SYSTEMATIC INTRODUCTION

I. CHARACTERIZATION OF THE MATERIAL: THE LETTERS AS HISTORICAL SOURCE

In setting to characterize the letters under study, one hardly needs to point out that they differ considerably from modern letters in certain formal respects. Physically, they are lumps of clay carefully worked into the shape of flat rectangles[1] and inscribed, usually on both sides[2], with Neo-Assyrian cuneiform characters[3]. With regard to the time that has elapsed since they were, 100 generations ago[4], filed in the royal archives of Nineveh, many of them have been preserved remarkably well[5], but many again are in a deplorably bad state of preservation[6]. As for the literary scheme, all letters[7] open with statement of the addressee and the sender[8], followed by stereotyped salutations and blessings[9]; date and provenance are indicated only exceptionally.[10] The message is then put down without further formalities[11].

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[1] The tablets measure, on the average, 17×30×60 mm; the corners are usually rounded, and both sides (obverse and reverse) are convex, contrary to the literary texts. Fine clay has been used throughout, in contrast to letters sent from provinces (whose clay is sometimes mixed with sand); letters written in Assur are often covered with a coating made of very fine white clay. The colours of the tablets vary from black to light yellow; some tablets have been given a hard, shining surface by fire. For more details see the notes at the end of Pt. I; for the rules observed in the preparation of the tablets and the arrangement of the writing see A.L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, p. 239f.

[2] All letters are inscribed parallel to the short axis; in LAS 318-345, as in all reports, the text runs along the long axis. To inscribe the reverse, the tablets were turned upside down; both edges, and occasionally the left side (seldom also the right side), could be inscribed as well.

[3] LAS 340 is written exceptionally in Neo-Babylonian script.

[4] See chapter IV.

[5] The tablets were originally not baked; however, most of them were subjected to fire during the destruction of Nineveh by the Medes in 612 B.C., and were consequently burnt hard as stone.

[6] According to the reports of the excavators, it seems that many tablets were broken already in the antiquity by the sackers of Nineveh; about 60% of the letters under study are incomplete, and in several tablets the script is considerably defaced or mutilated.

[7] The reports lack all introductory formalities; only the name of the sender is given at the end of the documents ("from NN"). In LAS 318-345 even this is omitted.

[8] Excepting LAS 104 which is anonymous; LAS 124 is a continuation of another letter.

[9] Cf. R. Pfeiffer, Assyrian Epistolary Formulae, JAOS 43 (1923) 26ff. and E. Salonen, *Die Gruß- und Höflichkeitsformeln in babylonisch-assyrischen Briefen* (StOr 37, Helsinki 1967), p. 78 ff. The salutation (usually "good health to the king, my lord") is omitted, without any visible reason, in 23 letters (LAS 33, 77-78, 87-92, 104, 115, 138, 148, 156, 158, 170 and 215-221); thereagainst the blessing (usually "may the gods Nabû and Marduk bless the king, my lord") is omitted only exceptionally (in LAS 5, 40, 61, 83, 168 and 170). See LAS 61:5-7 and the pertinent comments.

[10] The provenance is stated immediately after the name of the sender; it is found only in LAS 77, 78, 81, 85-86 and 93-99. For dated letters see chapter IV (the date, if given, is always found at the end of the letter).

[11] The epistolary style is, of course, characterized by certain stereotyped expressions. Thus, e.g., new topics are as a rule introduced by the words *ina muḫḫi . . . ša šarru bēlī išpuranni* "as regards the . . . about which the

Thousands of texts of this kind have hitherto been found in the Mesopotamian soil[1], and many more thousands are certainly still to come to light. The factor distinguishing the present letters from this mass is that they are practically the only letters that have come down to us from Mesopotamian scholars[2], and in any case the only letters of this kind forming a large, chronologically and internally coherent group[3].

The nature of these letters is best illustrated by a reference to the "wise men of Babylon" of the book of Daniel[4]. The present scholars were the "wise men of Nineveh" likewise serving the king by their knowledge and advices. Thus, the letters are basically answers to questions asked by the king, or reports on the activities of the scholars in the fields of medicine, astrology, magic, extispicy and other arcane disciplines. Unlike the scholarly reports[5], the letters discuss technical matters freely and generally, and touch also a variety of other topics ranging from the private life of the scholars to daily incidents in the court.

The historical environment to which the letters belong is illustrated as vividly by no other cuneiform source. Only the Bible or the classical sources can convey us as lively, though not as authentic picture of an ancient oriental court[6]. On the other hand, no other source elucidates all sides of the activity of the Mesopotamian scholars as effectively as the present letters[7]. Taking into account the great political and cultural significance[8] of the Sargonid Assyria, the source value of the letters can hardly be overestimated. I dare say that without them our conception of the men on the top of that world power would be decisively poorer. Thanks to them we have a chance not only to learn to know the Assyrian king and his advisors as human beings, but also to understand the way of thinking and the world view of the intellectual elite of that time; at the same time they provide invaluable information about various aspects of the contemporary culture. I will, however,

king, my lord, wrote to me", or simply *ša šarru bēlī išpuranni* "what the king, my lord, wrote to me", etc.

1 For an excellent selection and translation of Akkadian letters see A.L. Oppenheim, *Letters from Mesopotamia* (Chicago 1967). For complete bibliography of Mesopotamian letters see ibid., p. 201 ff.

2 Sporadic letters from Middle Babylonian physicians are to the found in H. Radau, *Letters to Cassite Kings* (BE 17/I, Philadelphia 1908); for a letter from a Neo-Babylonian astrologer (UET 4 168) see Oppenheim, *op.cit.*, p. 195. Cf. also the following note.

3 This is naturally a generalization; as stated in the preface to Pt. I, there are a number of related contemporaneous texts (Neo-Babylonian letters and astrological reports) which had to be excluded from this edition. They must naturally be taken into consideration along with the present letters. For a list of these texts see Appendix 1B.

4 See Chapter II, p. 9.

5 The astrological reports consist of astronomical observations and relevant omens cited from the traditional literature; explanatory remarks are sometimes added. The reports of the haruspices contain a formal inquiry addressed to the Sun god, accompanied by quotations from the divinatory literature indicating the results of the extispicy.

6 See, e.g., the books of Esther, Ezra and Daniel; Herodotus I 8ff. VII 5 ff. etc.

7 Cf., e.g., W. von Soden, Leistung und Grenze sumerischer und babylonischer Wissenschaft (Nachdruck Darmstadt 1965), Anm. 43: "Diese [Briefe und] Berichte geben uns übrigens einen ausgezeichneten Einblick in die Arbeitsweise der assyrischen Astronomen und Astrologen, den uns die "wissenschaftliche" Literatur *nie verschaffen kann*".

8 As a result of the expansion of Assyriological studies, the interest in the Neo-Assyrian period has considerably decreased from what it was at the beginning. Yet this period is and will remain central for several reasons. Owing to the military might of Assyria, the Mesopotamian civilization at that time exerted an immense influence on the neighbouring world; at the same time the Mesopotamian culture experienced a short, but the more significant bloom. The conquest of Egypt, the Sargonid reliefs and the library of Assurbanipal still mark the culmination of the Mesopotamian political power, art and literature.

not go on analyzing pedantically the points in which the research could draw profit from this source[1]; the variety and amount of information will stand out clearly enough in the introduction and commentary.

I would like to stress that though the letters have been subjected to study for over 60 years[2], their information is by no means exhausted yet. These letters, as the epistolary texts in general, present a number of inborn difficulties which make themselves all too clearly apparent in the hitherto available translations and studies. "In quick-shifting, emotion-charged, pregnant sentences, topics are introduced and abruptly dropped, and allusions are made to situations known only to the correspondents. Emphasis, irony, rhetorical questions, veiled threats, unfinished sentences, and imprecations run the gamut of syntactical finesse to mold the diction of these letters to such expressiveness that it remains beyond the ken of the philologist accustomed to the inane formalism of conventional literary texts."[3] Add to this that many texts are badly broken or obliterated, and it becomes evident how great the danger of mistranslations and misunderstandings is. Furthermore, quite apart from the philological and epigraphical difficulties, it is often difficult to recognize and evaluate correctly the extant evidence. Since the letters are not dated, one cannot readily place them in their proper historical connections or even find out their correct chronological sequence or relation to each other. Depending on the emphases of the writers, many important details may escape attention at the cost of secondary information, and many letters lack the details and background that would clarify what the writers actually are speaking about.

It will certainly never be possible to remove all unclarities that beset the letters. However, far more than hitherto can be done in this respect, and every step forward contributes to the understanding of the rest of the material. In the preface to Pt. I, I have concisely sketched the methods which I have applied in order to make the best out of these letters. Though all possibilities of these methods have not been exhausted (e.g., there is always a chance that a couple of more joins could be found and some obscure passages clarified through collations), I am pretty sure that it is no more really rewarding to follow this line. A deeper understanding of the texts may better be obtained through their diligent correlation to other sources (ancient and modern), and especially the cooperation of the experts in the Mesopotamian traditional literature would be certainly profitable.

1 Besides Assyriology proper, I would say the letters are of the greatest usefulness to Biblical studies and the history of sciences.

2 The first detail study devoted to these letters, E. Behrens's *Assyrisch-babylonische Briefe kultischen Inhalts* (= LSS 2 2), was published in 1906.

3 A.L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, p. 26. For a more detailed characterization of Akkadian letters see idem., *Letters from Mesopotamia*, p. 64f.

II. THE SCHOLARS

A. Definitions

1. *On the Mesopotamian concept of scholarship*

The term "scholar" used in this book refers to learned persons, trained in a special branch of learning or wisdom (cf. Webster's *New World Dictionary*, College Edition, 1966, s.v.). I hasten to stress that this term has here to be understood relatively. It does not connote the modern concepts of "learning" or "wisdom" (according to which the modern astrologers and diviners cannot be termed scholars), but is used solely with regard to the Mesopotamian concept of these (just as we, in conformance with the Mesopotamian usage, would call a slinger "warrior", regardless of the modern connotations of the word). The purpose of this chapter is to define what exactly the words "learning" and "wisdom", and hence "scholar", meant for the ancient Mesopotamians.

There are two reasons to use the designation "scholar" of the writers of the present letters. First, they were experts in subjects that formed an integral part of the Mesopotamian "science" (see below). Second, they were called "scholars" by the ancients themselves. Whenever they are referred to in general terms, the designation *ummânu* is used. This word whose basic meaning is "master (craftsman)" has, as in English, several semantic shades, one of which corresponds to the notion "scholar".[1] In order to illustrate the semantic range of the word in Neo-Assyrian times, I shall cite a couple of examples taken from contemporary texts, preferably letters.

a) The meaning of the word *ummânu*

1) *ummânu* "master" = "scholar" (referring to the writers of the present letters): *šumu anni'u ul-ū ša iš=kārimma šū ša pî ummânī šū* "this omen is not from the Series; it is from the oral tradition of the masters (= scribes)" LAS 13 r1-2; *issūri ummânī ina muḫḫi māt Amurrî memmēni ana šarri bēlīja iqabbijū* "probably the masters (= scribes) will tell something about the (concept) Westland to the king, my lord" LAS 279:19-20; *ūmâ kalīt imittīšu ša šeḫratūni aktanak ana šarri bēlīja ussēbila ummânī lēmurū* "I am now sealing its right kidney which is (unusually) small, and sending it to the king, my lord; the masters (= haruspices) should examine it" ABL 975 r11-14; *annûte 9 ša isse ummânī izzazzūni dullu ša bēt marṣi eppašūni* "these 9 are those who are assisting the masters (= exorcists) and working on the (series) (when the exorcist goes to the) house of the sick" ABL 447 r10-14; *ina zamâri ša māt Akkadî mā aššu pîka ṭābi rē'ū'a gabbu ummânī upaqqūka* "in a song from Akkad it is said: because of your good speech, O my shepherd, all masters look forward to you" LAS 124 r10-11 (the author is making an allusion to himself).

[1] A specific word for "scholar" is missing in Akkadian. The notion "scholar" is usually associated (and partly expressed) with adjectives meaning "wise" and participles of the verb "to know" (see CAD s.v. *emqu*, *eršu*, *ḫasāsu*, *igigallu*, *itpēšu*, and AHw s.v. *mūdû*). For the equation *apkallu* "sage" = *ummânu* "master" see below.

2) *ummânu* "master" = "teacher": *ana manni ibašši ṭābtu ša kī ĵâši šarru ēpuš ša ina pān mār šarri tapqidannīma ummânšu anākūni liginnu aqabbaššūni* "to whom indeed has the king done such a favour as to me whom you have appointed to the service of the crown prince, to be his master and to teach him" LAS 34 r4-9.

3) *ummânu* "master" = "counselor": *[Sîn]-aḫḫē-erība šar māt Aššūr Nabû-aplu-iddina ummânšu* "(when) Sennacherib was the king of Assyria, Nabû-aplu-iddina was his master" KAV 216 IV 1-2; *ṭuppi Nabû-šallimšunu ṭupšar šarri rabû rab pīt uzni(?) ummân Šarru-kēn šar māt Aššūr* "a tablet of Nabû-šallimšunu, the great scribe of the king, chief . . . , master of Sargon, king of Assyria" Sg 8 428.

