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

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

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

1F. W. Maitland, Domesday Book and Beyond (Cambridge: University Press, 1897), p. 3.
3M. Civil in MSL XIV, p. 168.
The term "canon," from which "canonicity" derives, comes into English from the Latin of the Catholic Church. Classical Latin had used the word in the general meaning "model or standard," as we know from Pliny’s use of it to refer to the model statue prepared by Polycleitus of Sicyon. In Greek, from which Latin had borrowed canov, kavriv referred to a "reed," and came generally to refer to a "straight rod." Greek also utilized kavriv metaphorically to mean "rule, standard," including legal "rule." The Greek term, in turn, goes back to the Semitic word qanvat found as "reed" in Hebrew, qanat in Akkadian, qn in Ugaritic, qn in Phoenician, and also in Aramaic, etc. and it has reference to measuring and defining there, as well.

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

We are in general accord with Rochberg-Halton’s views of "canonicity," once having written, "as normally understood, 'canonicity' is a concept at odds with the principles which governed the transmission of texts in Mesopotamia and elsewhere in the ancient Near East." The normative, divinely-sanctioned, quality of the term "canon," is not—so far as we can see—justifiably used of ancient Near Eastern materials. Anyone who wants to understand the implications of the term "canon" as applied to literary texts need merely read the "canon criticism" which is current among some Biblical scholars, such as Brevard S. Childs, to be convinced of the inappropriateness of the conception to cuneiform materials. Such criticism investigates the history of interpretation of a text as a means to determine its meaning, an approach which would clearly have been incomprehensible in the ancient Near East.

Basing herself on a reading of letters and a "catalogue" of neo-Assyrian date, Rochberg-Halton concludes that there were three "streams of textual transmission": the texts labelled iIkara, those labelled aji, and the oral tradition, designated as ša pi īmmatu "according to the master" when it is cited. There can be little doubt that the last category, the citations of scholars (even when collected into ša pi īmmatu, "oral lore of a master" and written onto a tablet), is somehow different in nature from that normally found in written tablets (cf. below), but a crucial question which must be posed is what distinction is being made when an ancient text or tradition is called ajī. Rochberg-Halton translates ajī as "extraneous," and explains that she uses that word "in its first sense of 'coming from outside,' that is, extrinsic, rather than its secondary although perhaps more commonly used sense of 'not being pertinent' or 'superfluous'." Rochberg-Halton grants W. G. Lambert’s holding that there is no evidence for the creation of an "authoritative" body of cuneiform works, but suggests that a distinction between the iIkara, or official, series,” and texts labelled ajī, "external" can be made. She suggests that these terms might have distinguished “authoritative” from "non-authoritative" scholarly works, but concludes after further investigation that there is not any such distinction between the groups of texts so designated.

Rochberg-Halton’s article thus comes as a welcome corrective to the usual (implicit) comparison with the Biblical “canon” which has, we think, provided an unfortunate model which has mislead cuneiformists, an imposition on Mesopotamia’s Eigenbegrifflichkeit. Indeed, the Biblical texts themselves do not conform to the conception that is behind the term "canon." A comparison of ajī with the etymologi-
cally-similar Aramaic term *brayta* used for Tannaitic materials not included in the *Mishnah* seems more apposite than one with the Biblical "canon." Such materials, though not included by Rabbi Judah in his *Mishnah* are nonetheless repeatedly cited in Talmudic discussion. They are thought no less authentic and indicative because he did not include them in his compilation.

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

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

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

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

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

Was Assurbanipal's library at Nineveh an "official" library? A. Leo Oppenheim is cited to substantiate the claim that "apparently the approval of the king was required for preparation of new series for the Neo-Assyrian library at Nineveh." All that Oppenheim had written, however, was that Assurbanipal "himself decided which tablets were to be put into the library and which to be omitted." Oppenheim had based his assertion on two letters: *ABL* 334 and *CT XXII* 1. Both of these letters are now in the British Museum. The first was excavated at Nineveh and the second purchased by the museum from an antiquities dealer, along with other tablets from Borsippa in Babylonia.

