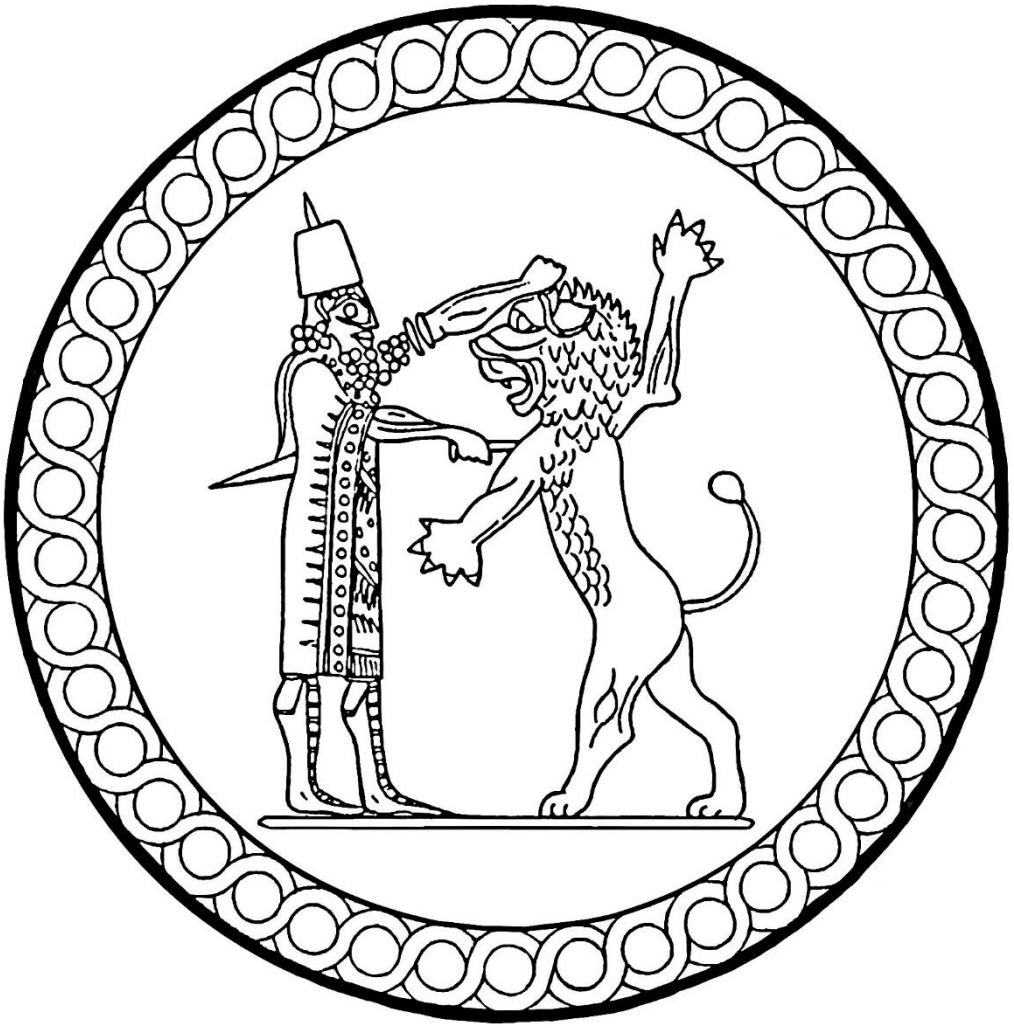


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FIVE THOUSAND NAMES
A CENTURY OF ONOMASTIC STUDIES
ON THE NEO-ASSYRIAN PERIOD [1]

Frederick Mario Fales †

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Abstract

Among Mario Fales' many research interests, onomastic always occupied a special place as a means to investigate languages, cultures, and societies. He planned to organise the results of his long-standing interest, particularly his recent in-depth studies, into a comprehensive publication. This work aimed to systematically address theoretical questions related to anthroponymy, explore problems and methods of name analysis and classification, investigate the social implications of onomastic data, and the historical and anthropological perspectives of name giving within cultural and ethnic contexts. Additionally, it would look into specific situations and their meanings during the NA period.

Mario completed a large part of this ambitious project so that it was almost ready for publication and in need of only minor editorial interventions, such as a few checks and updates, whereas the last chapters he had planned were still only barely outlined. After reading the manuscript, the editorial board considered that the extensive presentation of the NA materials and the thorough definition of the methodological issues, conducted along with a critical review of decades of onomastic studies, that the author produced in the first part, was a valuable and dense study in itself, a competent reflection on this field of study which is worth being shared as such with the scholarly community. We trust that we can correctly interpret the author's desire by publishing it in the journal Mario founded more than 30 years ago. This posthumous publication, therefore, represents both an important scientific contribution and a homage to Mario's scholarly activity.

The manuscript is here published with the kind permission of Marina Bentivoglio and Ludovica Fales, who promoted the edition of this article in SAAB, and whom we heartedly thank.

The editors also thank Luigi Turri for the first preparation of the manuscript, and Giulia Francesca Grassi for checking references to the Aramaic bibliography.

To the memory of Karlheinz Deller
who opened my eyes on Assyrian texts and on the personal names therein.

To the thousands of unfortunate victims of the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020,
whose remains lie buried somewhere in haste, with only their names to linger in future memory.

A man might be deprived of his shadow, and would be in no position to replace it.
But if he were robbed of his name by a malign sorcerer, and stricken with amnesia,
he would still not have to go through life nameless.
He could invent an appellation for himself; and even if he were deprived of the faculty of speech,
or of human intelligence altogether, a name would without fail be imposed on him by others.
Pulgram 1954, 149

1. I am very grateful to Ms. Roswitha Del Fabbro (Udine - FuB Berlin) and to Mr. Luciano Esteban Monti (Buenos Aires - Udine) for their kind bibliographical support. Specific abbreviations employed in specific contexts of this essay (especially footnotes) for reasons of convenience: NA = Neo-Assyrian; NB = Neo-Babylonian; LB = Late Babylonian; PN = personal name/anthroponym; GN = geographical name/toponym; DN = divine name/theonym.

1"Five Thousand Names"

1. a General Introduction

The present essay (to which jottings and corrections have been added with irregular rhythm over the years) is aimed at a comprehensive appraisal of research on the personal names of the Assyrian empire, a topic that has long been of philological and historical interest to this writer.[2]

The proper names from the Neo-Assyrian period should, of course, be viewed first and foremost as an integral part of the onomastics of the Ancient Near East in general, and specifically as a local/temporal development of the millennial tradition of Akkadian onomastics.[3] However, it may be recalled that, although the vast majority of the names which have come down to us from this period reflect linguistic elements and cultural contents of Assyrian origin, the political developments of the period brought an inordinate number of people(s) under the sway of Assyria — and this phenomenon caused a vast crowd of non-Assyrian name bearers to trod the country roads and the city streets of the empire, leaving some not negligible marks of their presence in the Assyrian texts dealing with epistolography, administration, business and law, historiography and literature.[4] Thus, Neo-Assyrian onomastics prove to differ from all other corpora of Ancient Near Eastern names for their interestingly cosmopolitan range.[5]

This feature brings about a unique consequence in itself. The study of the proper names of this empire spread all over the Near East proves to require recourse to the corpora of onomastic forms attested in documents couched in other scripts of the time, such as the Phoenician/Aramaic/Hebrew alphabet and hieroglyphic Luwian, and in other contemporaneous or later documentary traditions such as the Old Testament and the Elephantine letters. Further, the study of Neo-Assyrian personal names allows specialists to take into account onomastic typologies tied to areas even far removed from the core of the Assyrian empire, such as Arabia and Egypt and the vast mountain sector to the north-east and east of the Twin Rivers (Urarṭu, Mannea and Media, Elam), whence came princes, military or deportees who found their way into the registers of the empire itself. In this light, therefore, investigations on the personal names in the Neo-Assyrian corpus prove to be based on the richest booty for comparative linguistic purposes of any single phase or locale in Ancient Near Eastern history.

2. Cf. Fales 1974; 1977; 1978a; 1978b; 1979; 1980; 2005.
3. For a general overview of Ancient Near Eastern onomastics, cf. the series of succinct but informative articles in Edzard *et al.* 1998, resp. dedicated to Sumerian and Akkadian (D.O. Edzard), Hittite (H.A. Hoffner, Jr), Hurrian (G. Wilhelm), Amorite and other West Semitic languages in cuneiform sources (M.P. Streck).
4. Cf. Fales 2001 for a bird's-eye view of these materials.
5. As is well known, this cosmopolitan patterning of NA-period names — which may be seen as one of the functions of an overall tolerance, if not actually an outright taste, of Assyrian rulership for the perpetuation of the cultures native to the vanquished peoples — did not find a continuation to the same extent in the (equally wide-ranging) NB empire, where onomastics show a prevailing conformity to Babylonian linguistic and religious standards (with the Murašû circle representing a welcome exception).

The present essay on Neo-Assyrian personal names is primarily directed to Assyriologists, Semitists, and students of the cultural history of the Ancient Near East, as a reference work but also with an eye to possible teaching purposes.[6] This writer's aim is to review, along historical-critical guidelines, the different methodologies that have been employed in this study area, also in relation to wider premises/conclusions reached on Ancient Near Eastern personal names in the course of the last century. However, it is the last half-century which shall be of particular concern, for two reasons. In the first place, the mid-to-late 1960s may be viewed as the "birthdate" of renewed investigations, both of philological and historical character, on the NA age: such investigations also led to specific refinements in approach concerning the onomastics of this period, as will be seen. Secondly, the same general date may be set as the beginning of a new overall consciousness regarding onomastics *per se*, which brought about a re-evaluation of personal names as bearers of many different types of information — from a linguistic, historical, and cultural-anthropological point of view — whichever the geographical or chronological context of application.[7] Since not all the potentialities of such implications prove to have been adequately exploited for NA onomastics to date, this writer will (1) attempt to pursue some of them through sectorial analyses in the course of this essay, and (2) focus on guidelines for possible future research in the field by way of conclusion.

* * *

An overview of onomastic studies on the Neo-Assyrian period is undoubtedly favoured, at this time, by the excellent state of scholarly editions in the field. Specifically, the present-day student of Neo-Assyrian names is no more forced to delve into a veritable jungle of textual references, as in the past. Her/his energy may be almost entirely devoted to the names themselves and to the relevant implications in secondary literature, thanks the full availability of the corpus of "everyday" documents of this age in updated transliterations and translations (in the series *State Archives of Assyria*, SAA), as well as by the parallel presence of a vast and detailed prosopographical repertory drawn from such documents (the three-volume *Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, PNA).

The first and foremost of these projects (begun in 1987) represents the complete renewal of the *editiones principes* of the texts of the so-called "state archives" of Assyria, published more than one century ago.[8] This result was achieved by means of international research collaborations — with specific corpora assigned to different authors — and

6. It is worth noting that onomastics are still nowadays slightly shunned in general linguistic studies on the Ancient Near East. For example, the entire sector of research on personal names was totally neglected in the otherwise interesting collective review of recent results in Semitics edited by Izre'el 2002.
7. Cf. e.g. Caprini 2001 (esp. 33–83), where the inclusion of the proper name on the part of the cultural anthropologists — starting from Lévi-Strauss — as a fully significant element within the taxonomic system elaborated by each culture is recalled. In the Italian context, it was especially the ethnolinguist Giorgio Raimondo Cardona who pointed out the importance of onomastics within ancient and traditional societies (cf. e.g. Cardona 1976, 133–155).
8. Cf. Johns 1898–1901 for the administrative and legal texts; Johns 1901 for cadastral documents; and Harper 1892–1914 for the vast epistolary corpus.

thanks to an efficient technical plan of text preparation and for subsequent editorship, founded on preliminary electronic databases and templates for final printed output. By consequence, scholars in this and adjoining fields of research, as well as an interested outer audience, have at their disposal a comprehensive and updated record in transliteration and translation of the "everyday" documents of the Neo-Assyrian period, mainly centred on the 8th and 7th centuries B.C.[9]

In its turn, the SAA editorial work gave rise to the PNA (1998–2011), a project equally based on a network of international competences and on fully computerized processes (databases, bibliographical lists) for the filing and printouts of the onomastic and prosopographical data in their documentary context.[10] The collaborators in the PNA project, responsible (with signatures) for individual lemmata — or at times entrusted with complete groups of entries — were approx. forty, from many different countries, selected on the basis of their previous interest and activity in onomastic research. Obviously, this plurality of contributions has enormously accelerated the practical realization of the work; but especially it has endowed the PNA itself with a great variety of philological and linguistic capabilities, such as are nowadays largely beyond the range of individual researchers, thus putting the many difficult etymological attributions of the names on the firmest of footings available at present.[11]

In practice, the availability of these two modern and reliable instruments of research has allowed this writer (who took part in both) to extrapolate from the complex of the approx. 5,000 known personal names of Neo-Assyrian date a representative *onomastic sampler*, which will be called upon in this essay either through single quotes or within specific charts. The sampler will include not only particularly significant cases of standard name-formations, but also a number of rare or exceptional occurrences; and it will not only regard Akkadian names, but also those of other linguistic varieties present and in use within the Assyrian empire, and notably Aramaic.[12]

9. The SAA project stems from the indefatigable scientific and editorial energies of Simo Parpola (Helsinki), with the aid of an international board of specialists.
10. This project also goes back to Parpola for its ideation, inner organization, and overall coordination, as offshoot of the SAA. It was first directed and edited by Karen Radner (1998–1999, vol. 1) and then by H. D. Baker (2000–2011, vols. 2 and 3). Well-known general studies on the theme, and specifically the scope, of prosopography are those by Stone 1971 and the response to it by Carney 1973.
11. Similarly to the SAA, the PNA is founded on the fully computerized Helsinki database of all Assyrian sources. Thus, the data for each item also comprises a brief, but very useful, description and partial quote of each documentary context in which the specific PN occurs. Indisputably, this methodology represents a fundamental scientific upgrade on the work of K.L. Tallqvist (cf. § 2, below) and on all other previous compilations of onomastic registers, where prosopographically useful data was limited to the accompanying professional names and/or chronological attributions. On the other hand, and unavoidably as such, the presence of many scholarly "hands" involved in this vast work has caused a — limited, but nonetheless visible — series of internal fluctuations, especially as regards the etymological interpretation of the PNs, such as to leave room for further reflections and future studies.
12. Since the work is satisfactorily complete, with all volumes and issues now published, and the lemmata placed in rigid alphabetical order, it will be necessary to quote the names only by the relevant page-numbers and columns (a/b) of PNA in the sampler. The names themselves will be also given in the normalized form of PNA, which represents a midrange and abstract rendering along the principles of Assyrian phonetics (this choice is explained by Parpola in PNA 1/I, xxii–xxvii), and thus sometimes

The specific function of the sampler of names will be that of background material, to illustrate the most significant stages in methodological approaches and/or factual results that have marked the progress of onomastic research on the Neo-Assyrian period during the last 40 years in this writer's opinion. This illustration, which represents the core of the present essay, will be given in a set of distinct chapters, opened by this one, as general introduction.

Getting to the heart of the topic,§ 2 will deal with the earliest general classifications on Neo-Assyrian personal names, as well as with the main theoretical positions reached on Akkadian names in general. § 3 will regard the period after 1965, describing studies of general analytical/classificatory character on the Neo-Assyrian onomastic corpus. These studies were not merely aimed at the philological/linguistic (i.e. typological or etymological) explanation of the names, but also at placing these onomastics in a historical-comparative light within the wider framework of the different languages and scripts attested in the Assyrian geographical and political horizon.

In § 4, the focus will shift to the social implications of the onomastic data from this corpus. Here, among others, we find the problems of the use of one or more variants of the same name, or even of different names, for the same individuals, and more widely the question of the initial choice or secondary attribution of names in relation to specific ideological and social instances.

§ 5 will regard an ethnolinguistic and historical-anthropological perspective on Neo-Assyrian personal names — in practice, through the analysis of the relationship between onomastics and the contemporary cultural framework. This type of examination cannot limit itself — as in the past — to mere distributional charts of cultural elements in the names along geographical or chronological guidelines, but also requires the historian to come to terms with the general problem of what the name-bearing subjects could have felt their status to be in terms of cultural identity, or ethnicity, vis-à-vis the society around him.

The review of approaches to Neo-Assyrian anthroponyms will be concluded in § 6, where some particular categories of onomastic materials of the Neo-Assyrian age will be examined,[13] in an attempt to focus on the personal names from the standpoint of the scribes of the Neo-Assyrian state administration. Finally, notes on still open problems, and a few indications for future work to be performed in this specific field of research will be illustrated in § 7.

1. b Some Preliminary Assumptions on Ancient Near Eastern Personal Names

Prior to our analysis, it may prove useful to go back once more to the well-known Shakespearean question, "What's in a name?"[14] — but in this case with specific reference to

also at variance with the phonetics of the original names. The latter are on the other hand fully retrievable within the single entries of PNA itself, and this writer has quoted them only in cases of specific interest.

13. *E.g.*, specimen names lists, astroglyphs, other crypto-writings (the numbers making up Sennacherib's name), etc.

14. W. Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, II, ii, 1–2: "What's in a name? That which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet".

personal names, albeit projected on the very wide cultural and linguistic canvas of the Ancient Near East between the third millennium BC and the Christian era. The main point to be raised here regards the type and degree of expected results that the Ancient Near Eastern personal name poses as a source, whether individually considered or within a set of similar data; and in which domains of information such results may be preferentially expected. We may start from a brief and useful definition of Mesopotamian personal names *per se* and within the overall textual corpus by Jasper Eidem:

> The personal names (PNs) from Ancient Mesopotamia clearly constitute an important source material. Indeed quite a large portion of the total text-matter in the cuneiform record consists of PNs, due to the preponderance of administrative and legal archives. In contrast to modern European tradition, PNs in the Ancient Near East carried semantic content, i.e. they had a lexico-grammatical structure conveying information which could be understood in contemporary society.[15]

This element of the patent semantic content borne by onomastics in Mesopotamia, but on the whole within all Ancient Near Eastern regional contexts, represents not only — as Eidem notes — a major substantial difference with the name-giving habits of the present, but may also be said to create a major analytical rift between Near Eastern onomasticians and specialists concerned with names from other areas/times. In onomastic studies of general scope by philosophers of language or linguists, mainly with Indo-European cultural backgrounds, personal names have in the main been distinguished from common nouns not only in view of their superficial function (nouns, as appellatives, are said to "designate" or "characterize", whereas names "identify"), but also as regards their deeplying logic-linguistic aspects, i.e. in their (mainly oppositional) relation to "definite descriptions".[16] And this, despite the fact that the adjacency of nouns and names has been established since Antiquity: *onoma* and *nomen* were used for both categories, albeit with different specifications.[17]

15. Eidem 2004, 191.
16. It may be useful to recall in passing that proper names have formed a crucial cornerstone of more than a century and a half of linguistic and logical philosophy, starting from John Stuart Mill (1843) with his view of names as connotative and meaningless, and then Gottlob Frege (1892), who instead attributed both *Bedeutung* and *Sinn* to proper names (albeit leaving various open-ended problems, especially regarding the latter term), followed in part by Edmund Husserl (1900): cf. Van Langendonck 2007, 24–29. A major leap occurred with Bertrand Russell's theory of definite descriptions (*On Denoting*, 1905), in which it was held that definite descriptions were devices of quantification rather than (as it seemed) devices of genuine reference, and that they differed from indefinite descriptions like "a man" only in the affirmation of uniqueness. On "the vices and virtues of this little theory", cf. Neale 2005, 809 and 825 (on Russell's idea that ordinary proper names are disguised descriptions).
17. As recalled by Neale 2005, 825 note 62, already Basil of Caesarea (330–379 A.D.) had stated that "A name is not actually a signifier of a substance, but of the distinctive properties which characterize the individual", thus anticipating Russell's theory of disguised descriptions (cf. previous footnote). For the ancient correspondence of names with nouns, see e.g. Van Langendonck 2007, 17, who personally holds that "proper names certainly designate 'things' in the widest sense and since a thing is designated by a noun … a proper name must be a noun from the semantic point of view".

However, to investigate the logical-philosophical semantic aspect of proper names in general implies straying in part away from the more basic questions of meaning in onomatology. On the latter level, it may be observed that the Indo-European personal name (at least, in the Western horizon of the post-Hellenistic period) does not consistently preserve a linguistic form which may be perceived as identical to the appellative with which it is comparable or even identifiable; and in any case, it appears that the level/ rhythm/ complexity of language change inherent to proper names over time is different from that of the remainder of the language. For these reasons, in a nutshell, the medieval and modern Indo-European personal name is considered to be semantically endowed with "prevailing intransparency" *per* se:[18] thus, e.g., to be called *Serena* does not necessarily imply that serenity is, or was hoped/thought to be, a character trait of the name-bearer.[19]

Quite the opposite may however be said for Ancient Near Eastern naming practices, especially of Semitic affiliation.[20] The onymic meaning and content of Semitic names is decidedly, and explicitly, transparent, as long ago pointed out by Ignace J. Gelb:

> … They [= the personal names] are generally easy to understand. The reason for this comprehensibility is that they were usually couched in the language of the person or persons giving the name. The reason for their being couched in the current language of the name-givers was that the latter customarily formed names for their children in order to express a sentiment, a wish, or gratitude, revolving around their progeny or themselves … the conclusion that the ancient Near Eastern names reproduced the current language of the name-givers and

18. Pulgram 1954, 155; and see already Pulgram 1947, 201, on Indo-European compounded names (like *Hildebrand* or the like): "it must not be forgotten that a great many of these compounded names lacked meaning, and this not only because of the semantic incongruity of the component parts, but also frequently because no meaning was intended to be attached to the names: we fall easily into the error of reading into a name all sorts of more-or-less beautiful sentiments that were never contained therein nor understood as such".
19. Cf. *ibid.*, 202: "If in our times a child is christened *Lily* or *Ernest* or *Violet* or *Pearl*, surely not many persons — not even the parents themselves — bear in mind the name's dictionary-value, or wish to call attention to it". Of course there are notable exceptions to this "rule", as in e.g. Oscar Wilde's comedy *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1892), with its humorous word-play on the PN Ernest.
20. However, it must be recalled that the main semantic and semiotic characteristics of Semitic personal names may be already retrieved in Sumerian onomastics from third millennium Mesopotamia, especially of the subject-predicate (Pulgram 1947 would have said "dithematic") type. On Sumerian onomastics, the sole substantial treatment to date remains the one by Limet (1968); cf. however Di Vito 1993; Andersson 2012, for two important monographic studies comparing parallel semiotic aspects (resp. on "the designation and conception of the Personal God", and on kingship) in Sumerian and Akkadian third millennium PNs; see also Hilgert 2002. On the other hand, various Sumerian anthroponyms, especially of the most archaic periods, still present a number of etymological (and even interpretive) difficulties, for reasons of orthography, values, and sign order: see e.g. Mander 1988 (and Steinkeller 1993) on Sumerian names of scribes and musicians at Mari and Ebla; Pomponio 1991 on the names from Abū Ṣālabīḫ; Selz 1995 on presargonic Lagaš; and, in a wider perspective, Krebernik 2002. In recent years, the publication of the vast (but unprovenanced) archive from Garšana, near Umma, dating to the Ur III period, has yielded a fully new picture of the large extent to which Akkadian PNs were attested in southernmost Mesopotamia: cf. Kleinermann & Owen 2009, 378–380 (general index of names, Sumerian and Semitic), and 608–617 (the brick haulers' names, exclusively Semitic).

were consequently easily understood holds true.[21]

As will be clarified below, this interpretive result tallies by and large with the semantic results of the work of Johann Jacob Stamm on Akkadian *Namengebung* (1939), although Gelb did not acknowledge this seminal contribution in his 1962 essay.[22] At that time, in any case, Gelb himself had just published a paradigmatic demonstration of the principles enounced above, by drawing the rudiments of a grammar of the Amorite language of the late third-early second millennium BC exclusively from personal names.[23]

Moving from the initial standpoint of its intelligibility as established by Gelb, Stamm, and others, the Ancient Near Eastern anthroponym proves to be open to a multi-dimensional perspective and to a variety of approaches. If one considers that the personal name in the Ancient Near East not only (1) functioned as a specific designation of an individual, but (2) was also endowed with independent and apprehensible meaning,[24] and finally (3) bore contents patently referring to particular (but socially and/or linguistically shared) realms of religion, of *realia*, time, kinship, geography and ethnicity, physical appearance, mental status and character, professions, and even of social/ideological status,[25] it may be seen as fully representing what has been aptly described as a "multiple metaphor".[26]

As a consequence, Ancient Near Eastern personal names would theoretically deserve to be tackled along a set of concurrent research guidelines between history, linguistics, and the social sciences, similarly to what is done for personal names of some present-day societies of anthropological interest. However, in point of fact, only some of such guidelines have been hitherto actively pursued. No doubt, this is to some extent due to the limitations of the documentation itself (just to name one of such limitations, the personal names of the Ancient Near East may be accessed by modern scholars only at written level, with the additional handicap of the connected "decoding" procedures to be effected), but it is also due partly to the somewhat rigid historical-linguistic formation of many of the relevant specialists, at least as has been the case up to the present.

Thus, for example, it is not surprising to note that among the traditional and most productive avenues of Ancient Near Eastern onomastic research since the late 19th century, the study of anthroponyms in a philological-classificatory perspective stands out — as will be specified for Neo-Assyrian studies in §§ 2 and 3, below. This type of investigation, of a deductive-empirical character, is normally centred on the linguistic-etymological interpretation of the names (whether in a monolingual or in a multilingual horizon), on the breakdown of the grammatical characteristics attested therein (phonemics, morphology, and to a lesser degree syntax), as well as on the individuation of the broader set of cultural

21. Gelb 1962, 47.
22. In point of fact, Gelb only quotes his own studies in the sparse footnotes to his article. It may however be recalled that Stamm's work circulated in a limited fashion in the original edition, and received its main notoriety after the anastatic reprint of 1968: cf. fn. 73, below.
23. Gelb 1958; see also Gelb 1980.
24. This is only partially the case of Hittite personal names: cf. Hoffner 1968, 203; Tischler 2002.
25. This rough list is drawn from A. Hilka's exhaustive repertoire of Sanskrit onomastics, as resumed by Pulgram 1954, 156.
26. Arno 1994, 23.

features (in matters religious, but also geographical or social) which are evoked by the names. Whereas all this information may initially best be gained by accretion, i.e. through the detailed examination of every single name attested in a specific corpus and the charting of all of its significant features, it is equally clear that further results of related type may instead stem from a comprehensive or even comparative view of entire corpora. By way of example, possible presences/absences (or popularity shifts) of particular features/elements attested in names may be charted over time and space, e.g. within family onomastics or between neighbouring communities. For all these matters, as is obvious, the degree of completeness/coherence and the reliability of the studied textual evidence may represent conditioning factors.

To sum up, this entire level of investigation in the realm of Ancient Near Eastern anthroponymy, which focuses on the most visible — and thus most superficial — components of the "multiple metaphor" mentioned above, may yield a vast set of data on many different levels. Most abundant *per se* are the purely linguistic data — to the extent of allowing the construction of a full-fledged grammar of specific language varieties, as has been the case for Amorite. Also very significant is the information on the cultural arrays linked to the different onomastic corpora — insofar as it may come to corroborate and complement in detail particular notions or frameworks of intellectual history to be gained from other sources.[27] Finally, onomastics are — at least potentially — rich sources of indications in the ethno-linguistic or socio-linguistic domains, whether they are attained through statistical, geographical, or purely typological methods.

To be sure, these are by no means meagre historical results, as their presence in specifically "laconic" bodies of written information testifies most clearly. Thus, e.g., in some particularly "arid" inventories of people and commodities, personal names may represent the main source of socially-based data available; or elsewhere, where contextual information happens to be "skeletal", onomastics may provide a useful background for the overall reconstruction of the basic historical picture, e.g. regarding aspects of religious belief within specific communities or the admixture of different ethno-linguistic traditions.[28]

On the other hand, another — and quite rich and complex — series of factors which may potentially have lain behind the attribution and use of personal names remains for the moment at the level of largely untapped sources of information.

According to Robert K. Herbert (1995), there are socio-cultural issues that should be addressed in any research paper dealing with onomastics. These include: Who names a child? When is a child named? How is a name selected? Is name bestowal marked publicly or privately? Are names drawn from a stock of available names or coined freely?

27. This feature is moreover especially true of West Semitic onomastic corpora: cf. in general Pardee 1988, for an overview of the many issues involved.
28. Some of these cases are dealt with in detail by Eidem 2004.

In all probability there is no more attractive subject
in the Assyro-Babylonian inscriptions than an examination
of the personal names that many texts contain.
Pinches 1916, 858

2 Early Research

2. a Knut L. Tallqvist

An evaluation of the methods employed to analyse Assyrian onomastics may begin with the main classificatory studies written prior to the 1960s. Ever since the first editions of cuneiform texts, during the last decades of the 19th century, it became customary to accompany the copies of the tablets with indexes of anthroponyms and toponyms therein attested; but the Finnish scholar Knut L. Tallqvist (1865–1949) was the first to prepare overall collections of Mesopotamian proper names, for Babylonian texts[29] and for documents discovered in Assyria. The volume *Assyrian Personal Names* (APN),[30] written exactly a century ago, in fact, is the best evidence of Tallqvist's many pioneering intuitions, both as regards the interpretation of the names as well as for the conceptual and formal layout of the register. For these reasons, his work has enjoyed long-lasting appreciation and utilization.[31]

Let us enter into some detail concerning this work. Tallqvist's vast linguistic abilities concerning ancient languages allowed him to pick out the main varieties into which the names of the Assyrians could be subdivided, so as to provide — in the introduction (pp. xv–xxxii) — a brief but extremely useful overview of the parallels which the onomastics attested in the imperial rosters found in other textual collections of contemporary or later date, from the Bible to Old Persian, Egyptian, and Greek inscriptions. The individual components of the names were then indexed in detail in the conclusive section of the volume (pp. 250–312).[32] Moreover, within his main onomastic register (pp. 1–249), the Finnish scholar went as far as to point out precisely the multiple occurrences of same names in the Neo-Assyrian textual corpus, together with their respective professional designations.[33] Thus, while restricting his work to a single volume, he also managed to offer a preliminary but fundamental series of prosopographical indications on the ranks and

29. Tallqvist 1905.
30. Tallqvist 1914.
31. It may also be pointed out that the material assembled in Tallqvist's work amounted already to more than half of the Neo-Assyrian documents known today.
32. A minor blemish is the fact that an ordering according to the Hebrew alphabet is followed here (*ʾ*, *b*, *g*, etc.), and the non-Semitic elements have to be fitted within this ordering, while the much more convenient Latin alphabet is used in the main body of the register.
33. This perspective of extreme detail on Assyrian personal names derived from a "long-distance" cooperation with Rev. Claude H.W. Johns of Cambridge, who had prepared an unpublished analytical register of the names in Neo-Assyrian texts, and passed it over in full to his Finnish colleague (as explained in Tallqvist's Preface, p. v). Perhaps for this reason, as already surmised by reviewers of the time, the book was written in English, and not in German like other works by the same author. For work by the British scholar himself on Assyrian anthroponyms, cf. Johns 1902.

professions within the Assyrian empire. All said and done, Tallqvist compiled single-handedly what would have — some eighty years later — represented the core material of PNA; and this feat is all the more admirable, if one considers that the vaster "remake" of today constitutes the product of a widespread and complex international venture, with the full power of the electronic medium behind it.

For the sake of completeness, it may be recalled that Tallqvist's monographs on Babylonian and Assyrian personal names, while representing his most renowned and long-standing contributions, are far from exhausting the writings that this brilliant all-round Finnish Orientalist dedicated to Mesopotamian studies. After early work on Late Babylonian tablets (1890, 1891), he prepared the *editio princeps* of the British Museum tablets pertaining to the series of incantations known as *Maqlû* (1895); in later years, alongside smaller essays on Babylonian and Assyrian philology, he compiled (1932) the earliest monograph on the god Aššur and the first collection of divine epithets in Akkadian (1938).[34]

2.b Johann Jacob Stamm

Whereas Tallqvist endowed studies on ancient Mesopotamia with the first vast collections of personal names at the beginning of the 20th century, the basic structural analysis on Akkadian onomastics (especially in its most ancient phases, the Old Akkadian and Old Babylonian periods) would have had to await a further generation, with Johann J. Stamm's monograph *Die akkadische Namengebung* (1939). A former student of Benno Landsberger in Leipzig, Stamm stated at the outset that his work was a complement to previous research which tended to "die Namen als Quellen zur Erkenntnis des Lebens und Denkens auszuwerten", albeit often a bit uncritically and rigidly. [35] His specific purpose was, thus, that of reconstructing "die psychologische Situation, aus der heraus die Namen erst verständlich werden", or, in other cases, "die konkrete Situation, in der die betreffenden Namen geprägt wurden".[36]

Stamm thus set out for his investigation by considering a *Namengebung* endowed with significance at all levels, in common with the findings of Semitic studies of the time[37] — but totally in contrast, it may be noted, with the guidelines of contemporary comparative

34. Cf. Borger 1967, 524f. for a list of Tallqvist's main Assyriological contributions. Tallqvist is, by the way, also known for a translation of the Gilgamesh epic into Finnish (1945). Finally, he also prepared (again proceeding from an initial assemblage of data by C.H.W. Johns, cf. the previous footnote) a manuscript, which remained for a long time unpublished in the University Library of Helsinki, bearing a vast list of Assyrian toponyms. This manuscript would have formed the basis for the comprehensive collection of the place names of this age on the part of S. Parpola, in one of the very first experiments of computer-generated study regarding the Ancient Near East (cf. Parpola 1970, p. vi).
35. As recalled by Marten Stol (Stol 1991, 191), Stamm omitted to acknowledge the debt to his teacher due to the political climate of Nazism at the time of publication of his work.
36. Stamm 1939, 1.
37. I.e. for the parents bestowing the name at birth, for the individual who would have borne it, and for all those who would have heard it uttered. As recalled by Dennis Pardee (1988, 141), "All scholars who have studied ancient Semitic names have either stressed or assumed the meaningfulness of these names".

onomatology, which insisted on the "meaningless" character of proper names.[38] In particular, Stamm referred back to the semantic and situational principles elaborated a few years before (1928) by Martin Noth in his *Die israelitischen Personnenamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung* — as end product of a long chain of historical-religious studies on Biblical names which went back to the 18th century — according to whom ancient Semitic names, and specifically the names in the Old Testament, was centered on the celebration of the child's birth.[39]

On the other hand, Stamm pointed out that the Akkadian onomastic corpus was open to a greater semantic-situational complexity than the Biblical names collected by Noth: while certainly the principle of celebrating the felicitous event of birth was common to both samplers, Akkadian names (also in relation to their Sumerian forerunners) were to be subdivided into expressions of simple and generic piety, and other cases which could be referred to a concrete situation relevant to the birth of the specific infant.[40] Within the latter category, Stamm regarded as paradigmatic the so-called "Ersatznamen", in which the newborn child is celebrated as substitute for a previously engendered brother, who had died prematurely or at childbirth. Stamm's refined study of the Akkadian names against their social and situational background did not, however, comprise a diachronical perspective. Despite the almost two millennia in which the Akkadian *Namengebung* is attested, the German scholar tended to visualize the onomastic corpus as a coherent body of materials, and proved extremely reluctant to accept the idea that specific innovative aspects, of psychological or ideological character, could have been formed in the course of time, in a certain opposition to A. Leo Oppenheim's views.[41]

The Akkadian *Namengebung* as sketched by Stamm finds its main core in the onomastic types with two elements (predicate-subject or vice versa) or with three elements (SOV

38. Cf. Caprini 2001, 17–27, for the evaluation of the *Theory of Proper Names* by A. Gardiner (1940), where the arbitrary and meaningless character of onomastics was upheld on logical and linguistic grounds.
39. Noth 1928, 132f. It may be recalled that the quite vast section of Noth's work devoted to semantic and interpretation (II. *Die israelitische Personennamen als Äusserungen der Frömmigkeit*) follows upon two equally complex sections. The first is constituted by the so-called *Prolegomena* (7–65), in which Noth examines the sources for Israelite onomastics, the grammatical structure of the names (subdivided in *Wortnamen*, *Satznamen*, *Kurznamen*), and their historical-linguistic position within Semitic languages, ending with the reconstruction of the Israelite *Namengebung* as an act performed upon the birth of the child by one or the other of the parents, also on the basis of specific Biblical references to the matter. The second of these sections (I. *Die theophoren Elemente in den israelitischen Personennamen*, 66–131) presents the study of all theophorous elements in the names, starting from the kinship terms *ʾb*, *ʾḥ*, *ʾm*, and thereupon proceeding to *ʾl* (and to the analysis of "Elohism") and *yhwh*, and ending with the mention of gods of Canaanite origin and uncertain components. While these parts of Noth's work were not taken up by Stamm, they have, on the other hand, acted as models for many later onomastic studies, especially in the Northwest Semitic milieu (cf. Pardee 1988, 119f.).
40. Stamm 1939, 2f., and further in 127–160, 161–207, in greater detail.
41. *Ibid.*, 4f. On the other hand, further on in the volume (*Namensprägung und Namenswahl*, *ibid.*, 14f.), Stamm poses — in a slightly naive fashion — the problem of the reasons behind the substantial modifications shown by Assyro-Babylonian onomastic formations in the course of time, not only from the linguistic point of view, but also as regards the contents of the names themselves.

or similar formations), which the author traced precisely back to a complex set of phraseological utterances, corresponding either (type A) to expressions of the parents at the moment of birth, or, and less frequently, (type B) to expressions which may be, in abstract, referred back to the newborn child itself. Among these utterances, Stamm distinguished clearly expressions of salutation and well-wishing, of gratitude, of supplication and lamentation, affirmations of faith, promises of grace-giving to the gods, etc.[42] Equally accurate was Stamm's analysis of verbal tenses, in which he distinguished between the use of the punctual past (preterite and perfect), of the durative present, and of the active participle, in relation to the different types of utterances.[43] A specific appendix to the category of the sentence names is represented by the so-called "allgemeine Aussagen", apodyctical utterances in which a relation of dependence between the subject (or others) and the god is affirmed (e.g. "the god X is my father"), or in which a positive quality of the invoked deity is set forth, either in relation to the birth or even in absolute (e.g. "all is in the hands of the god X"),[44] down to names bearing a definite aphorism, totally divorced from the normally presumable context of childbirth, e.g. "(the god) X loves the righteous", or "(the god) X is the bulwark of the frail", etc.

The different phraseological types singled out by Stamm have many attestations also in the Neo-Assyrian onomastic corpus, although a number of innovations characterize the latter, e.g. the use of the verbal imperative, with its direct "call" to the gods, and its variant in the third person singular represented by the precative.[45] The following examples represent both traditional and more recent forms, both as regards sentence names and apodyctical names: [1] *Aššur-maqtu-šatbi*, "O Aššur, lift up the fallen one!";[46] [2] *Ātamar-dumuq-īli*, "I have seen the grace of the god";[47] [3] *Bânītu-atkal*, "[In] Banitu I have trusted";[48] [4] *Da''inanni-Nergal*, "Strengthen me, O Nergal!";[49] [5] *Gabbu-ina-qāt-īli*, "All is in the hands of the god";[50] [6] *Inurta-āpil-kūmū'a*, "Ninurta stands up for me";[51] [7] *Issar-mētu-balliṭ*, "Ištar, revive the dead!";[52] [8] *Nabû-mukin-apli/šumi/zēri*, "Nabû is the one who establishes the heir / (the continuation of the) name / the offspring (*lit.*: the seed)";[53] [9] *Nabû-pir'u-lilbur*, "O Nabû, may the offspring become old!"[54]; [10] *Nabû-*

42. *Ibid.*, 27–36. It may be recalled that Noth (in his *II. Hauptteil* quoted above) had already distinguished the four onomastic categories of *Bekenntnisnamen*, *Vertrauensnamen*, *Danknamen*, and *Wunschnamen*.
43. *Ibid.*, 93–99.
44. Here, e.g., Stamm placed the PNs built with an interrogative sentence requiring a negative answer, of the type "Who is like (the god) x?" or "Who can exist without (the god) x?"; cf. *ibid.*, 237f.
45. To the opposite, the forms in the precative, first pers. sg. (e.g. "May I praise", in the sense of "I want to praise") are traditional: cf. *ibid.*, 31; 104.
46. PNA, 194a.
47. PNA, 231a.
48. PNA, 266a.
49. PNA, 370a.
50. PNA, 416a.
51. PNA, 547b.
52. PNA, 573a.
53. PNA, 846f.
54. PNA, 859b.

reḫtu-uṣur, "O Nabû, protect the remaining one!";[55] [11] *Paliḫka-libluṭ*, "May your worshipper live!";[56] [12] *Rēmanni-Issar*, "Have mercy on me, o Ištar!";[57] [13] *Rišat-abiša*, "Joy of her father";[58] [14] *Sīn-tabni-uṣur*, "Sin, you have created [him, now] protect [him]!";[59] [15] *(Ina)-ṣil-Bēl-allak*, "I walk in the [protective] shade of Bel".[60] Possibly also [16] *Lā-qēpu*, "(It's) incredible";[61] and [17] *Mardānu*, "Our heir"[62] belong here.

