

Babylonian and Assyrian Historical Texts

TRANSLATOR: A. LEO OPPENHEIM

Texts from the Beginnings to the First Dynasty of Babylon

For this section, two documents have been selected to illustrate the content and the stylistic features of early Mesopotamian historiography, while two groups of texts have been translated to represent the historical source material, which is rather rare in this period.

The texts of the first part are: (1) an excerpt of the Sumerian King List, and (2) the "Sargon Chronicle." The second part contains (1) two inscriptions from statues of Sargon of Agade, (2) an excerpt from an inscription of Naram-Sin, and (3) excerpts from three inscriptions of the well-known Gudea of Lagash.

HISTORIOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTS

I. THE SUMERIAN KING LIST

In his book *The Sumerian King List* (AS, No. 11), Thorkild Jacobsen offers not only a critical edition of the entire text material¹ and an excellent translation,² but also critical examination of all textual, stylistic, and historical problems involved. On the basis of a systematic study of the numerous variant readings, Jacobsen has shown that all extant "manuscripts" go back to one single original written at the time of Utu-hegal, king of Uruk, the liberator of Sumer from the yoke of the Gutti domination. To demonstrate that his country had always been united under one king—though these kings were ruling successively in different capitals—the learned and patriotic author compiled this interesting document from two types of literary sources: from lists containing the names of the kings, the places and the lengths of their rules (established originally for practical chronological purposes), and from epical texts, legendary stories, local anecdotic traditions, etc., dealing with the biography and the marvelous deeds of some of these primeval kings. This literary material is referred to in very succinct sentences scattered throughout the monotonous enumeration of royal names, figures, and place names. To this opus has later been added a section dealing with the events before the Flood. This "preamble" has an entirely different literary background³ and does not appear in all manuscripts.

The entire text material has been utilized by Thorkild Jacobsen (*The Sumerian King List*) to establish a "standard version" of this document on the basis of the most extensive "manuscript" published by S. Langdon from the Weld-Blundell Collection (= *Oxford Edition of Cuneiform Texts*, Vol. 11 [Oxford, 1923]), No. 1923, 444, pp. 13 ff. and Pls. 1-14.

The following translation contains lines 1-iv 5 with the "ante-diluvian" preamble (cf. above) and the historical survey from the beginnings to the end of the First Dynasty of Ur. This section has been selected because it contains the names of the kings who ruled for an excessive length of time as well as nearly all the passages of mythological and literary interest.

¹ An additional text has been published since by V. Scheil, *Liste susienne des dynasties de Sumer-Accad*, in *Mémoires, inst. franç. d'archéol. orientale . . . du Caire*, LXII (1934), (= *Mélanges Maspero*, 1), 393-400.

² My translation differs only slightly and in minor points from that of T. Jacobsen.

³ cf., for a more detailed discussion, Jacobsen, *op.cit.*, pp. 63 f.

When kingship was lowered from heaven, kingship was (first) in Eridu. (In) Eridu, A-lulim⁴ (became) king and ruled 28,800 years. Alalgar ruled 36,000 years. Two kings (thus) ruled it for 64,800 years.

I drop (the topic) Eridu (because) its kingship was brought to Bad-tibira. (In) Bad-tibira, En-men-lu-Anna ruled 43,200 years; En-men-gal-Anna ruled 28,800 years; the god Dumu-zi, a shepherd, ruled 36,000 years. Three kings (thus) ruled it for 108,000 years.

I drop (the topic) Bad-tibira (because) its kingship was brought to Larak. (In) Larak, En-sipa-zi-Anna ruled 28,800 years. One king (thus) ruled it for 28,800 years.

I drop (the topic) Larak (because) its kingship was brought to Sippar. (In) Sippar, En-men-dur-Anna became king and ruled 21,000 years. One king (thus) ruled it for 21,000 years.

I drop (the topic) Sippar (because) its kingship was brought to Shuruppak. (In) Shuruppak, Ubar-Tutu became king and ruled 18,600 years. One king (thus) ruled it for 18,600 years.

These are five cities, eight kings ruled them for 241,000 years. (Then) the Flood swept over (the earth).

