

ON STANDARDISATION AND VARIATION IN THE INTRODUCTORY FORMULAE OF NEO-ASSYRIAN LETTERS¹

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The introductory formulae of Neo-Assyrian letters sent to the king or a superior official during the eighth century B.C. attest to a highly standardised form of letter writing (especially in the address), proving scribal sensitivity to an established letter writing etiquette. The introductory formula reflects the office of the sender; exactly the same formula (including the greeting) may be used by successive officeholders. Yet these formulae are by no means entirely uniform. In particular, the presence or absence of a blessing may tell us about the sender's relationship with the Assyrian king.

1. Introduction

After a period of relative weakness, Assyria's fortunes rose with the rule of Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 B.C.). His expansionist policy marked a turning point for the Assyrian empire; this was the beginning of a new era, with brighter prospects for the ever-growing ranks of ambitious administrators in the Assyrian capital and in the recently conquered provinces alike. As the vast geographical expansion posed new challenges for the administration, including written correspondence, the best response was to develop standards. At this time a degree of standardisation of administrative methods is evident, something that is also reflected in the introductory formulae² of letters. Although the introductory formulae may appear insignificant, they are in fact meaningful and touch upon many different issues that are not limited to their linguistic characteristics. They display patterns that reflect, for example, the social hierarchy and cultic practices of the Assyrian empire.

One of the pioneering studies of Assyro-Babylonian introductory formulae is that of Erkki Salonen (1967), in which the author treated all the first millennium evidence together, without distinguishing between different sub-corpora (Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, Late Babylonian).³ As we shall see, such a distinction is necessary, since these sub-corpora display different patterns. Salonen recorded a large number of variants that derived in the main from priestly and scholarly letters of the seventh century B.C.⁴ Since that time, with the flow of new tablets being published and many older tablets being reinterpreted and better understood, together with the arrival of more developed theories and especially the systematic use of computers, it has been possible to produce more nuanced studies such as those by Cancik-Kirschbaum on Middle Assyrian (1996), Sallaberger on Old Babylonian (1999) and Mynářová on Amarna-Akkadian (2007).⁵

The whole picture regarding eighth and seventh century introductory formulae is too complicated to permit exhaustive examination here.⁶ This study therefore concentrates mainly on the evidence from the eighth century, the earliest Neo-Assyrian letters available. It also focuses on letters sent by subordinates to superiors; in practice, most of the extant Neo-Assyrian letters from the period automatically fall into this category, as the king of Assyria is the most frequent addressee. It should be emphasised at the outset that most subordinates who corresponded with the Assyrian king were

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² An introductory formula is to be defined as the opening of a letter that consists usually of an address (by which is meant not a street address, but rather an invocation with a

profession or title, such as "king", or a personal name) plus greeting/salutation—especially when writing to a superior—after which a blessing (or blessings) may follow.

³ Salonen (1967: 78–114).

⁴ The majority of these letters have been published in *SAAT* 10 and *SAAT* 13.

⁵ For the Neo-Assyrian period, the following studies should also be mentioned: Parpola (1971: 28–45) and (1983: 437–46) and Reynolds (2003: xvii–xix).

⁶ This paper nevertheless offers some hypotheses to better understand the wider picture.

no lesser figures than provincial governors, who themselves controlled vast areas and were thus local potentates and dignitaries of the Assyrian empire.

It is a well-known and oft stressed fact that the extant Neo-Assyrian letters from the eighth and seventh centuries follow different patterns in their introductory formulae. This is because of the different geographical and social circumstances as well as, presumably, the different educational backgrounds of the senders. For while the majority of the Assyrian eighth century letters were sent from the provinces to the capital, the extant seventh century letters were often written in the capital, even in the same palace complex where the king himself resided. This dichotomy is exaggerated by the fact that we know very little about the eighth century scribes.⁷ At any rate, their letters were less elaborate than those dispatched from the scholars of the capital, who were versed in many genres. Compared to the eighth century scribes, these learned writers of the seventh century letters augmented the basic introductory formulae extensively; in seeking royal favour they competed fiercely with one another and wrote long blessings in the hope that the writer would acquire or continue his employment at the royal court at Nineveh: the stakes were high at the time. Here is a fine example of an introductory formula from a seventh century letter:

a-na LUGAL EN-ia ^f8 *ARAD-ka* ^{md}PA-MU-AŠ / *lu-u DI-mu lu-u DI-mu / lu-u DI-mu a-na LUGAL EN-ia / a-du 1-lim lu-u DI-mu / a-na LUGAL EN-ia /* ^daš-šur ^d30 ^dšá-maš / ^dEN ù ^d[AG] / *a-na LUGAL EN-ia / lik-ru-bu*

To the king, my lord: your servant Nabû-šumu-iddina. Good health, good health, good health to the king, my lord. A thousand (times) good health to the king, my lord. May Aššur, Šin, Šamaš, Bel, and [Nabû] bless the king, my lord!⁹

SAA 13 80: 1–10

Here, in comparison, is a typical example of an introductory formula from an eighth century letter:

a-na LUGAL be-lí-ia / ARAD-ka ^maš-šur-BAD-IGI-ia / *lu šul-mu a-na LUGAL be-lí-ia*

To the king, my lord: your servant Aššur-dur-paniya. Good health to the king my lord!

SAA 5 52: 1–3

On the other hand, it should be pointed out that the differences described are only partly substantive, since some atypical eighth century letters are preserved. Consider, for example, the introductory formula of the following letter from a certain Hunnî, which is unusually florid for the period:¹⁰

a-na LUGAL be-lí-ia a-dan-niš / a-dan-niš lu-u šul-mu / aš-šur ^dUTU ^dEN ^dPA ^d30 ^dU.GUR / *a-na LUGAL be-lí-ia lik-ru-bu / ARAD-ka* ^mhu-un-ni-i / *ka-ri-ib LUGAL be-lí-šú / šul-mu a-na É.KUR-ra-a-te / a-na É.GAL.MEŠ ša KUR-aš-šur gab-bu / šul-mu a-na* ^{md}30-PAB.MEŠ-SU / *DUMU-LUGAL GAL-e [šú]l-mu a-na DUMU.MEŠ MAN /* ^Γ*gab* ^Γ*[bu am-mar*¹¹ *ina] KUR-aš-šur šu-nu-ni / [šA-bu ša LUGAL be-lí-ia / [a-dan-niš lu-u ta-a-b)a*

The very best of health to the king, my lord! May Aššur, Šamaš, Bel, Nabû, Šin and Nergal bless the king, my lord! (This is from) your servant Hunnî, an adorer of the king his lord. All the temples and palaces of Assyria are well; the crown prince Sennacherib is well; all the princes [who are in] Assyria are well; [the king], my lo[rd, can be gl]ad [indeed]!

SAA 1 133: 1–13

⁷ Their education and origin are not treated in the available sources. In the late eighth century, it must occasionally have been challenging for the central government to find competent scribes for outlying provinces. Therefore, I would not rule out the possibility that some of these scribes, especially those serving in the northern, eastern and western fringes of the Assyrian empire, may have been young apprentices or of Babylonian (writing in Assyrian) or local, non-Assyrian, origin; for example, this concerns the scribes of vassal kings such as Hu-Tešub of Šubria (cf. section 5, below). The following letters or passages provide some information about the eighth century scribes and the problems

of employing them: SAA 1 171 s. 1–3, 204; SAA 5 250 r. 24 f.; SAA 15 17.

⁸ Note that in this article the slash signifies the end of a line and not, for example, the beginning of a phrase or clause in quoted Akkadian.

⁹ All the translations follow those of the SAA editions unless otherwise stated.

¹⁰ Apart from being the sender of this letter, nothing certain is known about Hunnî, but a similar letter (SAA 1 134) may also be attributed to him. Note also some atypical, political letters from the seventh century, e.g. SAA 16 126–29 and 148.

¹¹ Alternatively, restore perhaps *ammār ša* or simply *ša*.

2. Eighth century forms of address

The standard Neo-Assyrian address for a letter sent to the King of Assyria, or to any other superior at the palace, reads: *ana šarri* (or another superior) *bēlīya urdaka* PN “To the king/(vizier/palace herald/chief eunuch/palace scribe/...), my lord, your servant PN.”¹² Generally speaking, every Neo-Assyrian letter sent to the king of Assyria contains this basic formula.¹³ All the elements in the Neo-Assyrian address to the king form a hierarchical pyramid, from top to bottom:

King
My lord
Your servant
Sender’s personal name

The equivalent address from the Middle Assyrian period differs from this in the use of the word *tuppi* and the later position of “your servant”: *ana* PN₁ (recipient) *bēlīya tuppi* PN₂ (sender) *urdaka* “To PN₁, my lord, a tablet of PN₂, your servant”. It is clear that there was a strictly-obeyed hierarchical order in Assyria. This Middle Assyrian formula, employed in the latter part of the second millennium, is infrequently attested because thus far the extant letter corpus remains relatively small, although it contains a good mixture of letters sent to subordinates, equals and superiors.¹⁴ Following the address may come a devotion formula and a greeting, but not a blessing.

The standard form of a contemporary Neo-Babylonian address to the king, meanwhile, is very different: *aradka* PN *ana dinān šarri bēlīya lullik* “Your servant PN: I would gladly go as the king, my lord’s substitute!” (i.e., “I would be prepared to die for the king, my lord”). The typical address to a subordinate or an equal ran as follows: *tuppi* PN₁ (sender) *ana* PN₂ (recipient) “A tablet of PN₁ to PN₂”. There is thus a marked difference in the order in which the active parties to written communication are presented in Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian. Interestingly, however, in letters sent to a subordinate or an equal, the Neo-Assyrian formula employs the same order as Neo-Babylonian: *tuppi* PN₁ *ana tupšar ēkalli* “A tablet of PN₁ to the palace scribe” *SAA* 19 56¹⁵: 1–2.