A further section of Stamm's work was devoted to the so-called "Bezeichnungen" — i.e. names built with a single structural element — such as epithets of affection, or names denoting analogies with the animal or vegetal domain, or with precious jewels and foodstuffs, or physical or social characteristics, or — finally — indications of the subject's date of birth (also in relation to festive occasions) or of his place of origin. Here, again, the examples from the Neo-Assyrian corpus are quite abundant:[63] [18] *Akbaru*, "Jerboa";[64] [19] *Batūlu*, "Young man";[65] [20] *Buṭnutu*, "Pistachio;"[66] [21] *Ḫarrānû*, "From Harran";[67] [22] *Kalbu*, "Dog/Slave"; [68] [23] *Kanūnayu*, "Born on the 10th month";[69] [24] *Namirtu*, "Brightness";[70] [25] *Qatinnu*, "Tiller".[71]

Finally, Stamm dedicated a vast chapter to the already mentioned "Ersatznamen";[72] and probably the attention given to this particularly developed aspect of Akkadian onomastics, whereby the infant is viewed "als Ersatz oder Wiederverkörperung eines (vor kurzem) verstorbenen Familiengliedes" remains his most memorable contribution, which still enjoys widespread credit. Stamm's basic idea was that, in an ancient ecological and economic horizon decidedly marked by a very high rate of infant mortality, an actual process of practical and psychological substitution should be detected behind the many Akkadian names with the subject-elements "the brother", "the sister" or "the brothers" in conjunction with specific verbal or nominal roots implying substitution and birth-giving.

55. PNA, 861a–b. This PN is in fact considered by Stamm (1939, 288) as an *Ersatzname* (see below).
56. PNA, 980b.
57. PNA, 1043b.
58. PNA, 1053b.
59. PNA, 1148-1150.
60. PNA, 1172a.
61. PNA, 652b–654a. The underlying meaning of this PN, quite well attested, is still uncertain (see already Stamm 1939, 252); perhaps it should be referred to particularly heavy and difficult conditions of childbirth.
62. PNA, 703a–b.
63. Cf. now specifically Gaspa 2008 on the topic of these "profane" names.
64. PNA, 94b.
65. PNA, 277b.
66. PNA, 357b.
67. PNA, 462a–b.
68. PNA, 598b–599a.
69. A particularly popular name: cf. PNA, 601–605, for the many individuals who bore it.
70. PNA, 923b,
71. PNA, 1010b.
72. Stamm 1939, 278–305.

On the other hand, the extension of the same principle to other members of the family posed various problems to Stamm himself,[73] and nowadays tends to be rather solved along the guidelines first set forth by Noth. In other words, those names which present as subject of the (nominal or verbal) action the father, the mother, the maternal uncle, etc., are considered as referring to figures of generally theophoric standing; their identification, depending on the cases, may be sought among actual deities (either of collective or personal nature) or, alternatively, in dead ancestors which were the object of a cultic devotion.[74] For precise examples of *Ersatznamen* in the Neo-Assyrian corpus, cf. the following: [26] *Aḫu-erība*, "He replaced the brother";[75] [27] *Aḫu-uqur*, "The brother is precious";[76] [28] *Kēnu-lāmur*, "Let me see the true one!";[77] [29] *Nabû-kēnu-šallim*, "O Nabû, keep the true one safe!";[78] [30] *Sīn-aḫḫē-erība*, "Sin replaced the brothers".[79]

* * *

Undeniably, Stamm's *Akkadische Namengebung* represents a milestone in the analysis of Assyro-Babylonian onomastics; as such, it constituted the basis for the addition of the main onomastic typologies as part and parcel of the entries within the two main Akkadian dictionaries, *CAD* and *AHw*, as well as in the phraseological examples of the more detailed grammars of Akkadian.[80] On the other hand, from a present-day standpoint, Stamm's work — in its exclusive concentration on the semantics of names as markers of contextual and psychological situations — shows a series of internal gaps and some oscillations of method, which to some extent hinder both its practical use and the overall acceptability of its results. Just by way of example, Stamm's detailed focus on the meanings of the predicative element leaves quite in the shadow, to the opposite, the variations in the subject-element, and specifically the presences, appearances, and disappearances of the many different deities of the Mesopotamian pantheon as protagonists of personal names during almost two millennia — almost as if it were virtually indifferent to place one's trust in this or that divine figure, regardless of place and time. Only in more recent studies have some of these deities been placed in their precise cultural context within the long history of ancient Mesopotamia, also on the basis of their attestations in onomastics.[81]

73. *Ibid.*, 280f., where Stamm asks himself whether the father (*abum*) acting as subject-element of nominal or verbal sentence names should in all cases be considered as deceased at the time of the name-bearer's birth.
74. Positions on this matter, however, are quite varied: see e.g. the discussion in Pardee 1988, 129–132.
75. PNA, 74f.
76. PNA, 88b.
77. PNA, 612b.
78. PNA, 840a.
79. PNA, 1113–1127, i.e. the biblical Sennacherib.
80. See, e.g., von Soden 1969, *passim*. The references to Stamm 1939 are also given in the entries to linguistically Akkadian names in PNA, but unfortunately not in an exhaustive manner, and thus also at times without noting the variant interpretations which have been brought forth on Stamm's own.
81. Such as, e.g., Franco Pomponio's monograph on the god Nabû (Pomponio 1978), or Daniel Schwemer's vast treatment of the Storm-god(s) (cf. Schwemer 2001; 2008).

Moreover, besides reconstructing the psychological or factual situations which lay behind the *Namengebung*, Stamm occasionally attempted to derive indications on specific social milieus from the meaning of specific names, e.g. by placing the onomastic types bearing the noun *bēlu*, "lord", among the so-called *Sklavennamen*.[82] Such types, however, could equally well be interpreted as formed by a theophorous element ("the Lord"). On the other hand, Stamm does not seem to draw results from the particularly frequent attestation of the subject-element *šarru*, "king", within the empires of the first millennium — an element which may nowadays, instead, be shown to refer back to specific social and political conditions.[83]

These and other limitations might explain the fact that later works of onomastic research have taken on Stamm's semantic and interpretative results mainly through perfunctory quotes, preferring instead to concentrate on the linguistic and grammatical-structural analysis of the names.[84] Nowadays, it may be safely stated that a full re-examination of the cultural implications of Akkadian name giving remains to be effected, in the light of modern ethnolinguistic and socio-anthropological criteria.[85]

2. c After Stamm

The first decades following Stamm's work show a certain slowing of pace in studies on Akkadian onomastics. Among the few exceptions, we may notice a much-quoted contribution by Dietz Otto Edzard (1962), in which light was shed on cases of intentional fluctuation (i.e. congruence or contradiction) in gender in theophorous Akkadian names — a point that Stamm had largely overlooked. Specifically, Edzard studied cases of fluctuation between the gender of the invoked deity (god/goddess) and the grammatical gender of the nominal/verbal predicate, as well as of that the bearers of the names themselves (as marked by the prefixed determinatives for "man" and "woman"). Such cases, which the author had already noted in NB-LB evidence, appear to be extant also in the earliest phases of Akkadian.[86] In an analysis of PNs from the Old Babylonian and the Old Assyrian period to the latest phases of each language (phases 1–6. with Babylonian represented by odd, Assyrian by even numbers), Edzard summons forth three morphologically separate name-types in which a distinction of gender is possible (a = nominal sentence names, also including names with the predicate in the stative; b = verbal sentence names with a prefixed verbal form; c = names in the imperative).[87] The results, given by Edzard in detailed discursive mode,[88] may be summarized in a chart as follows:

82. *Ibid.*, 307–314.
83. The typology of names built with the subject-element *šarru* will be dealt with in § 4.
84. This is the case, especially, of studies dedicated to the analysis of non-Akkadian onomastics in cuneiform sources of the second, and even of the third, millennium BC, e.g. Huffmon 1965 on the Amorite names in the Mari texts, followed by the computer-generated analysis of all Amorite personal names by Gelb (1980); see also the study on the onomastics of Ebla by Manfred Krebernik (1995).
85. Cf. § 5, below.
86. Edzard 1962, 114; but Old Akkadian names are treated as a case apart, *ibid.*, 128.
87. *Ibid.*, 113f.
88. *Ibid.*, 126f.

NAME-TYPE	PHASES	DETAILS
a	1–6	In masc. PNs with a goddess as subject, the predicative element regularly has masculine form (e.g. ^{m}Ningal-gāmil).
b	From 1 onward, with distinctions	In phase 1, frequent distinction of gender in the prefixed predicates according to the gender of the name-bearer, but independently of the gender of the deity (e.g. ^{m}Ištar-iddinam, ^{f}Aja-tarībam). For some later phases the evidence is inconclusive, but in 3 and 6 masculine and feminine names with either *iprus-* or *taprus-* forms are attested, whereas phase 5 seems to follow by and large the Old Babylonian "rules".
c	1, 3, 5	The congruence in gender of subject and predicate is respected, often also in regard to the gender of the deity.
C	2, 4, 6	Masculine imperative forms occur quite often with goddesses as subject, in male name-bearers (e.g. ^{m}Rēmanni-Ištar).

Edzard's conclusions from this precise linguistic analysis are deftly drawn, and are essentially of philological character: what occurs — in varying degrees according to the different periods — is a shift (but the author speaks of an actual *Ersatz*, substitution) from a subject-predicate congruence in gender to a congruence between the gender of the name-bearer and the predicative element. Why did this shift take place? According to Edzard, this is "leicht ersichtlich": the name was clearly to be identified as a masculine name. Consequently, gender was expressed — considering the name no more as a clause, but as a lexical unit — in the only possible place, i.e. the predicative element.[89] Nowadays, however, one may wonder if this reconstruction actually takes into account all possible factors involved from the standpoint of name-giving in ancient Mesopotamia — or, more to the point, whether Edzard's interesting assumption that "der Name war deutlich als Männername zu kennzeichnen" should not be taken up again with an eye to its possible implications for Mesopotamian society and ethnicity.[90]

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Closer to the specific theme of this essay is the important collection of all onomastic material from Middle Assyrian texts by Claudio Saporetti (1970).[91] Although Saporetti stated that his corpus of Akkadian names in Middle Assyrian texts did not present particular variations on the general sampler assembled by Stamm,[92] in point of fact the impres-

89. *Ibid.*, 127.
90. This general theme has, in point of fact, been recently taken up in part, in relation to shifts in personal determinatives (feminine names sometimes bearing the masculine determinative), both for Middle Babylonian PNs (Brinkman 2007) and for the names in the Nuzi documents (Abrahami 2011). Especially the latter author posits that the occurrence of the masculine determinative might be tied to "the situation of spouses / daughters who were, under certain circumstances, given by their husbands / fathers the legal capacity normally ascribed to men" (*ibid.*, 2).
91. Saporetti 1970; cf. also Saporetti & Freydank 1974, and Saporetti 1979.
92. Saporetti 1970, II, 74f.

sion to be gained from a comparison of the two collections is quite to the opposite. In the Middle Assyrian group, a wide variety of hypocoristic typologies (i.e. forms in which the divine or theophorous subject-element is substituted by abbreviative elements, whether long vowels or diphtongs) is discernible, while Stamm had only dedicated brief remarks to them.[93] This point is certainly not negligible, insofar as the following Neo-Assyrian period is also marked by a large frequency of hypocoristic forms, which — apart from specific problems of etymological attribution — lend themselves to the wider question of a possible loss in semantic transparency on the sentence-names from which they ultimately should have derived.[94]

Moreover, Saporetti's analysis of Middle Assyrian onomastics, which concentrates on the grammatical typology of the names,[95] indicates clearly that, while the Akkadian linguistic component in his corpus is certainly predominant, it is by no means exclusive. If one glances through the list of names generically qualified as "foreign" by the Italian scholar, it is easy to pick out Hurrian formations on one hand, and West Semitic ones on the other: this feature also represents an interesting chronological anticipation of a horizon which will come to the fore in onomastic studies on Neo-Assyrian texts.[96]

3 Etymological and Interlinguistic Studies after 1965

3. a The onomastic intuitions of Karlheinz Deller

The beginning of the most recent phase of study on Neo-Assyrian onomastics may be traced back to two brief but dense contributions by Karlheinz Deller in the mid-1960s,[97] in which typically Aramaic onomastic formations were singled out in the administrative

93. In later years, Saporetti presented the project of a computer-aided re-elaboration of his onomastic collection (Saporetti & Ghiroldi 1991).
94. See, e.g., names [47], [60], [68], [106], [109], [157], etc. The problem set forth above is formulated for Biblical PNs by Pardee 1988, 141, in the following terms: "Could the divine character of a theophoric element thousands of years old be forgotten? When, for example, one named a child Reshef (1 Chron. 7:25), could one really be naming the child "Sparky" and not be aware that *ršp* had served as a theophoric element in personal names from times immemorial?".
95. Saporetti 1970, II, 77–97. It may be further noticed that Saporetti's work was innovative in character also for the presence of sections dedicated outright to the prosopography of the Middle Assyrian period: II, 52–73; 230–251; and cf. § 4, below.
96. It may be recalled that, in the time of Saporetti's enquiries on Middle Assyrian names, the basic collection of Hurrian onomastics was that of the PNs from Nuzi by Pierre M. Purves in Gelb *et al*. 1943, 183–279, although Hurrian PNs from Ugarit had also been competently classified by Gröndahl 1967, and the ones in the Mari texts had been studied in Sasson 1974. The overall outlook would soon significantly change, however, with the publication of Laroche 1980. See also Brinkman 1981 for Hurrian anthroponyms in Middle Babylonian texts.
97. Deller 1965; and see also Deller 1966. Deller's innovative graphemic and phonemic results are given in his *Lautlehre des Neuassyrischen* (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Wien 1959), and were a half-century later taken up to a certain extent in what would become the "official" grammar of Neo-Assyrian, Hämeen-Anttila 2000; see also Luukko 2004. It is worth recalling that Deller was Saporetti's teacher at Heidelberg and inspired the latter's research project on Middle Assyrian names (cf. Saporetti 1970, I, 1), in which some of the same methodological guidelines being experimented on Neo-Assyrian onomastics (research on non-Akkadian name-types, prosopography) were carried out.

texts of the period. The presence of Aramaic anthroponyms in Neo-Assyrian texts had, of course, been clearly and efficaciously pointed out in Tallqvist's work. Deller, however, took up the problem again — while adding numerous names from recently published or even still unpublished texts — along innovative guidelines: those of graphemics, i.e. taking into specific account the written rendering (syllabic or logographic) of such names on the part of the Assyrian scribes, in the light of their expected etymologies in Aramaic.

Deller's paradigmatic study thus brought to the fore names with divine subject-elements, such as **ʿ̱ttr*, "Attar" (e.g. [31] *Attār-sūri*, "Attar is my bulwark",[98] [32] *Attār-bi'dî*, "Attar is behind me"),[99] **nsḫ*, which represents a Western Mesopotamian variant of the divine name *Nusku*, rendered in cuneiform by the writings *Našḫu* or *Našuḫ* (e.g. [33] *Al-Našuḫ-milki*, "the god N. is my king",[100] [34] *Našuḫ-dilīni*, "N., draw me up!"),[101] and finally the alleged deity **Hadad-milki*, identified by Deller as such on the basis of the possibly logographic writing U.U (or 10.10).[102] The real identity of this divine entity would, in point of fact, be clarified only many years later by Olof Pedersén as a "rebus-type" writing,[103] such as to yield the divine name **Dāda/i/u*.[104]

The solution of the "riddle" to the names bearing the element U.U (or 10.10) was found on the basis of a comparison between logographic and syllabic writings of names of same persons, and with the aid of attestations in Aramaic alphabetic script (see e.g. the case of no. [116], below). However, against Pedersén's interpretation which pointed univocally to the Akkadian noun *dādu*, "dear, beloved", **Dāda/i/u* may be understood — in the majority of cases — as a variant of the name of the Storm God, synchretistically worshiped all over Western Asia, known in the Akkadian milieu as **Hadad* and in the West Semitic horizon as **Adda/u*.[105] For relatively clear examples on this count, cf., e.g., the following names, in which a theophoric figure seems implied: [35] *Dādi-idri*, "Dadi is my help", with Aramaic predicative element;[106] or [36] *Dādi-iqbi*, "Dadi has ordered", with Akkadian predicate.[107]

98. Deller 1965, 473; PNA, 236a.
99. I.e. "Attar favours me": Deller 1965, 473; PNA, 234b.
100. Deller 1965, 474; PNA, 522b (classified without references under *Il-Našuḫ-milki*).
101. Deller 1965, 474; PNA, 935b.
102. Deller 1965, 474f.; the reading of the two identical signs on Deller's part was in fact 10.UMUN, since this rendering yielded the required correspondence with *Hadad-milki* on the basis of the equivalences in ancient Mesopotamian lexical texts.
103. I.e., a rendering in which a logogram is used, in a learned fashion, for the mere phonetic value to which it has become linked, and thus independently of its original semantic and morphological context of application. A further good example of this procedure is represented by no. [123], below.
104. Pedersén 1986.
105. Specifically, while the correspondence **Dāda/i/u* = Akkadian *dādu* might have lain behind some names with Akkadian predicative elements, on the other hand a case such as no. [114], below, makes it likely that in other names bearing U-U (especially with Aramaic predicates), a specific divine figure — and presumably the Storm God — was implied.
106. PNA I/2, 363b.
107. PNA 363f. At this point one might even wonder whether by chance the learned word-play underlying U-U had not actually overcome the interlinguistic barrier, causing the sign U/10, as used in these onomastic contexts, to be phonetically equivalent to [**d*+V] (or [***V+*d*]): in other words, leading the sign itself to take on the same wide gamut of phonetic values which may be attributed to the linear

In any case, Deller's contribution — in which he made the point that the analysis of personal names represented an important sector in the overall interpretation of written documentation in Neo-Assyrian, proceeding from the graphemic features of the latter — had the effect of stimulating a vast series of further studies, aimed at a reappraisal of Tallqvist's interpretations of West Semitic onomastics, with integrations of the data since published. The 1970s were thus marked by new editions of Neo-Assyrian texts, or re-editions of previously known documents, in which the numerous Aramaic names were set in adequate light alongside the typically Akkadian formations. Cases in point are resp. the Governor's Palace archive from Nimrud[108] and the so-called "Harran Census" texts, along with other cadastral texts from Nineveh.[109]

The following chart was made out, for the specific aims of this essay, from a vast cadastral register from the Assyrian capital:[110] it derives, in particular, from a list of the numerous possessions, of land and people, held by Nabû-šarru-uṣur, chief eunuch of Ash-urbanipal. As may be seen, it represents a good example of the widespread admixture between individuals bearing Akkadian names and those with "other" (and especially West Semitic) onomastic traditions, to be found in the "everyday" documents of this age.

THE NAMES IN SAA XII 27, 1–33

ASSYRIAN NAMES	NON-ASSYRIAN NAMES[111]
[37] *Urda-Nanaya*, "servant of Nanaya"[112]	[38] *Amurru-naṣaba*, "Amurru has placed"[113]
[39] *Šamaš-bēlu-uṣur*, "O Šamaš, protect the lord!"[114]	[40] *Iaū-idri*, "Yaw/Yahweh is my help"[115]
[41] *Nūr-Issar*, "Light of Ištar"[116]	[42] *Abi-raḫî* (femm.), "My/the father is pleased"[117]
[43] *Šamaš-killanni*, "O Šamaš, hold me!"[118]	[44] *Ḫarrâ* (fem.; uncertain Aramaic etymology)[119]
[45] *Nušku-šezibanni*, "O Nušku, save me!"[120]	[46] *Raḫīmu-Adda*, "Adda is compassionate"[121]

graphemes of ancient West Semitic alphabetic series. A shred of possible proof of this hypothesis — whereby the sequel U-U would have been secondarily perceived by peoples accustomed to contemporary alphabetic script as corresponding to [**da-ad*] or the like — might be found in the different variants of no. [137], below, in which the sign U/10 appears to be used as an (unexpected) alternative for the syllabograms *id* or *ad*.

108. Texts published in Postgate 1973; cf. Fales 1974, for the analysis of the names.
109. Fales 1973.
110. Fales 1973, n. 23 (= ADD 741), now republished as SAA XII 27.
111. Only the complete names and the ones of certain reading in the document SAA XII 27 are charted here. The non-Akkadian names of affiliation other than West Semitic are noted as such.
112. SAA XII 27, 7; PNA, 1410b–1412b.
113. SAA XII 27, 11; PNA, 109a.
114. SAA XII 27, 9; PNA, 1193b–1195a.
115. SAA XII 27, 14; PNA, 697b. The subject is said to be brother of nos. [47] and [49].
116. SAA XII 27, 9. PNA, 970a gives an interpretation as a construct-state name. However, in the light of the syllabic writing (*nu-ri-* etc.), the name could alternatively be understood as "My light is Ištar", i.e. with a pronominal suffix of the first p. sg.
117. SAA XII 27, 15 (see also *ibid.*, l. 25, for the same name, but applied to a man); PNA, 12b.
118. SAA XII 27, 10; PNA, 1204a.
119. SAA XII 27, 15 (the same name is attested in *ibid.*, 23, applied to the wife of the Assyrian *Adad-uballiṭ*); PNA, 461a.
120. SAA XII 27, 11; PNA, 974b.
121. SAA XII 27, 17; PNA, 1029a.

[47] *Urdî*, hypocoristic from *urdu*, "servant, slave"[122]
[48] *Se'-sūri*, "Se' is my bulwark"[123]
[49] *Urdu-Issar*, "Servant of Ištar"[124]
[50] *Adda-ḫutni*, "Adda is my strength"[125]
[51] *Issar-rēmanni*,"O Ištar, have pity on me!"[126]
[52] *Bannâ* (fem.; uncertain etimology [Aramaic?])[127]
[53] *Mullissu-dūrī*, "Mullissu is my protective wall"[128]
[55] *Ṣūṣu* (masc.; uncertain etimology)[129]
[56] *Libūšu*, "May they [= the ill-wishers] come to shame!"[130]
[60] *Nūrî*, hypocoristic from Aramaic *nūr* or from Akkadian *nūru*[131]

122. SAA XII 27, 14; PNA, 1393b. The subject is said to be brother of nos. [40] and [49].
123. SAA XII 27, 14; PNA, 1106b.
124. SAA XII 27, 14; PNA, 1404a–1407b. The subject is said to be brother of nos. [40] and [47].
125. SAA XII 27, 18; PNA, 46a. Cf. no. [139], below.
126. SAA XII 27, 15; PNA, 576b. The graphemic rendering of this name is unusual: 15–AMA–*man-ni*, with the use of the logogram AMA = *rēmu* (instead of the more frequently used syllabic signs *rem* /*rém*), and of the phonetic complement –*man-ni* (instead of the usual -*an-ni*). Not surprisingly, Tallqvist (1914, 107b) had understood it as 15-AMA-MAN-*ni*, "Ištar is the mother of our king"; but this interpretation is neither justified from the point of view of writing or that of meaning. Much more intriguing was a further interpretation, long ago suggested by word of mouth to this writer by K. Deller, as an interrogative sentence name, "Whose mother is Ištar?". However, in this case the required answer would not necessarily have been in the rhetorical negative (i.e. "of nobody"), and thus the meaning would have clashed with the basic "rule" of this class of names (especially if bearing *mannu*) in Akkadian.
127. SAA XII 27, 18; PNA, 267b.
128. SAA XII 27, 15; PNA, 765b. In fact, however, on the tablet there would seem to be space in the gap immediately following for a further element; in this case, the integration could lead to a formation such as [54] *Mullissu-dūru-uṣrī*, "O Mullissu, protect the city wall!", for which see PNA, 766a. In this case, we would have here an onomastic formation of a "civic" typology, pertaining to Stamm's so-called *Beamtennamen* (1939, 316), of which more shall be said in § 4.
129. SAA XII 27, 19; PNA, 1178b.
130. SAA XII 27, 16; PNA, 661b. The etymology of this abbreviated name, given in PNA as a precative of the verb *bâšu* (by S. Parpola *apud* the entry by Angelika Berlejung), seems absolutely acceptable, due to the excellent sense it yields in similar names which bear also the subject-element, e.g. [57] *Dabībī-libūšu*, "May my opponents come to shame!". See, however, PNA, 358b, where this name is in fact read *Dabībī-lipušū* and interpreted as "May they make my plea [come true]!", with a more traditional reference to the verb *epēšu*, "do, make", but with an overall interpretation which differs yet from the one offered by Stamm 1939, 195, "Mögen meine Feinde tun". Further fluctuations between the two verbs may be noted in [58] *Lidbubū-libāšū*, PNA, 662a, which is understood as "Let them speak, let them come to shame!", i.e. from *bâšu,* in comparison with the next entry, quite similar in orthography, *Lidbubū-lip/būšu*, which is not taken as a mere variant of [58], but is translated "Let them speak, let them do [whatever they will]!", i.e. again drawing the final verb from *epēšu* (both entries are by A. Berlejung). Fluctuating solutions come to the fore also for [59] *Ḫādê-lip/bušū*, PNA 2/I, 438a, which is interpreted following Stamm as "May the ill-wishers do [whatever they will]!" (although the alternative suggestion by W. von Soden, to derive the verbal form from **puāšu*, "to be frustrated", is also recalled), against the adjacent entry, again with quite similar orthographic rendering (*ibid.*, 438f.), *Ḫadi-libbušu*, which is (albeit problematically) explained as "His heart is happy", from *ḫadû+ libbu+* pronominal suffix (both entries are by Claus Ambos). As may be seen, therefore, despite the fact that the *akkadische Namengebung* is normally viewed as totally solved, there are still various obscure areas of interpretation, which appear to require in-depth grammatical and/or contextual research — possibly even beyond the results achieved in PNA.
131. SAA XII 27, 20 (husband of no. [62]); PNA, 969a.

[61] *Bāzītu*, (fem.)"woman from Bāzu"[132]
[62] *Ḫanzabâ* (fem.; uncertain etymology)[133]
[63] *Mannu-kī-Adad*, "Who is like Adad?"[134]
[64] *Awirâ*, "Blind"[135]
[65] *Bēl-ukīn*, "Bel has established"[136]
[66] *Asâ* (fem.; uncertain etymology [Aramaic?])[137]
[67] *Ilu-eppaš*, "God makes"[138]
[68] *Nanî* (masc.; uncertain etymology)[139]
[70] *Sukkītu*, "the woman of the shrine"[140]
[71] *Adda-idri*, "Adda is my help"[141]
[72] *Adad-uballiṭ*, "Adad has revived"[142]
[73] *Mati'î*, hypocoristic from *mt'*, "to save"[143]
[74] *Īn-ili*, "Eye of God"[144]
[75] *Am-rāpi*', "The paternal uncle is (my) healer"[145]
[76] *Aḫu-lē'ī*, "The brother is almighty"[146]
[77] *Iatamâ*, "Orphan"[147]
[78] *Qitti-ilāni*, "My end are the gods"[148]
[79] *Šamgayāni*, "Šam has exalted me"[149]
[80] *Urda-Banītu*, "Servant of Banitu"[150]
[81] *Pišatti*, (unknown etymology)[151]
[82] *Banītu-aiāli* (fem.), "Banitu is my help"[152]
[83] *Ḫiṭubarra* (fem.; unknown etymology)[153]
[84] *Damqaya* (fem.), hypocoristic of *damqu*, "good"[154]
[85] *Gūgî*, "Spider" (? Aramaic)[155]
[86] *Ra'imtî*, (fem.) "My beloved"[156]
[87] *Bi'â* (fem.), "The desired one"[157]

132. SAA XII 27, 16: PNA, 229a–b. The region of Bāzu was inhabited by Arab populations, and was the object of Esarhaddon's campaigns (680–668 a.C.); on the other hand, as in many other similar cases, the gentilic suffix (the so-called *nisbe*) of the name is decidedly Akkadian. Cf. however Stamm 1939, 254, followed by CAD B, 185, s.v. *bazītu* for references to NB cases, and an interpretation as an animal name.
133. SAA XII 27, 20 (wife of no. [60]); PNA, 458b, no etymology given. It may be asked, in any case, whether the West Semitic root *ʿzb*, "to abandon", may be implied here, with a quaint graphemic rendering *<ḫan> for the initial consonant *ʿayin*. See also chart II, below.
134. SAA XII 27, 16; PNA, 681–683.
135. SAA XII 27, 20 (husband of no. [66]); PNA, 238a.
136. SAA XII 27, 17; PNA, 334f.
137. SAA XII 27, 20 (wife of no. [64]); PNA, 135b.
138. SAA XII 27, 18; PNA, 527b.
139. SAA XII 27, 21 (the same name in l. 23, *ibid.*); cf. PNA, 925b, where a possible Anatolian etymology is discussed. On the other hand, *Nanî* might represent a *Lallname*, or alternatively be connected to the West Semitic root *ḥnn*, "to be merciful", perhaps as further abbreviation of the hypocoristic [69] *Ḫananî*, "Merciful" (PNA, 450a–b).
140. SAA XII 27, 19; PNA, 1156b.
141. SAA XII 27, 21; PNA, 46b–47a.
142. SAA XII 27, 23 (husband of the woman *Ḫarrâ*, on whom cf. no. [44]); PNA, 41a–b.
143. SAA XII 27, 22; PNA, 745a.
144. SAA XII 27, 24; PNA, 544a.
145. SAA XII 27, 22; PNA, 106a, s.v. *Ammi-rāpi'*. This is a typical *Ersatzname*, in which the paternal uncle (deceased) is indicated as being behind the (perhaps difficult) birth of the infant.
146. SAA XII 27, 24; PNA, 82a–b.
147. SAA XII 27, 23; PNA, 495b.
148. SAA XII 27, 25; PNA, 1016b.
149. SAA XII 27, 25; cf. Tallqvist 1914, 239 a. To my knowledge, the writing of this name (*Ú/šam-ga-a-a-ni*) causes still some uncertainties regarding the subject-element.
150. SAA XII 27, 26.
151. SAA XII 27, 26; PNA 3/I, 997b.
152. SAA XII 27, 27; PNA 1/II, 266a.
153. SAA XII 27, 26; PNA 2/I, 474b.
154. SAA XII 27, PNA 1/II, 374b.
155. SAA XII 27, 27; PNA 1/II, 427b.
156. SAA XII 27, 28; PNA 3/I, 1030b.
157. SAA XII 27, 28; PNA 1/II, 342a.

[88] *Qurdī-Nergal*, "Heroism of Nergal"[158]

[89] *Adadi-ṭalli* (femm.), "Adad is my protective shadow"[159]

2. b Beyond Deller: Assyro-aramaica

Wide-ranging applications of the Deller "method" brought about, in the 1970s, a number of studies dedicated to the systematic comparison between the West Semitic names occurring in Neo-Assyrian administrative documents and the onomastic attestations in contemporary Aramaic epigraphs in alphabetic script, at times with the aid of other West Semitic materials (e.g. the names in Phoenician and Hebrew epigraphs, Biblical names, etc.). Thus. e.g., Stephen A. Kaufman clarified the problematical *incipit* to one of the Neirab funerary inscriptions of the sixth century BC, *š'gbr*, previously considered to bear a relative pronoun *š* in first position, as corresponding instead to the name *Si'gabbar, with a rendering of the DN *Sîn typical of NW Syro-Mesopotamia.[160] Other PNs in Aramaic alphabetic script of the eighth–sixth centuries BC were brought to light in the detailed study of Aramaic epigraphy undertaken by Francesco Vattioni, thus acting as an important premise for the full republication of Aramaic epigraphs on clay tablets of NA date, and the comprehensive catalogue of PNs on Aramaic alphabetic texts, of more than a decade later.[161] As for West Semitic names in NB texts, a monograph by Michael D. Coogan provided the full study of PNs in the plentiful documents of the Murašû firm, largely innovating on Tallqvist's results in a clear and satisfactory way.[162]

In sum, a bird's-eye view of these studies shows that the overall, albeit not always explicitly formulated, objective of the newly discovered or critically re-examined onomastic comparisons was (1) to fix the rules of graphemic correspondence between cuneiform and alphabetic renderings in the case of immediately identifiable PNs, and (2) to verify the overall onomastic inventory of the West Semitic linguistic-cultural horizon in alphabetic script, in order to trace further, and not immediately evident, attestations of this inventory in the NA/NB corpus. This double scope was posed outright and met concretely in various parts of the 1975 monograph on Aramaic inscriptions and onomastics by Edward Lipiński.[163]

In this book — the first of a three-volume series, which would reach to 2010[164] — the Belgian scholar chose to make personal names one of the main focuses of his research on the most ancient remnants of the Aramaic language, alongside the detailed re-examination of various groups of Old Aramaic inscriptions. Thus, Lipiński posited the notion that "names are an important source for our knowledge of ancient Aramaic and of the societies in which the Aramaic language was used, as well as of the religious ideas of the Aramaeans

158. SAA XII 27, 29; PNA 3/I, 1024b. For this onomastic type, cf. already Stamm 1939, 322.
159. SAA XII 27, 28; PNA 1/I, 51a.
160. Kaufman 1970. For the divine name Si', Se', cf. fn.215, below.
161. Vattioni 1970; for later studies which took off from Vattioni's research, cf. Fales 1986; Maraqten 1988.
162. Coogan 1976.
163. Lipiński 1975.
164. Lipiński 1994, 2010.

and of the Aramaic speaking peoples".[165] And, in conclusion, the author expressed the expectation that the future would bring about a comprehensive historical grammar of Aramaic and an Aramaic etymological dictionary, in which also personal names — in the different graphemic renderings by which they have come down to us — could find room.[166]

Among the many interesting cases which formed the object of his treatise, Lipiński studied names bearing the predicative element *-šumkī*, " [DN] (is) my support", from the Aramaic root *smk* (e.g [90] *Attār-šumkī*,[167] [91] *Bēl-šumkī*,[168] [92] *Se'-šumkī*)[169] and *-sakā*, "(DN) has looked at /has looked out for [the newborn]", from the Aramaic root *śky* (e.g. [101] *Adda-sakā*,[170] [102] *Se'-sakā*,[171] [103] *Sakā-il*,[172] and [104] *Iltakâ*).[173] Forms such as the latter, showing a complex orthographical rendering (<V*lt*>) in cuneiform for the West Semitic lateral sibilant /ś/, gave rise to a further series of studies of comparative phonology and graphemics on the part of various authors, proceeding from the important indications already provided by Tallqvist,[174] in order to tackle the broader problem of the

165. *Ibid.*, 13.
166. *Ibid.*, 210.
167. Lipiński 1975, 58f.; cf. now PNA, 236a–b. The name was borne by a king of the Aramaic state of Arpad, who had political relations with Assyria during the mid-8th century: his name is given in Aramaic epigraphs of the time as '*trsmk*.
168. Lipiński 1975, 65, where this unusual pairing of a Babylonian god with an Aramaic predicative element was noted, with the suggestion that the logogram EN (= Akkadian *bēlu*, "lord/the god Bel") could have here represented Aramaic *māre'*, "lord". However, as argued in Fales 1977, there are no cases of loan-translations in these renderings of Aramaic personal names in Neo-Assyrian texts, but merely — and eventually — those of an encoding of Aramaic elements by means of the cuneiform logo-syllabic system on the basis of broad phonetic resemblances ("improper encoding"): thus, at most, one might see in the name in question the possibility of a rendering EN=*bēlu* for West Semitic **b'l*, "lord/ the god Baal". That the factual pronunciation of the latter divine name was not so remote from that of Akkadian *bēlu* may be demonstrated considering the "lord/Baal of the chariot" of Sam'al, which appears as ^{d}*bé-'e-li–ra-kab-bi ša* URU.*sa-ma-al-la* in SAA XVI 63, r.11. Moreover, a partial parallel to this use of EN in connection with West Semitic predicative elements may be found in names built with the synchretistic divine name EN–KASKAL = *Bēl-Ḫarrān*, "lord of Harran" — an epithet of the Moon-god Sīn with reference to his main sanctuary. Although mainly Akkadian predicative elements are attested in connection with this god (such as [93] *Bēl-Ḫarrān-abu/aḫu/bēlu/šarru-uṣur,* "Lord of Harran, protect the father/brother/lord/king!", PNA I/2, 300–303; [94] *Bēl-Ḫarrān-dūri*, "The Lord of Harran is my protective wall", *ibid.*, 302 a; [95] *Bēl-Ḫarrān-issē'a*, "the Lord of Harran is with me", *ibid.*, 302b; [96] *Bēl-Ḫarrān-killanni*, "Lord of Harran, hold me!", *ibid.*, 303 a; [97] *Bēl-Ḫarrān-kuṣuranni*, "Lord of Harran, put me together!", *ibid.*; [98] *Bēl-Ḫarrān-ṣabtanni*, "Lord of Harran, take me!"; [99] *Bēl-Ḫarrān-šaddū'a,* "The Lord of Harran is my mountain", *ibid.*; etc.), there is also an Aramaic case, [100] *Bēl-Ḫarrān-idrī,* "the Lord of Harran is my help" (PNA I/2, 302b), which tallies with the designation of the Moon-god as *b'l Ḥrn* in a contemporary Aramaic inscription from a private collection (cf. Lemaire 2001, no. 1, l. 10).
169. Lipiński, *loc.cit.*; PNA, 1106b.
170. Lipiński 1975, 71; see now PNA, 50 a–b.
171. Lipiński 1975, *ibid.*; see now PNA, 1106a.
172. Lipiński 1975, *ibid.*; see now PNA, 1065b.
173. Lipiński 1975, *ibid.*, see now PNA, 525a, albeit with an erroneous interpretation as a verbal sentence name formed by **'l* and **śky* ("the god has looked out"). In point of fact, this is a hypocoristic formation, built only with a verbal perfect in the third pers. sg., on the basis of the rendering <V*lt*> for /ś/, as discussed in Fales 1978b.
174. Tallqvist 1914, xviii–xix.

correspondence of sibilants in alphabetic and cuneiform script.

