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VOLUME XXIX

G.B. Lanfranchi, R. Mattila and R. Rollinger (eds.)

WRITING NEO-ASSYRIAN HISTORY

SOURCES, PROBLEMS, AND APPROACHES

THE NEO-ASSYRIAN TEXT CORPUS PROJECT

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The Assyrian Royal Seal emblem drawn by Dominique Collon from original
Seventh Century B.C. impressions (BM 84672 and 84677) in the British Museum
Cover: Assyrian scribes recording spoils of war. Wall painting in the palace of Til-Barsip.
After A. Parrot, *Nineveh and Babylon* (Paris, 1961), fig. 348.
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Sources, Problems, and Approaches

Proceedings of an International Conference
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Edited by

G.B. Lanfranchi, R. Mattila and R. Rollinger

THE NEO-ASSYRIAN TEXT CORPUS PROJECT
2019

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ABBREVIATIONS

A = tablets in the collections of Istanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri.
ABL = R. F. Harper, *Assyrian and Babylonian Letters Belonging to the Kouyunjik Collection of the British Museum I–XIV*, Chicago, 1892–1914.
ADW = A.Y. Ahmad, J. N. Postgate, *Archives from the Domestic Wing of the North-West Palace at Kalhu/Nimrud* (*Edubba* 10), London 2007.
AHw = W. von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, Wiesbaden 1959–1981.
ALA = O. Pedersén, *Archives and Libraries in the City of Assur*, Uppsala, Part I 1985, Part II 1986.
BIWA = R. Borger, *Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals. Die Prismenklassen A, B, C=K, D, E, F, G, H, J und T sowie andere Inschriften. Mit einem Beitrag von Andreas Fuchs*, Wiesbaden, 1996.
BWL = W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*, Oxford, 1960.
CAD = *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, Chicago, Glückstadt 1956–2010.
CAH = J. B. Bury, S. A. Cook, F. E. Adcock (eds.), *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. III, Cambridge, 1925.
CAH^2 = I. E. S. Edwards, C. J. Gadd and N. G. L. Hammond (eds.), *The Cambridge Ancient History. Second Edition, Vol. III/2: The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires and Other States of the Near East, from the 8th to the 6th Centuries B.C.*, Cambridge, 1991.
CDA = J. Black, A. George, N. Postgate, *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*, Wiesbaden 2000 (2nd ed.).
CDLI = The Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative.
CHLI = J.D. Hawkins, *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions*, Volume. I: *Inscriptions of the Iron Ages* (*Studies in Indo-European Language and Culture* 8/1), Berlin - New York 2000.
CT = *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum*, London
CT 53 = S. Parpola, *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum, Part 53: Neo-Assyrian Letters from the Kuyunjik Collection*, London, 1979.
CT 54 = M. Dietrich, *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum, part 54. Neo-Babylonian Letters from the Kuyunjik Collection*, London, 1979.
GPA = J. N. Postgate, *The Governor's Palace Archive*, London 1973.
K = tablets in the collections of the British Museum.
KAJ = E. Ebeling, *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur juristischen Inhalts* (*Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichung der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 50), Leipzig 1927.
KAN 1 = L. Jakob-Rost, F. M. Fales, *Neuassyrische Rechtsurkunden*, I (*Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 94), Berlin 1996.
KAN 2 = L. Jakob-Rost, K. Radner, V. Donbaz, *Neuassyrische Rechtsurkunden*, II (*Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 98), Saarbrücken 2000.
KAN 3 = B. I. Faist, *Neuassyrische Rechtsurkunden*, III (*Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 110), Saarwellingen 2005.
KAN 4 = B. I. Faist,. *Neuassyrische Rechtsurkunden* IV (*Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 132), Wiesbaden 2010.
KAR = E. Ebeling, *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts*, Leipzig 1920–23 (Neudruck: Osnabrück 1970–72).
KAV = O. Schroeder, *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur verschiedenen Inhalts* (*Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 35), Leipzig 1920.
LAS = S. Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal* (*Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 5/I–II), Kevelaer, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1970–83.
LAS 2 = S. Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal, Part II: Commentary and Appendices* (*Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 5/2), Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1983.
LKA = E. Ebeling, *Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Assur*, Berlin, 1953.

MARV I = H. Freydank, *Mittelassyrische Rechtsurkunden und Verwaltungstexte*, I (*Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin* 19, N.F. 3), Berlin 1976.
MARV II = H. Freydank, *Mittelassyrische Rechtsurkunden und Verwaltungstexte*, II (*Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin* 21, N.F. 5), Berlin 1982.
MARV III = H. Freydank, *Mittelassyrische Rechtsurkunden und Verwaltungstexte*, III (*Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichung der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 92), Berlin 1994.
MARV IV = H. Freydank, C. Fischer, *Mittelassyrische Rechtsurkunden und Verwaltungstexte*, IV: *Tafeln aus Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta* (*Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichung der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 99), Saarbrücken 2001.
MARV V = H. Freydank, B. Feller, *Mittelassyrische Rechtsurkunden und Verwaltungstexte*, V (*Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichung der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 106), Saarbrücken 2004.
MARV VI = H. Freydank, B. Feller, *Mittelassyrische Rechtsurkunden und Verwaltungstexte*, VI (*Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichung der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 109), Saarwellingen 2005.
MARV VII = H. Freydank, B. Feller, *Mittelassyrische Rechtsurkunden und Verwaltungstexte*, VII (*Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichung der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 111), Saarwellingen 2006.
MARV VIII = H. Freydank, B. Feller, *Mittelassyrische Rechtsurkunden und Verwaltungstexte*, VIII (*Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichung der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 119), Wiesbaden 2007.
MARV IX = H. Freydank, B. Feller, *Mittelassyrische Rechtsurkunden und Verwaltungstexte*, IX (*Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichung der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 125), Wiesbaden 2010.
MSL 12 = M. Civil, *The Series* lú = ša *and Related Texts* (*Materialien zum sumerischen Lexikon* 12), Roma 1969.
NATAPA 1 = F. M. Fales, L. Jakob-Rost, "Neo-Assyrian Texts from Assur. Private Archives in the Vorderasiatisches Museum of Berlin, Part I", *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin* 5 (1991).
NATAPA 2 = K. Deller, F. M. Fales, L. Jakob-Rost, "Neo-Assyrian Texts from Assur. Private Archives in the Vorderasiatisches Museum of Berlin, Part II", *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin* 9 (1995).
ND = field numbers of tablets excavated in Nimrud.
NL = H. W. F. Saggs, "The Nimrud Letters, 1952 — Parts I–IX", *Iraq* 17 (1955), 21–50 until *Iraq* 36 (1974), 199–221.
NWL = J. V. Kinnier Wilson, *The Nimrud Wine Lists: A Study of Men and Administration at the Assyrian Capital in the Eighth Century BC* (*Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud* 1), London 1972.
OIP 117 = S. W. Cole, *The Early Neo-Babylonian Governor's Archive from Nippur*, Chicago 1996.
PNA = K. Radner, H. D. Baker (eds.), *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, Helsinki 1998–2011.
PNA 1/I = K. Radner (ed.), *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire 1, Part I: A*, Helsinki 1998.
PNA 1/II = K. Radner (ed.), *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire 1, part II: B–G*, Helsinki, 1999.
PNA 2/I = H. D. Baker (ed.), *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire 2, Part I: H-K*, Helsinki, 2000.
PNA 2/II = H. D. Baker (ed.), *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire 2, Part II: L-N*, Helsinki, 2001.
PNA 3/I = H. D. Baker (ed.), *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire 3, Part I: P–Ṣ*, Helsinki 2002.
PNA 3/II = H. D. Baker (ed.), *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire 3, Part II: Š–Z*, Helsinki 2011
RGTC 7/1 = A. Bagg, *Die Orts- und Gewässername der neuassyrischen Zeit*, Teil I: *Die Levante* (*Répertoire géographique des textes cunéiformes* 7/1 [*Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients*], Wiesbaden, 2007.
RIMA 1 = A .K. Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the 3rd and 2nd Millenia BC (to 1115 BC)* (*The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods* 1), Toronto 1987.

