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HISTORY AS CHARTER

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE SUMERIAN KING LIST

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THE TEXT WHICH WE KNOW AS THE SUMERIAN KING LIST has been with us for quite some time.¹ Seventy-one years ago V. Scheil published the first manuscript of the composition but the text truly made its imprint on the field of Assyriology due to the pioneering efforts of A. Poebel and, most importantly, those of T. Jacobsen, who published his now classic treatment of the "List" in 1939.² Since that time the King List has been dissected and commented upon there has been, surprisingly, little critical literature on the subject. Most studies of early Mesopotamian history have in one way or another made use of this text and while one often encounters isolated comments on the "tendentious" nature of the composition, to this day we lack any comprehensive modern study of the non-philological aspects of the King List.

In the comments that follow I would like to make a preliminary attempt at a reevaluation of the Sumerian King List. I cannot pretend to solve most of the questions which I feel should be raised concerning this composition; I would, however, like to discuss a number of issues which arise from the study of this rather peculiar text. I use the word peculiar not because of the fact that like most of us I often feel frustrated and lost when confronting any ancient text, but because I am becoming convinced that the King List is unique in many ways and that it contains certain features which it shares with no other Sumerian text.

Most discussions of the King List have centered around the historical value of the text. Some have perceived this composition as a historical source, albeit a skewed one, or as a form of meta-commentary, classified under the heading of "historiography." Terms

such as "history" and "historiography," however, are semantically loaded and such concepts only acquire meaning within particular ideologies. The ontological status of "historical facts" and "sources" has been debated by countless philosophers and historians.³ In recent years discussions of these problems have once again become focal points in the works of numerous historians, mainly due to the influence of Hayden White.⁴ The positivistic heritage of Assyriology, however, has largely served to discourage debate on such theoretical issues.⁵ In this article I should like to invoke some of these problems in the context of the study of the Sumerian King List.

The study of textual sources is, by its very nature, part of the larger problematic of narrative. Thus, in a radical vein, one could very well posit that there is no such thing as history or histories but that there are only texts: ancient or modern. This point of view requires that we view the problem of historical sources in the same manner as we would approach any other text. The major corollary of this point of view is the simple fact that the question of realism cannot be invoked in order to single out certain texts as historical, and therefore, somehow "real" in opposition to those

¹ Old Babylonian royal inscriptions are cited according to the system found in I. Karki, *Die sumerischen und akkadischen Königsinschriften der altbabylonischen Zeit: I. Isin, Larsa, Uruk*, 1980.

² T. Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King List* [Assyriological Studies 11], 1939.

³ As a good example from American historiography one may cite C. L. Becker, "What are Historical Facts?" *Western Political Quarterly* 8 (1955), 327-40 (often reprinted). A highly instructive essay on some of these matters by an ancient historian is to be found in P. Veyne, *L'inventaire des differences*, 1976.

⁴ See H. White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, 1973; idem., *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, 1978.

⁵ For a recent critical account of the ideological underpinnings of the main trends of reconstruction of the history of the Ancient Near East, concentrating primarily on "Biblical History," see J. M. Sasson, "On Choosing Models for Recreating Israelite Pre-Monarchic History," *JSOT* 21 (1981), 3-24.

which one could, conceivably, label as "fictions."⁶ Texts are stories, or narratives, or whatever one may wish to call them, but there is no way in which any verbal artifact can be said to be ultimately more true than any other. In a more cautious and less radical vein H. White has written:

It is sometimes said that the aim of the historian is to explain the past by "finding," "identifying," or "uncovering" the "stories" which lie buried in chronicles; and that the difference between "history" and "fiction" resides in the fact that the fiction writer "invents" his. This conception of the historian's task, however, obscures the extent to which "invention" also plays a part in the historian's operations. The same event can serve as a different kind of element of many different historical stories, depending on the role it is assigned in a specific motifical characterization of the set to which it belongs.⁷

These comments can be brought to bear not only upon the work of the modern historian but also equally well applied to the analysis of any ancient work which we suspect to be "historical."

Historical sources are thus narrative. This form of narrative, however, often has its own particular features. R. Barthes has suggested that historical texts are characterized by what he terms "*l'effet du réel*" in which the signified (i.e. the mental image of the sign) is confused and fused with the referent, that is the perceived reality which the sign points to in a given communicative act.⁸ The complex confusion between referent and signified is found in all texts which aspire to the realm of "realism" and thus the historian is confronted with the unending task of unraveling these chains of meaning in "source" narratives as well as in his own meta-commentary on these "events." These observations hold true for highly developed prose narratives but they are equally applicable to a text such as the Sumerian King List.

Viewed as a narrative form the King List exhibits a structure which is difficult to define. It is in many

ways a list but, although it is constructed by means of an unrelenting repetition of formulas, it cannot be easily classified as a chronicle, as an annal, or as any of the other of the traditionally designated forms of elementary historical narratives. Thus studies of simple historical narratives from other cultures, let us say those of Medieval Europe, are of little value to our efforts. More close to home, moreover, the very status of this particular text within the set of other known Sumerian literary compositions of the Old Babylonian period is equally difficult to define. Briefly stated, the sources of the King List belong to a class of tablets which cannot be easily classified within the bounds of our present knowledge of Sumerian literary tablets. Of the fifteen sources known at this time more than half, specifically nine texts, derive from Nippur.⁹ As far as I am able to discern, all of the Nippur sources contained the entire composition of the List in its "Nippur recension," that is without the section enumerating the antediluvian kings.¹⁰ None of these texts represents any of the typical Nippur student tablets; no extracts are known. It should also be noted that no copy of the King List was found in the third post-war season of excavations at Nippur in the private houses in the well-known TA area of Tablet Hill which yielded a large group of practice tablets which represent a cross-section of the school curriculum of this city during the time of Samsu-iluna.¹¹ In light of these facts it is difficult to designate the King List as a school text in the same manner in which we view the majority of Old Babylonian literary works from Nippur and, perhaps, from Ur. Compositions which were written solely on large tablets are difficult to place in the curriculum; perhaps they were the exercises of highly advanced students. The only problem with this hypothesis is the fact that often the large tablets of other compositions contain an unusually high percentage of errors in comparison with the extract texts.¹² The place of the King List in the tradition is

⁶ For a radical criticism of these concepts see D. Nye, *The Semiotics of Biography: The Lives and Deeds of Thomas Edison* [Toronto Semiotic Circle. Monographs, Working Papers and Prepublications], 1981.