Thus, Simo Parpola (1974) conclusively established — through a paradigmatic example — how the phonetic values of Neo-Assyrian graphemes with <š> had consistently shifted to /s/, and viceversa: e.g., the name of the god **Aššur* should have been pronounced as /*Assur*/, while the name of the Moon-god **Sîn* was presumably pronounced /Ši:n/. This phenomenon should account for the "crossed" references between the two in transcriptions of Assyrian names in Aramaic or Biblical Hebrew: e.g. in the royal name [105] *Tukultī-apil-Ešarra*, "My trust/support is the heir of Ešarra",[175] rendered *tgltplysr* in Aramaic epigraphy and *Tiglath-pileser* in the OT.[176]

In the same general vein, Lipiński (1978) instituted a full-fledged comparison between the renderings of /š/, /s/, and /ś/ in Aramaic epigraphy and in Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian documents, seeking the phonetic characteristics of the sibilants in Aramaic and Late Akkadian.[177] Finally, this writer (1978) brought to light the use of transcriptions in cuneiform with <*V*lt> to indicate the phonemes /š/ and /ś/, both in Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian.[178] Examples of this rendering are the Neo-Assyrian names [106] *Iltama'*, a hypocoristicon from the root **šm'*, "to hear"[179], and [107] *Iltadaia*, perhaps to be understood as **Šaday*, "man of the open country/steppe".[180]

* * *

A further aspect, relevant to graphemic variants in the names of single individuals as indication of the mechanisms behind the overall written rendering of personal names, both "native" and "foreign", on the part of the Assyrian scribes, was tackled in an extended review article by this writer (1977).[181] Comparisons were made of the different variants that the same name underwent, both in Neo-Assyrian "everyday" documents and in official inscriptions, and — more rarely — between the two.[182] The result was a chart of 110 case-studies of anthroponyms, in which graphemic variants (in the following patterns: $sign_1$::$sign_2$, sign::sign sequence, or $sequence_1$::$sequence_2$) were visualized in varying po-

175. PNA, 1328b–1331a.
176. Parpola 1974, 4; see also Millard 1976. The opposite case is, e.g., represented by the divine name *mlš*, attested in the Aramaic Sefire treaties after Aššur (Stele I A, l. 8), which corresponds to the NA consort of Aššur **Mullissu* (^{d}NIN.LÍL), as shown by Parpola 1974 and Dalley 1979: cf. the names [53] and [54], above. For the traditions concerning the goddess, cf. Krebernik 1998–2001; for later periods (Mylitta and Molis), cf. most recently Huber 2009,142.
177. Lipinski 1978, 205ff.; cf. Fales 1986, 63 n. 103, for objections to this reconstruction.
178. Fales 1978b.
179. PNA, 525a.
180. PNA, 524b. As noted *ibid.*, the tentative etymology goes back to Fales 1991, 105 n. 37. For a fuller picture of the correspondences, cf. Chart 3, below.
181. Fales 1977, review article of Lipiński 1975.
182. Obviously, these often-repeated PNs were attached to individuals of a certain overall prominence: more often than not foreign rulers, encountered and subdued by the Assyrians, or high-level officials of the Palace and administration (and especially the year-eponyms, attested most frequently in legal documents for dating purposes: cf. Millard 1994 for their names and sequence).

sitions within the names. Thus, e.g., variations in the final vowels of the individual morphological elements were observed (as in the case of the Aramean king [108] *Ammi-Baʿal*, "Baʿal is my paternal uncle", attested as *Am-me/ma/mi—ba/pa-ʿa-li*,[183] and in that of the eponym [109] *Saʾīlu*, a hypocoristic formation from the West Semitic root **šʾl*, "to ask", which shows the renderings *Sa-i/ʾi-lu/li / Sa-il / Si-i/ʾi-lu/li*.[184] More vastly, variations in the perception of the internal structure of names were noticed e.g. in the Canaanite name of a merchant from the city of Assur, [110] *Menaḫēme*, "Comforter", rendered either as *Mi-(i)-nu-uḫ-ḫi-me* or as *Me-na-ḫi-me*.[185]

Further, this writer pointed out that, in order to understand the process of written registration of the names, particularly interesting were those cases in which logograms, desumed from a standard scribal repertory of the age for the writing of anthroponyms in Neo-Assyrian cuneiform,[186] were employed merely on the basis of assonance to reproduce linguistically non-Assyrian contents — with yields that, at first sight, may even seem obscure to the modern researcher. Cases in point of this process, which led from phonically perceived linguistic substances to their written reproduction by employing the solutions available to the scribes (which this writer has called "improper encoding"), are the names of two year-eponyms. The first is [111] *Mār-larīm*, "May the lord be exalted", an Aramaic PN composed of the noun *māre'* and the precative of the verb *rw/ym*: to render this name in the texts, purely syllabic solutions were envisaged (*Mar–la-rim(-me) / Mar–la-ar-me / Ma-ri–la-rim*) alongside the mixed renderings DUMU–*la-rim/la-ár-me*, in which the logogram DUMU (= Akkadian *māru*, "son") was obviously chosen on the basis of assonance with the Aramaic noun, and for ease of use.[187] The second case is that of [112] *Bur-Sagalê*, "son of Sagalê",[188] i.e. either with reference to a specific goddess or (more likely) to a divine "Queen" in Aramaic (cf. Hebrew *šegal*, "queen, royal wife", which in its turn derives from an originally NA designation).[189] In this case, alongside a straightforward syllabic rendering *Bur–*^{d}*sa-gal-e*, one finds the variant SUḪUŠ–*sa-gal-e*, with the use of the logogram SUḪUŠ, which *per se c*orresponds to Akkadian *ubru* (construct state *ubur-*), "client": again, with an encoding of the name which was based on a generic assonance of linguistic content, and on the need for brevity in written execution.[190]

183. Fales 1977, 49: 19; cf. PNA, 103 a–b. For the interchange between <b> and <p>, see Chart. 3, below.
184. Fales 1977, 49: 15; see the full range of cases in PNA, 1063f., relevant to various different, but homonymous, individuals.
185. Fales 1977, 51: 71; cf. PNA, 748 a–b.
186. Cf. § 6, below, for this repertory.
187. Fales 1977, 49: 24, and *passim*; cf. PNA, 740b.
188. Fales 1977, 49: 6: translation given following PNA, 355a.
189. The element **Sagalê*, known from Hebrew *šegal*, and to be further connected to a goddess *šgl* in the Palmyrene context, seems to derive in its turn from NA *issi ekalli*, "palace woman, queen", as has been demonstrated by Parpola 1988 (against the previously accepted etymology, from *ša ekalli*).
190. For the equivalence of SUḪUŠ with *ubru* in NA, cf. Postgate 1973, 67f. At present, this equivalence is further confirmed by the rendering of *ubru* as *ʾbr* in Aramaic alphabetic epigraphs, in connection with cuneiform versions bearing SUḪUŠ: see e.g. *ʾbrḥrn* = **[113]** *Ubur-Ḫarrān*, "client of (Sîn of) Harran" (written: SUḪUŠ–URU.KASKAL) in Radner 2002, no. 39 (and see also *ibid.*, nos. 38 and 40).

Naturally, alongside these cases, there are examples of a more transparent form of encoding, i.e. in which it is easier to perceive the reasons for such partial semantic "Assyrianizations" on the part of the imperial scribes. Thus, e.g., the name of an Arab chieftain, [114] *Bīr-Dāda*, "son of Dada", shows, alongside the syllabic renderings *Bir–da(-ad)-da*, also an "encoded" version, *Bir–*^{d}IM, with the use of one of the best-known logographic renderings for the Storm-god Adad: this rendering may be justified on the basis of the (at least partial) overlap of the divine figures Dād and Adad in the NA context.[191] On the other hand, it may be noted that this phenomenon is by no means limited to Semitic onomastics: e.g. in the renderings of the names of various successive kings of Urarṭu bearing the Hurrian dynastic name [115] *Sardūri*, we find — alongside syllabic transcriptions (*Sa-ar-du/da-ur-ri*) — various cases of encoding with the use of the numeric logogram 15 for the goddess *Ištar (which in NA was pronounced as *Issār, and even *Sār, with a variant by aphaeresis),[192] and at times also with the logogram BÀD (= Akkadian *dūru*), i.e. with an overall rendering *Issar-dūri*, which in NA corresponds to the nominal sentence PN "Issar is my protective wall".[193]

2. c Ran Zadok's classification of West Semitic PNs

Other contributions in the same decade came to refine this or that aspect of our understanding of Aramaic PNs through comparisons of alphabetic renderings with cuneiform transcriptions.[194] However, it was only with the 1977 monograph *On West Semites in Babylonia during the Chaldean and Achaemenian Periods: an Onomastic Study*, by the Israeli scholar Ran Zadok,[195] that research of West Semitic onomastics in cuneiform reached a first major standpoint. Zadok's book, although published as "grey literature" (i.e. with appearance little better than a typescript, and in an out-of-the way venue), is a precious consultation tool, insofar as it holds a full and basically coherent classification of West Semitic onomastics in the cuneiform texts of the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods, with an ample set of references to the Neo-Assyrian period as well.

Zadok starts out from the assumption that the overall NB-LB corpus held a certain amount of names which were recognizable as Aramaic — not only on the basis of linguistic criteria which tell them apart from the remainder of Northwest Semitic (phonology, lexicon, morphological elements), but also on the basis of various so-called "topical criteria", of theological, genealogical, historical, geographical and social character (pp. 21f.). In practice, therefore, Zadok tries to identify the "Arameans", as well as other Northwest-Semitic-speaking population elements attested in Mesopotamia between the

191. See nos. [35] and [36], discussed above.
192. Cf. S. Parpola in PNA I/1, xxv. This abbreviated rendering explains clearly the correspondence of *Ištar with Aramaic alphabetic *šr* in some texts on clay tablets of this period: see e.g. the name *šrdrq'l* (see Chart 3, below), and even more cogently the legal clause mentioning *'šr nnwh* (* Ištar of Nineveh), in Lemaire 2001, no. 2, ll. 6–7.
193. PNA, 568–570.
194. See e.g. Millard 1976; Lipiński 1976; Fales 1979.
195. Zadok 1977b.

eighth and the fourth centuries BC, through a connection between personal names, etymologically examined, and some contextual data, whether internal to the PNs themselves (e.g. the names of the deities acting as subject-element) or external (ethnic or social designations of the individuals, connected toponyms of tribal names, distribution of the PNs by geographical criteria). This comprehensive operation (see pp. 175–191 for the conclusions) is thereupon repeated, albeit more briefly, for the linguistically Arabic names (pp. 202–239).

Summing up, in Zadok's vast and detailed monograph — which represented his seminal debut in a major scholarly oeuvre on onomastics, continuously enriched with books and articles until the present — attention to the studied anthroponyms is first and foremost given along well-tested (and obviously cherished) linguistic and etymological guidelines. However, a historical outlook on the bearers of the names themselves is also provided, especially with the use of statistics and historical geography; and some parts of the work moreover comprise attempts at a historical-ethnographic approach to the names, albeit without the support of adequate critical tools. Thus, *On West Semites in Babylonia* represents a work mingling and blending various analytical levels, moreover with the aim of illuminating two distinct chronological/geographical horizons (the NB-LB one in the first place, but also, collaterally, the previous NA phase), and finally with application to two different onomastic corpora (the Aramaic and Canaanite names on one hand, the Arabic names on the other). No wonder, therefore, that — although it gives rise to a vast number of original results and suggestions — the book is indeed arduous to consult and in no way user-friendly.[196]

The most significant part of the book remains the first and longest one, relevant to the Northwest Semitic anthroponyms in Mesopotamia (pp. 1–191).[197] The examination of Aramaic and Canaanite names is effected initially following the system first devised by Noth, i.e. by classifying the names (1) by subject-elements of divine/theophorous type, and then (2) by morphological characteristics (nominal and verbal typologies). Thus, first of all an overview is given of subject-elements represented by deities of the Aramaic pantheon, of other epithets and symbolic terms, of Mesopotamian deities, and of some toponyms — obviously, to the extent that they are coupled with Northwest Semitic predicative elements (pp. 28–78). A classification of the same names by structural components follows: Zadok starts out with verbal-sentence names, and specifically names in the perfect tense (which form the overwhelming majority of Northwest Semitic PNs of the 1st millennium BC), subdivided by conjugations and then by declinations, and then goes

196. The great difficulty in the use of Zadok's book also derives from the "binary" system of numbering employed by the author to mark chapters, sections, and subsections (of the type 1, 11, 111, 1111, 11111, etc.), which the reader is forced to follow in his search for the frequent internal cross-references. The latter may, in not a few cases, also concern the countless footnotes — quite uncomfortably lumped together toward, but not at, the end of the book (pp. 265–333). Quite frequently, therefore, the reader will need to refer to the very exhaustive conclusive indexes (pp. 346–420) to retrieve the specific page-number in which a name is quoted — unless it were by chance hidden in the numerous pages of *Addenda and Corrigenda* (pp. 421–437)!

197. In a further section of the book, Zadok classifies the (much more limited) PNs which may be classified as Arabic.

on to the few names with verbs in the imperfect and the imperative (pp. 79–86). Names with nominal sentences (either interrogatives, or construct-state names), and finally the rare types with three elements, follow (pp. 96–110).

At this point, the vast section (pp. 11–172) dedicated to "One-Word Names" opens. This may be considered the most important and innovative area of Zadok's work. In the face of a veritable mass of one-word West Semitic onomastic formations in NA and NB cuneiform, the author chose to classify them again from a amorphological point of view, i.e. subdividing along the classic parameter of Semitics of nominal types, and indicating only in general the semantic references tied to each type.[198] In this, Zadok deviates from Noth's model — more specifically tied to the semantics of the names and thus to onomastic types of more transparent meaning — and rather follows the model already tested by Herbert B. Huffmon for Amorite names in the cuneiform texts from Mari (18th century BC).[199]

Working by growing complexity, Zadok begins with trilitteral names, from the mono- and bisyllabical bases (*qVtl*, *qVtVl*) to those bases extended by different affixes — through doubling of the second or third radical or the addition of various prefixes (*'a-*, *ya-*, *ma-*, *nV-*, *ta-*)– and then goes on to themes with a number of radicals different from three (from one to five). The same standard inspires the following analysis of hypocoristica, i.e. those names which present suffixes in substitution of lost subject or predicative elements: Zadok proceeds here from purely vocalic suffixes (of quite frequent attestation) to the consonantal ones, and thereupon to composite formations (*V+C*), ending with actual clusters of suffixes. A final section is dedicated to the not particularly frequent feminine names.

* * *

Summing up, a major asset of the classification presented in *On West Semites in Babylonia* lies in the much greater "inclusiveness" of Zadok's onomastic collection than in the previous assemblages of West Semitic PNs in first millennium cuneiform sources. On one hand, Zadok arrives at a systematization of the many diverse intuitions on sentence names which had been already formulated by Tallqvist, as by-product of his list of West Semitic PNs in NA and NB/LB texts: and he applied them not only on a largely enriched corpus, but also with the addition of previous results of research, especially those from Deller onward on the graphemics of the names. On the other hand and with a greater degree of innovation, Zadok came to flank this central onomastic nucleus of clear West Semitic origin and transparent meaning with a further (and quite vast) group of names with various types of abbreviations — which, as such, could have been of a greater or lesser significance to the bearers and their contemporaries, according to each case — on the basis of the etymologies of the constituent roots and of the many formal typologies

198. As is well known, beginning with the seminal work of Jacob Barth (Barth 1894), various types of Semitic nominal formations are tied to specific semantic areas, although the latter may — on the other hand — show a wide range of variation, according to the specific linguistic variety, to the basic meaning of the root, and/or to technical-lexical accretions which occurred through time.

199. Cf. Huffmon 1965, 130–140 (*Hypocoristica*), 141–152 (*One-word names*).

presented by their hypocoristic "appendages".

In this sense, the West Semitic (and especially Aramaic) horizon traced by Zadok for Mesopotamia in NA and NB/LB times also came to be "populated" by a myriad or short names or nicknames, conceived — or perhaps restructured by the imperial scribes in an *ad hoc* fashion[200] — for a rapid and functional identification of the name-bearer, and nowadays recoverable in their sole etymological base, provided by the root. This horizon proves moreover, at a closer view, to be fully coherent with the picture provided by the administrative sources for the vast supra-national empires centred on first millennium BC Mesopotamia — and especially the Assyrian empire — in which the aim of a homogenizing admixture of many different ethnicities and traditions of the subjected populations would seem to have been pursued.

A further result of Zadok's analysis, albeit presented in the book only in a preliminary and partial form, was the focus on those morphological elements of continuity or innovation characterizing West Semitic anthroponymy of the first millennium BC on that of the previous millennium, in which "Amorite" populations prove to be amply attested. Also this feature, it may be noted, represents a development and a deepening of hints already provided by Noth; however, Zadok projects it on a vast documentary base in cuneiform script, similarly to what had been done by Huffmon for the Mari texts. Just to give a couple of examples, Zadok sheds light on two paradigmatic cases — albeit mutually oppositional ones — which concern (1) the presence of generally adjectival suffixes in *-ān* (+ vowel), which show a clear continuity with Amorite formations known since the Ur III period,[201] and, to the opposite, (2) names with a verbal clause built with the imperfect (or prefix-conjugation), which are the norm in West Semitic PNs of the second millennium, but are instead quite rare in the more recent period, having been substituted in an almost systematic way by verbal forms of the perfect (or suffix-conjugation).[202]

Nowadays, the worth of this attempt at correlating Amorite anthroponimy with later Canaanite/Aramaic names may be gauged on the basis of a textual corpus of more recent discovery, that of the cuneiform archive from Meskeneh/Emar in Syria, to be dated to the 13th century BC.[203] These newer materials have, in point of fact, shed light on some diachronically intermediate phases, which allow to evaluate in detail between the typologies of West Semitic onomastics of the Middle Bronze - Late Bronze ages and those of the Iron Age.[204]

200. In this sense, considering the ample body of administrative rosters of servile personnel and/or deportees which have come down to us from the Mesopotamian empires of the age under discussion, thoughts inevitably run to the case of the names of European immigrants to the United States between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, and in particular to the many diverse ways in which those names were pitilessly cut, altered or anglicized by the immigration authorities at Ellis Island in New York City (e.g. *Cuzzle* from *Casupola*, *Emil Smith* from *Milan Shimitz*: cf. e.g. Petersen 2001).
201. See e.g. names [135], [140], [143], below.
202. Cf. already Noth 1928, 41ff., for Biblical Hebrew. See e.g. names [146–147], below.
203. Pruzszinsky 2003.
204. As noted by Zadok himself in a later contribution (Zadok 1993, 317), "… one cannot avoid the impression that the onomastics of Late Bronze Emar, although still of the Amorite type, approaches very slightly the onomastics of the Aramaic type from early first millennium Mesopotamia".

* * *

A work more analytical than synthetical in its mechanisms, rather explorative than resumptive in its results: the first monograph by Ran Zadok is still at present of great importance for the myriad of philological and linguistic data which fill its classificatory grid, for the multiplicity of its etymological suggestions, often innovative and largely acceptable, and for the vast presence of comparisons, ranging from PNs in Sumerian texts of the third millennium BC to those in Greek and Syriac of the first millennium A.D. From another point of view, however, the work shows the serious limitation of failing to fulfil one of its initial assumptions: that of isolating the Aramaic onomastic component against the remainder of the West Semitic PNs attested in the cuneiform sources from Mesopotamia of the first millennium BC. At the end of the day, Aramaic names do not seem to be endowed with a sufficient gamut of distinctive linguistic traits, to allow them to be set consistently in opposition to Canaanite (Hebrew, Phoenician, Ammonite, Moabite) names, with the ensuing attribution to one or the other group. This result was already evident in the contemporaneous names in alphabetic script, but it proves to be confirmed, and even increased, viewing the names as passed through the "filter" of cuneiform renderings by Assyrian and Babylonian/Persian scribes — a filter which, as seen above, even tended toward some homogeneity of West Semitic and Akkadian names, wherever possible.[205]

In a nutshell, it is impossible to decide, on the basis of purely the available data, if the already mentioned merchant from Assur, *Menaḫēme*,[206] was — following the logic of Zadok's initial assumption — of Aramaic or Phoenician/Hebrew linguistic-cultural affiliation. Or, to take a further example: it is legitimate to surmise that a real estate owner from Ma'allanate, in present-day northern Syria,[207] by name [116] *Dādi-nūrī*, "Dadi is my light", was an Aramean. However, it may be noted that many versions of his name by the scribes of the Assyrian administration, more often encoded with the use of logograms (10.10–*nu-ri*, *da-di*–ZALÁG, 10.10–ZALÁG) than through a purely syllabic rendering (*da-di-nu-ri*), tended — on the basis of the similarity of the lexeme **nūr* in Aramaic and Akkadian — to obfuscate the possible "alterity" of this individual's ethnicity.[208]

At the end, therefore, the attribution of *Dādi-nūrī* to the group of Arameans, or better Arameophones, within the Assyrian empire essentially results from the specific geographical context in which this individual is to be found (North-western Mesopotamia, an area of ancient Aramean settlement), and from the presence of his name also in Aramaic documents from the same archive (where he appears as *ddnr*, *ddnwry*).[209] More in general,

205. It is interesting to note that, to the contrary, the group of Arab names as isolated by Zadok in their attestations in Mesopotamia show a series of decidedly distinctive traits, as the same author was to further clarify in a later essay on the subject (Zadok 1981).
206. See name n. [110], above.
207. The texts from this site have, after a wait of some 30 years, been finally published by E. Lipiński (Lipiński 2010). On the numerous merits and defects of the edition, cf. the extensive review by this writer (Fales 2013).
208. PNA, 364b.
209. *Ibid*. Cf. most recently the indexes in Lipiński 2010, 275, 279.

the question of the specific linguistic-cultural affiliation of many individual West Semitic names may be essentially answered, or at least find the most precious hints for its solution, through subsidiary contextual information whenever available, rather than by purely linguistic means. In other words, it may be necessary to take into account the presence of particular deities within the names, or the ethnonyms possibly attested for the individuals or their groups of belonging, or even other (similarly non-linguistic) markers, so as to trace a picture of the single ethnic and linguistic communities present in the two major imperial formations of first millennium BC Mesopotamia. But the search for such possible interpretative "keys" would have the inevitable consequence of a radical shift of methods in the investigation on the names themselves, leading far from linguistics *tout court*, and toward ethnolinguistics, or toward various applications of historical research on names (with prosopography to the fore), and finally toward studies on ethnicity. This shift was destined to take place, for Zadok himself and for other authors, in the decades following the publication of *On West Semites in Babylonia.*

* * *

Among the many different data which may be extrapolated from Zadok's work, a special position may be assigned to the comprehensive phonology of West Semitic names in relation to their outcomes in cuneiform script of the periods considered. The following chart will thus deal with an updated synopsis on this aspect, in which the Neo-Assyrian "orthographic" correspondences with the least transparent and most mutable Northwest Semitic phonemes (mainly to be found in the area of the so-called "gutturals") are provided, with some examples for each case[210] (NSP = Northwest Semitic Phoneme; NAC = Rendering in Neo-Assyrian Cuneiform; EX. = Examples)

NSP: /'/ (etymological)
NAC: <Ø> in initial, internal and final position; also <'> in internal and final position[211]
EX.: [117] *Abi-ḫazâ*, "the father has seen;"[212] [118] *Ammi-lēti*, "the paternal uncle is my strength" (renderings: *A-mi–le-'e-ti/Am–le-e-te*);[213] [119] *Ammi-rāpi'*, "the paternal uncle is a healer" (renderings: *Am-mu–ra-pi, Am–ra-pi-i'*);[214] see also nos. [126], [127], etc.

210. This chart is based on the more abbreviated one in Zadok 1977b, 263f., with the addition of some examples quoted by the author in his discussion of single cases (*ibid.*, 243ff.), and of further data or renderings attested in PNA.
211. It may be recalled that the Akkadian syllabary presents only one sign (Labat no. 397, with its partial doublet of later periods Labat no. 398) to indicate the presence of an *aleph* ('), with the entire gamut of connected vocalic values, whether before or after it (i.e. <'V> or <V'>), depending on the case.
212. PNA, 10a.
213. PNA, 105a.
214. PNA, 106a.

NSP: /'/ from the fall of final /n/ [215]
NAC: <Ø>, more often <'>
EX.: [120] *Ammi-ladin*, "may the paternal uncle dispense justice!" (renderings: *Am-mu(-u)–la(-ad)-di-in/din*, *Am-mu–la-di*);[216] [121] *Se'-dilīni*, "Se', lift me up!" (renderings: *Se-e'–di-li-i-ni*, *Se-e–dil-li-ni*);[217] see also nos. [122], [131], etc.

NSP: /b/ and /p/
NAC: <b> / <p> and <p> / <b>
EX.: [122] *Se'-barakka*, "Se' has blessed" (renderings: *Se-e'–ba-rak-ki/pa-rak-ka*);[218] [123] *Būru-rāpa'*, "Buru has healed"[219] (= epigraphic Aramaic *prp'*).[220]

NSP: /*ḏ/ (rendered as ד and more rarely as ת in Aramaic, as ת in Canaanite)
NAC: <d>, <z>
EX.: [124] *Kubāba-idrī* (rendering: *Kù*-KÁ–*id-ri*), "Kubaba is my help";[221] [125] *Attar-dimrī*, "Attar is my protection";[222] [126] *Azrī-Iāu*, "Yahweh is my help" (renderings: *Az-ri/A-za-ri/A-zar*$_4$*–Ia-u/Ia-a-ú/Ia-ú/A-ú*);[223] see also no. [153], below.

215. This phenomenon is documented e.g. for the name of the Moon-god *Sîn* ([**Šîn*]), which, in its conjunction with Aramaic predicative elements, finds the rendering *š', šy* (i.e. [**Ši/ Še /Še'*]) in contemporaneous alphabetic texts from North-western Mesopotamia: see Lipiński 1994, 171–192, and cf. already fn. 164 above. For a reduced rendering as *š-*, see e.g. *šlpqd*, "May Šê order!", Hug 1993, 24 (for Aramaic **pqd*, cf. DNWSI, 932).
216. PNA, 104f.; see already Fales 1977, 51: 97.
217. PNA, 1099b.
218. PNA, 1098a. It is a form of perfect *qal*, third p. sing., from **brk*. For the paragogic vowel added by the Assyrian scribes in an accented VC syllable, i.e. following their own phonetic rules, see Parpola in PNA I/1, xxiv. Notice also the third variant, which shows an interesting example of "improper encoding" by means of the logogram BARAG (= Akkadian *parakku*, "[cultic] podium, dais").
219. Cf. Radner 2002, no. 66; the relevant individual, from Dur-katlimmu, was the son of one *Būru-aḫu-iddina*. On the presence of a deity named Būr in the Aramaic pantheon, but also in connection with Akkadian-type PNs, see already Zadok 1977, 62. At present, the attestation of a great number of names bearing Būr-, with both Aramaic and Akkadian predicative elements, in the recently published texts from Dur-katlimmu, has allowed to suggest that this deity was endowed with a local temple on the Middle Euphrates (Radner 2002, 16). A further question is whether the character of this divine figure was actually that of a divine "Stierkalb" (as believed *ibid.*, and cf. PNA, 355ff.), on the strength of the constant rendering of its name in cuneiform with the logogram AMAR (= Akkadian *būru*, "calf"), or if, instead, this rendering could not have been a further case of "improper encoding" (see § 3, above), also in the light of its alphabetic version with <p>.
220. Radner 2002, no. 66b.
221. PNA, 631a; for the "rebus-type" writing of the name of the goddess, with the use of KÁ for the phonetic value *[*bab*V], deriving from the traditional equivalence KÁ=*bābu*, "door, gate", see Zadok 1977b, 273. Kubaba, known from Old Assyrian texts onward, corresponds to the Kybele of the Greek epigraph material; overall, this goddess shows a synchretistic cult, extending from southern Anatolia to North-eastern Syria (cf. Hawkins 1981). That its main centre was Karkemiš is abundantly clear from early first millennium hieroglyphic Luwian texts, and is confirmed by the loyalty oath of Esarhaddon of 672 BC (SAA 2 6); it is now further corroborated by the 7th century NA documents discovered at Tell Shiukh Fawqani, some 8 km downriver from Karkemiš itself, where it appears with the particular writing KU$_6$ both in legal formulae (^{d}KU$_6$ *āšibat Gar<ga>meš*) and as a component of PNs, at times built with Aramaic predicative elements (cf. Radner in Fales & Radner 2005, 625ff., and esp. 628).
222. PNA, 235a, with a noun from the root **ḏmr* (cf. Zadok 1977b, 98 and *passim*).
223. PNA, 240 a. The name is that of a king of Judah or of the Syrian state of Hatarikka, in any case of

NSP: /h/
NAC: <Ø> or <ḫ>, initial and internal
EX.: [127] *Awsēa'* (rendering: *A-ú-se-'a*) and [128] *Ūsēa'* (rendering: *Ú-se-'a*), "salvation";[224] [129] *Nagaha-Dādi*, "Dadi has shone";[225] [130] *Samsi-iâbi* (rendering: *-ia-a-bi*), "Samsi has given";[226] [131] *Iaū-ḫazi* (rendering: *Ia-ú–ḫa-zi*), "Yahweh took possession of" (= Biblical Hebrew *yhw'ḥz*).[227]

NSP: /ḥ/
NAC: <ḫ>
EX.: [132] *Ḫana-Se'*, "Se' has been merciful";[228] [133] *Ḫazugu*, "the strong one";[229] [134] *Ḫamaṭuṭu* (= Aramaic alphabetic *ḥmṭṭ*), "lizard(?)";[230] [135] *Iaḫūṭu* (cf. Aramaic alphabetic *yḥwṭ*).[231]

NSP: /'/
NAC: initial <Ø>/<ḫ>,[232] internal and final <Ø>/<'>, with reflexes on vowel colouring and possibly on length
EX.: [136] *Abdānu*, diminutive (?) from **'bd*, "slave";[233] [137] *Idrī-aḫā'ū*, "My help is the brother" (renderings: *Id-ri/Ad-ra/A-da-ra/A-tar/*10-*ra–ḫa-ú/a-ḫa-ú/a-ḫa-a-ú*);[234] [138] *Ḫabdidu*, "servant of Addu/Idu";[235] [139] *Se'-ḫutni*, "Se' is my strength" (cf. Aramaic alphabetic *š'šny*);[236] [140] *Baḫiānu*, "the desired one" (cf. Aramaic alphabetic *b'yn*);[237]

similar form to Biblical *'zryhw* (Azaryah). The second variant presents the phenomenon of anaptyxis, quite frequently to be found not only in the graphemics of PNs (non-Assyrian or Assyrian), but also in common nouns and verbs of Neo-Assyrian: see Zadok 1977b, with previous bibliography.

224. PNA, 238b for this rendering of the name of the last king of Israel (*Hwš'*). For the second variant, PNA, 1421b. See already Zadok 1977b, 255, who pointed out — on the basis of the parallel versions *Ú-se-'a* / *Hwš'* on an Assyro-Aramaic tablet (= Fales 1986, n. 5) — that the use of the initial sign <*ú*> in West Semitic PNs of the NA period could have represented an explicit notation of the diphtong /aw/, and not of its reduction.
225. PNA, 921b: from the root *ngh*, "to shine" (cf. Zadok 1977, 88).
226. PNA, 1085b: from the root *yhb*, "to give" (cf. Zadok 1977, 83).
227. PNA, 497a: both cuneiform and alphabetic renderings refer to a well-known king of Judah (cf. Zadok 1977, 244). For the predicative element (where /ḥ/ is realized as <ḫ>) see the following case in the chart.
228. PNA, 450b.
229. PNA, 470a; the comparison here is with the Aramaic alphabetic name *ḥzg* (Fales 1986, nos. 53, 57; see also Maraqten 1988, 163).
230. PNA, 446b, for different and non-conclusive etymological suggestions. The cuneiform attestation refers to the same individual as the Aramaic alphabetic one (Fales 1986, 135–140).
231. PNA, 487f. (with uncertain etymology); see on the other hand Maraqten 1988, 171, who suggests it may be a hypocoristicon from **ḥwṭ*, with prefix-conjugation, "he protects". Cf. *ibid.* for the Aramaic epigraphic attestation.
232. For further cases of a cuneiform rendering <ḫ> corresponding to an alphabetic realization as ʾ, see the next row in the chart.
233. PNA, 4b.
234. PNA, 506 a-b. This writer's interpretation of the name (see the references *ibid.*) is =**'dry+'ḥ'+hw*, with postposition of the independent pronoun of the third person m. sg., so as to underscore the subject. For anaptyxis in the second variant, cf. fn. 223, above.
235. PNA, 436b, where the unusual "NA phonetic spelling of the DN Adda" is noted.
236. PNA, 1100b; and see already Fales 1996, 93f.; the root is **'ṯn*. Cf. also no. [50], above.
237. PNA, 252 a–b.

[141] *Mati'-il*, "saved by the god/El" (= Aramaic alphabetic *mt''l*);[238] and see nos. [73], [126] and [127], above.

NSP: /*ḏ/ (rendered ק and later ע in Aramaic, צ in Canaanite, ض in Arabic)[239]
NAC: <q>/<ḫ>, also <ṣ>
EX.: [142] *Adda-raqî*, "Adda is pleased" (cf. Aramaic alphabetic *hdrqy*);[240] [143] *Raqiānu/Raḫiānu*, "pleased" (= Biblical Hebrew *rṣyn*);[241] [144] *Raṣī'*, "pleased";[242] see also no. [42], above.

NSP: /*ġ/ (or /ɣ/) (rendered ע in Canaanite and Aramaic, and possibly also ק)
NAC: <ḫ>
EX.: [145] *Ḫīri-aḫḫē*, "awakened by the brothers", or sim. (= Aramaic alphabetic *qyrḥ*);[243] [146] *Il-iaḫīri*, "The god/El will awaken".[244]

NSP: /ś/ (usually rendered שׁ, also ס[245])
NAC: <s>, rarely <*V*lt>
EX.: [147] *Iasime'-il*, "God/El will establish"[246]; [148] *Sagib-Il*, "God/El is exalted"[247]; for other renderings with <s>, see nos. [101], [102], [103], above; for renderings with <*V*lt>, see nos. [104], [106], [107], above.

238. PNA, 745 a–b.
239. The phoneme indicated here with the conventional Arabic rendering /*ḏ/ corresponds to the traditionally posited voiced interdental emphatic of Proto-Semitic (i.e. emphatic ḏ), or — according to a different view (e.g. already Moscati 1964, 28, 34; and especially Steiner 1977, 1991) — to a lateral fricative, presumably emphatic (i.e. emphatic ŝ); the latter hypothesis has gained much consensus in recent decades (e.g. Lipiński 1997, 129–132; Kogan in Weninger 2011, 71f.). For a bird's-eye view of the renderings of this phoneme as ק and/or as ע in the different textual corpora of Aramaic between the 10th and the 3rd century BC, see Folmer 1995, 63–70; Muraoka & Porten 1998, 8f. It may be of some interest to note that in NA itself a shift between <q> and <ḫ> (or even <Ø>) may be observed, in those cases in which an etymological /ʿ/ may be reconstructed; e.g. **qudīni* is an alternative to *udīni*, "up to now; hitherto" (Hämeen-Anttila 2000, 17).
240. PNA, 50a; cf. Avigad & Sass 1997, 281:751, for the seal with the alphabetic PN.
241. PNA, 1028a. Both the cuneiform and the alphabetic versions reflect the name of a king of Damascus, known as *Reṣīn* from the Masoretic text; see discussion in Lipiński 2000, 404. In PNA, s.v. *Raḫiānu,* the etymological section (by Andreas Fuchs and Herrmann Hunger) does not take account of this well-known correspondence, which leads back to the root **rḍy*, and the name is instead attributed to **rʿy*, "to be friendly, to desire".
242. PNA, 1034a (again from **rḍy*).
243. PNA, 474a; cf. Fales 1980, for a detailed study of the correspondences between these names, all deriving from *ġwr, "to awake, to wake". Considering the faringalisation of <q> for Neo-Assyrian, we cannot exclude that this example may be "melt" with the previous one: both the /*ḏ/ and the /*ġ/ of the Aramaic could have already developed in /ʿ/, giving place to the common graphemic renderings <q>/<ḫ> (and possibly also <Ø>) in cuneiform.
244. PNA 2/I, 517a. Note this form of imperfect tense, always from *ġwr.
245. Cf. Fales 1996, 107; and cf. no. [177], below.
246. PNA 2/I, 494a, a form of imperfect tense from *śym; alternatively, the name might derive from *šmʿ, "hear, listen" (imperfect tense). Also the name *'trśmn* attested in a seal of the Paris Bibliothèque Nationale, erroneously explained as a divine name ("ʿAtarshamin": Bordreuil 1986, 75f.), might be connected to the verb *śym (with the suffix pronoun of first p. sg.).
247. PNA 3/I, 1061 a–b.

NSP: /s/
NAC: <š>
EX.: [149] *Aplad(ad)-šitrī*, "Aplad(ad) is my refuge"[248]; [150] *Aštrâ*, "Captive" (cf. epigraphic Aramaic *'sr'*);[249] [151] *Ḫašānu*, "strong, powerful".[250] Cf. also nos. [90], [91], [92], above.

NSP: /š/
NAC: <s>, also <*V*lt>
EX.: [152] *Ammi-sūrī*, "my paternal uncle is my bulwark"[251]; [153] *Salmānu-idrī*, "Salmanu is my help" (= epigraphic Aramaic *šlmn'zry*);[252] [155] *Adda-same'*, "Adad listened" (=epigraphic Aramaic *'dšm'*).[253]

NSP: /*t̲/ (rendered ת, also שׂ or ס in Aramaic, שׂ in Canaanite)
NAC: <t>
EX.: [156] *Adda-it'ī*, "Adda is my liberation" (=epigraphic Aramaic *hdys'y*; and cf. *hdyš'y*);[254] cf. no. [139], above.

CHART 3

RENDERINGS IN NEO-ASSYRIAN CUNEIFORM AND IN ALPHABETIC

[166] *Akkadāyu*, "Man from Akkad".[255] Alphabetic Rendering: *'kdy*.[256]
A gentilic, with the typical suffix (*nisbe*) *–y*, well attested in alphabetic rendering, from the traditional toponym "Akkad", used for marking a Southern Mesopotamian origin, parallel/alternative to *Kaldāyu*, "Chaldaean".

[167] *Aššur-šallim-aḫḫē*, "Assur, keep my brothers safe (*recte*: keep my brother safe)!".[257] Alphabetic Rendering: (=) '*srslmB* / *srslmB*.[258]
The alphabetic rendering shows an apheresis of the initial *aleph*, which appears in other names formed with *Assur,[259] and its apocope in internal position. In final position, the Neo-Assyrian abbreviation of the final vowels might be registered, also in the plural;[260] however, the variant renderings of the final element in cuneiform (-PAP.MEŠ / -*a*-*ḫi*) signal the use of the sign MEŠ "as a rebus" for the first person singular suffix adjective *–ī*.[261]

248. PNA 1/I, 115 a. For the Aramaic name *sitr, cf. DNWSI, 805.
249. PNA 1/I, 142f.
250. PNA 2/I, 464 a, suggesting an etymology from North-western Semitic *bsn.
251. PNA 1/I, 1096b; for Aramaic *šūr, "bulwark", cf. Zadok 1977b, 99 and *passim.*
252. PNA 3/I, 1078b. This god has been recently identified as one of the main objects of cult in the region of the Khabur river, subject to syncretism (Radner 1998); cf. e.g. the name [154] *Salmānu-ašarēd*, "Salmanu is the main (god)", adopted by several Assyrian kings.
253. PNA 1/I, 50b.
254. PNA 1/I, 47b. It is the name of the king of Tell Fekheriye/Sikāni.
255. PNA 1/I, 95a.
256. Fales 1986, no. 47:3; Maraqten 1988, 231.
257. PNA 1/I, 216f. With the second proposal the problem of the identity of the ideal "giver" of the name (Stamm 1939, 43, 145) would be solved: he would be the elder brother.
258. Maraqten 1988, 233; cf. Fales 1986, nos. 46:2, 47:2, 48:2; Hug 1993, 21ff.
259. Cf. no. [167], and also *e.g., srḥdn mlk'*, "king Aššur-aḫḫē-iddina [= Esarhaddon]" in Lemaire 2001, 26, 16–17.
260. Hämeen-Anttila 2000, 78.
261. Cf. Parpola in PNA 1/I, xxiii–xxiv.

[168] *Aplad(ad)-erība*, "Aplad(ad) has replaced".[262] Alphabetic Rendering: *'pldryb / 'pl(d)rb*; *pldrb*.[263]
The alphabetic writings suggest a common phonetic rendering [aplad];[264] also note the rare case of *mater lectionis –y* for the long vowel of the verb *riābu.*

[169] *Arba'il-šarrat*, "(Issar of) Arba'il is queen".[265] Alphabetic Rendering: *'rblsr*.[266]
The toponym is rendered in defective form compared to no. [178].

