

Stephen J.  
Lieberman

CANONICAL AND OFFICIAL  
CUNEIFORM TEXTS:  
TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF  
ASSURBANIPAL'S PERSONAL  
TABLET COLLECTION

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 become blurred; the ideas become fluid, and instead of the simple we find the indefinite."<sup>1</sup> 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,<sup>2</sup> reaching the conclusion, with M. Civil,<sup>3</sup> that this term as used of the cuneiform corpus must be restricted to "text stability and fixed sequence of tablets within a series."<sup>4</sup> 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 *aḫū* text from *Enūma Anu Enlil*," which she had

<sup>1</sup>F. W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond* (Cambridge: University Press, 1897), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>*JCS* 36 (1984 issued 1985) 127-44.

<sup>3</sup>M. Civil in *MSL* XIV, p. 168.

<sup>4</sup>Rochberg-Halton, *JCS* 36 (1984) 129.

recently edited.<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup> In Greek, from which Latin had borrowed *canon*, *κανών* referred to a "reed," and came generally to refer to a "straight rod."<sup>7</sup> Greek also utilized *κανών* metaphorically to mean "rule, standard," including legal "rule."<sup>8</sup> The Greek term, in turn, goes back to the Semitic vocable found as קִנָּה "reed" in Hebrew, *qanû* in Akkadian, *qn* in Ugaritic, *qn*<sup>2</sup> 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 "canonicity" 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."<sup>9</sup> The normative, divinely-sanctioned, quality of the term "canon," is not—so far as we can see—justifiably used of ancient near Eastern materials.<sup>10</sup> Anyone who wants to understand the implications of the term "canon" as

<sup>5</sup>The text has appeared in *Language, Literature and History: Philological and Historical Studies Presented to Erica Reiner*, edited by Rochberg-Halton, American Oriental Series, vol. 67 (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1987), pp. 327–50.

<sup>6</sup>Pliny, *Natural History*, Book XXXIV (xix) 55.

<sup>7</sup>Latin *canna*, from Greek *κάννα*, "reed," is clearly related.

<sup>8</sup>For studies of the legal terminology, cf. F. Schulz, *History of Roman Legal Science* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946/1967), p. 66 n. 3 and A. Berger, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, NS vol. 43, pt. 2 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1953), p. 379.

<sup>9</sup>Lieberman *Loanwords* I, p. 26 n. 66.

<sup>10</sup>Prohibitions on adding or subtracting from the contents of the "law," such as can be found in Deuteronomy iv 2 are a different matter.

W. W. Hallo uses the term "canonical" for texts passed through what Rochberg-Halton, following A. Leo Oppenheim, calls in the "stream of tradition." His idiosyncratic usage is consistent, and seems to entail none of the overtones inherent in the usual application of the term. While we

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 *iškaru*, those labelled *aḫû*, and the oral tradition, designated as *ša pi ummâni* "according to the master" when it is cited.<sup>11</sup> There can be little doubt that the last category, the citations of scholars (even when collected into *šû pi ummâni*, "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 *aḫû*. Rochberg-Halton translates *aḫû* 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'."<sup>12</sup>

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 *iškaru*, or official, series,"<sup>13</sup> and texts labelled *aḫû*, "external" can be made. She suggests that these terms *might* have distinguished "authoritative" from "non-authoritative" scholarly works,<sup>14</sup> but concludes after further investigation that there is not any such distinction between the groups of texts so designated.<sup>15</sup>

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 misled cuneiformists, an imposition on Mesopotamia's *Eigenbegrifflichkeit*. Indeed, the Biblical texts themselves do not conform to the conception that is behind the term "canon."<sup>16</sup> A comparison of *aḫû* with the etymologi-

regret his choice of words, his categorization of cuneiform texts into "monumental," "archival," and "canonical" may not be faulted on this basis.

In addition to the literature on "canon" cited by Rochberg-Halton, cf. the articles in R. von Hallberg, ed., *Canons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

<sup>11</sup>*JCS* 36 (1984) 130.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>*JCS* 36 (1984) 138.

<sup>14</sup>*JCS* 36 (1984) 135.

<sup>15</sup>*JCS* 36 (1984) 144.