⁷ H. White, *Metahistory*, 6-7.

⁸ R. Barthes, "Le discours de l'histoire," *Social Science Information / Information sur les sciences sociales* 6 (1967), 65-75.

⁹ For the most recent list of manuscripts of this text see D. O. Edzard, "Königslisten und Chroniken. A. Sumerisch," *RIA* 6 (1980), 77-8.

¹⁰ See W. W. Hallo, "Beginning and End of the Sumerian King List in the Nippur Recension," *JCS* 17 (1963), 52-7.

¹¹ Most of these texts were published by J. W. Heimerdinger, *Sumerian Literary Fragments from Nippur*, 1979. The significance of this group of texts has been discussed briefly by M. Civil, *MSL* 14, 8.

¹² See, for example, the remarks by J. Klein, *Three Šulgi Hymns: Sumerian Royal Hymns Glorifying King Šulgi of Ur*, 1981, 170-1.

therefore difficult to define. It is so particularly in light of the observation that the repetitive nature of the composition, combined with the fact that it consists mainly of personal names, would have made it a useful tool for the learning of cuneiform signs at an early state of instruction.¹³

Given this state of affairs little can be said of the place of the King List in the set of other Old Babylonian literary compositions, a matter further complicated by the fact that there is, at present, considerable disagreement on the date of composition of this document.¹⁴ These matters are of great importance for any understanding of this, or, for that matter, any text since meaning is never hermetically sealed within a text but resides, in the words of Harold Bloom, "between texts."¹⁵

Any discussion of the King List can only begin to unravel the levels of meanings which circulate within, around and next to this composition. While uncertainties abound and the semantic space of the text may be difficult to grasp, the sources of the compiler can, most probably, be better perceived. The likeliest sources for the sections containing information from the Old Akkadian period to the time of the Isin dynasty are the date-lists. Such date-lists exist and, for the most part, it is not difficult to reconcile the data of the King List with information which can be independently gleaned from these sources.¹⁶ The earliest year-dates go back to the time of Enšakušana, but the consistent use of this type of dating began

with the Akkad dynasty.¹⁷ It is, therefore, no coincidence that the fewest manuscript problems and variant readings are found in those portions of the List which concern historical periods when year-dates were in use. For other periods some of the possible sources are votive and triumphal inscriptions which were still available during the Old Babylonian period. The ever-growing corpus of Old Babylonian copies of pre-Sargonic, Sargonic and Ur III royal inscriptions testifies well to this fact. Nippur, in particular, must have been a good source of older texts. It is now quite evident that triumphal inscriptions were set up in the Ekur and possibly in other shrines of Enlil in that city; this is apparent from the subscripts in the well-known compilations of Sargonic inscriptions from Nippur.¹⁸ A recently published text of similar contents contains a concluding note specifying that the inscriptions copied on the tablet were found in the courtyard of the Ekur.¹⁹ The Old Babylonian tablet of the inscriptions of the Ur III ruler Šū-Sîn likewise was copied from texts from temples of Enlil and Ninlil in Nippur.²⁰ Individual inscriptions do not, however, necessarily provide the name of a given ruler's father and therefore are difficult to seriate in a list. I suspect that this may be the source of the large variation in the order of kings in the early sections of the king list. It must be said, however, that of the sixty or so names of rulers in the pre-Sargonic sections of the list, only approximately six are presently attested in contemporary texts.²¹ Moreover, as J. Cooper reminds me, the unstable manuscript tradition for these sections is also a function of the transmission history of the text and thus one must look for other reasons to explain why certain parts of the list were less subject to change than others.

¹³ Lists of personal names as well as primers based on names were utilized in Old Babylonian schools at early levels of instruction. See E. Sollberger, "A Three-Column Silbenvokabular A," *AS* 16 (1965), 21–8; M. Çiğ and H. Kızılay, "Additions to Series B and C of Personal Names from Old Babylonian Nippur," *AS* 16 (1965), 41–56.

¹⁴ For a recent survey of various opinions on the subject see D. O. Edzard, *RIA* 6 (1980), 80–1.

¹⁵ "An empirical thinker, confronted by a text, seeks a meaning. Something in him says: 'If this is a complete and independent text, then it has a meaning.' It saddens me to say that this apparently commonsensical assumption is not true. Texts don't have meanings, except in their relations to other texts, so that there is something uneasily dialectical about literary meaning. A single text has only part of a meaning; it is itself a synecdoche for a larger whole including other texts. A text is a relational event, and not a substance to be analyzed," H. Bloom, *Kabbalah and Criticism*, 1975, 166.

¹⁶ See R. Borger, *HKL* III, 37 par. 19.

¹⁷ A. Westenholz, "Early Nippur Year Dates and the Sumerian King List," *JCS* 26 (1974), 154–6.

¹⁸ See H. Hirsch, "Die Inschriften der Könige von Agade," *AFO* 20 (1963), 72.

¹⁹ P. Michalowski, "New Sources Concerning the Reign of Naram-Sîn," *JCS* 32 (1980), 239.

²⁰ See for the possibilities of restoring the subscript, see M. Civil, "Šū-Sîn's Historical Inscriptions: Collection B," *JCS* 21 (1967), 37.

²¹ See T. Maeda, "'King of Kish' in Pre-Sargonic Sumer," *Orient* 17 (1981), 2 and J. Cooper, *Reconstructing History from Ancient Inscriptions: The Lagash-Umma Conflict*, 1982, in press. The actual number depends on how many restorations one accepts in broken passages in the King List as well as in original Early Dynastic inscriptions.