[1] From the letter *ABL* 334 (K 22), Oppenheim cited lines 4–13: DUB = a ni 'x-ní / LUGAL EN-ia lül-si-ma / mim-ma SAG 3a-pa-an LUGAL ma'y-ru a-na SAG[bi] / lu-se-ri-id : mim-ma SAG 3a-pa-an LUGAL : la ma'y-ru / la SAG[bi] w2-se-li / DUB = a-ni SAG ad-su-ub / an UD'ma sa-a-ti a-na SAG 3a-ka-nu ta-a-btí, which he translated "the king, my lord, should read the ... tablets and I shall place in it (i.e., the library) whatever is agreeable to the king: what is not agreeable to the king, I shall remove from it; the tablets of which I have spoken are well worth to be preserved for eternity." Oppenheim wrote that this "clearly refers to the library of Assurbanipal," and

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20 *CS* 36 (1984) 143 with n. 70.


22 Ibid., p. 378 n. 22.

23 Cf. p. 378 n. 22.

24 The translation cited above is that given by Oppenheim in his *Ancient Mesopotamia*, p. 378 n. 22 (which, like his translation in *JNES* 1, pp. 371–72 assumes that the king, not the writer read the
he asserted further that "the latter's concern with the content of his collection is illustrated in the famous letter CT XXII 1."25

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

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

It is absolutely certain that the tablets referred to in these two texts were not being considered for inclusion in either an "official" library or one which contained tablets. In his Letters from Mesopotamia (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 160, Oppenheim translated "I will read the [...] tablets to Your Majesty and whatever is acceptable to the king I will place in it (the royal library). Whatever is not acceptable, I have (already) removed from it. The tablets I have mentioned are worthy of being deposited (in the library) forever." Either understanding of the ambiguous verbal form can be made to support the contention that Assurbanipal decided on the contents of his library.


26Parpola (LAS II, pp. 116–17) has followed G. Meier, "Kommentare aus dem Archiv der Tempelschule in Assur," AJO 12 (1937–39) 237–46 at p. 238, in considering that ABL 722 (= Parpola, LAS 116) deals with the instruction of scribes at school, since the type of tablet referred to (ligimmu) was used for teaching. Following their lead, we see no reason to connect this letter with the king's tablet-collecting.

27P. Michalowski, "Königsbriefe," RLA 6 (1980), pp. 51–59 is unaware of this first-millennium copying of a (supposed) royal letter, but treats of most of the earlier such exercises.

28Given above, n. 24.
nce to tablets worthy of being kept. It is just such deliberations which are implied when we call some text "canonical" or "official" and they are clearly not present.

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

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

What would have been required for a text to become "official"? Some of the ways that this could happen are self-evident: some office-holder could guarantee the validity of a tablet by affixing a sealing to it or merely by sending it in his official capacity; a king could promulgate a text by having copies of it sent to those it reached. He wants texts which will be helpful for his palace. They can hardly become "canonical" without having undergone some sort of examining and testing.

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

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

of the well-known "Eighth Campaign of Sargon," which is the tablet of Nabû-šallim-šunu, 30DUB-SAR sar-ti GAL 6UGAL GTU 6UM-ma-an 6UGAL-GI-NA "great scribe of the king, chief scribe, secretary-in-chief of Sargon." 38

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

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

(King List 12 iv 3 and King List 17 iv 4) was designated as rab tupšarrī in two of the colophons of his son īstar-šuma-ēreš (IV R 9 r 45 = Hunger, Kolophone 344 4 and 81–7–27, 69 cited in R. Burger, "Zum Handverbeizungsbegriff an Nanna-Sin IV R 49," ZA 62 (1971) 81–83, 83, cf. Parpola, LAS II Appendix N 3), and probably to be restored in a third, CT XVI pl. 38 (r) iv 25. The latter was likewise an ummanūn (King List 12 iv 3 and iv 16 and King List 17 iv 5 and iv 6) and is designated as rab tupšarrī in both his own tablets (IV R 9 r 43, K 3877 = Hunger, Kolophone 344 2, 81–7–27, 69 = ZA 62 (1971) 81–83 at 83, and surely also III R 66 [r] xii 33, plus CT XVI pl. 38 [r] iv 22, if we restore his name correctly there; cf. n. 40 and in Urukûm (ADD 444 [r] 11, cf. also ADD 448 1 11, collated Assur II (1979) 73). Kalû (King List 12 iv 11 and King List 17 iv 2) is shown to have been in charge of Steinschereith's scribes and diviners by a letter (ABL 1216 r 2) written to Esarhaddon, though his name is not recorded (cf. Parpola, LAS II, p. 50). We know of no relevant information concerning the Assyrian ummanūn Bel-ūpabbi (King List 12 iv 11 and King List 17 iv 3), [NEE-]-LIL-ū-ja-a (King List 12 iii 21) and Nabû-apla-idilna (King List 12 iv 2) who is probably the same as Nabû-bānī (King List 17 iv 1) and the Babylonian ummanūn Qalla (King List 12 iii 15) and MUL-PAB (King List 14 i 10 and King List 17 iii 12).