Another Neo-Assyrian address to a superior was also in use at the same time: *ana* PN₁ (recipient) *tuppi* PN₂ (sender) “To PN₁ a tablet of PN₂” (e.g. *SAA* 1 215, 220). It should be stressed that this is rarely used and still differs from the order of words in a typical Neo-Babylonian address. In addition, this address is not always sufficient indication that the letter was sent to a superior, and thus may be supplemented by a term denoting his rank: *bēlišul/bēlīya* “His/my lord”. Alternatively, a greeting (including the term of rank) may be added to confirm the relationship between sender and recipient: *lū šulmu ana bēlīya* “Good health to my lord!”¹⁶ When the word for king is added to this model, have the standard greeting of Neo-Assyrian letters sent to the King of Assyria: *lū šulmu ana šarri bēlīya*¹⁷ “Good health to the king, my lord!” As only a limited number of letters without a greeting is addressed to the King of Assyria, we may consider the greeting formula obligatory in Neo-Assyrian letters sent to him (for exceptions, see section 6 and Table I of the Appendix).¹⁸ A greeting may be extended by an additional element for emphasis. To this end, the adverb *adanniš* “very” or *adanniš adanniš*

¹² This is a simplification from earlier formulae; the deletion of the traditional, but redundant, words *qibīma* and *umma* may have paved the way for innovation that resulted in this new standard address.

¹³ A small group of anonymously sent letters (that is, where the sender’s name is deliberately not given) do not concern us here: *SAA* 1 203; *SAA* 5 111, 139, 171; *SAA* 15 189+208 (join by G. Van Buylaere), 199; *SAA* 17 78.

¹⁴ For the editions of Middle Assyrian letters sent to a superior, see e.g. Donbaz (2004: 74 f.); Brinkman and Donbaz (1985: 81–83); Aynard and Durand (1980: 3–5); *BATSH* 4, nos. 2–7, 9–20, 22–25, 27, 30, 36 (envelope); Finkelstein (1953: 135 f., 167 f.); Faist (2001: 251–54, Taf. 3–6); Tsukimoto (1992: 35–38); Weidner (1959–60: Taf. 5; Freydank and Saporetti 1989: 9, 51); Ebeling (1933: 23); *MARV* 4 17, *MARV* 1 71; Llop (2003: 6–9), *MARV* 2 8, *MARV* 5 19; Wilhelm (1997: 431–34); cf. Cancik (1996: 56–61, esp. n. 37).

¹⁵ This letter was sent from Inurta-ila’i, governor of Našibina, to the palace scribe, a high official at court (see Luukko 2007).

¹⁶ *SAA* 1 215: 3, exceptionally written as *lū šulmu ana* 𒀭DUMU¹-ia (“my lord”) in *SAA* 1 220: 3 (for which see Luukko 2004: 178–79; cf. *SAA* 19 13: 1–3 in which *tuppi* PN *ana* begins the letter).

¹⁷ In quite a number of Neo-Babylonian letters sent to the king of Assyria (*SAA* 17 59: 6, 73: 3, 89: 4, 90: 3 f., etc.), the same greeting appears as an Assyrianism. On the other hand, in other Neo-Babylonian letters we also observe a variation between “the king (of the lands, my lord)” and the use of Sargon’s personal name: Šarru-kēn (Sargon).

¹⁸ The King of Assyria corresponded mainly with the ruling class of Assyria. It may be appropriate to recall Sallaberger’s (1999: 263) observation concerning Old Babylonian introductory formulae, “No greetings are employed in cases of great differences in rank”.

“extremely” is often added to the greeting. Contrary to the other elements in the Neo-Assyrian introductory formulae, the place of *adanniš* is rather free; this is not the case with, e.g., *lū šulmu* “Let there be health” that regularly takes the initial position in Neo-Assyrian, but occurs in the final position in both Middle Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian letters.

3. Similarity and variation in the letters of successive office-holders

The introductory formulae reflect the office of the sender; exactly the same formula may be used by successive officeholders.¹⁹ On the other hand, the introductory formulae are by no means entirely uniform, even those by the same sender. One of many possible examples of the same formula being used by successive officeholders is provided here from two governors of Arrapha²⁰, Aššur-šallimanni (governor during the reign of Tiglath-pileser III) and Issar-duri (governor during the reign of Sargon II):

a-na LUGAL be-li-ia / ARAD-ka^m aš-šur-DI-a-ni / lu-u DI-mu a-na LUGAL be-li-ia

To the king, my lord: your servant Aššur-šallimanni. Good health to the king, my lord!

SAA 19 83: 1–3

[a-na] LUGAL be-li-[ia] / ARAD-ka^m 15-BAD / lu-u DI-mu a-na LUGAL EN-ia

[To] the king, [my] lord: your servant Issar-duri. Good health to the king, my lord!

SAA 15 8: 1–3

The words of Aššur-šallimanni are clearly echoed by those of Issar-duri, but this comparison is too simplistic. Both the address and the greeting in their letters are generic, used by most governors, notwithstanding the location of their posts. Therefore, it makes better sense to turn to more complex examples, such as that of Nabû-belû-ka²¹ in and Mannu-ki-Ninua, successive governors of Kar-šarruken (Harhar):²¹

a-na LUGAL EN-a / ARAD-ka^m PA-EN-GIN / lu šul-mu a-[n]a LUGAL EN-a / DI-mu a-na KUR [ša] LUGAL EN-a / LÚ.mat-a-a ša bat-te-bat-te-e-ni : né-e-hu*

To the king, my lord: your servant Nabû-belû-ka²¹ in. Good health to the king, my lord! The land [of] the king my lord is well. The Medes around us are peaceful.

SAA 15 85: 1–5

a-na LUGAL be-li-ia / ARAD-ka^m man-nu-ki-i-URU.ni-nu-a / lu šul-mu a-na LUGAL be-li-ia / šul-mu a-na KUR ša LUGAL be-li-a / LÚ.mat-a-a ša bat-te-bat-te-e-ni / né-e-hu ù a-né-e-nu / dul-li-in-ni né-pa-áš*

To the king, my lord: your servant Mannu-ki-Ninua. Good health to the king, my lord! The land of the king my lord is well. The Medes around us are peaceful, and we are doing our work.

SAA 15 100: 1–7

Here, however, the almost perfect match between the introductory formulae of the successive officeholders can be explained by employment of the same scribe;²² this explains more generally the use of identical wording or a close orthographic match between formulae.²³ The influence of the scribe is also evident in variation between letters of a given official. The Nimrud Letters (*SAA* 19 and *CTN* 5) contain many cases in which a high official has clearly employed more than one scribe, each of whom has used a slightly different formula. Consider, for example, the letters of “Qurdi-Aššur-lamur”

¹⁹ See also the letter(s) of Aššur-nirka-da²¹ in section 7.

²⁰ Our sources are usually not explicit on the issue of succession in high provincial posts. There may have been another governor of Arrapha between Aššur-šallimanni (eponym of the year 735) and Issar-duri (eponym of the year 714). However, this is not significant for the present comparison. For Aššur-šallimanni’s letters, see *SAA* 19 80–88. For Issar-duri’s letters, see *SAA* 15 1–15.

²¹ See Fuchs and Parpola (2001: xxvi, xxviii, xxxviii–xxxix). For Nabû-belû-ka²¹ in’s letters, see *SAA* 15 83–89, and for Mannu-ki-Ninua’s letters, see *SAA* 15 90–105.

²² See note 23 below.

²³ According to Parpola 1981: 128 n. 12 the same scribe was employed by the following successive officeholders: Ašipâ and Ša-Aššur-dubbu (see note 31); Adda-hati (*SAA* 1 173–76) and Bel-iqbî (*SAA* 1 177–82: his name is only preserved in no. 177); Šamaš-belû-ušur (*SAA* 15 111–28) and Nabû-duru-ušur (*SAA* 15 129–35: his name is fully preserved only in no. 131); Mannu-ki-Ninua and Nabû-belû-ka²¹ in (see note 21, above).

versus those of “Qurdi-Aššur”. It is generally assumed that we are dealing with a single high official whose two scribes use different formulae; the one employs the standard greeting *lū šulmu ana šarri bēlīya*, while the other (unusually) omits it:

[a-n]a LUGAL be-lī-ia / ARAD-ka ^mqur-dī-aš-šur / lu DI-mu a-na LUGAL be-lī-ia

To the king, my lord: your servant Qurdi-Aššur. Good health to the king, my lord!

SAA 19 29: 1–3

a-na LUGAL EN-ia / ARAD-ka ^mqur-dī-aš-šur-IGI / TA* UGU URU.šur-a-a ša LUGAL iq-bu-u-ni / ma-a : DUG₄. DUG₄ : KI-šú lu DÜG.GA

To the king, my lord: your servant Qurdi-Aššur-lamur. Concerning the Tyrean (king) about whom the king said: ‘Speak kindly with him!’

SAA 19 22: 1–4

The variation between the introductory formulae of the crown princes’ letters in the late eighth and early seventh centuries is a highly interesting feature that may suggest subtle or even drastic changes in their position.²⁴ We can compare the formula of Ululayu (the future King Shalmaneser V) to that of Sennacherib. Ululayu’s introductory formula is exactly the same as Sennacherib’s, except that the latter consistently uses “good health” instead of “the best of health”.²⁵ Sennacherib’s letters employ *adanniš* only in the phrase *libbu ša šarri bēlīya adanniš lū t̄āb* “The king, my lord, can be glad indeed”.

a-na LUGAL be-lī-ia / ARAD-ka ^mITI.KIN-a-a / lu-u DI-mu a-na LUGAL be-Γlī -iā / a-dan-niš DI-mu a-na KUR-aš-šur / DI-mu a-na É.KUR.MEŠ / DI-mu a-na HAL.ŠU.MEŠ ša LUGAL gab-bu / ŠÀ-bu ša LUGAL be-lī-iā a-dan-niš lu DÜG.GA

To the king, my lord: your servant Ululayu. The best of health to the king, my lord! Assyria is well, the temples are well, all the king’s forts are well. The king, my lord, can be glad indeed!

SAA 19 9: 1–7

a-na LUGAL be-lī-ia / ARAD-ka ^md30-PAB-MEŠ-SU / lu šul-mu a-na LUGAL be-lī-ia / šul-mu a-na KUR-aš-šur. KI / šul-mu a-na É.KUR.MEŠ-te / šul-mu a-na URU.bi-rat ša LUGAL gab-bu / ŠÀ-bu ša LUGAL EN-ia a-dan-niš lu DÜG.GA

To the king, my lord: your servant Sîn-ahhe-riba. Good health to the king, my lord! Assyria is well, the temples are well, all the king’s forts are well. The king, my lord, can be glad indeed!

SAA 1 31: 1–7

It should be stressed that there must be truth in what is said by the sender, since, for example, only the crown prince of Assyria can proclaim that “all the king’s forts are well”, implicitly referring to all the forts of the empire.