The variations of entries in these early sections may have originated in a variety of ideological and perceptual influences which cannot presently be recovered. Whatever these may have been, one thing is clear; there is absolutely no reason to trust the data contained in the King List. The unreliable nature of the early sections of the text may be most dramatically demonstrated in the case of the Dynasty of Gutium. It is well-known that almost everything we know of that "dynasty" comes from the King List. This matter has been discussed recently by W. W. Hallo and I shall not repeat his arguments here.²² Suffice it to say that of the four known manuscripts which preserve this section, no two agree on the names, order, regnal years, or number of the Gutian Kings. An unpublished tablet from Nippur, edited below, preserves the names of five of these rulers, among them two who do not appear in any other text of the List. In light of these facts I would venture to state that one cannot privilege any particular manuscript of the King List and that it is at present impossible to produce a composite text of this composition which would reflect any historical "reality."

Let me now turn briefly to a discussion of the ideological context of the King List. It has often been stated that this text contains a fiction, a notion that Sumer and Akkad were always ruled by one dynasty at a time. A word commonly encountered in discussions of the composition is the adjective "tendentious."²³ What this tendentious slant may have been, however, is less often spelled out with any detail in the literature on the subject. The most detailed account of the propagandistic nature of the King List was offered by J. J. Finkelstein who, building on previous statements by T. Jacobsen and F. R. Kraus, interpreted this composition as an expression of the idea of centralization of power in the hands of one dynasty, ruling from one city, an idea which found its roots in the period directly following the "expulsion of the Gutians" and which was ultimately realized as a legitimization of the Isin dynasty.²⁴ In the discussion

which follows I should like to develop this idea further and to suggest an ideological context which may help to explain one aspect of the conceptual basis of the King List.

After the fall of the Third Dynasty of Ur, Mesopotamia was ruled by a variety of competing kingdoms which were unable to achieve unity until the brief period of hegemony by Hammurabi and Samsu-iluna of Babylon. It is commonly accepted that the petty kingdoms of Babylonia during this period were in the hands of rulers who were of Amorite origin. The very nature of these Amorite origins, however, is a matter which is difficult to gauge and it is clear that a purely inductive analytical stance cannot cope with such problems; comparative studies and the use of models are necessary if the historian is to make any sense of the meager, selective and highly biased ancient sources available. In the paragraphs that follow I shall attempt to provide one model for the interpretation of certain aspects of Old Babylonian royal ideology.

However one may view the ethnic makeup of the local rulers of Babylonia during this period, one thing stands out: with very few exceptions these dynasties somehow stressed the fact that their ancestors were Amorite. The most dramatic evidence for this is the well-known "Genealogy of the Hammurabi Dynasty" and the related list of Shamshi-Adad's ancestors embedded in the Assyrian King List.²⁵ Hammurabi calls himself the ruler of all the Amorites but other kings, I would suggest, also proclaimed their connection with some aspect of "Amorite ideology." Thus Zabaja and Abi-sarē of Larsa, as well as Sîn-gāmil of Diniktu, are described in royal inscriptions as *rabiān amurrim* "Amorite chieftains."²⁶ The

de l'Iraq du début de l'époque néolithique à 333 avant notre ère. Perspectives et limites de l'interprétation anthropologique des documents, 1981, 230. A similar interpretation was expressed by J. Krecher, "Sumerische Literatur," in W. Röllig (ed.), *Neues Handbuch der Literaturwissenschaft. Altorientalische Literaturen*, 1978, 138-9.

²⁵ See J. J. Finkelstein, "The Genealogy of the Hammurabi Dynasty," *JCS* 20 (1966), 95-118.

²⁶ For references see M. Stol, *Studies in Old Babylonian History*, 1976, 87-8. A new inscription of an Old Babylonian ruler who bears the title *rabiān amurrim* was recently excavated at Tell Hadad in the Hamrin basin. Dr. Rashid al-Arwi, who is preparing the text for publication, was kind enough to allow me to see his copy of the inscription and generously allowed me to quote it. The text commemorates

²² W. W. Hallo, "Gutium" *RIA* 3 (1971), 711.

²³ See, for example, D. O. Edzard, *RIA* 6 (1980), 77.

²⁴ J. J. Finkelstein, "Early Mesopotamia, 2500-1000 B.C.," in H. D. Lasswell, D. Lerner and H. Spier (eds), *Propaganda and Communication in World History. Volume I: The Symbolic Instrument in Early Times*, 1979, 60-3. See M. Civil's observation, "La finalité de la liste royale sumérienne, par exemple, semble être la légitimation des revendications territoriales de la faible dynastie d'Isin," in *L'archéologie*

case of the early kings of Larsa is an interesting one in this context. The true power of this dynasty dates from the time of Gungunum, traditionally the fifth ruler of that line. No year-dates are preserved from the period prior to this king's reign. A date-list as well as a king list, however, provide us with the names and lengths of reign of four of Gungunum's predecessors.²⁷ It is clear, nevertheless, that the power of these early rulers—if indeed all of them actually reigned at Larsa itself—could not have extended far beyond the immediate environs of the city. In recent years new information has been published which sheds light on the reigns of two of Gungunum's predecessors. The first piece of evidence is found in an inscription of Gungunum himself; the opening lines read as follows:²⁸

1. *gu-un-gu-nu-um*
2. *lugal arar.ki-ma*
3. *lugal ki-en-gi ki-uri*
4. *ibila kala-ga*
5. *sa-mi-um*

Gungunum, king of Larsa, king of Sumer and Akkad, rightful heir of Samium.

Note that while Gungunum dresses himself in the Mesopotamian titular trappings of power, calling himself "King of Larsa," "King of Sumer and Akkad," the name of Samium is not followed by a title. The recent excavations at Larsa have brought to light a monumental text of Zabaja, the brother of Gungunum who preceded him on the throne of Larsa. The full text of this inscription reads:²⁹

1. *za-ba-a-a*
2. *ra-bi-an* MAR.TU
3. DUMU *sa-mi-um*

the (re)building of the wall of ME.TUR.AN^{ki} by *a-ri-im-li-im* / *dumu i-ba-a-a* / *ra-bi-an* MAR.TU (lines 1–3).