39The texts are referred to in n. 37, above.
40CT XVI pl. 38 (r) iv 18–19 (= Hunger, Kolophone 502). The chief scribe who owned this tablet is surely īstar-šuma-ēreš, but his name and that of his father (but not their titles) are destroyed on the tablet.

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

In dealing with the destination of the tablets, Parpola cautiously speaks of the "royal libraries of Nineveh," 45 and his caution is well-warranted by the evidence. If one looks through the neo-Assyrian colophons searching for the names of these supposed former owners of the tablets, one discovers that there is not a single tablet from Nineveh which can be shown by its colophon to have been referred to in these records, since the name of none of the individuals designated as sources of tablets in the records 46 can be found in a colophon. 47

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

42Ibid., p. 5; Parpola estimates that the original totals of the tablets referred to about 2000 clay tablets and some 300 writing boards.
43Ibid., p. 11 with n. 38.
44Ibid., p. 12.
45On the other hand, his assumption that CT XXII 1 (ibid., p. 11 with n. 40) had anything to do with Nineveh, rather than another city (such as Assur or Kalah), is precisely that, an assumption. 46It is true that the Nippur exorcist Aplaya (source of a single tablet, see JNES 42, p. 14 ii 13' (14)) could conceivably have been the copyist of the fourth tablet Ura = fiubullu whose colophon was published in Delitzsch, AL2, p. 90 (= Hunger, Kolophone 345), but that tablet (K 2016 K 2017 K 5174), which is a copy of Ura = fiubullu who's colophon was written earlier, during the reign of Esarhaddon, when Assurbanipal was crowned prince, and the identification seems unlikely. The Aplaya found in K 14067 + Rm 150, one of tablet fragments associated in W. G. Lambert, "A Late Assyrian Catalogue of Literary and Scholarly Texts," Kramer AV 313–18 (cf. S. Parpola, JNES 42 (1983) 28–29 and below, n. 119) probably was responsible for the copy of Ura = fiubullu IV made for Assurbanipal, who is most likely the individual who wrote divination "reports" to the king from Borsippa, rather than the other man.
47The name [Nabû]-balas-su-qqi (JNES 42, p. 19 iv 2' [2.8]) may well be found in the colophon of K 10595 (= Hunger, Kolophone 429; now joined to K 5174), which is a copy of a letter a lamentation (cf. JNES 42, p. 7 n. 23), but the individual in the administrative document had a father named [Nabû]-apla-idilna, while the owner of the tablet would seem to have been the son of Bel-ikur. No other personal name given in the "Assyrian library records" is listed in the index of Hunger, Kolophone or, for that matter, in a colophon indexed in Bezold, Car. or Tallqvist, APN.

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no individual other than Assurbanipal is ever mentioned in a neo-Assyrian cuneiform text which contains the king’s name. (No tablet with an Assurbanipal colophon is, appa-
rently, ever dated with an eponym.) The earliest of the tablets which do mention Assurbanipal is the tablet written for him while he was crown prince which Delitzsch called “Ein Lehrbuch für den Prinzen Assurbanipal.”48 We now know that this tablet was simply a copy of the fourth tablet of the lexical series Ur a = ṣabûlu, listing wooden objects,49 and, like the other tablets of the series, goes back to the second millennium and earlier. In three of the other tablets, IV R 9 (the famous Sumero-
Akkadian Š u-1-1a for Nana), K 3877 (which contains omens), and 81–7–27, 69 (an unpublished “religious text,” with only a colophon and part of the catchline pre-
served), Assurbanipal is mentioned only because their owner was Ištar-šuma-ēres, whose title was “chief scribe of Assurbanipal.”50 The last of these tablets with Assurbanipal’s name in their colophons likewise contained omens, and the royal name, most likely, appeared in the colophon as part of the tablet-owner’s title.51

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

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

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

50 The tablets are referred to in n. 37.

51 K 8880 = Hunger, Kolophone 343, with a colophon written in characters smaller than the rest of the tablet. We would restore the title of Nabû-tarrā-usur as [L]U-GAL SAG I a A[jtarr-īši-
apti, a title that this individual has in ADD 646 8, 25, and r 19. Since some of the other titles Nabû-tarrā-usur held included reference to the king, other restorations are possible.


