple of Lugal-Marad. All the personnel of the temple of Nergal in Udannu have run away. Guzānu, the son of Nabû-mukīn-apli, who was in charge as guard, has likewise run away. There is nobody there to serve the sacrificial meal to the two Nergal images, and nobody to stand guard

in the temple Eanna and in the temple of Nergal. Our lords should send a message to Nanā-ēriš to dispatch here all of the temple personnel, especially Aḥ-iddina and Šum-iddina, [the sons] of Arad-Nanâ. May the lords [act] quickly; there is nobody in charge of the temple guard. Let us hear promptly an order issued by our lords.

139.

YOS 3 91

A letter from Innin-šar-ušur: To my brother Nabû-aḥḥē-šullim:

May the Lady of Uruk and the goddess Nanā ordain well-being for my brother.

Why in the world did you lift your hand against the king and also, (why) have I not seen an answer to the letter I wrote to you; (why) have you not come with the entire levy of the land of Babylonia and taken up your work on the embankment of the Great Canal?

I am now sending you the official order for the separation of the young animals from the cattle and sheep in the month Addaru. Separate them according to the written order. Do not be careless. All the cattle that can already eat fodder, and also the sheep, should enter Uruk on the twenty-fifth day. Deliver on the evening of the first day the lambs for (the service of) the second day. Please, have ready in the early morning of the second day the two-year-old bulls about which I wrote to you. On the evening of the second day, deliver at the New Year's Chapel 17 lambs for the (service of the) third day. Deliver on the third day, at eight o'clock in the morning, 5 suckling bull calves and 5 lambs. Deliver on the fifth day a heifer for the *harû*-ceremony. Bring in and hand over to the priests 30 he-goats on the second day. Now, read carefully the order concerning the separation which I have written out for you; I have not neglected(?) a single day. Do not create confusion in any respect; (you are responsible for) regular delivery. (The letter) I have written you will be evidence against you concerning the delivery dates; my order [*break*]

140.

YOS 3 25

A letter from Isinaya of the town of Šarrabānu: To my lord, the administrator:

I pray daily to the gods Bēl and Nabû for the good health and the good state of mind and body, and for a long life for my lord.

My lord should not be annoyed because the sheep and goats are late in coming. The king has taken away my sons and I have been sick now for two years. I am in a dangerous condition and cannot possibly rise from my bed. So I am sending my lord by Nabû-malik only [...] sheep. My lord may ask the people whether [*end broken*]

141.

BIN 1 83

A letter from Nabû-kibsu-šarri-ušur: To my brother Kurbanni-Marduk:

May the gods Nabû and Marduk bless my brother.

Since the month of Addaru, Anu-zēr-līšir has become a notary by royal decree.

I am writing to you on account of the one hundred bowmen to be taken from the shepherds; why did you not levy these bowmen and come (here)? Now, the very day you read this message—it is an order of the king!—levy one hundred bowmen from among the shepherds as it was formerly done, and come here along with them. This letter is entrusted to you to serve (if needed) as evidence (against you).

142.

YOS 3 44

A letter of Guzānu (chief priest of Sippar): To my brother Širku:

May the gods Bēl and Nabû ordain for you health and life.

Every day you have been telling me lies in Babylon. You used to say: “Libluṭu, the chariot driver, and your shield-bearer (lit.: third-man-on-the-chariot) are assigned to you in the rolls.” But when the commander of the fortress came here, he withheld from my contingent not only Libluṭu but all the chariot drivers, asserting: “They belong to me!” and he also took away the

shield-bearers who were with me. You, who were supposed to assert my claim before him, have in reality handed over to him what belongs to me!

And now Libluṭu the chariot driver is in charge of the (transport) of boats for the town Da[. . .]nu. You must not put under his command (my) chariot drivers, shield-bearers, or citizen-soldiers. He must not claim from the commander of the fortress my soldiers illegally. And you, say to Atkal-ana-mār-Esaggil as follows: "Give him (Libluṭu other) soldiers in place of (Guzānu's) soldiers!" The curse of King Darius be on you: release the *gardu*-soldiers as I have already ordered you.

Please consider: at your disposal are the gate guards and all the chariot drivers, also the contingent of Dakūru-tribesmen who are stationed in Babylon, do not claim soldiers which belong to my "chariot fief!"

143.

CT 22 No. 74

An order from the king to Ninurta-šarra-ušur:

I am well, may your heart be happy.

Be not negligent with regard to the service in the temple Eanna, as to the timing(?), the regular offerings, the cultic utensils, and the other preparations for the ceremony of the laying of the foundation; have everything ready before I come and pray there to my gods, Bēl, Nabû, and the Lady of Uruk, I want to perform (the ceremony) as perfectly as possible.

144.