[170] *Nergal*(?)*-šarru-uṣur*, "Nergal, protect the king!".[267] Alphabetic Rendering: (=)*'ṯhrsrṣr*.[268]
The identity of the two names, attested in a recently edited tablet from Dur-katlimmu, is certain, and also the reading of the divine name, alphab. *'ṯhr*, and cuneiform MAŠ.MAŠ, corresponding (as U.GUR) to Nergal. However, this equation, albeit not yet understood,[269] is justified through *'ṯhr* = *Išḫara, an Anatolian-Mesopotamian goddess connected with the Netherworld, like in general Nergal.[270] This opens the possibility of other "alternative" renderings, hidden under the logograms used for the Assyrian names.[271] The rendering of the two other elements of the name is *standard*.[272]

[172] *Mullissu-ibni*, "Mullissu has created".[273] Alphabetic Rendering: *mlš'bny*.[274]
The goddess *Mullissu* (<**Mulliltu*), the god Assur's paredra, usually rendered in cuneiform with NIN.LÍL, is attested as *mlš* in the Aramaic Sefire stele:[275] cf. no. [54], above. In the second element, note the final *–y*, which has a parallel in *Bqby*.[276]

[174] *Mannu-kī-Inurta*, "Who is like (the god) Inurta?".[277] Alphabetic Rendering: *Mng'nrt*.[278]
For the exchange *k*::*g*, cf. above; and *ibid.* for the insertion of the *aleph* at the border between morphemes in presence of a long vowel. For other renderings of manes formed of an interrogative sentence, cf. e.g. *mng'sr*, "Who is like Assur?", *mng'rbl*, "who is like (Issar of) Arba'il?", and *mngsr*, "Who is like the

262. PNA 1/I, 113b.
263. The first two names could be reciprocal variants; cf. Fales 1986, nos. 50, 2; 51, 3; but cf. Hug 1993, 24 (Ass U 6), for the reading of the second name. The third name is edited in Lemaire 2001, 26: 12.
264. Cf. Lipiński 1976 for a long-range study about this god.
265. PNA 1/I, 127b, but with an erroneous reconstruction of the corresponding Aramaic name (cf. Fales 1986, tab. IX, fig. 27).
266. Fales 1986, no. 27; Maraqten 1988, 233.
267. PNA 2/II, 954–956; and cf. specifically 955b:36, for the case from Dur-katlimmu studied here (the Aramaic equivalent, however, is not given).
268. Röllig, *apud* Radner 2002, 88f.
269. Cf. Röllig *apud* Radner 2002, 89, who suggests an unlikely connection with Ammonite **'ṯhr*, "hiding place".
270. As for phonology, we must suppose that the local pronunciation of the goddess' name contained an interdental element /*t̲/, rendered ת in Aramaic (cf. §4, Table 2, above).
271. Cf., *e.g.*, against this rendering, the name *nrglslm* in a seal from Jerusalem (Avigad & Sass 1997, 307:822), out of context, but probably of Assyrian period considering the *Lautverschiebung* of the sybilants. It corresponds indeed to [171] *Nergal-ušallim*, "Nergal has protected", PNA 2/II, 958b.
272. Cf. *blsrṣr* (variant: *blsr'ṣr*) in Fales 1986, nos. 46, right edge. 1; 47, verso, 3; 48, verso, 2; *nbsrṣr* (= *Nabû-šarru-uṣur*) in *ibid.*, no. 3:7, and *šlmnsrṣr* in Röllig 1997, 368:1 (= Lemaire 2001, 84:1). Again, *blsrṣr* appears in Radner 2002, no. 109:c., and cf. no. [168].
273. PNA 2/II, 766b.
274. Fales 1996, 106.
275. Cf. Parpola in PNA 1/I, xxv, with literature.
276. Fales 1986, no. 13 verso 4. The name corresponds to [173] *Aḫu-iqbi*, "The brother has decreed" (or: "He has decreed/promised a brother", with PNA 1/I, 77f.).
277. PNA 2/I, 691b.
278. Avigad & Sass 1997, 301:805.

king?".[279] This case demonstrates the pronounce /*Inūrta*/ of the name of the Sumerian-Akkadian god *Ninurta in neo-Assyrian times.[280]

[175] *Nabû-šumu-iddina*, "Nabû gave the name"[281]. Alphabetic Rendering: *nbwsmdn.*[282]
Cf. above. In the alphabetic renderings, *nbw* is attested almost similarly as *nb* in initial position (however, the predicates can be Aramaic, not only Assyirian), but seems to prevail in final position.

[176] *Nusku-šarru-uṣur*, "Nusku, protect the king!".[283] Alphabetic Rendering: (=) *nšsrṣr***.**[284]
Other certain alphabetic renderings of Assyrian names bearing the god Nusku are, *e.g.*, *nškly* and *nškn'd***,**[285] always with an epigraphic <š> pointing to an Assyrian pronunciation /*Nusku*/[286]. In this instance, considering the identity of the person in the two renderings, the Aramaic scribe possibly simply omitted to mark the <*k*>.

[177] *Šamaš-aḫu-uṣur*, "Šamaš, protect the brother!"**.**[287] Alphabetic Rendering: (=) *ssḥṣr***.**[288]
The alphabetic rendering *ss* of the sun god's name seems characteristic of contemporaneous Northern Mesopotamia: as of today it is only attested at Tell Fekheriye (alphabetic *ssnwry* = cuneif. *Šamaš-nūrī*),[289] at Tell Shioukh Fawqani (*ssly*),[290] at Ma'allanate (*ssbṣr*),[291] with an Assyrian predicate, like this name from Dur-katlimmu. It seems a peculiar rendering of Aramaic **Śamš*, as discussed elsewhere;[292] here, the cuneiform rendering, pointing to the Assyrian god *Šamaš* (with logograms), can be explained, like no. [170], as a "translation", albeit in the light of a clear syncretism between the relevant divine persons.

[178] *(U)pāqa-ana-Arba'il*, "I am obedient to (Issar from) Arba'il"[293]. Alphabetic Rendering: (=) *pqn'rb'l***.**[294]
The alphabetic rendering fully corresponds to the cuneiform in the same contract: *Pa-qa–a-na–Arba-ìl***.**[295] Thus, it is a variant proper of Neo-Assyrian for the form *ūpāqa* (*puqqu***,** pres. first p. s.), as is demonstrated by the name of an eponym who is mentioned in both ways**.**[296] Further, note the rendering *'rb'l*, which reflects — with its second *aleph* — a popular Neo-Assyrian concept of the toponym *Arbīl, Arba'il (classic

279. For the first two names, cf. Fales 1986, resp. nos. 46, 2; 47, 4, L.E. 1; and no. 28:1; Maraqten 1988, 240. For the third, cf. Lemaire 2001, 134:5, and cf. PNA 2/II, 697f.; he is the *Mannu-kī-šarri* eponym for year 665 BC. Cf. also [*mng*]*šl*[*mn*] in Radner 2002, no. 45:b, which corresponds to *Mannu-kī-Salmānu* ("Who is like Salmanu?") in the cuneiform section of the text.
280. Cf. Parpola in PNA 1/I, xxv.
281. PNA 2/II, 884–888.
282. Fales 1986, no. 19, l sup.; Maraqten 1988, 242.
283. Radner 2002, no. 60.
284. *Ibid.*
285. For *nškly*, cf. Fales 1986, no. 13 verso 4; Maraqten 1988, 243 (equivalent to *Nusku-lē'i*, "Nusku is omnipotent", PNA 2/II, 974 a). For *nškn'd*, cf. Avigad & Sass 1997, 309:826 (equivalent to **Nusku-na'id*, "Nusku is praised, exalted", not attested in cuneiform).
286. It is obscure why — diverging from Tallqvist 1914, 178a–b — in PNA 2/II, 972–975 an Assyrian normalized writing *Nušku* has been adopted.
287. Tallqvist 1914, 209 a–b.
288. Radner 2002, n. 53:b.
289. Cf. Abou Assaf, Bordreuil & Millard 1982, 80–82.
290. Fales 1996, 91:21**.**
291. O. 3714:4; cf. Fales 2000, 113.
292. Fales 1996**,** 107; the rendering <*s*> of the second sibilant should depend on assimilation.
293. Tallqvist 1914, 242a; Stamm 1939, 84, 195.
294. Fales 1986, 209; Maraqten 1988, 245.
295. Cf. SAA XIV, no. 47, for the context of the two renderings.
296. Cf. *e.g.*, SAA XIV, 353b.

Arbela, mod. *Erbil*) as formed of the numeral "4" /*arba*/ and of /*il*(*u*)/, "god", which is reflected in the cuneiform rendering through the signs <4–DINGIR>.

[179] *Aššur-gārû'a-nēre*, "Assur, kill my foe!".[297] Alphabetic Rendering: (=) *srgrnr*.[298]
A (typically Assyrian: Stamm 1939, 179) name bearing a request of help against an enemy, who, however, might be not exclusively human. Compared to the meager alphabetic rendering, the syllabic cuneiform renderings of the name of this eponym generally show the preservation of the *–û* at the end of the word and of the suffix pronomen **'a*(*-gar)-ru-u-a / -gar-u-a*) and only rarely its removal (*gar-u*).

[180] *Issar-dūr-qalli*, "Issar is the protecting wall of the weakling".[299] Alphabetic Rendering: *šrdrq'l*.[300]
For the Mesopotaman goddess *Ištar, rendered in Neo-Assyrian *Issar*, and, like in this case, also *Sar*, cf. § 3, above.[301] As for the last element, note that the alphabetic version reflects, through the *mater lectionis '*, a rendering **qāli*, according to the Neo-Assyrian rule which has a possible alternation between penultimate long vowel and gemination of the following consonants (and vice-versa).[302]

* * *

From this point on the article is highly incomplete and fragmentary.
We publish only the intelligible parts.

4 Social Implications of the Neo-Assyrian Onomastic Data

From the information that Sir Winston Churchill was Prime Minister,
a number of consequences follow, such as that he was the leader
of the majority party in Parliament. But from the fact that yonder dog is Fido,
no other truth about him follows at all.
(Kirwan 1968, 509)

Names and systems of naming "can exist only in social communication"; thus "one of the basic tasks of onomastics is research into the social function of proper names".[303]

Naming procedures at birth: some hypotheses.
Were there class distinctions in onomastics?
Cf. the Old English "Domesday Book"

At the outset we must recognize that the Domesday Book material is bound to give a rather incomplete and one-sided picture of late OE nomenclature. The vast majority of the tenants whose names are recorded in Domesday Book belong to the higher classes of

297. PNA 1/I, 185-186.
298. Fales 1986, n. 58:4; Hug 1993, 25.
299. PNA 2/I, 570 a.
300. Fales 1986, 206-207.
301. A clear instance of epigraphic rendering *'šr* for *Issar* out of onomastics is now attested in an Aramaic calco loanword of an Assyrian juridical formula, *'l brky 'šr nnwh yśm*, "he will place (*n* minas of gold) on the knees of *Issar* of Nineveh": Lemaire 2001, 26f.
302. Hämeen-Anttila 2000, 30.
303. Blanár 2009, 92.

the community, to what might be termed the landed gentry of the period. The names employed by them were mostly dithematic and of stereotyped, conventional character …

(…) The humbler people, the villains, cottars, bordars, serfs, and, with few exceptions, the soke-men, who represented the majority of the population, are never mentioned by name.

(…) Apart from incidental information [from other sources] we know next to nothing about the habits of name-formation prevalent among the lower classes on the eve of the Conquest ... (from Pulgram 1947, 194f.)

(…) One of the first problems I encountered in doing fieldwork with the Kaguru was determining a person's name. My problem in part stemmed from an ethnocentric and naive assumption that a person would have one and only one proper name. Although Kaguru do not have the intense aversion to disclosing a name to another as is found in some societies, every Kaguru has several names which he uses on different occasions. Besides his or her social names (mentioned above), there are baptismal names if the person is a Christian, an Arabic-Swahili type name if a Muslim, and a number of personal names, the number depending in large part on the difficulties the person encountered at birth, during infancy, or at initiation (Beidelman 1974, 285).

5 Neo-Assyrian names in an ethnolinguistic and historical-anthropological perspective

"It has often been remarked in West Semitic studies that the deities known from ritual, narrative, or other documentary sources to be considered the deities most proper for worship and veneration are not those that occur most frequently in proper names" (Pardee 1988, 119).

How is the NA situation in this regard?

(…)

6 Beyond Naming at Birth: Particular Categories of NA Onomastic Materials

Mälkä-t' ïfu bäsïm yïdäggïfu
An ugly face is compensated by a good name.
(Amharic proverb, after Leyew 2003, 182)

Now we may begin to wonder how we can ever invent new proper names and form new definite descriptions, or indeed devise any at all if, as I say, their correct use requires that they already be understood as performing their function within an established tradition of usage. This problem is not difficult. There are recognised procedures for assigning proper names: champagne bottles at launchings, baptisms, birth certificates, etc. In these cases there is some kind of accepted ceremony which is generally recognised as correctly assigning a name (or, rather, there is no question of correctness to arise). .... New proper names and definite descriptions can be introduced when there is the possibility of relating them to a particular already encompassed by the knowledge of speaker and hearer.
(Candlish 1968, 158)

(…)

7. Conclusions
(…)

INDEX OF THE QUOTED NAMES

In order of quotation

[1] *Aššur-maqtu-šatbi*
[2] *Ātamar-dumuq-īli*
[3] *Bânītu-atkal*
[4] *Da''inanni-Nergal*
[5] *Gabbu-ina-qāt-īli*
[6] *Inurta-āpil-kūmū'a*
[7] *Issar-mētu-balliṭ*
[8] *Nabû-mukin-apli/šumi/ zēri*
[9] *Nabû-pir'u-lilbur*
[10] *Nabû-reḫtu-uṣur*
[11] *Paliḫka-libluṭ*
[12] *Rēmanni-Issar*
[13] *Rišat-abiša*
[14] *Sīn-tabni-uṣur*
[15] *(Ina)-ṣil-Bēl-allak*
[16] *Lā-qēpu*
[17] *Mardānu*
[18] *Akbaru*
[19] *Batūlu*
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]81] *Pišatti*
[82] *Banītu-aiāli*
[83] *Ḫiṭubarra*
[84] *Damqaya*
[85] *Gūgî*
[86] *Ra'imtî*
[87] *Bi'â*
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[89] *Adadi-ṭalli*
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[91] *Bēl-šumkī*
[92] *Se'-šumkī*
[93] *Bēl-Ḫarrān-abu/aḫu/bēlu/ šarru-uṣur*
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[95] *Bēl-Ḫarrān-issē'a*
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[100] *Bēl-Ḫarrān-idrī*
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[102] *Se'-sakā*
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[104] *Iltakâ*
[105] *Tukulti-apil-Ešarra*
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[107] *Iltadaia*
[108] *Ammi-Ba'al*
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[111] *Mār-larīm*
[112] *Bur-Sagalê*
[113] *Ubur-Ḫarrān*
[114] *Bīr-Dāda*
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[128] *Ūsēa'*
[129] *Nagaha-Dādi*
[130] *Samsi-iâbi*
[131] *Iaū-ḫazi*
[132] *Ḫana-Se'*
[133] *Ḫazugu*

[134] *Ḫamaṭuṭu*
[135] *Iaḫūṭu*
[136] *Abdānu*
[137] *Idrī-aḫā'ū*
[138] *Ḫabdidu*
[139] *Se'-ḫutni*
[140] *Baḫiānu*
[141] *Mati'-il*
[142] *Adda-raqî*
[143] *Raqiānu/Raḫiānu*
[144] *Raṣī'*
[145] *Ḫīri-aḫḫē*
[146] *Il-iaḫīri*
[147] *Iasime'-il*
[148] *Sagib-Il*
[149] *Aplad(ad)-šitrī*
[150] *Aššrâ*
[151] *Ḫašānu*
[152] *Ammi-sūrī*
[153] *Salmānu-idrī*
[154] *Salmānu-ašarēd*
[155] *Adda-same'*
[156] *Adda-it'ī*
[157] *Ḫanda-buri*
[158] *Ḫanda-larīm*
[159] *Kubaba-aḫu-iddina*
[160] *Kubaba-uarri*
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[162] *Arwas-ma'ādī*
[163] *Ḫiba-azammi*
[164] *Sanda-pî*
[165] *Aḫḫēšāya*
[166] *Akkadāyu*
[167] *Aššur-šallim-aḫḫē*
[168] *Aplad(ad)-erība*
[169] *Arba'il-šarrat*
[170] *Nergal-šarru-uṣur*
[171] *Nergal-ušallim*
[172] *Mullissu-ibni*
[173] *Aḫu-iqbi*
[174] *Mannu-kī-Inurta*
[175] *Nabû-šumu-iddina*
[176] *Nusku-šarru-uṣur*
[177] *Šamaš-aḫu-uṣur*
[178] *Upāqa-ana-Arba'il*
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Šamaš-killanni [43]
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MĪNU ATTĀ MALṬARĪ? PARODY, GENETTE, AND THE *POOR MAN OF NIPPUR* AS MOCK-HEROIC PASTICHE *

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Abstract

This article aims to provide a workable methodology for the classification, analysis, and discussion of "parodic" texts in the ancient Near East. Since the publication of the *Poor Man of Nippur* by O. Gurney (1956, 145–164), scholars have recognised the humorous nature of various additional cuneiform texts, several of which have been termed "parodies" or similar. However, in choice of terminology, the lack of a strict, structural approach has led to an obfuscation of the relationship these texts exhibit with their respective "parodied predecessor(s)". The following advocates for using the trans-textual theory of Gerard Genette's *Palimpsests* (1997) to approach the topic of Parody in the cuneiform literature. After outlining Genette's theory, a survey of texts often termed "parodies" follows, to better clarify their textual relationships. Thereafter, a full application of the methodology is demonstrated with the *Poor Man of Nippur* to argue that the text is a Mock-Heroic Pastiche that both reinforces previous readings and has bearings on literary history.

1. Introduction

Joan Goodnick Westenholz wrote, in response to scholars who had termed the OA *Sargon Legend* a "parody", that "the term 'parody' has been particularly abused in the process of categorizing legendary texts as parodies … What is the prior text which is mocked in this Old Assyrian literary composition?".[1] It is not just the OA *Sargon Legend*, however, which has been debated to be "parodic". Several cuneiform texts have been the object of

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1. Westenholz 2007, 21f., against Van De Mieroop 2000, 155, fn. 6 (owed to Liverani) and Foster 2005, 71f. For further arguments against the parodic definition of this text, see Dercksen 2005, 108, and Alster & Oshima 2007, 8.

scholarly back-and-forth over whether they are "parodic" or not, often without a consensus emerging.[2] This is not surprising: even specialists outside of cuneiform literature have had occasion to decry the "onerous confusion"[3] associated with the term parody.

But parody is not the only term that has been abused in cuneiform research. The discussion of (supposed) humorous texts seems especially susceptible to confusion. Texts fluctuate between a constellation of labels — parody, pastiche, caricature, and satire — at times in articles from different scholars, at times in the same paper.[4] The *Poor Man of Nippur* (hereafter PMN) is a case in point, termed a pastiche by A. Finet (1992, 102), a parody by E. Jiménez (2017, 101 with fn. 271–272) and J. Finn (2019, 20–22), and both "pastiche-like" and a "parody" by G. P. Campi (2024, 102; 107).[5] Far from being purely semantic, each of these terms carry significantly different connotations regarding the text's structural makeup: if the PMN is a parody, it implies, *per* Westenholz above, that a prior text serves as its inspiration; if it is a pastiche, there is the suggestion that the PMN is rather imitating the style of another composition; if both terms are to be used interchangeably, why do we not employ one or the other? All this suggests that a new approach ought to be sought.

In 1982, the French literary theorist and structuralist Gérard Genette, who grappled with these same problems of definition, proffered a solution in *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*.[6] Having surveyed the use of the term parody from Aristotle (παρῳδία; *Poetics*, 1448a) through to the 20th century, he came to the conlusion that "Today this term is the site of a perhaps inevitable confusion". The problem, he suggested, lay in the use of the term "parody" when applied to texts of distinct transtextual relationships, because "it is called upon to designate at times playful distortion, at times the burlesque transposition of a text, and on other occasions the satirical imitation of a style".[7] He thus developed a system of categorisation to allow those using the term "parody" "to check and focus with greater swiftness and accuracy what it is they are (probably) thinking about when they (haphazardly) utter the word *parody*".[8] The following pages advocate for the use of said system in the study of cuneiform parody, using the PMN to demonstrate the fruitfulness of its results.

Imprecision of the use of parody (and related terms) in Assyriology has led to lengthy debates, based largely on content, on whether a text is "parody" or not. While content must always be considered (and is done so in this paper), the core insight of a Genettean

2. For examples of debates on whether certain cuneiform texts are parodic, see discussion in Jiménez 2017, 100f., including LKA 62: as "parody" see Edzard 2004a, 81–87; *contra* "parody" Hurowitz & Westenholz 1990, 46. For the *Rulers of Lagaš*: as "parody" see Sollberger 1967, 279–291; Glassner 2005, 74f.; *contra* "parody" Cooper 2010, 331 fn. 36; on its difficulties Foster 1974, 82.
3. Genette 1997, 24.
4. E.g., Rumor 2017, 199–202, on the *Aluzinnu* text as both parody and caricature; see further under section 2.3.
5. It is also termed a satire, though only regarding its content and not its genre, by Cooper 1975, 167.
6. Original French: *Palimpsestes. La Littérature au second degré*. I quote and cite from the 1997 English translation of Newman and Doubinsky.
7. Genette 1997, 24.
8. Genette 1997, 27.

approach is that shifting the focus of investigation to structural procedures allows for more precise statements about the nature of a text to be made. This aids not only in determining whether a text is "parody" but also provides a stronger platform to support contentual remarks. Further, using a Genettean and structural approach better elucidates the intertextual relationship(s) at the heart of all "parodic" genres.

To this end, the basics of Genette's system (or "conceptual tool" in his words)[9] are fully explained in the first section and compared to previous applications of parodic theory (or lack thereof) in Assyriology. Thereafter, a survey of cuneiform literary texts that have been called parodies ensues. It will be shown that the indiscriminate use of the term parody applied to these texts has often obfuscated their structural differences; these are better ascertained via Genette's system, and their perception allows for some new interpretations of the texts to boot. Lastly, a specific case is examined by way of the PMN. It will be demonstrated that the text is not a "parody", but rather a pastiche, and specifically an example of the "mock-heroic" genre. This classification will complement previous, contentual interpretations of the text, but also elucidate some new points of interest and better clarify some of the subtleties of the text's humour. It will also have bearing on the history of the mock-heroic genre, which has hitherto been thought to be first attested only in the Hellenistic period with the *Batrachomyomachia* ("Battle of the Frogs and Mice").

1.1 Genette's Structural Parody[10]

Parody appears to encompass many different genres (e.g. pastiche, caricature, burlesque-travesty), whose texts exhibit different relationships with their "parodied" predecessor, a relationship termed by Genette as "hypertextuality": "any relationship uniting a text B ['hypertext'] … to an earlier text A [hypotext] … upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary".[11] These textual relationships differ at a structural level: a hypertext either *transforms* its hypotext or it *imitates* its hypotext.[12] The processes are quite distinct, and, above all, it is in their confusion that the problematic usage of "parody" in Assyriology lies. Transformation can be as simple as changing a single letter or word, or as complex as transposing or altering a style (e.g., burlesque travesty) or subject (parody proper). Crucially, transformative cases concretely depend upon *one or several hypotext*(*s*).[13] Imitation is still more complex. According to Genette, it depends upon "rewrit[ing] directly in the style of [a] model". By "style", Genette meant in the "broadest sense: '[style] is a *manner*, on both the thematic and formal level' ". Such a "style" is generated

9. Genette 1997, 26.
10. For more concise recapitulations of Genette's theory (with minor modifications) in Assyriology see Bach 2021, 26f. (later and in more depth 2024, 213–234) and Tadmor 2023, 44f.
11. Genette 1997, 5.
12. For Genette (see esp. 1997, 6), both textual relationships (*transformation* and *imitation*) are considered to be "transformation", *i.e.* the same, but *transformation proper* is "simple", while *imitation* is "indirect". To explicate the difference, Genette wrote: "Joyce tells the story of Ulysses in a manner other than Homer's [*transformation*], and Virgil tells the story of Aeneas in the manner of Homer [*imitation*] — a pair of symmetrical and inverse transformations" (*ibid.*).
13. Genette 1997, 84.

within a "matrix of imitation", by which Genette meant "to imitate a particular text in its particularity first means that one should establish the text's idiolect — *i.e.*, identify its specific stylistic and thematic features — and then *generalize* them".[14] In contradistinction to transformations, imitations depend not on one or several texts, but rather on a genre or genres. Here is the crux of the issue: in Assyriology, one often finds the description "parody of genre x". The *Aluzinnu Text*(*s*) (discussed in further detail below), is a good example, since it incorporates numerous genres in a humorous way to create a new composition, which scholars have subsequently labelled a "parody" of those genres.[15] This is a misnomer that obscures the structural and textual practices at play, for to parody a text and to "parody a genre" are very distinct. The latter involves generalisation and purposeful misapplication of an idiolect, which is then strictly imitation. Hence Genette considered the notion of a "parody of genre" a "pure chimera": parody (or travesty) "always takes on one (or several) individual text(s)".[16] This principle even applies to texts which imitate only one text: "one can imitate only a genre (a corpus, no matter how narrow, that is treated as a genre) — for the simple reason … that *to imitate is to generalize*".[17] To imitate a particular text means generalising its particular features, in a sense making a genre out of that text, whence derives terms like Proustism, Ovidism, etc.[18]

Transformations and imitations are further qualified by the "mood" or "tone" their hypertext takes towards its hypotext. These are most often "playful", "satirical", or "serious". The difference between a "playful" or "satirical" mood lies in a hypertext of the latter being mocking or aggressive vis-à-vis its hypotext. The "playful" mood is of "pure amusement" or "entertainment". A "serious" mood is one that involves no mocking or humour.[19] As can be seen from Table 1, below (from Genette 1997, 28), parody is the confluence of transformation and a playful mood. Here Genette's methodology becomes problematic. Moods are inherently subjective and require us to know what was considered humorous by the ancient scribe. This is a difficult undertaking itself in Assyriology, as succinctly stated by D'Agostino (1998, 272): "we cannot know, on the basis of the documentation we possess now, the psychological aspect of their humour … did they feel the tragedy which often finds itself behind a laugh?".[20] Regardless, it will become clear that

14. Genette 1997, 81–83.
15. E.g. Jiménez 2017, 103, who termed the text an "omnibus parody". See further fn. 85.
16. Genette 1997, 83–85.
17. Genette 1997, 85.
18. See further Genette 1997, 73–81.
19. See esp. Genette 1997, 24–28.
20. To accurately determine humour and thus mood in Mesopotamia, the implementation of humour theory would be necessary, for two recent examples of which see Milstein 2022, 257f., and Zaia 2025, 131–157 (esp. 131–135). Most approaches to the subject of humour in cuneiform literature rely on the basic notion of humour as, *per* already Foster 1974, 69, "revel[ling] in the inevitable gap between what is and what is supposed to be". Thus D'Agostino 2000, 24, understood humour by "il fatto cioè che ad essa è sempre inscindibilmente legata l'idea dello stravolgimento, dello iato logico". The aforementioned article of Milstein (2022, 263–266) advocated for discussing texts in humoristic terms, despite a lack of native designation comparable to the Greco-Roman tradition. Her, and Zaia's (above) examples demonstrate how fruitful and correct it is to allow discussion of humour in cuneiform texts (cf. Campi 2024, 81f.). See also Milstein 2020, 353, with thoughtful comment on the difference between "comedy" and

the cuneiform texts typically termed parody are misclassified due to a misunderstanding of their hypertextual relationship, not mood. In the survey below, texts have been tentatively grouped by mood when it is more readily ascertainable and for the convenience of the reader. The crucial difference of transformation and imitation remains.

Mood / **Relation**	*Playful*	*Satirical*	*Serious*
Transformation	Parody	Travesty	Transposition
Imitation	Pastiche	Caricature	Forgery

Table 1. Text categories after structure and mood (reproduced from Genette 1997, 28).

1.2 Previous Approaches to "Parody" in Assyriology

The majority of texts described as "parody" in Assyriology are, from a structuralist perspective, really varieties of imitation — *i.e.*, pastiches, caricatures, and forgeries — because their hypertextual relationship does not depend on one or several hypotexts, but rather on a genre or genres.[21] In fact, there is an almost total dearth of one-to-one text transformations in cuneiform literature outside of singular allusions.[22] This will be demonstrated in the survey below.

While the term parody has often been invoked in Assyriological studies, only Jiménez has specifically engaged with parodic theory to aid in its identification.[23] For defining parodies, in his case the *Disputation Poems*, Jiménez employed the "maximalist definition of Glei", that required: "(1) a form of 'explicit intertextuality' (*i.e.*, the hypertext clearly depends on its hypotext); (2) the parodied text is changed in form, but still recognizable; and (3) transformed for comic or satiric purposes".[24]

This definition can detect singular parodic instances but cannot lead to the classification of a whole text as a parody. This was the concern of C. Mittermayer when reviewing Jiménez's work, who pointed out that that in "parodies" such as the *Aluzinnu*

"humour" (fn. 21, citing Lowe 2008, 1–20). A forthcoming article of the writer will offer a fuller overview of humour theory from an Assyriological perspective.

21. E.g., Foster 2007, 38: "Throughout the history of Akkadian literature, parodies were composed on various genres of writing, such as letters, royal inscriptions, magic spells, and legal documents". See also Bach 2021, 27; 31.

22. See esp. Wisnom 2020, 75–78 (with further literature) on the famous allusion of *Enūma Eliš* IV 31–32 to SB *Anzû* II 17–18. While Wisnom showed concrete examples of one-to-one text transformations (e.g., *ibid.*, 216–244 for *Erra and Išum* and the *Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur*), these texts also contain numerous other hypotexts, so that they might better be understood as *generic chimeras* / *contaminations* — see further under section 2.8 below.

23. Jiménez 2017, 69–108; 2018, 124–133; 2020, 91–104. Sansone 2023, 264, also approached the subject, drawing an important distinction between metapoetics (*i.e.*, comment aimed at readership) and parody (*i.e.*, comment aimed at text).

24. Glei 2000, 346 *apud* Jiménez 2017, 98. See also *ibid.*, 99: Jiménez cited the distinction between "specific" and "general" "parody": "whereas the former is directed against a specific precursor, the latter parodies a group of texts or a discursive mode". He noted that the *Disputations* fall in to both categories. "Specific" and "general parody" are akin to Genette's transformation and imitation.

Text(s) or *Batrachomyomachia*, "the whole setting of the text reflects the parodied original, not only sections of two words (as is often the case with the intertextual references given for the disputation poems)".[25] To demonstrate that a text transforms one (or several) hypotext(s), numerous instances of explicit intertextuality are required. It must be admitted that our patchwork knowledge of Akkadian literature means that we surely miss some potential allusions, and hence risk failing to detect instances of parody.[26] However, we also risk placing undue weight on specific phrases that might actually be stock-literary language.[27] Only one of these eventualities can be controlled, since we cannot guess what we do not know. But we can exercise due caution in ascribing shared language to parody, when stock-literary language, and hence generic imitation is, as the text survey will demonstrate, more likely. This is one benefit of Genette's approach when compared to that of Glei.

Another advantage of Genette's system over that of Glei's definition is the lesser need to depend on a text being "transformed for comic or satiric purposes". As stated above, this is challenging to detect in cuneiform literature. But with Genette's system, less of an emphasis is placed on mood (*i.e.*, comic or satiric tones). This is the reason for the dashed lines between moods as indicated in the diagram above. Moods are not mutually exclusive: all could be identified within one text, and Genette even envisaged there being more than three, representing them in a "rose-window" diagram, where "ironic" is placed between "playful" and "satirical", "humorous" between the "serious" and "playful", "polemical" between the "satirical" and "serious", and so on.[28] This has been cited as a criticism against Genette's work. For example, L. Hutcheon disagreed with Genette's rejection of the hermeneutic reader:

> … the reality of the art forms with which I want to deal demands that a pragmatic context be opened up: the author's (or text's) intent, the effect upon the reader, the competence involved in the encoding, and the decoding of parody, the contextual elements that mediate or determine the comprehension of parodic modes — all these cannot be ignored.[29]

25. Mittermayer 2018, 340f. The two examples cited are strictly imitations (see section 2.3 for *Aluzinnu* and 3.3 for mock-heroic pastiche below).
26. Jiménez 2017, 80.
27. *Ibid.*, 89. Jiménez admitted that some proposed allusions might fall under this category. Cf. however, Wisnom 2020, 12f.: "even if the language used is formulaic or generic, this cannot discount an allusion". In the end, whether a line is an allusion or generic language will inevitably depend on the type of text. For those discussed in this paper the latter seems more likely.
28. Genette 1997, 29.
29. Hutcheon 2000, 18f.; 21f.. Hutcheon also disagreed with Genette's restriction of parody to shorter texts (e.g., puns, poems), though cf. Genette 1997, 31: *Chapelain décoiffé* is a notable longer parody, and Genette only noted that "parody gravitates to short texts" — implying it could also apply to longer ones. S. Dentith (2002, 11–14) also offered two criticisms. First, "[Genette's approach] suffers from the difficulty of attempting to reform or reconstitute a whole vocabulary by an act of scholarly force majeure, as though habitual usage could be single-handedly transformed in the name of greater precision". This criticism was foreseen by Genette (1997, 26): "In proposing this taxonomic and terminological reform, I hold no real hopes for its future … I am therefore claiming not to censure the abuse of the word parody

Though a fair critique, Genette's methodology is still best when approaching, particularly, cuneiform literature, whose chronological distance makes hermeneutic procedures ever more challenging.

2. Text Survey: Transformation or Imitation?

The following presents a survey of some well-known texts of Akkadian literature corresponding to Genette's table above (Table 1),[30] texts which, by and large, have been termed "parodies". Problematic cases are discussed at the end. Some texts, notably those under forgery and transposition, are included not so much to show where scholars have gone wrong, but to demonstrate the effectiveness of Genette's framework. Others are mentioned because they deserve due attention when approaching cuneiform parody. The survey reveals that parody and transformation are largely restricted to singular instances and, in the case of whole texts, are exceedingly rare. Imitation is by far the more common extant textual practice. Reasons for this are suggested in the conclusion.

2.1 Serious Imitation: Forgery

Strictly serious imitations are termed forgery in Genette. The title is not intended to be negative, but rather struck Genette as "more neutral" than the near-synonymous ancient term *apocrypha*.[31] In contrast to the *pasticheur* or caricaturist, for whom recognition is the goal, and whose works are characterised by a "saturation" of their chosen idiolect ("too much like [x] to be [x]"), the forger wants "to disappear".[32] Modern cases in Assyriology are ubiquitous from attempts at making fake cuneiform tablets.[33]

In the ancient world, forgeries of legal and contractual texts are numerous in Akkadian literature. This is unsurprising, since the formulaic nature of such texts makes the extraction of an idiolect quite simple. The model court documents, "pedagogical exercise[s], in

> … but only to point it out and — because it is impossible to clear up the lexical area effectively — at least provide its users with a conceptual tool enabling them to check and focus with greater swiftness and accuracy what it is they are (probably) thinking about when they (haphazardly) utter the word parody". Dentith's second criticism is that Genette's approach "loses sight of the social and historical ground in which that [parodic] interaction occurs, and the evaluative and ideological work performed by a parody". This is a fairer argument, though Genette never claimed to be an anthropologist or cultural historian. As long as one proceeds within the cultural framework of the texts they have chosen to study, as in this paper, Genette's approach is still of great use.

30. Partially overlapping with the present survey is the overview in Jiménez 2017, 100–103, who discussed the *Lagaš King List*, the *Gilgameš Letter*, the PMN, and the *Aluzinnu Text*(*s*). Though not exclusively concerning "parody" but rather pedagogical humour, Zaia 2025, 135–148, also overlaps here, discussing (among others) the *Real Estate for the Birds*, the *Gilgameš Letter*, the PMN, and the *Aluzinnu Text*(*s*). Cases not included due to scope are: *Ninurta-Pāqidāt's Dog Bite* (also known as *The Illiterate Doctor of Isin* or *Why Do You Cuss Me?*), a partially imitative text used for a pedagogic end in which names and places are lifted from bilingual and topographical lexical lists (Reiner 1986, 1–6; George 1993, 63f.; Milstein 2022, 255–258; Zaia 2025, 140–143); *At the Cleaner's* (see Foster 2005, 151f. for translation and further literature), which Foster (1974, 73) called "obvious parody" — I see no hypotext or even idiolect present here. See also Milstein 2022, 264f. on two pieces of humorous Edubba literature.
31. Genette 1997, 28.
32. *Ibid.*, 161.
33. See Michel 2020, 25–60, and esp. 39–56.

which a teacher of law required his pupil to compose a convincing and ostensibly authentic court document",[34] are exemplary exercises in serious imitation. This is not to say that all are completely serious: S. J. Milstein convincingly demonstrated the humour of one such document, in which an adulterous wife and lover are brought before the assembly on the very bed where they had been caught red-handed (though whether this is playful or satirical is hard to ascertain).[35]

A conspicuous case of Forgery is the *Cruciform Monument of Maništušu*.[36] Purporting that Maništušu, the 23rd century BCE Akkadian king, bestowed special benefits to the Šamaš temple at Sippar, the text incorporates archaising elements by way of Old Akkadian sign forms to create the illusion of a storied artefact.[37] The purpose, as suggested by its latest editor E. Sollberger, was to create a *fraus pia*, "pious fraud", "to establish the great antiquity of some privileges and revenues of the Ebabbar at Sippar, thereby strengthening the temple's claims to them".[38] However, elements of language and content are Old Babylonian or younger,[39] and the physical monument is decidedly Neo-Babylonian.[40] Indeed, Sollberger would even suggest that in the frequent use of the expression sìla instead of ban, when applied to amounts larger than nine sìla, the scribe had "overreach[ed] himself in his efforts to compose an 'archaic' text".[41] In other words, it is a poor attempt at imitation: "As a lapicide the author of [the *Cruciform Monument*] does not deserve very high marks".[42] Though most scholars have correctly labelled the text a forgery, M. A. Powell would, in the same article, term it both a pastiche and a forgery, "not modelled on a single Old Akkadian inscription".[43] While Powell was correct to signal that the text is involved in the procedure of imitation, here Genette's distinction of moods is

34. George 2009, 146.
35. Milstein 2022, 259 (with fn. 17)–262, with an overview of other pedagogical exercises and previous literature. See now also Zaia 2025, 138f., who argued, regarding the humorous examples of this practice, that the "blend of somewhat tedious and formulaic material with instructional humor inspires creative thinking and reflection on genre and style" (139).
36. Editions by Sollberger 1968, 50–53; Al-Rawi & George 1994, 139–142; discussion in Longman III 1991, 79–83 and Michel 2020, 30–33.
37. Gelb 1949, 346f.; however, some syllabic signs, expressions of quantity, and linguistic forms cannot belong to the Old Akkadian period.
38. Sollberger (1968, 50), who took the term *fraus pia* from Gelb 1949, 348.
39. Michel 2020, 30–33: OB elements include *ilkum* corvée and the *nadītum* priestess.
40. Aside from the NB monument, the text is known in several copies that complicate its dating. Sollberger 1968, 52, argued that a duplicate from Sippar (Si 3 + Ni 1288) was the basis of the monument. The Sippar original, from its colophon, purports to be copied from an inscription in Babylon that Sollberger noted could be an authentic Maništušu text. Longman III (1991, 82) noted that Sollberger's dating could not be proven (though cf. 82 fn. 13 where he concedes it might still be correct). The duplicate edited in Al-Rawi & George 1994, 139, claims to be a copy of an original from Borsippa, so that "the document belongs to the traditional corpus of texts copied and recopied in the Neo-Babylonian period by the scribes of the northern centres".
41. Sollberger 1968, 51.
42. Gelb 1949, 52 fn. 19.
43. Powell 1991, 20. *N.B.*: that his argument that the monument should not be (fraudulently) attributed to Maništušu, but Naram-Sin, should not be entertained. The new manuscript from Sippar (IM 124625, i 2) confirms that Maništušu is named in the opening lines (Al-Rawi & George 1994, 146).

of use, since the term "pastiche" conjures the idea of joviality. Nonetheless, the *Cruciform Monument* demonstrates that imitation is far from limited to smaller, unique documents.

The epistle, according to B. R. Foster, is one of the genres upon which "parodies" were composed "Throughout the history of Akkadian literature".[44] Instead, we have numerous cases of imitation in what is now a vast corpus.[45] The majority are completely serious and are forgeries of royal letter writing that correspond to the case of the model court documents, in that they were used for pedagogic ends.[46] Of particular interest due to its purported authenticity (though perhaps not pedagogic) is VAT 13294, allegedly sent from a high-ranking official to king Šulgi.[47] The letter is certainly from the first millennium and found in Babylon, but the scribe wrote the text "in an imitation of Ur III script"[48] and even followed the Neo-Sumerian "letter-order" scheme in its introduction, *i.e.*, placing the name of the sender before the addressee (Obv. i 1–6): [...] x [...] x-lá [... -^{d}s]ìn-ke$_4$ [na-b]é-a [$^{(d)}$šu]l-gi [lu]gal-mu ⌜ù⌝-na-a-du$_{11}$, "[...] Mr x-Sin (thus) says: 'to Šulgi, my king, say'.".[49] Copies of the royal letters from the OB period tend to have the reverse, *i.e.*, addressee and then sender.[50] As Michalowski noted, "there is no way of establishing if this is a copy of a real letter or a late fabrication",[51] which is the mark of a well-executed forgery and speaks to the difficulties when determining if these texts are "real" or "fabricated".