²⁷ The *Larsa King List* (YOS I, 32), edited most recently by A. K. Grayson, "Königslisten und Chroniken," *RIA* 6 (1980), 89–90, and the *Larsa Date List*, see A. Ungnad, "Datenlisten," *RIA* 2 (1938), 149–59. Both texts list the four predecessors of Gungunum but the date list only begins the enumeration of actual year formulae starting with that king.

²⁸ Gungunum 1.

²⁹ Zabaja 1. See now also the fragmentary Old Babylonian letter from Girsu which includes the lines: (10') *uš-tu za-ba-a-a be-li* (11') *i-na giš.gu.za-im uš-bu-ma*, D. Arnaud, "Texts relatifs à l'histoire de Larsa: 1," *RA* 71 (1977), 4.

4. É.BABBAR.RA

5. *i-pu-uš*

Zabaja, the *rabiān amurrim*, son of Samium, (re)built the Ebabbar.

Abi-sarē, the king who followed Gungunum on the throne of Larsa, likewise used this title in one of the few inscriptions which are presently available from his reign.³⁰ His family relationship with the preceding rulers of Larsa is not known, however. The full implications of the use of this title are impossible to ascertain. One could, of course, claim that these "Amorite titles" were meant to refer to the tribes which lived within the scope of rule of these kings. I would like to suggest, however, that another explanation is in order. It appears that the best interpretation of these titles is to assume that legitimacy in this period was not only a function of the traditional Mesopotamian trappings of power, as well as of power itself, but was also related to the status of a given ruler within the kinship structure of the Amorite tribes. In other words, I am suggesting that these titles provide a form of "genealogical charter" for the legitimization of kingship; it was not enough to be king, one had to claim descent from the proper lineage within the Amorite tribes.³¹ Indirect evidence in support of this hypothesis may be found in the inscriptions of the Old Babylonian dynasty of Uruk. The first ruler of this dynasty, Sîn-kāshid, claimed as one of his titles the designation "King of the Amnanum (Tribe)" (*lugal am-na-nu-um*).³² The same title was held by Sîn-gāmil, most probably his grandson.³³ When, however, the throne of Uruk passed into the hands of Anam, a *homo novus* who had served as a high official under Sîn-gāmil, we find this title conspicuously absent in the inscriptions of the new king. In the light of our hypothesis we may claim that the reason why Anam could not claim the title "King of the Amnanum" was that he was not descended from the royal lineage within that tribe. If we were to assume that the title simply referred to the fact that the Amnanum were an important component in the domain of Uruk under Sîn-kāshid and his successors,

³⁰ Abi-sare 4: 1, 27.

³¹ For this concept see L. and P. Bohannon, "A Genealogical Charter," *Africa* 22 (1952), 301–15.

³² D. O. Edzard, *Die "zweite Zwischenzeit" Babylonien*, 1957, 106.

³³ Sîn-gamil 3: 7.

we would be at a loss to explain its absence in the inscriptions of Anam since contemporary evidence clearly indicates that this tribal group played an important role in the politics and economics of Uruk during the reign of Anam.³⁴

If, for the sake of the argument, one assumes that this form of genealogical charter was an important component of the ideology of royal legitimization during the Old Babylonian period, one is immediately struck by the lack of any evidence of any such elements in the propaganda of the rulers of Isin. The explanation for this is not hard to find, for the founder of the dynasty, Ishbi-Erra, was either not an Amorite or, more probably, was from the wrong lineage within his own tribe, having attained high status and, eventually, control of Isin only through his service to the kings of Ur. Briefly stated, I should like to propose that the Isin kings, from the wrong side of the tracks, so to speak, had no right to claim this particular form of legitimization. Theirs was a different claim, a claim which was, I would suggest, the central issue of the Sumerian King List. The fiction that each city of Mesopotamia in turn held the bala, the turn of office, not only provided them with an alternative to the genealogical charter which was not available to them, but it also served to bolster their claims of hegemony over all the territories which had once been under the rule of the Ur III dynasty. In this sense the King List complements the evidence of the lists which enumerate the Ur and Isin kings as if they constituted one unbroken chain of rulers,³⁵ the liturgical composition which lists the kings of these dynasties as incarnations of the god Damu,³⁶ as well as the perpetuation of particular forms of "royal hymns" by the Isin kings.³⁷ This conscious attempt to link the Isin dynasty with the Ur III kings was most dramatically realized in a literary text which exploited the fall of Ur. The "Lament over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur," clearly an Old Babylonian composi-

tion, contains, in effect a full articulation of Isin ideology.³⁸ Towards the end of the composition Nanna, the god of Ur, goes before Enlil and weeps over the destruction of his city. The answer of Enlil reads as follows:³⁹

di til-la inim pu-úh-ru-um-ma-ka šu gi₄-gi₄
nu-gál
inim du₁₁-ga en^den-lil-lá-ka šu bal-e nu-zu
ur₁.ki-ma nam-lugal ha-ba-sum bala da-rí
la-ba-an-sum
u₄ ul kalam ki gar-ra-ta zag un lu-a-šè
bala nam-lugal-la sag-bi-šè è a-ba-a igi im-
mi-in-du₈-a

The verdict of the assembly cannot be turned back, the word commanded by Enlil knows no overturning. Ur was granted kingship, it was not granted an eternal reign. Since the days of old when the land was founded until (now) when the people have multiplied, who has (ever) seen a reign of kingship that is everlasting?

The "Lament" and the King List both reflect the same ideology; Isin is in line to hegemony and that is simply the way things are. The explanation of the King List as a form of charter naturally explains the absence of the Larsa rulers from the text. The other major omission, that of the Early Dynastic kings of Lagash may, in effect, be linked to the absence of the Larsean kings. The last rulers of Larsa continually stressed their tribal connections with Jamutbal and with the region of Lagash.⁴⁰ Rīm-Sîn mentions his connections with Girsu and Lagash in his inscriptions. In connection with these facts W. W. Hallo has suggested that it was during this time that certain Lagash literary traditions were incorporated in the Nippur literary corpus since such texts as Lugal-e and the Nanshe Hymn clearly reflect Lagashite motifs and stylistic features.⁴¹

The narrative form of the King List, that of a repetitive list, is perfectly suited for the purpose of the

³⁴ See the letter between An-am and Sîn-muballit published by A. Falkenstein, "Zu den Inschriftfunden der Grabung in Uruk-Warka 1960-1961," *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 2 (1963), 56-71. The "epistolary" nature of this text has been discussed by F. R. Kraus, *BiOr* 22 (1965), 289-90.