In contrast, around 670 B.C. both Assurbanipal and Šamaš-šumu-ukin employed a formula typical of governors of the late eighth century (but for the blessings, see section 7, below):²⁶

a-na LUGAL be-lī-ia / ARAD-ka ^maš-šur-DÜ-A / lu DI a-na LUGAL be-lī-ia / aš-šur ^dEN ^dPA a-na MAN EN-ia / lik-ru-bu

To the king, my lord: your servant Assurbanipal. Good health to the king, my lord! May Aššur, Bel and Nabû bless the king, my lord!²⁷

SAA 16 17: 1–5

²⁴ For Ululayu see SAA 19 8–11; for Sennacherib see SAA 1 29, 31–38; SAA 5 281; SAA 19 158.

²⁵ For a comparison of Ululayu’s and Sennacherib’s introductory formulae, see the critical apparatus of SAA 19 158.

²⁶ The same formula is also employed in the letters from prince Šamaš-metu-uballit (SAA 16 25–7), a brother of Assurbanipal and Šamaš-šumu-ukin, with the exception that he

or his scribe has added *adanniš adanniš* to the formula immediately before *likrubu*, “... bless ..., very greatly” (nos. 26–27).

²⁷ Assurbanipal also often used this ideologically loaded sequence of Aššur, Bel and Nabû in his royal inscriptions; the gods rarely occur in this order in the eighth century sources, but see SAA 1 134: 8 (probably by Hunni); SAA 5 146 r.6 (by Urzanâ of Mušasir); SAA 17 2: 11; 3: 13, r.8, 12 (four times by Sargon II); 68 r.19 (by Ana-Nabû-taklak).

a-na LUGAL *be-li-ia* / *ARAD-ka* ^{md}GIŠ.NU–MU–GI.NA / *lu-u* DI-*mu a-na* LUGAL EN-*ia* / ^dPA ^dAMAR.UTU *a-na* LUGAL / *be-li-ia* *lik-ru-bu*

To the king, my lord: your servant Šamaš-šumu-ukin. Good health to the king, my lord! May Nabû (and) Marduk bless the king, my lord!

SAA 16 22: 1–5

Moreover, the above examples show that both Ululayu and Sennacherib use the same extended account of prevailing circumstances in the greeting section, but write no blessing to the king, as do both Assurbanipal and Šamaš-šumu-ukin.²⁸

4. Circumstantial factors and exceptional cases

Circumstantial factors may sometimes play a role in Neo-Assyrian introductory formulae. In the case of at least one official, Duri-Aššur (governor of Tušhan and eponym of the year 728), the chronological narrative of his achievements in the province may be exposed by comparing the introductory formulae in his letters:

a-na LUGAL EN-*ia* / AR[A]D-*ka* ^mΓBĀD^Γ –*aš-šur* (horizontal ruling) / [š]u-*uh dul-Γ*lu^Γ ša LUGAL / EN Γiš^Γ –[p] *ur-an-ni* BĀD *ga-mur*

To the king, my lord: your servant Duri-Aššur. As to the work about which the king, my lord, wrote to me, the (protective) wall is finished.

SAA 19 60: 1–4

a-na LUGAL EN-*ia* / *ARAD-ka* ^mΓBĀD^Γ –^d*aš-šur* / *lu* DI-*mu a-na* LUGAL / EN-*ia a-dan-niš* / *a-dan-niš*

To the king, my lord: your servant Duri-Aššur. The very best of health to the king, my lord!

SAA 19 62: 1–5

[*a-na*] LUGAL EN-*ia* / [ARAD]-*ka* ^mBĀD–^d*aš-šur* (horizontal ruling) / [D]I-*mu a-na* URU.bi-*rat* / ša ΓLUGAL^Γ EN-*ia* / a–Γ*dan*^Γ –[n]iš / ŠA Γša LUGAL EN-*ia*^Γ / *lu-u* DÜG.GA

[To] the king, my lord: your [servant] Duri-Aššur. The forts of the king, my lord, are very well. The king, my lord, can be glad!

SAA 19 61: 1–7

a-na LUGAL EN-*ia* / *ARAD-ka* ^mBĀD–*aš-šur* / *lu* DI-*mu a-na* LUGAL / EN-*ia a-dan-niš* / DI-*mu a-na* URU.b[*i-rat*] / *a-na* KUR [š]a LU[GAL EN-*ia*] / ŠA-*bu* ša LUGAL [EN-*ia*] / a-*d[a]n-niš* *lu* [DÜG.GA]

To the king, my lord: your servant Duri-Aššur. The best of health to the king, my lord! The forts and the land of the king, [my lord], are well. The king, [my lord], can be [glad] indeed!

SAA 19 63: 1–8

Duri-Aššur's first and most detailed letter (*SAA* 19 60) is without a greeting and concerns the building of a fort;²⁹ he cannot use his later standard phrase, “The forts and the land of the king, my lord, are well” as he is obviously building his main stronghold at the time. In his second letter (*SAA* 19 62), Duri-Aššur greets the king and adds to his third (*SAA* 19 61) and fourth (*SAA* 19 63) letters the clauses about “the king's forts” and that the king “can be glad”. Moreover, in Duri-Aššur's fourth letter his introductory formula is more complete than in his third letter as it also contains the phrase about “the land of the king” and the standard greeting (and the final clause) in its amplified form: “The best of health to the king, my lord!” Alternatively, we may interpret these letters from Duri-Aššur as the result of his scribe using a variable introductory formula,³⁰ even a single scribe

²⁸ Note also that Hunni's involvement in the teaching of Sennacherib and other princes may be deduced from his introductory formula (*SAA* 1 133: 7–11, see above) which is very close to the crown prince's formula in the late eighth century B.C. For the continuity of such formulae, one may also compare Hunni's formula with a Middle Assyrian letter in Tsukimoto (1996: 35–38), see especially his remarks on p. 37 f.

²⁹ For an edition and discussion of the letter, see Parker (1997).

³⁰ Note also Aššur-šallimanni's circumstantial remark, DI-*mu a-na* ma-*d[a]k-t[e ša* LUGAL] “The [king's] camp is well” as part of his greeting in *SAA* 19 86: 2 to the king when campaigning in Babylonia.

may not always employ exactly the same formula. Such cases are, however, exceptional. An illustration of the general regularity of formulae may be seen in the shared introductory formulae of letters from Ašipâ and Ša-Aššur-dubbu, two of Duri-Aššur's successors as provincial governor of Tušhan (written by the same scribe):³¹

a-na LUGAL EN-ia-l-ia / ARAD-ka^ma-ši-pa-a (šá-aš-šur-du-bu) / lu DI-mu a-na LUGAL / EN-ia a-dan-niš / DI-mu a-na URU.bi-rat / a-na KUR ša LUGAL EN-ia

To the king, my lord: your servant Ašipâ/Ša-Aššur-dubbu. The best of health to the king, my lord! The forts and the land of the king, my lord, are well.

SAA 5 28/32: 1–6

5. The spread and status of the standard introductory formula

Three extraordinary cases may illustrate that the Neo-Assyrian introductory formula was deeply ingrained in the minds of scribes and high officials who formed a substantial part of the Assyrian elite. The first example is a letter authored personally by a high-ranking official who is requesting a scribe:³²

a-na LUGAL BE-i a-l / ARAD-ka^{md}30- a-l / DI-mu a-na LUGAL / be-li-ia / a-na bé-et / LUGAL iš-pu-ra-ni-ni / LÚ.A.BA i-še-e'-a / la-a-si' / LUĞAL li-is-pu-ru / a-su-mu q-na LÚ*.EN.NAM / ša URU.arrap-ra-ap-ha / a-l -su-mu // a-l -na^maš-šur'-U-LAL' / a-l -en' LÚ*.A.BA / a-l -še!-e'-a / [li]- a-l -pu-ru*

To the king, my lord: your servant Šin-na'di. Good health to the king, my lord <!> I have no scribe where the king sent me to. Let the king direct either the governor of Arrapha³³ or Aššur-belu-taqin to send me a scribe.

SAA 15 17

Despite the outright mistakes and somewhat unusual orthographic conventions in the letter, this simple piece of writing is remarkable since it attests to a certain level of literacy, including the knowledge of the standard address and greeting of Neo-Assyrian letters, among the high officials who were not scribes.

The second example comes from the Šubrian ruler Hu-Tešub,³⁴ a vassal king of Assyria: *a-na LUGAL EN-ia a-dan-niš a-dan-niš / lu-u DI-mu ARAD-ka^mhu-te-šub* “The very best of health to the king, my lord! Your servant Hu-Tešub” SAA 5 45: 1–2³⁵. Hu-Tešub's scribe may even be considered innovative as there are no parallels for beginning a letter with the word order in which *lū šulmu* is immediately followed by *urdaka*. On the other hand, this use may be characterised rather as an idiosyncrasy. His “vassal” letters (SAA 5 44–45, SAA 19 184), although fragmentary, seem to show that the scribe had quite a good command of Assyrian. Hence this idiosyncrasy may be deemed a permissible variant, suggesting the flexibility of letter writing conventions. Apart from this marked word order in the greeting, it is worth stressing that the scribe is not floundering in the introductory formulae or making any grave errors in the extant parts of these letters.

The third example is quite extraordinary, as we have a letter whose introductory formula is in Neo-Assyrian, but which is otherwise written in an unknown language, considered Urartian by Postgate.³⁶ The letter opens with: IM KÜ-na-a-me / ana aš-šur-A-AŠ / DI a-a-ši / DI a-na EN-i “A tablet from Kunamu³⁷ to Aššur-aplu-iddina; I am well, <may> my lord be well(!)”. After this the letter becomes incomprehensible to those who are not familiar with the language in question. The fact that

³¹ The restoration [šá ša LUGAL EN-ia lu DÜG].GA, “[The king my lord can be] glad”, with many parallels, makes good sense in SAA 5 35: 6. However, because of the following broken context, and especially as this is not attested in Ša-Aššur-dubbu's other letters, this restoration is uncertain. Note also the shorter introductory formula that does not mention “the forts and the land of the king” in SAA 5 38: 1–3. For Ašipâ's letters, see SAA 5 21–30, and for the letters from Ša-Aššur-dubbu, eponym of the year 707, see SAA 5 31–9. See also note 23 above.

³² This letter is edited and commented on in detail in Parpola 1997.