<sup>16</sup>In his *Torah and Canon* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), James A. Sanders has argued convinc-

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 *ahû* 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 *ahû* 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 *ahû* 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.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, while rejecting an identification of *ahû* 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

ingly concerning the use of the term canon, which he considers to be a group's viewing a body of texts as having "authority and invariability." He writes that a "canon begins to *take shape* first and foremost because a question of identity or authority has arisen, and a canon begins to *become unchangeable* or invariable somewhat later, after the question of identity has for the most part been settled" (p. 91).

<sup>17</sup>Bezold, *Cat.*, vol. I, p. 5. On the colophons of Assurbanipal, see below.

library or group of scholars, as in the case of the Greek texts preserved in the Royal Ptolemaic library in Alexandria,<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup> 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."<sup>20</sup> 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."<sup>21</sup>

Oppenheim had based his assertion on two letters: *ABL* 334 and *CT* XXII 1.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup>

[1] From the letter *ABL* 334 (K 22), Oppenheim cited lines r 4–13: *DUB<sup>pa</sup>-a-ni* 'x-ni' / *LUGAL EN-ia lul-si-ma* / *mim<sub>2</sub>-ma ša<sub>2</sub> pa-an LUGAL maḥ-ru a-na ŠAG<sub>4</sub><sup>bi</sup> / lu-še-ri-id* : *mim<sub>2</sub>-ma ša<sub>2</sub> pa-an LUGAL* : *la maḥ-ru / la ŠAG<sub>4</sub><sup>bi</sup> u<sub>2</sub>-še-li* / *DUB<sup>pa</sup>-a-ni ša<sub>2</sub> ad-bu-ub / ana UD<sup>me</sup> ša-a-ti a-na ša<sub>2</sub>-ka-nu ta-a-b'i*, 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."<sup>24</sup> Oppenheim wrote that this "clearly refers to the library of Assurbanipal," and

<sup>18</sup>Cf. P. M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972/1984), vol. I, pp. 320–35 on the library at Alexandria (with references in the notes in vol. II).

<sup>19</sup>Cf. Saul Lieberman, "Texts of Scripture in the Early Rabbinic Period," in his *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 2nd ed. (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1962), pp. 20–27, esp. p. 22 n. 18.

<sup>20</sup>*JCS* 36 (1984) 143 with n. 70.

<sup>21</sup>A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization*, revised edition completed by E. Reiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 244. There is no change in page or content from the first edition (1966). Comparable assertions can be found in his "The Neo-Babylonian Preposition *LA*," *JNES* 1 (1942) 369–72, at pp. 371–72.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 378 n. 22.

<sup>23</sup>We are indebted to Julian Reade for information on the tablets acquired with the *CT* XXII 1 texts.

<sup>24</sup>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*."<sup>25</sup>

The letter published as *CT XXII 1* is not a "real" letter.<sup>26</sup> 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 *mimma tuppi u nēpešu ša ... ana ekalliya tābū* (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.

<sup>25</sup>Like Oppenheim, others have assumed that this text was written by Assurbanipal, including E. F. Weidner, "Die astrologische Serie Enūma Anu Enlil," *AfO* 14 (1941-44) 172-95, at p. 178 with n. 37 (which refers to earlier literature); E. Ebeling, *Neubab. Briefe*, who treated the letter as no. 1 on pp. 1-2, M. Weitmeyer, "Archives and Library Technique in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Libri* 6 (1956) 217-38, at 228-29 (with a translation), S. Parpola, "Assyrian Library Records," *JNES* 42 (1983) 1-29, p. 11 with n. 40, M. Dandamaev, *Vaviloniskie piscy* (Moscow: Nauka, 1983), p. 15 and n. 36 on p. 181 (he provides a translation of the letter on p. 64), and J. M. Durand, in A. Barucq et al., *Écrits de l'Orient ancien et sources bibliques*, Ancien Testament, 2 (Paris: Desclée, 1986), p. 121 (with a partial translation pp. 121-22).

Parpola (*LAS* II, pp. 116-17) has followed G. Meier, "Kommentare aus dem Archiv der Tempelschule in Assur," *AfO* 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 (*liginnu*) was used for teaching. Following their lead, we see no reason to connect this letter with the king's tablet-collecting.

<sup>26</sup>P. 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.