4) *ummânu* "master" = "master-craftsman": *ummânī ša issē'a illikūnenni kaspu niddanaššunu parakkī ša Ezida kī ša šarru bēlī iqbûni uḫḫuzū* "we shall give silver to the masters who came along with me, and they will mount the daises of Ezida just as the king, my lord, told me" LAS 284:5-8; *ḫurāṣu ana ṣalam šarrāni . . . lā iddin šarru bēlī ana abarakki ana ṭupšar ekalli ṭēmu liškun ḫurāṣu lipti'ū rēš urḫi <ša> ṭābūni ana ummânī liddinū dullu lēpušū* "he has not given gold for the royal statues . . . the king, my lord, should give orders to the steward and the scribe of the palace that they should open the (sealed) gold; at the beginning of a favourable month they should give it to the masters, and these should perform the work" ABL 114 r3-12.

b) The Mesopotamian "science"

In the example cited above, under section a 1, scribes, haruspices and exorcists were referred to by the designation *ummânu*. I shall now adduce more evidence to show that also the physicians and appeasers serving in the court[1] were called *ummânu* and belonged to the same social class as the foregoing three occupations. In an unpublished Neo-Babylonian letter, K.3034 + K.7655 (digested by M. Dietrich, WO 4 [1968] 95f), the author enumerates by name 20 able scholars (PAP 20 UM.ME.A^{MEŠ} *lē'ûtu*), of different occupations; only three of these have been preserved, namely Lābâši, expert of the series [. . .], Kudurru who masters the divination (*bā=rûti ile''e*) and has studied the (astrological) series *Enūma Anu Enlil*, and Aḫa-šubši, a very distinguished p h y s i c i a n (^{LÚ}*asû ma'diš ile''e*). Another letter from the same writer, ABL 1321 + 82-5-22, 123 (see ibid., p. 96), deals with the same subject: there the crafts of the a p p e a s e r s, the exorcists and the scribes are mentioned. Still another Neo-Babylonian letter from the Sargonid archives (ABL 954) reads: "Last year . . . I wrote to the palace as follows: 'The apprentices whom the king entrusted to me have learned the (series) Enūma Anu Enlil; so what is my fault? The king has not summoned me with his masters (^{LÚ}*um-ma-ni-šú*).' The king (then) said: 'I have not pushed (you) aside; I shall summon you.' But from the moment I left the palace until now the king has not summoned me. Now, as the king has summoned (all) the scribes, big and small, shall I not . . . ?" (Rest fragmentary). Here the existence of a circle of "the king's masters" is stated explicitly.

It has to be pointed out in this context that calling these masters "scholars" is perfectly justifiable insofar as their ability was based on study and mastery of an extensive technical literature. In fact, excepting lexical texts and syllabaries used for the erudition of scribes[2], practically the whole "scientific" literature of Mesopotamia consists of the lores of the omen-experts (scribes), diviners, exorcists, physicians and appeasers (called *ṭup=*

[1] I do not argue that *all* exorcists, physicians, etc. were called "masters". The Akkadians themselves differentiated between "masters", practitioners and apprentices.

[2] The creation of the syllabaries, vocabularies and lexical lists was necessary for two main reasons: to fix the cuneiform system of writing and to provide the means for studying the "sacred" Sumerian language. There is no need to assume that their compilation was guided by an "urge to coordinate the universe". That the philology was not considered an independent science appears from the lack of an appropriate word in Akkadian.

šarrūtu "scribal craft", *bārûtu* "divination", *āšipūtu* "exorcism", *asûtu* "medicine" and *kalûtu* "appeasers' craft")[1]. Significantly enough, even the poetical works and other literary products were, as far is known, ascribed to scholars specializing in these subjects. According to the Ninevite "catalogue of texts and authors", the epic of Gilgameš was redacted by the exorcist Šîn-leqe-unninnī (É.ŠGÀR ^{d}GIŠ.GÍN.MAŠ: *šá pi-i* ^{Id}*30-le-qé-un-nin-ni* ^{LÚ}M[AŠ.MAŠ], JCS 16 66 vi 10), the fable of the willow by the exorcist Ur-Nanna, a scholar of Babylon ([É.ŠGÀR] ^{GIŠ}ASAL: *šá pi-i* ^{LÚ}UR-^{d}NANNA ^{LÚ}MAŠ.MAŠ ^{LÚ}UM.ME.A TIN.TIR^{KI} ibid. vi 14), etc. In this way the text assigns various compositions to exorcists, diviners and appeasers, most of which are characterized as scholars of particular cities (^{LÚ}MAŠ.MAŠ ^{LÚ}UM.ME.A TIN.TIR^{KI} v 2.5, vi 2.6.8.14, ^{LÚ}ḪAL ^{LÚ}UM.ME.A TIN.TIR^{KI} vii 7; ^{LÚ}GALA ^{LÚ}UM.ME.A ERI.DU$_{10}$ vi 13, vii 2.4). Judging on the ground of the literature, one cannot, hence, escape the conclusion that the core of the Mesopotamian "science", as well as all intellectual life, was dominated by subjects which we nowadays tend to call pseudosciences. Such sciences as philology and mathematics were in a secondary position and even did not warrant a special designation[2].

The correctness of this conclusion can be tested in many ways. The best touchstone is, of course, the famous passage in the inscriptions of Assurbanipal where the king boasts about the careful education he was given in his youth. Claiming that he had studied all branches of the wisdom of his time, he actually presents the contemporary concept of "science" in a nutshell. A short version of the passage reads: "I studied the wisdom of (the divine scribe) Nabû, the entire extent of the scribal art: I examined and learned the precepts of all the masters" (VAB 7 4 i 31-34); the full account (VAB 7 252 i 13-18) runs as follows: "(I am versed in) the craft of the sage Adapa: I studied the secret lore of the entire scribal craft, I know the celestial and terrestial portents, I discuss with competence in the circle of the masters: I argue about (the work) '(If) the liver is a correspondence of the sky' with expert diviners, I can solve the most complicated divisions and multiplications which do not have a solution, I have read intricate tablets inscribed with obscure Sumerian or Akkadian difficult to unravel, and examined sealed, obscure and confused inscriptions on stone from before the Deluge." Converted into prose, these poetical words refer to exorcism (= craft of Adapa), omen-science, haruspicy, mathematics, appeasers' craft (= Sumerian) and elementary epigraphy.

Secondly, one can turn to the Akkadian lexical texts. E.g., in Igituh, Short Version (AfO 18 81-86), one finds the sequence *ḫassu* (= ^{LÚ}NUN×ME.NÍG.TAG.GA), *bārû, āšipu, asû, kalû* "wise man, haruspex, exorcist, physician, and appeaser"; in STT 385 (a list of professions) the group *ṭupšarru, āšipu, bārû, asû* "scribe, exorcist, haruspex and physician" is found. Since in texts of this kind similar professions are grouped together, it is unlikely that other professions than the ones mentioned above were included into the conception "wise men".

Of special interest is a Neo-Assyrian memorandum from the reign of Assurbanipal, ADD 851[3], which lists the scholars serving in the palace; it gives the names of altogether 7 scribes (PAP 7 A.B]A.^{MEŠ}; col. I 8), 9 exorcists (PAP 9[?] MAŠ.MAŠ^{MEŠ}, I 18), 5 haruspices (PAP 5 ḪAL^{MEŠ}, II 6), 9 physicians (PAP 9 A.Z[U]^{MEŠ}, II 16), 6 appeasers (PAP 6 GALA^{MEŠ}, III 7), 3 augurs (PAP 3 *da-gíl* MU ŠEN, III 11), 3 interpreters of dreams (PAP 3 *ḫar-ṭi-bi*, IV 2), and 3 Egyptian scribes (3 A.BA^{MEŠ} *Mu-ṣur-aje*, IV 6-7). The three professions mentioned last were alien to Mesopotamia and make an appearance in texts only as a result of the conquests of the Assyrian kings. Augurs were obtained from Syria and northwestern Mesopotamia (cf., e.g., the neo-Assyrian letter ND 2673 [= Iraq 20, p. 196 and pl. XLI], r14-16, "let the king, my lord, write to the Šubrian (king) so that he may send PN, his augur"; ABL 1346 r1-2 mentions augurs from Hamat); interpreters of dreams originated from Egypt and were first imported to Assyria by Esarhaddon in 671 B.C. (cf. CAD Ḫ 116b, s.v. *ḫarṭibi*: this word is a direct loan from Egyptian (*ḥrj-tp*). Note that interpreters of dreams are not mentioned among the scholars enumerated in LAS 2 dating from 672 B.C.).

[1] For the mathematical texts see note 2.

[2] There is no word for "mathematics" or "mathematician" in Akkadian; Assurbanipal refers to mathematics by the words I.GI A.RÁ-*e* (= *igê arê*) "reciprocals" and "productions" (in the inscription to be quoted presently). The large amount of excavated mathematical exercise tablets written by apprentice scribes indicates that the study of mathematics was part of the normal school curriculum and as essential to a scribe's instruction as the copying of vocabularies. Cf. the edubba-text K.2459:10 ff. "do you know multiplication (*arâ*), reciprocals (*igâ*), coefficients (*igibâ*), balancing of accounts (*igigubâ nikkassi*), administrative accounting, how to make all kinds of pay allotments, divide property (and) delimit shares of fields?" (Gadd, BSOAS 20 256; cited after CAD I 39b).

[3] Note also the partial duplicate Sm. 471 listing two exorcists and three physicians. ADD 851 dates from about 650 B.C.; see page 32, note 3.

The nature of the Mesopotamian "science" is particularly clearly displayed in the Bible, and the above deductions are fully confirmed by its testimony. In chapters 2, 4 and 5 of the book of Daniel, the author enumerates the "wise men of Babylon" who were summoned by the king to interpret the perplexing dreams seen by him. These "wise men" (Aramaic *ḥakkîmîn*) can be confidently identified with the "masters" (*ummâ=nu*) of the Babylonians and Assyrians, and the enumerated professions coincide exactly with the ones treated above. The following series of "wise men" are found:

	Dan.
ḥarṭummîm aššāpîm	1:20
ḥarṭummîm aššāpîm m^{e}kaššᵉpîm kaśdîm[1]	2:2
āšᵉpîn ḥarṭummîn gāzᵉrîn	2:27
ḥarṭumajjā' āšᵉpajjā' kaśdājē' gāzᵉrajjā'	4:4
ḥarṭummîn āšᵉpîn kaśdā'în gāzᵉrîn	5:11

To visualize the coincidence with the Akkadian terms the following list of correspondencies may be drawn:

Aramaic	Hebrew	Akkadian	English
ḥakkîmîn	*ḥᵃkāmîn*	*ummânī*	scholars
āšᵉpîn	*aššāpîm*	*āšipī*	exorcists
gāzᵉrîn	*bārîm*[2]	*bārê*	haruspices
kaśdā'în	*kaśdîm/ṭaps^{e}rîm*[3]	*ṭupšarrī*	astrologers
ḥarṭummîn	*ḥarṭummîm*	*ḫarṭibī*	interpreters of dreams

The Hebrew and Aramaic renderings of the Akkadian *ummânu* prove unequivocally that the men so designed were really considered the scholars of the Mesopotamians and not simply experts on divination and similar matters. The abstract word corresponding to *ḥakkîm/ḥākām* is *ḥâkmā* "wisdom" (both in Hebrew and Aramaic). This is exactly the word which in classical Greek denotes the concept "science" (σοφία = wisdom, science), and the Greek word for "scholar" is a compound literally meaning "lover of wisdom" (φιλόσοφος).

Isaiah, in predicting the fall of Babylon, writes as follows (47:10): "Your wisdom (*ḥâkmatek*) and your knowledge (*da'tek*) perverted you, and you said in your heart, I am, and none else beside me." What the prophet

[1] *m^{e}kaššᵉp* corresponds to Akkadian *kaššāpu* "sorcerer", "practitioner of black magic". The mention of sorcerers side by side with Babylonian scholars reflects the despise that the Jews felt toward the Mesopotamian science; in fact, black magic was strongly opposed by the Mesopotamian scholars too.

[2] Cf. Hebrew conj. ברר pro ברה Isaiah 44:25, Jer. 50:36; cf. Koehler-Baumgartner, *Lexicon* s.v. (J. Aro).

[3] Cf. Nahum 3:17.

meant by wisdom and knowledge appears in the following verses (47:12-13): "Stand now with your enchantments, and with the multitude of your sorceries, wherein you have laboured from your youth: perhaps you will profit, perhaps you will prevail! You are wearied in the multitude of your consels: let now the viewers of the heavens, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up and save you from what will come upon you!" The same idea recurs in the prophecy of Nahum on the fall of Nineveh (3:17): "You have diviners[1] like locusts, and astrologers[2] like grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun arises they flee away."