³⁵ E. Sollberger, "New Lists of the Kings of Ur and Isin," *JCS* 8 (1954), 109.

³⁶ *TCL* 15, no. 18.

³⁷ On these matters see already W. W. Hallo, "The Last Years of the Kings of Isin," *JNES* 18 (1959), 57.

³⁸ The published sources of this composition have been listed by D. O. Edzard, *AJO* 23 (1970), 92 and a translation by S. N. Kramer is available in *ANET*³, 611-9. I am preparing a full edition of this text which will include all known unpublished duplicates.

³⁹ *STVC* 25 obv. 18-22 = *UET* 6, 132: 71-11.

⁴⁰ M. Stol, *Studies* . . . , 63-72.

⁴¹ W. W. Hallo, "Choice in Sumerian," *JANES* 5 (1973), 110.

text—to serve as a historical charter for the Dynasty of Isin. The meaning of the text is not revealed by any narrative episodes but through the cumulative effect of the structure of the composition. The ending of the text is simply the present—the Isin kings. It is therefore not surprising that the order of certain dynasties, the names and even the presence or absence of some groups of rulers are minor details from the point of view of the function of the List. In this instance structure is meaning and therefore the details are of little importance. The result of this state of affairs is that there is no “correct” form of the composition, that is one which would be more true to reality and reflect more precisely the actual chronology of early Mesopotamian history. The vagaries of textual transmission as well as the functional and structural properties of this text are such that we cannot, by any means, privilege any particular manuscript of the King List. I do not want to enter here into a discussion on the comparative merits of different ways of editing cuneiform documents; in the case of the King List, however, we must avoid attempting to reconstruct any ideal manuscript. Given the state of our knowledge we can only assume that there are as many King Lists as there are manuscripts.

Since the King List is not a reflection of real events but is, rather, a depiction of an *idea* of reality, the text should forever be banished from reconstruction of early Mesopotamian history. Others have come to similar, if not as radical conclusions. Thus, T. Jacobsen, who has worked on this text more than anyone else, recently concluded that he had at one time overestimated the chronological value of the King List.⁴²

In this article I have reconstructed and contrasted two styles of political legitimation in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia: the ideology of the King List and related documents and the historical charter of genealogical thought. Before concluding this essay I should like to dedicate a few final paragraphs to the ideological and social contexts of these concepts. The central problems which come to mind in any discussion of tribes and genealogies are those of social and economic organization. Traditionally there has been a tendency to associate tribal structure and strong extended kinship ties with pastoralism and nomadism, often collapsing the last two concepts together. This

view of the Mesopotamian social landscape has been questioned to good effect in recent studies and there is no reason to confuse these various factors in historical research.⁴³ It is clear that nomadism can have many forms and that the spectrum between fully settled urban life and total nomadism is a broad one, one which cannot be demarked by simple typologies.⁴⁴ Moreover, it is also quite clear that urban settlement does not preclude the perpetuation of kinship ties.⁴⁵ When I suggest that Old Babylonian rulers utilized genealogies as charters I do not necessarily wish to claim any particular way of life as a determining factor in the background of these kings. The recognition of their Amorite past, or even present, does not mean that I envision, as has often been done in the past, hordes of semi-nomadic Amorite-speaking tribes descending upon the rich cities of the Mesopotamian plain from Syria through the Jezira. The linguistic situation I leave aside as unsolvable, most likely involving numerous dialects and languages, of which we shall never know, trade languages and various forms of bilingualism. The subsistence pattern of “Amorites” probably differed from place to place and from time to time, depending very much on environmental and political pressures. Finally, the entry point for most “Amorite” groups, or rather the strongest point of contact and interaction, was not the route down the Euphrates from western Syria but through Northern Mesopotamia, the Ġabal Ḥamrīn and down the Diyāla. Thus Sippar and its environs was probably a crucial place of cultural exchange.⁴⁶ Who these “Amorites” were is another matter. In order to even begin to approach such a question we must go back in time and investigate certain aspects of the problem already evident in Ur III times.

R. M. Adams and H. Nissen have drawn attention to the model developed by Owen Lattimore which explained the relationships between Mongolian nomads

⁴² T. Jacobsen, cited by J. A. Brinkman, “Chronologies of the Near East, 3500–2000 B.C.: The Sixtieth Anniversary Symposium of the Oriental Institute,” *The Oriental Institute. Annual Report 1979–80*, 60.

⁴³ See K. A. Kamp and N. Yoffee, “Ethnicity in Ancient Western Asia During the Early Second Millennium B.C.: Archaeological Assessments and Ethnoarchaeological Perspectives,” *BASOR* 237 (1980), 85–104.

⁴⁴ See P. C. Salzman, “Introduction: Processes of Sedentarization as Adaption and Response,” in P. C. Salzman (ed.), *When Nomads Settle*, 1980, 1–19.

⁴⁵ K. A. Kamp and N. Yoffee, *BASOR* 237 (1980), 93.