(only) "canonical" works—or works in some "canonical" form. In the Babylonian letter found at Nineveh [1], Ninurta-aḥa-iddina writes to a king, who may—or may not—be Assurbanipal<sup>27</sup> and he consults him on whether certain tablets are to be included. Given the ambiguity of the verb forms in the passage cited, which may be read as first or third person singulars, it cannot be proved that the decisions were made by the king, and that Ninurta-aḥa-iddina had not already removed "unfitting" tablets from the library, as Oppenheim's later translation assumed.<sup>28</sup> Even, however, if we understand the passage as referring to the king's personally deciding what would be kept, it does not follow that tablets so selected became part of some "official" collection, as that word is normally understood. Whether they were "official" or not would depend on the *purpose* of the collecting carried out, and on that question, this letter gives us only a single criterion: whether they were worthy of being kept for posterity. We shall see that their colophons tell us that preserving tablets in Assurbanipal's name for the ages was one of the considerations which motivated the collecting of his library.

Such safekeeping by a king does not, however, make that which is collected "official," even if it does render the tablets collected "royal." If a prince collects stamps, his "royal" collection need never become an "official" one, but may remain private, even beyond his lifetime.

The selection process described by this letter [1] likewise militates against the view that the tablets which the king was to consider for inclusion were the subject of the special types of selection and textual verification which are implied by the term "canonical," as normally understood. If the tablets had been so selected, one might well have expected Ninurta-aḥa-iddina to mention the fact, but the colophons of the tablets he sent, colophons which would have noted the care with which the tablets were copied and checked and the provenance of the originals from which they were prepared might have left him thinking it unnecessary to summarize such matters. This, however, would refer only to the pedigrees of individual tablets, and we should have expected there to be some reference to the texts which had been included, to previous or future discussions of just what works were to be included in the collection(s) or where the copies were to be made and checked, rather than a casual refer-

<sup>27</sup>So far as we can see, the only evidence on which one could decide who the king was would be the identity of Ninurta-aḥa-iddina. The latter is the writer of *ABL* 335, surely of *ABL* 336 and of *ABL* 797 and he is also mentioned in *ABL* 873 (Parpola, *LAS* 238). All of these letters whose addressees can be determined were written to Esarhaddon, and all but *ABL* 873 were inscribed in Babylonian, not Assyrian script. We have no way of determining whether the man of the same name mentioned as father of the scribe of K 4191 (*CT* XVIII pl. 38a) or in the legal texts from Nineveh is the same.

<sup>28</sup>Given above, n. 24.

ence 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 šarrūti tābi*, 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-ukīn 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,<sup>29</sup> 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 affected, etc. We know of no instance in which tablets of the type in question, i.e. texts which have been passed on through the Mesopotamian scholarly tradition are given such a stamp of approval.

What official would have been responsible for making such a decision regarding a text? It seems most likely that declaring a tradition or a traditional text fit and proper

<sup>29</sup>Craig, *AAT* 5a, a tablet of Nabû-zuqup-kēna. For the provenience of his collection and other matters, see our "A Mesopotamian Background for the So-Called *Aggadīc* 'Measures' of Biblical Exegesis?," *HUCA* 58 (1987), 157-225, esp. pp. 204-17.

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"<sup>30</sup> excavated in the city of Assur, in addition to recording the kings and additional information about them, an *ummānu* is identified. Thus,<sup>31</sup> King List 12 (the Synchronic King List)<sup>32</sup> 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 14<sup>33</sup> presents us with the name of the *ummānu* of the Babylonian king Marduk-zākīr-šumī (ninth century), King List 15 (Synchronistic King List Fragment)<sup>34</sup> recorded (at the least) the *ummānu* of Enlil-nārārī (1327-1318), King List 17 (Synchronic King List Fragment)<sup>35</sup> recorded the names of Babylonian kings along with their *ummānus* and Assyrian kings with theirs.

Arguing from these uses of the word *ummānu*, O. Schroeder contended that the *ummānu* was the "secretary-in-chief" of the king,<sup>36</sup> basing himself on the fact that some of the individuals named as *ummānu* are designated as *rab tupšarri* "chief scribe" in other texts.<sup>37</sup> This understanding of the term is bolstered by the colophon

<sup>30</sup>A. K. Grayson has conveniently presented complete texts of these in his contribution to the article "Königslisten und Chroniken" in *RLA* 6 (1980), pp. 87-135. We shall refer to the lists with his numbering; his study refers to the earlier treatments of the texts.