These two passages, scornful as they are, reveal the great respect which the Mesopotamians had for the experts in divination, magic and astrology, and one may get an idea of why the study of these pseudo-sciences was appreciated above everything else. Insight into supernatural things was considered the greatest wisdom of all: the foundations of the divinatory and magical sciences were believed to have been laid by the gods themselves — or by the mythological sages who personified the highest wisdom one could think of. Thus the entire corpus of the appeasers and the fundamental work of the astrologers, Enūma Anu Enlil, were ascribed to the god Ea in the aforementioned catalogue of texts and authors; in the same catalogue, the seven sages figure as authors of several compositions beside historical persons designed as scholars. The high opinion held of the wisdom of the scholars is also reflected by the fact that the word *ummânu* is sometimes replaced by *apkallu* "sage", thus the scholar Lu-Nanna (cf. the said catalogue, col. VI 11) is also called sage (cf. the colophon of K.8080, LÚ-^{d}NANNA NUN.ME URIM) or "two-thirds" of a sage (Lú. ^{d}Nanna$\frac{2}{3}$.bi nun.me.ne = ^{I}LÚ-^{d}NANNA *ši-ni-pat ap-kal-*[*li*], LKA 76 r11-13). Note also the interchange of *niširti apkalli* "secret (lore) of the sage" and *niširti ummâni* "secret of the scholars" in colophons (cf. *ni-ṣir-ti* NUN.ME, Hunger, AOAT 2, Nr. 303 [astronomical text], and *ni-ṣir-ti um-ma-a-ni*, ibid. Nr. 319:2 [astrol. omens] or MÍ. ŠEŠ LU *um-man-nu* [astronomical] ibid. 98:7)[3].

To sum up: Admitting that the Mesopotamian concept of "scholars" and "science" differed radically from that current in our times, the two have nonetheless much in common. Just as modern scholars are thought to represent the highest learning in all branches of science, so their Mesopotamian colleagues are found among the men who mastered the subjects worthy of the designation "science" in those times. The great difference is that while the Mesopotamian scholars were not only highly respected for their learning but also[4] for their wisdom, the subjects they studied are nowadays considered worthless, and the emphasis is laid on studies which in turn were regarded as secondary by the ancients.[4]

2. *Mesopotamian scholars: priests or scientists?*

The subject matter of this chapter must be treated, since views differ as to the true nature of the Mesopotamian scholars. The English and American Assyriologists usually translate the scholarly occupations plainly with "scribes, diviners, exorcists, physicians, and *kalû*-singers" (see, most recently, CAD A 2 431a, 432a etc., whereas the Germans speak of special sorts of "priests" (AHw 628a "Beschwörungspriester", 109b "Opferschau(priest)er, 427b "Klagepriester"; W. von Soden, *Herrscher im alten Orient*, p. 125 "Priester Adadschumussur"; and quite recently, H. Hunger, AOAT 2, p. 10 etc., labels *bārû* and *mašmaššu* as "Priester"). Thus there are two main 'schools', one regarding these occupations priestly, the other more or less profane. B. Landsberger has recently (in *Brief des Bischofs von Esangila*, 1965) critisized the German renderings with the following objections: "Ist ihre [sc. des ganzen gelehrten Klüngel, der, meist vom Königspalaste aus, in seiner Weise Einfluß auf die Politik Asarhaddons nahm] Kennzeichnung als Priester berechtigt? — Es hängt von der Definition des Wortes "Priester" ab, ob man Magier, Haruspices, Propheten als Priester bezeichnet. Zur Zeit Asarhaddons wurden sie nicht zur Priesterklasse gerechnet, sie sind weder *šangû* noch *ērib bīti* noch *gallubūti*. In jeder Hinsicht profan ist die eigentliche Schreiberklasse, in deren Kompetenz die Astrologie fiel, für die schon die Spezialberuf *tupšar-Enūma-Anu-Enlil* entwickelt war." (p. 14, note 8). Yet even this criticism, though at heart correct, fails to take cognizance of the whole truth. I cannot naturally in this connection discuss the subject matter in all its aspects, but in fact cumulative evidence is not necessary to clear up the basic problem.

Some sort of connection with priests is first of all evident from titles of individuals such as "Ibni-Ištar, son of Ḫunzu'i, *kalû* of Uruk, enterer of the temple of Nanâ, priest of Uṣur-amātsa, and scribe of Eanna" (RA 16 126 III 7-12). The astrologer Akkullānu was, at the same time, a high priest, "enterer of the temple of Aššur" (ABL 539 r14), and most of his letters deal with matters of temples. Furthermore there is abundant evidence that *āšipus* and *kalûs* featured among the personnel of the temples: note only the colophon *ṭuppi Kiṣir-Aššūr* MAŠ.MAŠ É *Aššūr* "tablet belonging to PN, the exorcist of the temple of Aššur" (CAD A 2 434), and the role played by the *āšipu* and *kalû* in the *akītu*-feast. On the other hand there is also very definite evidence suggesting that the scholars nevertheless were no priests. Their technical literature had nothing to do with cults and religious ceremonies performed in the temples; thus, e.g., the prayers which formed an essential part of the exorcistic literature, were not intended to be recited in the temples, but were spells used in the exorcists' daily practice. The haruspices, whose profession and literature was closely related to that of the astrologers, did not do service to the temples but to the court and the army (see the evidence collected in CAD B 123b ff); and the physicians, whose technical literature sometimes is difficult to distinguish from that of the exorcists, can by no means be called priests. Except Akkullānu, who was explicitly an "enterer of the temple" and stayed in the Aššur-temple, none of the authors of the present letters were concerned with matters belonging to the sphere of temples, but stuck to their special fields.

I think the 'dilemma' finds its solution when it is associated with medieval Europe. Hardly anyone would claim that the theologians, scholastics, and grammaticians working in the monasteries were priests, but no scholars, or vice versa; the truth is certainly between the two extremities. To put the matter very generally, in the Middle Ages and before the foundation of universities, the conditions were such that scientific work was not possible but in courts and cloisters. Only these institutions possessed the necessary premise for any higher intellectual life: sufficiently large libraries. Another striking parallel to the ancient Mesopotamia is that the scientific work of the monks consisted primarily of copying and canonizing the traditional literature; in other words, of maintaining the classical Greek and Roman culture. The monks certainly did not study Aristophanes or Livy for religious reasons! In Mesopotamia, the script was first invented from necessities of the temple bureaucracy and the schooling of scribes was from the very beginning connected with the temples. Hence there should be nothing extraordinary in that later on "scientific" studies were practised in the temples which with time developed considerable libraries. In the Neo-Assyrian times an essential part of the literary tradition consisted of technical literature of various branches of Mesopotamian "science". The nature of this science gave its specialists jobs in the temples and in the courts as well as in private life. Of course, scholars could become priests too (as also priests could become scholars), but they did not *have to*; their professions may better be compared (and the ancients did do so) to the profane craftsmen, artists, sculpturers etc.[1]

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[1] Amend the senseless בזרקיך into בזרכיך.

[2] Literally, "scribes".

[3] Cf. also the colophons of two medical texts, Hunger, AOAT 2, Nr. 171 and 333 *ša* KA U.ME.A *ša* KA NUN.ME^{MEŠ}-*e la-bi-ru-ti*).

[4] In both cases the appreciation of sciences seems to be conditioned by their immediate practical value; the usefulness of the technical studies was not foreseen by the ancients, whereas the study of pseudosciences was of great practical value, in accordance with the prevailing world view.

[1] As an interesting parallel I would like to point out that also the Middle American Aztecs differentiated between scholars and priests. See Bernardino de Sahagun's *Gliederung des alt-aztekischen Volks* (= Quellenwerke zur alten Geschichte Amerikas V, Stuttgart 1952), p. 75 ff; as scholars are enumerated "the wise man" (*tlamatini*), "the physician" (*tiecitl*), "the magician" (*navalli*), "the computer" (of days)" (*tlapovhqui, tonalpovhqui*, = Mesopotamian "scribe") and "the owl-man" (*tlacatecolutl*, = sorcerer). For priests see ibid. p. 83 ff.

This, of course, does not imply that the learned would have studied and practiced their fields out of purely scientific interest only. On the contrary, this does not seem to have been the case, not in the modern sense of "scientific" at least. The apparent superstitiousness of the scholars, only occasionally interspersed with seemingly modern observations should not, however, lead to an underestimation of their intelligence and ability. Rather, it should be stressed that there was a fundamental difference in the way of thinking. The ancient Mesopotamians believed firmly in the supernatural; and this belief is reflected even in their sciences. The Mesopotamian "wisdom" was largely governed by an urge to learn to know the supernatural forces and to cope with them; this purpose determined its line and character. It was empiric and descriptive, but not rationalistic. The "Western" rationalistic science came into the world only with the Greeks. Yet the Mesopotamians definitely did not lack the ability to reason. Though they did not believe in mechanical laws of universe but in gods as causes of the observed phenomena, they were perfectly able to register and arrange these into a plausible system. To take an example, they found the Saros period of the eclipses on the ground of data accumulated during centuries, and were able to predict lunar and, in some degree, solar eclipses long before the Greeks, although they thought that both the sun and the moon were gods.[1] Thus, while we cannot expect to find modern scientific rationalism in the way of thinking of the Mesopotamian scholars, we must by no means look down on them; even though they believed in things which we cannot accept, they were perfectly competent with regard to the standards of their time.

3. *The classes and special fields of the scholars*

The topics discussed in the present letters make it possible to define what was considered by the ancients themselves to belong to the sphere of each scholarly occupation[2]. What follows is a succinct synthesis of this evidence; for fuller details the reader is referred to the letters themselves.

a) *ṭupšarru* = "scribe", "omen-expert"

The "scribes" specialized *in the observation and interpretation of celestial and terrestial omens* and malformed births, and in the hemerology and menology. The literal translation of *ṭupšarru*, "scribe" is hence, in this specific sense, somewhat halting, but also rendering it with "astrologer" is misleading, though this was the primary meaning of the Hebrew loanword **ṭapsār* and its later equivalent *kasdî* ("Chaldean", Greek χαλδαῖος). The "scribes" whose sole concern was astrology were called *ṭupšar-Enūma-Anu-Enlil*, literally "scribes of the (astrological omen-series) E.-A.-E." (see the notes on LAS 60:13 and 279:11-13). – The technical literature of the "scribes" (*ṭupšarrūtu*) consisted, as can be shown with the help of quotations form it, found in the letters, of the following basic reference-books: *Enūma Anu Enlil* ("When Anu (and) Enlil", a 70-tablet compendium of the astrological and meteorological omens), *Šumma ālu ina mēlê šakin* ("If a city is situated on a hill", a 107-tablet compendium of the terrestial omens), *Šumma izbu* ("If a malformed birth", a 24-tablet compendium of omens derived from malformed births; also called *Šumma sinništu arâtma* "If a woman is pregnant"), *Iqqur īpuš* ("If one demolishes and rebuilds (a house)", a large compendium of menology[3]), *Enbu bēl arḫim* ("Fruit,

[1] As a matter of fact, "studying the habits of the gods" here gives the same result as "studying the mechanical laws of the universe". In such cases the way of thinking really makes no difference!

[2] As regards the present scholars in particular, in most cases specialization in one subject only can be traced. There are only three exceptions: the *exorcist* Adad-šumu-uṣur, the *haruspex* Marduk-šumu-uṣur, and the *appeaser* Urad-Ea, all of which were competent enough to write *astrological* reports, i.e., to deal with matters belonging to the field of the *scribes*. See RMA 133, 136F, LAS 120 and 120 signed by Adad-šumu-uṣur, RMA 252F, signed by Marduk-šumu-uṣur, and RMA 272, 100 and 256C, by Urad-Ea. Note also the Neo-Babylonian letter cited above, p. 16, which mentions a haruspex "who has also studied (the astrological work) *Enūma Anu Enlil*."