⁴⁶ See P. Michalowski, *The Royal Correspondence of Ur* [Unpublished Yale University doctoral dissertation], 1976, chapter 4. Hereafter cited as *RCU*.

and Chinese authorities during the Han dynasty.⁴⁷ Reacting against Chinese narratives concerning the interrelationship between the central government and the frontier areas, Lattimore was able to demonstrate that the political formations on the Chinese borders were as much a consequence of imperial government policy as a function of subsistence patterns in these areas. Imperial control provided the environment for contact and intermingling of peripheral groups from the center as well as pastoral nomads from the steppes. Not surprisingly, in time, the peripheral members of the state began to identify more closely with the other inhabitants of the area who, in turn, adapted certain features from them. Without stretching the analogy it is certainly reasonable to assume, on the basis of the extant data, that a similar situation existed in the border areas of Mesopotamian military control. The best example of the autonomous nature of the *limes* during the Ur III period is found in the literary correspondence between king Šulgi and Arad-mu, the chief military officer of the "empire."⁴⁸ In two well known letters Arad-mu complains to the king that Apillaša, the appointed governor of Subartu, has insulted the office of the representative of the crown and has established a virtually independent kingdom in the area. The answer of Šulgi is quite telling; he orders Arad-mu to come to terms with Apillaša and to disregard the latter's insulting behaviour. A similar situation is found in the correspondence between a later king, Šū-Sîn, and his official Šarrum-bāni, an officer sent to oversee the building of the fortifications against the "Amorites" in the north-east.⁴⁹ The king actually deposes Šarrum-bāni from his post and replaces him with a more trustworthy official, his uncle Babati.⁵⁰ The reason for this action is that Šarrum-bāni has exceeded his orders by engaging in military activity against the Amorites, actions which were specifically forbidden by the king. Šū-sîn makes references to the fact that the military activities as well

as his high-handed attitude towards the local leaders, have upset the delicate balance of power and stability in the area. The term used to describe this state of affairs is *dím-ma ma-da*, the equivalent of Akkadian *ṭēm mātim*.⁵¹ The Sumerian expression is not common but the Akkadian version is well attested, particularly in the omen literature.⁵² It is difficult to provide a modern "translation" of this expression but the contexts in which it appears suggest something akin to "the balance of power," and "political *status-quo*."

In the case of the peripheral areas of the Ur III state this situation encompasses not only "hostile" Amorite elements but also the colonists sent there from the core area and a variety of other peoples and social groups which inhabited the border regions; individuals and organizations which interacted in a variety of ways with the central government. It is clear from the Ur letters that the crown recognized the political reality of the tenuous nature of the military and economic control over these areas and adjusted its policy to practical contingencies. The fluid nature of social organization in the regions where we suspect the Amorites lived most probably resulted in a continuous shifting of the status of various elements of the population. As a number of researchers on the subject have stressed, sedentarization and restructuring of nomadic groups can manifest itself in an almost infinite variety of ways and it is impossible to construct a model which would predict the situation in the past in a definite manner.⁵³ It is reasonably clear, however, that throughout early Mesopotamian history we are dealing not with successive waves of nomadic groups from some putative ultimate homeland, but with differing modes of interaction with population groups which consisted of a variety of elements, some settled, some in various nomadic patternings, some newly arrived and some which had lived in the area for generations. Moreover, one must posit that the varieties of social and economic forms under which these

⁴⁷ R. McC. Adams, "The Mesopotamian Social Landscape: A View from the Frontier," in C. B. Moore (ed.), *Reconstructing Complex Societies* [Supplement to the Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research no. 20], 1974, 1–20; H. J. Nissen, "The Mobility Between Settled and Non-Settled in Early Babylonia: Theory and Evidence," *L'Archéologie de l'Iraq* . . . , 285–90.

⁴⁸ RCU, 135–59.

⁴⁹ RCU, 224–42.

⁵⁰ On Babati see also R. M. Whiting, "Tiš-Atal of Nineveh and Babati, Uncle of Šu-Sîn," *JCS* 28 (1976), 173–82.

⁵¹ The expression occurs a number of times in the Šū-Sîn correspondence. See for example, the instructions given to Šarrum-bāni and Babati by the king:

ma-da dí-ma-bi nu-kúr-ru-dè nam-ba-sum-mu-[en]-zé-en, "I have instructed you both not to change the political climate of the territory!" (Šū-Sîn—Šarrum-bāni 39–40: RCU, 236).

⁵² See J. Bottéro, "Le pouvoir royal et ses limitations d'après les textes divinatoires," in A. Finet (ed.), *La voix de l'opposition en Mesopotamie*, 1974, 119–64.

⁵³ K. A. Kamp and N. Yoffee, *BASOR* 237 (1980), 85–104.

people lived provided the occasion for successive forms of intermingling between those who were from the periphery and those who had arrived from the center. The view of those who wrote documents, the scribes and bureaucrats of Mesopotamia, may not have been the same as those who lived in these areas and thus the variety of tribal names and appellatives does not, necessarily, reflect accurately the native designations for the same concepts. Moreover, these designations may have changed over time. The Mari records, for the most part covering only one generation or so, provide some evidence for a larger "confederation" which encompassed groups which were designated as Amnanum, Ubrabum, Jarihū, Jahrurum, and Rab-baium.⁵⁴ Some of the "tribal names" known from Mari also occur in texts from Babylonia.⁵⁵ Most intriguing among these are a small number of references to double names;⁵⁶ among these the most conspicuous is Amnan-Jahrurum. This designation occurs for the first time in a letter from An-am of Uruk to Sin-muballit of Babylon where men of this grouping are allies of the ruling houses of these two cities.⁵⁷ Two generations later, during the reign of Samsu-iluna, the Amnan-Jahrurum are enemies of Babylon.⁵⁸ We have no way of knowing, however, whether these references in fact refer to the same political and military entities and, most important of all, whether the Amnan-Jahrurum have anything to do with the separate entities Amananum and Jahrurum, both of which were part of the Jaminites encountered in the Mari records.⁵⁹ Thus one would be hard pressed to attempt to define or recognize pure

Amorite tribes in the extant documentation. Tribal groupings, recognized for particular purposes, must have been quite fluid and the genealogical information within these groupings was probably adjusted to accommodate new situations. Kinship is, in many ways, a fiction, and there is ample documentation for the manipulability of genealogies to serve different ends.⁶⁰ Thus one should not expect the various manifestations of genealogical charters, as described above, to be identical from situation to situation. In a survey of recent work on the representation of social reality S. F. Moore has written:

Established rules, customs, and symbolic frameworks exist, but they operate in the presence of areas of uncertainty, of ambiguity, of uncertainty and manipulability. Order never fully takes over, nor could it. The cultural, contractual, and technical imperatives always leave gaps, require adjustments and interpretations to be applicable to particular situations, and are themselves full of ambiguities, inconsistencies, and often contradictions.⁶¹

For these reasons any attempt at ascertaining the "original" form of Amorite royal genealogy has been and will always remain, a failure. The differences between the textual remains must be explained in terms of indeterminacy and manipulation. Social groups often require periodic reinforcements of ethnic or other identities, of the fictions which help to bend them together. It is therefore of little surprise that two of the three main ancient royal genealogies, the tablet with the "Genealogy of the Hammurabi Dynasty," as well as the royal ancestor lists from Ugarit, are encountered within the context of ritual offerings to deceased ancestors.⁶² These factors also allow us to explain the relative scarcity of genealogical material from Mesopotamia for these are precisely the type of reinforcements which function on a practical level in

⁵⁴ J. T. Luke, *Pastoralism and Politics in the Mari Period* [Unpublished University of Michigan doctoral dissertation], 1965, 61.