2.2 Playful Imitation: Pastiche

Legal contracts are also subject to playful imitation, pastiche in Genette's system.[52] There are two clear examples. The first is called, by Foster, the *Monkey Man*.[53] It makes use of at least one piece of clear legalese (5–6): *ša dēna dabāba ina muḫḫīšu ubta''ûni*, "he who seeks against him a lawsuit or complaint". The phrase *dēna* (*u*) *dabāba bu'û* is entered in the CAD (B/2 s.v. *bu'û*, 365a–b) with the special meaning "to file a lawsuit and complaint" (only in MA and NA), with numerous other attestations from real legal documents.[54] Further, the text includes a date formula (10–11: ITI.ZÍZ UD-1.KAM *līmu* ^{md}IŠKUR–SAG-*ši–i-ši*, "first day of the month of Šabāṭu, eponym year of Adad-reš-iši), and lists witnesses (12–13: IGI ⟨⟨^{m}⟩⟩^{d}30 IGI ^{d}UTU IGI ^{d}IŠTAR IGI ^{d}*gu-la*, "in the presence of Sin, Šamaš,

44. Foster 2007, 38.
45. Michalowski 2011, 216–224, contains many examples with further literature. See especially 217f. for the debate on the authenticity of the "Royal Correspondence of the Kings of Ur", with responses to Huber 2001, 169–206, and Hallo 2006, 85–104. Recently, Frazer 2024 (with other examples of imitative letters), 65, concluded that such a debate is a "flawed endeavour" to begin with due to a lack of objective criteria on which to base (often circular) arguments in favour of (in)authenticity.
46. Michalowski 2011, 223.
47. Edition in Neumann 1992, 29–39; see also Michalowski 1993, 117f., for an English translation.
48. Michalowski 2011, 223.
49. Following Neumann 1992, 31–33; Michalowski 1993, 117f.
50. Neumann 1992, 30. See also Sollberger 1966, 2f.
51. Michalowski 1993, 117; Neumann 1992, 38f., and 2006, 19f., argued, conversely, for its authenticity.
52. See Genette 1997, 22–24; 73–158.
53. Foster 2005, 768. See Franke & Wilhelm 1985, 19–26, for a full edition.
54. See also Franke & Wilhelm 1985, 24: "Der Wortlaut des Vindikationsverbots … folgt dem üblichen mittelassyrischen Formular".

Ištar, and Gula)".[55] However, the text is inscribed on what appears to be a clay foot, a sure indicator of its unreality, and the "contract" concerns a "monkey-man" (LÚ *pagû*), whom a woman has rescued and raised from a river.[56] The text is thus a mock-adoption document, made clearer by the name of the monkey: ^{m}ÍD–SU, or *Narû-erība*, "The river(god) has replaced", understood by Foster as "The-river-god-has-provided-a-replacement-child".[57] In addition, it loosely follows the common content-structure of adoption documents:[58] 1–4 correspond to the adoption statement; 5–6 a stipulation; 6–7 a penalty clause; and 10–13 the date and witnesses (all of whom are gods).[59] The line between pastiche and caricature (see below section 2.3) is not hard and fast in this text. Though the *Monkey Man* appears to be playful, thereby termed pastiche here, it is arguable that the text has satirical qualities. Child adoption was a means of securing future care in old age, both materially and religiously via funerary offerings.[60] To substitute a child for a monkey in this context could be viewed as more mocking towards to the adopter. The physical object, a foot, may also speak to exaggeration and hence satire, when considering the practice of imprinting a child's foot on clay tablets.[61] As related elsewhere in this paper, however, the benefit of Genette's methodology is the lesser need to precisely determine the text's mood, since the boundary between a playful and satirical text is fluid. All one must do is signal this fluidity.

The second example, which Foster termed a "satirical legal document",[62] is the so-called *Real Estate for the Birds*, an imitation of land-purchase contracts, in which a *šēdu* ("genie")-bird (2) buys non-arable land at the *bāb irkalli*, the "Gate of Hell" (16). It employs the language (e.g., 17: *ina āl zakûti*, "in a town of tax-exemption")[63] and precise formulation of purchase contracts,[64] but makes particular elements avian: the currency

55. See *ibid.*, 24.
56. Simians seemed to be a favourite subject of supposed humorous texts. See discussion on imitative letters above and compare SEpM 16 (B14, 3.3.7), "Monkey to Mother" (Kleinerman 2011, 158–160), and possibly another pastiche.
57. Foster 2005, 768 fn. 4.
58. Paulissian 1999, 6; Ellis 1975, 130–151.
59. Franke & Wilhelm (1985, 24) remarked that while the sequence Sin, Šamaš, and Ištar is common in Babylonian and Assyrian convention, Gula, the last name in the list, does not appear in the lists of gods in MA royal inscriptions (although she had a temple in Aššur and some MA personal names bear her name). They added that in the curse formula of a MB *kudurru* (BM 90840) she appears after the same sequence of gods (Sin, Šamaš, and Ištar).
60. See Livingstone 2007, 17; 25; Wunsch 2003–24, 209–211.
61. Livingstone 2007, 18.
62. Foster 2005, 942f. (translation). See Kwasman & Parpola 1991, 232f. (SAA 6 288), and more recently Kwasman 2018, 205–220, for an edition (K 8398).
63. Following Foster 2005, 942 fn. 3; Kwasman & Parpola (1991, 232) preferred to read a town name, Zakuti. But later Kwasman (2018, 210) suggested that what is meant here is "an untaxable place"; see also *ibid.*, 205: "As is common in land sales, a topographical description is given".
64. Following Postgate 1976, 12, and Radner 1997, 316, the formula of such contracts and the corresponding elements in SAA 6 288 are: "seal identification" and "seal impression" (1–3 and space for impressions); object sold (4–17); initiation of transaction / *uppišma* clause (18); owner / *issu pān* clause (19); price / *ina libbi* clause (19–20); completion of transaction / *ilqe* (21); confirmation of transfer / *kaspu kammur tadin* (21); exclusion of litigation / *tuāru dēnu dabābu laššu* (22 in restoration); penalties of litigation (23–r.5); witnesses (r.6–19); and date (r.20–22). See other such contracts in SAA 6 (e.g., 10) and note Radner 1997, 45: "der Text [muss] von einem mit diesen Werken bekannten Menschen

becomes *kupāte* ("bird fodder")[65] and in the witnesses there are, beside good Akkadian names, U'a-u'a the *akkû* (owl), Qu'a-qu'a the *qāribu* (crow?), and Ḫalli-arrakate ("Long-legs") the *kurkû* (goose).[66] Further, at the bottom of the tablet, there appear to be claw-shaped marks, intended to represent sealings (perhaps in the manner of fingernail impressions).[67] As with the *Monkey Man*, this indicates the text's unreality. In addition, the literary nature of the text is witnessed in rare orthography and vocabulary.[68] Scholars have already suggested that the text is humorous.[69] However, T. Kwasman went further, pushing back against Parpola's caution that the text ought not to be read as a "parody", given the very real elements in the text, such as some personal names and the toponym Kar-Nergal.[70] In his later edition, he termed the document a parody "based on imitation": "parody, which was mentioned by Parpola, is based on imitation. It mocks another text and alters wording making it ridiculous or producing a ridiculous effect … It appears that most of what has been interpreted as humor is conflated with parody".[71] He went on, in discussion of Foster's preferred "satirical legal document", to note that

> satire is a literary category that may use humor or other devices such as irony or ridicule in order to point out some folly or misgivings about a situation, person or event. Applied to the present text it would mean that it is satirizing human land sales e.g. high property prices.[72]

While it is certainly true that the text engages in imitation, some serious objections must be raised: (1) if "parody", under Kwasman's definition (it is uncertain where his definition came from) "mocks another text", what is the previous text being mocked here (unless the genre of land-purchase contracts is implied); (2) how are we to differentiate between "humour", "mocking", and "producing ridiculous effects"; and (3) if satire is a literary category, how is it different from parody, which according Kwasman's definition also uses ridicule? This is where the benefits of Genette's strict approach are made manifest.

verfaßt worden sein, der außerdem mit dem Formular einer Kaufurkunde vertraut war".

65. The meaning of this word is uncertain, but it is some kind of plant. CAD K has three separate lemmas for the following words (550a): *kupatu* A, "(mng. uncert)"; *kupatu* B, "a plant", based on its appearance in a lexical commentary from Aššur (mur-gud D) as ú mušen = *kupatum* = *šammu*(!) *iṣ*[*ṣuri*]; and *kupātu*, "(mng. unkn.)", in the text under discussion, for which they added that "no connection can be assumed between the lex. passage and the NA ref.". However, given that *kupatu* B must literally mean "plant of bird", a connection seems more likely than not, and this appears to be how previous translators and editors (see fn. 62) have understood it. The lexical commentary is now published by Weiershäuser & Hrůša 2018, 212–223, who followed Deller 1991, 9f. (no. 11) in translating *kupātu*, "Mistel".
66. For these names see also Radner 1997, 313 fn. 1775, with further literature.
67. Foster's (2005, 943) suggestion, now confirmed in the new edition by Kwasman 2018, 206f. See Radner 1997, 36–39, on sealing by fingernail impressions.
68. Kwasman 2018, 215.
69. Scurlock 1993, 11f. (no. 17); Radner 1997, 45; Zaia 2025, 139.
70. Kwasman & Parpola 1991, 232 fn. 288. Cf. Kwasman 2018, 214: "The names are not actually that real as only Ṭab-salamu is otherwise attested (once in a broken context), whereas the other names are unique or reconstructed".
71. Kwasman 2018, 213–215, and esp. 215.
72. *Ibid*.

These terms, “satire”, “imitation”, “parody”, are clearly delineated, allowing the scholar to express with greater accuracy the textual practices with which a manuscript engages. The text under discussion is better understood as a playful imitation of the genre of land-purchase contracts. And while Parpola was wary of such an interpretation, due to the realistic elements found in the text, the point of a good pastiche is precisely to imitate these elements, which are then simultaneously applied to the new playful subject of birds. Whether the text is a possible “excerpt from a literary work”, “part of an ‘event’ e.g. a property sale that occurred in some myth or legend”,[73] is difficult to determine. But one could point to other legal documents which engage in similar textual practices, such as the *Monkey Man*, to strengthen prior arguments that the piece is intended to be a simple piece of humour.

2.3 Satirical Imitation: Caricature

The cuneiform example *par excellence* of satirical imitation, caricature in Genette,[74] is the (problematically titled) *Aluzinnu Text*(*s*).[75] The text opens with a pseudo god-list in which the deities and their respective cities are mismatched (K 4334 Obv. i).[76] There follows a section (K 4334 Obv. ii) which is both a humorous self-praise hymn of Ištar[77] and a piece of mock love literature (perhaps related to the divine love lyrics of Ištar and Marduk).[78] The third column (K 4334 Obv. iii) is difficult to decipher, but perhaps includes the “journey of a king of Dilmun”.[79] After this, a section (CTN 4 205, r. i) demonstrating “perversion of regular omen collections” appears.[80] The fifth section (K 4334 r. i′) finally introduces the *aluzinnu*, who recounts the various jobs he can do in the style of a profession list.[81] Lastly, the sixth portion (K 4334 r. ii′) is a mock menology,[82] in which the meals to be eaten are grotesque and supposedly draw upon gastronomical and medical texts.[83]

73. *Ibid.*, 215f.
74. Genette 1997, 89–98.
75. The fullest edition is still Ebeling 1931, 9–19. As noted by Veldhuis 2003a, 628 fn. 1, and Zaia 2025, 144f., the title *Aluzinnu Text* is a possible misnomer, since the *aluzinnu* appears once and it is not apparent that all the various pieces form one composition (hence the title *Aluzinnu Text*(*s*)). Jiménez 2017, 101f. fn. 273, is yet to publish his new edition, but the eBL has stated that it will be uploaded in the course of 2023/4 (at the time of publishing this has yet to be updated). For a partial translation see Foster 2005, 939–941, and previously 1974, 74–79, with Akkadian. Veldhuis 2003b, 23–27, summarises with select translations from passages; Rumor 2017, 199–202, offers a summary. See also Römer 1975–76, 43–68.
76. Jiménez 2017, 102; Rumor 2017, 199; Lambert 2003.
77. Jiménez 2017, 102, based on an unpublished portion of text.
78. Rumor 2017, 200. Veldhuis 2003b, 24f., argued that it is a king to be mocked here.
79. Rumor 2017, 201.
80. See Veldhuis 2006, 495f. Foster 1974, 77, considered these legal provisions.
81. Jiménez 2017, 103, with further literature.
82. As opposed to “hemerology” by Jiménez 2017, 103 (though the composition perhaps draws on hemerological texts). See now Kikuchi 2024, 9–11, for discussion of hemerological/menological text terminology. I follow her distinction in using “ menology” “nur für die Lehre von Monaten und die zugehörigen, nach Monaten angeordneten Texte”, which is the case in the *Aluzinnu Text*(s).
83. Rumor 2017, 20; see also Milano 2004, 249–256.

As mentioned in section 1.1, the misnomer "parody of genre" is often applied to the *Aluzinnu Text*(*s*),[84] which obfuscates rather than elucidates the structural and textual practices at play. The third column was termed a "possible parody on the journey of an Assyrian king" by Milano.[85] It seems that Milano was implying that the "journey of the king of Dilmun" is somehow cognate to the royal journey Assyrian kings took,[86] but here the term "parody" should not be used, reserved only for that which applies to texts. The same caveat should be applied to Zaia's (2025, 145f.) description that "[the *Aluzinnu Text*(*s*)] parody the highest level of elites, their knowledge, and the genres important to them", and that "the collection was a parody of the scribal curriculum and the professional roles for which students were training".[87] The *Aluzinnu* text can be understood as caricature because of how mocking and thus satirical the text is vis-à-vis its imitated genres, exemplified in the scatological remarks of the menology section (K 4334 r. iii 17′–19′ + K 6392).

The *Dialogue Between Put-Ištar and His Son Mannu-utarrissu* (YBC 2394) is one of the more recently published examples of caricature.[88] As above, its classification as "parody of [Sumerian 'Instruction' compositions]"[89] obscures that its form and organisation is an imitation of that group of texts. Its satirical mood, however, does not derive from grotesque language (as with *Aluzinnu*), but rather an "abusive tone and the contempt displayed".[90]

2.4 Serious Transformation: Transposition

There are many ways of rendering serious transformations, transposition in Genette's words.[91] Allusions and quotations (see fn. 22, above) are numerous and constitute singular instances in cuneiform literature where minor transformations have occurred. But the foremost, large-scale application of transposition in the ancient Near East is translation: "transposing a text from one language to another".[92] As the most famous literary text of two millennia, *Gilgameš* (hereafter *Gilg.*) was translated into a variety of languages, such as Hittite and Hurrian. It is difficult to know what version of the Akkadian epic the Hittite translation is based on, since the latter seemingly predates the generally accepted period

84. As "parody": Foster 1974, 74–79; Veldhuis 2003a, 628 fn. 1 ("collection of parodies of various learned text types"), 2003b, 23–27, and 2006, 495; Milano 2004, 249f.; as "parody" and "caricature": Rumor 2017, 199–202; as "satire": Foster 2005, 939, and 2007, 39; as "omnibus parody" Jiménez 2017, 103; 2020, 100; as "parody" of a variety of items Zaia 2025, 144f.
85. Milano 2004, 249 f.
86. See Llop & Shibata 2016, 67–98.
87. Though cf. Zaia's (2025, 145 fn. 105) intriguing suggestion that the text is "an imitation of exercise tablets" due to the various genres collected on one tablet.
88. Edition in Foster & George 2020, 37–61.
89. Foster & George 2020, 38.
90. *Ibid*. See also Fechner 2022, 449–452, for further elements of exaggeration and hence the satirical mood.
91. On the practice of transposition and the many ways one can achieve this see esp. Genette 1997, 212–400.
92. Genette 1997, 214 (see esp. 214–218). Another example of transposition via translation is *Ištar's Descent*, the Akkadian hypertext of the Sumerian hypotext *Inanna's Descent*. On the relationship of these two compositions see, e.g., Sladek 1974, 34–51; Reiner 1985, 29–49.

of standardisation and canonisation for SB *Gilg.*[93] Nonetheless, in the eyes of the most recent editor of the Hittite version, "the Hittite editor/translator must have begun with an Akkadian *Vorlage* similar to the work credited to Sin-leqi-unninni, but lacking [certain] elements".[94] The structural dependence is almost certainly on one hypotext. The hypertext, Hittite *Gilg.*, then displays all the hallmarks of a typical transposition. There is: translation (above); prosification (Akkadian metre is swapped for Hittite prose);[95] excision (e.g., Hittite *Gilg.* does not depict the Urukeans complaints under Gilgameš; the dreams of Gilgameš before the arrival of Enkidu and later the battle with Humbaba are suppressed; etc.);[96] but also augmentation or addition (e.g., Gilgameš' meeting with the personified Sea and later the Moon God in the steppe).[97]

2.5 Problematic Case 1: The Disputation Poems

The disputation poems are complex cases. In Jiménez's thorough study, he argued that they are "parodies" based on their "Hymno-Epic dialect", speech-introduction formula, cosmogonic prologues, and quotations from "highly sophisticated literary texts such as the *Theodicy* or *Gilgameš*".[98] However, to take one example from Jiménez's work, the fragmentary *Series of the Spider* is remarkably challenging.[99]

The text begins with its cosmogonic prologue: the assembly of gods creates the universe and all its living creatures. The spider then begins to boast of its pre-eminence, before Ea (called here Ninšiku) creates two rivals, *ḫamānīru* and *ešqapīzu* (*hapax legomena*), and the three set to debating. After a series of exchanges, the spider begins what Jiménez terms "a grandiloquent speech that contains several clear quotations from texts such as the *Theodicy* and *Gilgameš* … and in which the parodic character of the text is obvious".[100] The remainder of the text then becomes very fragmentary.

The language register used in the text is clearly high, in contrast to the protagonists, who are decidedly humble. Jiménez points to literary word forms such as *puḫri* (8; 10), a ŠD stem verb (*šuparruru*, 20), a "pseudo locative-adverbial" (*banûtū'a*, 25), and a stock-literary verse (*lā ādir tāḫāzi*, 25).[101] Such a register points not to specific literary text, but to an idiolect generated from Akkadian *belles lettres*. This would qualify the text as an imitation, not transformation or parody. The structural relationship of the hypertext, the Disputation, to its generic group of hypotexts, "high" Akkadian literature, is thus clearer.

But the picture is problematised if the *Theodicy* and *Gilg.* quotations adduced by Jiménez are accepted. These are: *limdā šibqīya* (26) from *Theodicy* 265, *limad šibqīy*[*a*];[102]

93. See George 2003, 3–70, and Beckman 2019, 1–14.
94. Beckman 2019, 10, who rejected the idea that the Hittite *Gilg*. is a "direct reflection of oral tradition or an independent composition not based in some way on earlier Akkadian (and Hurrian?) texts".
95. See esp. Genette 1997, 219–225. Beckman 2019, 8 (*Element No.* 1).
96. See esp. Genette 1997, 229–235. Beckman 2019, 8 (See *Elements No.* 4; 10; 13; 17).
97. See. esp. Genette 1997, 228f.; 254–259. Beckman 2019, 9f. (*Elements No.* 39; 40).
98. Jiménez 2017, 97.
99. Edition in *ibid.*, 291–323.
100. *Ibid.*, 291f..
101. See philological commentary in *ibid.* 312–316.
102. See edition on eBL by Heinrich 2022a.

and *puḫḫurat elīkun* from SB *Gilg.* I 250, *mātu puḫḫurat ina muḫḫīšu*.[103] Imitations, *stricto sensu*, never directly allude, quote, or borrow.[104] But nor is the text a complete parody, because the quotes pertains to two lines, *i.e.*, the hypertext has not transformed the hypotext *en masse*, and thus outside of this line the *Theodicy* is barely recognisable. Instead, the quote could be a select parodic instance, where a minimal transformation has taken place, congruently situated within a text which imitates a high Akkadian register. Thus, while entirely correct to point to the "parodic character" of the Spider's speech (above), it is of lesser use to classify the whole text as a parody,[105] not least because it simplifies what must have been quite a complex textual procedure in which the scribe engaged.

2.6 Problematic Case 2: The Divine Love Lyrics

Akin, and perhaps related to the second section of the *Aluzinnu Text*(*s*), are the "Divine Love Lyrics".[106] This hotchpotch of texts, recitations, and poetic passages, from different findspots (Nineveh, Sippar, etc.) and periods (late Neo-Assyrian and late Babylonian) was collected into four groups by W. G. Lambert. The poetic portions narrate the jealousy of the goddess Zarpanitu, whose adulterous spouse Marduk has been "consorting" with Ištar of Babylon. The texts are to be taken together with a ritual tablet (BM 41107 + BM 41005), that reveals the ritual to be one of "divine adultery or jealousy", a *qīnayātu* (BM 40090+, r. iv 34–36), that "gives the poetry a cultic setting".[107]

Two of the poetic passages of the "Divine Love Lyrics" have been considered "parodies" of love literature.[108] The first "parodic passage" (K 6082 + 81-7-27, 241, col. B 11–17) would appear to show Marduk questioning why his *tappattī* ("my second-rank wife,

103. Edition by George 2022 on eBL; see previously George 2003, 552f. with the numbering 252. The quotation here is not so certain, given the only point of contact is the D. Stat. third fem. s. stative verb from *paḫāru*.
104. Genette 1997, 78. Note the very similar case of *La secchia rapita* (1615–1617), a mock-heroic poem that includes touches of parody in its paraphrasing. As noted by Genette (1997, 135f.), the speech of the watchmaker to her husband in the second *canto* is taken from Dido's speech to Aeneas at the end of *Aeneid* IV: "But the line between imitation and transformation is very hard to draw in this instance". It seems imitations use transformation more than Genette originally envisaged. Even the *Batrachomyomachia* (269) has one direct quote from Homer (though Hosty 2020, 33f. with fn. 58, was suspicious of its originality given its uniqueness in a text where the poet appears keen to avoid such practices). The use of direct reference in imitations can function as an invitation to the reader to identify the hypotext.
105. See, e.g., Jiménez 2017, 97: "These factors make it clear that Babylonian disputation poems should be classified as parodies".
106. Originally published by Lambert 1959, 1–15 and again in 1975, 98–135. A new fragment has been published by Fincke 2013. On the emotion of jealousy in this text see Da Riva 2020, 306–334.
107. Nissinen 2001, 123f.; Edzard 1987, 68 f.; Da Riva 2020, 314.
108. Foster 1974, 79; on comic elements in the text cf. Edzard 1987, 68. In the following the writer compares the "Lyrics" to Wasserman's (2016) corpus of love literature of the third and second millennium, in lieu of a comparable work for love literature of the first millennium. Because Wasserman could examine a number of texts together, more general features of this genre could be extracted, verified, and provide more certain points of comparison. Nevertheless, the other (non-medical/incantational) shining example of first millennium love literature, *Nabu and Tašmetu* (SAA 3 14) certainly conforms to the aspects compared here, with its focus on the appearance of Tašmetu, avian imagery, and flow of speech.

beloved") farted and comparing her appearance to a gecko and cooking pot.[109] Here the constellation of lover and beloved and the attention to the body and complexion of the latter is typical of love literature,[110] and thereby imitative, but note the (not-so) subtle difference: typically in Akkadian love literature the term for "skin" is *šīru*;[111] here it is *mašku*, which, though also used for human flesh, is more widely attested as "hide" or "leather", and is thus doubly degrading.[112]

The second passage in question (LKA 92 and 81-2-4, 8–17) depicts Zarpanitu describing the rival lover's (Ištar's) genitalia as foul-smelling and warns the *ḫaḫḫuru*-bird to beware the *kamūnu* (a fungus) and *nipiš suḫāti* ("smell of the armpit"). The evocation of *ḫaḫḫuru*-bird is significant. In Akkadian love literature birds are "a typical semantic feature", "expressing the separation of lovers" and being "bearers of good tidings".[113] Here the bird is instead given a warning by Zarpanitu, thus inverting the usual semantic associations.

Both passages cited above are first person speeches and thereby exhibit the "natural flow of speech" found in Akkadian love literature of the third and second millennium.[114] But rather than "Love Lyrics", these texts could aptly be described as "Jealousy Lyrics". Their relation to wider Akkadian love literature is (un?)clear[115] and could persuade one to interpret them as caricatures, *i.e.*, satirical imitations, of the genre of love literature, given their vulgar language. However, as suggested to the writer by Rocio da Riva (edition forthcoming), the fragmentary nature of the texts and their context make the identification of humour very challenging. Their status as imitations is more certain.

There is an intriguing possibility that the composition is engaged in the textual procedure of transformation. Da Riva and E. Frahm suggested that the catchline to the beginning of a commentary on an unknown literary text (K 4657+ 60′) references the very same rites we find in the "Jealousy Lyrics": *qīnayātu*.[116] The unknown literary text has now been identified as an earlier version of the same lyrics we have here, but enacted in Nippur and with Nippurite protagonists: Enlil, Belet-ili, and Šuzianna.[117] It is impossible to discern any more about this original version: how did the narrative progress? what was its

109. On these unbecoming descriptions see Foster 1974, 79 fn. 23. To the best of the writer's knowledge, it has not been suggested that this is the speech of Marduk but given that the speaker is male (*sisiketīšu*, 8; *šu* and *mār*, 9) and the only male protagonist so far attested in the text is Marduk, this is a reasonable conclusion. For a similar notion of the beloved's flatulence, compare the Sumerian "proverb" (1. 12): nig$_2$ ud-bi-ta la-ba-gal$_2$-la ki-sikil tur ur$_2$ dam-ma-na-ka še$_{10}$ nu-ub-dur$_2$-re, "a previous thing which was not there: a young girl was not farting in her spouse's lap" (see Alster 1997, 9). There also exists an Emesal variant of this "proverb" (Alster 2007, 130) and later Sumero-Akkadian bilingual (Lambert 1960, 260; Alster 1997, 9; 2007, 130). A forthcoming article from the author will treat this "proverb", perhaps "joke", at length.
110. Wasserman 2016, 44.
111. *Ibid.*, 59–62.
112. CAD M, s.v. *mašku*, 376a–379b.
113. Wasserman 2016, 48f.
114. *Ibid.*, 23.
115. Nissinen 2001, 124; Da Riva 2020, 314f.
116. Da Riva & Frahm 1999–2000, 181f.
117. Frahm & Jiménez 2015, 328f., based on OECT 11 69+70 i 40′–41′; Da Riva 2020, 316 f. These figures

language register? What is clear is the dependence of the "Jealousy Lyrics" on this earlier text. However, unique to the latter, as far as is attested, is its coarse and vulgar language. In the words of Lambert, "imagery of the boldest kind is commonplace, and the eroticism is the most explicit for ancient Mesopotamia. Parallels are hard to find".[118] Could the later version of the lyrics have used more vulgar expressions than its earlier version? If so, the "Jealousy Lyrics" might represent one of the earliest attested forms of burlesque travesty, which "rewrites a noble text by preserving its "action", meaning its fundamental content and movement …, but impressing on it an entirely different elocution, or 'style' ".[119] However, to follow the methodological advice given above, the more prudent reading is still to view these lyrics as *imitations* of the genre of Akkadian love literature.

2.7 Problematic Case 3: The *Letter of Gilgameš*

More obscure textual practices are at play in the famous *Letter of Gilgameš*.[120] It has been called parody, satire, and caricature, mainly due to disagreements over a humorous nature of the text.[121] Whether the text is humorous or not cannot be answered, but a clarification of the hypertextual relationship exhibited in the letter should at least be attempted before embarking on that question. The suggestions that the letter is based on SB *Gilg.* VIII and wider elements found in the poem favour a transformative relationship: Gilgameš is the *migir Šamaš*, "favourite of Šamaš" (3); one of his gods is Lugalbanda (34); and his demands for materials and precious commodities, *ana irat Enkīdu ibrīya lukīn*, "so that I may fix [them] on the chest of my companion Enkidu" (23), evokes Gilgameš' desire to make a gold funerary statue of his friend (SB *Gilg.* VIII, 71).[122] However, other elements

later became those found in text under discussion. Through the syncretism between Marduk and Enlil, Belet-ili became Zarpanitu (Oshima 2017, 218a). Šuzianna was identified in god-list K 1451, 1 (CT 25, 49) as Belet-Babili, "lady of Babylon", who is the same as Ištar of Babylon (Krebernik 2011–13, 377b; Frahm & Jiménez 2015, 329).

118. Lambert 1975, 99; echoed by Da Riva 2020, 321.
119. Genette 1997, 58.
120. First edition by Gurney 1957, 127–135. A Late Babylonian exemplar (Ni 2869) likely from Sippar was then identified by George (2003, 118 with fn. 111). See now the edition in Frazer 2024, 73–114 (a translation can also be found in Foster 2005, 1017–1019). For general discussion and the text's difficulties see Kraus 1980, 109–121; D'Agostino 2000, 50–58; and Zaia 2025, 139f.
121. Most arguments in favour of a humorous reading base themselves on the immense numbers of commodities requested by Gilgameš (e.g., Campi 2024, 102; Zaia 2025, 139). See Foster 2005, 1017, as possible "parody on the Assyrian royal style"; later Foster 2007, 39, as satire of *Gilg.* VIII; Kraus 1980, 120, as possible "bewusster karikaturaler Persiflage"; see also Campi 2024, 102, who identified a "clear parodic aim" in the "absurd, farcical amounts" Gilgameš demands. The political interpretation of Kraus based on Gilgameš's title "King of Ur" in the text should now not be followed: "This association with Ur as well as Uruk must be a distant legacy of the efforts of Ur-Nammu and Šulgi of Ur to identify themselves in their considerable literary output as brothers of the great hero" (George 2003, 119).
122. George 2003, 118f. See also Frazer 2024, 93 and 99, with previous literature (and the commentary between 88 and 109, e.g. 107, for additional references to the "Epic"). This hypothesis could be strengthened should Frazer's restoration in line 10, [*ana ṣalmi š*]*a* ^{d}*Enkidu*, "for the statue of Enkidu" (following Tournay & Shaffer 1994, 276 fn. 5) be accepted. Zaia (2025, 140, with previous literature) also considered it significant that a tablet from the school in Ḫuzirina, the same findspot of the *Letter*, contained the corresponding and relevant portions of the SB *Gilg.* VIII.

of the letter certainly do not belong to the tradition as embodied in the poem, and thereby speak to an imitative relationship: Gilgameš is *narām Marduk* ("beloved of Marduk", 3);[123] other gods accompany Lugalbanda in 34; and "the subscript of the letter repeats the common epithet of the omen apodoses" where Gilgameš features.[124] Most prominently, Gilgameš is called the "King of Ur" throughout the text, which as A. George notes, must derive from traditions beginning with Ur-Nammu and Šulgi.[125] If the letter were taken as derived solely from the "Epic", there could be an intriguing case of transformation, in which the style of the hypotext, SB *Gilg.*, has been transformed into the format of a letter. However, the incorporation of elements from wider traditions surrounding Gilgameš should dissuade from reading the text as a parody or transposition of the "Epic" alone. Instead, the text is a kind of double imitation, first of royal letter writing, and second of the motifs and themes concerning Gilgameš by the first millennium.[126]

2.8 Problematic Case 4: The Bel-eṭir Text and "*Narû*-Literature"

Lastly, there is the curious case of the Neo-Assyrian *Bel-eṭir Text*,[127] a (supposed) diatribe against a (possible) rebel of the Assyrian state.[128] K 1351 cites the SB *Cuthean Legend* (hereafter SB *Cuth.*) from its opening line: *ṭupšinna pitēma narâ šitassi*, "Open the tablet-box and read the stele!".[129] However, "rather than praising the man, as would a stela, it

123. George 2003, 119; Frazer 2024, 89.
124. George 2003, 119 (see also 112–117).
125. *Ibid.*, 119. See also fn. 121, above, and Frazer 2024, 88.
126. Zaia (2025, 139f.), from the pedagogical perspective, similarly suggested that the text was "employed to enliven and communicate formulae and generic conventions to students" and compared it to the model contracts.
127. SAA 3 29. The second Bel-eṭir text, 82-5-22, 88 (SAA 3 30), is traditionally labelled a "parody" of an ÉN, "incantation", from its *incipit* (see Foster 2005, 1021f.; Lenzi 2019, 189; Edmonds 2025, 43 no. 28, terms it an "execration text"), that recites Bel-eṭir's name with degrading epithets. The ÉN is, however, damaged and cannot be confirmed from the photo. I thus do not address it here. If it were an incantation, then imitation comes to mind and not strict parody, since there is likely no one hypotext in mind.
128. Until recently, it was uncertain who this person is. However, with Frame & Parpola's (2023, 122) publication of a new NB Bel-etir letter sent to Ashurbanipal (SAA 22 151; see PNA 1/II s.v. Bēl-ētir, 299b no. 17, with reference to other historical letters pertaining to an individual of the same name), Edmonds (2025, 43–46 no. 28) proffered a convincing and updated historical sketch (see earlier overviews in Michalowski 1999, 84–87; Machinist 2018, 356f.). He inferred that Bel-etir was associated with (and perhaps an attendant to) a rebel king of the Chaldean Bit-Dakkuri tribe, Šamaš-ibni, whom Esarhaddon executed after deportation to Assyria in 678 BCE. Further, he demonstrated the possibility that Bel-etir could have befriended Ashurbanipal, during the latter's crown princeship, should he have joined Šamaš-ibni in being deported. His evidence for a close relationship is seen in Bel-etir's "non-standard" (Frame & Parpola 2023, 122 n. 151; Edmonds 2025, 44 no. 28) greeting to Assurbanipal and possible degrading name for Šamaš-šuma-ukin in letter SAA 22 151. As Edmonds (2025, 45 no. 28) concluded, however, an inventory text (SAA 7 51) refers to "scholarly texts looted from Bēl-ēṭir's Bīt-Ibâ dated 29th Addaru (XII) 648 (eponym Bēlšunu)" and indicates an end to the friendship between king and Bel-etir. SAA 3 29 (and 30), seems to attest as much, though their mood cannot be taken as a given. Sansone (2023, 261) argued that even if Bel-eṭir were a real person, he ought to be treated as a "literary construct" in this text.
129. Foster 2005, 1020, who also noted that lines 21–22 allude to SB *Cuth.*: *ina pān annīti tenēšētu appī-šunu iltabnū mā agātu ṣibittu u puluḫtu*, "In face of this, mankind 'stroked their noses', saying: 'this

presents a litany of abuses and insults".[130] At the text's end (r. 4–10), the stele is again referenced, purporting to offer admonishment "for posterity". The text is unquestioningly labelled a "parody" in the scholarship, some suggesting of a single hypotext in SB *Cuth.*,[131] others a "parody" of royal inscriptions and so-called *narû*-literature.[132] De Zorzi recognised its actual nature, a "parodistic imitation",[133] with Sansone crucially adding:

> but the *Bel-etir Narrative* is not a parody of any one text or any one genre. It is a narrative in which several texts are mentioned or composed, all of which are to an extent parodies in their own right. This cannot be confused with the whole text amounting to one overall parody.[134]

That K 1351 has SB *Cuth.* in mind is certain from the opening line (elsewhere only appearing in SB *Gilg.*, which may itself be drawing upon SB *Cuth.*).[135] It is a genuine citation *per* Genette, a "complete congruence between the text citing and the text cited".[136] This is the "parodistic" element. Aside from the *incipit*, however, the hypotext is barely visible. K 1351 abandons the first person narrative form of SB *Cuth.* for a traditional omniscient narrator to report the "stela".[137] Like SB *Cuth.*, it makes use of a flashback to describe Bel-eṭir's origins (Obv. 2–4):

> *ultu adīni*$^{?}$ ^{m}*Ṣallâ lā immedu šadâšu šū … lā īdēšu šarru // ardu dāgil pān* ^{m}*Šamaš-ibni mār bā'iru šaplum lā* [*simat*] *šarrūte // išpik zê* ^{m}*Zēru-kēn šārānu tappê* ^{m}*Nummuraya nīku*
> When Ṣalla had not yet disappeared forever, he … the king did not know him, a slave serving Šamaš-ibni, son of a lowly fisherman, unbefitting of kingship, a shit-bucket of the farter Zeru-ken, raped companion to Nummuraya.

Compare SB *Cuth.* 31–36:[138]

> *ṣābī pagrī iṣṣūr ḫurri amēlūta arēbī pānššun // ibnûšunūtīma ilū rabûtu // ina qaqqar ibnû ilū ālûšu(n) // Ti'āmatu ušēniqšunūti // šassūršunu Bēlet-ilī ubanni*

(is) correct behaviour and awe' ". I am unable to identify what exactly is being alluded to in SB *Cuth.* It seems Foster meant the general "spirit" of the end of SB *Cuth.* (171–172) *per* the reading of Machinist 2018, 358f. Machinist (359) also suggests a possible allusion in the writing of Bel-eṭir's name, EN.KAR, to En-me-kár, the legendary king referenced at the beginning of SB *Cuth.*

130. Lenzi 2019, 188.
131. Westenholz 1997, 263; Michalowski 1999, 85 (who also says "similar texts"); Shipp 2002, 43–46; Foster 2005, 1020; Haul 2009, 108 fn. 35; Dewar 2019, 26.
132. Livingstone 1989, xxviii; Machinist 2018, 359: "parody not only of the presumed Bel-eṭir stela, but of the Cuthean Legend itself"; Fink / Parpola 2019, 184 fn. 18; Sansone 2023, 261–262; Edmonds 2025, 43 no. 28 (as both "literary parody of *narû*-literature" and "satirical *narû*-text"). For '*narû*-literature' see further fn. 139.
133. De Zorzi 2019, 226.
134. Sansone 2023, 264–265 (see also 270).
135. See Walker 1981, 191–195; Michalowski 1999, 87; and now Mitto 2023, 115–117, whose edition of the school tablet BM 72553 has led to the full restoration of the beginning of SB *Cuth.*
136. Bach 2020b, 30.
137. See also Machinist 2018, 358.
138. Following the edition of Mitto 2022 on eBL with translation by Foster.

// ina qereb šadî irte'ûma īteṭlūma irtašû minâti
The great gods created them, people of partridge body, a humanity whose faces (were) ravens. On the earth (where) they created (them), the gods (were) their cohabitants. Tiamat suckled them, their womb, Belet-ili made (them) beautiful. In the midst of the mountain(s) they grew up, reached manhood, and attained (their) physique.

The content between these passages is hardly congruent. Then, in place of SB *Cuth.*'s central piece of enemy hordes, scouts, and omens (47–148), K 1351, albeit in a fragmentary context, appears to contain a mocking narrative against Bel-eṭir (7–r. 3). The final admonishment of K 1351 then looks to the past, focussing on all that Bel-eṭir did wrong (r.4–10; e.g., r.7: *ramānšu itta'id*, "he praised himself"; r.8: *šūtūma idabbub šūtūma ina''ad šūtūma iqabbi šūtū*[*ma uštar*]*raḫ*, "he himself did the speaking, he himself did the praising, he himself did the saying, he himself took pride"). This is in stark contrast to SB *Cuth.*, which looks to the future when addressing the reader (149–180; e.g. 157: *lā tapallaḫ lā tatarrur*, "may you not be afraid, may you not tremble"; 159: *attā ina sūn sinništīka šipra lū teppuš*, "may you do work in the embrace your wife"; 175–176: *tup-šarrū enqūtu lizkurū*[?] *narâka*, "let wise scribes pronounce your stele"), the crucial last two lines reading: *šūt yâši taktarba arkû liktarrabka kâša*, "you who have blessed me, may someone in the future bless you!".