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

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

On the other hand, the tablets which are for the palace of the king are either so designated without any purpose (as is the case with the oversized and inked colophons), or specify quite a different set of goals. The objectives named are: ana tâmarî tîsattiya,65 "for my review in perusing," ana tâmarî šarrîtiya,66 "for my royal review," ana taḫṣîṣti tâmaritu,67 "for study in his reviewing," ana taḫṣîṣti šâsašîtu,68 "for study in his reading," and ana tanmertiya,69 "for my examining."70 In all cases, the person referred to by the pronoun is Assurbanipal. That is, the colophons which indicate the purpose of the collecting of tablets by Assurbanipal all show the library to have been his personal collection, gathered in his palace for his own study. A formal analysis of these purpose clauses reveals some interesting features: all refer to the king with a personal pronoun, and all of the verbal nouns governed by the preposition ana, "for," are on a t form of the verb: the first two on the undecorated stem (G) of the verb amarru, "to see," and the others on the stem with a doubled second radical (D). The first /h/ in such forms is the /ha/ affix so well known in the verbal system which forms a "middle" or "reflective." This infix was originally a demonstrative pronoun meaning "the aforementioned," and in this case it referred to Assurbanipal. These two formal features of the purpose clause make it seem appropriate to characterize the collection as the "personal" holdings of Assurbanipal.

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

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

We know from Oppenheim's studies of the "reports" of observations on which divination was based that the king sometimes cross-examined his correspondents with respect to the sightings.77 It seems reasonable to conclude that Assurbanipal's
purpose in collecting tablets was similarly motivated, and intended to enable him to
check the accuracy of the book learning on which his counselors based their interpre-
tations, and their advice to him. The checking and reviewing that was referred to in
the colophons, then, would seem to be the king’s examining the accuracy of the scholarly
grounds on which his aides recommended that he take action. His collection included,
we know, not only the tākaru and aḫḫa materials, but tablets recording “oral lore,” šāt
pi, as well.78

In the letters addressed to Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal, particularly those from
scholars, there are many citations of texts which formed part of the scholarly tradition.79
The many omens cited exactly include particularly the astrological series Enûma Anû Enûlî (with commentaries),80 hemerologies,81 and MUL-APIN.82 The “reports” of observations sent to them also cite Šuûna Ašû83 and Šuûna Išbu,84 as well as the oft-quoted Enûma Anû Enûlî. Sometimes these texts are cited by title and sometimes without identification. Clearly, combining his expertise with his personal
collection of tablets would give Assurbanipal some degree of control over the bases for
the policies recommended to him. It made it easy for the king to check what the
nature of the quotation was, whether it was a mere allusion,85 an abbreviation of the
original,86 a word-for-word citation,87 an imprecise quotation,88 which could omit