RIMA 2 = A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC I (1114–859 BC)* (*The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods* 2), Toronto, 1991.
RIMA 3 = A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC II: 858–745 BC* (*The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia. Assyrian Periods*), Toronto 1996.
RIMB 2 = G. Frame, *Rulers of Babylonia from the Second Dynasty of Isin to the End of the Assyrian Domination (1157–612 BC)* (*The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia. Babylonian Periods* Vol. 2), Toronto, 1995.
RIME 4 = D. R.Frayne, *Old Babylonian Period (2003–1595 BC)* (*The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia. Early Periods* 4), Toronto 1990.
RINAP 1 = H. Tadmor, Sh. Yamada, *The Royal Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 BC), and Shalmaneser V (726–722 BC), Kings of Assyria* (*Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period* Vol. 1), Winona Lake, IN, 2011.
RINAP 3/1 = A. K. Grayson, J. Novotny, *The Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib, King of Assyria (704–681 BC)*, Part 1 (*Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period* Vol. 3/1), Winona Lake, IN, 2012.
RINAP 3/2 = A. K. Grayson, J. Novotny, *The Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib, King of Assyria (704–681 BC)*, Part 1 (*Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period* Vol. 3/2), Winona Lake, IN, 2014.
RINAP 4 = E. Leichty, *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria 680–669 BC* (*Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period* 4), Winona Lake, IN 2011.
RINAP 5/I = J. Novotny, J. Jeffers, *The Royal Inscriptions of Ashurbanipal (668–631 BC), Aššur-etel-ilāni (630–627 BC), and Sîn-šarra-iškun (626–612 BC), Kings of Assyria, Part 1* (*The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period* 5/1), Winona Lake 2018.
RlA = *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, Leipzig, Berlin, New York, 1928–.
SAA = *State Archives of Assyria*, Helsinki 1987–.
SAA 1 = S. Parpola, *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part I. Letters from Assyria and the West* (*State Archives of Assyria* I), Helsinki, 1987.
SAA 2 = S. Parpola, K. Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* (*State Archives of Assyria* II), Helsinki, 1988.
SAA 3 = A. Livingstone, *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea* (*State Archives of Assyria* III), Helsinki, 1989.
SAA 4 = I. Starr, *Queries to the Sungod: Divination and Politics in Sargonid Assyria* (*State Archives of Assyria* IV), Helsinki, 1990.
SAA 5 = G.B. Lanfranchi, S. Parpola, *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part II: Letters from the Northern and Northeastern Provinces* (*State Archives of Assyria* V), Helsinki, 1990.
SAA 6 = T. Kwasman, S. Parpola, *Legal Transactions of the Royal Court of Nineveh, Part I. Tiglath-Pileser III through Esarhaddon* (*State Archives of Assyria* VI), Helsinki, 1991.
SAA 7 = F. M. Fales, J. N. Postgate, *Imperial Administrative Records, Part I. Palace and Temple Administration* (*State Archives of Assyria* VII), Helsinki, 1992.
SAA 8 = H. Hunger, *Astrological Reports to Assyrian Kings* (*State Archives of Assyria* VIII), Helsinki, 1992.
SAA 9 = S. Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies* (*State Archives of Assyria* IX), Helsinki, 1997.
SAA 10 = S. Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars* (*State Archives of Assyria* X), Helsinki, 1993.
SAA 11 = F. M. Fales, J. N. Postgate, *Imperial Administrative Records, Part II: Provincial and Military Administration* (*State Archives of Assyria* XI), Helsinki, 1995.
SAA 12 = L. Kataja, R. Whiting, *Grants, Decrees and Gifts of the Neo-Assyrian Period* (*State Archives of Assyria* XII), Helsinki, 1995.
SAA 13 = S. W. Cole, P. Machinist, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Priests to Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal* (*State Archives of Assyria* XIII), Helsinki, 1998.
SAA 14 = R. Mattila, *Legal Transactions of the Royal Court of Nineveh, Part II. Assurbanipal through Sin-šarru-iškun* (*State Archives of Assyria* XIV), Helsinki, 2002.

SAA 15 = A. Fuchs, S. Parpola, *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part III. Letters from Babylonia and the Eastern Provinces* (*State Archives of Assyria* XV), Helsinki, 2002.
SAA 16 = M. Luukko, G. Van Buylaere, *The Political Correspondence of Esarhaddon* (*State Archives of Assyria* XVI), Helsinki, 2002.
SAA 17 = M. Dietrich, *The Babylonian Correspondence of Sargon and Sennacherib* (*State Archives of Assyria* XVII), Helsinki, 2003.
SAA 18 = F. Reynolds, *The Babylonian Correspondence of Esarhaddon and Letters to Assurbanipal and Sîn-šarru-iškun from Northern and Central Babylonia* (*State Archives of Assyria* XVIII), Helsinki, 2003.
SAA 19 = M. Luukko, *The Correspondence of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II from Calah/Nimrud* (*State Archives of Assyria* XIX), Helsinki, 2012.
SAA 20 = S. Parpola, *Assyrian Royal Rituals and Cultic texts*, Helsinki 2017.
SAA 21 = S. Parpola, *The Correspondence of Assurbanipal, Part II: Letters from the King and from Northern and Central Babylonia* (*State Archives of Assyria* 22), Helsinki, 2018.
SAA 22 = G. Frame, *The Correspondence of Assurbanipal, Part II: Letters from Southern Babylonia* (*State Archives of Assyria* 22), Helsinki, forthcoming.
SAAS 8 = A. Fuchs, *Die Annalen des Jahres 711 v. Chr.* (*State Archives of Assyria Studies* VIII), Helsinki 1998.
StAT 1 = K. Radner, *Ein neuassyrisches Privatarchiv der Tempelgoldschmiede von Assur* (*Studien zu den Assur-Texten* 1), Saarbrücken 1999.
StAT 2 = V. Donbaz, S. Parpola, *Neo-Assyrian Legal Texts in Istanbul* (*Studien zu den Assur-Texten* 2), Saarbrücken 2001.
StAT 3 = B. Faist, *Alltagstexte aus neuassyrischen Archiven und Bibliotheken der Stadt Assur* (*Studien zu den Assur-Texten* 3), Wiesbaden 2007.
TAVO = *Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients*, Wiesbaden 1969–1994.
TCAE = J. N. Postgate, *Taxation and Conscription in the Assyrian Empire* (*Studia Pohl: Series Maior* 3), Roma 1974.
TCL 3 = F. Thureau-Dangin, *Une relation de la huitième campagne de Sargon (714 av. J. C.)* (*Textes cunéiformes du Louvre* 3), Paris, 1912.
TFS = S. Dalley, J. N. Postgate, *The Tablets from Fort Shalmaneser* (*Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud* 3), London 1984.
TIM 9 = J. van Dijk, *Cuneiform Texts: Texts of Varying Content* (*Texts in the Iraq Museum* 9), Baghdad, Wiesbaden 1976.
Ugaritica 5 = J. Nougayrol, *Nouveaux textes accadiens, hourrites et ugaritiques des archives et bibliothèques privées d'Ugarit. Choix de textes littéraires*, 1968.