³³ Almost certainly Issar-duri (cf. above). On his governorship of Arrapha, see Fuchs and Parpola (2001: xxxviii–

xxxix, xliii). The letter is to be dated to 710, see *ibid.* p. xliii.

³⁴ For Hu-Tešub's letters, see SAA 5 44–45, cf. also SAA 5 31 and 52 (by Aššur-dur-paniya); possibly also SAA 19 76–77, 186–87 concern him. He may have employed a native scribe, educated in Assyria. In SAA 19 184, the introductory formula is otherwise exactly the same as in his other two letters, but here the scribe has omitted *adanniš adanniš* between *bēliya* and *lū*.

³⁵ Cf. SAA 5 44: 1–2.

³⁶ No. 1, Rylands Box 22 P28: 1–4. For a discussion of the letter, see Postgate (1973b: 35–36).

³⁷ The reading of the name is uncertain.

the letter uses the Neo-Assyrian introductory formula, or at least tries to imitate it, suggests the status Neo-Assyrian enjoyed at the time of the Assyrian supremacy in the Near East.³⁸

These three examples together show that foreign rulers and officials, including some Assyrian officers who were not professional scribes or did not have them at their disposal, could still take part in high-level correspondence. Despite errors in their writing, they were able to make themselves understood, and their letters show how widespread awareness of etiquette was.

6. *Some trends and diagnostic features*

Statistically, it is easy to show how important greetings were considered in Neo-Assyrian letters of the eighth century. Out of the 621 available introductory formulae in Neo-Assyrian letters from subordinates to superiors, only 48 letters from 32 senders lack one (for details, see Table I of the Appendix, below); that figure represents a mere 7.7 per cent of the corpus. Interestingly, many of these letters without a greeting were sent from the west³⁹ and the east or north-east of the empire.⁴⁰ The lack of a greeting may be explained either as ignorance of the importance of this feature on the part of some scribes or, perhaps more likely, as the decision of senders or their scribes to omit it intentionally for one reason or another. In fact, several Nimrud Letters separate the address (not followed by a greeting) by the use of a horizontal ruling, after which the body of the letter usually begins.⁴¹ It is also worth pointing out that if a letter lacked a greeting, a blessing was only rarely added to it.⁴²

The Assyrian type of greeting was not a typical feature in Neo-Babylonian letters. However, the Assyrian type of address and/or greeting does appear in at least 58 Neo-Babylonian letters by 23 senders (presented in Table II of the Appendix, below). This represents a relatively high figure of 32.6 per cent of the 178 available introductory formulae from Neo-Babylonian letters to the king of Assyria, his high-ranking officials and the governors of Nippur. At least two explanations may be given for this: some of these letters seem to reflect the interaction between an Assyrian official and his Babylonian scribe, whereas others originate with Babylonians whose high position may have depended on the Assyrian king.

7. *Blessings and inferences to be drawn from them*

Blessings are relatively rare in Neo-Assyrian letters of the eighth century. This is because so many were sent by governors and other high-ranking officials. With only a few prominent exceptions from major Assyrian cult centres, governors did not send a blessing; for example, there is not a single letter with a blessing in *SAA* 15, in which are edited the letters sent to Sargon II from Babylonia and the eastern provinces of the Assyrian empire. No blessings to the king are invoked in the letters of the treasurer, ʿab-šar-Aššur (*SAA* 1 41–74, cf. *SAA* 5 282–90); the chief cupbearer, Na'di-ilu (*SAA* 5 62–73) or Gabbu-ana-Aššur (*SAA* 5 113–25), presumably the palace herald. However, since the seven highest-ranking officials of the Assyrian empire (after the king and crown prince) also belong to the group of palace officials close to the king, they may make exceptions.⁴³ In contrast, the seventh century corpus (*SAA* 10, 13, 16, 18), containing numerous letters from scholars and priests, is replete with blessings. We can infer from the evidence that those who themselves wielded great personal power, including provincial governors and magnates, usually did not write blessings, whereas palace officials, scholars, relatives of the king and others who were physically close to the king or to those actively seeking his favour employed them profusely.

Two standard blessings are known, invoking the national gods of Babylonia and Assyria, respectively: *Nabû Marduk ana šarri bēliya likrubu* “May Nabû (and) Marduk bless the king, my lord” (*passim*); *Aššur Šamaš ana šarri bēliya likrubu* “May Aššur (and) Šamaš bless the king, my

³⁸ Unfortunately, at present, it is not possible to determine the provenance of the letter or give an approximate date to it; it may be seventh, eighth or even ninth century.

³⁹ For example, from Bel-duri, Nergal-ibni, Qurdi-Aššur-lamur, Šamaš-ahu-iddina and Šarru-emuranni (see Table 1, below).

⁴⁰ Especially by Gabbu-ana-Aššur.

⁴¹ This is a chronological trait; segmenting and separating rulings are frequently attested in the introductory formulae

of Middle Assyrian letters, but virtually disappear after the eighth century.

⁴² Three exceptions to this survive: *SAA* 19 103, 105 and *GPA* 180. Note also that the devotion formula of *SAA* 1 131–32, between an address and a blessing, is unusual.

⁴³ See e.g. Table III s.v. Nabû-eṭiranni, Ina-šar-Bel-allak and Nabû-nammir. On magnates in general, see Mattila (2000).

lord.”⁴⁴ The former invocation of Nabû and Marduk completely overshadows the latter in the available sources. Many contributory factors should be taken into account. Instead of interpreting the divine pairs Aššur and Šamaš and Nabû and Marduk simply as national or state gods one should probably consider their individual characteristics too.⁴⁵ Outside the religious centre of the Assyrian empire, Aššur may never really have been the people’s god. The invocation of the powerful duo Aššur and Šamaš that appears frequently in Assyrian royal inscriptions and is invoked as prosecutors against those who break contracts (Frame 1999: 18) may have been “intimidating”, although they are invoked in the blessing of some seventh century letters, especially from the Sealand (southern Babylonia).⁴⁶ Nabû was the god of writing, and thus patron god of the scribes who wrote these letters. His character may have appealed to the urban elites; Nabû was the most popular god in personal names,⁴⁷ perhaps reflecting literacy levels at the time. This could explain the Assyrian habit of invoking Nabû before his father, Marduk.⁴⁸ The order Nabû - Marduk is first attested in a Kassite *kudurru* from the thirteenth century B.C. (cf. Pomponio 1998: 18a). Somewhat surprisingly, the choice of the gods and their order is the same in letters from eighth century Nippur, at the expense of Enlil, Ninurta and Nusku.⁴⁹ Accordingly, the choice of the gods to be invoked is likely to have been politically motivated. By the eighth century B.C., Marduk had been revered in Assyria for centuries, obviously ever since the fourteenth century (see Frame 1999: 13–16, 19), and one can hazard an educated guess that some of the cult personnel may have been of Babylonian origin.⁵⁰ In addition, syncretism or even intentional ambiguity may explain the frequent use of the logogram ^(d)EN = Bēl in related situations. Generally, it stood for Marduk, but may refer to Enlil (Illil in Neo-Assyrian) or as an appellative “lord”, referring to any god or a human superior.⁵¹ It is difficult to determine whether Adad-nerari III’s oft-quoted credo to “trust in Nabû: trust in no other god!” (e.g., Pomponio 1998: 19, Porter 1997: 254) had a decisive impact on the god’s status in Assyria as a catalyst or whether it only confirms the growing momentum of Nabû’s unstoppable cult-following in the country.⁵² Porter (1997: 260) even suggested that “Nabû’s importance in Babylonia in the late period may have been due to the influence of Babylonia’s earlier Assyrian rulers, for whom Nabû was an important Assyrian god”! In Frame’s (1999: 17) words: “Nabû developed such a following in Assyria that it is quite possible that at times Marduk was invoked simply through association with his son, rather than the other way around.”

A blessing is attested in 63 Neo-Assyrian letters by around 20 different senders (also provided in Table III of the Appendix, below, with more details) and these letters originate from:

Assur: 28 letters;⁵³
 Babylonia (by Assyrian officials): 8 letters;⁵⁴
 Dur-Šarruken: 8 letters;⁵⁵

⁴⁴ Thus far only attested in *SAA* 1 133, *SAA* 19 68 and *GPA* 180; should we have Neo-Assyrian letters sent to superiors from the ninth and early eighth centuries B.C. at our disposal (note that none of the letters from Tell Halaf, see Weidner, Ungnad and Meyer in Friedrich *et al.* 1940, were sent to superiors), it would be interesting to see whether which, if any, gods were invoked in these letters.

⁴⁵ On Aššur, see e.g. Frame 1999: 7–9, 12 f., 18 f. See also *ibid.* p. 7 f. for Marduk.

⁴⁶ Frame 1999: 17; these letters from Babylonia invoking Aššur, Šamaš, etc., are published as *SAA* 18 85–86, 131, 182 (restored but certain), 185–86, 202.

⁴⁷ For the names in which Nabû appears as the first element, see PNA 2/II, pp. 788–914, and for the popularity of the god in personal names, cf. Pomponio 1998: 20.

⁴⁸ For the discussion about the relative status of Nabû and Marduk in Assyria at the time, see Porter 1997, esp. pp. 255–60.

⁴⁹ See Cole 1996a: 61. These three gods, however, are invoked in the blessing of the letters from the governor of Nippur to the king(s) of Assyria; see *SAA* 17 89, 91 and *SAA* 19 139.

⁵⁰ Babylonians were taken to Assyria in the thirteenth century and later; cf. Frame 1999: 16. For the cult of Nabû in Assyria since the thirteenth century, cf. Pomponio 1998: 19.

⁵¹ For the syncretism between Enlil and Marduk, see e.g. Cole 1996a: 266 and *id.* 1996b: 19 (n. 75). His suggestion,

apparently following Tallqvist 1914: 253 (cf. the discussion in Frame 1999: 16 f.), to see Bel as Enlil/Marduk is attractive as it may hint at why Bel regularly precedes Nabû when the two gods appear in sequence. On different syncretistic tendencies reflecting the ever-changing power relations of the largest cities and most important cult centres in Mesopotamia, see e.g. George 1992: 4–7 (Marduk/Asalluhi and Marduk/Enlil), 185 (Aššur/Enlil); Maul 1998a: xiii (Nabû/Marduk); Maul 1998b 181 (Marduk/Enlil), 191 f. (Aššur/Enlil), 193 f. (Aššur/Marduk/Enlil and Nabû/Marduk); Porter 1997: 258 f. (Aššur/Marduk), 260 (Nabû/Marduk).
⁵² On Nabû’s cult and Adad-nerari III, see also RIMA 3 A.0.104.14.