78In addition to the tablets noted below, n. 137, which have an “official” colophon, cf. III R 57, 4,
Craig, AAT 11b, etc.
79Parpola identifies these in his commentary on the texts, Parpola, LAS II, where further details
may be found. Since some 80% of the Parpola, LAS correspondence is to be dated to Esarhaddon (Par-
pola, LAS II, p. xii), a number of the texts referred to date from the time of Assurbanipal’s father,
but the latter might well be, during the time he was a prince, have checked such matters for the king.
80For instance, ABL 37 = Parpola, LAS 12, r 10–11 and 15–17, cf. Parpola, LAS II, pp. 15–16.
81For instance, ABL 406 = Parpola, LAS 62, cf. Parpola, LAS II, p. 82. The citations of Īqqur
Ipiš in the letters could all, so far as we can see, also come from the hemerologies.
82For instance, ABL 352 = Parpola, LAS 43 5, cf. Parpola, LAS II, p. 52.
83See Oppenheim, “Divination and Celestial Observation” (above, n. 77), p. 128 n. 11.
84E.g. Thompson, Rep. 277; Leichty, Išbu, pp. 8–12 gives complete texts of the relevant “reports.”
85Cf. ABL 405 = Parpola, LAS 64 r 2–3, Parpola, LAS II, p. 69 (allusion to Enûma Anû Enûlî);
Parpola, LAS II, p. 222 considers the badly damaged passage ABL 1401 = Parpola, LAS 233 10–11’
“probably an allusion” to Enûma Anû Enûlî.
86CT 53 142 5–7 = Parpola, LAS 108 4–6, cf. Parpola, LAS II, p. 94 (citing Enûma Anû Enûlî,
and omitting “or the fifteenth day” in the first citation).
87Cf. for instance, the passages cited in nn. 80–82; most of the citations are precise.
88For instance, ABL 76 = Parpola, LAS 38 r 1–8, cf. Parpola, LAS II, pp. 44–45 (citing Šuûna
Ašû), ABL 76 = Parpola, LAS 50 12–15, cf. Parpola, LAS II, p. 57 (citing Išbu Bēl Arši but omitting
MAH and replacing ana màš Nalla with apor), ABL 670 + ABL 1391 (= CT XXXIV, pt.
10) = Parpola, LAS 110 + LAS 300 9, cf. Parpola, LAS II, p. 309 (citation of Enûma Anû Enûlî with
KAR-‘a for š-tāl-lal of omen), and CT 53 241 9–11 = Parpola, LAS 108 6–10’, cf. Parpola, LAS
irrelevant information,89 or merely referred to the content or meaning of an omen,90 or
was— as seems sometimes to have been the case—an inaccurate representation of the

THE CASE OF THE FAVORABLE DAYS OF IYYAR

An examination of the apparently inaccurate representation of the tradition is
instructive, since the available letters and scholarly literature make evident the king’s
need for checking, without our having to ascribe motives to his actions. This instance
may be called “the Case of the Favorable Days of Iyyar.” The documentation consists
of three letters or letter-like documents from the neo-Assyrian court. Whether they
actually date from the reign of Assurbanipal or from the time of his father’s rule is
uncertain, in fact we cannot even be absolutely sure that they all stem from the same
year, but even in the unlikely event that they do not refer to the same royal enquiry,
the problem which they reflect illustrates the difficulties which confronted the court
when it tried to take account of the predictive tradition.

In the letter published by R. F. Harper as ABL 1140, we read as follows, in the
translation of S. Parpola:92 (beginning lost)

[When] he reveres the gods, [ ... ] is good [for praying. The favourable days
which the king, my lord, spoke are: the 10th, the 15th, the 16th, the 18th,
the 20th, the 22nd, the 24th, (and) the 26th, altogether 8 days of the month of Ajaru
which are opportune for undertaking an enterprise (and) revering the gods

The 10th favourable in court
The 15th perfect seed
The 16th joy
The 18th make the cleaned (barley) ready
The 20th he should kill a snake, he will reach first [rank]
The 22nd] good for undertaking an enterprise.93

92LAS 1 243, p. 185.
93The text of the letter as collated by Parpola, with a minor correction of a typographical error (u
for t2 in r 10) based on comparison with the copy published by Harper, reads

1’ | 1’X’1]
2’ | 1’X’1] SIG+4q
Adad-šuma-usur wrote the king with slightly different information in another letter, ABL 652, part of which reads in Parpola’s translation:94

What the king, my lord, wrote to me: “Is the month good? Aššur-makin-paletja should come up to (see) me, and Sin-per‘i-ukiš should come with him. Could he join him? They are (now) separated” let them come up together: Ajaru is a good month, it has numerous good days.95

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

94Lias 1, p. 113.
95The text of this part of ABL 652 reads:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UD-3E SUG3+GA-3E LU ME-3E</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UD-15-KAM₂* SUG3+GA-3E LU ME-3E</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UD-20-KAM₂* SUG3+GA-3E LU ME-3E</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UD-25-KAM₃* SUG3+GA-3E LU ME-3E</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UD-30-KAM₃* SUG3+GA-3E LU ME-3E</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