INTRODUCTION

Giovanni Battista Lanfranchi, Raija Mattila, Robert Rollinger

Due to the collective effort of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project in Helsinki the Neo- Assyrian epoch is one of the best documented periods within Ancient Near Eastern history. So far 21 volumes have been published presenting the most important bulk of the archival, literary and religious sources in new and reliable text editions, collated and indexed, and complemented with English translations and elucidating introductions. In the meanwhile, most of the Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions are as well available in modern editions with English translations, thanks to the efforts of the Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia and the Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period projects.

Having these facts in mind, in early 2014 we decided that it was time to launch an international conference aiming at establishing a full-fledged methodological address to the problems concerned with the "Writing of Neo-Assyrian History". This approach included a clear cut look at the sources, and at the problems connected with their interpretation and "transformation" into what is used to be called "history". Accordingly, the conference focused on several main topics connected to this issue, and therefore we organized an international meeting in September 2014 at the University of Helsinki when Robert Rollinger held his Finland Distinguished Professor at the Department of World Cultures, University of Helsinki (Research Director of the project "Intellectual Heritage of the Ancient Near East", 2011–2015).

The structuring of the volume mainly follows the outline of the conference with some additions and adaptions. The first section "History of Research and General Questions" is devoted to important problems of defining the Neo-Assyrian empire as well as its history within broader frameworks. How does the composition and structure of the empire look like? What about ethnicities, languages and identities? How did the Neo-Assyrians themselves approach their past and how? Which role are texts, scribes and literary tradition playing in shaping what we are used to call Neo-Assyrian history? What does Neo-Assyrian history mean and what is the place of Neo-Assyrian history within world history? This also includes modes of modern approach and terminologies. Gendered history is a keyword in this respect, but there is also the vast problem that Neo-Assyrian history — as Ancient Near Eastern history in general — is still widely perceived through western lenses and encapsulated in western terminologies. These are defined by sources from the Biblical and Classical World, and this bears important consequences on how we assess and qualify

historical processes and developments. These issues give way to a broad range of topics which are dealt with in the second section of the volume.

In this second section "How to deal with the Neo-Assyrian Sources" some general questions are addressed. The various contributions focus on three main categories of sources that can be defined as "historical" *stricto sensu*: royal inscriptions, eponym lists, and eponym chronicles.

The next seven sections develop a broader focus on Neo-Assyrian history by defining and discussing all available sources and their specifics: the religious texts, the literary texts, the letters, the administrative and legal texts, the treaties, archaeological sources. In this context the sources themselves are introduced and qualified, distinguishing between the different categories of source production and their *Sitz im Leben*. This includes both the written and the archaeological sources. Bureaucratic contexts and redaction processes are taken into consideration and the relevant archaeological contexts are revealed. Assyrian royal inscriptions and treaties, religious texts and literary texts, letters, administrative and legal texts on the one side, archaeological remains, reliefs, and works of art as well as urban planning on the other side are evaluated and put into their specific contexts. Each section's discussions do not only imply the simple question of how to use and deal with these sources, but to reflect on text production and context and to develop an updated theory of how to approach these sources. Their specific characteristics are outlined, their validity are analysed and the main problems addressed a modern historian is facing who is using these sources. In this respect the problems of transforming the available sources into "history" are specified and discussed in detail. How can a modern historian use these sources and what are the main problems he/she encounters when he/she is dealing with them?

The volume concludes with two additional sections. The first one focuses on the Neo-Assyrian Onomastics and its relevance for writing Neo-Assyrian history. The second one deals with the Periphery of the Assyria by discussing two exemplary neighbouring regions of the empire and their text production.

By addressing these questions the conference was aimed at singling out paradigmatically a specific and extraordinarily well documented period of Ancient Near Eastern history and at addressing the basic questions of any historiographical approach. This should be done within an Ancient Near Eastern framework, where Classical and Biblical historiographies are not taken as a defining leitmotiv but as a point of reference where specific regional and cultural developments are taken into considerations accordingly.

True, the goals of this conference were ambitious; but we are convinced that the various contributions, how diverse and varicoloured the sources of Neo-Assyrian history are, could contribute to an intense methodological discussion and to a robust increase of historical self-conscience in Neo-Assyrian studies. We also were, and still are convinced that this is a distinct field of historical research offering an enormous potential for historical analysis, methodology and sophisticated *Quellenkritik*. It allows rich insights in general historical problems which not only deserve to be considered by specialists but also by any historian who can learn as much from Neo-Assyrian history as, just to take some examples, from histories of the French Revolution, the First World War or the Cold War. Neo-Assyrian history is important, illuminating and exciting, and the path towards it are the sources we have. These were the aims of our conference, and we very much hope that with this publication its targets have been somehow accomplished.

* * *

This volume contains most of the contributions of the conference held in Helsinki in September 2014. However, after the conference, we considered that some important fields were not covered due to various reasons; thus, we requested some scholars to submit additional contributions so as to have a more complete view on the general topic of "How to write Neo-Assyrian history?". Not all those who agreed, however, were able to submit their text, and in late 2017 we decided to proceed for final publication with the available texts at our hands.