YOS 3 5

A letter from Nabû-aḥḥē-iddina : To my brother Nabû-ušallim :

May the gods Bēl and Nabû, the Lady of Uruk, and the goddess Nanā ordain well-being and good health for my brother.

See, I am sending you by Ibni- . . . one container with rendered butter, and at the same time I have sent you a beautiful ram. But you too must do something to help me; go into the office of the scribe of the palace and investigate those

complaints that are being made there (against me), and report to me. Do not be negligent.

What is this that I keep hearing every day about the gold?

145.

TCL 9 93

PRIVATE LETTERS

A letter from the lady Saggila and Rīmūt: To their brother Zakir:
Well-being to my brother.

Will you treat the children kindly, once I have died, and even search for them among prisoners in order to redeem them by the payment of silver? For as long as I have lived(?), you have not acted kindly toward me. Lift your head and tell the truth by looking toward the Sun god: Are you not like a son of mine, and have I not raised you—or should I come there and tell you this to your face? Why then when Rīmūt fell sick there, did you not send him off and (why) did he not leave?

Now, I have sent Ṣalmu and Nabû-iqīša to my brother because you wrote to me: “I will give you barley and dates worth one mina of silver.” This is not enough. My brother should increase it from the value of one to that of one-and-a-half minas, either from your own account or from that of Bēl-eriba or from that of the lady Bau-asītī. And that because my brother wrote to me: “I have saved the family, I will give you [. . .].”

Send Ṣalmu and Nabû-iqīša, whom I have dispatched to you, on their way at once, so that they can come back here. Don’t you know that I have nothing on hand, otherwise would I myself not have come to you without delay? May Ṣalmu, who is on his way to you, make the contents of this letter touch your heart; may god make your heart merciful.

146.

TCL 9 141

A letter of Araḍ-Bēl: To my sister Epirtu.

May the gods Bēl and Nabû ordain well-being and health for my sister.

That’s abominable! Why do I never hear any news from all of you? My heart rejoiced about your being pregnant.

The things I heard are bad indeed. Give me that mina of silver, but since there is a royal edict: "Silver with the marking 'standard' must not be given in payment" get refined silver! Send me a coat . . . through somebody traveling this way.

Arad-Bēl (the sender) sends greetings to the women Bazītu, (and) Ḥanina, the man Ana[. . .], and the woman Ilaya-bēl-bīti. Bazītu must not become angry.

To my brother Šamaš-aḥa-iddina: May the gods Nabû and Marduk bless my brother.

Why have I not heard any news from you? Be not careless with the *kasia*-condiment, do not release even one quart of *kasia* to anybody. One-hundred ninety-seven *kor* measures of dates are charged to you; be not careless with regard to the dates; do not release them to anybody either. Nobody should even look at a fresh palm rib in your garden nor your [. . .]

The royal commissary here [is presenting (?)] my lawsuits to the chief administrator of Sippar [. . .] I declared here with respect to [*break*]

147.

CT 22 No. 40

A letter of Nabû-zēra-ibni: To his brothers Aqara, Balāḫu, Nabû-bēl-šumāti, and Šamaš-mudammīq.

Now I am praying to Nabû and the goddess Nanā to keep my brothers in good health.

Bēl-ēpuš who is now there with you is like a brother to me. My brothers should silence as best they can anybody who says evil things about him. We are in every respect like brothers. I am writing this to you my brothers in great anxiety. This is a favor which my brothers must do (for me). Let me have an answer to this letter from my brothers.

148.

CT 22 No. 155

A letter of Rīmūt-Nabû: To his brothers Bēl-ibni and Šumaiddina:

May the gods Nabû and Marduk bless my brothers.

I did not see your sister for several years but the very day I saw her again she took up residence with me. For the last two years Nabû-kišir has been claiming her: "She is a slave girl who belongs to me." But she, Hibtā, has never given me information to this effect. You are too much afraid of the governor and you cannot possibly complain to the king. Woe to him who lodges such a complaint! Do you want me to lose her? There is no wrong-doing involved; you need not be angry on account of this!

But Nabû-kišir will not succeed, (although) he has sworn: "I will not give her free!" And why do you put(?) me in the wrong, for how much of what is also your (fault) do you intend to blame me? This is at the same time bound to be the destruction of my family. Do not persist(?)!

I shall send a fine slave girl (as replacement) to the woman Kabitti.

149.

CT 22 No. 202

A letter of Kudurru to his brother Bēl-rīmāni:

A cloud appeared just when I was observing (the moon). Did the eclipse take place? Please, send me an exact report. Find out what (prayers) are to be said (on account of the eclipse). Write down for me your well-considered opinion.

Send me an exact report concerning the finances(?) of Zērūtu.

150.