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

**Day Prediction**

| 1 favorable | 0 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 13 |
| 2 favorable | 0 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 13 |
| 3 he should get a wife, he will grow old | 0 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 13 |
| 4 he should get a wife, he will grow old | 0 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 13 |
| 5 he should be satisfied | 0 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 13 |
| 6 notable: favorable | 0 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 13 |
| 7 in court: favorable | 0 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 13 |
| 8 in court: favorable | 0 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 13 |
| 9 in court: favorable | 0 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 13 |
| 10 in court: favorable | 0 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 13 |
| 11 notable in court: favorable | 0 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 13 |

**Number of favorable days**

| 8 | 12 | ++ | 132 | 9 | 7 | 15 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 6 (15) | 15 | 9 | 13 | 12 | 13 |

N.B. Omissions of second clauses of predictions are not noted, though those clauses are set off by a comma; the temptation to correct numbers has been resisted. + = noted as favorable; in Letters by number and recording of prediction; in Tables by recording of number; in Extracts by listing day and prediction (as given at left); in Almanacs by presence and comparison with ancient interpretation of predictions; in Hierarchies by comparison with other materials (additional predictions are not taken account of).

0 = not included / = contradicted by prediction

0 = 0 last number / = partially lost number

Note: The sign is good: completely favorable.

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Table 1. Summary of Predictions for Month of Iyyar

| 30 the sign is good | 100% favorable | 131 |
| Number of favorable days | 8 | 12 | ++ | 132 | 9 | 7 | 15 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 6 (15) | 15 | 9 | 13 | 12 | 13 |

---

96Not preserved, but labelled at the bottom of the column as having been prepared for Nazimurutt, after copies in seven joined Babylonian cuneiform. The preserved Assyrian tablet is that which forms the basis of the column immediately to the right. J. Marzahn has kindly collated VAT 9663 iv 25 for us. H. Hunger, following W. G. Lambert, read the word following the 7 as dlgi-"baal-ak"; Lassner reads af-ma-ua-ri, and R. Labat apparently read DUB... We asked whether a reading DUB-pa-ni, DUB-MES-ni was possible, and Dr. Marzahn wrote that the character following the 7 is UM or DUB, not URU or AP, that reading the last glyph is problematic, and that the second wedge copied by Caelus is a blank. His conclusion is given in Figure 1, below. The word seems most likely, then, to have been aum,um or tarpin.30 Labelled at the bottom of the column as after Assyrian original. ND 5591 vi is not preserved for this month.31 If K 1200x and VAT 14280 are part of the same tablet, as has been suggested, the columns should be combined and the total be as given below. J. Marzahn kindly checked the size of VAT 14280 for us and I. Finkel provided a photocopy of K 12005h. These data do not seem to exclude the possibility that the two fragments were part of the same tablet, as proposed. If they were to be brought together, they might even join.32 The restorations of the numbers of the days are based both on the ordering on the predictions and on other materials.33 The restorations of the numbers of the days are based both on the ordering on the predictions and on other materials.34 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled AS and SE.35 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.36 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.37 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.38 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.39 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.40 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.41 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.42 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.43 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.44 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.45 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.46 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.47 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.48 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.49 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.50 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.51 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.52 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.53 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.54 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.55 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.56 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.57 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.58 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.59 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.60 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.61 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.62 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.63 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.64 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.65 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.66 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.67 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.68 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.69 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.70 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.71 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.72 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.73 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.74 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.75 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.76 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.77 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.78 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.79 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.80 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.81 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.82 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.83 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.84 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.85 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.86 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.87 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.88 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.89 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.90 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.91 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.92 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.93 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.94 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.95 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.96 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.97 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.98 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.99 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.100 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.101 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.102 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.103 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.104 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.105 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.106 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.107 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.108 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.109 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.110 The texts have Akkadian magnific, spelled SE and AB.
day was or was not favorable (or can be so interpreted) are distinguished in the chart, and the indications given in the letters are included for comparison. The different types of texts included "Tables" which record only the numbers of the days which were favorable, "Extracts" which list favorable days and briefly indicate the nature of that quality, and "Almanachs" which include both the favorable and unfavorable days of a month with the same brief remarks on their qualities. The letters cite from these sources, to which we have added the "Hemerologies" which come from a tradition which gave more extensive information on each of the days of the month. The summarizing boldface horizontal line shows that the traditions as to how many days of each month were favorable according to the published texts are not uniform.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It was possible to turn such oral lore into written form, and there are tablets with Assurbanipal's colophon which are designated "oral lore of a master," sa pi unwandu.137 In ABL 519, then, Istar-suma-eresh may, in some sense, have been telling Assurbanipal where he could check his quote.