<sup>31</sup>Perhaps the names in the right hand column of King List 11 (*KAV* 18) listed the kings' *ummānus*, but the names are poorly preserved.

<sup>32</sup>E. F. Weidner, "Die grosse Königsliste aus Assur," *AJO* 3 (1926) 66-76, also *KAV* 216 (reverse only). Cf. Parpola, *LAS* II Appendix N 1.

<sup>33</sup>*KAV* 10 and *KAV* 13, which are apparently part of the same tablet, but not directly joined to one another; the *ummānu* recorded is given in *KAV* 10.

<sup>34</sup>*KAV* 11.

<sup>35</sup>*KAV* 182. Cf. Parpola, *LAS* II Appendix N 1a. Given what appears to be the uninscribed state of the right half of column (r) iii, it would seem that the list of *ummānus* for Babylonian kings was not very complete.

<sup>36</sup>O. Schroeder, "ummānu = Chef der Staatskanzlei?," *OLZ* 23 (1920) 204-7. His understanding of the term is accepted by Grayson, who considered it "probably the king's chief scribe," *RLA* 6 (1980), p. 117, and by Parpola, *LAS* II, p. 448, who translates "scholar" (cf. *ibid.*, p. 270 ad 19).

<sup>37</sup>The following are registered as *ummānu* in the king lists and given a suitable title in other texts: Gabbi-ilāni-ereš (King List 12 iii 17 and iii 19) known to hold the title *rab tupšarri* from the colophons of his descendants Nabû-zuqup-kēna (Hunger, *Kolophone* 293-313; on the latter see the article referred to in n. 29), and Ninurta-uballissu (Lambert, *BWL* pls. 55-57 [p. 220] iv 31 = Hunger, *Kolophone* 313 2, partly restored). Nabû-zuqup-kēna's son, the *ummānu* Nabû-zēra-lišir

of the well-known "Eighth Campaign of Sargon," which is the tablet of Nabû-šallim-šunu, <sup>lu2</sup>DUB-SAR *šar-ri* GAL<sup>u2</sup> <sup>lu2</sup>GAL G<sup>r</sup>T<sup>1</sup>-U <sup>lu2</sup>*um-ma-an* <sup>1</sup>LUGAL-GI-NA "great scribe of the king, chief scribe, secretary-in-chief of Sargon."<sup>38</sup>

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 *ummānu* Ištar-šuma-ēreš which record his title as *rab tupšarri ša Aššur-bāni-apli* "chief scribe of Assurbanipal" was designated as part of the palace collection,<sup>39</sup> 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.<sup>40</sup> 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 tupšarri* in two of the colophons of his son Ištar-šuma-ēreš (IV R 9 r 45 = Hunger, *Kolophone* 344 4 and 81-7-27, 69 cited in R. Borger, "Zum Handerhebungsgebet an Nanna-Sin IV R 9," *ZA* 62 [1971] 81-83 at 83, cf. Parpola, *LAS* II Appendix N 5), and probably to be restored in a third, *CT* XVI pl. 38 (r) iv 23'. The latter was likewise an *ummānu* (King List 12 iv 3 and iv 16 and King List 17 iv 5 and iv 6) and is designated as *rab tupšarri* 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 *Urkunde* (*ADD* 444 r 11, cf. also *ADD* 448 r 11, collated *Assur* 2 [1979] 73). Kalbū (King List 12 iv 11 and King List 17 iv 2) is shown to have been in charge of Sennacherib's scribes and diviners by a letter (*ABL* 1216 r 2) written to Esarhaddon, though his title is not recorded (cf. Parpola, *LAS* II, p. 50). We know of no relevant information concerning the Assyrian *ummānus* Bēl-upaḥḥir (King List 12 iv 11 and King List 17 iv 3), [ME<sup>2</sup>-L]UH-ḥa-a (King List 12 iii 21) and Nabū-apla-iddina (King List 12 iv 2) who is probably the same as Nabū-bāni (King List 17 iv 1) or the Babylonian *ummānus* Qaliya (King List 12 iii 15) and MU-PAB (King List 14 i 10 and King List 17 iii 12).

<sup>38</sup>*TCL* III 428 = Hunger, *Kolophone* 26; the same man is designated as *tupšar šarri* in ND 1120 6, published by D. J. Wiseman, "The Nimrud Tablets, 1951," *Iraq* 14 (1952) 61-71, at p. 69.