* * *

With the publication of such a volume it is always a pleasure to thank those colleagues and institutions without whose assistance and help this volume would not have been possible. This is first the University of Helsinki which launched the project "Intellectual Heritage of the Ancient Near East" and hosted Robert Rollinger as Finland Distinguished Professor (2011–2015). We are especially grateful to Prof. Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila the former Director of the project who was excited about the conference and its aims from the very beginning. A special thanks goes to the Getty Foundation that offered Robert Rollinger a Getty Scholarship during which the final steps of the editing process of this volume could be accomplished. We wholeheartedly thank Prof. Simo Parpola, Editor in Chief of the *State Archives of Assyria* series, for accepting this volume in the series *State Archives of Assyria Studies*, of which he is Project Director. Last but not least, we thank Dr. Silvia Gabrieli, Università degli studi di Verona, for her difficult but very successful enterprise of preparing the indexes of this volume.

We very much hope that the volume will be useful not only for specialists but for all those who are interested in ancient Near Eastern history of the first millennium BCE, a period of high interest and relevance that still does not have the place in world history it really deserves.

Giovanni Battista Lanfranchi, Padova
Raija Mattila, Helsinki
Robert Rollinger, Getty Villa, Los Angeles

TEXTS, SCRIBES AND LITERARY TRADITIONS: A GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Jamie Novotny[1]

Introduction

Thanks to nineteenth-, twentieth-, and twenty-first century excavations, mostly in modern-day Iraq and Syria, we have a wealth of sources from the Neo-Assyrian period at our disposal. These texts are written on a variety of clay, stone, and metal objects — mostly notably tablets, cylinders, and prisms — and they are now housed in many museum and private collections around the world, especially in the British Museum, Louvre, Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, and Vorderasiatisches Museum. The bulk of the Neo-Assyrian material in those collections originates from Ashur, Babylon, Calah, Dūr-Šarrukīn, and Nineveh. This large corpus, which is a testament to the army of scribes and scholars working at the royal court, comprises texts of numerous genres: for example, royal inscriptions, letters, astronomical reports, succession treaties, omens, prophecies, haruspical queries, administrative records, and legal transactions. The extant sources, which are only a fraction of what had existed in antiquity, gives us access to some of the details of the complex and ever-changing nature of the Assyrian empire, with the king, his divine patrons, and his inner circle of scribes and scholars at its centre. This textual material serves as primary sources not only for our knowledge of Assyrian history, religion, and culture, but also for our understanding of its scribal and scholarly arts.

Even before Botta and Layard started their systematic explorations of the ruins of Assyria's royal cities and the decipherment of cuneiform, scholars have been publishing Neo-Assyrian texts. Sources from northern Iraq have been of great interest from the 1840s, which is in part due to the fact that some of the kings of Assyria are mentioned in the Bible and Classical sources. Since the 1980s and 90s, there has been a real concerted effort to publish all of the known textual sources for the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Thanks to projects such as the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, the Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Project, and the Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period Project, as well as the efforts of numerous individual scholars,

[1] Support for my research on Assyria is provided by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (through the establishment of the Alexander von Humboldt Professorship for Ancient History of the Near and Middle East) and Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (Historisches Seminar – Abteilung Alte Geschichte). All dates are BC(E), except, of course, in bibliographical references. Because this is one of the introductory papers to this conference proceedings volume, which contains numerous genre-specific contributions, footnotes and bibliography are kept to a minimum. Further details and information can be found elsewhere in this book. Studies about the subject covered by this contribution can also be found in Frahm 2011; Fincke 2017; and Heeßel 2017.

a sizeable portion of the identified Neo-Assyrian texts have been published.[2] Within the last decade, a large percentage of that published material has been made even more easily accessible via various online projects, most notably SAAo, RIAo, and RINAP.[3] Thus, the time is ripe to start re-evaluating many aspects of the Neo-Assyrian period, including its texts, scribes, and literary traditions.

This proceedings volume, as one might expect from its title *Writing Neo-Assyrian History: Sources, Problems and Approaches*, contains numerous papers deal specifically with how texts, art, and archaeological remains are used by scholars to write about various aspects of Neo-Assyrian history, culture, and religion, as well as the problems that we face when working with them. This general paper, however, will provide a very brief introduction to the textual sources and the scribes who wrote them, as well as give some information on historical events and personal interests of the kings that appear to have impacted the content and nature of the source material. Although the Neo-Assyrian period starts in earnest with Ashurnasirpal II, this contribution will cover only the very end of the eighth century and most of the seventh century, thus limiting itself to the reigns of Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Ashurbanipal, as well as their four lesser-known successors. Given the scope of the topic, one could easily tackle the material thematically or chronologically. For various reasons, the latter is preferred here. Let us begin Sennacherib, a man most famous nowadays for besieging the Judean capital Jerusalem and sacking and destroying Babylon.

Sennacherib[4]

There is a wealth of textual evidence from Assyria, mostly Ashur and Nineveh, for the twenty-four years that Sennacherib was king. We have over 230 royal inscriptions, some letters, astrological reports, legal and administrative records, land grants, records of votive donations and gifts, and a handful of other texts, including a fragmentarily preserved succession treaty.[5] Unlike for his father Sargon II, his son Esarhaddon, and his grandson Ashurbanipal, there are relatively few pieces of correspondence that can confidently be dated to his reign, thus, greatly limiting our

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[2] The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project has published twenty volumes so far, with a further two remaining. The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia (RIM) Project and the Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period (RINAP) Project have produced seven books, with three more to appear in the next couple of years. The biggest gap in the publication of texts of the Neo-Assyrian period is for the reigns of Ashurbanipal and his successors. Many of the inscriptions of Sargon II, especially those from Khorsabad, have been published in the past twenty-five to thirty years; see, for example, Fuchs 1994 and 1998.

[3] For the LMU Munich-based SAAo and RIAo, see respectively http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/saao/ and http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/riao/; and for the NEH-funded and LMU Munich-supported RINAP Project, see http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/rinap/. All three are part of the Munich Open-Access Cuneiform Corpus Initiative (http://www.en.ag.geschichte.uni-muenchen.de/research/mocci/index.html), headed by Karen Radner and the present author.

[4] For details on Sennacherib and his reign, see in particular Frahm 1997; Frahm 2002; Frahm 2009; Grayson 1991a, 103–122; Grayson & Novotny 2012 and 2014.

[5] For example, see Dietrich 2003, 48–52 nos. 52–57; 84–91 nos. 92–100; 93–111 nos. 103–128; Frahm 2009, 130–135 nos. 67–69; Grayson & Novotny 2012 and 2014; Kataja & Whiting 1995, 22–24 nos. 20–23; 104–109 nos. 86–88; Kwasman & Parpola 1991, 35–160 nos. 34–200; Parpola 1987, 28–41 nos. 29–40; Parpola 2017, 103–110 no. 38; and Parpola & Watanabe 1988, 18 no. 3.

knowledge of the daily, inner workings of the kingdom with Sennacherib at its helm; these texts may have been intentionally destroyed in antiquity.[6] This documentary loss reduces our ability to counterbalance information provided in the king's official, self-aggrandizing texts. The bulk of the sources are in the British Museum and Vorderasiatisches Museum. The known media for texts include: tablets, cylinders, prisms, horizontal prisms, cones, bricks, human-headed bull and lion colossi, wall and threshold slabs, stone blocks, paving stones, door sockets, cylinder-shaped beads and seals, steles, rock faces, metal platings, and lion weights.[7] Although we have only a fraction of the texts from Sennacherib's reign, there are more than a sufficient number of written sources to give us a window into the active life of scholars and scribes, as well as the events that helped shape the nature and content of texts. We also know the names of several men who may have helped in the production of texts between 704 and 681.