Verifying that the message found in an omen was not merely the result of happenstance in the medium which reveals it is a problem for any system of divination. In Mesopotamia, it is well known that extispicies were commonly carried out twice, to check their accuracy. During the rule of the Sargonids in Assyria we have indication of another method of checking and interpretation: one could divide the diviners into groups, get separate answers from each, and then compare the answers.138 When Sennacherib wanted to discover the reason for the death of his father Sargon, he divided139 the seers into four,140 and he (or at least the author of "The Sin
of Sargon" who speaks in his voice) advises his son, Esarhaddon, to separate them into three or four.141 When the separated groups agree, one is sure that the message was intended. Esarhaddon tells us in his inscriptions that he used this technique, putting the augurs into separate groups and getting a single answer from the enquiry.145 This method eliminated not only the possibility of misunderstanding accidental phenomena in the divining medium as messages, but prevented the experts from conspiring in their interpreting of the messages.

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

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

141Ibid., rev. 8-9.
142Ibid., rev. 11-12: ḫēru ta ʾabēnāt purru; apparently to be restored asb. 21.


144Ibid., rev. 8-9.
1456i6., the next line: terētē ki pī ʾetēn inādḫāš-ma šēpakēni annā šēnu.
146Oppenheim, Ancient Mesopotamia, p. 20. As we have noted, our conclusions are confined to those tablets which can be shown actually to have been part of Assurbanipal’s holdings. Given the way that the tablets were excavated and reached London, this means that we refer only to those tablets which bear his colophon. Other tablets, such as those he donated to Nabû’s Ezida temple at Nineveh, and tablets which do not mention his name at all cannot be considered as part of his holdings.

147See also ABL 24 = Parpola, LAS 172 7 r 12, cf. Parpola, LAS II, p. 162 (concerning the rituals accompanying an incantation from Ḫallākum šemaḥa), ABL 64 = Parpola, LAS 132 r 9-10, cf. W. G. Lambert, BWL, p. 315 ad 143-7 and Parpola, LAS II, p. 120 (adapting a passage from the "Counsels of Wisdom"), ABL 355 = Parpola, LAS 35 r 9, cf. Parpola, LAS II, p. 41 (using a ritual phrase), and cf. ABL 6 = Parpola, LAS 125 r 1, which Parpola thinks "a direct adaptation of the po-\(\text{t}\)etical language of the royal inscriptions," Parpola, LAS II, p. 112, as well as CT 53 155 = Parpola, LAS 321 r 8-11, which Parpola holds to be an "abbreviated" "direct adaptation" of the blessing re-

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

149Ibid., rev. 8-9. Such as Streck, Asb. c = Hunger, Kolophone 319 = V R 33, and Streck, Asb. t = Hunger, Kolophone 320 = CT XVII pl. 306; For a spelling with DUB\(\text{t}\), see the reference given below in n. 153.

150Ibid., rev. 8-9. Such as Streck, Asb. b = Hunger, Kolophone 318.

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

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

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


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

156On these, see G. Offner, "A propos de la sauvegarde des tablettes en Assyro-Babylonie," RA 44 (1950) 135-43.
"palace of Assurbanipal," but also tablets which were his (tūppī Aššur-bānī-apli), including a "broad tablet" of his (the colophon of which does not specify its having been put into the palace). There is, then, no distinction to be made between tablets labelled as belonging to Assurbanipal and those from his palace. The latter are no more "official" than the former. The king did not collect the tablets as an "official", even if they were of use in his official duties, and it is hard to see how they can properly be described with an adjective of broader application than "royal." It seems quite unlikely that anyone from outside (say, a Babylonian scholar) would have been allowed to look at one of the king’s tablets and copy it for his own purposes, at least during Assurbanipal’s lifetime. His library was neither a reference nor a lending library.