None of this speaks to the practice of parody. Instead, the extant generic features of K 1351 belong to royal inscriptions and so-called *narû*-literature, *i.e.*, first person fictional-*narû*.[139] The line between the two is incredibly blurry, since the latter are imitations of authentic royal inscriptions.[140] Nonetheless, they share an idiolect that can be identified here, notably in Bel-eṭir's boasts: *ina māt Aššūr u māt Akkadî māḫira ul īši*, "In the land of Aššur and Akkad I have no rival", Obv. 5);[141] *ali šāninī ina māti kalāma*, "Where in all of the land (is) my rival?", Obv. 6), both of which would not be out of place in a royal inscription.[142] Michalowski also noted that the expression (*ana*) *aḫrâtaš* (r.5) is only ever attested in royal inscriptions.[143] The majority of its content follows the typical order of a

139. For discussions of this term see the overviews of Westenholz 1997, 16–24, Haul 2009, 95–131, and more recently Frazer 2022, 824–826. Texts previously recognised as "*narû*-literature" are more heterogeneous than once assumed. *Per* Galter 1986, 73, the classification overemphasises the first person narratives, disregarding others. As I use it here, it refers to the first person narratives.
140. See Haul 2009, 133f.
141. *Māḫira ul īši* and minor variations (e.g., third person) are well attested in the corpus of first millennium Assyrian royal inscriptions. Of the 58 instances of *māḫiru*, 30 are in the construction we find in K 1351. *N.B.*: the Sumerographic rendering used here, GABA.RI, is exceedingly rare, found in only in the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*, Sg. II 52, Esh. 48, Asb. 23, and Asb. 60.
142. There are no attestations of the rhetorically phrased Obv. 6 in the *Royal Inscriptions of Assyria Online* corpus (available via Oracc at https://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/riao/), but variations of *māḫira ul īši* with *šanīna* are attested 28 times (discounting Sennacherib's "Palace-without-rival"). Also compare the semantically close and frequent phrase: *ša kibrāt erbetta šanīnšu lā īšû*, "who has no rival [among the rulers] of the four quarters (*i.e.*, the whole world)".
143. Michalowski 1999, 84. See CAD A/2, s.v. *aḫrâtaš*, 193b, and *N.B.* the attestation in *Enūma Eliš* V 76. The use of the adverbial expression with *ana* in this text must be a scribal error. The adverb is

royal inscription on a reductive and miniature scale:[144] a (degrading) genealogy (Obv. 2–4); a (insulting) quasi-historical narrative (Obv. 5–r.3: that we have a short narrative seems clear from r.2–3, which appears conclusive to previous events); and a conclusion (r.4–5). The language and content-structure are the imitative element.

Through the combination of hypotext and generic idiolect, the text is not a "parody", but what Genette terms a *generic chimera* or *contamination*, the presence of two different but now fused together hypotextual elements, e.g., two genres, or one text and one genre, in a single hypertext.[145] In this case, the presence of a hypotext in SB *Cuth.*, and a genre in royal inscription, is far more complex than the statement "parody of SB *Cuth.*" implies. Naturally, it leads to a more complex interpretation.[146] Both hypotext and idiolect serve to create a new singular text. K 1351 is, in essence, a piece of "*narû*-literature", within which a purportedly real, though probably virtual stele is presented.[147] It serves to denigrate the maker of the virtual stele, Bel-eṭir.[148] The imitation of royal inscriptional language between Obv. 2–r. 5 is employed to report said stele. The parodistic and citational *incipit*, which takes from SB *Cuth*., is by no means a "parody" of that text. Instead, it conjures for the reader the expected generic themes and features associated with that text and those like it (military might and far-off expeditions, divine interventions, etc.), and then swiftly reverses or removes them (no military endeavours; distinct lack of the divine but for a reference to Pazuzu). This is at its most clear when, at the end of K 1351, there is reference to *ana arkûti*, "the future" (r.6), much like a typical admonition to a future ruler in a royal inscription or SB *Cuth*. Instead, however, K 1351 focusses on all that Bel-eṭir did wrong in the past.[149] The SB *Cuth.* hypotext is also a signal of the generic game

never attested with a preposition. The substantivized form, *aḫrâtu*, can take the preposition, but one would then expect the genitive *aḫrâti*.

144. Grayson 1980, 140–171 *apud* Machinist 2018, 332f. See similarly Sansone 2023, 271.
145. On the presence of *generic chimera* in *Esarḫaddon's Apology* see Bach 2020b, 36–38. Sansone 2023, 265, uses the similar term "hybrid genre".
146. See also most recently Sansone 2023, 270–276, whose close reading concluded that the text displays courtly resentment, while simultaneously reaffirming the *status quo* of propagandistic participation.
147. This kind of text is not a *unicum per se* in the ancient Near East. In the century after the *Bel-eṭir* text, the *Stele of Adad-guppi* combines a first person (autodiegetic) royal inscription with third person (heterodiegetic) funerary text: "the text as a whole must be understood to be written in the words of Adad-guppi, but words placed in her mouth by another person. This, however, does not mean that the events and even the opinions associated with Adad-guppi are unauthentic" (Longman III 1991, 102). See edition in Schaudig 2001, 500–513; discussion in Longman III 1991, 97–103; most recently Yun 2017, 277–294.
148. Already noted by Machinist 2018, 358.
149. See similarly Sansone 2023, 267. There may here be a play with Enmerkar as noted by Machinist 2018, 359, though not as he understood it: "And if EN.KAR = Bel-eṭir is a playful echo of Enmerkar, then the association makes of Enmerkar — who in the Cuthean Legend is a failed, but not ridiculous ruler — someone who becomes a pilloried fool on the model of Bel-eṭir". Rather, the humour comes from the fact that Enmerkar failed to leave a stela, though was still remembered. Contra, in K 1351, Bel-eṭir did leave a "stela", and the result, converse of SB *Cuth*., was *ana tēlte u bilte ina pī nīšī ittaškin*, "he was made in the mouth of the people a (mocking) saying and insult"; on the meaning of *tēltu* see Van De Mieroop 2011, 316.

at play.[150] Haul convincingly demonstrated that SB *Cuth*. could well have been recognised by the Babylonian or Assyrian as a piece of literary fiction.[151] As such, the scribe, deliberately straddling the murky line between real and fictional royal inscription, evoked that quintessential and famous fictional *narû* of Naram-Sin, in order to evoke the fictionality of Bel-eṭir's monument, all while using the very real language of related royal narrative texts.

3. Case Study: PMN *as Mock-Heroic Pastiche*

It remains to demonstrate the application of this methodology to the PMN. This case study is included to show how one can take Genette's system, of which only the framework was applied in the text survey, even further. It allows one to delineate in fine-grained detail the structural procedures in a specific text.

3.1 Introduction to PMN[152]

The PMN is a short tale (approximately 160 lines) describing the clever revenges of a poor man, Gimil-Ninurta, on the mayor of Nippur after he had mistreated him. It was first edited by Gurney in 1956.[153] At the time, the tale was known in three manuscripts: two from Ḫuzirina (mod. Sultantepe), STT 1 38 (SU-1951.78) and 39 (SU-1952.252), and one from Nineveh, K 3478, all dating to the Neo-Assyrian period and in Neo-Assyrian script. STT 38, which preserves most of the text, is a four-column tablet of 160 lines. STT 39, corresponding to lines 72–82 of STT 38, appears to be from the upper right corner of a single-column tablet, with its obverse inscribed and its reverse blank. K 3478, the reverse of which is destroyed, corresponds to the opening 18 lines. Corrections to the edition were published by O. Gurney in 1958,[154] and O. Gurney and P. Hulin published a further fragment, STT 2 116 (SU-1952.292), a join to STT 39 (thus SU-1952.252 + SU-1952.292), the obverse of which is destroyed, a few years later.[155] George then provided minor corrigenda and collations of STT 38 in 1993.[156]

A further fragment, N 4022, was published by M. de J. Ellis in 1974, consisting of a small fragment of a school tablet from Nippur dated to the Neo-Babylonian period and in

150. See also relevantly Sansone 2023, 263: "for instance, once we understand that the poem satirizes the generic conventions of the Assyrian Royal Inscriptions … we will see that it is engaged in a reflexive commentary on the production and dissemination of propaganda and its effects on readers …".
151. See Haul 2009, 161–187, and esp. 186. The notion that a reader in the ancient Near East could detect fictionality in the literary-historical texts has in the past been challenged: Longman III 1991, 207f.; Schaudig 2001, 5. Gilan (2008, 267–284) maintained that it is impossible to know if the Hittite audience of the *Cannibal Text* (CTH 17) regarded it as fiction. See contra in Haul 2009, 133–159 for theoretical discussion on fictionality in the ancient Near East, and esp. 176–187 for fictionality and SB *Cuth*. See also Michalowski 2011, 206, on the fictionality of the Puzur-Numušda correspondence; Pongratz-Leisten 2015, 300f.; Helle 2020, 54–61, on authorship; Feldt 2020, 282–298, on myth and fiction in SB *Gilg.*; and Frazer 2022, 824–826.
152. See now also the overview in Campi 2024, 71–80.
153. Gurney 1956, 145–162; Gurney & Finkelstein 1957, plates L–LIII (nos. 38–39).
154. Gurney 1958, 245.
155. Gurney & Hulin 1964, plate CXLIII.
156. George 1993, 75.

Neo-Babylonian script.[157] Ellis considered the tablet faces indeterminable, noting that one side preserved two columns, one of which corresponds to the PMN's *incipit*, the other an unknown composition, and the other side a section of the lexical list ḪAR-*ra* = *ḫubullu* (iii 282–295). P. D. Gesche (2001, 790), however, in her study of first millennium school tablets, assigned N 4022 to the "type 1" format of school tablet, in which lexical lists are most often found on the obverse.[158] For this reason, she assigned the PMN excerpt here to the reverse, which is now followed in the eBL edition.[159] Subsequent joins have since been identified by Jiménez and Peterson for the eBL, resulting in the manuscript CBS 11301 + CBS 11338 + CBS 11417 + N 4022 + N 4036.[160] As relayed by M. Frazer (2024, 77), Jiménez (forthcoming) will publish the joined manuscript, which contains not only the lexical list and PMN excerpts, but also a verbal paradigm and extracts from the *Gilgameš Letter*, the *Sargon Birth Legend*, an Akkadian proverb, and "perhaps a hymn of self-praise".

Most recently in 2021, A. C. Heinrich, under the auspices of the eBL, published two more Neo-Assyrian fragments, K 19604 and Rm 468, which correspond to lines 20–25 and 95–105 // 109–117 of STT 38 respectively.[161] Thus, while B. Ottervanger's 2016 edition is still of much use,[162] today the most current version is that available on the eBL.[163] Differences between the manuscripts are minimal and amount to minor variations in spelling.[164]

The tale of the PMN can be separated, following Cooper,[165] into five sections:

(I) Introduction (1–22): the *incipit* introduces our protagonist, Gimil-Ninurta (hereafter GN), a citizen of Nippur (*mār Nippūri*) and poor man. He owns no valuable possessions and no food. Desiring a change of circumstance, GN decides to sell the clothes off his back to buy a sheep. Instead, he buys a three-year-old goat. Eager to throw a feast for his friends and family, he realises that the goat is not enough to feed them all. Nor does he have any beer for the feast. Fearing the anger of his relatives, he determines to take the goat to the mayor (*ḫazannu*) of Nippur.

(II) First contact with the mayor (23–71): the gatekeeper of the mayor, Tukulti-Enlil, announces GN's arrival to his master. Angry that a citizen should be left waiting, the mayor invites GN inside. The mayor asks why he has brought him a goat and GN explains his circumstances. Fragmentary lines now follow, but when we resume, the mayor has given GN only bones, gristle, and third-rate beer. Expelled from the mayoral dwelling, GN promises threefold revenge to the gatekeeper. The mayor laughs upon hearing this. GN then turns to the palace of the king, in hopes of fair judgement.

157. Ellis 1974, 88f.
158. Gesche 2001, 44–49; see also Zaia 2025, 145 f.
159. Heinrich 2022b.
160. See *ibid.* on eBL for these manuscripts and joins. In particular, for CBS 11301+, see https://www.ebl.lmu.de/library/CBS.11301
161. Heinrich 2021a, 170–173.
162. The edition could only use STT 38, STT 39 + 116, K 3478, and N 4022.
163. Heinrich 2022b.
164. Heinrich 2021a, 170–173.
165. Cooper 1975, 164.

(III) Second contact / first revenge (72–114): GN requests to borrow a chariot from the king for one day in return for a pound of red gold. Without question, the king grants him the chariot and noble clothing. GN then rides back to the mayor's house, capturing two birds on the way and sealing them in a box. The mayor greets GN as if he were nobility. The protagonist explains, in pretence, that the king has sent him to take gold to Enlil's temple, the Ekur. After treating GN to a feast, the mayor falls asleep. GN now releases the birds. At dawn, the mayor wakes up to find the box empty, exclaiming that the gold has been taken. In a dramatic display, GN tears his garments and beats the mayor from head to toe. The mayor begs forgiveness, giving GN two pounds of red gold and new clothes. GN then exits, telling the gatekeeper he has enacted one revenge: two remain.

(IV) Third contact / second revenge (115–139): GN goes to a barber, where he shaves his head and disguises himself as a doctor. Approaching the mayor's house, he tells the gatekeeper that he can cure ailments. Before the mayor, GN outlines the bruises where he had previously beaten him, duping the mayor into thinking he is skilled. GN then makes an excuse: his cures only work in darkness and isolation. With the mayor to himself, GN ties him to the ground and beats him a second time.

(V) Fourth contact / third revenge (140–160): GN finds a young man, and, in return for a reward, commands him to stand in front of the mayor's house and shout: *anāku ša enzi*, "I am the one of the goat!". Meanwhile, GN hides under a bridge. Upon hearing this cry, the mayor sends all his personnel in pursuit of the young man. However, left alone outside, GN seizes the mayor and beats him for a third time. GN leaves for the open country; the mayor returns to the city, crawling.

Various dates have been proposed for the origin of this composition. Gurney initially suspected a time before the Old Babylonian period, based on the attestation of the potentiality particle *tušāma* (17) which fell out of use post-OB,[166] and a possible correspondence at line 40 ([*mīn*]*u ḫibiltakāma kadrê našâta*, "what is your wrong-doing, that you bear me a gift?") with the proverb KAR 174 iv 8–10: á-zi-da-zu máš ḫé-da-gál gùb-bu-zu kadra ḫé-da-gál, "let a goat be carried in your right hand (and) a bribe in your left".[167] E. Speiser suggested that the NA scribe of STT 38 may have copied a tablet from the Middle Babylonian period, due to a perceived confusion of the sign forms UŠ and MA and through what he thought was an allusion to *Enūma Eliš* III 69 (*uškēnma iššiq qaqqara maḫaršun*, "he prostrated and kissed the ground before them") at PMN line 73 (*uškēnma iššiq qaqqara maḫaršu*, "he prostrated and kissed the ground before him").[168] The only manuscript to preserve a colophon, STT 38, informs us that it was composed (169) *ina* ITI.ŠE U$_4$-21.KAM *limmu ḫanāni*, "on day 21 of the month of Addaru, eponym year of Ḫanana", which corresponds to 701 BCE. Finet argued that the tale was composed c. 100–

166. See attestations in CAD T s.v. *tuša*, 494a–495a.

167. Gurney 1956, 158f. See also Gordon 1960, 140 with fn. 138; Ellis 1974, 88; Jason 1979, 194; Annus 2024, 132; and Campi 2024, 93 fn. 77. The transliteration and translation (with minor changes) is from Alster 1997, 101.

168. Speiser 1957, 43 f. See also Dietrich 2009, 335. *N.B.*: that all the *Enūma Eliš* manuscripts preserving this are from the NB period, and a parallel attestation exists in SB *Nergal and Ereškigal*. See further under section 3.4 below (esp. fn. 215) and the edition of Heinrich 2021b on eBL.

150 years before this date, who considered the older words (e.g., *tušāma*) archaisms and thought that correspondences to SB *Gilg.* X, a text which took its final form around 1000 BCE, were suggestive of such.[169] One of Finet's examples is the PMN *incipit* (1–2), *eṭlu mār Nippuri katû u lapnu* // *Gimil-Ninurta zikrāšu lummunu amēlu*, "a man, a citizen of Nippur, needy and poor, Gimil-Ninurta his name, a very wretched man", which he compared to SB *Gilg.* X 40–41, [*ammēni aklā lēt*]*āti quddudū pānūka* // [*lummun libbāka qat*]*û zīmūka*, "[why are your] cheeks [consumed], your face bowed, [your heart very wretched] (and) your face [exhaust]ed?".[170] This argument was, in turn, followed by Ottervanger, who added that a possible correspondence to the *Advice to the Prince*, 8–10 (also composed around 1000 BCE) at lines 72–82 suggested a composition at the turn of the first millennium.[171]

All of these arguments are problematised because we now recognise that the PMN likely had its origins in "favole folkloristiche ed umoristiche" (D'Agostino 2000, 111–113) both by its similarity to certain types of folklore (e.g. the "Master Thief" cycle) and paralleled story-events found in Middle Eastern and European folklore.[172] As such, Gurney's remark that the tale "doubtless had its roots in an oral tradition of immemorial antiquity"[173] is likely true. With that being said, that at least STT 38 was intended to be enjoyed as a written composition is clear from both the visual puns on sign-forms, as identified by S. B. Noegel,[174] and its colophon (165): *ana tāmarti Qurdī-Nergal*, "for the reading of Qurdi-Nergal". Thus, while likely having an oral background, it is valid to treat the text as we have it as a written composition. Its dating must remain uncertain. In the following, the first millennium time frame is adopted, though only because most of the analysis must draw, as a necessity, on STT 38. Regardless, this will not affect the arguments to come.

3.1 Previous Interpretations of PMN

The PMN has been subject to different interpretations and analyses. The majority focus on content, leading to the text being read variously as socio-political comedy (due to the bureaucratic corruption exhibited by the mayor and seeming ambivalence of the king),[175] "crisis literature" (exhibited in the GN's attempts to alleviate his social decline),[176] and a

169. Finet 1992, 102–106.
170. Following the edition of George 2022 on eBL.
171. Ottervanger 2016, ix–x; see also Zaia 2025, 145f. fn. 113.
172. See Aarne-Thompson-Uther (ATU) no. 1538 (Uther 2004, 273f.); Gurney 1972, 149–158; Kločkov 1975, 218–229; Jason 1979, 189–215; Saporetti 1985 for a comparative folkloric analysis of the PMN's appearance in Sicily; and Campi 2024, 83f.
173. Gurney 1956, 157.
174. Noegel 1996, 177–182; e.g., line 8, where SAG is used Sumerographically in KAŠ.SAG, "(first-rate) beer"; see fn. 229, but also syllabically in the same line to write *i-riš* in the phrase *ana erēš*, "in desiring". See also Annus 2024, 120.
175. Cooper 1975, 167; von Soden 1990, 174 (with German translation); Milano 1998, 6–12; 21f.; D'Agostino 2000, 109–116; D'Agostino 2014, 69; Lenzi 2019, 190; Annus 2024, 120f.; Campi 2024, 82 f.
176. Dietrich 2009, 333–345; Campi 2024, 107f. *N.B.*: that Dietrich reached this conclusion by radically reading GN as the previous mayor, nowhere confirmed in the text; see further Ottervanger 2016, xi fn. 9.

"human-centred" tale, due to the perceivable lack of divine will and authority in the text.[177] More generally, the humorous tones of the text have been recognised and derived from aspects of its content and writing, such as GN's abuse of the practices of the medical profession,[178] and the linguistic games and wordplays,[179] hallmarks that the piece was intended for scribal (as well as originally popular) entertainment.[180] All this is in tandem with the overt slapstick and violent humour in the three deceptions.[181]

Attempts at classifying the genre of the text beyond simply humorous have similarly diverged over a variety of terms, including parody, satire, and pastiche.[182] Besides being in some cases mutually exclusive, the profusion of different terms has hindered a clearer interpretation of the text. It will be suggested instead that the text is best read as a "mock-heroic pastiche".[183] Several scholars have already approached this reading. A. Finet (1992, 102) examined instances of "intertextuality" between the PMN and the SB *Gilg.* X, concluding that "la multiplication de ces pastiches du langage 'noble' pour rapporter les mésaventures d'un personage du commun se charge de 'vis comica' pour les initiés".[184] S. Helle (2020, 190–224) reached a similar conclusion based on the PMN showing a "two-act structure", a "literary device" found in many of the so-called Akkadian "Epics": "Gimil-Ninurta's tale may be read as an ironic twist on a standardized aspect of "high" literature, which is here put to more humorous uses" (217f.). More recently, A. Annus (2024, 119–125) has argued that several (content) parallels emerge between the PMN and Ninurta Mythology.[185] Near contemporaneously, G. P. Campi (2024, 101–106) acknowledged that "several scholars have seen in PMN some form of parody of different literary forms and genres, especially epic" (101), though emphasised that the text is a "parody of the pious suffer motif" and in dialogue with so-called "Wisdom Literature".[186] These

177. Ottervanger 2016, xi–xii; Campi 2024, 80f.; 103.
178. Worthington 2010, 30f.
179. Noegel 1996, 169–186.
180. Minunno 2014, 64f.
181. See now also Campi 2024, 81f. and Zaia 2025, 146f., for a comprehensive overview of the different forms of humour exhibited in the tale.
182. For pastiche see Finet 1992, 102. For parody see Jiménez 2017, 101 (and fns. 271; 272); Finn 2019, 20–22. For "parody" as well as "pastiche-like" see Campi 2024, 107. "Satire" is only used in the contentual, not generic sense (e.g., Cooper 1975, 167).
183. See also Vanstiphout 1988, 191–227, who argued that the *Tale of the Fox* was a "satirical animal epic" using similar lines of inquiry as below.
184. See similarly Ali 1972, 87–100, for GN's "gentlemanly pretension".
185. E.g.: Gimil-Ninurta's name, "revenge of Ninurta", and the god's function as "defend[ing] the poor and underprivileged" (121) as well as the term's significance for royal ideology; GN's riding in a chariot and Ninurta's return to Nippur in *Angim*; GN catching birds and Ninurta's victory over monsters, including Anzu, in *Angim*; and GN and Ninurta releasing entrapped birds in PMN and the *Hymn to Ninurta as Helper in Misery*. See further 125–140 for Annus' comparison between PMN and the *Testament of Job*.
186. Both Campi (2024) and Annus (2024) draw comparisons between the PMN and (the *Book* / *Testament of*) *Job*, but whereas the latter examines the influence of the PMN on the biblical text, the former also adds (with explicit reference to Genette, 101) that the PMN is a hypertext to "pious sufferer" texts. Campi (2024, 87f. fn. 60) added that the relationship exhibited in the PMN to the "epic genre" "should not automatically rule out other patterns of connection" and instead "attest[s] all the more to the fact

interpretations begin to capture the text, but it will become clear that focussing on singular identifications of humorous effects (in the case of Finet and Helle) overlooks the extent to which a "heroic" idiolect saturates the work as the real defining feature of the PMN (cf. Campi above).

3.3 Mock-Heroic Pastiche and "Heroic Style"

According to Genette, a mock-heroic pastiche "[consists] of treating a vulgar subject in a noble style and using the heroic style in general: that is, without specific reference to any particular noble text".[187] Mock-heroic pastiche exhibits the structural relationship of imitation. Particular to the genre, it "accomplishes its potential *vis comica* … only when it takes aim at one noble style in particular, one that we can enjoy identifying and seeing lampooned", the success of which lies in an incongruity between subject and style.[188]

Genette never strictly defined "heroic style": applied to cuneiform literature, it might be considered the style of text in which a "hero" appears, necessitating a cultural definition of "hero". However, there exists no straightforward concept of a "hero" in ancient Near Eastern cultures, not least because said cultures span millennia. A. Zgoll (followed by J. Bach, who noted that Zgoll's theory is essentially similar to Klaus von See's concept of heroic exorbitance), defined the "hero" as "Grenzgänger, die sich an bestimmte, in ihrer Gesellschaft geltende Grenzen wagen, diese Grenzen prüfen und teils überschreiten".[189] These boundaries are situated along a horizontal and vertical axis, the former representing martiality, the latter wisdom.[190] Heroes need not always be positive examples, however: there are anti-heroes too,[191] and even Gilgameš fluctuates between polarities in SB *Gilg.*[192]

that the PMN is a work in dialogue with other literature". He suggested that while the relationship of the PMN to "epic" "play[s] on a compositional level", the connection to "pious sufferer" texts is "oriented toward the conveyance of an overall message". Should Campi's (2024, 86–96) connections to "pious sufferer" texts be accepted, then strictly speaking, in Genette's terms, the PMN would be an example of *generic chimera*/*contamination* due to the fusion of distinct hypotextual elements (compositionally "epic" but thematically "pious sufferer"), which Campi seems to recognise when terming the text's tropes "a deliberate attempt to parody ancient understandings of piety" and simultaneously calling the PMN a "pastiche-like work" (107) in its (proposed) various hypertextual relationships — although "parody of motif *x*" is at odds with Genette's understanding of parody as the playful transformation of one (or several) hypotext(s).

187. Genette 1997, 143. The *Batrachomyomachia*, an ancient Greek poem of war between frogs and mice narrated in the epic-style of Homer, is the example *par excellence*. For the latest edition see Hosty 2020, and esp. 14–21 on parody and pastiche. For Genette (1997, 134), this poem is not actually a pastiche as the name implies, but a caricature, "because its stylistic traits are both exaggerated and depreciated by an 'inappropriate' application and are thus doubly satirized". Be that as it may, Genette kept the term mock-heroic pastiche to remain in line with the "classical tradition" that had adopted that term. The present writer follows suit, only noting that the *Batrachomyomachia* and indeed the PMN could still be viewed as pastiches, if one identifies their mood as solely for pure entertainment.
188. See esp. Genette 1997, 134–142.
189. Zgoll 2008, 5. See the concurring analysis of Bach 2022, 27–47, and esp. 31: "Das Faszinosum der Heldensage ist nicht in einer Vorbildlichkeit, sondern in einer durch Amoralität ermöglichten Transgressivität ihrer Protagonisten zu sehen".
190. Zgoll 2008, 16; 19.
191. E.g., Naram-Sin regarding his prudence in SB *Cuth*.
192. Zgoll 2008, 21; see esp. Bach 2022, 35–47.

"Heroic style" might then be the style of any text in which the protagonist exhibits the above phenomena, but this is a very broad definition.

Genette also used "heroic style" interchangeably with "Epic style".[193] The Western concept of "Epic" has proved challenging in its application to Mesopotamian poetic narrative.[194] There exists no native designation akin to the term, even though emic notations such as *šēru* and *zamāru*, "song" (the logogram of which, ŠÌR, is attested in the colophon of an Akkado-Hittite fragment of *Gilg.*, KBo 19.116 2′),[195] grouping of similar texts in catalogues, and labels that correspond to performative contexts or distinguish between different musical accompaniments suggest that some native notion of "genre" existed.[196] Nor does there exist a consistent modern grouping of cuneiform texts under the taxonomy "Epic". Some modifications to Genette's theory are required.

"Heroic style" will be defined here as the idiolect extracted from any text (extant in the first millennium) in which a "hero", *per* the definition of Zgoll, Bach, and, by extension, von See, appears. These texts are often recognised as "Epics" by Assyriological scholarship too. Though a broad definition, this approach is apt in the Mesopotamian textual network, where generic boundaries are "far more fluid".[197] Provided that the features analysed below are also found in those texts recognised as "heroic", or "epic" poetic narratives by other scholars, then their constituting a "heroic style" can be accepted. Given the criticism of the imprecision of the use of the term "parody" raised above, one might contend that this definition of "epic" or the "hero" is overly vague. But the search for precision with "parody" arises from a desire to accurately describe the textual procedures (transformation or imitation) involved in texts often labelled with this term, not to censure the use of the ascription. The purpose of Genette's system is not to supply us with genres: terms such as mock-heroic pastiche, burlesque travesty, and parody are simply modern short-hand names that correspond to specific transtextual relationships, which are universal. The above definitions of "epic" and the "hero" are employed to situate the following analysis, as much as can be, within the realms of cuneiform literature.[198]

In addition, there will be adduced some elements of a more general "noble style", *i.e.*, an idiolect taken from texts where the protagonist is of higher standing than Gimil-Ninurta (e.g. royal inscriptions). The presence of these elements do not serve to undermine the

193. Genette 1997, e.g., 12; 58; 82; 89f.

194. Not only "Epic", but indeed all Western generic application. The classic example of Vanstiphout 1986, 1–11, and follow ups in 1999a, 703–717 and 1999b, 79–99, are still of much use. See also discussions in: Westenholz 1983, 327–336; Vanstiphout 1988, 207f.; Tinney 1996, 15–18; Pongratz-Leisten 1999, 74 and 2001, 12–31; Haubold 2002, 1–19; Wasserman 2003, 176–178; Edzard 2004b, 491–494; Martin 2005, 9–19; Sasson 2005, 219f.; Noegel 2005, 233f.; Haul 2009, 11–13; Michalowski 2010, 7f.; Kämmerer & Metzler 2012, 2–4; Guichard 2014, 71–75; Hess 2015, 254–257; Jiménez 2017, 77 fn. 205; Lenzi 2019, 79f.

195. See George 2007, 43f.

196. See fn. 194, above.

197. Noegel 2005, 244.

198. While the search for genre in cuneiform literature is still a thorny proposition, with even Vanstiphout (1999b, 94) arguing for caution when trying to impose modern categories on ancient texts, in the words of George (2007, 45), "there is no doubt that understanding of literature can be deepened by classification from a modern perspective".

mock-heroic, but rather reinforce what the scribe was attempting. After all, heroes were frequently (or became) kings in cuneiform literature.[199]

3.4 "Heroic" Language Register, Formulae, and Verse in PMN

Scholars have long acknowledged that the PMN is written in a literary register.[200] There are Standard Babylonian forms[201], Hymnic-Epic Dialectical[202] features, archaisms,[203] and literary syntax.[204] Many "Epic" verse-formulae adduced by Hecker are also found in the PMN.[205] Said features are not exclusive to the "heroic style", but they certainly appear in those texts in which a "heroic" register is used.[206] Interestingly, it seems typical of "epic texts [to] use a rather simple style, with ordinary words, short clauses, and relatively few stylistic adornments".[207] This would accord with the case in the PMN, although given the shortness of this text relative to longer "Epic" compositions, the inclusion of such features might betray that the scribe wanted to saturate the text with this idiolect. Moreover, it has been noted that the PMN "is one of the very rare non-epic texts to feature speech introduction formulae".[208] Speech introduction formulae are also not exclusive to the heroic style,[209] but are found therein more often than in other Akkadian literature.

199. To state the obvious examples: Gilgameš; Etana; Marduk, etc. Adapa is, of course, a counter-example.
200. This was generally acknowledged by D'Agostino 2000, 109–116. See now also Campi 2024, 82f.
201. PMN 41: *tisītu*, SB by-form of *šisītu*, "shout, cry", acknowledged by Ottervanger 2016, 28. Possibly PMN 78 on Ms. B *mušše*, "refined" — see discussion in Ottervanger 2016, 34; on Standard Babylonian see Groneberg 1987 and overview in Hess 2020, 473–488.
202. PMN 7: *kabattuš*, acknowledged by Jiménez 2017, 101 and fns. 271–272. PMN 148: *kamêtuš*, acknowledged by Finet 1992, 102. On the Hymnic-Epic Dialect see von Soden 1931, 163–227 and 1933, 90–183; Hess 2010, 101–122.
203. PMN 17: *tušāma* acknowledged by Finet 1992, 102.
204. George 2003, 434f., and further examples in Ottervanger 2016, xiv, for the separation of a noun and its attribute by a predicate and noun-adjective reversal (e.g., PMN 15); Worthington 2012, 190–197, and esp. 197 (PMN referenced) for "honorific nominatives" (e.g., PMN 70–72).
205. See esp. in Hecker 1974 the following examples: single-verse formulae (101–141, e.g., PMN 13; 21; 69; 73; 144); "Doppelvers" formulae (145, e.g., PMN 7–8; 33–34; 36–37); "relation-word-epithet" formulae (164, e.g., PMN 1; 13; 15; 24; 25; 28; 31; 39; 44; 58; 61; 65; 87; 105; 110; 118; 119; 136) and *N.B.* (164, fn. 4): "*mār Nippuri*^{ki} nimmt im 'Armen Mann' stets die Stelle des 2. Stichos ein … was übrigens auch für *ālu Nippuri*^{ki} … und *ḫazan Nippuri*^{ki} gilt"; "terminative-adverbialis + *wašābum*" (168, e.g., PMN 3); "verse-closing" formulae (170, e.g., PMN 70; 84); "verse filling" formulae (171f., e.g., PMN 34; 64; 72; 109; 124; 135).
206. E.g., SB *Gilg.*; see George 2003, 431–433, though they are not common.
207. Kouwenberg 2012, 438; see also George 2003, 431; Annus 2024, 139.
208. Jiménez 2017, 101; first evidenced by Finet 1992, 102. *Ana* PN *amāta izakkar*, "he speaks the word to PN", is the most common (PMN 25; 27; 39; 65; 110; 119; 136). According to Sonnek 1940, 228, it appears in SB *Gilg.*, *Ištar's Descent*, *Etana*, *Enūma Eliš*, and *Erra*. *Itti libbīšu lummunīšu imtalli*, "with his wretched heart he deliberates", is used twice (PMN 11; 16). Though not direct speech, it accords with similarly introduced internal monologues found in *Nergal and Ereškigal* and *Ištar's Descent*, for which see Vogelzang 1990, 59.
209. As noted by Jiménez 2017, 92f. fn. 246, they also appear in *Agušaya Hymn B*, *Marduk's Address to the Demons*, and *Instructions of Šupe-ameli*. There is still no comprehensive study of speech introduction formulae in Akkadian literary texts, though see the doctoral thesis of Kirkham-Smith 2021, who compares direct speech in Homer and Near Eastern literature, defining the corpus of the latter as *extended mythological narratives*. For a sole Assyriological focus see Jiménez 2017, 92–97. Older

Some phraseology is also paralleled in "heroic" as well as royal texts.[210] PMN 71, *ina ṭēmi šarru rubû u šakkanaku iparrasū dīn kitti*, "by reason, the king, noble, and governor will make a true decision", is at first grammatically challenging. If one reads a genitive compound *ina ṭēmi šarri*, "by reason of the king", we expect the construct state *ṭēm*. In addition, rendering the line in this way makes the *rubû u šakkanaku* subjects, which is in disjunction with what follows in the narrative, since it is the king who will render the judgment for GN. Ottervanger's suggestion of a "self-standing adverbial phrase" *ina ṭēmi*, "by reason", is perhaps best.[211] The arising grammatical difficulty could be explainable as an attempt to deliberately incorporate phraseology of a "noble" and "heroic" idiolect, thereby leading to its awkwardness.[212] For a semantically similar sequence can be found in SB *Gilg.* VI 16 (*lū kamsu ina šaplīka šarrū kabtūtu u rubû*, "kings, important ones, and nobles shall be bowed down beneath you"), which, *per* A. George, is a "literary cliché",[213] near-identically read (and closer still to the PMN line) in a prayer to Gilgameš as a judge of the Netherworld (*šarrū šakkanakkū u rubû maḫarka kamsū*, "kings, governors, and nobles are kneeled before you").[214]

A further example of "heroic" phraseology can be recognised in PMN 73, *uškēnma iššiq qaqqaru maḫaršu*, "he prostrated and kissed the ground before him", which is found near identically in *Enūma Eliš* III 69 (*uškēnma iššiq qaqqara maḫaršūn*) and SB *Nergal and Ereškigal* 33 and 203 (*ikmīsi iššiq qaqqaru/a maḫrīša*).[215] Lastly, PMN 89, *mannu attā bēlī*, "Who are you, my lord …", employs the *mannu attā* phrase found frequently in the hortatory / curse sections of both *narû*-literature and royal inscriptions (thereby both

works include Sonnek 1940, 225–235; Vogelzang 1990, 50–70; and Mayer 2007, 117–144.

210. Possibly related, though fragmentary and thus not included here is PMN 114: *ḫazannu išmēma kal ūm*[*i īšu*]*š*, "The mayor heard (this) and was upset all day", now confirmed (and *contra* previously understood *iṣīḫ*, "he laughed") by fragment Rm 468 r. iii 6′. As noted by Heinrich 2021a, 173, a parallel phrase is possibly found in the *Toil of Babylon*, which in Lambert's (2013, 306f.) edition reads (K 3657+ i 9): [*išme ri*]*mmassina kala ūmi īšuš*, "he heard their groaning, was upset all day".
211. See Ottervanger 2016, 33, for commentary to this line, though *N.B.* that *ina ṭēmi* as an adverbial phrase is without parallel according to the CAD Ṭ, s.v. *ṭēmu*, 85a–97a. The eBL (Heinrich 2022b) preferred "Since it is the king's will that prince and governor shall give just verdicts", hence *ina ṭēmi šarri* (LUGAL). See now also Campi 2024, 95f.
212. If this is GN's direct speech, as understood by the edition of Van Buylaere 2010 for the Oracc *Geography of Knowledge in Assyria and Babylonia* project (https://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/cams/gkab/P338355), this is case where the protagonist's language is at odds with his person — see section 3.7.
213. George 2003, 830.
214. KAR 227 ii 7–11; LKA 89 ii 14–22. See George 2003, 134, for text and translation. Another similar sequence, *ilu*, *šarru*, *kabtu*, and *rubû*, is found frequently in a wider range of prayers and incantations (See Lenzi 2011, 192), notably the corpus of anti-witchcraft rituals (with thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out the ubiquity of the sequence in the corpus of anti-witchcraft rituals). These are available via the Oracc project *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-witchcraft Rituals* online (https://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/cmawro/).
215. For *Enūma Eliš* following the edition of Lambert 2013, 78 and Heinrich 2021b (eBL); for SB *Nergal and Ereškigal* 33 (and 203) following the edition of Ponchia & Luukko 2013. Speiser 1957, 43f., suggested PMN 73 was "copy-pasted" from *Enūma Eliš* III 69, but the parallel formulation in SB *Nergal and Ereškigal* should dissuade from taking this argument.

"heroic" and "noble").[216]

3.5 "Heroic/Epic" Poetic Features and Literary Devices in the PMN

Of those texts traditionally termed "Epic", poetic and stylistic features include *Damqa-mīnim* constructions — in which an adjectival or (rarely) substantival *regens* ends in *-am* and is coupled with a substantive *rectum* in the absolute state or genitive[217] — similes, merismus, repetition, word pairs, metaphors, paronomasia, and polysemy.[218] This is neither an exhaustive list nor especial to "Epic". However, the PMN exhibits many of these features in its 160 lines,[219] though this can only betray, again, the highly literary nature of its composition. S. Helle identified a more concrete literary device found in six "Epics", which he termed the "two-act structure": a text divided in two parts, in which the second part expands the first with mirroring between both.[220] It appears in *Atra-ḫasīs*, *Enūma Eliš*, *Gilg.*, *Etana*, *Nergal and Ereškigal*, *Erra*, and, crucially, the PMN.[221] Though not necessarily unique to Akkadian "Epic" or exhibited by all "Epic" texts,[222] that the PMN also exhibits this feature should now come as no surprise.

3.6 'Heroic' Narratological Features in the PMN

A comparison of the narratological features[223] of Akkadian "Epics" is yet to be published.[224] L. K. Altes noted that SB *Gilg.* uses, like Homer in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, a narrator external to the narrated world (for Genette an extradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrator) who largely refrains from ideological comment, instead using direct speech that alternates in the typical fashion with narrative summary to convey the thoughts and feelings of the protagonists.[225] This focus on direct speech is one certain feature that distinguishes the Akkadian "Epics" from other cuneiform literary works. J. Haubold has shown that *Enūma Eliš* is over 50% direct speech, and in SB *Gilg.*, Tablet I is 53% reported speech, Tablet

216. See Moran 1959, 130–140; Vanderhooft 1999, 53; Haul 2009, 128f. fn. 86. E.g., SB *Cuth.* 149; an Aššur-eṭel-ilani inscription (RIMB 2 B.6.35.5, line 4; see Frame 1995, 267). Attested three times in Nabonidus inscriptions *per* CAD M/1 s.v. *mannu*, 217b.
217. See Wasserman 2003, 45–60.
218. Wasserman 2003, 178; Noegel 2005, 233.
219. Noegel 1996, 169–186, for wordplays and puns; Ottervanger 2016, xii–xiv, and commentary (21–46) for hendiadys (e.g., PMN 1), chiasmus (e.g., PMN 5), simile (e.g., PMN 140; 147), and merism (PMN 35–36; 149). For merism see also Wasserman 2003, 82 fn. 101.
220. Helle 2020, 192f.
221. *Ibid.*, 193–212.
222. *Ibid.*, 192.
223. In other words, a narratological analysis, with elements including narrative *mood* (e.g., distance, function of narrator), *instance* (e.g., focalisation), *level* (e.g., embedding of narratives), and *time* (e.g. *analepsis*, *prolepsis*, and narrative speed). These terms can be found in Genette 1980 and 1988.
224. Bach 2020a, 122–178, structurally approached the Middle Assyrian royal "Epics", noting that they differ from royal inscriptions due to their extradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrator (*ibid.*, 122f.). However, the royal "Epics" remain somewhat distinct from their non-historiographic counterparts in their contemporaneity with events discussed and degree of fictionality, for which see Pongratz-Leisten 2015, 300f.
225. Altes 2007, 191f., who added that there are multiple focalisations in the text, *i.e.*, of the narrator, of Enkidu, of Ištar, etc. The above focusses only on the focalisation of the narrator.