<sup>39</sup>The texts are referred to in n. 37, above.

<sup>40</sup>*CT* XVI pl. 38 (r) iv 18'-19' (= Hunger, *Kolophone* 502). The chief scribe who owned this tablet is surely Ištar-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.<sup>41</sup> 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).<sup>42</sup> 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-ukīn's Babylon to Assurbanipal.<sup>43</sup> 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-mukīn-palē<sup>2</sup>a, Assurbanipal's brother, was among the sources of tablets keeps him from thinking that the war was the only source of tablets.<sup>44</sup>

In dealing with the destination of the tablets, Parpola cautiously speaks of "the royal libraries of Nineveh,"<sup>45</sup> 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<sup>46</sup> can be found in a colophon.<sup>47</sup>

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

<sup>41</sup>S. Parpola, "Assyrian Library Records," *JNES* 42 (1983) 1-29.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 5; Parpola estimates that the original totals of the tablets referred to about 2000 clay tablets and some 300 writing boards.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 11 with n. 38.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>45</sup>On 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.

<sup>46</sup>It is true that the Nippur exorcist Aplaya (source of a single tablet, see *JNES* 42, p. 14 ii 13' [1.4]) could conceivably have been the copyist of the fourth tablet U r a = *hubullu* whose colophon was published in Delitzsch, *AL*<sup>3</sup>, p. 90 (= Hunger, *Kolophone* 345), but that tablet (K 2016A + K 4421 + ..., see S. Langdon, "Miscellanea Assyriaca III," *Babyloniaca* 7 [1913-23] 93-98, at p. 94 and R. Borger, "Bemerkungen zu den akkadischen Kolophonien," *WO* 5 [1970] 165-71, esp. 169) was written earlier, during the reign of Esarhaddon, when Assurbanipal was crown prince, and the identification seems unlikely. The Aplaya found in K 14067 + Rm 150, one of tablet fragments assembled 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 U r a = *hubullu* IV made for Assurbanipal, who is most likely the individual who wrote divination "reports" to the king from Borsippa, rather than the other man.

<sup>47</sup>The name [Nabū]-balāssu-iqbi (*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 e r š e m a lamentations (cf. *JNES* 42, p. 7 n. 23), but the individual in the administrative document had a father named [Nabū<sup>7</sup>]-apla-iddin, while the owner of the tablet would seem to have been the son of Bēl-iqsur.

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, *Cat.* or Tallqvist, *APN*.

no individual other than Assurbanipal is ever mentioned in a neo-Assyrian colophon which contains the king's name. (No tablet with an Assurbanipal colophon is, apparently, 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."<sup>48</sup> We now know that this tablet was simply a copy of the fourth tablet of the lexical series U r a = *hubullu*, listing wooden objects,<sup>49</sup> and, like the other tablets of the series, goes back to the second millennium or earlier. In three of the other tablets, IV R 9 (the famous Sumero-Akkadian Š u - i l a 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 preserved), Assurbanipal is mentioned only because their owner was Ištār-šuma-ēreš, whose title was "chief scribe of Assurbanipal."<sup>50</sup> 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 again as part of the tablet-owner's title.<sup>51</sup>

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 "impressionist,"<sup>52</sup> both as a result of the ancient destruction 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 inscriptions of Assurbanipal,<sup>53</sup> and his survey of the evidence was supplemented to some extent in H. Hunger's study of Mesopotamian colophons.<sup>54</sup> While there can be no pretense that a more thorough presentation of the colophons is not a desideratum, our

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

<sup>49</sup>Edited by B. Landsberger, *MSL* V, pp. 143-85, with some addenda in *MSL* IX, pp. 168-72.

<sup>50</sup>The tablets are referred to in n. 37.

<sup>51</sup>45. 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-šarra-ušur as [LU<sub>2</sub>-GAL SAG] ša Aššur-bāni-apli, a title that this individual has in *ADD* 646 8, 25, and r 19. Since some of the other titles Nabû-šarra-ušur held included reference to the king, other restorations are possible.