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

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

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

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

The “Catalogue of Texts and Authors” edited by W. G. Lambert gives a listing of various works along with their sources. The god Ea is given as a source of texts such as the astrological series Enuma Anu Enlil and the body of texts used by lamen-
tation priests, while other texts are said to come from "before the flood" or to have been dictated by a horse. This neo-Assyrian list of texts seems to provide the names of many of the common works of cuneiform literary remains, and the registering of authors may have been designed to provide a pedigree which lent them authority. 172

Ancient scribes were likewise concerned with the textual accuracy of their work. This is clear not only from the colophons' assurances that the scribe has "reviewed and checked" his tablet, but from their righting of errors, whether those mistakes were incorrectly written words 174 or omitted graphemes, words, or lines in their copies. 175 The numbering of every tenth line and registering the total may well have kept copyists from omitting a line. 176 Their concern with accuracy is likewise evident from their careful marking of broken passage in the Vorlage with the designation le-pi, "broken," the distinction between "new" and "old" breaks, and the indication of the extent of the damage. 177 Colophons, on occasion, express the hope that such lacunae will be completed. 178 Rarely, texts will include the indication of variants. 179

173The tablet fragments assembled in W. G. Lambert, "A Late Assyrian Catalogue of Literary and Scholarly Texts" (above, n. 46) on the other hand, show by their form that they had some special purpose, even if that purpose is not clear. They seem not to have been a "catalogue" at all, note the graphemes (1 GAM) written at the left-hand margins of the columns of the fragments opposite the titles of some compositions. This same pattern, as well as a comparable clay preserved in only a thin layer allow the addition of two more fragments (now joined to one another) to the remains of this tablet.

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

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

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

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

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

179Variants are usually added in smaller script as supralinear "glosses." This practice already started in Old-Babylonian times, as is evident from the orthographic variant given in the oil-omen CT V which seems to reflect the checking of more than one original, 180 and when copying old texts, they on occasion accurately mimic the script of the original. 181

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

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

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

182The colophon of the catalogue of Sa-gig, first published by J. V. Kinnier-Wilson from Nimrud tablet ND 4558, in Iraq 18 (1956) 130-46, esp. pl. XXV, following p. 131, which was re-edited fully by W. G. Lambert in his "Ancestors, Authors and Canonicity," JCS 11 (1957) 1-14, 112 as Appendix V, with a translation of the first few lines of the colophon on p. 6, has now been re-edited by I. Finkel "Adda-apla-idinna, Esagil-kin-apli and the Series SA.GIG," in A Scientific Humanist, Studies in Memory of Abraham Sachs, eds. E. Leichty, M. deJ. Ellis and P. Gerardi. Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund 9 (Philadelphia: The Samuel Noah Kramer Fund of the University Museum, 1988 [1989]), 143-59, with the help of a new manuscript and collations of ND 4558. This text may be of interest for the question of the editing of cuneiform series. The information found in it has been compared with the colophons found on Nineveh copies of Uraûna = nataškal (now given as Hunger, Kolophone 321). The Babylonian manuscript makes it clear that the (presumed editorial) work on the cuneiform series Enûma ana bit mursī allītu iliملك was done under Adda-apla-idinna of the second Isin dynasty (1068-57 B.C.E.).

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

183Labat, TDP, see his introduction, as well as the preceding note.
ballu on Ur a = huballu. The supposed textual constancy of cuneiform tablets is likewise largely the result of a misimpression. If one compares the number of variants in a cuneiform historical text found in many copies or in a piece of Greek or Latin literature with the number of variants in a cuneiform "literary" text, there will be no overwhelming differences. Textual constancy over a long period of copying is, at any rate, merely a result of the care with which scribes approach their task, and when copyists are working on compositions written in a language of which they are not native speakers, they are likely to make few innovations. For first millennium Mesopotamia, this seems to have been the case, and surely many, if not most or nearly all, of the scribes who were charged with producing copies from old texts spoke Aramaic in their daily lives, rather than Akkadian.

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

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

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

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

1  a-ma1 LUGAL a-na  $SzJ-du-nu
2  iu1-ma ia-ti SAG$J-a'-la u [ta-ab-ka]
3  UdE1 DUB1 ta-mu-nu Lu-ma a
4  DUMU-SzJ, SzJ, MU-EN-KAR$a  $SeS-SzJ
5  UNIBa-a DUMU-SzJ, SzJ, AR$-ka$-DdGRR-MES
6  uSj8um-ma1 nu SzJ, BAR$-SIPA$a
7  lSzJ at-ta ti-di-uz1 ina $UL$-ka za-[ba Haus]

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