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Glossary of Persons, Places, and Technical Terms

Proper names accompanied by such indications as “the god (or goddess) . . .,” “the town of . . .,” “the weapon . . .,” and so forth are listed here only if their identification furthers the understanding of the passages in which they occur.

AKKAD Founded by Sargon I as capital of his empire, Akkad (in northern Babylonia) has yet to be discovered. Akkad was used later as a poetic designation of Babylonia. “Akkadian” denoted the Semitic as distinguished from the Sumerian language of Mesopotamia. Now it often refers to an important phase in the artistic development of Mesopotamia.

AMARNA CORRESPONDENCE In the ruins of the capital of Amenophis IV (1367–1350 B.C.), today’s El Amarna, were found letters in cuneiform which come from Palestine, Cyprus, Syria, Anatolia, and Mesopotamia, written by kings and princes and by officials in contact with Egypt.

AMENOPHIS IV Pharaoh, 1367–1350 B.C.

AMMIŠADUQA King of Babylon, 1646–1626 B.C.; penultimate ruler of the dynasty of Hammurapi.

AMURRU Designation of a kingdom in northern Syria in the middle of the second millennium B.C.; literally, “Westland.”

ASSURBANIPAL King of Assyria and Babylonia, 668–627 B.C.; last great ruler of the empire, victorious in a civil war against his brother Šamaš-šum-ukin, who was king of Babylon.

BURNABURIAŠ II King of Babylonia, 1375–1347 B.C.; important ruler of the Kassite Dynasty.

BYBLOS Seaport on the Mediterranean Sea.

CARCHEMISH City on the middle Euphrates and capital of a kingdom in the second millennium B.C., situated on an important trade route.

EANNA Temple of the goddess Ištar in Uruk.

ELAM Home of an enduring and remarkable civilization in the valleys and plains to the northeast of Babylonia; its capital was Susa. Elam often supported Babylonia in its conflicts with Assyria.

EPONYM The Assyrians dated according to the names of certain high officials; these names (eponyms) were used to identify the years of the king's reign in a more or less traditional sequence, with the king giving his own name to his first full year in office.

ESAGILA Temple of Marduk in Babylon. Its temple tower is the "Tower of Babel" of biblical fame.

ESARHADDON King of Assyria, 680–669 B.C.; son of Sennacherib and father of Assurbanipal.

EŠNUNNA Capital of a kingdom between the Tigris and the mountains that flourished in the first half of the second millennium B.C.

FLOOD DRAGON Mythical conceptualization of the destructive power of storms, also used to refer to the Flood.

gagûm-CLOSE During the Old Babylonian period, designation of a compound connected with the temple in which certain classes of unmarried women lived in small houses. See also *naditu*-women.

gardu-SOLDIER A late, perhaps foreign, designation of a class of soldiers or of a profession.

guenna-OFFICIAL Old Sumerian title of the highest civic official, governor of Nippur.

GUTI A barbaric mountain tribe whose invasion brought about the downfall of the Dynasty of Akkad, founded by Sargon.

HAMMURAPI King of Babylon, 1792–1750 B.C. Under his rule, the first dynasty to use Babylon as capital reached its acme of political and military power. The famous Codex Hammurapi attests to the king's interest in economic and social problems.

HANA A small kingdom on the Euphrates between Sippar and Mari whose warlike inhabitants served the kings of Mari as auxiliaries.

HAPIRU In the context of the letters of the Amarna correspondence, this term denotes bands of unsettled foreign groups from outside the town striving to occupy or dominate it.

harû-OFFERING A religious ceremony attested mostly in first-millennium texts, involving animal sacrifices, the use of a large vat, libation of beer, and, often, the participation of the king.

HATTI LAND The kingdom of the Hittites in Asia Minor. Its capital, Hattuša (today Boghazkeui), was an important political power in the ancient Near East during the first two-thirds of the second millennium B.C.

ḪATTUŠILI III Hittite king (early thirteenth century B.C.).

igišû-TAX An important tax levied in silver on individuals practicing lucrative professions, mainly during the period of the Hammurapi Dynasty.

KADAŠMAN-ENLIL II King of Babylon, 1280–1265 B.C.

kor-MEASURE See Measures and Weights.

KURIGALZU II King of Babylon, 1345–1324 B.C.

laḫmu Designation of a mythical amphibious monster sometimes represented in Mesopotamian art.

MARI Important city on the middle Euphrates; capital of a kingdom attested from the end of the third millennium B.C. until its destruction by Hammurapi.

MEASURES AND WEIGHTS The basic dimensions of the Mesopotamian measures of capacity, length, weight, and time have been taken over by the later civilizations. Thus, the mina corresponds to the pound, the *iqu* to the acre, the *qû* to the quart. The mina subdivided into 60 shekels, while 300 *qû*-measures make up (in the Old Babylonian period) one *gur*, in Hebrew *kor*.