After the Flood had swept over (the earth) (and) when kingship was lowered (again) from heaven, kingship was (first) in Kish. In Kish, Ga[. . .]ur became king and ruled 1,200 years—(original) destroyed! legible (only) to heavenly Nidaba (the goddess of writing)—ruled 960 years. [Pala-kinatim ruled 900 years; Nangish-lishma ruled . . . years];⁵ Bah[i]na ruled . . . years; BU.AN. [. . .]. [um] ruled [8]40 ye[ars]; Kalibum ruled 960 years; Qalumum ruled 840 years; Zuqaqip ruled 900 years; Atab ruled 600 years; [Mashda, son]⁶ of Atab ruled 840 years; Arwi'um, son of Mashda, ruled 720 years; Etana, a shepherd, he who ascended to heaven (and) who consolidated all countries, became king and ruled 1,560 (var.: 1,500) years; Balih, son of Etana, ruled 400 (var.: 410) years; En-me-nunna ruled 660 years; Melam-Kishi, son of En-me-nunna ruled 900 years; Bar-sal-nunna, son of En-me-nunna, ruled 1,200 years; Samug, son of Bar-sal-nunna, ruled 140 years; Tizkar, son of Samug, ruled 305 years; Ilku' ruled 900 years; Ilta-sadum ruled 1,200 years; En-men-barage-si, he who carried away as spoil the "weapon" of Elam, became king and ruled 900 years; Aka, son of En-men-barage-si, ruled 629 years. Twenty-three kings (thus) ruled it for 24,510 years, 3 months, and 3½ days.

⁴ For a late (Neo-Assyrian) reference to this first king of Mesopotamia, cf. my note in *BASOR*, 97 (1944), 26-27.

⁵ The passage in square brackets does not appear in the Weld-Blundell text.

⁶ Emendation of T. Jacobsen; cf. Jacobsen, *op.cit.*, p. 24.

Kish was defeated in battle (lit.: was smitten with weapons), its kingship was removed to Eanna (sacred precinct of Uruk).

In Eanna, Mes-kiag-gasher, the son of the (sun) god Utu, became high priest as well as king, and ruled 324 years. Mes-kiag-gasher went (daily) into the (Western) Sea and came forth (again) toward the (Sunrise) Mountains; En-me-kar, son of Mes-kiag-gasher, he who built Uruk, became king and ruled 420 years; the god Lugal-banda, a shepherd, ruled 1,200 years; the god Dumu-zi, a šu.PEŠ-fisherman⁷—his (native) city was Ku'a(ra),—ruled 100 years; the divine Gilgamesh, his father was a *lillá*,⁸ a high priest of Kullab, ruled 126 years; Ur-Nungal (var.: Ur-lugal), son of Gilgamesh, ruled 30 years; Utul-kalama, son of Ur-nun-gal (var.: Ur-lugal), ruled 15 years; Laba[h . . .]ir ruled 9 years; En-nun-dara-Anna ruled 8 years; MES(?).ĤÉ, a smith, ruled 36 years; Melam-Anna ruled 6 years; Lugal-ki-tun(?) ruled 36 years. Twelve kings (thus) ruled it for 2,310 years.

Uruk was defeated in battle, its kingship was removed to Ur.

In Ur, Mes-Anne-pada became king, ruled 80⁹ years; Mes-kiag-Nanna¹⁰ became king, ruled 36 years; [Elulu ruled 25 years; Balulu ruled 36 years. Four kings (thus) ruled it for 177 years. Ur was defeated in battle].

2. THE "SARGON CHRONICLE"

While in the Sumerian King List the references to legendary, pseudo-historical, and historical traditions occur only sporadically and are subordinated to the chronological framework elaborated by the author, here they have overgrown the basically annalistic structure in a type of chronicle to be represented by two tablets of the same series.¹ This literary work centers its attention around the most interesting of the historical figures and reports their outstanding achievements in peace and war with special regard to the unique and the memorable. Important events in neighboring countries as well as foreign invasions are recorded from time to time. For a literary evaluation of this document, cf. H. G. Güterbock, *ZA*, XLII (NF VIII), 1 ff.

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The tablet (British Museum 26,472), written in the Neo-Babylonian Period, has been published by L. W. King in his *Chronicles Concerning Early Babylonian Kings* (London, 1907), II, 113-119. Transliteration and translation: *op.cit.*, pp. 3-14. Latest complete translation: Ebeling in *AOT*, 335-336.

Sargon (*Šarru-ĕĕn*), king of Agade, rose (to power) in the era of Ishtar² and had neither rival nor opponent. He spread his terror-inspiring glamor over all the countries. He crossed the Sea in the East and he, himself, conquered the country of the West, in its full extent,

⁷ For this profession, cf. Jacobsen, *op.cit.*, p. 88, n.125.

⁸ For this difficult word, cf. Jacobsen, *op.cit.*, p. 90, n.131; also, my remarks in *Orientalia*, NS XVI (1947), 233, n.3.