[3] The length of the text varies after different editions. The so-called "serie générale" comprised 7 or 10 tablets, the "serie mensuelle" was made up of 12 tablets.

the lord of the month", a 15-tablet series of hemerological prescriptions concerning the king), and *biblāni* (general label for hemerological handbooks of different schools, see the note on LAS 1 r12). Besides these basic books there were extensive commentaries on each of them (*mukallimtu* "commentary" explaining technical expressions, *ṣâtu* "antiquities" explaining difficult antiquated words, and *šūt pî* "oral tradition" of the masters written down in literary form), and concise surveys (*rikis gerri*) on the large works for quick reference. The astronomical knowledge necessary for erudition of the "scribes" was synthesized in treatises entitled MUL.APIN "Plough-star" (2 tablets), I.NAM GIŠ.ḪUR AN.KI.A ". . . of the scheme of universe" (2? tablets), and other less well-known compositions (including lists of stars; see E. Weidner, AfO 19 [1959-60] 105-113). – An essential part of the activity of the "scribes" was the watch of the moon at the beginning and in the middle of each month. The watch (*maṣṣartu*) was necessary not only for observation of important periodical omens (appearence of the moon crescent, opposition of the sun and the moon, and solar and lunar eclipses), but also for calendrical purposes (for fixing the length of a lunar month and adding the necessary intercalary month in proper time). The data registered in the course of these observations provided the "scribes" with a respectable amount of astronomical knowledge, clearly displayed also in the present letters (see below).

b) *bārû* = "haruspex", "diviner"

The haruspices specialized *in asking the divine will* in matters of high consequence (war, illness, religion) by means of studying the exta (mainly liver, but also other entrails) of sacrificial victims[1]. The translation "haruspex" is here preferred to the more exact, but little used "extispex" and the too general "diviner" (CAD). To judge from the reports and also from the letters (LAS 115-116), the inspection of the exta was often performed by a collegium of haruspices (cf. also ABL 975 r11 ff, "I am now sealing its right kidney which is (unusually) small and sending it to the king, my lord; the *masters* (here = haruspices) should examine it", and LAS 246:18 f, "the *haruspices* should prepare an enquire on it"). The royal extispicies were apparently performed as follows: after writing down and pronouncing a carefully formulated inquiry to the gods Šamaš and Adad, the victim was slaughtered and the answer of the gods was read in the entrails whose peculiarities were minutely registered on the tablet. These were then interpreted according to the technical literature of the craft. It consisted, in the first place, of a large (at least 55-tablet) series entitled *bārûtu* "divination" where all signs one could possibly think of and the relevant apodoses were systematically listed. This so far little studied work was made up by several sub-series, e.g., *Šumma martu* "If the gall", *Šumma padānu* "If the 'path' (of the liver)", *Šumma ubānu* "If the 'finger'", *Šumma ḫašû* "If the lungs", *Šumma kakku arki amūti* "If the 'weapon' behind the liver", and so on. For schooling of students there was a treatise called *Šumma multābiltu* "If the interpretation(?)". The rituals accompanying the performances of extispices were explained in texts beginning with the words *Enūma mār bārê nīqē ukān* "When a haruspex is to perform a sacrifice" and *Enūma bārû ana šarri bīra barê* "When a haruspex (is to) inspect the exta for a king" (both texts incorporated into the series *bārûtu*). The strict qualifications set to all haruspices and the mythological origin of the craft were expounded in a text called (after its incipit) *Enmeduranki šar Sipparim* "E., king of Sippar". – The science of divination was jealously guarded by its practitioners, and its secrets could, according to the text just mentioned, go only from father to son. A deviation from this rule, such as reported in the letter ABL 1245[2], was considered nearly a sacrilege. The matter was, however, different when the royal family was concerned; thus at least the crown-prince Assurbanipal was introduced into the secrets of divination[3].

[1] The practice of lecanomancy which was in wide use in Old-Babylonian period appears to have been insignificant in Neo-Assyrian times and is disregarded here.

[2] Cf. obv 2 ff: "Paruṭu(?), a goldsmith of(?) the palace of the queen, has acquired (a private teacher) with his money and settled him in his home like the king, the crown prince or the prince of Babylon, and has taught his son in exorcism; he has even been shown liver omens of the haruspices and excerpts of *Enūma Anu Enlil*, and this before the face of the king!"

[3] Cf. VAB 7 254:15, "I argued about the text 'If the liver is a correspondence of the sky' with the wise diviners".

c) *āšipu* = "exorcist", "magician"

The exorcists specialized *in magic, i.e., trying to influence and fight the supernatural forces* by magical means, ritual (*nēpēšu*) and spell (*šiptu*). Since supernatural forces were considered not only the causes of diseases but also of other calamities[1], the domain the exorcists had to master was really vast: in the present letters alone a great variety of their activities can be distinguished. Their function in the capacity of doctors (chasing demons out of the sick by means of exorcism, ritual treatment, and magical amulets) is best attested (see LAS 143-144, 147, 150-156, 159-160, 172, 180-184, 193, 196, 215-217, 222). To this side of their activity, which can be characterized as *therapeutical*, belongs also LAS 178 (about a ritual against the grinding of teeth) and 219 (ritual for attaining good dreams). Equally essential, however, was their *apotropaic* activity (i.e., warding off and turning aside evil forces in advance) which is illustrated by numerous letters. E.g., letters 149, 172, 185, 196, 203 and 204 deal with the nullifying of bad portents by means of "apotropaic rituals" (*namburbû*), 159, 163, 164, 173-177 with turning back witchcraft and black magic by means of "counter-spells" (*ušburrudû*), 139, 208, 218, 219, 223, 227 with periodical rites performed in order to assure the health of the royal family, etc. The long and complicated ritual of substitute king (see pp. 54-65) was nothing but an elaborate apotropaic ritual. Still another important section of their work was their *cultic* activity, also clearly displayed in the letters. This included consacrating of divine statues by magical means (ritual called *mis pî* "washing of the mouth"; see LAS 188; only through this and similar ceremonies the human made statues were believed to be imparted of the divinity), ritual purification (*takpertu*) of places and objects during funerary ceremonies, great religious festivals etc. (e.g., during the transport of the statue of Marduk to Babylon, VAB 7 252ff III 2; in *akītu*-feast, ABL 1197: 9 [see the note on LAS 271:11]). In his therapeutical function the exorcist often collaborated with a physician (cf. below and LAS 222), in the apotropaic and cultic one often with an appeaser (see the note on LAS 268:12). – The vast coverage of the exorcists' craft ist best illustrated by their extensive and complex technical literature (= *āšipūtu* "exorcism") which formed the basis of their activity. The "exorcists' manual" KAR 44 (a tablet enumerating "the titles of exorcistic works fixed for erudition", obv. 1) alone lists over 100 different titles; but the actual number of reference-books was still higher, since for instance all apotropaic rituals were omitted in this list. An even superficial presentation of this literature is not possible in this connection. It consisted largely of ritual handbooks dealing with individual lengthy rituals (such as *Maqlû* and *Šurpu*, "Burning", *Ilī ul īde* "My god, I don't know", *Muššu'u* "Rubbing", *Bīt rimki* "Wash-house", *Bīt mēsiri* "Enclosured house", *Bīt salā' mê* "House of water-sprinkling", *Mis pî* "Washing of the mouth") or of collections of incantations or/and rituals belonging to a given category (such as the series *Namburbi* containing hundreds of apotropaic rituals, *šuillakā=nu* "Hand-lifting" containing hundreds of incantation-prayers, *māmīt pašāri* "to solve a curse" containing incantations of the type *namerimburrudû*, etc.). Large bilingual series contained Sumerian medical incantations with an interlinear Akkadian translation (*Utukkī lemnūti* "evil demons", *Asakkī marṣūti* "painful devils", etc.). A large (at least 155-tablet) compendium containing incantations and ritual instructions for and against all kinds of sorcery was entitled *teppušma išallim* "(If) you perform (this), he will get well". A diagnostical and prognostical work for the exorcists' medical practice, entitled *Enūma āšipu ana bīt marṣi illiku* "When an exorcist goes to the house of the sick", served for identifying the demons and gods causing the diseases. The books *alandimmû*, *kataduggû* and *nigdimdimmû* contained omens derived from the bodily traits and manner of speech of the patients; since these books were commonly counted to the exorcistic literature, observation of such omens apparently fell to the share of the exorcists (and not of the scribes). In addition to the bilingual texts

[1] The technical term for this was *lapātu* "to afflict"; cf. LAS 144:14 *li-ip-tu-šú da-an* "his affliction is severe" (said of a sick), 25 r.7' *kaq-qu-ru E u-la-pat-an-ni* "the area which it (= the eclipse) afflicts", 135:19f *li-ip-tu-šu e-piš* "his affliction becomes a reality" (said of the substitute king), 109:17' ISKIM-*šú la-ap-ta-at a-dan-nú* "its portent is very bad (lit. afflicted)", 172:10f *ki-ma mi-i-nu il-ta-pat-su* "after something has afflicted him (= the sick)", etc.

mentioned above, incantations and rituals for benefit of the sick were collected in recipe-books entitled IGI.GIG.GAMEŠ "sore eyes", ŠU.GIG.GAMEŠ "aching hands", etc. The students were supposed also to study the pharmaceutic and minerologic lists of the physicians (see below). – The great extent of the literature makes the impression that very few exorcists actually could master their whole field. In fact, the subjects treated in the letters of individual exorcists suggest that specialization was widely common, cf. the letters of Nabû-nādin-šumi, which concentrate on apotropaic rituals, and those of Nabû-nāṣir dealing with therapeutic matters only.

d) *asû* = "physician"

The physicians specialized *in what may most conveniently be called "pharmaceutical medicine"*; as doctors, their activity overlapped that of the exorcists, and the two are often found co-operating (see above)[1]. What the exorcists sought to achieve by magical means, the physicians did by applying various medications (made of a variety of plants and minerals by crushing and filtering) and other seemingly modern methods of treatment. Several kinds of medicaments are mentioned in the present letters, notably "potions" (*mašqītu*) and "drugs" (*šammu*), for internal use, "lotions" (*marḫuṣu*) and "salves" (*napšaltu*), for external use, "tampons" (*lippu*), "bandages" (*taʾīltu*), "fumigations" (*qutāru*), "phylacteries" (*mēlu*, worn around the neck) and an unidentified medication called *ṣil(li)bāni*. Without arguing about the scientific basis of the manufacturing and application of these medicaments, it must be remarked that also magical spells and rituals were used in order to improve the effect of the treatment. This is probably influence of the healing practice of the exorcists, who in their turn made use of the methods of the physicians (cf. LAS 144, 181, 193 etc.). – The physicians' technical literature (*asûtu*) consisted of a great wealth of stereotypically formulated recipes (*bultu*, literally "healing") organized into more or less loose wholes according to their subject matters. Of the titles of such recipe-books may be mentioned *Šumma amēlu muḫḫašu ummu ukāl* "If a man's skull is burnt with fever", *Šumma amēlu suāla mariṣ* "If a man suffers of suālu disease" and *Šumma amēlu pūšu kabit* "If a man's speech is difficult". The pharmacological and minerological series *Šammu šikinšu* "Plant (and) its kind" and *Abnu šikinšu* "Stone (and) its kind" served educational purposes.

e) *kalû* = "appeaser", "lamentation-expert"

The "appeasers" specialized *in appeasing the supernatural forces* by means of elaborate chants accompanied by a kettledrum. The general idea underlying their activity was that all kinds of bad signs, disasters and calamities were manifestations of diviner anger and that these could be cancelled or at least lessened with the reconciliation of the gods. Thus their interference was considered necessary e.g. during lunar eclipses (see LAS 278:9-10 and the corresponding note); they are frequently found co-operating with the exorcists in the performance of apotropaic rites as well as in the cult. – The technical literature of the lamentation-experts consisted in the first place of a vast hymnic literature; the catalogue 4R^2 53 which enumerates hymns of 3 different types (*balaggu*, *eršemma* and *šuillakānu*) lists nearly 200 different titles, and as the text itself states (rev. IV 31), this was only a portion of the existing ones; e.g., all chants of the type *eršaḫunga* (see the note on LAS 271 r3) are missing there. A special ritual-book treated the ceremonies performed before and during the nightly chants (beginning *Enūma lilis siparri ana arāmīka* "when you are to cover the kettledrum"). The appeaser's parts in the apotropaic rites were clarified in ritual compendiums resembling those of the exorcists (characterized by a colophon line *nēpēšī ša qāt kalê* "rituals in the hands of the appeaser").

[1] For the co-operation of exorcists and physicians see E. Ritter, *Studies Landsberger*, p. 299-321.

This, of course, does not imply that the learned would have studied and practiced their fields out of purely scientific interest only. On the contrary, this does not seem to have been the case, not in the modern sense of "scientific" at least. The apparent superstitiousness of the scholars, only occasionally interspersed with seemingly modern observations should not, however, lead to an underestimation of their intelligence and ability. Rather, it should be stressed that there was a fundamental difference in the way of thinking. The ancient Mesopotamians believed firmly in the supernatural; and this belief is reflected even in their sciences. The Mesopotamian "wisdom" was largely governed by an urge to learn to know the supernatural forces and to cope with them; this purpose determined its line and character. It was empiric and descriptive, but not rationalistic. The "Western" rationalistic science came into the world only with the Greeks. Yet the Mesopotamians definitely did not lack the ability to reason. Though they did not believe in mechanical laws of universe but in gods as causes of the observed phenomena, they were perfectly able to register and arrange these into a plausible system. To take an example, they found the Saros period of the eclipses on the ground of data accumulated during centuries, and were able to predict lunar and, in some degree, solar eclipses long before the Greeks, although they thought that both the sun and the moon were gods.[1] Thus, while we cannot expect to find modern scientific rationalism in the way of thinking of the Mesopotamian scholars, we must by no means look down on them; even though they believed in things which we cannot accept, they were perfectly competent with regard to the standards of their time.