<sup>52</sup>J. Reade, "Archaeology and the Kuyunjik Archives," in K. R. Veenhof, ed., *Cuneiform Archives and Libraries*, Publications de l'Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul, vol. 57 (Amsterdam, 1986), pp. 213-22, at p. 222. C. Bezold's "Introduction" in volume V of his *Catalogue*, has much the same view, cf. also his "Bibliotheks- und Schriftwesen im alten Ninive," *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* 21 (1904) 257-77, and King, *Bezold Cat. Supp.*, pp. xi-xv.

<sup>53</sup>Streck, *Asb.*, pp. LXXIV-LXXXII and 354-75. Streck letters the colophons he reconstructs.

<sup>54</sup>Hunger, *Kolophone*; Hunger numbers the colophons, frequently conflating under a single number colophons which were kept separate by Streck.

comments will be based largely on these studies.<sup>55</sup>

The colophons referring to Assurbanipal were written on tablets in three different ways: some were impressed *en large*, often with a stamp, which read "palace of Assurbanipal," followed by royal epithets,<sup>56</sup> two tablets had this "official note" painted onto them,<sup>57</sup> and the rest of the texts had colophons written, like the remainder of the tablet, with a reed stylus.<sup>58</sup> When the colophon was inscribed with a stylus, it was sometimes inscribed in script of the same size and ductus as the rest of the text, and sometimes it was written in a different hand, perhaps smaller or impressed more shallowly than the rest of the text.

The colophons refer to two different buildings in Nineveh: the "palace (*ekallu*)<sup>59</sup> of Assurbanipal," and the temple of Nabû. All tablets which were put into a *girginakku*, "library" or (probably better) "scriptorium"<sup>60</sup> according to their colophons, were put into the *girginakku* of the temple of Nabû,<sup>61</sup> but these constitute a small percentage of the excavated tablets and only a few of the colophons.<sup>62</sup>

The purpose of commissioning the tablets put into the Ezida, Nabû's temple, seems to be different from that of the palace tablets, in so far as the colophons make

<sup>55</sup>R. Borger, "Bemerkungen zu den akkadischen Kolophonen," *WO* 5 (1970) 165-71 has added important comments to the work of Hunger.

In referring to individual colophons, as available, we cite Streck's letters, Hunger's numbers, and a single cuneiform publication as an example.

It should particularly be noted by anyone using the studies of Streck and Hunger that the former did not consider the information at the beginning of the colophon (which gave the site of the *Vorlage*, and referred to the copying, collating and checking, etc.) relevant to his interests. Where Hunger has relied on Streck, such information is, consequently, missing. Our use of Assurbanipal's colophons has not been based on a complete review, but we hope it will stimulate one, and that future editors of texts with an Assurbanipal colophon will no longer simply refer to Streck, but will provide precise details.

<sup>56</sup>Streck, *Asb.* a = Hunger, *Kolophone* 317. The stampings have some orthographic variants and are disported over one or two lines. This is what Bezold (above, n. 17) called an "official note."

<sup>57</sup>A photo of DT 273 (the black of which has now partly faded to red) has been published by Reade, "Archaeology" (above, n. 52) and the colophon of K 10100 (photo *ibid.*), likewise bears the "official note," and, in so far as preserved, reads "[pa]lace of A[ššur-b]āni-[apli ...]."

<sup>58</sup>Streck, *Asb.*, p. LXXII, Bezold, "Bibliothek" (above, n. 52), p. 275.

<sup>59</sup>This word is written E<sub>2</sub>-GAL (for instance on K 3977, *CT* XXVII pl. 28a) or KUR (e.g. Sm. 12, *CT* XIX pl. 24).

<sup>60</sup>D. Arnaud, "Religion Assyro-Babylonienne," *Annuaire, École pratique des hautes études*, V<sup>e</sup> Section 76 (1977-78) 183-93, at 184.

<sup>61</sup>Was this *girginakku* the place where tablets for Assurbanipal's collection were prepared?

<sup>62</sup>Streck, *Asb.* n = Hunger, *Kolophone* 327 = *CT* XVIII pl. 37, Streck, *Asb.* o = Hunger, *Kolophone* 328 = IV R<sup>2</sup> 53 (Streck refers to two more tablets with the colophon), Hunger, *Kolophone* 338 = RA 17 (1920) 139 (additional instances in RA 64 [1970] 188 8 and Borger, *HKL* II, p. 114), and Hunger, *Kolophone* 339 = K 8501 (+) K 10600 (RA 64 [1970] 188 8).