Rather than providing a general summary of the sources, this paper will present some information on a few historical events that appear to have played a role in shaping the source material written out by Sennacherib's scribes, some of whom will be mentioned by name.

The death of Sargon in 705 certainly had a profound impact not only on his son and grandson, but also on the men advising them and writing their texts. The fact that the Assyrians were not able to recover Sargon's body from the battlefield and that Sennacherib was not able to hold a funeral for his father as tradition prescribed was regarded as highly inauspicious. As Eckart Frahm has already discussed, Sennacherib may have asked the learned scholar Nabû-zuqup-kēnu to investigate the nature his father's death.[8] The outcome of those queries, which may have involved studying passages in Gilgamesh Tablet XII, led to Sennacherib transferring the royal court from Dūr-Šarrukīn to Nineveh, avoiding reference to Sargon in texts composed on his behalf, and possibly renovating the temple of Nergal at Tarbiṣu. One can only speculate what Sennacherib's texts would have looked like had Sargon not been killed in battle and whether or not Sennacherib would have made Nineveh his seat of power. That tragic event also inspired the composition of at least one piece of literary royal propaganda, the so-called "Sin of Sargon" text.[9]

There are at least two other events that appear to have impacted Assyrian scribal activity. These closely interconnected events are (1) the carrying off, and presumably murdering, of Sennacherib's son Aššur-nādin-šumi, the Assyrian-installed king of Babylon, and (2) the subsequent siege and destruction of Babylon.[10] The chain of events that unfolded between 694 and 689 not only influenced texts composed during Sennacherib's last years as king, but also those written during the reigns of his son and grandson. In fact, some of the most interesting texts and passages in texts of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon were written as a result of the aforementioned events. For example, reports of the battle of Ḫalulê, which are written in a high-literary style

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[6] For this opinion, see Parpola 1981, 120f. For some information about Neo-Babylonian letters from the time of Sennacherib, see Dietrich 2003, XV–XXXVII, especially XIXf.

[7] Grayson & Novotny 2014, 3f.

[8] See Frahm 1999 and 2005.

[9] Livingstone 1989, 77–79 no. 33. For further details about this interesting piece of royal propaganda, see Tadmor, Landsberger, & Parpola 1989; as well as Frahm 1997, 227–229 T 186.

[10] See Grayson & Novotny 2012, 12–14 (with references to previous literature).

and contain several overt literary allusions to *Enūma eliš*, and the "Bavian Inscription", which itself upends traditional building inscriptions.[11] With regard to the latter, the Bavian Inscription is essentially a reverse building inscription, that is, the account of construction precedes the military narration, rather than the expected reports of victory on the battlefield followed by a description of construction. This is just one of many instances where the profound impact of the destruction of Babylon and Esagil on the scribal arts is undeniable; other examples include the Assyrian literary text referred to as the "Marduk Ordeal", the Assyrian version of *Enūma eliš*, and Esarhaddon's "Babylon Inscriptions."[12]

Sennacherib's religious reforms, both those before and after 689, also influenced text production, especially those composed in connection with the expansion of the Aššur temple and the construction of a new *akītu*-house outside of Ashur.[13] The Assyrian version of *Enūma eliš*, with Aššur's name appearing in lieu of Marduk's, and the "Marduk Ordeal" text are also products of those theological changes. In a few instances, it appears that the Assyrian king used Babylonian scribes or priests in the composition of texts. This may have been because southern scholars were better qualified than Assyrian ones to compose texts in high literary Standard Babylonian or because those men had the theological know-how to properly transfer Marduk's attributes to Aššur.[14] However, this does not mean that there were no learned Assyrian scholars attached to the king's court. For example, the talented Nabû-zuqup-kēnu, who also served under Sargon II, appears to have had an influence on texts written during the early part of Sennacherib's reign.[15] He may have composed, or at least had a hand in writing, texts written ca. 702.[16] Both Nabû-zuqup-kēnu's ancestors and descendants, including his son Nabû-zēru-lēšir and grandson Ištar-šumu-ēreš, held high positions at the royal court and these men are generally thought to have made their mark on texts.[17] Presumably, Nabû-bāni, Kalbu, and Bēl-upaḫḫir, Sennacherib's *ummânu*s, also helped shape the contents and style of inscriptions, literary compositions, and other important texts.[18] Unfortunately, little to nothing of their "authorship" of texts can be proven.

Nearly all of the known sources for the reign of Sennacherib have been published. What is clear from them is that historical events and the personality and character of

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[11] For the description of the battle of Ḫalulê and the "Bavian Inscription", see respectively Grayson & Novotny 2012, 181–184, no. 22 v 17–vi 35; Grayson & Novotny 2014, 310–317, no. 223. For a study of the literary style and literary allusions in Sennacherib's report of his "victory" at Ḫalulê, see Weissert 1997.

[12] See respectively Livingstone 1989, 82–91, nos. 34–35; Kämmerer & Metzler 2012, 26–33 and 355–360; Leichty 2011, 193–247, nos. 104–117. Additional details about Esarhaddon's "Babylon Inscriptions" can be found in Novotny 2015.

[13] For information about his religious reforms, see in particular Frahm 1997, 20 and 282–288; and Vera Chamaza 2002, 111–167 §2.3. For Sennacherib's construction work at Ashur, see Grayson & Novotny 2014, 18–22; Novotny 2014a.

[14] George 1986, 137; Frahm 1997, 220.

[15] For a biography of Nabû-zuqup-kēnu, see Baker & Pearce 2001; Frahm 1999.

[16] Frahm 2003, 157–160. One text composed by him may have been Grayson & Novotny 2012, 29–40 no. 1.

[17] Respectively Baker 2001c; Pearce 2000.

[18] For Kalbu and Bēl-upaḫḫir, see Berlejung 2000; Fabritius 1999. The reading of the name of Sennacherib's *ummânu* in a fragment of a synchronistic king list appears to be Nabû-bāni, but that reading is not entirely certain.

the king influenced the content and style of written sources. Learned men from illustrious scribal families in Assyria and Babylonia appear to have adeptly rose to the challenge of meeting the specific needs of Sennacherib. They also reworked existing religious, cultural, and literary traditions. The products of their labours are evident from many sources currently at our disposal.