VI 62%, and Tablet XI 81%.[226]

The PMN employs a similar narrator as in SB *Gilg*. They are the traditional "omniscient" narrator, who fulfils only the narrative function (*i.e.*, they do not address the audience directly, which is equally rare in SB *Gilg.*).[227] Direct speech constitutes 40% of the narrative, which rises further if one discounts lines used to introduce the direct speech itself to 45%.[228] Both figures are remarkably high in such a short text, and together with the narrator, betray an attempt to incorporate a "heroic"/ "epic" idiolect via narratological features.

3.7 "Heroic" Characterisation and Thematisation in the PMN

Throughout the PMN several themes and the characterisation of GN are suggestive that the poor man is not only so. The initial driving force of the narrative is GN's hunger. This hunger is for no ordinary food, but *šīru u šikaru rēštû*, "flesh and top-quality beer" (PMN 8), so that the protagonist appears a regular "Feinschmecker", "a gourmet who appreciates good meat and top quality beer".[229] In a similar vein, after failing to acquire the sheep, GN notes that with his three-year old goat, *ul ibašši naptanu*, "there would be no banquet" (PMN 18).[230] The term *naptanu* is frequently used in royal and divine contexts (as meals for kings and gods) and is another indicator that GN is a man of great aspiration.[231] S. Ermidoro cited the PMN and *Tamarisk and Palm* as examples of the meal also being organized by the "common man", *i.e.*, not only in the royal context.[232] It is, however, interesting that both these examples are texts that deliberately employ a high register, so that the *naptanu* may not be as "common" as suggested.

Having then suffered injustice at the hands of the mayor, Gimil-Ninurta's triple-deception demonstrates some "heroic" thematization. Though not always in agreement, scholars have identified in broad strokes the themes typical of Mesopotamian "Epic". These include making a name for oneself, dangerous encounters, journeys to far-flung places; overcoming adversaries, and demonstrating wisdom and/or cunning.[233] The last theme is the most prominent in the PMN, where "human wit as a means to overcome grief and frustration in the face of injustice"[234] plays a major role, namely in the aforementioned

226. Haubold 2019, 17.
227. Cf. discussion in Campi 2024, 95f., on the possibility that PMN 71 could be a parenthetical interjection of the scribe.
228. Counting 62 lines of direct speech in 154 lines of text — discounting the highly fragment lines 52–57, that themselves may also be direct speech if Ottervanger 2016, 30f. was correct. In this case, the figure rises to 46%.
229. Ottervanger 2016, 22. However, as rightly noted by an anonymous reviewer, the logographic spelling as it is found in PMN 8, KAŠ.SAG, can simply mean *šikaru*, "beer".
230. Translated as a hypothetical due to *tušamma* in the previous line.
231. CAD N/1 s.v. *naptanu*, 319a–323b. See, e.g., the contrast of the "low" vs. "high" meal in *Theodicy* 185 (eBL ed. Heinrich 2022a): *mālil erqi naptan rube* … […], "the eater of greenery [devours] the banquet of the prince", and note Jiménez 2017, 85: "The phrase *mālil arqi* is thus a derogatory description of a poor person, who cannot afford to eat meat".
232. Ermidoro 2015, 248–251 and fn. 21.
233. See overviews in Alster 1995, 2324f.; Sasson 2005, 226–228; Noegel 2005, 242f.
234. Ottervanger 2016, xii.

three deceptions.[235] Part and parcel too, of Gimil-Ninurta's cunning, is the overcoming of his adversary in the *ḫazannu*, "mayor".

Perhaps the greatest contentual hint that the PMN is to be read as a mock-heroic pastiche lies in the first deception (PMN 70–113): *iltēt narkabta ina qibītīka liddinūnimma* // UD-1 KAM *ēma uṣammaru izimtu lukšud*, "On your command, let them give me one chariot. For one day let me achieve (my) desire, wherever I strive" (PMN 76–77). The narrative quite emphatically depicts its protagonist as a mock-nobleman, complete with chariot (a *sim*[*at rab*]*ûte*, "symbol of greatness", PMN 83)[236] and *nēbeḫu* ("belt" or "sash", PMN 82). The garment is also mentioned in SB *Gilg.* I 225 with the same verb found in PMN 82, *ez/sēḫu*, "to gird".[237] This is duly fitting, in a mock-heroic text. The first deception is therefore also self-referential and metonymic, having the content of the text refer to its own form and structure. There may also be recourse to this at PMN 105, where B. Ottervanger noted the reversal of addresses: Gimil-Ninurta becomes *bēlī*, "my lord", and the *ḫazannu* the *mār Nippūri*, "citizen of Nippur".[238] Thus, as the king allows Gimil-Ninurta to dress-up as nobleman, the scribe dresses his text accordingly.[239]

3.8 Implications

Reading the PMN as a mock-heroic pastiche has several implications. First and foremost, it clarifies the text's hypertextual relationship. The PMN is not a parody, for it does not transform one text. It is, with A. Finet, better termed a pastiche, because it takes its style from a range of hypotexts which can rightly be considered "heroic" or "noble". This leads to an incongruity between the protagonist and subject matter, a poor man who wants to have a party. Herein lies the text's *vis comica*, taking us beyond the clear revelry the PMN betrays in its slapstick, violent depictions of revenge. The humour is far more subtle, with the scribe equally engaged in a humorous generic twist. This twist, the revenge of a poor man told as an "epic", subsequently informs and reinforces the previous, singularly identified interpretations of the text. As noted in its introduction, scholars have harkened on to the socio-political tones, in which a poor man overcomes bureaucratic corruption, its focus on the human as opposed to the divine realm, and its mockery of the medical profession. Much of this boils down to what J. Cooper (1975, 167–170) would term "role reversal".[240] The identification of the text as mock-heroic is not needed to recognise these humorous moments but rather allows us to view these singular instances not just as aggregated comic elements. They are subsumed under the mock-heroic practice and are the result of the

235. Perhaps with recourse to the Sumerian *Epic of Enmerkar and Ensuḫkešdanna* where three impossible tasks are to be solved? See Alster 1995, 2324.
236. On the prestige of and individuals associated with chariots see Waetzoldt 2014–16, 617b–618b. As pointed out to me by S. Helle, this may well have recourse to the "heroic" genre too.
237. First noted by Gurney 1956, 160, and followed by Ottervanger 2016, 35.
238. Ottervanger 2016, 38.
239. With thanks to S. Helle for pointing this out to me. On the self-referentiality of cuneiform literature see most recently Helle 2023, 93–107 (with previous literature), and esp. 103 on metonymy. Annus 2024, 122, compares this scene with Ninurta's chariot return to Nippur in *Angim*.
240. In addition to previously cited literature see Zgoll 2003, 181–203, for PMN as "Reziprozität als Norm".

text's structure. The narrative is itself one that plays in reversal. Thus, the king is depicted as ambivalent in contradistinction to the active roles they play in traditional "epic" texts. The divine nature of the "epic" protagonist and intervention of the gods is done away with. And the learned profession of doctor is rendered a cunning device by which GN can exact his revenge.

Further, the recognition of this type of humour reflects on this text's use in the scribal curriculum. That the PMN was part of scribal training in at least Neo-Assyrian Sultantepe and Neo-Babylonian Nippur is confirmed by the colophon of STT 38 and a student's fragment found in Nippur. To a similar end, *Ninurta-pāqidāt's Dog Bite* is another humorous text used for didactic purposes, aiming to aid the students in memorising complex Sumerian names.[241] Both the PMN and *Ninurta-pāqidāt* are discussed together as examples of humorous Mesopotamian texts, but they share more than this: as *Ninurta-pāqidāt* familiarises the student with Sumerian, the PMN does likewise with the "heroic" idiolect. It is even possible that both texts were introduced to scribes at the same level of education. The colophon of *Ninurta-pāqidāt* (IM 78552, 35) reads: [*ana*] *šitassī šamallê šaṭir*, "inscribed [for] the recitation of apprentice scribes". The PMN colophon on STT 38 indicates the text was for the reading of one Qurdi-Nergal, written by the *šamallû* Nabu-reḫtu-uṣur. However, it is likely that Qurdi-Nergal was also a *šamallû* at the time Ms. A was written, given that he is called as such in the colophon of STT 192, dated two months before Ms. A was written.[242] The PMN is, therefore, another example of didacticism via humour in the training of Mesopotamian scribes.[243]

There is also bearing on the history of literature and genre. The *Batrachomyomachia* is frequently cited as the earliest example of mock-heroic texts. The analysis above has demonstrated that the spirit of the mock-heroic was very much alive in first millennium Mesopotamia, and thus centuries before the Greek witness.

4. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to show the benefits of employing a strictly structuralist approach to the topic of parody in ancient Near Eastern literature. More often than not, scholars have been content to label texts parodies, when in fact the texts exhibit different hypertextual relationships. Either this, or one text, which is termed a parody by one scholar, is subsequently labelled a caricature or a pastiche by another. But if we want to convey, as accurately as possible, the textual procedures a text engages in, and moreover, not inadvertently overlook through loose terminology and intellectual shortcuts any of the

241. See George 1993, 63–72; D'Agostino 2014, 69f.; fn. 30, above.

242. *Per* Ottervanger 2016, 45; *contra*, Pearce 1993, 186.

243. See Milstein 2022, 253–268. Cf. now Zaia 2025, 146f. with esp. fn. 115: "There are some hints that, as with *The Doctor of Isin*, the story contains (or actively incorporated) other material from the school curriculum … However, there is not enough compelling evidence to conclude that *The Poor Man of Nippur* was purposefully designed around specific pedagogical aims. The parallels to curricular material may have nonetheless added to its appeal as a composition that could be used to teach students". Zaia would instead emphasise the "normative behaviors and cultural expectations" (147) established by the tale (given the socio-political overtones and transgressive, negative, but humorous model of GN) as a means of enculturating students.

erudition of the scribes who bequeathed us these tablets, we should no longer be satisfied with such an approach. Genette's system offers an alternative. The writer does not intend to censure the use of the term parody or advocate solely for Genette to the detriment of other approaches. Nor does he necessarily expect the terminology used in this paper to become the standard for Assyriology — cf. Genette's own self-deprecation in *Palimpsests* (1997, 26) regarding the adoption of his terminology: "I hold no real hopes for its future". Whether one uses the phrase "parody of genre", or "imitation of genre", might even be considered to boil down to semantics. The emphasis lies, instead, on drawing attention to the subtle, yet crucial differences between creative textual practices. This has a knock-on effect on determining whether a piece of cuneiform literature is humorous or not, a question which, bar obvious cases and textual instances of semantic incongruity, has proven challenging. For even before doing so, the survey of texts above has shown that a more sensitive approach is required to better elucidate the hypertextual relationships between texts typically termed parody. Only then should one begin to comment on the text's humour.

Using the strict definitions of parody advocated in this paper, namely the playful transformation of one (or a few) hypotext(s) by one hypertext, shows the phenomenon to be as yet unattested in ancient Near Eastern literature, at least at the textual level. There are singular instances of parody confined within specific texts by way of allusions, but no whole work that meets this criterion. Transformation is instead confined to its serious mode, *i.e.*, transposition, in the Ancient Near East, as may be seen by the numerous works of ancient translation. In contrast, imitation, whether serious, playful, or satirical, has been identified in abundance. There is probably no singular reason for this, although two suggestions can be made. First and foremost, the fluid nature of ancient Near Eastern "genres", which frequently overlap, comes to mind. Imitation may well have come more naturally to the scribes who worked within this system. The second most obvious reason is the pedagogic contexts in which many of these texts, notably the model court documents, fictitious letters, and legal documents found their form.[244] The purpose of such texts was likely to acquaint the trainee scribe with the idiolects they would need to employ when writing such documents over the course of their career. As such, less of an emphasis is placed on transforming one specific text, but rather on acquiring the conventions necessary to imitate a whole generic corpus. If the vehicles to train such competencies were often humorous compositions, this may well have been due to the need to facilitate learning, as was argued for the PMN above.[245] In the end, however, that parody is as yet unattested in cuneiform literature remains mysterious, though the writer holds out hopes that an example will one day be discovered.

The title of this paper, *mīnu attā malṭarī*, itself a (poor) attempt at a parody of PMN 89 (*mannu attā bēlī*), posited the question: "what are you, my text?". It is hoped that the system applied in the preceding pages helps the modern scholar find the answers.

244. See similarly Matuszak's commentary *apud* Zaia 2025, 150: "what is actually there [are] predominantly parodic texts in the widest sense, which play with 'genre' conventions and are hence particularly amenable to pedagogic pursuits".

245. On this topic see now the detailed and theoretically grounded approach of Zaia 2025, 131–157, esp. 138–140, with arguments to the same effect.

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MARDUK IN THE NEO-ASSYRIAN ROYAL INSCRIPTIONS FROM ADAD-NĀRĀRĪ II TO SENNACHERIB *

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Abstract

Marduk appeared in the Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions since the reign of Adad-nārārī II. From the reign of Adad-nārārī II onwards, his status in royal ideologies began to be increased, and he gradually acquired various roles in Assyrian imperialism and kingship. During the early reign of Tiglath-pileser III, Marduk's prominence was still visible. Sargon II continued this trend and elevated Marduk to a new level. Sargon II's policies were deemed as "too Babylonian" by his son, Sennacherib, who reversed course in order to de-Babylonianise Assyria. After about a decade of almost total silence on Marduk (and Bēl) in his royal inscriptions, Marduk began to be mentioned after 691 BC, which is the year that Sennacherib fought the battle of Ḫalule against the Babylonians and their allies, followed by the capture of Babylon and the destruction of Marduk's statue in 689 BC. A detailed examination of Marduk's character and status in the royal ideologies from Adad-nārārī II to Sennacherib serves to better contextualize Sennacherib's policies to erase Marduk and de-Babylonianise Assyria.

1 Introduction

Assyria's interaction with, and conquest of Babylonia led to various impacts on Assyrian culture and religion.[1] One way to understand such impacts is to look at how Assyrian kings viewed and dealt with the city god of Babylon, Marduk, in their royal inscriptions. It is well known that from the Old Babylonian period onward, there were seats of Marduk under his names Marduk and Asalluhi in the temple of Aššur.[2] A temple of Marduk in Assur is first attested during the reign of Aššur-uballiṭ I in the Middle Assyrian period.[3] Towards the end of the 13th century, the Assyrian king Tukultī-Ninurta I captured Babylon and took the statue of Marduk to Assur, where it remained for no fewer than 106

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1. For example, Assyrian royal inscriptions used the Babylonian literary dialect and Babylonian script and the Assyrian elites participated in the Babylonian culture and scholarship (Frame 1999, 19; Frame 2008, 24). For Babylonian influence on Assyrian religion in general, see Maul 2017, 336.
2. George 1993, 72, no. 120, and 107, no. 564.
3. Sommerfeld 1987–2000, 367.

years.[4] Marduk was also worshipped in the Nabû temple at Nineveh, which was built by Adad-nārāri III (810–783 BC). While it is unclear when Marduk was added to this temple, it is certain that Marduk was worshipped in it during the reign of Sargon II (721–705 BC). Marduk's name first appeared in official Assyrian inscriptions after the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I.[5] Since that time, Marduk was regularly mentioned by Assyrian kings, until several centuries later, when Sennacherib (704–681 BC), who destroyed Babylon and smashed the statue of Marduk in 689 BC,[6] almost completely omitted Marduk's name from his inscriptions.

While many scholars have examined Sennacherib's treatment of Marduk, as well as his alternative name Bēl,[7] in myths, royal inscriptions, and cultic practices,[8] the policies of his predecessors concerning Marduk's role in the empire have yet to be sufficiently analysed.[9] A detailed examination of Marduk's character and status in the royal ideologies from Adad-nārārī II (911–891 BC) to Sennacherib should serve to better contextualize Sennacherib's policies.

2 General Remark on References to Marduk (Bēl) in Neo-Assyrian Royal Inscriptions

Beginning with Shalmaneser III (858–824 BC), Marduk was mentioned in passages describing campaigns in Babylonia and other locations in which Marduk was locally worshipped. For example, Marduk (sometimes along with Aššur) is mentioned in Shalmaneser III's inscriptions that record his effort to assist the Babylonian king Marduk-zākir-šumi (c. 851–824 BC), suppress a revolt, as well as his campaign against the Chaldeans and Namri.[10] References to Marduk are very frequent in the inscriptions of Sargon II in the context of his campaigns against Marduk-apla-iddina II, a Chaldean ruler. According to Sargon II's inscriptions, these campaigns are commanded by Marduk to remove the

4. Weidner 1939–1941, 120; Zaia 2015, 28, n. 33.
5. Sommerfeld 1982, 193–195.
6. For Sennacherib's descriptions of the event (the Bavian Inscription [RINAP 3/2 Sennacherib 223] and the *bīt akīti* Inscription [RINAP 3/2 Sennacherib 168]) and the Babylonian reaction, see Zaia 2015; Levavi 2021. For the relationship between Assyria and Babylonia during the reign of Sennacherib, see Brinkman 1973; Brinkman 1984, 54–67; Frame 1992, 52–70; Frahm 2017; Grayson & Novotny 2012, 11–14.
7. The name Bēl refers "to the god in his specific role as the patron deity of the city of Babylon, and to the primary cult image of the god in that role in Babylon's Esagil temple" (Heath-Whyte 2023, 188). For a discussion on the uses of Marduk and Bēl in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions, see Heath-Whyte 2022.
8. For example, Machinist 1984–85; Frahm 1997, 282–288; Frame 2008, 26–28; Vera Chamaza 2002, 71–167; Maul 2017, 352; Robson 2019, 75–77; Novotny 2023, 407–411; Zaia 2023, 617 and 2024; Frahm 2023, 225–232; Ponchia & Lanfranchi 2024, 465–467.
9. Short and summarized descriptions: Sommerfeld 1987–2000, 367; Tadmor, Landsberger & Parpola 1989, 25–28; Frame 1999, 14–18; Zaia 2024, 104f.
10. RIMA 3 A.0.102.14, 188. Namri was located at the foot of the Zagros, in the area of the Diyala valley, near Dēr (see Kessler 1998–2001). The lands of Chaldea, Elam, Namri, and Aram were the sources of the troops mustered by Marduk-balāssu-iqbi, the Babylonian king, to fight against the Assyrian king Šamšī-Adad V (823–811 BC) in one inscription (RIMA 3 A.0.103.1, iv 37–39). Therefore, Namri fell in the sphere of Babylonian influence.

Chaldeans from Babylonia.[11] Marduk is also mentioned by Shalmaneser III, Adad-nārārī III, Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 BC), and Sargon II in passages that describe the Assyrian king making offerings in Babylon, Borsippa, and Cutha, and imposing tax for sanctuaries in Babylonia, as well as his participation in religious rituals in Babylonia.[12] Certain inscriptions of Sargon II commemorating building activities in Babylonia conventionally invoke Marduk,[13] just like inscriptions commissioned by native Babylonian kings.

There are five primary roles attested for Marduk in contexts that are not directly connected either to Babylonia or to his cult outside of Babylonia:

(1) *Representative of the Assyrian pantheon*. There are two ways in which the divine representatives of the Assyrian pantheon were presented: (I) the introductory list of gods and goddesses that appears at the beginning of an inscription (the introductory list of gods and goddesses henceforth)[14] and (II) the group of divine symbols on stelae and rock reliefs. These gods were variously referred to as "the gods and goddesses who dwell in Assyria",[15] "the gods who dwell in Assyria",[16] and "the gods of Assyria" in royal inscriptions.[17] As the national god of Assyria, Aššur had limited acceptance outside of the Assyrian heartland, which posed a considerable problem for the legitimacy of its expansionist ambitions.[18] A pantheon consisting of Aššur and other gods whose prominence was universally acknowledged made Assyria more familiar to the subjected peoples in the peripheries.

(2) *Guardian of stelae marking boundaries between political entities*. During the reigns of Adad-nārārī III and Shalmaneser IV (782–773 BC), four stelae marking boundaries were established in Turkey and Syria, marking the border of Assyrian influence.[19] At the

11. E.g., RINAP 2 Sargon II 1, 268–269.
12. In the inscription of Bēl-Ḫarrān-bēl-uṣur, the palace herald, commemorating the establishment of his city Dūr-Bēl-Ḫarrān-bēl-uṣur, the gods Marduk, Nabû, Šamaš, Sîn, Ištar-kakkabī are listed as the gods worshipped in the city (RIMA 3 A.0.105.2). For the discussion whether this stele was established during the reign of Tiglath-pileser III or Shalmaneser IV, see May 2015, 108, n. 152.
13. RINAP 2 Sargon II 123–125.
14. These gods and goddesses are said to determine destinies and appoint the king to his position. This practice was already adopted in the Middle Assyrian period. For example, one inscription of Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076 BC) has this kind of list featuring Aššur, Enlil, Sîn, Šamaš, Adad, Ninurta, and Ištar (RIMA 2 A.0.87.1, i 1–14). This practice of listing the great gods probably continued to the end of the Empire, but the relevant inscription types are not attested for the last rulers. The latest attested example is from the reign of Ashurbanipal (e.g., RINAP 5/2 Ashurbanipal 113, obv. 1–15).
15. For example, RINAP 2 Sargon II 2, 483: DINGIR.MEŠ ⌜*ù*⌝ [d]IŠ.TAR.MEŠ *a-ši-bu-*⌜*ut* KUR⌝*–aš-šur*.KI.
16. For example, RINAP 2 Sargon II 2, 489: DINGIR.MEŠ [*a*]-⌜*ši-bu*⌝-[*ut*] ⌜KUR⌝*–aš-šur*.KI.
17. For example, RINAP 3/2 Sennacherib 168, 7: DINGIR.MEŠ KUR*–aš-šur*.KI.
18. For more discussion, see Maul 2017, 351f. For the near total absence of Aššur in Babylonian cult, see Frame 1999. However, there was a cult of Aššur in Uruk after the fall of Assyria (Beaulieu 1997). In order to make up for this limitation, the Assyrians implemented various religious policies. The equation of Aššur to Enlil is one such example. The Assyrians also equated Aššur with Anšar, one of the primordial entities at the beginning of the cosmos (Maul 2017, 352; Frahm 2023, 373f.; Ponchia & Lanfranchi 2024, 464 and 466f.). Stephanie Dalley is currently working on this issue.
19. Adad-nīrārī III: RIMA 3 A.0.104.2 (Antakya); A.0.104.3 (Pazarçık); A.0.104.5 (Dūr-katlimmu / Tell Sheikh Hammad); A.0.104.6 (Saba'a). Shalmaneser IV: RIMA 3 A.0.105.1 (Pazarçık); the stele of the Palace Herald Bēl-Harrān-uṣur (RIMA 3 A.0.105.2 [Tell Abta]) was either established during the reign of Tiglath-pileser III or Shalmaneser VI. It is excluded for the discussion, because it does not

end of the text, a group of gods are invoked in the curse section as the guardians of these stelae marking boundaries.

(3) *Commander of the Assyrian expansion*. In Assyrian royal ideology, territorial expansion was a mission granted by Aššur in his role as the national god of Assyria. In a royal ritual of Tukultī-Ninurta I during the Middle Assyrian period, the king was commanded by Aššur: "Expand your country with your just sceptre!".[20] This command was also issued by the collective of Aššur and the great gods in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076 BC).[21] Throughout the Neo-Assyrian period, this role was always attributed to Aššur,[22] sometimes together with Mullissu,[23] and the great gods.[24] For example, Ashurnasirpal II claimed that "the great gods of heaven and netherworld chose me, in their steadfast hearts, and my kingship, dominion, (and) power came forth by their holy command. They sternly commanded me to rule, subdue, and direct the lands and mighty mountains".[25] Other than Aššur and the great gods, various combinations of Aššur and other deities or divine symbols were given the role of commander of imperialism. They were often invoked in the format "at the command of DN" in context of war.

(4) *Issuer and guardian of decisions of international hierarchy during the reign of Sargon II*. There is a series of terms related to such decisions: divine decisions (*adê* and *māmītu*),[26] command (*zikru*), design (*gišḫurru*), limit (*itû*), and judgement (*dīnu*). The insubmissive rulers were accused to disregard (*mêšu*), sin against (*ina … haṭû*), overturn (*abāku*), and transgress (*etēqu*) the *adê* and the *māmītu* of the great gods.[27]

(5) *Divine helper* (tiklu) *of the Assyrian king during the reign of Sargon II*: Divine helpers of the king were described as granting support and might to the king, making the royal weapons prevail, marching at the side of the king, granting victories, and making

fit the definition of the stelae in question. For this stele, see footnote 12.

20. SAA 20 7, ii 34–35.
21. E.g., RIMA 2 A.0.87.1, i 46–49: "The god Aššur (and) the great gods who magnify my kingship, who granted (me) power and strength as my lot, commanded me to extend the border of their land".
22. There are several campaign reports directed to Aššur by the king, showing Aššur as the commander for their expansions (Maul 2017, 350).
23. In one inscription of Adad-nārārī III, Aššur and Mullissu were the commanders to conquer foreign lands (RIMA 3 A.0.104.2010, 13).
24. In one case, Anu, Enlil, and Ea held this role: "When the gods Anu, Enlil, and Ea chose me and named me for the shepherdship of Assyria, granted to my dominion the weapon, the sceptre, the crown, and the staff, (and) sternly commanded me to rule and subdue all of the lands insubmissive to (the god) Aššur" (RIMA 2 A.0.101.40, 10–12).
25. RIMA 2 A.0.101.2, 24–25.
26. The translation of *adê* has been debated. Scholars translate the term variously as "treaty", "covenant", "pact", "loyalty oath", and "the supernatural power of an oath". For the discussion about the debate between (treaty-)oath and supernatural power of an oath, see Fales 2012, 153, n. 125. For discussions of various translations, see Parpola 1987, 180–183; Tushingham 2023, 44f. I would argue that *adê* were believed to originate from the gods, who were, at the same time, also the guarantors. Meanwhile, *adê* were merely imposed by the Assyrian king on Assyrian subjects, rather than originated from the king. Therefore, the term can be interpreted as divine decisions imposed by the Assyrian king or the Assyrian state. The term *māmītu* has the same sense. I plan to examine the function and meaning of the term *adê*, as well as its etymology in a future paper.
27. E.g., RINAP 2 1, 68, 72, and 264–265; 65, 309.

the enemies bow down to the king.

An important aspect for understanding Marduk's status in Assyrian royal ideology is the use of the title "the Enlil of the gods" for Aššur and Marduk. Beginning in the Old Assyrian period during the reign of Šamšī-Adad I, Aššur was equated with Enlil, who was the supreme god of southern Mesopotamian pantheons since the third millennium BC, in order to promote Assyrian imperialism.[28] The city of Assur was promoted as the new Nippur in upper Mesopotamia, adopting the epithet of Nippur: šà-uru (Sum.) / *Libbi-āli* (Akk.), "inner city", and Aššur's temple was given the original name of Enlil's temple in Nippur, Ešarra.[29] Aššur was also paired with Enlil's wife, Mullissu.[30] Based on this syncretism, the royal epithet "the appointee of Enlil (*šakin Enlil*)" is frequently used in inscriptions from the Middle and Neo-Assyrian periods.[31]

The Babylonians likewise syncretised Marduk with Enlil using similar strategies. For example, Babylon was equated with Nippur and was given epithets and various topographical names of Nippur. By the end of the second millennium, Marduk took over the supreme status of Enlil.[32] In the inscriptions of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, Marduk is called "the Enlil of the gods", "the king of the gods", and "the lord of lords".[33] These three titles are also used for Aššur in Neo-Assyrian inscriptions. However, the title "the Enlil of the gods" for Aššur is only employed by a few kings — Tiglath-pileser III,[34] Sargon II,[35] Sennacherib,[36] and Ashurbanipal.[37] However, Sargon II only used this title for Aššur once, and all the other occurrences of this title are exclusively for Marduk.

These roles and epithet were attributed to or taken away from Marduk at different stages from the reign of Adad-nārārī II to Sennacherib, and his status in the Assyrian pantheon varied from period to period. I conduct a detailed examination in this respect in a chronological order, thus contextualising Sennacherib's policies with his predecessors.

3 From Adad-nārārī II to Šamšī-Adad V

In the ninth century, several Assyrian kings conducted campaigns in Babylonia and visited Babylonian sanctuaries (Babylon, Borsippa, and Cutha) and made offerings there.[38]

28. Grayson 1987, 47; Vera Chamaza 2002, 124f.
29. Maul 1998, 191f.; Maul 2017, 342–344; also see Pongratz-Leisten 2015, 141f. Note that this temple went by a different name before that time, as clear from texts of Erišum I and inscriptions of Šamšī-Adad I (Eamkurkurra and Rīmu).
30. Mullissu was added as the consort of Aššur-Enlil in the Middle Assyrian period (Maul 2017, 348).
31. On Assyrian titulary, see Cifola 1995 and Sazonov 2017.
32. Lambert 2013, 273f.
33. For "Enlil of the gods," see e.g., RINBE 1/1 2, ii 44, iv 8 (Nebuchadnezzar II). For "king of the gods", see e.g., RINBE 1/1 2, iii 35; 36, i 15‴. For "lord of lords", see e.g., RINBE 1/1 2, iii 35; 11, v 9′. Marduk is also called "the Enlil of the gods" in *Enūma Eliš*, tablet vii, line 149 (Lambert 2013, 132).
34. E.g., RINAP 1 35, i 1, and 34–35; RINAP 1 37, 1.
35. Sargon II used this title for Aššur "the Enlil of the gods" in RINAP 2 65, 121 (*Letter to to the god Aššur*).
36. E.g., RINAP 3/2 159, 5.
37. E.g., RINAP 5/2 186, 4; Hymn to Aššur (SAA 3 1, 2–3).
38. For details, see Frame 2008, 22–26; Nielsen 2023, 547–556. Furthermore, Edmonds (2023) provides a more complete reconstruction of the reigns of Adad-nārārī II and Tukultī-Ninurta II based on five newly attributed early Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions.

Šamšī-Adad V (823–811 BC) used the title "king of Sumer and Akkad" in Assyrian inscriptions, though his rule in Babylonia is not acknowledged as legitimate in any Babylonian sources.

Marduk's appearance in the introductory list of gods and goddesses and the group of divine symbols on stelae and rock reliefs was not consistent during this period. While the number of gods present in the lists varies, there is a standard order, consisting in six categories of gods,[39] and the order of gods in each category varies:[40]

The Supreme God of the Pantheon:	Aššur (1)[41]
Triad of the Most Ancient Gods:	Anu (13); Enlil (12); Ea (14)
Triad of the Moon, Storm, and Sun God:	Sîn (2); Šamaš (3); Adad (4)
Pair of Babylonian Gods:	Marduk (7); Nabû (8)
Warrior Gods:	Ninurta (11); Nergal (9); Nusku (16); Sebettu (6); Amurru (10)
Goddesses:	Mullissu (15); Ištar (5);[42] Gula (18)

During the reigns of Adad-nārārī II and Tukultī-Ninurta II (890–884 BC), there are five inscriptions that employed this introductory list, one from the reign of Adad-nārārī II[43] and four from the reign of Tukultī-Ninurta II.[44] These inscriptions are found in Assur and inscribed on clay foundation tablets deposited (or displayed) in buildings (e.g., temples and palaces), on which there are no divine symbols. All the lists are the same, invoking gods 1–5, 7 (Marduk), 9, 11–16.[45] Marduk is always called "sage of the gods, lord of oracles", titles associated with wisdom.[46]

From the reign of Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BC) onwards, the introductory list of gods and goddesses was almost exclusively employed on stone stelae/slabs and rock reliefs which feature a royal figure and a group of divine symbols.[47] Some of the stelae/slabs

39. Although not all of them are always present.
40. Note that this pantheon is essentially a copy of the Babylonian pantheon with a different head. For example, in the curse section of the *adê* between Šamšī-Adad V and Marduk-zākir-šumi, the list of gods begins with Marduk and Nabû, the two highest gods of the Babylonian pantheon, followed by Anu, Enlil, Mullissu, Ea, Šamaš, Sîn, Adad, Zababa … (SAA 2 1).
41. The number in the bracket represents the deity's presence in the list and the group of divine symbols in tables below. The number follows Reade 1977, 39f.
42. Also RINAP 2 103 (Sargon II).
43. RIMA 2 A.0.99.2.
44. RIMA 2 A.0.100.2–5.
45. This is similar to the annals of Tiglath-pileser (RIMA 2 A.0.87.1).
46. This connection seems to be derived from his syncretism with Asalluhi, the son of Ea. See Johandi 2018, 557–562. In the hymn *Asalluhi A*, which is presumably dated to the Larsa period, Asalluhi is called "authoritative son of the Abzu, fully equipped with pure wisdom, Marduk, the bringer of advice" (Johandi 2018, 561). In one inscription of Sargon II, Marduk is referred to by the name Asari (RINAP 2 125, i 27), an alternative name of Asalluhi. For the role of Marduk in incantations from Assyria, see Frame 1999, 15.
47. For the divine images or symbols in the practice of Assyrian imperialism, see Liverani 2017, 220–222.

from the reign of Ashurnasirpal II to Šamšī-Adad V are located in the heartland of the empire, while others in the peripheries (Table 1).[48]

King	*Inscription*	*Material*	*Provenance*	*List*
Ashurnasirpal II	RIMA 2 A.0.101.8	Stone slab	Northwest Palace, Kalhu	1–5, **7**, 9, 11–16
	RIMA 2 A.0.101.30	Stone slab	Northwest Palace, Kalhu	—
	RIMA 2 A.0.101.17 (Nimrud Monolith)	Stone stele	Ninurta temple, Kalhu	1–5, **7**, 9, 11–16
	RIMA 2 A.0.101.18 (White Obelisk)	Stone stele	Nineveh	missing
	RIMA 2 A.0.101.47	*Clay tablet*[49]	Nineveh	1–4, 12–14
	RIMA 2 A.0.101.19 (Kurkh Monolith)	Stone stele	Kurkh	1–5
	RIMA 2 A.0.101.20	Stone stele	Babil	1–5, **7**, 9, 11–16
Shalmaneser III	RIMA 3 A.0.102.2 (Kurkh Monolith)	Stone stele	Kurkh	1–3, 5, 12–14
	RIMA 3 A.0.102.4	Stone slab	Til-Barsip	1–3, 5, 12–14
	RIMA 3 A.0.102.17	*Clay tablet*	Sultantepe	1, 3, 5, (**7**, 13)[50]
	RIMA 3 A.0.102.21 and 22	Rock relief	The source of the Tigris	1–5
	RIMA 3 A.0.102.6	*Clay tablet*	Assur	1–3, 5, 12–14
	RIMA 3 A.0.102.10	Stone foundation tablet	Assur	1, 4, 5, **7**, 11–14
	RIMA 3 A.0.102.11	Stone slab	Assur	. . . 3, 9, 15–16
	RIMA 3 A.0.102.14 (Black Obelisk)	Stone stele	Kalhu	1–5, **7**, 9, 11–16
Šamšī-Adad V	RIMA 3 A.0.103.1	Stone stele	Nabû temple, Kalhu	—

Table 1. The lists of gods and goddesses from the reign of Ashurnasirpal II to Šamšī-Adad V.

During the reigns of Ashurnasirpal II, Shalmaneser III, and Šamšī-Adad V Marduk was never present in the group of divine symbols and not always present in the lists. During the reign of Shalmaneser III, he only appeared for three or four times out of eight inscriptions. Ashurnasirpal II elevated his position in two inscriptions and kept him in a standard order in the remaining one. Shalmaneser III lowered his position in one inscription and kept him in a standard order in the other (Table 2).

48. For a brief survey of stelae and rock reliefs marking Assyrian territorial delineations, see Shafer 2007. For a discussion of the local variants in the visual imagery, see Porter 2000. For the divine symbols, see Reade 1977.
49. It is a copy of an inscription originally inscribed on a royal statue.
50. The name Bēl and Anu appear in a sentence describing them entrusting the distant mountains to a certain god or person, but not in the usual format — invocation of the divine name, followed by the epithets.

	Ashurnasirpal II		*Shalmaneser III*	
Inscription	RIMA 2 A.0.101.8 and 17	RIMA 2 A.0.101.20	RIMA 3 A.0.102.10	RIMA 3 A.0.102.14
Provenance	Kalhu	Babil	Assur	Kalhu
Marduk's position	Aššur Anu Ea Sîn **Marduk** Adad Ninurta Nusku Mullissu Nergal Enlil Šamaš Ištar	Aššur Anu Enlil Ea Sîn Adad Šamaš **Marduk** Ninurta Nergal Nusku Mullissu Ištar	Aššur Anu Enlil Adad Ninurta Ištar Ea **Marduk**	Aššur Anu Enlil Ea Sîn Adad Šamaš **Marduk** Ninurta Nergal Nusku Mullissu Ištar

Table 2. Marduk's positions in the lists.

The inscriptions in which Ashurnasirpal II elevated the position of Marduk are from Kalhu, his newly established royal city. The higher status of Marduk may have had a connection with the city as a religious centre. Kalhu is described as a cult centre, *māhāz bēlūtīya*, "cult centre of my (the king's) lordship", in the inscriptions of Ashurnasirpal II,[51] containing sanctuaries for various deities, such as Enlil, Ea(-šarru), Sîn, Adad, Nabû, Bēlet-Kidmuri, Šarrat-niphi, Damkina, Gula, Šala, and the Sebettu,[52] as well as the temple of the patron god, Ninurta. The religious characters of the king were emphasized in the inscriptions from Kalhu: the theme of the wise king is only used in royal epithets from Kalhu and the epithet "purification priest" is particularly common in the inscriptions from Kalhu.[53] It is possible that in the introductory list of gods and goddesses, gods are arranged according to certain religious reasons connected to the city.

4. From Adad-nārārī III to Tiglath-pileser III

Adad-nārārī III used the title "king of Sumer and Akkad" in Assyrian inscriptions.[54] Although he was not acknowledged as king of Babylonia in Babylonian sources, he, along with Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II, boasted in his inscriptions that the people of Babylon brought him the leftover of the sacrificial meals for Marduk, a right reserved to the king of Babylon.[55]

Tiglath-pileser III had more involvements in Babylonia than his predecessors.[56] He removed Nabû-mukīn-zēri, a Chaldean, from the Babylonian throne in 729 BC, and took

51. RIMA 2 A.0.101.30, 53.
52. RIMA 2 A.0.101.30, 53–59.
53. Karlsson 2016, 273.
54. For details about the period from Adad-nārārī to Tiglath-pileser III, see Nielsen 2023, 556–568.
55. Brinkman 1979, 229.
56. For the strategies of Tiglath-pileser III concerning Babylonia, see Brinkman 1979, 229; Brinkman 1984, 39–44; Brinkman 2008, 23–26; Frahm 2017, 292; Nielsen 2023, 560–568. The *Eponym Chronicle* records the events of the reign of Tiglath-pileser III. For the chronicle, see Grayson 1987, 17f.

the throne for himself. He participated in the *akītu* festival and gave gifts[57] and offerings to Babylonian sanctuaries (Babylon, Borsippa, Cutha, and others).[58] He was the first Assyrian king who was acknowledged as king of Babylon in Babylonian tradition, since he is mentioned as Pūlu in Babylonian king lists.[59]

During this period, Babylonian influence increased in Assyrian court and royalty. For example, there is a text (K 8663) written by one of Adad-nārārī III's physicians in which the physician makes reference to the temples of Marduk and Nabû, Esagil, and Ezida, and its colophon mentions the wife of Nabû, Tašmētu and ends with a pray to Nabû: "Do not let shame come to the one who trusts in you, O Nabû".[60] Adad-nārārī III also constructed an Ezida temple at Nineveh and worked on the Ezida temple at Kalhu.[61]

4.1 Introductory List of Gods and Goddesses

Beginning in the reign of Adad-nārārī III, all the presently-attested stelae and rock reliefs bearing the introductory list and the divine symbols appear in the peripheries. A list featuring these great gods and their consorts (except for Aššur) is also used as the punishing agents of the *adê* of Aššur-nārārī V (754–745 BC) imposed on Mati'-ilu, king of Arpad. While Aššur-nārārī V's *adê* is from a clay tablet in Nineveh, it is known that *adê* was also displayed in the area that was the other partner of the *adê*.[62]

King	*Inscription*	*Material*	*Provenance*	*List*	*Divine symbols*
Adad-nārārī III	RIMA 3 A.0.104.5	Stone stele	Dūr-Katlimmu	—	3–5, others?
	RIMA 3 A.0.104.6 (Saba'a Stele)	Stone stele (boundary marker)	Saba'a	—	1–**7**, 8–9, 17
	RIMA 3 A.0.104.7	Stone stele (boundary marker)	Tell al-Rimah	—	1–**7**, 8
	RIMA 3 A.0.104.2010	Stone lions	Til-Barsip	1–2, 5, 7–8, 12–14, 18	—
Aššur-nārārī V	SAA 2 2	*Clay tablet*	Nineveh	1–9, 11–16, 18, others	—
Tiglath-pileser III	RINAP 1 35 (Iran Stele)	Stone stele	Western Iran[63]	1–10, 14	2–6, 8, others?
	RINAP 1 37 (Mila Mergi Rock Relief Inscription)	Rock relief	Mila Mergi	1–10, 14	1–5, **7**, 8, 10, others?