⁵⁵ See D. O. Edzard, *Die "zweite Zwischenzeit"*, 104–08.

⁵⁶ M. Stol, *Studies* . . . , 86.

⁵⁷ A. Falkenstein, *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 2 (1963), 56–71, see note 33 above.

⁵⁸ CBS 1627, an unpublished tablet of uncertain contents, mentions Samsu-iluna and, in lines 8 and 9, ù šà mu l-a-ka 6 ugnim ma-da am-na-an-ia-aḥ-ru-rum. ki-ma-ke₄. The text is very poorly preserved and requires further study. I hope to provide a publication of this tablet in the near future.

⁵⁹ In Babylonia these two groupings gave their names to the separate settlements of Sippar-Amnanum and Sippar-Jahrurum. See D. O. Edzard, *Altbabylonische Rechts und Wirtschaftsurkunden aus Tell ed-Dēr im Iraq Museum, Baghdad*, 1970, 19–22.

⁶⁰ See, for example, C. Humphrey, "The Uses of Genealogy: A Historical Study of the Nomadic and Sedentarised Buryat," in *Pastoral Production and Society*, 1979, 235–60.

⁶¹ S. F. Moore, "Epilogue: Uncertainties in Situations, Indeterminacies in Culture," in S. F. Moore and B. G. Myerhoff (eds.), *Symbol and Politics in Communal Ideology*, 1975, 220.

⁶² J. C. De Moor, "Rapi'uma—Rephaim," *ZAW* 88 (1976), 323–45; K. A. Kitchen, "The King List of Ugarit," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 9 (1977), 131–42.

the society and not necessarily in the selective world of the scribes. Our data are, and will remain, incomplete not only because the available texts constitute the tip of an iceberg, but because they represent the top of only one small iceberg among many, the minute aspects of the society which were committed to writing.

APPENDIX

A New Fragment of the King List and the Problem of the Dynasty of Gutium

UM 29-15-199 is an upper right-hand fragment of a tablet which originally contained the whole text of the King List, most probably without the antediluvian section. The tablet was excavated in Nippur and is currently in the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. The text, which was brought to my attention by Miguel Civil, is published by kind permission of Åke Sjöberg, curator of the Babylonian Section of the Museum.

The preserved portions of UM 29-15-199 contain the remnants of sections containing the Dynasty of Agade (i') the Third Dynasty of Uruk (ii'), the Gutian Dynasty (iii') and the Dynasty of Isin (rev. i). As far as I have been able to discern, this tablet does not join any of the presently known Nippur exemplars of the King List. In the edition which follows the numbers in parentheses refer to the line numbering of Jacobsen's standard edition; the section containing the Gutian kings is discussed separately below.

UM 29-15-199

Obverse

i'

1. [r_i-m]u-^ruš¹ } (vi 37)
 2. [dumu šar-r]u-GI
 3. [9² mu] ^ri-ak¹ (vi 38)
 4. traces
- Rest of column broken.

ii'

1. unug.ki-ga } (vii 15)
 2. ur-nigin₃ lugal-àm
 3. [x] mu ⁱ-ak (vii 16)
 4. [ur-giš.gigir d]umu ur-nigin₃- (vii 17)
 - ke₄
 5. [x mu] ^ri-ak¹ (vii 18)
 6. traces
- Rest of column broken.

iii'

1. si-lu-lu-e
 2. 6 mu ⁱ-ak
 3. du₁₀-ga 6 mu ⁱ-ak
 4. i-lu-DINGIR mu 3 ⁱ-ak
 5. ia-ar-la-ga-ab
 6. 5 mu ⁱ-ak
 7. [ku-r]u-um 3 mu ⁱ-ak
 8. [x x] x-um
 9. [x x x mu ⁱ]-ak
- Rest of column broken.

Reverse

i

- 1'. i-si-in.[ki-šè ba-túm] (viii 22)
 - 2'. i-si-in.ki-[na] } (viii 23)
 - 3'. ^diš-bi-è[r-ra]
 - 4'. lugal-àm
 - 5'. 33 mu ⁱ-ak (viii 24)
 - 6'. ^dšu-ⁱ-lⁱ-šu / dumu ⁱš-bi-èr-ra- (viii 25)
 - ke₄
 - 7'. 10 mu ⁱ-ak (viii 26)
 - 8'. ^di-din-^dda-gan / dumu ^dšu-ⁱ- (viii 27)
 - li-šu-ke₄
 - 9'. 21 mu ⁱ-a[k] (viii 28)
 - 10'. ^diš-me-^dda-gan / dumu ^di-din- (viii 29)
 - ^dda-gan
 - 11'. 18 mu ⁱ-ak (viii 30)
- End of Column

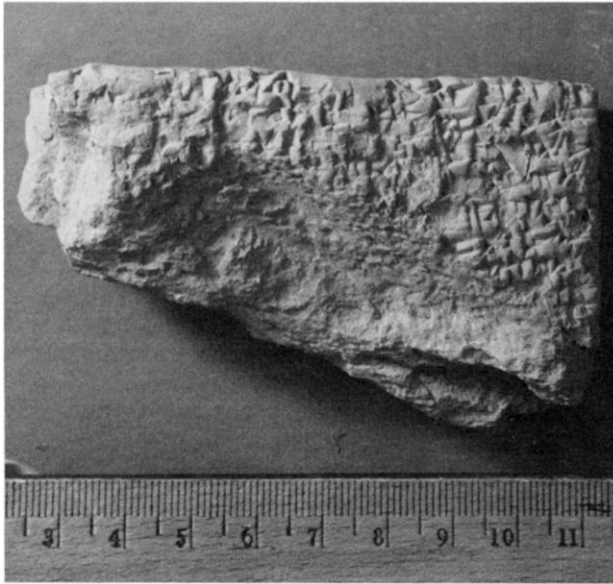
From the fact that the remains of a vertical column separating two more columns are visible on the bottom of the reverse it is obvious that the text continued in the next column.