Esarhaddon[19]

Textual sources for the twelve years that Esarhaddon was king of Assyria and *de facto* ruler of Babylon are likewise abundant. The written material for the 680–669 period is not only diverse in its content and geographical distribution, but also in the number of text genres attested. For example, we have over 140 royal inscriptions, numerous letters and astrological reports, legal and administrative records, land grants, records of votive donations and gifts, queries to the sun-god Šamaš, collections of prophecies, several treaties, and a few literary compositions.[20] We even have some letters and royal inscriptions of his mother Naqīʾa.[21] Objects inscribed from this time include: tablets, prisms, cylinders, bricks, human-headed bull colossi, steles, small cuboid-shaped monuments, rock faces, wall slabs, stone blocks, door sockets, gaming boards, amulets, eyestones, cylinder seals, and metal vessels.[22] The bulk of these were discovered at Ashur, Babylon, Calah, and especially Nineveh. A few were found at other prominent Assyrian and Babylonian cities, including Nippur, Tarbiṣu, and Uruk. Most of the objects are now in the British Museum and Vorderasiatisches Museum.

Numerous letters and astrological reports dating to this time provide us with a wealth of information about scribal and scholarly life. Thanks to these and other contemporary sources, we have a good understanding of the day-to-day aspects of what it was like to have been a scribe and/or scholar in the employ of an Assyrian king, at least for Esarhaddon. In addition, we know the names of many scribes and scholars working at the royal court. Some of the more notable *ṭupšarru*s, *bārû*s, *āšipu*s, *asû*s, and *kalû*s were: Nabû-zēru-lēšir, Ištar-šumu-ēreš, Balasî, Marduk-šumu-uṣur, Adad-šumu-uṣur, Marduk-šākin-šumi, Urdu-Gula, Urdu-Nanāya, and Urdu-Ea.[23] Nabû-zuqup-kēnu's son Nabû-zēru-lēšir and grandson Ištar-šumu-ēreš were Esarhaddon's *ummânu*s. The aforementioned men may have helped in the composition of inscriptions, literary texts, and other important documents, including the king's succession treaty. As expected, little to nothing of their "authorship" of texts

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[19] For details on Esarhaddon and his reign, see in particular Grayson 1991a, 122–141; Leichty 2011; Porter & Radner 1998.

[20] For example, see Cole & Machinist 1998, *passim*; Hunger 1992, *passim*; Kwasman & Parpola 1991, 161–287, nos. 201–295; Leichty 2011; Livingstone 1989, 24–26, no. 10, and 77–79, no. 33; Luukko & Van Buylaere 2002; Starr 1990, 1–231, nos. 1–261; Parpola 1993, *passim*; Parpola 1997, 4–35, nos. 1–6; Parpola & Watanabe 1988, 24–59, nos. 5–7; Reynolds, 2003, 1–113, nos. 1–142.

[21] For example, see Cole & Machinist 1998, 66f., nos. 76–77; Leichty 2011, 315–324, nos. 2003–2010; Parpola 1993, 14, no. 16, 118 no. 154, and 250, no. 313; Parpola & Watanabe 1988, 62f., no. 8. For a study of the queen mother Naqīʾa (Zakūtu), see Melville 1999.

[22] Leichty 2011, 3f.

[23] See respectively Baker 2001c; Pearce 2000; Åkerman & Radner 1999; Baker & Perroudon 2001; Luppert-Bernard 1999; Frahm 2001; Jas 2011; Radner 2011b and 2011a.

can be proven. Simo Parpola, in particular, has written a number of studies on the king and his inner circle and, therefore, there is no need to repeat or summarize that information here.[24] Esarhaddon's scribes appear to have followed some earlier traditions, as well as tried to create a few of their own. These changes were in part due to events leading up to Esarhaddon becoming king, while others were probably due to the well-educated men in his inner circle.

As for the section dealing with Sennacherib's reign, this section will provide a few details about some historical circumstances that appear to have had an impact on Esarhaddon's advisors and scribes, rather than giving an overview of extant sources.

The six most notable events that probably shaped texts written between 680 and 669 are: (1) the violent death of Sargon II, assuming that the "Sin of Sargon" text was composed at this time;[25] (2) the destruction of Babylon and its temples; (3) Sennacherib's religious reforms, especially the alteration of the plan of the Aššur temple at Ashur; (4) the nomination of Esarhaddon as heir designate; (5) the murder of Sennacherib and the short civil war that followed;[26] and (6) the discovery of texts of the Middle Assyrian king Shalmaneser I. Moreover, Esarhaddon's own interests in the scholarly arts may have played a role in the composition of some texts. Events such as these required scribes to be innovative. The men closest to the king and those writing out texts on his behalf sought to carefully integrate changes into existing traditions. For the most part, they seem to have done a good job. Texts composed at this time are both very Assyrian and uniquely Esarhaddon.

The deaths of Sargon and Sennacherib inspired the composition of at least one piece of literature. The presently unparalleled "Sin of Sargon" text itself may have been inspired or been influenced by scholarly investigations surrounding the unusual death of Sargon in battle; the scholar Nabû-zuqup-kēnu may have been consulted in order to elucidate the consequences of Sargon's demise.[27] The events surrounding Esarhaddon's nomination and ascent to the throne certainly had a major impact on the composition of "Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty".[28] The language, content, and style of that document conform to earlier tradition, but that text is also a product that was created as a result of a series of events that took place between ca. 683 and 681. Had Esarhaddon's older brothers graciously accepted his nomination and had Sennacherib not been murdered, perhaps partly due to his choice of successor, then that succession treaty probably would have been a completely different composition than the one we have today. That document is of great interest to those examining scribal and editorial practices since it was a text that was intensely copied by a group of scribes during a short period of time.[29] The variants, omissions, dittographies, and

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[24] For example, Parpola 1983; Parpola 1993, XXV–XXVII. See also Fincke 2017; Frahm 2011 (with references to previous bibliography).

[25] It is generally assumed that the "Sin of Sargon" text (Livingstone 1989, 77–79 no. 33) was written while Esarhaddon was king.

[26] See most recently Grayson & Novotny 2014, 26–29.

[27] See fns. 8–9, above.

[28] For a recent study about the composition of the "royal apology" in Esarhaddon's "Nineveh A", see Knapp 2016, which refutes Tadmor 1983. For further information on "Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty", see Radner's contribution to this volume.

[29] The number of studies about this important text has increased significantly since a copy of it was found at Tell Taʿyinat in 2009; see, for example, Fales 2012; Harrison & Osborne 2012; Lauinger 2012.

text distribution of the extant copies has and will continue to generate a great deal of scholarly attention. One point of interest is that the orientation of the text of the reverse is the same as that of the obverse, that is, the tablet had to be rotated along its vertical axis, rather than its horizontal axis, in order to read the contents of the reverse face.[30] This fundamental change in how scribes wrote out tablets may have caused some problems.