Table 3. Lists of gods and goddesses and divine symbols from Adad-nārārī III to Tiglath-pileser III.

57. Porter 1993, 78, n. 180.
58. E.g., RINAP 1 47, 11.
59. His son Shalmaneser V (726–722) was also acknowledged as king of Babylon, although he ruled for few years only. Notably, he appears not to have participated in the *akītu* festival (Porter 1993, 78, n. 180) — there is no record of his participation in the *akītu* festival in the *Eponym Chronicle* and in the *Babylonian Chronicle*. For the two chronicles, see Grayson 1987, 17f. Tiglath-pileser III (Pūlu) and Shalmaneser V (Ulūlāyu) are listed as king of Babylon in the *Babylonian King List A*. See Fales 2014.
60. Siddall 2013, 174.
61. For more discussion, see Siddall 2013, 174.
62. One copy of the so-called *Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty* was found being displayed in a temple at Tell Tayinat (Lauinger 2011).
63. Possibly from Luristan or the region of Kermanshah.

We can see that the divine symbols of Marduk and Nabû appear for most of time, an innovation compared to the predecessors of Adad-nārārī III. Marduk and Nabû also appeared in the introductory lists of gods and goddesses more consistently than in the reigns of Adad-nārārī III's predecessors.

It is notable that Marduk, with Nabû, appears higher than usual in the inscriptions of Adad-nārārī III and Tiglath-pileser III (Table 4), while remained in a standard position in the *adê* of Aššur-nārārī V:

	Adad-nārārī III	*Aššur-nārārī V*	*Tiglath-pileser III*	
Inscription	RIMA 3 A.0.104.2010	SAA 2 2	RINAP 1 35	RINAP 1 37
Provenance	Til-Barsip	Nineveh	Near the mountains (Iran)	Mila Mergi
Marduk's position	Aššur Anu Enlil Ea **Marduk** Nabû Sîn Ištar Gula	Aššur Anu and Antu Enlil and Mullissu Ea and Damkina Sin and Nikkal Šamaš and Nur Adad and Šala **Marduk** and Zarpanitu Nabû and Tašmetu Ninurta and Gula Uraš and Ninegal Zababa and Babu Nergal and Laṣ Madanu and Ningirsu Humhummu and Išum Girra and Nusku Ištar, Lady of Nineveh Ištar, Lady of Arbela Adad of Kurbail (the rest is omitted)	Aššur **Marduk** Nabû Nergal Šamaš Sîn Adad Ea Ištar Sebetti Amurru	Aššur **Marduk** Nabû Šamaš Sîn Adad Ea Ištar Sebetti Amurru Sumuqan

Table 4. Marduk's Position in the Lists of Gods and Goddesses.

It is interesting that Ea, Marduk, and Nabû are listed in a row to construct a triad of direct three generations (father, son, and grandson) in the inscription of Adad-nārārī III. Furthermore, in RINAP 1 35 (Tiglath-pileser III), Nergal is also elevated up to form a triad of Babylonian gods,[64] whose order follows the mention of cult centres in which offerings are generally made: Babylon, Borsippa, and Cutha.[65] It is important to note that Tiglath-pileser III's elevation of Marduk took place long before he became king of Babylon. RINAP 1 37 is from 739 BC and RINAP 1 35 is from 737 BC, almost a decade before Tiglath-pileser III became king of Babylon in 729 BC.

64. For Nergal in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions, see Ponchia & Luukko 2013, xli–lxiii.
65. E.g., RIMA 3 A.0.102.6, II 50 (Shalmaneser III); RIMA 3 A.0.104.8, 23 (Adad-nārārī III). Tiglath-pileser III made offerings in Sippar, Nippur, Babylon, Borsippa, Cutha, Kish, Dilbat, and Uruk (e.g., RINAP 1 51, 9).

In the three lists in which Marduk is elevated, Marduk also acquired a new title. Adad-nārārī III added "the commander of all" to his usual title "sage of the gods, lord of oracles".[66] Tiglath-pileser III abandoned Marduk's traditional epithets, instead giving him the title: "the one who formulates designs, creator of mankind, the one who inspects … the one who makes firm the foundations of the land".

Although Tiglath-pileser III increased the status of Marduk in the lists, he also emphasized the supremacy of Aššur by applying the title "the Enlil of the gods" for Aššur in the very same inscriptions.[67] In contrast, the title "the Enlil of the gods" is almost exclusively applied for Marduk in Sargon II's inscriptions (I discuss this in detail in section 5.4, below).

4.2 Stelae Marking Boundaries between Political Entities

During the reigns of Adad-nārārī III and Shalmaneser IV, stelae marking boundaries were established in the peripheries, some of which bear divine symbols like other stone stelae (see Table 3, above). In the texts inscribed on them, four gods were regularly invoked in the curse section: Aššur, Marduk, Adad,[68] and Šamaš. Sîn is also invoked frequently, although less than the standard four. The addition of Sîn is because of his importance in the Balikh region as the god of Ḫarran.[69]

King	*Inscription*	*Provenance*	*Gods in the curse section*
Adad-nārārī III	RIMA 3 A.0.104.2	Antakya	**Aššur** **Adad** and Ber the Assyrian Enlil the Assyrian Ninlil Sîn
	RIMA 3 A.0.104.3 (Pazarcık Stele)[70]	Pazarcık	**Aššur** **Marduk** **Adad** Sîn **Šamaš**
	RIMA 3 A.0.104.6 (Saba'a Stele)	Saba'a	**Aššur** **Marduk** **Adad** **Šamaš**
	RIMA 3 A.0.104.7	Tell al-Rimah	The great gods
Shalmaneser IV	RIMA 3 A.0.105.1 (Pazarcık Stele)	Pazarcık	**Aššur** **Marduk** **Adad** Sîn **Šamaš**

Table 5. Stelae marking boundaries in the reigns of Adad-nārārī III and Shalmaneser IV.

66. RIMA 3 A.0.104.2010, 5.
67. RINAP 1 35, i 1, 34–35; 37, 1.
68. For a discussion about Adad in Neo-Assyrian royal ideology, see Zaia 2018.
69. For the prominence of Sîn in Neo-Assyrian period, see Hätinen 2021, especially 384–415 for his cult in Ḫarran.
70. This stele is inscribed with two inscriptions from Adad-nārārī III and Shalmaneser IV.

A royal decree was made and preserved in the presence of the statue of Mullissu in the reign of Adad-nārārī III in order to establish the border of the province of Raṣappa and assign the land Ḫindānu to its jurisdiction.[71] Aššur, Šamaš, Nabû, Marduk, Enlil, Ninurta, Nergal, and the Assyrian Ištar were invoked to protect this provincial division.[72] It is worth noting that Marduk alone was invoked earlier in this inscription, probably because of his prominence in the region of Sūhu.[73]

4.3 Gods as Commanders of Assyrian Expansion

During the reigns of Adad-nārārī II, Ashurnasirpal II, and Shalmaneser III, four combinations of gods were invoked in the format "at the command of DN" in context of war: Aššur and Ištar; Aššur and Ninurta; Aššur and the divine standard (*urigallu*); Aššur, Šamaš,[74] and Adad. From the reign of Šamšī-Adad V, the list began to be standardized. In his reign, Aššur, Šamaš, and Adad were regularly invoked for the role as the commander of expansion.[75] For example, Šamšī-Adad V was commanded to impose tribute and tax on all the kings of the Naʾiri lands.[76] In another case, these three gods (Aššur, Šamaš, Adad), along with Ištar, were invoked commanding all the foreign rulers to submit to the Assyrian king.[77]

From the reign of Adad-nārārī III onwards, Marduk was invoked consistently along with Aššur as a commander of imperialism. For example, in one inscription of Adad-nārārī III, Aššur, Marduk, Adad, and Ištar command the kings of Ḫatti to grasp the feet of (*i.e.*, submit to) the Assyrian king.[78] During the reign of Tiglath-pileser III, Adad was dropped from this divine grouping.[79] For example, in RINAP 1 47, 3, only Aššur, Šamaš, and Marduk were invoked as the commanders of Assyrian imperialism (Table 6).[80]

71. Using this method to mark off provincial administrative boundaries was a sign of political decentralization in Assyria (Shafer 2007, 135).
72. RIMA 3 A.0.104.9, r.27–29.
73. RIMA 3 A.0.104.9, r. 17.
74. The royal epithet "sun-god of all peoples" has been assumed by Assyrian kings since the Middle Assyrian period and continued to be used during the Neo-Assyrian period. However, it has few clear references to the judicial function of the king. For more discussions, see Johnson 2022, 41f.
75. Adad gained prominence in the Assyrian pantheon and kingship since the Old Assyrian period (Zaia 2018, 236f.).
76. RIMA 3 A.0.103.1, iii 64–65.
77. RIMA 3 A.0.103.1, ii 13–14.
78. RIMA 3 A.0.104.6, 15.
79. In the aforementioned inscription of Bēl-Ḫarrān-bēl-uṣur, the gods Aššur, Šamaš, Marduk, and Adad are said to have the authority to name a person "to be in charge of the land for its benefit" and they are invoked to protect the inscription (RIMA 3 A.0.105.2, 17 and 29). For more discussion, see fn. 12, above.
80. Adad's attestations in royal inscriptions start to decline from the reign of Tiglath–pileser III (Zaia 2018, 236).

Šamšī-Adad V		*Adad-nārārī III*			*Shalmaneser IV*	*Tiglath-pileser III*
RIMA 3 A.0.103.1	RIMA 3 A.0.103.1	RIMA 3 A.0.104.6	RIMA 3 A.0.104.6	RIMA 3 A.0.104.3	RIMA 3 A.0.105.1	RINAP 1 47
Aššur Šamaš Adad	Aššur Šamaš Adad Ištar	Aššur **Marduk** Adad Ištar	Aššur **Marduk** Adad Šamaš	Aššur **Marduk** Adad Sîn Šamaš	Aššur **Marduk** Adad Sîn Šamaš	Aššur Šamaš **Marduk**

Table 6. Standardized list of gods as commanders of the Assyrian expansion.

5 The Reign of Sargon

While Marduk appeared in royal inscriptions since the beginning of the Neo-Assyrian period, his status was elevated from the reign of Adad-nārārī III onwards. Coincident with this was the increased popularity of Nabû in the Assyrian court and royalty. Marduk's prominence was still visible in the first decade of Tiglath-pileser III's reign, continuing the trend started under Adad-nārārī III. This trend was considerably expanded during the reign of Sargon II, who further intensified the Assyrian involvement in Babylonia.[81] In his Assyrian inscriptions, he called himself the governor of Babylon, the king of Sumer and Akkad, and the governor appointed by Nabû and Marduk.[82] Sargon also introduced himself as "(the one) who reveres the gods Nabû (and) Marduk" in the *Letter to the god Aššur*[83] and became the first Assyrian king to use the title "provider of Esagil and Ezida", a traditional Babylonian royal title, in his Babylonian inscriptions.[84] According to Sargon II's royal inscriptions, during his 710 BC campaign against Marduk-apla-iddina II, a Chaldean ruler who seized the throne of Babylon, he received the support of the citizens and temple personnel of Babylon and Borsippa.[85] This is also confirmed by letters from Babylon to Sargon II, inviting him to assume the Babylonian throne.[86] After the defeat of Marduk-apla-iddina II, Sargon lived in Babylon for five years, leaving the Assyrian heartland in the hands of his crown prince, Sennacherib.[87] He participated in the *akītu* festival[88] and carried out building activities at Babylon, Uruk, and likely Kish and Tell Had-

81. Brinkman 1979, 229; Brinkman 1984, 45–54; Brinkman 2008, 26–32; Frahm 2017, 292f.; Frame 2021, 23–30.
82. E.g., RINAP 2 92, 1, and 95, 1. After the conquest of Babylonia, Sargon II as king of Babylon appeared in the "triple dating" formula invented by his scribe Nabû-zuqup-kēnu in the colophons. This "triple dating" formula consists of the *limmu* year, the regnal year of the king of Assyria, and the regnal year of the king of Babylon, an attempt to strengthen and centralize the power of the king (May 2015, 98).
83. RINAP 2 65, 156.
84. RINAP 2 123, 9.
85. E.g., RINAP 2 1, 371–374.
86. SAA 17 20–23.
87. For the details, see Vera Chamaza 2002, 43–59, and Frame 2021, 28–30. Note that the information comes from chronographic texts, all of which are edited in Frame 2021, 37–41.
88. E.g., RINAP 2 1, 384–388. Also see the *Eponym Chronicle* and the *Chronicle concerning the period from Nabû-nāṣir to Šamaš-šumu-ukīn* (Frame 2021, 40f.).

dad.[89] He became the first Assyrian king to commission building inscriptions for Babylonia.[90] He also granted exemptions for obligations to certain cities.[91]

Sargon II made considerable efforts to Babylonianise Assyria.[92] He invited Babylonian scholars to the Assyrian court[93] and initiated the mass production of the scholarly Neo-Assyrian texts.[94] In the same vein, he called Aššur "the city of wisdom and understanding" in his inscriptions, trying to mimic Babylon.[95] The rise of the court scholarship under Sargon II elevated the status of Marduk and Nabû in the royal ideology,[96] since scholars viewed Marduk and Nabû as the gods of their profession.[97] Sargon's *Letter to the god Aššur* contains the first extant reference of scholarly omens determining military activities, thus, connecting the court scholarship to Assyrian kingship in official royal ideology:

> At the exalted command of the gods Nabû (and) Marduk, who had moved on a path in a station of the stars indicating the mobilization of my weapons, and with a propitious sign for seizing power — Magur, lord of the corona, remained eclipsed for more than one watch, portending the defeat of the land of the Gutians — (and moreover) with the valuable approval of the god Šamaš, the warrior, who had trustworthy omens written on a (sacrificed sheep's) liver (indicating that he would) go at my side.[98]

Sargon II also modelled his new capital, Dūr-šarrukīn, on Babylon [99] and established Nabû as the patron deity of this city, in whose temple Marduk was also worshipped. Furthermore, Sargon II rebuilt the temple of Nabû and Marduk at Nineveh.[100]

89. Frame 2021, 36. For more discussion about the bricks inscribed with Sargon II's inscription from Babylon and Kish, see Pedersén 2023.
90. See RINAP 2 123 and 124 for the city walls of Babylon; RINAP 2 125–128 for the Eanna.
91. Sippar, Nippur, Babylon, and Borsippa's privileged status was reinstituted and Dēr, Ur, Uruk, Eridu, Larsa, Kullab, Kissik and Nemed-Laguda were granted with freedom from obligations (*andurāru*) in the times of Sargon II (e.g., RINAP 2 7, 5–10).
92. Maul points out that during the Middle and Neo-Assyrian periods, "Assyrian rulers consciously attempted to give, at least outwardly, a Babylonian appearance to their systems of government, their institutions, their ceremonies, and their piousness", and there were two possible reasons for that. The first was "to make Assyria appear more familiar to the kingdoms and principalities of the Near East"; the second was to dissociate "the symbols of Babylonian culture" from the city Babylon and "transfer them to Assyria" (Maul 2017, 336).
93. See Fincke 2014, 269f.
94. May 2015, 92 f.
95. RINAP 2 65, 113.
96. Robson 2019, 68 f.
97. The letters sent to Assyrian king by the scholars typically open with invocation of Nabû and Marduk (Robson 2019, 39) and they often used Nabû and Marduk as the theophoric element in their names. For Assyrian royal attitudes to court scholarship and the god Nabû, see Robson 2019, 49–97 and Rubin 2021, 292–481.
98. RINAP 2 65, 317–319.
99. Novotny 2023, 402–407, and most recently Yamada 2025. For the city plan, see Frame 2021, 30–34.
100. RINAP 2 92.

There are six common categories of references in the inscriptions of Sargon II:

(1) in the introductory list of gods and goddesses;
(2) in contexts directly dealing with Babylon or Babylonia. For example, Marduk was mentioned as commander of campaigns in Babylonia and as receiver of offerings and beneficiary of tax impositions. While Sargon II's Babylonian campaign against Marduk-apla-iddina II was usually said to be commanded by Marduk, the pair of Aššur and Marduk as divine commanders of this campaign is also attested.[101] Sometimes, Šamaš is also mentioned alongside the pair of Aššur and Marduk in this context.[102] Nabû also appears with Aššur and Marduk in some cases as the commander of Sargon II's Babylonian campaigns;[103]
(3) as the name of an army unit;[104]
(4) as the issuer and guardian of decisions concerning international relationships;
(5) as the divine helper of the king;
(6) as the Enlil of the gods.

Among the inscriptions of Sargon II, there are five inscriptions in which Marduk is mentioned more than five times, and the categories of references to Marduk in these inscriptions are listed in Table 7:

Inscription	*Genre and location*	*References to Marduk (and Bēl)*	*Categories of reference*
RINAP 2 1	Annals in the royal palace of Dūr-Šarrukīn	7+2	2, 4–6
RINAP 2 2		9+4	2, 5–6
RINAP 2 7	Summary inscriptions in the palace of Dūr-šarrukīn	6+1	2, 5–6
RINAP 2 65	Letter to Aššur	11+1	3–6
RINAP 2 103	Cyprus Stele	5+1	1–2, 5–6

Table 7. Inscriptions of Sargon II containing most references to Marduk.

Of particular significance for this study are categories 1, 4, 5–6.

5.1 Introductory List of Gods and Goddesses

During the reign of Sargon II, the introductory list and symbols of gods and goddesses only appear on stone stelae and rock reliefs in the empire's peripheries (Table 8).[105]

101. E.g., RINAP 2 Sargon II 7, 124.
102. E.g., RINAP 2 Sargon II 1, 408 and 2, 384.
103. E.g., RINAP 2 Sargon II 74, vi 43.
104. E.g., RINAP 2 Sargon II 65, 10 and 407. See this practice, see Larsen 1999, 153.
105. For the study of the stelae and rock reliefs from Sargon II's reign, see Frame 2006.

Inscription	*Material*	*Provenance*	*List*	*Divine symbols*
RINAP 2 103 (Cyprus Stele)[106]	Stone stele	Larnaca	1–**7**, 8	1–**7**, 8
RINAP 2 116 (Urāmārāt Relief)[107]	Rock relief	Tang-i Var	1–3, 5–8	unrecognizable[108]
RINAP 2 117 (Najafabad Stele)	Stone stele	Najafabad	1–3, 7	1–3, others?

Table 8. Introductory List and Symbols of Gods and Goddesses in Sargon II's Inscriptions.

	RINAP 2 103	*RINAP 2 116*	*RINAP 2 117*
Provenance	Larnaca	Tang-i Var	Najafabad
Marduk's position	Aššur Sîn Šamaš Adad **Marduk** Nabû Ištar Sebetti	Aššur **Marduk** Nabû Sîn Šamaš Ištar Sebetti	Aššur **Marduk** Sîn Šamaš [...]

Table 9. Marduk's position in the list of gods and goddesses in Sargon II's inscriptions.

While Marduk's position in the Cyprus stele is standard, as in for example, RIMA 2 A.0. 101.20 (Ashurnasirpal II) and RIMA 3 A.0.102.14 (Shalmaneser III), the other two inscriptions elevated Marduk in the second place right after Aššur. This follows Tiglath-pileser III, Sargon's father (see Table 4, above). It is possible that the reason for the high position of Marduk in these two texts is their geographical positions — both of them are located in the east, more proximate to Babylon than Cyprus.

Sargon II did not refer to Marduk by the epithet "sage of the gods, lord of oracles", or Tiglath-pileser III's title for him, instead giving him two new epithets: "lord of all, who provides all people with food and revives the dying …" in RINAP 2 116, and "the lord […], who provides all people with food, […] … […], (and) grants pl[ants …]" in RINAP 2 103 and 117.

5.2 Issuer and Guardian of Decisions of International Relationships

Aššur is sometimes attested as the sole issuer and guardian of decisions of international relationships.[109] In other cases, Aššur, Marduk, Šamaš, and Nabû are invoked as the issuers and guardians of such decisions, although they did not always appear together (Table 10):[110]

106. It is called Larnaca Stele or Kition Stele.
107. Or Tang-i Var Rock Relief.
108. Frame 2006, 57.
109. In the inscriptions of Sargon II, Aššur continue to act alone as the commander of Assyrian expansion during the reign of Sargon II. For example, Aššur was said to command Ullusunu, a Mannean ruler, to come to submit to Sargon (RINAP 2 82, v 47′–54′).
110. This coincided with the increased status of Nabû in Babylonia during the first millennium. Nabû was promoted as the co-ruler of the world with Marduk, possibly holding an even higher status than the latter. T. Oshima (2014, 474) suggests that Nabû "assumed the active role as the divine ruler, while Marduk continued to enjoy the highest authority". A discussion about the rise of Nabû during the Neo-Babylonian period can be found in Oshima 2014, 473–480.

Aššur (Enlil)	*Marduk*	*Šamaš*	*Nabû*	*Inscription*	*Genre*
adê				RINAP 2 65, 310	Letter to Aššur
māmītu		—		RINAP 2 1, 149	Annals (stone wall slabs, Dūr-šarrukīn)
māmītu	*itû*		—	RINAP 2 65, 148	Letter to Aššur
zikru	—			RINAP 2 65, 346–347	Letter to Aššur
zikru	*māmītu*		—	RINAP 2 82, vii 34″–35″	Annals (clay prism, Nineveh)
zikru		*zikru; gišḫurru*	—	RINAP 2 65, 92[111]	Letter to Aššur

Table 10. Issuers and guardians of decisions of the Assyrian dominion.

Marduk is paired twice with Aššur (*māmītu*; *zikru*), twice with Šamaš (*itû*; *māmītu*), and once with Aššur, Šamaš, and Nabû (*adê*). Apart from the formulas cited in Table 10, there are also attestations of the combination of the decision (*māmītu*) of the great gods and the judgement (*dīnu*) of Šamaš.[112]

5.3 Divine Helper of Sargon II

Both Aššur and other gods were chosen for the role as the divine helper of the king during the Neo-Assyrian period. For example, Ashurnasirpal II claimed that Aššur is "the one who made my (the king's) kingship surpass the kings of the four quarters".[113] Furthermore, Aššur and Šamaš are called "his helpers"[114] and they are said to have "cut down like marsh reeds fortified mountains and rulers who are hostile to him (and) subdued all their lands" in his inscriptions.[115] During the reign of Ashurbanipal, Ištar of Nineveh and Ištar of Arbela were especially promoted as his personaldivine helpers.[116]

Sargon II typically viewed Aššur and Marduk as his divine helpers.[117] Sargon II attributed his successful reign and far-reaching reputation to them,[118] claiming that his "accomplishment of victories and conquests" were granted by Aššur and Marduk.[119] These two gods were also said to have granted him might and made his weapons prevail.[120]

In some cases, Sargon II added Nabû to the pair of Aššur and Marduk to form a triad.[121] Sargon II also stated that he had subjugated all the people "with the support of the gods Aššur, Nabû, and Marduk", calling them his "helpers".[122] Aššur, Nabû, and Marduk were

111. The command (*zikru*) of Aššur and Marduk is further followed by the decision (*māmītu*) of the lord of lords (RINAP 2 65, 92).
112. RINAP 2 63, ii′ 13′.
113. E.g., RIMA 2 A.0.101.1, i 41.
114. RIMA 2 A.0.101.17, i 17.
115. RIMA 2 A.0.101.17, i 17–18.
116. Porter 2004.
117. He claimed the title "offspring of the gods Enlil and Marduk" in RINAP 2 89, 13 (*nadušu Enlil Marduk*).
118. E.g., RINAP 2 1, 2.
119. E.g., RINAP 2 1, 453.
120. RINAP 2 65, 60.
121. The personal relationship between Sargon II and the gods Nabû and Marduk is also examined by Robson 2019, 68.
122. RINAP 2 103, iv 48–49.

also said to mobilize his weapons[123] and make his enemies bow down at his feet.[124] In reference to the kings of Dilmun and Meluḫḫa, it is said that the fear of the might of Aššur, Nabû, and Marduk led them to submit to Sargon II.[125] Šamaš is mentioned with the other three gods, Aššur, Nabû, and Marduk supporting Sargon II's campaign against Urarṭu and the city Muṣaṣir.[126] The supporting role of these four gods in Sargon's ruling is expressed by the following introduction of the king himself:

> I, Sargon (II), who protects justice (and) does not transgress against the limits set by the gods Aššur (and) Šamaš, who is always humble, (and) who reveres the gods Nabû (and) Marduk, attained my heart's desire with their (the gods') firm approval and stood in triumph over the proud one who was hostile to me.[127]

5.4 The Enlil of the Gods

As I mentioned above, four Neo-Assyrian kings, Tiglath-pileser III,[128] Sargon II,[129] Sennacherib,[130] and Ashurbanipal[131] used the title "the Enlil of the gods" for Aššur. However, Sargon II used this title for Aššur only once, all the other occurrences of this title are exclusively for Marduk. It was used in his Assyrian inscriptions, though usually only in Babylonian contexts. The most frequent use is to call Babylon "the city of the Enlil of the gods".[132] The epithets of Marduk used in Babylonian contexts also include "king of the gods",[133] "lord of lords",[134] and "lord of the gods".[135]

In the *Letter to the god Aššur*, Sargon II gives Marduk the title "Enlil of the gods" in the context of a campaign against Muṣaṣir in Urarṭu (*i.e.*, not in a Babylonian context):

> … the god Aššur … to whom, in the distant past, the Enlil of the gods, the god Marduk, granted the gods of (all) the (low)land and mountain regions of the four quarters (of the world) in order that they, without any exception, might constantly render honour to him (Aššur) (and) that he might bring (them), with their accumulated riches, into Eḫursaggalkurkurra.[136]

According to this passage, it was Marduk who placed all the gods under the jurisdiction of Aššur. In other words, Aššur possessed the active role as the divine ruler, while Marduk

123. RINAP 2 8, 21.
124. E.g., RINAP 2 2, 467–468.
125. E.g., RINAP 2 7, 145 (Dilmun) and 111 (Meluhha).
126. RINAP 2 65, 13.
127. RINAP 2 65, 156–157.
128. E.g., RINAP 1 35, i 1 and 34–35; RINAP 1 37, 1.
129. Sargon II used this title for Aššur "the Enlil of the gods" in RINAP 2 65, 121.
130. E.g., RINAP 3/2 159, 5.
131. E.g., RINAP 5/2 186, 4; *Hymn to Aššur* (SAA 3 1, 2–3).
132. E.g., RINAP 2 1, 267 and 374; 2, 356.
133. RINAP 2 125, ii12. This is an inscription commemorating Sargon II's work on the Eanna of Uruk.
134. RINAP 2 7, 122 in the context of the campaigns against Marduk-apla-iddina (II).
135. RINAP 2 1, 384 in the context of the *akītu* festival. Nabû is called the king of the totality of heaven and earth in this passage.
136. RINAP 2 65, 314–316.

held the highest authority.[137] Accordingly, Aššur was given the executive power over the gods. This resembles a line from the prologue of Hammurabi's *Law Code*, where Anu and Enlil give Marduk the "*illilūtu* over all peoples".[138] In other words, Aššur was the one who was actually in charge of the gods and Marduk's leadership was nominal.

6 *The Reign of Sennacherib*

Sargon continued the earlier tradition to promote Marduk in the royal ideology and further expanded upon it. He spent five years in Babylon, fulfilling the duties as the king of Babylon. Furthermore, he made considerable efforts to Babylonianise Assyria. Marduk's status was increased significantly under such historical circumstances. Sargon's policies were deemed by Sennacherib as "too Babylonian", a threat to Assyria's own identity, therefore, he reversed his father's policies once he became the king of Assyria.

As a part of his strategy to de-Babylonianise Assyria, Sennacherib completely omitted Marduk's name from his inscriptions at the beginning of his reign.[139] Around his campaign against the Babylonians and their allies, at the end of which Babylon was destroyed (689 BC), he began to mention Marduk in the introductory lists of gods and goddesses on stone stelae and rock reliefs (see Tables 13–14, below). Likewise, most occurrences of the name Bēl (twelve inscriptions) and the god Nabû (thirteen inscriptions) appeared after 691 BC. There are four contexts for references to Bēl and Nabû (Table 11):

Context	*God*	*Other gods listed together*	*Year*
Curse formula on artifacts from the palace	Bēl	Aššur, Sîn, Šamaš, Adad, (…) Ištar, **Bēl**, […][140]	—
	Nabû	Aššur, Sîn, Šamaš, Adad, …, **Nabû**, and Uraš[141]	
Sennacherib praying to gods for the battle of Ḫalule	Bēl and Nabû	Aššur, Sîn, Šamaš, **Bēl, Nabû**, Nergal, Ištar of Nineveh, and Ištar of Arbela[142]	After 691
Babylonians misusing treasure of Esagil in the context of the battle of Ḫalule	Bēl	**Bēl** and Zarpanītu[143]	After 691
In the introductory list of gods and goddesses	Nabû	See Tables 12–14 below[144]	One is from ca. 702–701 and the other two are after 691

Table 11. The attestations of Bēl and Nabû in the inscriptions of Sennacherib.[145]

Sennacherib established stone stelae and rock reliefs in both the heartland and peripheries of the empire. All of the inscriptions on stelae and rock reliefs start with the introductory

137. Ponchia and Lanfranchi's (2024, 464) interpretation of this passage is in contrast with mine: Aššur has the role of creator and Marduk that of the holder of the executive power.
138. Col. i, 11: *illilūt kiššat nišī*. Roth 1997, 76. For the meaning of *illilūtu*, see CAD I–J, 85f.
139. For the attestations of various gods in his inscriptions, see Gansell *et al.* 2024, 251f. (Table 3).
140. RINAP 3/2 117, 8; 126, 5′; 128, 3′.
141. RINAP 3/2 104, 7; 115, 6; 129, 3′.
142. RINAP 3/1 18, v 6′; 22, v 63; 23, v 53; RINAP 3/2 144, i 8′; 148, 7′; 230, 59.
143. RINAP 3/1 22, v 32; 23, v 24; RINAP 3/2 146, 10; 147, 10; 230, 13.
144. RINAP 3/1 36, 10 (without Marduk); RINAP 3/2 153, 18 (with Marduk); 223, 1 (with Marduk); 230, 1 (with Marduk).
145. The belonging of 1019 is not certain, so I do not include in the table.

list of gods and goddesses.[146] The lists in the inscriptions and divine symbols before 691 BC consistently omit Marduk, while those after 691 BC (one from Sūr-marrati and three concerning the Nineveh water network) almost always make reference to Marduk (see Tables 12–14). In two cases, Marduk's position follows the standard order, while in one case it was lowered slightly, with Ištar's name appearing before his.[147]

The list of the inscription RINAP 3/2 36 is very peculiar, as Šamaš appears twice: in the first instance, his name appears in the standard order, while in the second instance, it takes the position typically held by Marduk in the standard order. This shows that this replacement was done intentionally to erase Marduk from the list and the strategy to erase Marduk was implemented at the beginning of his reign.

Inscription	*Material*	*Provenance*	*Year*	*List*	*Divine symbols*
RINAP 3/1 36	Stone foundation tablet	Nineveh	ca. 702–701	1–6, 8, 11–14	—
RINAP 3/2 222 (Judi Dagh Inscription)	Rock relief	Judi Dagh	ca. 697	1–5, 11	1–5, 11
RINAP 3/1 38 (Inscription from the Royal Road)	Stone stelae	Nineveh	—	—	1–6, 12–14

Table 12. Sennacherib's inscriptions on stone stelae/tablets and rock reliefs before 691.[148]

Inscription	*Material*	*Provenance*	*Year*	*List*	*Divine symbols*
RINAP 3/2 230 (Baltimore Inscription)[149]	Stone foundation tablets	Possibly Sūr-marrati	690	1–9, 12–14	—

Table 13. Sennacherib's inscriptions on stone stelae/tablets and rock reliefs after 691 BC.

Inscription	*Material*	*Provenance*	*Year*	*List*	*Divine symbols*
RINAP 3/2 223 (Bavian Inscription)	Rock relief	Khinnis	ca. 688	1–**7**, 8–9, 12–14	1–**7**, 8–9, 12–14
— (Maltai rock reliefs)	Rock relief	Maltai	—	—	1–5, **7** or 8, 15[150]
RINAP 3/2 153–155	*Clay tablet*[151]	Prob. Nineveh	—	1–**7**, 8–9, 11, 13, 15, Palil	—

Table 14. Inscriptions concerning the water network in the vicinity of Nineveh.[152]

Marduk reappeared in the list of gods and goddesses and the group of divine symbols in Sennacherib's inscriptions and reliefs after 691 BC, the year in which Sennacherib fought

146. Grayson & Novotny 2014, 15f.
147. RINAP 3/2 153.
148. RINAP 3/2 1023 is a draft or archival copy of a text inscribed on stone stele or rock relief. It is uncertain whether it was belonging to Sennacherib. However, the tablet is very broken and the introductory list is not complete.
149. It is also called Waters Inscription, Washington Inscription, and Sūr-marrati Inscription.
150. The identification of the god who stands on the *mušhuššu* dragon is uncertain. Reade 1987–90, 321, suggests identifying it with Anu or Enlil; Morandi Bonacossi & Qasim 2022, 24, identify this god as Nabû. Since the *mušhuššu* dragon is the symbol for both Marduk and Nabû, the option of Marduk cannot be ruled out. Note that the relief was altered later, probably during the reign of Esarhaddon or Ashurbanipal (Morandi Bonacossi & Qasim 2022, 31f.).
151. An archival copy or a draft.
152. There is another inscription mentioning Marduk, RINAP 3/2 1019; however, it is not certain whether it belonged to Sennacherib. Therefore, I do not include it here.

the battle of Ḫalule against the Babylonians and their allies, followed by the capture of Babylon and destruction of Marduk's statue in 689 BC.[153] Destroying the statue of Marduk was not consistent with the Assyrian convention of kidnapping enemy's gods after defeating them;[154] usually, the divine statues were settled in Aššur's temple in Assur or in other temples, and provided with a cult.[155] It is unclear why Sennacherib reversed his previous policy of omitting Marduk in the introductory list and the group of divine symbols, especially in the Bavian Inscription which commemorates the destruction of Babylon and Esagil.[156] One possible scenario is that he intended to show Marduk's support for his campaign against Babylonia. He did not mention that this campaign was commanded by Marduk as Sargon II did. The role of commander of Assyrian imperialism was solely attributed to Aššur in his inscriptions.[157] Sennacherib started the narration of his campaign against Babylonia by describing the evil deeds of the Babylonians against Marduk: the Babylonians took the treasury from Esagil to bribe the Elamites. In this way, his campaign was presented as vengeance on behalf of Marduk. As I mentioned above (Table 11), in the context of the battle of Ḫalule, Sennacherib stated that he prayed to a group of gods including Bēl and called them his helpers. Furthermore, he did not specify in his inscriptions that Marduk's statue was destroyed, only using phrases like "gods living inside Babylon" and "its (Babylon) gods", perhaps to avoid taking blame for its destruction:[158]

> My people seized and smashed the gods living inside Babylon.[159]

> After I destroyed Babylon, smashed its gods, (and) put its people to the sword, I removed its earth in order to make the site of that city unrecognizable and I had (it) carried to the sea by the Euphrates River.[160]

Sennacherib had a strategy to replace Marduk with Aššur. He inserted Aššur in the place of Marduk in rituals and literature originally associated with Marduk,[161] for example, in *Enūma Eliš*.[162] He also restructured Aššur's temple in Assur to make it more like the

153. Although he did not specify the statue of Marduk (RINAP 3/2 223, 47–48 and 168, 36–39). For the event and the Babylonian reaction, see Zaia 2015; Levavi 2021. For the relationship between Assyria and Babylonia during the reign of Sennacherib, see Brinkman 1973; Brinkman 1984, 54–67; Frame 1992, 52–70; Frahm 2017.
154. For this practice, see Holloway 2002, 123–144; Zaia 2015; Liverani 2017, 222–227.
155. Sometimes, the divine statue was instead returned to its original location, in which case it would be inscribed with the phrase "the might of the god Aššur" (*danān Aššur*) and accompanied by a royal inscription (Zaia 2015, 34–35). The purpose of this "godnapping" was to rebrand these previously foreign gods as Assyrian (*aššurû*) (CAD A/2, 471).
156. For the details of Bavian Inscription, see Dalley 2025.
157. E.g., the battle of Ḫalule, RINAP 3/2 223, 36, and 230, 66.
158. Liverani 2017, 224, notes that there is a difference in languages concerning deportation of gods from other regions and Babylonia in the inscriptions of Sennacherib: while Sennacherib named himself as the actor for the former, he attributed the latter to his soldiers.
159. RINAP 3/2 223, 47–48.
160. RINAP 3/2 168, 36–39.
161. For the details of Sennacherib's religious reform, see the bibliography in fn. 8, above.
162. Assyrian scholars produced a version of the *Enūma Eliš* in which Marduk's name is replaced by that of Aššur (Lambert 1997, 2013, 4–5; Kämmerer & Metzler 2012, 26–32).

Esagil and built an *akītu* house outside Assur, which contained gates depicting Aššur preparing to fight Tiamat.[163] Furthermore, Sennacherib replaced gods that he deemed to be "too Babylonian" with gods that were "more Assyrian" or "non-Babylonian" in the Assyrian pantheon.[164] Sennacherib also limited the divine association with Assyrian imperialism and kingship primarily to Aššur. This is made evident by the frequency of the divine names attested in his royal inscriptions. Among the gods mentioned in Sennacherib's inscriptions, Aššur accounts for 54.68% of all divine names. In contrast, in the royal inscriptions of Sargon II, Aššur accounts for only 35.45%.[165]

The policies of Sennacherib to de-Babylonianise Assyria were short-lived, and were overturned right away by his son Esarhaddon. In the text *The Sin of Sargon*, composed during the reign of Esarhaddon,[166] Sennacherib's policies are anachronistically attributed to Sargon and taken as the reason why Sargon II died during a campaign and his body could not be brought back to Assyria.[167] His policies are described as "he esteemed the gods of Assyria too much, placing them above the gods of Babylonia".[168] In order to distance himself from Sennacherib, Esarhaddon initiated a series of steps to remedy the damage his father had inflicted on the cult of Marduk and his city, Babylon.[169]

7 Conclusion

Marduk's ascension in the Assyrian royal ideology started in the reign of Adad-nārāri III and continued all the way through the reign of Sargon II. He gradually acquired various roles in Assyrian expansion and kingship, and gained an increasingly important status in the Assyrian pantheon. This trend ceased during the reign of Sennacherib, who adopted various policies to erase Marduk and replace him with Aššur. Sennacherib's policies concerning Marduk (and Nabû) represented a complete breakdown of the Assyrian tradition of incorporating other people's gods into its own pantheon and was an attempt to distance himself from his father, whose policies he deemed too "Babylonian". The aim of his policies was to bring Assyria to the fore, as it had long been in the shadow of Babylonia in terms of religious and cultural influence.

163. RINAP 3/2 160, 5–18; Novotny 2023, 407–411. In the inscription, Sennacherib also claims that the gates contained a description of Tiāmat's capture by Aššur. For the details of these building activities in Assur, see Grayson & Novotny 2014, 18–22.
164. For example, Ḫaya for Nabû, Zababa for Ninurta. For details, see Zaia 2024, 108–112.
165. See Gansell *et al.* 2024, 251f. (Table 3).
166. SAA 3 33.
167. RINAP 2, 37.
168. SAA 3 33, 17′–18′.
169. Zaia 2024, 113–115.

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