⁹ For this figure, cf. Jacobsen, *op.cit.*, p. 93, n.145. From historical inscriptions of his own, we know that the name of the son of this king was A-*anne-pada*. For unknown reasons, he is not mentioned in the present list.

¹⁰ *Nanna* to be emended to *nunna*; cf. Jacobsen, *op.cit.*, p. 94, n.146.

¹ This tablet belongs to the same literary work as the text translated p. 303. cf. B. Landsberger-Th. Bauer, *ZA*, xxxvii, (NF III), 61 ff.

² For the latest discussion of the enigmatic expression "era of Ishtar," cf. J. Lewy, *HUCA*, XIX (1946), 420, 480.

in the 11th year (of his rule). He established there a central government (lit.: he made its mouth be one). He erected his stelae in the West. Their booty (i.e. the booty of the countries in the Eastern and Western Seas) he ferried over on rafts. He made his court officials live (around his residence, thus covering an area) of five double-miles, and held sway over the totality of the countries, without exception.

He marched against the country of Kazalla³ and turned Kazalla into ruin-hills and heaps (of rubble).^{3a} He (even) destroyed (there every possible) perching place for a bird.

Afterwards, in his old age, all the countries revolted against him and they besieged him in Agade. (But) Sargon made an armed sortie and defeated them, knocked them over, and crushed their vast army.

Later on, Subartu⁴ rose with its multitudes, but it bowed to his military might. Sargon made sedentary this nomadic society.⁵ Their possessions he brought into Agade. He took away earth from the (*foundation*)-pits⁶ of Babylon and he built upon it a (nother) Babylon beside the town of Agade. On account of the sacrilege he (thus) committed, the great lord Marduk became enraged and destroyed his people by hunger. From the East to the West he alienated⁷ (them) from him and inflicted upon [him] (as punishment) that he could not rest (in his grave).⁸

Naram-Sin, son of Sargon, marched against the town of Apishal⁹ and made a breach (in its wall to conquer it). He personally caught Rish-Adad, king of Apishal, and the *sukkal* of Apishal. He (also) marched against the country Magan and personally caught Mannu-dannu, king of Magan.¹⁰

Šulgi,¹¹ son of Ur-Nammu, took very good care of the town of Eridu which is on the seashore (but) he had evil intentions and he removed the property of the

³ The British Museum text K 2130, a collection of hepatoscopic omina referring to historical events and personalities (first published in Rawlinson, Vol. IV, Pl. 34, No. 1), gives the name of the king of Kazalla, to wit: Kashubila.

^{3a} For this translation of the well-known nouns *tillu u ĕarmu* cf. E. F. Weidner in *Mélanges syriens*, II, 924, n.5.

⁴ My translation differs from the usual by emending the vertical wedge before *mat-Su-Bir*.⁴¹ The use of the verbs *tebá* and *ĕamásu* fits much better into the thus corrected phrase, and so does the word *giĕsu*, which normally describes an unorganized army and therefore seems more likely to refer to the army of Subartu than to that of Sargon. The lines 15-16 (*abiĕta-šú-nu im-ĕaš ĕa-mar-šú-nu iš-ĕun um-man-šú-nu rapástim⁴² ú-šam-qi-it*) have been omitted as an erroneous repetition of lines 12-13.

⁵ Conjectural translation, text in disorder.

⁶ This passage (and its parallel in the so-called "Weidner-Chronicle," cf. H. G. Güterbock, *ZA*, XLII [NF VIII], 47 ff., rev. 17) has been lately elucidated by Güterbock, in *AJO*, XIII (1940-41), 50, who connected it with *is(s)á* "pit." The passage seems therefore to suggest that the contents (clean earth and sand) of the well-known deep pits under the emplacements of the images were considered endowed with the very essence of the "holiness" which pervaded the image, its temple, and its sacred city.

⁷ The subject of all three verbs is necessarily Marduk.

⁸ For this punishment, cf. lately E. F. Weidner, *AJO*, XIII (1940-41), 236, n.26.

⁹ For this town, cf. I. J. Gelb, *AJSL*, LV (1938), 70 f.

¹⁰ For a recent statement concerning the often discussed problem of the identification of Mannu-dannu (var.: Manium) with Menes, the first king of the list of Manetho, cf. E. Drioton and J. Vandier, *L'Égypte* (Paris, 1946), pp. 162 ff.; and of Magan with Egypt, cf. A. Ungnad, *AJO*, XIV (1941-44), 199 f.

¹¹ For the still uncertain reading of this name of the second king of the Third Dynasty of Ur, formerly often read Dungi, cf. T. Jacobsen, in *BASOR*, 102 (1947), 16 ff., where the transliteration šaĕ-gi is proposed.