The destruction of Babylon and its temples in 689 and the alteration of the ground plan of the Aššur temple at Ashur between 688 and 681 both seem to have had a profound impact on how royal scribes approached writing some texts, especially official inscriptions. With regard to the former, Esarhaddon seems to have called upon his top advisors — men deeply steeped in the knowledge of celestial and terrestrial omens, building rituals, and other arcane secrets — to help compose inscriptions intended for Babylon. Those texts needed to delicately work around sensitive issues concerning the nature of the Assyrian king's control over Babylon, his relationship to the man who destroyed Marduk's temple, and the proper rebuilding of Esagil. As we can now see from the so-called "Babylon Inscriptions", Esarhaddon's scribes and scholars came up with creative solutions, thus not only pleasing the anxious king, but also the gods and Babylonians the Assyrian king was trying to placate.[31] Moreover, these texts also included a great deal of scholarly information that was not included in inscriptions of previous Assyrian rulers. The inclusion of certain words or phrases, and sometimes the way particular words were written, attest to the input of several scholarly disciplines. As for the impact of Sennacherib altering the Aššur temple as part of his religious reforms, this may have ruffled the feathers of temple personnel and court officials. Some of the upset individuals appear to have made it known to Esarhaddon that they felt that Sennacherib had sinned against Aššur and, therefore, advised their new king that changing or destroying a temple was a sin punishable by death.[32] Esarhaddon, according to some of his inscriptions, appears to have taken the warnings seriously. These "Aššur Inscriptions" clearly show influences for several scholarly disciplines, including the craft of the *kalû*, a profession well versed in building rituals.[33]

The discovery of inscriptions of Shalmaneser I in the structure of the Aššur temple appears to have also influenced information included in texts.[34] The result was that Esarhaddon's scribes altered the style of building histories to be more like the one included in that Middle Assyrian king's texts. Usually, Neo-Assyrian inscriptions name only one ruler as a previous builder and rarely include the span of time between rebuildings.[35] The composers of Esarhaddon's "Aššur Inscriptions" named Ušpia, Erišum I, Šamšī-Adad I, and Shalmaneser I as builders and included the num-

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[30] This is because the tablets were intended to be displayed (in temples and palaces), as it is now clear from the copy of the treaty discovered at Tell Taʿyinat. For this reason, the text of the reverse face had to be oriented in the same direction as the obverse face so that it could be read.

[31] For some details about Esarhaddon "Babylon Inscriptions", including the intentional dating of those texts to his "accession year", see Novotny 2015. For editions of these inscriptions, see Leichty 2011, 193–247 nos. 104–117.

[32] For this opinion, see Novotny 2014a.

[33] For editions of "Aššur A" and "Aššur B", see Leichty 2011, 119–134, nos. 57–59.

[34] This inscription was probably Grayson 1987, 185, no. A.0.77.1.

[35] This will be discussed in a forthcoming paper by the present author. For some information about the mention of previous builders in Neo-Assyrian inscriptions, see Novotny 2014a, 110f.

ber of years that had passed between each renovation of the temple. Although Esarhaddon broke with a tradition used by his immediate predecessors, his scribes attempted, at least in this one instance, to revive a Middle Assyrian practice.

The reign of Esarhaddon is undoubtedly one of the most interesting periods of Assyrian history. Nearly all of the known sources for this twelve-year period have now been published and made available online. Even though much work has already been undertaken, there is still a great deal more information that can be mined from these vast and varied textual sources.

Ashurbanipal[36]

As with the previous two reigns, there is a wealth of texts for Ashurbanipal's tenure as king, which lasted between thirty-eight and forty-two years.[37] The extant material for the 668–ca. 631 period is diverse in terms of the text genres attested and the geographical distribution of the inscribed objects. For example, we have over 240 royal inscriptions, numerous letters and astrological reports, administrative records, land grants, records of votive donations, queries to the sun-god, collections of omens, and a few literary texts, including a coronation hymn and a royal epic.[38] We also have at least one text written on his grandmother's behalf; this is a succession treaty.[39] Objects inscribed with these texts include tablets, prisms, cylinders, vertical cylinders, bricks, small steles, wall and paving slabs, door sockets, and eyestones. Most of these were unearthed at Ashur, Babylon, Calah, and especially Nineveh, and the majority of these are now in the British Museum, Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, and Vorderasiatisches Museum.

Just like the reign of his father, there are numerous letters and astrological reports from his tenure as king that provide us with important information about scribes and scholars and, thus, we know a lot about the men advising him and writing his texts. Some of the more notable men in his inner circle were: Ištar-šumu-ēreš, Balasî, Akkullānu, Adad-šumu-uṣur, Marduk-šākin-šumi, Nabû-nādin-šumi, and Nabû-zēru-iddina.[40] Ištar-šumu-ēreš was Ashurbanipal's *ummânu*. Presumably, some of these

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[36] For details on Ashurbanipal and his reign, see in particular Grayson 1991b; Novotny & Jeffers 2018; Radner, Ruby & Weissert 1998, 159–171.

[37] The exact length of Ashurbanipal's reign has received a great deal of attention, but no scholarly consensus has yet been reached. Ashurbanipal's tenure as king may have ended as early as the late Spring/Summer of 631 or as late as 627, if a stele inscription of Adda-guppī, the centenarian mother of the last native Babylonian king Nabonidus, records the correct information (which it does not). In 631 (or 630), Ashurbanipal may have died, abdicated the throne, or was deposed; he might have even ruled as co-regent with his son Aššur-etel-ilāni during the final years of his life. Nothing about Ashurbanipal's death is recorded in cuneiform sources, so it unclear if he died of natural causes, suicide, or regicide.

[38] For example, see Borger 1996; Cole & Machinist 1998, *passim*; Frame 1995, 194–247; Hunger 1992, *passim*; Livingstone 1989, 4–13, nos. 1–3, 16–20, nos. 5–7, 26–35, nos. 11–13, and 48–52, 19–22; Kataja & Whiting 1995, 31–35, nos. 29–34, and 110–112, no. 90; Mattila 2002a, 1–124, nos. 1–153; Novotny & Jeffers 2018; Starr 1990, 233–315, nos. 262–354; Parpola 1993, *passim*; Parpola 1997, 38–43, nos. 7–11; Parpola 2017, 111–121, nos. 40–41; Parpola & Watanabe 1988, 64–69, nos. 9–10; Reynolds 2003, 115–171, nos. 143–204.

[39] Parpola & Watanabe 1988, 62f., no. 8.

[40] See respectively Pearce 2000; Åkerman & Radner 1999; Pearce & Radner 1998; Luppert-Bernard 1998; Frahm 2001; Baker 2001a; Baker 2001c.

men aided in shaping texts written at the royal court. As usual, little to nothing of their "authorship" of texts can be proven.