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The topics discussed in the present letters make it possible to define what was considered by the ancients themselves to belong to the sphere of each scholarly occupation[2]. What follows is a succinct synthesis of this evidence; for fuller details the reader is referred to the letters themselves.

a) *ṭupšarru* = "scribe", "omen-expert"

The "scribes" specialized *in the observation and interpretation of celestial and terrestial omens* and malformed births, and in the hemerology and menology. The literal translation of *ṭupšarru*, "scribe" is hence, in this specific sense, somewhat halting, but also rendering it with "astrologer" is misleading, though this was the primary meaning of the Hebrew loanword **ṭapsār* and its later equivalent *kasdî* ("Chaldean", Greek χαλδαῖος). The "scribes" whose sole concern was astrology were called *ṭupšar-Enūma-Anu-Enlil*, literally "scribes of the (astrological omen-series) E.-A.-E." (see the notes on LAS 60:13 and 279:11-13). – The technical literature of the "scribes" (*ṭupšarrūtu*) consisted, as can be shown with the help of quotations form it, found in the letters, of the following basic reference-books: *Enūma Anu Enlil* ("When Anu (and) Enlil", a 70-tablet compendium of the astrological and meteorological omens), *Šumma ālu ina mēlê šakin* ("If a city is situated on a hill", a 107-tablet compendium of the terrestial omens), *Šumma izbu* ("If a malformed birth", a 24-tablet compendium of omens derived from malformed births; also called *Šumma sinništu arâtma* "If a woman is pregnant"), *Iqqur īpuš* ("If one demolishes and rebuilds (a house)", a large compendium of menology[3]), *Enbu bēl arḫim* ("Fruit,

[1] As a matter of fact, "studying the habits of the gods" here gives the same result as "studying the mechanical laws of the universe". In such cases the way of thinking really makes no difference!

[2] As regards the present scholars in particular, in most cases specialization in one subject only can be traced. There are only three exceptions: the *exorcist* Adad-šumu-uṣur, the *haruspex* Marduk-šumu-uṣur, and the *appeaser* Urad-Ea, all of which were competent enough to write *astrological* reports, i.e., to deal with matters belonging to the field of the *scribes*. See RMA 133, 136F, LAS 120 and 120 signed by Adad-šumu-uṣur, RMA 252F, signed by Marduk-šumu-uṣur, and RMA 272, 100 and 256C, by Urad-Ea. Note also the Neo-Babylonian letter cited above, p. 16, which mentions a haruspex "who has also studied (the astrological work) *Enūma Anu Enlil*."

[3] The length of the text varies after different editions. The so-called "serie générale comprised 7 or 10 tablets, the "serie mensuelle" was made up of 12 tablets.

the lord of the month", a 15-tablet series of hemerological prescriptions concerning the king), and *biblāni* (general label for hemerological handbooks of different schools, see the note on LAS 1 r12). Besides these basic books there were extensive commentaries on each of them (*mukallimtu* "commentary" explaining technical expressions, *ṣâtu* "antiquities" explaining difficult antiquated words, and *šūt pî* "oral tradition" of the masters written down in literary form), and concise surveys (*rikis gerri*) on the large works for quick reference. The astronomical knowledge necessary for erudition of the "scribes" was synthesized in treatises entitled MUL.APIN "Plough-star" (2 tablets), I.NAM GIŠ.ḪUR AN.KI.A ". . . of the scheme of universe" (2? tablets), and other less well-known compositions (including lists of stars; see E. Weidner, AfO 19 [1959-60] 105-113). – An essential part of the activity of the "scribes" was the watch of the moon at the beginning and in the middle of each month. The watch (*maṣṣartu*) was necessary not only for observation of important periodical omens (appearence of the moon crescent, opposition of the sun and the moon, and solar and lunar eclipses), but also for calendrical purposes (for fixing the length of a lunar month and adding the necessary intercalary month in proper time). The data registered in the course of these observations provided the "scribes" with a respectable amount of astronomical knowledge, clearly displayed also in the present letters (see below).

b) *bārû* = "haruspex", "diviner"

The haruspices specialized *in asking the divine will* in matters of high consequence (war, illness, religion) by means of studying the exta (mainly liver, but also other entrails) of sacrificial victims[1]. The translation "haruspex" is here preferred to the more exact, but little used "extispex" and the too general "diviner" (CAD). To judge from the reports and also from the letters (LAS 115-116), the inspection of the exta was often performed by a collegium of haruspices (cf. also ABL 975 r11 ff, "I am now sealing its right kidney which is (unusually) small and sending it to the king, my lord: the *masters* (here = haruspices) should examine it", and LAS 246:18 f, "the *haruspices* should prepare an enquire on it"). The royal extispicies were apparently performed as follows: after writing down and pronouncing a carefully formulated inquiry to the gods Šamaš and Adad, the victim was slaughtered and the answer of the gods was read in the entrails whose peculiarities were minutely registered on the tablet. These were then interpreted according to the technical literature of the craft. It consisted, in the first place, of a large (at least 55-tablet) series entitled *bārûtu* "divination" where all signs one could possibly think of and the relevant apodoses were systematically listed. This so far little studied work was made up by several sub-series, e.g., *Šumma martu* "If the gall", *Šumma padānu* "If the 'path' (of the liver)", *Šumma ubānu* "If the 'finger'", *Šumma ḫašû* "If the lungs", *Šumma kakku arki amūti* "If there is a 'weapon' behind the liver", and so on. For schooling of students there was a treatise called *Šumma multābiltu* "If the interpretation(?)". The rituals accompanying the performances of extispices were explained in texts beginning with the words *Enūma mār bārê nīqē ukān* "When a haruspex is to perform a sacrifice" and *Enūma bārû ana šarri bīra barê* "When a haruspex (is to) inspect the exta for a king" (both texts incorporated into the series *bārûtu*). The strict qualifications set to all haruspices and the mythological origin of the craft were expounded in a text called (after its incipit) *Enmeduranki šar Sipparim* "E., king of Sippar". – The science of divination was jealously guarded by its practitioners, and its secrets could, according to the text just mentioned, go only from father to son. A deviation from this rule, such as reported in the letter ABL 1245[2], was considered nearly a sacrilege. The matter was, however, different when the royal family was concerned; thus at least the crown-prince Assurbanipal was introduced into the secrets of divination[3].

[1] The practice of lecanomancy which was in wide use in Old-Babylonian period appears to have been insignificant in Neo-Assyrian times and is disregarded here.

[2] Cf. obv 2 ff: "Paruṭu(?), a goldsmith of(?) the palace of the queen, has acquired (a private teacher) with his money and settled him in his home like the king, the crown prince or the prince of Babylon, and has taught his son in exorcism; he has even been shown liver omens of the haruspices and excerpts of *Enūma Anu Enlil*, and this before the face of the king!"

[3] Cf. AAB 7 254:15, "I argued about the text 'If the liver is a correspondence of the sky' with the wise diviners".

c) *āšipu* = "exorcist", "magician"

The exorcists specialized *in magic, i.e., trying to influence and fight the supernatural forces* by magical means, ritual (*nēpēšu*) and spell (*šiptu*). Since supernatural forces were considered not only the causes of diseases but also of other calamities[1], the domain the exorcists had to master was really vast: in the present letters alone a great variety of their activities can be distinguished. Their function in the capacity of doctors (chasing demons out of the sick by means of exorcism, ritual treatment, and magical amulets) is best attested (see LAS 143-144, 147, 150-156, 159-160, 172, 180-184, 193, 196, 215-217, 222). To this side of their activity, which can be characterized as *therapeutical*, belongs also LAS 178 (about a ritual against the grinding of teeth) and 219 (ritual for attaining good dreams). Equally essential, however, was their *apotropaic* activity (i.e., warding off and turning aside evil forces in advance) which is illustrated by numerous letters. E.g., letters 149, 172, 185, 196, 203 and 204 deal with the nullifying of bad portents by means of "apotropaic rituals" (*namburbû*), 159, 163, 164, 173-177 with turning back witchcraft and black magic by means of "counter-spells" (*ušburrudû*), 139, 208, 218, 219, 223, 227 with periodical rites performed in order to assure the health of the royal family, etc. The long and complicated ritual of substitute king (see pp. 54-65) was nothing but an elaborate apotropaic ritual. Still another important section of their work was their *cultic* activity, also clearly displayed in the letters. This included consacrating of divine statues by magical means (ritual called *mis pî* "washing of the mouth"; see LAS 188; only through this and similar ceremonies the human made statues were believed to be imparted of the divinity), ritual purification (*takpertu*) of places and objects during funerary ceremonies, great religious festivals etc. (e.g., during the transport of the statue of Marduk to Babylon, VAB 7 252ff III 2; in *akītu*-feast, ABL 1197: 9 [see the note on LAS 271:11]). In his therapeutical function the exorcist often collaborated with a physician (cf. below and LAS 222), in the apotropaic and cultic one often with an appeaser (see the note on LAS 268:12). – The vast coverage of the exorcists' craft ist best illustrated by their extensive and complex technical literature (= *āšipūtu* "exorcism") which formed the basis of their activity. The "exorcists' manual" KAR 44 (a tablet enumerating "the titles of exorcistic works fixed for erudition", obv. 1) alone lists over 100 different titles; but the actual number of reference-books was still higher, since for instance all apotropaic rituals were omitted in this list. An even superficial presentation of this literature is not possible in this connection. It consisted largely of ritual handbooks dealing with individual lengthy rituals (such as *Maqlû* and *Šurpu*, "Burning", *Ilī ul īde* "My god, I don't know", *Mušlu'u* "Rubbing", *Bīt rimki* "Wash-house", *Bīt mēsiri* "Enclosured house", *Bīt salā' mê* "House of water-sprinkling", *Mis pî* "Washing of the mouth") or of collections of incantations or/and rituals belonging to a given category (such as the series *Namburbi* containing hundreds of apotropaic rituals, *Šuillakā=nu* "Hand-lifting" containing hundreds of incantation-prayers, *māmīt pašāri* "to solve a curse" containing incantations of the type *namerimburrudû*, etc.). Large bilingual series contained Sumerian medical incantations with an interlinear Akkadian translation (*Utukkī lemnūti* "evil demons", *Asakkī marṣūti* "painful devils", etc.). A large (at least 155-tablet) compendium containing incantations and ritual instructions for and against all kinds of sorcery was entitled *teppušma išallim* "(If) you perform (this), he will get well". A diagnostical and prognostical work for the exorcists' medical practice, entitled *Enūma āšipu ana bīt marṣi illiku* "When an exorcist goes to the house of the sick", served for identifying the demons and gods causing the diseases. The books *alandimmû*, *kataduggû* and *nigdimdimmû* contained omens derived from the bodily traits and manner of speech of the patients; since these books were commonly counted to the exorcistic literature, observation of such omens apparently fell to the share of the exorcists (and not of the scribes). In addition to the bilingual texts

[1] The technical term for this was *lapātu* "to afflict"; cf. LAS 144:14 *li-ip-tu-šú da-an* "his affliction is severe" (said of a sick), 25 r7' *kaq-qu-ru E u-la-pat-an-ni* "the area which it (= the eclipse) afflicts", 135:19f *li-ip-tu-šu e-piš* "his affliction becomes a reality" (said of the substitute king), 109:17'f ISKIM-*šú la-ap-ta-at a-dan-nú* "its portent is very bad (lit. afflicted)", 172:10f *ki-ma mi-i-nu il-ta-pat-su* "after something has afflicted him (= the sick)", etc.

mentioned above, incantations and rituals for benefit of the sick were collected in recipe-books entitled IGI.GIG.GAMEŠ "sore eyes", ŠU.GIG.GAMEŠ "aching hands", etc. The students were supposed also to study the pharmaceutic and minerologic lists of the physicians (see below). – The great extent of the literature makes the impression that very few exorcists actually could master their whole field. In fact, the subjects treated in the letters of individual exorcists suggest that specialization was widely common, cf. the letters of Nabû-nādin-šumi, which concentrate on apotropaic rituals, and those of Nabû-nāṣir dealing with therapeutic matters only.

d) *asû* = "physician"

The physicians specialized *in what may most conveniently be called "pharmaceutical medicine"*; as doctors, their activity overlapped that of the exorcists, and the two are often found co-operating (see above)[1]. What the exorcists sought to achieve by magical means, the physicians did by applying various medications (made of a variety of plants and minerals by crushing and filtering) and other seemingly modern methods of treatment. Several kinds of medicaments are mentioned in the present letters, notably "potions" (*mašqītu*) and "drugs" (*šammu*), for internal use, "lotions" (*marḫuṣu*) and "salves" (*napšaltu*), for external use, "tampons" (*lippu*), "bandages" (*tal'īttu*), "fumigations" (*qutāru*), "phylacteries" (*mēlu*, worn around the neck) and an unidentified medication called *ṣil(li)bāni*. Without arguing about the scientific basis of the manufacturing and application of these medicaments, it must be remarked that also magical spells and rituals were used in order to improve the effect of the treatment. This is probably influence of the healing practice of the exorcists, who in their turn made use of the methods of the physicians (cf. LAS 144, 181, 193 etc.). – The physicians' technical literature (*asûtu*) consisted of a great wealth of stereotypically formulated recipes (*bulṭu*, literally "healing") organized into more or less loose wholes according to their subject matters. Of the titles of such recipe-books may be mentioned *Šumma amēlu muḫḫašu ummu ukāl* "If a man's skull is burnt with fever", *Šumma amēlu suāla mariṣ* "If a man suffers of suālu disease" and *Šumma amēlu pūšu kabit* "If a man's speech is difficult". The pharmacological and minerological series *Šammu šikinšu* "Plant (and) its kind" and *Abnu šikinšu* "Stone (and) its kind" served educational purposes.

e) *kalû* = "appeaser", "lamentation-expert"

The "appeasers" specialized *in appeasing the supernatural forces* by means of elaborate chants accompanied by a kettledrum. The general idea underlying their activity was that all kinds of bad signs, disasters and calamities were manifestations of diviner anger and that these could be cancelled or at least lessened with the reconciliation of the gods. Thus their interference was considered necessary e.g. during lunar eclipses (see LAS 278:9-10 and the corresponding note); they are frequently found co-operating with the exorcists in the performance of apotropaic rites as well as in the cult. – The technical literature of the lamentation-experts consisted in the first place of a vast hymnic literature: the catalogue $4R^2$ 53 which enumerates hymns of 3 different types (*balaggu*, *eršemma* and *šuillakānu*) lists nearly 200 different titles, and as the text itself states (rev. IV 31), this was only a portion of the existing ones; e.g., all chants of the type *eršaḫunga* (see the note on LAS 271 r3) are missing there. A special ritual-book treated the ceremonies performed before and during the nightly chants (beginning *Enūma lilis siparri ana arāmīka* "when you are to cover the kettledrum"). The appeasers' parts in the apotropaic rites were clarified in ritual compendiums resembling those of the exorcists (characterized by a colophon line *nūpāšī ša qāt kalê* "rituals in the hands of the appeaser").