⁵³ *SAA* 19 164 (Aššur-nirka-da’‘in); *SAA* 1 75–78, 80, 82–85, 87–91, 93–94, 96–97, 100–04, 106–07, 109 (Ṭab-šill-Ešarra); VAT 9770 (Nabû-ahhe-eriba: date uncertain, possibly seventh century).

⁵⁴ *SAA* 19 98–99 (Šamaš-bunaya and Nabû-nammir, most likely written by the latter’s scribe; names restored in no. 99); *SAA* 19 103–07 (Nabû-nammir, see above and the Appendix, below), *SAA* 19 113 (Ašipâ, see above).

⁵⁵ *SAA* 1 128 and 130 (Ina-šar-Bel-allak); *SAA* 1 131–32 (Ahu-lurši); *SAA* 1 150 (Aššur-šumu-ka’‘in); *SAA* 1 152 ([Nabû]-zer-ketti-lešir); *SAA* 5 293 (Nabû-ušabši and Iglî); *SAA* 5 295 (name broken away).

Harran: 12 letters;⁵⁶
 Hindanu: 2 letters;⁵⁷
 Kalhu: 2 letters;⁵⁸
 The province of the chief cupbearer (*rab šāqê*): 1 letter;⁵⁹
 Uncertain location 5 letters.⁶⁰

It can be seen that blessings are present in letters from Assyrian capitals, Kalhu (modern Nimrud) and Dur-Šarruken, the former capital Assur, and other cult centres such as Harran, as well as in letters from Babylonia. Some of these letters originate from what may be considered high palace officials and others may attest to a desire to imitate Babylonian custom.⁶¹ We should also note the two letters sent from Hindanu, whose cultic importance should probably not be underestimated.⁶² We may see an emphasis on the sender's institutional role rather than on his private person. The most conspicuous absentees from the list are Arbela⁶³ and Nineveh. There are hardly any letters sent from Nineveh in the eighth century; the letters of Mahdê (*SAA* 5 74–76, *SAA* 19 162), governor of Nineveh and eponym of the year 725, are not necessarily sent from Nineveh.⁶⁴ Usually the gods invoked in these blessings corresponded quite strictly to those of the main temple of a city or a town (cf. Table III, below), especially if it was the main cult-centre of a god. The exception to this is that the national gods Nabû and Marduk appear in letters from cities or towns that were not considered the centres of the cult of some other gods, i.e., these localities only housed the secondary temples of these deities.

In the late eighth century, blessings are also attested in 55 contemporary Neo-Babylonian letters by 32 different senders.⁶⁵ These figures are proportionally much higher than those of the Neo-Assyrian corpus⁶⁶, although the extant Neo-Babylonian letter corpus is much smaller. However, it is worth emphasising that most of the letters were sent to the king of Assyria from the main cult centres such as Babylon, Borsippa, Cutha, Der, Nippur and Uruk. It is this that probably explains the unusual number of blessings.

Aššur-nirka-da'in, from whom we have only two extant letters, can be identified as governor of Assur because of his introductory formula and the fact that he is mentioned in the eponym list as eponym of the year 720.⁶⁷ Although a governor, he blesses the king in his introductory formula. The former capital remained the main place for the cult of Aššur until the end of the Assyrian empire, and the king himself was a regular visitor there because of his cultic duties. It is therefore an understandable exception that the influential governor of Assur blesses the king in his introductory formula.

a-na LUGAL EN-ia / ARAD-ka m aš-šur-GIŠ-ka-KALAG-in / lu DI-mu a-na LUGAL EN-ia / aš-šur dNIN.LİL a-na LUGAL EN-ia / lik-ru-bu

To the king, my lord: your servant Aššur-nirka-da'in. Good health to the king, my lord! May Aššur (and) Mullissu bless the king, my lord!

SAA 19 164: 1–5

Unsurprisingly, Ṭab-šill-Ešarra,⁶⁸ the successor to Aššur-nirka-da'in as governor of Assur, and eponym of the year 716⁶⁹, began his letters in exactly the same way:

a-na LUGAL EN-ia / ARAD-ka m DÜG.GA-šil-É.ŠAR.RA / lu DI-mu a-na LUGAL EN-ia / aš-šur dNIN.LİL a-na LUGAL EN-ia lik-ru-bu

⁵⁶ *SAA* 1 188–92, 195–96, 198, 200–02, 210 (Nabû-pašir; in no. 210 Nabû-pašir's name is restored and the letter is sent together with Nabû-dur-makie).

⁵⁷ *SAA* 1 208–09 (unknown sender: the name is broken away).

⁵⁸ *GPA* 180 (Hunanu) and *SAA* 1 110 (Marduk-remanni).

⁵⁹ *SAA* 19 65 (the chief cupbearer Nabû-eṭiranni is of course also a palace official).

⁶⁰ *SAA* 1 133–34 (Hunni but the attribution of no. 134 to him is uncertain), *SAA* 5 126–27 (Aššur-belu-uda'an) and *SAA* 19 68 (Šamaš-ila'i).

⁶¹ With the usual suspects: priests and scholars.

⁶² See also *SAA* 10, *SAA* 13 and *SAA* 18 for a multitude of *karābu* "to bless" forms. Note also that *šullū* "to pray" often appears separately, e.g., in *SAA* 17. In Neo-Babylonian letters blessings are not infrequently inserted in the body of the text, e.g., "and be one who blesses [the

king] and my lord before Bel, N[abû and] Zarpanitu" *SAA* 17 54 r. 1–3.

⁶³ I know of only six eighth century letters from Arbela (*SAA* 1 135–39 and 155); they are not from the governor of the province and this perhaps explains the lack of a blessing.

⁶⁴ However, Hunni's letter(s; see nn. 10, 28 and 60, above, and Table III of the Appendix, below) may in fact have been sent from Nineveh.

⁶⁵ *SAA* 17 19–22, 24–29, 31–34, 38–41, 43, 45–53, 55, 57–58, 60, 74, 77, 79–80, 86–87, 89, 91, 132, 134–37, 145, 152, 167; *SAA* 19 99, 134–39.

⁶⁶ 31% compared to 10% in the available Neo-Assyrian letter corpus of the eighth century with preserved openings (63 out of 621); cf. the Appendix, below.

⁶⁷ Cf. Luukko (2004: 240 n. 10).

⁶⁸ For Ṭab-šill-Ešarra's letters, see *SAA* 1 75–109.

⁶⁹ For successive office-holders, see section 3, above.

To the king, my lord: your servant Tab-šill-Ešarra. Good health to the king, my lord! May Aššur and Mullissu bless the king, my lord!

SAA 1 77: 1–4

In some cases where a letter includes a blessing, a personal relationship between the king and the sender may be assumed, even if not proven. It may be recalled that some of the highest-ranking palace officials were probably able to meet him regularly. Nabû-nammir in his letters to the king, for example, always invokes the gods Nabû and Marduk:

a-na LUGAL / be-lí-ia / ARAD-ka^{md}PA-ΓZALAG^Γ-ir / ^dPA^dAMAR.U[TU] / a-na LUGAL be-Γl^Γ-iá / lik-ru-bu

To the king, my lord: your servant Nabû-nammir. May Nabû (and) Marduk bless the king, my lord!

SAA 19 105: 1–6

This blessing would be easily explicable were Nabû-nammir a high official at the court of the Assyrian capital, Kalhu. In fact, one Nimrud Letter addressed to Nabû-nammir, i.e., found in Kalhu, seems to prove that Nabû-nammir was just such a high-ranking palace official:

[i]M^maš-šur-ΓIŠ-ka-KALAG-in / a-na^{md}ΓPA^Γ-na-mir ŠE[š-i]a / Γlu^Γ-u DI-m[u] Γa^Γ-[n]a ŠEŠ-Γia^Γ [a-d]an-niš

A tablet of Aššur-nirka-da⁷⁰ to my brother Nabû-nammir. The best of health to my brother!

SAA 19 165: 1–3 (cf. SAA 19 164: 1–4, above)

Considering Nabû-nammir's prominent role in Babylonia during the late reign of Tiglath-pileser III, he may have been *sukkallu* “vizier” at that time.⁷¹

Among the Nimrud Letters, Nabû-nammir is not the only high-ranking official whose palace connection may be detected. For example, Ašipâ,⁷² who takes care of the barley transport on boats in northern Babylonia, may be identified with a high palace (or temple) official as well:

a-na LUGAL EN-ia / ARAD-ka^ma-ši-pa-a (horizontal ruling) / lu-u DI-mu a-na LUGAL / EN-ia / LÚ.NINDA ša MÍ.ša-kín-te / i-tal-ka :. iq-tí-bi-a / ma-a GIŠ.PA / GIŠ.tup-ni-nu / ka-ṇu-ṇu AN.BAR^Γ a-sa-lu URUDU / ša É.GAL :. ša-ar-qu / ina kás-pi ta-da-nu // a-sa-ap-ra / [b]é-et :. ka-nu-nu AN*.BAR^Γ / ina kás-pi ta-dí-nu-nu / i-ša-ab-tú / LÚ*.ba-te-qu / a-na UGU LUGAL / [E]N-ia a-sa-ap-ra / [LUGAL E]N liš-'a-al-šú*

To the king, my lord: your servant Ašipâ. Good health to the king, my lord! The baker of the harem manageress came and told me: ‘A scepter, a chest, an iron brazier and a copper kettle have been stolen from the Palace and sold for money.’⁷³ I sent word and those who sold the iron brazier for money were arrested. I am herewith sending the informer to the king, my [lo]rd. Let [the king, my lo]rd question him.

SAA 19 114

Curiously, out of seven Nimrud Letters attributable to Ašipâ, only the introductory formula of *SAA 19 113: 1–5* contains a blessing, invoking the gods Nabû and Marduk. At any rate, one case is stronger than none when pondering his identification as a palace official, supported by the clear palace context of *SAA 19 114*.⁷⁴

The importance of analysing introductory formulae is not limited to what precisely is said in them, but together with other features from the same letters, they often help us to restore sender's names⁷⁵. It is therefore helpful to classify the details of introductory formulae to identify the senders, since the sender's name is often broken away or so badly damaged that it has become illegible.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ For whom cf. p. 106 above.