Just as historical events could influence the written record, so could the personality of the king. For example, Ashurbanipal's interest in the scribal arts had a profound impact on scholarly life in Assyria and Babylonia.[41] His strong drive to acquire as many texts as possible pertaining to scribal learning and lore was not only a great boon to scholars, but also a source of stress, frustration, and duress for some of them.[42] On one hand, numerous scholarly and literary compositions, as many as the scribes could get their hands on, were copied and sent back to Nineveh, thus, greatly increasing and improving the existing scholarly collection at the capital. On the other hand, many rivalries between scribal communities and individual scribes flared up; we have texts accusing others of being incompetent, lazy, or failing to complete assigned tasks. Moreover, the source material reveals that Ashurbanipal intimidated and used other means of coercion to get scribes to build his library; this included seizing thousands of tablets from numerous private Assyrian and Babylonian libraries and forcing Babylonian scribes to copy tablets under great duress by locking them in chains when they were not working.[43] This ruler's obsessive desire to collect scholarly and literary texts had both positive and negative outcomes.

A substantial portion of the tablets and fragments in the British Museum's Kuyunjik Collection is a testament to this Assyrian king's drive to create the largest and greatest collection of texts the world had ever seen. Thanks to his aggressive collecting policy, we now have copies of scholarly compendia and literary compositions that would otherwise be lost. Ashurbanipal's claims to have possessed advanced knowledge of writing and scholarly lore also made their way into some of his official inscriptions, thus publicly reinforcing his personal interest in the collecting and copying of tablets for his own personal use.[44].

Numerous texts from the reign of Ashurbanipal are now easily accessible, but most, however, are not. This is due to the breadth of the material, especially given the wide range of genres and sub-genres attested. With regard to texts directly connected to the king and his court, most of the non-royal sources and many principal official inscriptions, including his "annals" and "epigraphs", have been published.[45] There are still many letters and royal inscriptions that have yet to be properly edited and made public.[46] These sources, as well as the extant material from Ashurbanipal's library collections, attest to the intense, productive scribal activity that took place in

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[41] See, for example, Fincke 2003–04, 120f.; Fincke 2017; Frahm 2011, 514; Livingstone 2007; Villard 1997.

[42] See, for example, Fincke 2003–04; Fincke 2017, 382–388; Frahm 2011, 523f.; Frahm 2012; Frame & George 2005; Lieberman 1990.

[43] For example, Fales & Postgate 1995, 98, no. 156 8–13: "Ninurta-gimilli, the son of the *šandabakku*, has completed the series (of celestial omens) and been put in irons. He is assigned to Banunu in the Succession Palace and there is no work for him at present".

[44] For example, the well-known "Ashurbanipal's School Days Inscription" (K 2694 + K 3050; = L[ondon][4]), see Novotny 2014b, 77, and 96, no. 18 i 9–22.

[45] See Borger 1996; Novotny & Jeffers 2018.

[46] Two volumes of letters are being prepared by Grant Frame (*The Correspondence of Assurbanipal, Part I: Letters from Southern Babylonia*) and Simo Parpola (*The Correspondence of Assurbanipal, Part II: Letters from the King and from Northern and Central Babylonia*). The second and final volume of inscriptions of Ashurbanipal and his successors is currently being prepared by the present author in collaboration with Joshua Jeffers and Grant Frame. These volumes will be respectively SAA 21, SAA 22, and RINAP 5/2.

Assyria and Babylonia between 668 and 631, 630, or 627, depending on when Ashurbanipal died or abdicated. Royal inscriptions, letters, and administrative texts highlight this ruler's desire to acquire a vast amount of scholarly lore, an interest that began before he was designated as the heir apparent of Assyria, when he himself may have been training to become a scribe or scholar. That preoccupation appears not to have diminished after he became king and it certainly had a major impact not only on scribes and scholars in his court, but also on many private scribes and scribal communities. Although the scribal arts flourished during this time, not all scribes, especially those from Babylonia, were properly rewarded for their skills and services. Thus, the strong influence of the personality of the king, like certain historical events, can be seen in the textual record of the Neo-Assyrian period.

Ashurbanipal's successors[47]

Relatively few sources are preserved for Assyria's last four kings: Aššur-etel-ilāni, Sîn-šumu-lēšir, Sîn-šarru-iškun, and Aššur-uballiṭ II. For this period of political decline and collapse, we have some royal inscriptions, letters, land grants, loyalty oaths, exemption documents, and legal transactions.[48] The known media include tablets, cylinders, prisms, and bricks. These objects mainly come from Assyria — Ashur, Calah, and Nineveh — and many of them are now housed in the British Museum and Vorderasiatisches Museum; note that a few texts of Aššur-etel-ilāni were also discovered in Babylonia. Little is known about the scribes and scholars of these rulers. The palace scribes Nabû-šarru-uṣur and Sîn-šarru-uṣur, both of whom held the honorary post of eponym, may have been involved in the writing of texts under Aššur-etel-ilāni and Sîn-šarru-iškun. Moreover, it has sometimes been suggested that Ashurbanipal's *ummânu* Ištar-šumu-ēreš continued to hold that prestigious position during Aššur-etel-ilāni's reign.

With regard to Sîn-šarru-iškun's official inscriptions, although these texts seem to more or less follow the established traditions, this king's image-makers incorporated a number of elements not common to other late Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions. For example, the prologues of texts are unusually long and trace the king's ancestry back four generations, to Sargon II.[49] The change in style may have been closely link with the events leading up to Sîn-šarru-iškun becoming king: he had to forcibly remove the usurper Sîn-šumu-lēšir from the throne.

Conclusions

Extant texts, which there are many, serve as primary sources not only for Assyria's history, religion, and culture, but also for its texts, scribes and literary traditions. On one hand, the learned men in the royal court were expected to maintain certain longstanding literary and cultural traditions, but, on the other hand, they had to be

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[47] For details on Aššur-etel-ilāni, Sîn-šumu-lēšir, Sîn-šarru-iškun, and Aššur-uballiṭ II and their reigns, see in particular Brinkman 1998a and 1998b; Frahm 2017, 191–193; Mattila 2002b; Novotny 2002; Oates 1991.

[48] See, for example, Frame 1995, 261–268; Kataja & Whiting 1995, 36–45, nos. 35–44; Mattila 2002a, 128–173, nos. 154–173; Meinhold 2009, 445–466; Novotny & Van Buylaere 2009; Parpola & Watanabe 1988, 72f., nos. 11–12; Reynolds 2003, 134f., no. 163, and 154f., no. 187.

[49] For example, Novotny & Van Buylaere 2009, 227 lines 17–20.

innovative in order to meet ever changing needs of the Assyria king, especially when unusual or unorthodox situations arose. There seems to have been a number of such instances in the eighth and seventh centuries that required the inner circle of *ṭupšarr*u*s*, *bārû*s, *āšipu*s, *asû*s, and *kalû*s to aid their king in finding interesting solutions to difficult problems. Moreover, personalities of the kings themselves influenced many texts. Although much work has already been carried out on the Neo-Assyrian period and its scribes and sources, there is still a great deal of research to be done on this extremely rich and varied source material.

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