[1] For the co-operation of exorcists and physicians see E. Ritter, *Studies Landsberger*, p. 299-321.

B. On the activity and the role of the scholars

1. *On the scientific activity of the scholars (from the modern point of view)*

It seems worthwhile to present in this connection some observations on the scientific activities of the "masters".

In the first place, the letters attest to the *rapid expansion of astronomical knowledge* begun in the Sargonid era. It is a more or less established opinion that the two-tablet compendium "Plough-star"[1] contains the summary of the astronomical knowledge around 700 B.C.[2], and it is therefore interesting to see how the letters of the astrologers correspond to that assumption. A comparison of the "Plough-star" and the letters is only partially possible, because whole sections of the former[3] have not been published as yet; nevertheless, it is quite evident that the letters reflect a *more advanced stage* of astronomy. As the examples cited below reveal, the Sargonid astrologers were able to *predict* lunar and solar *eclipses* and *planetary phases* with a considerable degree of certainty. This was made possible through *the discovery of the periodity of the astronomical phenomena*, based on exact observations and recordings of eclipses and movements of the planets. These achievements have hitherto invariably been credited to the astronomers of the Neo-Babylonian and Persian era.[4]

I shall now concisely present the evidence necessary to prove the assertions made above. First, examples of various *predictions* made by the astrologers: a) concerning *eclipses of the moon*: "On the 14th day, an eclipse of the moon will occur: bad for the Eastland and the Westland, good for the king, my lord. The king, my lord, can be happy. Ever since the planet Venus became visible, I said to the king, my lord: 'An eclipse will take place'. From Rāši-ili, [the king]'s foremost servant." (RMA 273); "On the 15th of Ulūlu the moon will be seen [opposite] the sun; he (= the moon god) will let [the eclipse] pass by [(long break)] will be seen opposite the sun; he will let the eclipse pass by (and) will not make it. From Nabû-aḫḫē-erība. On the

[1] The best survey on this work is given by B.L. van der Waerden, *Die Anfänge der Astronomie* (Basel 1968), p. 64-81. See also the notes on LAS 43.

[2] Cf. B.L. van der Waerden, *op. cit.*, p. 65: "Die Serie ^{mul}APIN stellt allem Anschein nach eine Kompilation des gesamten astronomischen Wissens der Zeit vor -700 dar"; O. Neugebauer, *The Exact Sciences in Antiquity* (Providence 1957), p. 101: "Historically much more interesting . . . are two texts which were called 'mul apin'. The earliest preserved copies are dated around 700 B.C., but they are undoubtedly based on older material. They contain a summary of the astronomical knowledge of their time."

[3] The first tablet and sections of the second have been edited and discussed in several connections, but a complete edition of the whole work is still wanting.

[4] Cf. van der Waerden, *op.cit.*, p. 97: "Die Astronomie dieser [= der neubabylonischen und persischen] Zeit besitzt folgende charakteristischen Züge, durch die sie sich *deutlich* von der älteren aus ^{mul}APIN und den assyrischen Briefen bekannten Astronomie unterscheidet: 1. Systematisch durchgeführte, datierte und schriftlich fixierte Beobachtungen von Finsternissen, Mond- und Planetenerscheinungen; 2. Erkenntnis der Periodizität der Himmelserscheinungen; Berechnung von Perioden; 3. Voraussage von Finsternissen und Vorausberechnung von Mond- und Planetenerscheinungen, wahrscheinlich auf Grund der eben erwähnten Periode; 4. Einteilung des Tierkreises in 12 Zeichen zu 30 Grad; 5. Entstehung der Horoskop-Astrologie." I would say that only the two points mentioned last were really characteristic of the period, and even the division of the zodiac was practically completed in the Assyrian time (see p. 18, note 2).

13th." (RMA 271A; cf the nearly exact duplicates RMA 274E and H); "As regards the watch of the moon about which the king, my lord, wrote to me, he (= the moon god) will let (the eclipse) pass by, he will not make it" (LAS 42:6-8, from Balasî); "It is said: '(As regards) the watch of the moon, he will let (the eclipse) pass by in the intercalary Ulūlu. In Tašrītu it is liable to occur'. On the 3rd of Ulūlu." (LAS 286 r7'-10', from Mār-Ištar). A particularly important letter is LAS 62, from Nabû-aḫḫē-erība, which unfortunately is badly broken. It seems to explain the theory according to which the predictions were made, mentioning the periodity of the eclipses; see the discussion below. "[As regards] the wa[tch of the moon] about which the king, my lord, wrote to me, the watch is tonight, in the morning watch. The eclipse will occur in the morning watch" (LAS 63:1'-9', from Nabû-aḫḫē-erība). b) Concerning *eclipses of the sun*: "As regards the watch of the sun about which the king, my lord, wrote to me, doesn't the king, my lord, know that it is difficult(?) – [the d]ay of tomo[rrow] is the only one, the watch will (then) be finished. He (= the sun god) will let the eclipse pass by, he will not make it" (LAS 42, from Balasî; see the discussion below). "As regards the watch of the sun about which the king, my lord, wrote to me, this is (really) a month to watch the sun. We keep watching it twice, on the 26th of Araḫsamna and on the 26th of Kislimu. In this way we keep watching the sun for two months. As regards the solar eclipse about which the king spoke, the eclipse did not take place. I shall look again on the 27th and write to the king, my lord." (LAS 41, from Balasî). "As regards the eclipse of the sun about which the king wrote to me: 'Will it occur or will it not occur? Send me a definite answer!' The eclipse of the moon does not "emerge from my hands" like that of the sun[1] . . . It do not know it. Now, because it is the month to watch the sun und the king is in the open country, that is why I wrote to the king: 'The king should pay attention whether it occurs or not'" (ABL 477, unknown author). c) Concerning *planets*: "What the king, my lord, wrote to me, (namely), 'One of your colleagues wrote that *Mercury* will be visible in the month Nisannu; what month do you have now?', the month we have is Addaru" (LAS 12:6-11); "And (as regards) what he s[aid to the king], (viz.), 'It (= Mercury) [will appear] in the constellation Ar[ies]'" (LAS 106:4'-5'); "(As regards) what the king, my lord, wrote to me: '(The prince) PN should appear before the king', he may come [as soon] as *Venus* has become visible. Now, Venus has taken a nice course (= is due to appear soon)" (LAS 69 r1'-7', from Nabû-aḫḫē-erība); "Concerning the crown prince, what the king, my lord, wrote to me, (namely), '*Mars* is shining brightly', Mars will be shining brightly and be clothed in luminosity until the month Ajaru" (LAS 45:6-11, from Balasî; the letter was written in the month Addaru); "I shall write to the king, after *Jupiter* has become visible. I am waiting for it, it will take this whole month" (LAS 38 r13-17, from Balasî); "*Saturn* will 'collapse' (= become retrograde) this very month" (LAS 13 r25-26, from Ištar-šumu-ēreš).

The fact that these predictions were based on accurate, empiric knowledge of the periodity of the astronomical phenomena, appears from the frequent occurence of the word *adannu* "term, fixed period" in astrological letters (LAS 62 r5, 66:14, 289:9'.20', and 334:6). Two letters are particularly revealing. In LAS 66 the astrologer Nabû-aḫḫē-erība reacts as follows to the claim that the planet Venus has become visible: "The man who wrote (this) to the king, [my lord], does not know what he speaks! He does not kn[ow the . . .] period (*adannu*) [of] the rotation(? *da-aja-la-[te]*) [of Venus]! (Short gap.) Venus is not y[et] visi[ble]. Tonight, when I am writing [this] message to the king, my lord, we can s[ee] only Mercury. We [can]not [see] Venus." The rest of the letter, unfortunately broken, is apparently devoted to clarifying the differences in the phases of the two planets. Taking into consideration the great luminosity of Mercury at the moment, Nabû-aḫḫē-erība seems to assert that a distinction between the two planets is only possible if one knows their fixed periods and current positions in the sky (r26-27). – LAS 62, referred to above, is important in that it mentions *adannu* in connection with the prediction of lunar eclipses. It proves the suggestion put forth already long ago[2] that the Sargonid astrologers knew the 'Saros' period of the eclipses. In fact, systematic observations of eclipses had.

[1] Taking into consideration the astronomical knowledge of that time, this literal transliteration is preferable to that given in CAD A 2 370b ("I am well able to deal with eclipses of the sun as well as of the moon"); perhaps the idiom *ana qāti aṣû* here is identical with *ana qāti šūṣû*?

[2] See P. Schnabel, Die Saros-periode der Finsternisse schon in der Sargonidenzeit bekannt, ZA 35 (1924) 297-318. Note also the detailed reports on subsequent lunar eclipses, arranged in groups of 18 years, published in

according to Ptolemy, been made since the reign of Nabonassar (747 B.C.), and it is thus entirely conceivable that the Assyrians might have discovered that the eclipses recur almost identically after cycles of 18 years. – As regards the solar eclipses, it had been recognized that they can be expected on the new moon days immediately preceding and succeeding lunar eclipses (see LAS 41, cited above). However, the Saros period was not valid for predicting solar eclipses with certainty, and apparently, for this reason such predictions were seldom ventured (cf. ABL 477). The non-occurrence of a solar eclipse predicted in LAS 42 was apparently based on the observation that two subsequent solar eclipses w i t h o u t an intervening lunar one are not possible (the letter was written before a lunar eclipse which was predicted not to occur).

Though certainly not based on mathematical calculations, but on purely empirical study, *the discovery that the astronomical phenomena followed regular patters was* undeniably a great achievement and, in my opinion, *essential to the later development of the mathematical astronomy*. It would, of course, be interesting to know the name of the man to whom this discovery can be attributed. However, the present amount of documentation makes only hypotheses possible.[1]

To illustrate the accuracy of the observations made at that time one need only refer to LAS 105, a report on the lunar eclipse of 11. VI. 669 B.C. by an unknown astrologer. Here, in fact, all essential details of the eclipse are recorded with considerable accuracy. The magnitude of the eclipse is given in fingers, the hour in sideral time (referring to the cluminating constellation), and the longitude of the moon with reference to the zodiac.[2] In addition, the astrologically interesting data (the date, the watch, and the eclipsed quadrants) were registered. Though the other reports sent to the king were generally less accurate and no annotations made by the astrologers for private purposes have been preserved, one may safely assume that the records kept by the astrological schools were on a "scientific" level.[3]

It is not possible to go deeper into the contents of the astrological letters in this connection. I would however like to draw attention to two interesting letters which have not yet been mentioned, namely: LAS 53 which shows that the Assyrian astrologers were aware of the better suitability of southern latitudes for the observation of Mercury, and LAS 38 which shows that the heliacal rise of Jupiter was taken into consideration in deciding whether an intercalary month had to be added after the month Ulūlu or Addaru. Such revealing glimpses into the astronomy of the Sargonid era are to be found in other letters too.

The letters of the physicians give welcome insight into the Mesopotamian medicine which otherwise is nearly exclusively known from the relevant scholarly literature[4]. Here, too, besides magical superstition, one encounters scientifically sound observations based on extensive empirical study. The best example of the "scientific" medicine is, curiously enough, offered by a letter of an *exorcist* (LAS 216). The author of this letter, Nabû-nāṣer, was able to connect the neuralgia in the head, hands and feet of his patient with the condition of the patient's teeth. Such a diagnosis can hardly have been given at random. Other letters illustrate the Assyrian methods of curing a bleeding nose (LAS 251-252), aching ears (LAS 253), injured eye socket (LAS 254), chronic rash (LAS 255) and rheumatism (LAS 246 etc.). For lack of sufficient medical knowledge I must refrain from commenting upon the applied methods.