⁷¹ For more on Nabû-nammir, see *SAA 19*.

⁷² For Ašipâ's letters, see *SAA 19 108–14*. He may be the same person as the governor of Tušhan who also sent letters to the king (cf. note 31, above); see Parker (2009).

⁷³ Alternatively, by translating “of/belonging to the Palace have been stolen” one can stress the ownership of these valuables.

⁷⁴ See also Sallaberger's observation regarding greetings (note 18, above) and consider that perhaps in a similar way

“No blessings are employed in cases of distant relationship” which need not refer to the physical distance at the time of sending a letter but to the imagined or real (personal) relationship between a sender and a recipient.

⁷⁵ See, e.g., *SAA 1 32, 34; SAA 5 11, 14; SAA 17 40, 76, 127*, etc.

⁷⁶ The sender's name regularly appears in line 2 in Neo-Assyrian letters.

8. Enlarging the picture

In the Neo-Assyrian royal correspondence of the late eighth century, both the address and the greeting of letters sent to superiors are highly standardised. There is hardly any variation in the address, while the presence or absence of a greeting in a given letter creates variation. Otherwise the variation in the greeting merely attests to the choice between using its simplest (*lū šulmu ana ... bēlīya*) or more extended⁷⁷ forms. As for the blessings, it seems that we have to postulate two different sets of rules depending on whether we are dealing with palace officials, scholars, relatives and others close to the king or with provincial governors and some other influential figures who wielded considerable personal power, often far away from the Assyrian capital. This division partly explains the difference between the eighth and seventh century letters, which is of course also based on the circumstantial nature of textual finds.

While there is a risk of reading too much into the introductory formulae of Neo-Assyrian letters, it should be stressed that what may at first sight look like meaningless or empty words to us held great significance to the ancients. The distribution of blessings in Neo-Assyrian letters may indicate Babylonian influence,⁷⁸ and the eighth century evidence from the Nimrud Letters and the Sargon correspondence seems to support this assumption. However, the letters from Babylonia itself are often topically and stylistically different from the other eighth century letters. As for some of the attested variation, in the eighth century many of the highest-ranking Assyrian officials were highly mobile and employed more than one scribe. Scribes may also have found the writing of blessings to be creative and innovative, and they duly availed themselves of the possibilities of this ceremonious rhetorical display. As a result, well-formulated greetings and blessings may have become widespread, both in private/family letters and in literary media, representing a higher form of art than day-to-day letter writing.

An obvious example of letter writing transferred into a higher sphere is Sargon's account of his by now legendary eighth campaign. The beginning of this composition, an introductory formula of a letter addressed to the god Aššur, contains an extremely interesting passage with its stylistically well-chosen repetition of the *adanniš adanniš lū šulmu* phrase:

a-na ^d*a-šur a-bu* DINGIR.MEŠ EN GAL-*e a-šib é-hur-sag-gal-kur-kur-ra* É.KUR-šú GAL-*i a-dan-niš a-dan-niš lu šul-mu a-na* DINGIR.MEŠ-*ni* ^dNAM.MEŠ ^dINNIN.MEŠ *a-ši-bu-ut é-hur-sag-gal-kur-kurra* É.KUR-šú-*nu* GAL-*i a-dan-niš a-dan-niš lu šul-mu a-na* DINGIR.MEŠ-*ni* ^dNAM.MEŠ ^dINNIN.MEŠ *a-ši-bu-ut* URU ^d*a-šur* É.KUR-šú-*nu* GAL-*i a-dan-niš a-dan-niš lu šul-mu a-na* URU ù UN.MEŠ-šú *lu šul-mu a-na* É.GAL-*li a-šib šà-bi-šá lu šul-mu a-na* ^mLUGAL-GI.NA SANGA KÙ *ir pa-lih* DINGIR-*ti-ka* GAL-*ti* ù KARAŠ-šú *a-dan-niš a-dan-niš šul-mu*

To the god Aššur, the father of the gods, the great lord who dwells in Ehursaggalkurkurra, his great temple, may it be extremely well (with him)! To the gods, who determine destinies, (and) to the goddesses, who dwell in Ehursaggalkurkurra, their great temple, may it be extremely well (with them)! To the gods (*who determine*) destinies (and to) the goddesses, who dwell in the city of Assur, at their great temple may it be extremely well (with them)! To the city and its people may it be well (with them)! To the Palace (and) the one who dwells there may it be well (with them)!⁷⁹ Sargon (II), the pure priest (and) servant who reveres your great divinity, and his military camp are extremely well.

TCL 3 lines 1–5

Finally, it is important to be aware of the fact that introductory formulae are the product of a combination of factors: physical distance is certainly one of them, both in terms of geography and

⁷⁷ Even the extended variants regularly use only a limited set of elements: *adanniš* “very”, *adanniš adanniš* “extremely”, and may include a statement that “fort(s)”, “horses”, “land”, “servant(s)” and/or “temple(s) are well” and often end in the phrase “The king, my lord, can be glad”.

⁷⁸ Cole (1996) contains 31 contemporary, eighth century Neo-Babylonian letters sent to superiors, the governors of Nippur (nos. 5–6, 13, 16, 21, 23, 27, 29, 38, 41, 44, 46, 53, 56–60, 62, 72, 80, 83, 93–94, 97–8, 101–03, 110–11). Of these, 17 include a blessing (nos. 27, 38, 41, 44, 46, 53, 56–8, 60, 72, 83, 93–94, 97–98, 110), and all save one (no. 72 with Anu and Ištar) invoke the main gods, Nabû and Marduk. Cole's claim (p. 182): “The greeting ‘May Nabû and Marduk bless my lord’

occurs in practically every letter of this archive which is addressed from servant to lord” should be modified accordingly. The blessing is deliberately omitted, in my opinion, from 13 letters (nos. 5–6, 13, 16, 21, 29, 59, 62, 80, 101–03, 111); no. 23 is a special case. A common trait among these letters might be that they originate with some of the tribal chieftains whose role can be interpreted as being less institutional than that of many other correspondents of the Nippur letter corpus.

⁷⁹ Alternatively, the sense of this clause, with a singular participle, may be better understood collectively, “to the Palace (and) those who dwell in it” as it cannot refer to Sargon II, who is the subject of the following sentence and the sender of this royal “letter” to the god Aššur.

status, and a close personal relationship with the king must provide some explanation in a number of cases. Naturally, the standardisation of introductory formulae is part of a deeper ideological indoctrination that took many different forms.

Abbreviations

BATSH 4 see Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996; *CTN* 5 see Saggs 2001; *GPA* see Postgate 1973; *KAJ* see Ebeling 1927; *MARV* 1 see Freydank 1976; *MARV* 2 see Freydank 1982; *MARV* 4 see Freydank 2001; *MARV* 5 see Freydank and Feller 2004; *PNA* see Radner and Baker 1998–2011; *RIMA* 3 see Grayson 1996; *SAA* 1 see Parpola 1987; *SAA* 5 see Lanfranchi and Parpola 1990; *SAA* 6 see Kwasman and Parpola; *SAA* 10 see Parpola 1993; *SAA* 13 see Cole and Machinist 1998; *SAA* 15 see Fuchs and Parpola 2001; *SAA* 16 see Luukko and Van Buylaere; *SAA* 17 see Dietrich 2003; *SAA* 18 see Reynolds 2003; *SAA* 19 see Luukko 2012.

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Appendix: Tables and a note on statistics

TABLE I: Eighth century Neo-Assyrian letters to superiors without a greeting

<i>Sender</i>	<i>Publication No.</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
(1/2) ⁸⁰ Aššur-le'i (SAA 19 71–74)	SAA 19 71 and SAA 19 74	Letters from the North. SAA 19 71 and 73: name is partly restored; no. 72 contains a gr.: the sender's name is fully restored
(2/4) Aššur-šimanni (SAA 19 15–16)	SAA 19 15–16	Governor of Kilizi and eponym of the year 724
(3/5) Aššur-šittu-ušur	SAA 19 51	Sender's location is unknown
(4/6) Aššur-taklak	GPA 196	A letter from the East (Arzuhina) to the governor of Kalhu
(5/7) Aššur-[...]	SAA 1 148	Sender's location is unknown
(6/9) Bel-duri (SAA 1 171–72, SAA 19 172)	SAA 1 171–72	Governor of Damascus whose name is restored in SAA 1 172. SAA 19 172 contains a gr.
(7/10) Bel-le'i	SAA 15 16	Letter from the East (Arrapha mentioned)
(8/11) City rulers	SAA 1 147	Letter from the East: city rulers working in Milqia
(9/20) Gabbu-ana-Aššur (SAA 5 113–25)	SAA 5 113–15, 117–21, 125	Palace herald from Kurbail whose name is restored in nos. 115, 117, 125; the attribution of no. 122 to G-a-A is uncertain since the letter seems to contain a broken gr. The beginning is broken away in nos. 116, 122–24
(10/22) Ilu-iqbi (SAA 1 140–44)	SAA 1 140, 142	Letters from central Assyria, sender's name is partly restored in no. 142. The beginning is broken away in nos. 141, 143–44
(11/23) Inurta-ila'i	GPA 193	A letter apparently from Kalhu; it is uncertain whether the sender is the same as in n. 15 above: to the governor of Kalhu
(12/24) Issar-šumu-iqiša	SAA 5 169	Letter from the North-east
(13/25) Mannu-ki-Nergal	SAA 19 163	Probably a letter from Kalhu. Note that the letter ends in "The royal (signet) ring and the land are well" clause
(14/26) Mar-Issar	GPA 197	Possibly a mayor of Kalhu (cf. SAA 6 31 r. 13) to the governor of Kalhu
(15/27) Nadin-[...]	SAA 15 290	Sender's location is unknown
(16/28) Nahiši	SAA 19 123	To the palace scribe (<i>ana tuššar ēkalli bēlīya urdaka PN_i</i>) from Babylonia
(17/29) Nergal-ibni	SAA 19 179	Letter from Huzirina (Sultantepe)
(18/30) Palace supervisor	GPA 191	To the governor of Kalhu: <i>ana pāhiti tuppi ša-pān-ēkalli</i> . No "my lord" is mentioned since even if sent to a superior the relation between the two high officials is somewhat "vague": obviously they were located in different palaces
(19/35) Qurdi-Aššur-lamur (SAA 19 22–32)	SAA 19 22–23, 25, 27–28	Governor of Šimirra. But "Qurdi-Aššur" greets the king (nos. 29–32). No. 25 as "Qurdi-ili-lamur". The beginning is broken away in nos. 24, 26.
(20/36) Šamaš-abu-ušur	SAA 15 186	The sender is active in northern Babylonia. A letter to the governor (<i>ana pāhiti bēlīya tuppi PN</i>)
(21/37) Šamaš-ah-iddina	SAA 19 37	Probably governor of Šupat
(22/38) Šarru-emuranni	SAA 19 39	Deputy governor of Isana
(23/39) Šarru-[...]	SAA 19 178	A letter from the West
(24/40) Urdu-Sîn	SAA 5 145	A letter from the North-east to the palace herald (<i>ana nāgir ēkalli bēlīya urdaka PN_i</i>)
(25/41) [NN]	SAA 5 265	Sender's location is unknown
(26/42) [NN]	SAA 5 266	Sender's location is unknown
(27/43) [NN]	SAA 5 268	Sender's location is unknown
(28/44) [NN]	SAA 15 377	Sender's location is unknown
(29/45) [NN]	SAA 19 21	Sender's location (Turmuna) is uncertain
(30/46) [NN]	SAA 19 44	A letter from the West
(31/47) [NN]	SAA 19 50	A letter possibly from the West
(32/48) [NN]	SAA 19 224	Sender's location is unknown