It is quite difficult to estimate the number of lines missing in columns ii' and iii'. One can conservatively assume that each column had approximately thirty lines of text. The lines on the UM tablet are rather short and it is therefore hard to judge exactly how many names must be restored in the Gutian section since columns iii' and i must have contained not only an unspecified number of Gutian rulers but also the reign of Utu-hegal, the Ur III kings, the beginning of the First Dynasty of Isin, as well as the formulas for each change of dynasty.

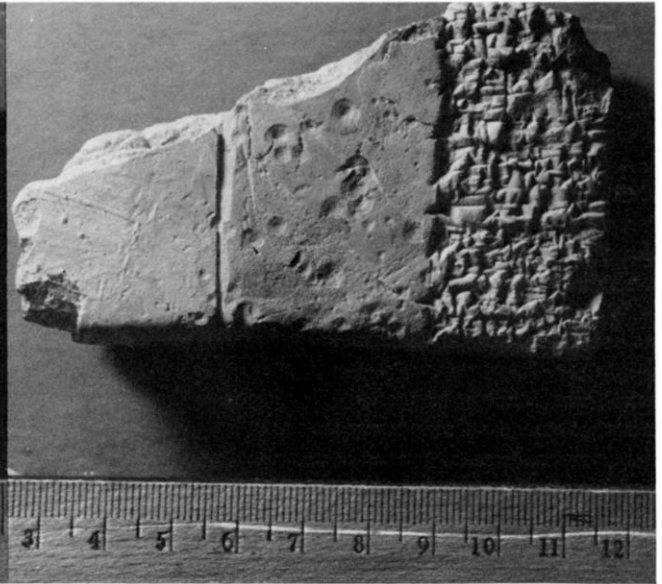
The new piece once again draws our attention to the impossibly complicated matter of the "Gutian Dynasty."⁶³ The only manuscript which contains a complete list of rulers of this dynasty is WB.⁶⁴ The other exemplars which have

⁶³ See W. W. Hallo, "Gutium" *RIA* 3 (1971), 707-20.

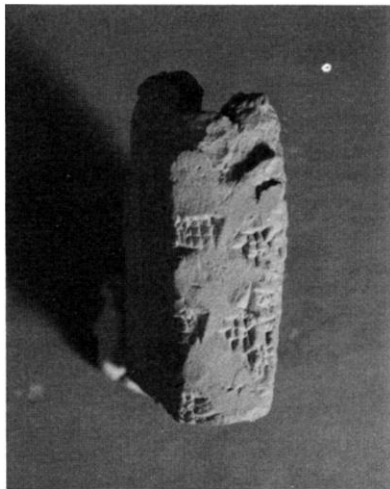
⁶⁴ The designations for the various manuscripts follow the usage of T. Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King List*, 1939; updated by D. O. Edzard, *RIA* 6 (1980), 77-8.



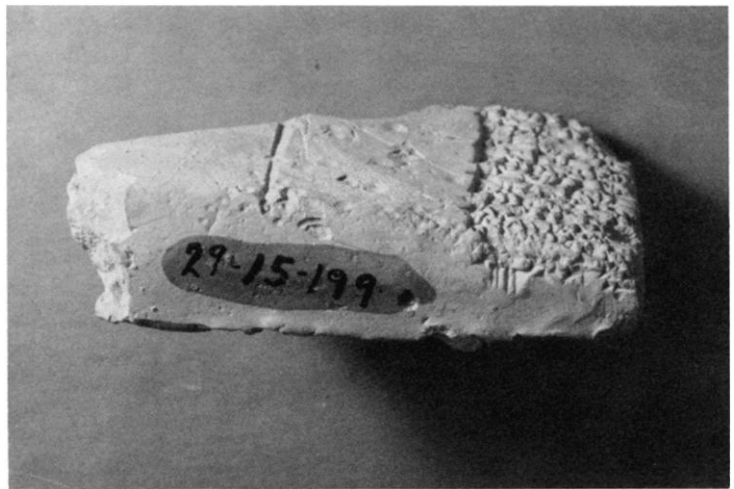
UM 29-15-199 obv.



UM 29-15-199 rev.



UM 29-15-199 right edge



UM 29-15-199 lower edge

partially preserved fragments of this section do not agree with the names, their order, or length of reign, which are attested in WB. Moreover, the summaries preserved on some of the Nippur tablets of the King List indicate that the actual number of kings was different in each text.⁶⁵ The new piece edited above only adds to the confusion. The first preserved king, si-lu-lu in iii' 1, is known only from WB, where he is the third ruler of the dynasty.⁶⁶ The next two kings of UM 29-15-199, du₁₀-ga and *i-lu*-DINGIR, are otherwise unat-

⁶⁵ These summaries have been edited by W. W. Hallo, *JCS* 17 (1963), 55-6.

tested. The next ruler, ia-ar-la-ga-ab, is to be identified with ia-ar-la-ga-ba, the second king in L₁ and ia-ar-la-gab, the seventh Gutian name in WB. *Ku-ru-um* is the tenth ruler of WB and the final traces of a name in the next line of the new text could represent any of the four kings of WB whose names end in /um/.

⁶⁶ WB vii 33. The name of this king was formerly read as e-lu-lu. This text was collated by W. W. Hallo, who was kind enough to provide me with the results of his work, as well as by myself on the basis of an excellent photograph which I owe to the courtesy of M. Civil.