Pinches - Strassmeier - Sachs, *Late Babylonian astronomical and related texts* (Providence 1955), no. 1414ff (comprising the years 730-317 at least).

[1] A clarification of this point would be possible only if the spade of some lucky archaeologist brought to light a sufficient amount of Neo-Assyrian "astronomical diaries", such as have been found in masses from later periods.

[2] Though the zodiac was fully developed in the Neo-Assyrian period (and already much earlier), its division into 12 schematic signs of 30° each was apparently not realized at that time; for the positions of the planets (including the sun and the moon) were indicated with reference to the zodiacal constellations, and not by means of the signs and degrees; yet this is only an argumentum e silentio, for the only texts we possess are reports written for astrological purposes, and we know nothing of the practice followed in actual astronomical observation texts. In any case, the division of the solar year into 12 schematic months is found already in the compendium "Plough-star", and from this there is only a short step to the zodiacal signs; cf. B.L. van der Waerden, *op.cit.*, p. 124, and, fuller, AfO 16 (1952-53), p. 218.

[3] Cf. already E. Weidner, ZA 27 (1912) 387: "Das Wichtigste bei der ganzen Angelegenheit ist . . . . daß die Fachausdrücke, die wir in den astronomischen Texten der spätbabylonischen Zeit finden, bereits zur Sargonidenzeit vollständig ausgeprägt sind."

[4] Besides these, one may resort to the account of Herodotus (Historiae I 197), the laws of Hammurabi (§§ 215-223), the Middle Babylonian letters referred to in footnote 2, p. 3, and scattered passages in other letters and inscriptions.

I shall not try to estimate the scientific element in the letters of the *exorcists, haruspices and appeasers* which, though full of interesting details about these crafts, do not have anything to do with the modern concept of science; one may analogously posit that they were as competent in their fields as their colleagues specializing in astrology and medicine. Instead, I shall pick out and discuss a couple of passages illustrating the relation of the scholars to the tradition, especially the traditional literature.

It must be made clear at the outset that the essence of the books forming the traditional literature was considered s a c r e d . This appears not only from the divine origin assigned to many compositions (see above, Chapter II A 1, p. 10), but also from the way in which these books were cited: the quotations are often preceded by the words "it is written" or "it is said", just like the Holy Scriptures are referred to in the Gospel and elsewhere.[1] According to Berossus, all wisdom and crafts were taught to the mankind by the fabulous fish-sage Oannes at the beginning of the times, and after that nothing noteworthy was invented[2]. Hence, the tradition was not simply a factor that determined the culture and had to be taken into consideration in all intellectual activities; it was certainly also a force suppressing literary and scientific creativeness, comparable to the role of the classical tradition in the Middle Ages.

Copying and maintaining the tradition was by no means felt as a burden; on the contrary, it was the very goal of the carriers of the tradition to adopt themselves to it and to become part of the ancient cultural continuum. Naturally, this does not exclude that new development took place. Military expansion, addition of knowledge, and social and economical growth contributed all to a gradual change of the world view which necessitated revisions and reinterpretations of the earlier conceptions; the literature, too, was subjected to this process. Besides, as a result of continuous study and rewriting, it was gradually standardized and modified into a more and more systematic and schematic whole. At the same time new works were composed and incorporated into the tradition. The present letters bear witness of all aspects of this literary activity.

It is noteworthy that, when references to tablets are made, wax tablets[3] are often mentioned (see LAS 147:10, 318:8, 319 r1.4, 320 r1, 331:8). This implies that large sections of the literature used by the scholars were written on such perishable materials, and are naturally now lost for good. It is quite possible that even the royal libraries of Nineveh consisted, for a good deal, of wax tablets; in other words, only part of the so-called library of Assurbanipal has probably come down to us. Cf. LAS 319 r1 ff: "Let them bring in that wax tablet of the (series) Enūma Anu Enlil which we have written, and let the king, my lord, have a look." This passage apparently refers to a copy specifically prepared by order of the king himself (most probably to be included in the library). LAS 318:8 refers to "new wax tablets that are being written"; see also LAS 331:8, in similar context.

[1] For *akī annie (ina libbi . . .) šaṭar* "it is written as follows (in . . .)" cf. Matt. 4:6 (γέγραπται γαρ ὅτι), 11:10, Mark. 1:2 (γέγραπται ἐν τῷ Ησαΐᾳ), 7:6 (ὡς γέγραπται ὅτι), Luke 3:4, 4:7, etc.; for *akī annie (ina libbi . . .) qabi* or *kī annie iqtibi* (LAS 43:5-7, 298 r8'-9') cf. Matt. 12:17, 13:14, 15:7, Luke 20:42, etc.

[2] See P. Schnabel, *Berossos*, p. 253.

[3] An exemplar of such wax tablets (= Ass. *lē'u*, in this edition conventionally rendered with "wooden tablet") has actually been found; see D.J. Wiseman, Assyrian Writing-Boards, Iraq 17 (1955) 3-13, and M. Howard, Technical Description of the Ivory Writing-Boards from Nimrud, ibid. 14-20.

In spite of frequent allusions to copying of texts, the present letters do not contain any concrete evidence bearing on the creation of the library of Assurbanipal[1]; nevertheless they prove that the library project was under way already in the reign of Esarhaddon. LAS 318, referring to "newly written tablets" (see above), was certainly addressed to Esarhaddon since the crown prince (Assurbanipal) is mentioned on obv. 4; in this letter the author praises the literary style of the king in lavish words. LAS 331, which unfortunately cannot be dated, seems to deal with a systematical copying of texts (for the library); see rev. 2-10. As a matter of fact, it is unthinkable that the scholars could have practised their work at court without a considerable stock of reference books available; hence a large palace library must have existed in Nineveh already from the time of Sennacherib onwards. But the only king who is known to have actively taken interest in enlarging the library is, now as before, Assurbanipal.[2]

Thereagainst the letters disclose a hitherto unknown purpose of copying literary texts. LAS 185, a letter of the chief exorcist Marduk-šākin-šumi, opens with an enumeration of 21 tablets containing incantations, prayers and rituals against a lunar eclipse, which the writer states to have "performed" on the river bank. Thereafter the letter continues (obv. 23 ff): "Today I shall be busy searching, collecting and copying a lot of tablets, 20 to 30, canonical and non-canonical, (but) I shall perform (them) (only) tomorrow evening (and) on the night of the 15th day." The writer evidently implies that he was preparing a new set of tablets for this special occasion (i.e., performance of the *Bīt rimki*-ritual). LAS 173, dealing with the performance of counter-spells against black magic, begins quite parallelly: "As regards the ritual about which the king said yesterday: 'Perform it before the 24th day!', we cannot make it, the tablets are (too) numerous; (God knows) when they will write (them)." (obv. 5-10; cf. also rev. 1 ff and 186 r12 ff). One can only guess what the purpose of this copying was; perhaps the name of the king had to be added to the prayers, or some kind of redaction was considered necessary.

Redaction of literary works is alluded to in LAS 116 which, after six broken lines, reads as follows: "The series should be rev[ised]. Let the king give orders: two long tablets containing explanations of antiquated words should be removed, (and) two (tablets) concerning divination should be put (instead)." On the interpretation of this passage see the commentary.

A new literary composition, probably a royal inscription, is referred to in LAS 305: "Let the king, my lord, have a look: anything that is superfluous should be removed, and what has to be added, should be added." This text shows quite clearly that the kings themselves, at least occasionally, gave the finishing touch to their inscriptions.

In conclusion, I would like to draw attention to two letters which show how lively the tradition was in Sargonid times and how new texts were incorporated into it. Both LAS 67 and 334 deal with untoward celestial omens against which apparently no apotropaic *namburbi* rituals were available. In both cases the following procedure was proposed: The so-called 'general' *namburbi* (against all kinds of evil) should be performed, wherefore the relevant ritual tablet had to be rewritten and the bad omen added to the section enumerating the evil portents to be counteracted. Tablets of this type have actually been found (see the pertinent comments); it is evident that large parts of the scholarly literature were born similarly, by gradual accretion of new texts written during the daily practice of the scholars.

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1 Other letters are more yielding in this respect; see ABL 334 (discussed by A.L. Oppenheim, JNES 1 [1942] 371 f), 447 (a memorandum concerning works in the library), and CT 22, no. 1 (= Pfeiffer, SLA 256 and Waterman, RCAE IV p. 212 ff; cf. Weidner, AfO 14 [1941-44] 178 f).

2 Assurbanipal's interest in the library is attested by his own inscriptions and, above all, by numerous colophons attached to literary works specifically copied in order to be included in the library. Note, however, that a great number of tablets lack such colophons and instead contain a brief remark "property of Assurbanipal, king of Assyria" engraved at the end of the tablet, suggesting that these tablets were not copied during the reign of Assurbanipal but, at least partly, belonged to the palace library which had existed already under his predecessors.

2. *The influence of the scholars at court*

The Mesopotamian concept of science influenced also the social status of the scholars. Their services and competence were needed in the courts, the haruspices to consult the gods about important enterprises, the astrologers to interpret omens occuring in the sky and the earth, the exorcists and the physicians to take care of the mental and physical wellbeing of the royal family, and the *kalû*-singers to appease angered gods (see above pp. 12ff.). As a matter of fact, it is not impossible that the scientific literature of these experts originated to a large extent in the needs of the royal courts[1].

In the court, the activities of the 'scientists' concentrated on the person of the king. They belonged to his entourage (= the circle of king's near men permanently staying in the palace), and the most able of them, "chief" exorcists, astrologers, etc., were ex officio in a very influential position as personal counselors of the king.

(To avoid misunderstandings it must be emphasized that the royal entourage naturally did not consist of "scientific" advisors only. Representatives of influental native families[2], foreign nobles kept as hostages or seeking protection at the court[3], palace officials such as the chief cupbearer and the chief baker etc.[4], king's personal friends and above all his relatives and other "royal seed"[5] certainly formed an equally essential part of it. This part of the entourage must, however, be disregarded here).

In this connection one may ask how is it possible that many letters were sent to the king, especially by his closest advisers such as Adad-šumu-uṣur, if they really stayed at the palace; would it not have been more convenient to see the king and to discuss the matter orally? The answer is, of course, yes, but it was not up to the scholars to see the king whenever they wished; the position and status of the king implied that the time he could give for the reception of people (including his courtiers) was strictly restricted (he could not grant a private audience to everyone wanting to see him for practical reasons alone and without risking his royal aura and authority). *The best way to communicate with the king* (even for the people living in the palace) *was to write letters.* The "morning post" was read to the king by his private secretary[6]; it was then up to the king to decide whom he wanted to see. The king evidently managed the visits, petitions, complaints etc. collectively in a great audience taking place daily. This audience is referred to in the letters with the idiom "to enter into the presence of the king" (*ina pān šarri erābu*)[7]. Naturally the king could in theory have a private talk with anyone whenever he so

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1 Note, e.g., that most of the apodoses of the *astrological* and liver omens concerned the fate of the king and his adversaries, as if written from the viewpoint of the palace; that such complicated rituals as *Maqlû*, *Šurpu*, *Bīt mēsiri*, etc. were composed solely for the protection of the king; that the king is the central figure of the *kalû*-rituals, and that the great hemerological work *Enbu Bēl arḫi* was written for the use of the king only.

2 See LAS 121 r6-11 and 122 r15-16.

3 This custom, later followed by the Neo-Babylonian and Persian monarchs, is well attested both in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions and letters.

4 For the influental position of the Chief Cupbearer see, e.g., Nehemiah 1:11 - 2:8.

5 Cf. VTE 76 ff (enumerating persons closest to the crown prince): "his brothers, his uncles, his nephews, his family, seed of his father, magnates, governors, courtiers, eunuchs, and scholars."

6 For the corresponding idiom *ina pān šarri sasā'u* see LAS 39:13-16, 40 r5'-6', 60 r2-6, 246:13-15 und ABL 1250 r17-18.

7 *ki-ma e-tar-ba* "after I have entered" and *le-ru-ub* "I will enter" in LAS 185 r27 and 252 r19 (etc.) refer to this audience and do not indicate that the authors lived outside the palace. LAS 2 dinstinguishes between scholars living in the city of Nineveh and in the palace; yet it can be proved that at least the most important ones lived at court (for Adad-šumu-uṣur see 121 r14, 126:14-16; for Nabû-aḫḫē-erība and Ištar-šumu-ēreš, ABL 993:6-8; for Balasî, LAS 34:7-8; etc.). On the other hand it is self-evident that they occasionally left the palace (cf. 181 r6-7, 247 r27-28, 249 r2-3, etc.).

desired. It must, however, be stressed that he, even as a despote, could not always act as he pleased: he was bound by the regulations and necessities resulting from this position as the religious and political leader of a very large and complicated empire.