⁸⁰ The first number is sequential and refers to the number of senders who use the same feature, whereas the second gives a progressive total of letters in which the studied feature

is attested. Note also the abbreviations bl. (blessing) and gr. (greeting).

TABLE II: The Assyrian type of address and/or greeting⁸¹ in eighth century Neo-Babylonian letters to the king of Assyria or his high officials

Sender	Publication No.	Remarks
(1/2) Abi-yaqiya (Tubliaš)	SAA 17 149, 152	No. 149: lines 1f contain the standard NB formula but (<i>lullik</i>) is supplied at the end; line 3 reads <i>lū (šulum) ana Šarrukēn bēliya</i> . No. 152: <i>ana šarri bēlini ardānika</i> PNs + a bl.
(2/3) Ahi-nuri (location uncertain)	SAA 17 156	To the treasurer: [<i>ana mašenna</i> (sic) <i>bēliya [aradka]</i> PN <i>lū šulmu...</i>
(3/5) Ana- Nabû-taklak (Borsippa)	SAA 17 64, 66 (cf. also no. 65)	“Assyrianized” greeting to the vizier: <i>ṭuppi</i> PN ₁ <i>ana sukkalli bēlišu lū šulmu ana bēliya</i>
(4/21) Aqar-Bel-lumur (Gambulu)	SAA 17 103–09, 111–18, 120	No. 103 to the “chamberlain”: <i>ana ša-muhhi-bētānu bēliya lū šulum ...</i> ; nos. 104, 106–09, 112–14 (nos. 115–8, 120 with Nabû-šumu-lišir): <i>ana šarri bēliyalni aradkardānika</i> PN/PNs <i>lū šulum ana šarri bēliyalni</i> ; no. 105 <i>ṭuppi</i> PN ₁ <i>ana</i> PN ₂ [<i>bēlišu</i>] <i>lū šulmu ana [bēliya]</i>
(5/23) Badâ (Gambulu)	SAA 17 101–02	<i>ana šarri bēliya aradka</i> PN <i>lū šulum ana šarri bēliya</i> (no. 101 with an extension)
(6/24) Balassu (Borsippa)	SAA 17 74	<i>an[a Šarrukēn šar kiššati aradka]</i> PN + a bl.
(7/25) Barsipitu (Borsippa)	SAA 17 73	<i>ana šarri bēliya amatka</i> PNf <i>lū šulmu ana ša[rri bēliya]</i>
(8/29) Bel-ibni (Babylon)	SAA 17 52–53, 55 and 57 (attribution uncertain)	No. 52 <i>ana šarri bēliya aradka</i> PN, followed by the standard NB introductory formula and a bl.; no. 53 <i>ana rab ša-rēši bēliya</i> (to the chief eunuch) + a bl.; nos. 55 and 57 are partly restored but no. 55 follows the model of no. 52 and no. 57 that of no. 53
(9/30) Bel-iddina (Babylon)	SAA 17 43	<i>ana šarri bēliya aradka</i> PN, followed by the standard NB introductory formula (<i>ana dinān ... lullik</i>) and a bl.
(10/32) Ha'il-il and Zabdi-il (Šabhanu)	SAA 17 59–60	<i>ana Šarrukēn šar kiššati ... lū šulmu ana šarri bēlini</i> no. 59:1, 6; <i>ana Šarrukēn šar kiššati ...</i> + a bl. in no. 60
(11/34) Kalbi-Ukû (Gambulu)	SAA 17 127–28	Lines 1f have the standard NB formula, followed by <i>lū šulum ana šarri bēliya</i> . Sender's name is restored in no. 127
(12/39) Lanšê (Gambulu)	SAA 17 92–94, 96, 100	<i>ana šarri bēliya aradka</i> PN <i>lū šulmu ana šarri bēliya</i>
(13/40) Mannu-ki-Aššur (location uncertain)	SAA 19 143	[<i>ana</i>] <i>šarri bēliya [aradka]</i> PN <i>lū šulmu ana šarri bēliya</i> . Presumably an Assyrian official has employed a Babylonian scribe
(14/42) [Nabû(?)]-ahhe-lumur (possibly from Sippar)	SAA 17 7–8	<i>ana šarri bēliyalni aradkardānika</i> PN/PNs <i>lū šulmu ana šarri bēliyalni</i> . His gr. is expanded with “the city and the guard of the king”, but sender's name is broken away from no. 8; the first three lines of no. 9 may be restored from no. 7
(15/43) Nabû-bel-šumate (Birati/ Harratu)	SAA 17 16	<i>ṭuppi</i> PN ₁ [<i>u</i> PN ₂] <i>ana šarri bēlišumu</i> , followed by a partly restored Assyrianized gr. <i>lū šu[umu ana šarri bēlini]</i>
(16/45) Nabû-šar-ahhešu (on duty in Borsippa)	SAA 17 75–76	Lines 1, 5/4f read <i>ana šarri bēliya aradka</i> PN ... <i>lū šulmu ana šarri bēliya</i>
(17/46) Nabû-šumu-iškun] (Babylon)	SAA 17 46	[<i>ana Šarr</i>]ukēn šar [<i>mātāti bēliya</i>] <i>aradka</i> PN, followed by the standard NB introductory formula (<i>ana dinān ... lullik</i>) and a bl.

Continued

⁸¹ Despite the fact that *ana kāša lū šulmu* “Good health to you!” (*passim* in Cole 1996; *lū šulmu ana ahīya* “Good health to my brother!”) may be considered its Assyrianized counterpart, especially so because of the word order, cf. SAA 5 81; SAA 15 371; SAA 17 63, 147, 155; SAA 19 160, 165; GPA 188–89; Cole 1996: no. 82) is a typical feature of Neo-Babylonian letters sent to equals, *lū šulmu ana (šarri) bēliya* “Good health to (the king,) my lord!” is an Assyrianism. Further, an evidently Assyrianised greeting is to be found in the letters of two tribal leaders who are sending

Neo-Babylonian letters to the governor of Nippur: Bahianu (see Cole 1996: 63; nos. 13 and 21, but see also no. 101 by the same sender without a greeting) and Amme-ladin (ibid. no. 102); their introductory formula reads: *aradka Bahiānu/ Amme-ladin ana dinān bēliya lullik ummā ana bēliyāma lū šulmu ana bēliya* (nos. 13 and 102) and ... *lū šulmu ana bēliya ummā ana bēliyāma* (no. 21). This formula may not appear surprising as it is likely that these tribal leaders were in contact with the Assyrians (for the men named Bahianu in Neo-Assyrian sources, see PNA 1/II, p. 252).

TABLE II: (Continued)

<i>Sender</i>	<i>Publication No.</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
(18/51) Nabû-šumu-lišir (Gambulu)	<i>SAA</i> 17 122–26	<i>ana šarri bēlīya aradka PN lū šulmu ana šarri bēlīya</i> (for Nabû-šumu-lišir, cf. also Aqar-Bel-lumur)
(19/52) Nabû-[šumu-lišir] and Eteru (Babylon)	<i>SAA</i> 17 36	[<i>ana šar</i>]ri [mātāti bēlīni ardā]nika PN ₁ u PN ₂
(20/54) Šama'gunu (Tubliaš)	<i>SAA</i> 17 153–54	No. 153 <i>ana šarri bēlīšulya aradka PN lū šulum ana šarri bēlīya</i>
(21/56) šandabakku (governor of Nippur)	<i>SAA</i> 17 89–90	Variable introductory formula (cf. no. 91 and <i>SAA</i> 19 139 with the standard NB formula): no. 89 [<i>ana šarri</i>] bēlīšumu ardānika šandabakku u mušarkisāni lū šulmu ana šarri bēlīnu + a bl.; no. 90 [tuppi šandabakki ana] šarri bēlīšu lū šulum ana šarri bēlīya
(22/57) Sheikhs of Tubliaš	<i>SAA</i> 17 151	Assyrianized address to the magnates of the king of Assyria: <i>ana rabūti ša šar māt Aššūr šar kiššati bēlīni qibīma umma nasikāti ša GN</i>
(23/58) [NN] (cohort commander)	<i>SAA</i> 17 168	Of course the restoration is not entirely certain: [<i>ana šarri bēlīya aradka PN</i>] rab-ki[šir]

TABLE III: Blessings in Neo-Assyrian letters of the eighth century

<i>Sender</i>	<i>Publication No.</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
(1/2) Ahu-lurši (Babylonian priest in Dur-Šarruken)	<i>SAA</i> 1 131–32	(no gr.) Nabû and Marduk are invoked
(2/3) Ašipâ (<i>SAA</i> 19 108–14; high-ranking official active in Babylonia)	<i>SAA</i> 19 113	(gr. +) Nabû and Marduk (neither a gr. nor a bl. in no. 109; only a gr. in nos. 108, 110, 111, 112, 114)
(3/5) Aššur-bel-uda'an (governor)	<i>SAA</i> 5 126–27	(gr. +) Nabû and Marduk
(4/6) Aššur-nirka-da'in (governor of Assur)	<i>SAA</i> 19 164	(gr. +) Aššur and Mullissu. No. 165 to Nabû-nam-mir (an equal): <i>tuppi PN₁ ana PN₂ ahīya lū šulmu ana ahīya adanniš</i>
(5/7) Aššur-šumu-ka'in (official active in Dur-Šarruken)	<i>SAA</i> 1 150	(gr. +) Aššur
(6/8) Hunanu (official active in Kalhu)	<i>GPA</i> 180 ⁸²	(no gr.) Aššur and Šamaš
(7/9) Hunnî (possibly a priest or scholar from Kalhu or Nineveh)	<i>SAA</i> 1 133–34 (attribution of no. 134 uncertain)	No. 133: (gr. +) Aššur, Šamaš, Bel, Nabû, Sîn, and Nergal; no. 134: (gr. +) Nabû and [Marduk]
(8/11) Ina-šar-Bel-allak (treasurer of Dur-Šarruken)	<i>SAA</i> 1 128, 130	(gr. +) Nabû and Marduk
(9/12) Marduk-remanni (governor of Kalhu)	<i>SAA</i> 1 110	(gr. +) Nabû and Marduk
(10/13) Nabû-eṭiranni (chief cupbearer)	<i>SAA</i> 19 65	(gr. +) Nabû and Marduk; no. 66 is also sent by him, but it breaks off after a gr.; no. 67 only a gr.