MIDDLE ASSYRIAN PERIOD The Assyrian capital Assur, and a few sites to the west, have given us most of the philological evidence for this period, which is to a large extent contemporaneous with the Middle Babylonian.

MIDDLE BABYLONIAN PERIOD The texts written in and around Babylonia (especially in Nippur and in Ur), between the middle of the fourteenth century B.C. and the end of the millennium are conventionally subsumed under this period. Most of them, and the more diversified ones, come from Nippur.

MINA See Measures and Weights.

mušarkisu-OFFICIAL Designation of certain executive officials of the Neo-Assyrian period attached to provincial governors.

naditu-WOMEN Designation of one of the groups of women around the cults of certain gods during the Old Babylonian period. The women of this class were attached to the temple of Šamaš in Sippar; they did not marry, but lived on their own income in compounds near the temple of this god.

namburbi-RITUAL An apotropaic ritual consisting of prayers and magic acts designed to avert the evil consequences of all kinds of ominous signs and happenings.

NEO-ASSYRIAN PERIOD The large archives and libraries of Nineveh give us nearly all the documents and literary texts which illuminate the period of the last Assyrian kings of the dynasty of Sargon II of Assyria, 721–612 B.C. They are written in a Babylonian dialect accepted in Assyria for literary use. The local Assyrian dialect is in evidence in a much smaller number of letters, deeds, and literary texts coming not only from Nineveh but also from Assur, Calah, Harran, etc.

NEO-BABYLONIAN PERIOD What we know of the half-millennium before the conquest of Babylon by Alexander the Great (331 B.C.) is mainly based on royal inscriptions, private legal documents and deeds, and the texts of the literary tradition. The legal texts are the most numerous and originate mainly in Uruk, Sippar, and Nippur; they represent the Neo-Babylonian dialect for which there is also evidence from the archives of Nineveh, while the royal inscriptions are written in an artificial and archaizing language.

OLD AKKADIAN PERIOD The documents of this period were written at the end of the third millennium B.C. in an early dialect of Akkadian during the rule of the kings of Akkad (the Sargonic Period) and, quite rarely, of the kings of Ur (the Third Dynasty of Ur); they comprise royal inscriptions, economic and legal texts, letters, and a few conjurations, and come from Babylonia proper, Elam, the region around Ešnunna, and Assyria, including upper Syria.

OLD ASSYRIAN PERIOD A large body of material consisting almost exclusively of commercial letters, accounts, and records, coming from Kültepe in central Anatolia and dating from the beginning of the second millennium B.C., is our main source of information on this period. Additional evidence is available from a few other sites in Anatolia and from Assyria.

OLD BABYLONIAN PERIOD The texts written in Akkadian, originating in Babylonia from the time of the dynasties of Isin and Larsa (2025–1763 B.C.) until the end of the Dynasty of Babylon (1894–1595 B.C.), represent, in spite of certain regional and period differences, the corpus of the Old Babylonian text material available to us. They cover in varying degrees nearly all text types known to Assyriologists.

rēdû-SOLDIER Designation of the conscripted soldier or policeman in the Old Babylonian period.

RĪM-SIN King of Larsa, 1822–1763 B.C.

SAMSUILUNA King of Babylon, 1749–1712 B.C., son of Hammurapi.

SANHARA A Western name for Babylonia.

SEA LAND Translation of the Akkadian designation (*māt tāmti*) of the marshy region at the lower courses of the Tigris and the Euphrates down to the Persian Gulf, where, in the second half of the second millennium B.C., independent dynasties established themselves several times.

SHEKEL See Measures and Weights.

ŠAMŠI-ADAD I King of Assyria, 1813–1781 B.C.; during his reign, his son, Yasmah-Addu, was governor of Mari, which at that time belonged to Assyria.

ŠAR-KALI-ŠARRĪ King of Akkad, 2217–2193 B.C.; last important ruler of the Dynasty of Akkad.

TERQA Provincial city on the Euphrates upstream from Mari.

UGARIT A city-state near the Mediterranean coast in upper Syria where a Semitic language was spoken and, in the second half of the second millennium, written on clay tablets in an alphabetic system of cuneiform signs. Texts in many languages were found there; this illustrates the importance of the city as a point of contact between the civilizations of the ancient Near East.

ugbaltu-PRIESTESS An early Mesopotamian religious institution of still undetermined function; a priestess of high social status (often of royal extraction) living in a special compound performing a role connected with the relationship of the community to its deity.

URARTIANS Designation of the natives of Urartu, a politically important and quite original civilization attested in the mountains of Armenia. During the first third of the first millennium B.C., Urartu was a dangerous enemy of Assyrian imperial aspirations.