The role played by the "scientific advisors" in the court has been much discussed and various, though parallel, opinions have been presented. However, there is as yet no special study on the subject, sufficiently detailed, to form a basis for a sound judgment about the expressed opinions. Since the relevant evidence is largely taken from the present letters, it seems imperative to take up the matter more fully here. I shall concentrate on the question of the scholarly influence on the king, *limiting myself to letters from Esarhaddon's reign*, for sufficient material for objective study is available only from that time. Three basic questions will be studied, 1) was the king superstitious, i.e., did the necessary conditions exist for considerable influence of the scholars, 2) what were the topics of the letters, i.e., in what matters could the scholars have influenced the king; and 3) what kind of influence can be observed and what was the king's attitude towards it.

1) *The superstitiousness of Esarhaddon stands out clearly from his own words*, frequently cited in the letters. They prove unequivocally that he was really interested in and concerned about the supernatural forces. I can here cite only a fraction of the evidence: e.g., "is this month auspicious? The crown prince should visit me" LAS 146:7-9, similarly 145:5-8: "as regards [the visibility of] Mars [which the king] wrote me about: 'perform [apotropaic rital against] it!'" 149:5-8: "what the king, my lord, wrote to me: 'A lightning struck from the sky in the city of Ḫarilumba and ravaged the field of the Assyrians', why does the king seek (trouble)? ", 38:5-10 "as regards the watch of the moon which the king, my lord, wrote about, the eclipse will pass by, it will not take place", 42:6-8: "as regards the raven about which the king, my lord, wrote to me", 36:5-6: "as regards the omen prediction about which the king, my lord, wrote to me: "'The king will come to naught with his dignitaries': what losses will ensue? ", 35:6-11: "as regards the crown prince about whom the king, my lord, wrote to me: 'Mars is bright (so he will probably not be able to visit me)'", 45:6-9: "as regards what the king wrote to me: 'Have you observed something in the sky? '", 41:6-8: "as regards the rites accompanying the incantation 'Verily you are evil' about which the king, my lord, wrote to me", 172:7-8. In some cases the scholars even had to assure their anxious lord that there was nothing to be afraid of, instead of trying to pump superstitious fear into him.

2) *The subject matter of almost every letter under study is strictly professional* (hemerology, astrology and omen science in general, extispicy, magic, medicine, chronology and literature). LAS 36, 85, 114, 118, 120, 121 are or contain petitions, 21, 79 are felicitations, 34, 59, 122, 130 are thanks, 123-127 contain thanks and blessings, 129 and 131 are congratulations, 19, 29, 57-58, 170, 191 deal with various cultic matters (19 and 191 with temples, 29, 57-58 with statues and 170 with offerings), 37 speaks about duties of the shepherds, 133 is a kind of secret service report. In the vast majority of cases (about 70%) the letters are answers to questions put forth by the king; and most of the remaining letters are automatical reports of celestical events (requested by the king, cf. 13, 41, 87 etc.) or the health of patients. Among the topics discussed the following can be distinguished:

Hemerology:	auspicious days for	1) building of temples
		2) erecting of statues
		3) celebration of festivals
		4) visits of the princes
	observation of hemerological prescriptions	
Omen science:	interpretation of omens threatening the safety of the king; predictions as to the fate of the king and his adversaries	
Magic:	substitute king ritual and other rituals pertaining to the safety of the king and his family	

Medicine:	cure of	1) the king himself
		2) the crown prince and the queen mother
		3) other children of the king
Chronology:	intercalation of year; calculation of the length of months	
Extispicy:	inquiries of divine will in matters of high importance, such as 1) military operations, 2) nomination of magistrates, 3) religious measures, 4) serious illness, 5) royal succession.	

Deviation from these topics is relatively seldom but does occur. In cases where the writers leave their special fields to touch matters of political importance, an attempt at influencing the king is possible (see next paragraph).

3) With regard to the significance of matters that were made the object of omen-science and extispicy in particular, it is conceivable that the counselors of the king might have been tempted to falsify the facts, and the king was well aware of this possibility. According to ABL 1216 (see note on LAS 41:6), in Sennacherib's reign the astrologers and haruspices agreed not to tell the king but lucky omens, although the king soon found out about this. The king's suspicion that something was being concealed from him is displayed clearly in LAS 13, 41, 128 and 199 (among others). He went even as far as to check the correctness of the information given to him. E.g., when it was claimed by some astrologer that the benevolent planet of Mercury was visible and the crown prince could thus safely visit the king, he wrote to other experts to ascertain the observation (LAS 12, 53, 65 and 66). As reports came to the king not only from his court advisers but also from other parts of the realm (see note on LAS 278:6-8), it was relatively easy, even for a layman, to find out inconsistencies in the interpretations, if any, by simply comparing the tablets with each other. In any case, careful sudy reveals that *the technical matters exposed in the letters are throughout reliable*; when the authors use references to scientific literature to support their case, the citations are word-for-word and in many cases even the source is indicated. This could partly be caution, but it is more likely that the advisors, being as superstitious as anyone else, really believed in the importance of their science and took it as their duty to give their lord as reliable information as possible. Cf., e.g., LAS 199:7-8 "May the gods Bēl and Nabû call to account the servant who is not honest with the king, his lord!", and see the pertinent note (see also LAS 321). The cases where an advisor is said to "lie" to the king should probably not be interpreted as deliberate falsifications of the traditional interpretations, but simply as due to different schools. Hence we may not expect to find deliberate influence on the king as far as strictly "scientific" matters are concerned.

The matter was, however, different when it came to *converting the theory into praxis*. Here the scholars were left with more range to move, and their subjective thoughts and feelings, finding expression in the comments and advices, came to play a greater part.

For instance, we read in a Neo-Babylonian astrological report to Esarhaddon, RMA 272, r7 ff: "All these portents which have appeared, concern Babylonia and its nobles; none of the evil pertain to the king, my lord. (. . .) The king should do this, and whatever Bēl-uṣēzib writes to his lord, and I shall take the responsibility (instead) of the king, my lord. The nobles of Babylonia whom the king, your father, nominated, destroyed the city of Babylon and carried away the . . . of Babylon; therefore these evil signs have (now) appeared. The troops of the king should go, seize them . . . and put others in their stead. If the king does not act swiftly, the enemy will come and change them." The Babylonian astrologer Munnabitu, when discussing the enthroning of a substitute king, gives the king the following advice: "Let the chief exorcist act as he pleases, and let the king change and remove one noble among the magnates of Chaldea, Aram and [. . .], from his office; this one will take the omen on himself." (ABL 1000:18 ff). This writer apparently *had in mind eliminating one of the unreliable rulers of the southern dynasties* and to give a schock to the others; the chief exorcist suggested a candidate among the nationalminded Babylonians: "[The king, my lord] know the Babylonians . . . [these pl]otters

should be aff[licted]. Tomorrow, if (this idea) is good, I shall discuss it with the king as soon as I have entered." (LAS 185 r21-27, and see the pertinent notes). *Occasionally the king was*, by appealing to good omens, *encouraged to military enterprises*. E.g., LAS 279:23 ff: "Someone of the kings of Ḫatti, Chaldea or Arabia will bear the consequences of this sign. With the king, my lord, all is well: the king, my lord, will attain his desire; . . . The king of Ethiopia, the king of [Tyre] or Mugallu will either [die] in the natural way or the king, my lord, will take him captive, and the king, my lord, will reduce his country." (Cf. the Neo-Babylonian letter ABL 137, cited in note on 279:13 ff). K. 1353 (Dietrich, WO 4 [1968] 234 ff), obv. 6 ff, reads: "This evil (omen) pertains to the Mannaeans. Where an enemy attacks a country, this country will bear the evil (consequences of the omen). Now that the troops of the king, my lord, have attacked the Mannaeans, they have taken the fortresses and plundered the countryside; will they return, they will heap (additional booty) and plunder the rest of the country. But if the troops of the king will not proceed against the enemy, (the situation) will become critical" (cf. ibid. 15 ff and ABL 1237, by the same author). Note also the unclear passage in LAS 13 r12-16, "why not these enemy kings do not bend under the chariot of the king, my lord? " The tendency discernible all along the line was *to interpret, whatever possible, to the advantage of the king*: as courtiers, the scholars were naturally concerned about their own well-being, which was in direct relation to their ability to keep the king happy and calm. Thus, in LAS 38, Balasî gives a resumée of the predictions pertaining to an omen which the king was concerned about, and chooses the least frightening one. In LAS 35 he affirms the king that the grave prediction resulting from an earthquake can be nullified by means of a ritual, and considers the whole incident only as a divine admonition to the king. In LAS 45, he uses a trick to give the king a chance to see the crown prince: according to hemerologies, the prince could not got out (for a visit), but "what has entering (into the audience) to do with going out? " (cf. LAS 148). This real concern for the king's happiness is very evident in LAS 51 and 143, where the writers try, using scholarly arguments, to make the sick king give up his unhealthy isolation and abstinence from food. Similarly the king was (though his doctors apparently knew that he suffered from an incurable disease) always encouraged during his ill periods: cf. RMA 257:6 ff: "The king, my lord, should not be worried about this sickness: it is a seasonal disease. All those who have been sick (with it) are well . . . 'He who is doing well dies young – he who is sickly lives long' "; LAS 182:5 ff: "As regards the chills about which the king, my lord, wrote to me, there is nothing to be worried about: the gods of the k[ing] will quickly cure it . . . It is a seasonal disease; [the ki]ng, my lord, should not lay it [on hi]s heart."; LAS 180:5 ff "what the king, my lord, said: 'My arms and legs are without strength', and 'I cannot open my eyes'. I am worn out and lie prostrate' . . . there is nothing to worry about; the gods Aššūr, Šamaš, Bēl and Nabû will see for its cure" (cf. also LAS 246 and 247). It would be unnecessary to present additional parallel examples: the overall striving to please the king is witnessed clearly enough by the abundant flatteries met in the letters and felicitations and blessings on account of the king's decisions. It must have been thought that compliments and good news might please the ruler, for *petitions* were often preceded by enumeration of good omens (see LAS 36, 85, 120 and 121).

The way in which the advices and suggestions were put forth needs special attention. Humble politeness and deep respect is the dominant feature. A suggestion (in precative) is very often accompanied by the reservation *šumma (šummu) ina pān šarri bēlīja maḫer* "if it is acceptable to the king, my lord" (e.g., 1:15-16, 45 r6-7, 119:14-15, 133 r4-5, 179:9-10, 185 r9, 195 r4, 277 r23, 280 r13-14, 291:14, 310:11), less often by *šummu ṭaris* "if it is convenient" (197 r3), *šumma šarru bēlī iqabbi* "if the king, my lord, says (so)" (1 r1-2, 173:14, etc.), or *šummu ana ṭūbi šakin* "if it seems good" (185 r27). Mostly several alternative suggestions are offered; they are, as a rule, accompanied by some of the following phrases: *mīnu ša šarru bēlī iqabbûni* "what is it that the king, my lord, says? " (e.g., 134 r6); *kī ša ina pān šarri bēlīja maḫirūni (šarru) lēpuš(ū)* "they (or the king) should do as it best suits the king, my lord" (60 r8-10, 73 r3-5); *šarru bēlī kī ša ila'ûni lēpuš* "the king, my lord, should act as he wishes" (309 r28-29); *mīnu šīṭīni šarru bēlī liprus lišpura* "the king, my lord, should decide what to do and write (about it)" (173 r2-4, 190 r11-13). Cf. 3:8-5 "the 20th, 22nd and 25th day are suitable for taking the oath; we shall undertake (it) *whenever the king, my lord, orders*". The humility of the counselor is expressed by occasional remarks such as *anāku mīnu laqbi* "what could I say" (199:14), *anākūma mīnu aqabbi* "what can I say (the old man who has no reason)" (143 r2-5). It goes without saying that this humility and politeness was intentional; but it certainly reflects the great prestige of the king and the distance that separated him even from his closest advisors.

It has been possible to demonstrate that necessary conditions existed for a considerable influence of the scholars on the king. It remains to study whether and how far this influence actually took place. In some cases, especially in matters of magic, it can be established beyond doubt that the king followed the advices of the scholars; note, e.g., the repeated performance of the substitute king ritual. Similarly he, as all Assyrian kings, certainly took notice of the hemerologies in his building operations, arrangement of public meetings, etc. *At the same time it is, however, quite clear that he was by no means under the thumb of his advisors.* The critical attitude of the king towards them, discussed above, can be further illustrated by such incidental remarks as "perhaps the king, my lord, does not believe (this)" (LAS 14 r6-7). The history proves that the king, e.g., did not follow the astrologers' suggestion to attack Egypt again in 670 B.C. (see above). To judge from the LAS 129 (note especially obv. 13-14 "when we saw this, we became happy and blessed to the king") the scholars had also no part in the regulation of Esarhaddon's succession – not at least in the decision itself. Note also LAS 181 r6-9, according to which the king did not believe his medical experts, but brought from Egypt medications which later proved unfit for the conditions of Assyria. This evidence, though meagre, leads to the conclusion that the king, with all due respect to the science and the advices of his counselors, still kept his own head in many cases. Also LAS 171 and 247, the tone of which comes near to personal, make it evident that the influence from the part of the scholars was not as great as might be thought at first sight.