Continued

⁸² *GPA*, p. 181: "This is the only letter addressed to the king, and as it is written very well on fine clay, it should possibly be kept separate from the rest of the archive."

TABLE III: (Continued)

Sender	Publication No.	Remarks
(11/18) Nabû-nammir (vizier, <i>Babylonia/Kalhu</i> ; cf. Aššur-nirka-da''in, above, and Šamaš-bunaya, below)	SAA 19 103–07	(no gr. in nos. 103, 105) Nabû and Marduk
(12/29) Nabû-pašir (governor of <i>Harran</i>)	SAA 1 188–92, 195–96, 198, 200–02, 210	(gr. +) Sin and Nikkal (no. 198 is heavily restored; in no. 201 also Adad and Buru: sender's name is restored); no. 202: Nabû and Marduk. No. 191 was sent to the vizier; in no. 210 as the main sender (with Nabû-dur-makie)
(13/30) Nabû-ušabši and Iglî (possibly scholars working at <i>Dur-Šarruken</i>)	SAA 5 293	(gr. +) Nabû and Marduk
(14/31) [Nabû]-zer- ketti-lešir (official active at <i>Dur-Šarruken</i>)	SAA 1 152	(gr. +) [Nabû] and Marduk
(15/32) Šamaš-bunaya (Assyrian prefect in <i>Babylonia</i>)	SAA 19 98 (SAA 19 99 in NB: attribution uncer- tain)	(gr. +) Nabû and Marduk (no. 98 with Nabû-nammir, possibly also no. 99); nos. 100 and 102: neither a gr. nor a bl.; no. 101 only a gr.
(16/33) Šamaš-ila'i (governor)	SAA 19 68	(gr. +) Aššur and Šamaš
(17/59) Ṭab- šill-Ešarra (governor of <i>Assur</i>)	SAA 1 75–78, 80, 82–85, 87–91, 93–94, 96–97, 100–04, 106–07, 109	(gr. +) Aššur and Mullissu (no. 98 with Na'di-ilu, incl. a gr., but no gods are invoked: probably written by Na'di-ilu's scribe; no. 99 no bl. but an extended gr.)
(18/61) [NN] (<i>Hindanu</i>)	SAA 1 208–09	(gr. +) Adad and Buru
(19/62) [NN] (official active in the North-east)	SAA 5 148	(gr. +) Aššur, Bel, [Nabû <i>ūmāti arkūti</i>] <i>liddin[ūnikka]</i> : exceptional since not with <i>karābu</i>
(20/63) [NN] (<i>Dur-Šarruken</i>)	SAA 5 295	(gr. +) [Nabû and Marduk] (Iglî mentioned, cf. Nabû-ušabši, above)

A note on statistics

The extant introductory formulae of 168 (*SAA* 1), 169 (*SAA* 5), 147 (*SAA* 15), 128 (*SAA* 17), 143 (*SAA* 19), 13 (*GPA*) and 31 (Cole 1996) eighth century letters were studied for this article; these make a total of 799 introductory formulae of which 621 are Neo-Assyrian and 178⁸³ Neo-Babylonian. The following letters were included in the study:

SAA 1 nos. 29, 31–38, 41–45, 47, 49–54, 56–58, 60, 62, 64–67, 70–71, 73–78, 80, 82–85, 87–91, 93–94, 96–104, 106–07, 109–13, 115–19, 121–25, 127–38, 140, 142, 145–53, 155–62, 164, 171–79, 181, 183–85, 188–92, 195–96, 198, 200–02, 204–10, 214–24, 226–30, 232–33, 235, 238–39, 244, 246, 249, 251–52, 257–59.

SAA 5 nos. 1–3, 6, 11, 14–18, 20–25, 27–34, 38, 40, 43–45, 47–50, 52–53, 55–57, 59, 62–66, 68–76, 78–80, 82–89, 91–92, 94, 96–98, 100, 104–05, 108, 110, 113–15, 117–22, 125–28, 132–36, 140–41, 143–46, 148–59, 161–65, 168–70, 172, 181–82, 194, 199–203, 205–07, 210–11, 213, 215–17, 221, 224–27, 232–33, 237–47, 250–51, 256, 265–71, 281, 292–93, 295.

SAA 15 nos. 1–9, 11–17, 21, 24–27, 30, 32, 34–36, 39–42, 45, 53, 55–56, 58–62, 64–72, 83, 85–86, 88, 90, 94–95, 98–101, 104–05, 110, 112–15, 117, 119, 121–24, 126–27, 129–33, 136–38, 140–41, 151, 155–56, 158, 161–62, 164, 166, 169, 171, 174, 177, 179–81, 184, 186–88, 207, 217–20, 223–24, 226–27, 230, 232, 234, 236–41, 244, 258, 261, 267, 288, 290–95, 313, 343, 346, 359–60, 363, 372, 375, 377–80, 385–86, 389.

SAA 17 nos. 7–8, 10–22, 24–29, 31–34, 36, 38–41, 43, 45–53, 55, 57–60, 62, 64, 66–68, 72–77, 79–81, 86–94, 96, 100–09, 111–18, 120, 122–32, 134, 136–38, 140–41, 143, 145, 149, 151–54, 156–65, 167–68, 170, 196, 206–07.

⁸³ All 128 of *SAA* 17, 17 from *SAA* 19 (nos. 99, 122, 124, 131, 134–43, 147, 149, 201), *GPA* 201–02 and 31 from Cole 1996 (see n. 78, above).

SAA 19 nos. 8–19, 21–23, 25, 27–39, 44, 47–51, 53–55, 57–65, 67–76, 78–86, 88–89, 91–92, 94–95, 98–114, 119–20, 122–24, 131, 134–43, 147, 149, 158, 162–64, 169, 172, 175–76, 178–80, 183–86, 192–5, 197, 199, 201, 204–07, 210–12, 214–15, 223–25, 227, 229.

Note that the beginning of **GPA** 200, 207, 209–10 is broken away, but **GPA** 180, 191–99, 201–02 and 205 are included in this study.⁸⁴

The employed introductory formulae of 111 out of 114 letters, published in **Cole 1996**, can be studied; this is an extremely high proportion, proving that these tablets are in good condition (but see *ibid.* p. 14). The beginning is completely broken away only in nos. 88, 112–13 while the restorations appear certain enough in nos. 7 and 98. In total, 31 of these letters were sent to superiors (see n. 78, above), whereas the majority of the letters in this corpus were sent to equals (“brothers”): nos. 1–4, 7, 10–12, 14–15, 17–20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30–37, 39–40, 42–43, 45, 47–52, 54–55, 61, 63–70, 73–78, 81–82, 84–92, 95–96, 99–100, 104–09, 112. Moreover, five letters were sent to subordinates (often “sons”): nos. 8 (by the “king”), 9, 25, 71 and 79.

The consistency and regularity of the introductory formulae in use often make restoring the beginning of numerous broken tablets easy and entirely predictable. For example, the beginning of **SAA** 1 122, 129, 157, 161, 179, 181, 198; **SAA** 5 17, 73, 256, 270; **SAA** 15 34, 71, 95, 99, 114, 130, 155; **SAA** 17 15, 40, 58, 168; **SAA** 19 50, 54, 59, 72, 99, 147, 192, 210, 229, **GPA** 205 and of many other letters is partly, or in some cases almost totally, broken away but the introductory formulae of these letters can be restored with sufficient certainty by comparing them with exact parallels from other letters so that they are included in the statistics.

On the other hand, the beginning of many letters is too broken to be used in the statistics. Apart from these — basically all the letters that are not enumerated above — the following letters or fragments do not appear in the statistics: **SAA** 1 1–27, **SAA** 5 277–80 (fragments), **SAA** 15 274–79 (fragments), **SAA** 17 1–6, **SAA** 19 1–7, 152–56 and **GPA** 181–7, 203 and possibly also **GPA** 206 are all royal letters and **SAA** 19 56 and **GPA** 190 were also sent to subordinates. In addition, the following letters were sent to equals (or subordinates) and thus ignored: **SAA** 5 81, 147; **SAA** 15 371; **SAA** 17 63, 84, 133 (to an equal or subordinate), 139 (to an equal or subordinate), 147–48, 150, 155; **SAA** 19 132–33, 144, 160, 165, 202, 208 and **GPA** 188–89. Note also that **SAA** 19 152–53 (royal letters), 157, 159, 161, 170–71, 173–74, 189–91 were previously edited in **SAA** 1, **SAA** 5 and **SAA** 15 and that **SAA** 5 214 is the envelope of **SAA** 5 213 and **SAA** 15 289 that of **SAA** 15 288. Furthermore, joins were excluded: **SAA** 1 28 forms a part of **SAA** 10 216; **SAA** 5 282 is joined to **SAA** 1 70; **SAA** 5 55 and 61 are rejoined (Van Buylaere 2007); **SAA** 15 335 forms a part of **SAA** 5 251 (lines 13–r.5). For anonymously sent letters, see n. 13 (above).

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⁸⁴ Other **GPA** letters were published in **SAA** 1 and **SAA** 5 (cf. Luukko 2004: 204).

