

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE URUK PROPHECY

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In their 1964 article entitled "Akkadian Prophecies" A.K. Grayson and W.G. Lambert defined this genre of Akkadian literature as descriptions of the reigns of unnamed kings expressed in the form of predictions.¹ The reign of each king is described either as paradigmatically propitious or evil, and the phraseology of the predictions is strongly reminiscent of the apodoses of omen literature. Although the protagonists of the events described are never named, the language of the prophecies is rarely so cryptic as to prevent their identification, with the result that the historical allusions contained in those texts have for the most part been decoded by Assyriologists. Clearly these so-called "prophecies" are best described as *vaticinia ex eventu*, predictions after the events. Their purpose is not always, if ever, clear to the modern reader, particularly in cases where some crucial part of the text is lost or has been preserved only in fragmentary condition. One may presume, on the basis of the few examples whose historical settings have been assessed with some degree of confidence, that they were intended to provide sanction to an event contemporary with their composition, such as the restoration of a cult or the rise of a new dynasty. This crucial event is always announced in the closing prediction of the prophecy and constitutes, in a manner of speaking, its historical climax. The narrative which leads up to this climax includes a succession of historical events carefully selected for their illustrative value and assembled into a dramatic progression of cycles of "good" and "bad" heralding the establishment of a final era of bliss. The prophecy contains the implicit message that this era of bliss is brought about by the realization of the event which it is the purpose of the text to vindicate.

Only five Akkadian literary compositions have been classified as "prophecies" in the sense we understand the term here. They include Prophecy A,² the Marduk and

Šulgi Prophecies,³ the Dynastic Prophecy,⁴ and the Uruk Prophecy.⁵ Other texts which were originally classified as prophecies have since been shown to lack some of the fundamental characteristics of the genre and should be considered separately. These include LBAT 1543 and Text B.⁶ It should be noted that the designation of "prophecies" for the compositions under consideration here is exclusively a creation of modern scholarship. There is no native name for the genre and no conclusive evidence that the compositions we call "prophecies" formed, for the ancient Mesopotamians, a distinct genre within their literary heritage. At least two of the prophecies, however, namely the Marduk and Šulgi prophetic speeches, were clearly considered part of a single series by the scholars of the library of Aššurbanipal, since the colophon of the Marduk Prophecy contains the catch-line of the Šulgi Prophecy *anāku Šulgi*, which may well have been the native name of that composition. This and the fact that all the prophecies share some unique features which lend them a distinctive tone and flavor leads one to suspect that the modern classification may not be too far removed from the ancient perception. We hope a literary catalogue containing the native designation(s) for prophecies will eventually come to light.

In spite of the considerable interest aroused by the prophecies since the genre was assessed by Grayson and Lambert, the matter of their relationship to other genres of Akkadian literature has remained entirely problematic. To be sure, numerous comparisons have been estab-

1. A.K. Grayson and W.G. Lambert, "Akkadian Prophecies," *JCS* 18 (1964), pp. 7-30.

2. Edition in Grayson and Lambert, "Akkadian Prophecies," pp. 9-10 and 12-16, with references to previous editions and studies on p.7.

3. Edition by R. Borger, "Gott Marduk und Gott-König Šulgi als Propheten," *BiOr* 28 (1971), pp. 3-24.

4. Edition with commentary by A.K. Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts, Toronto Semitic Texts and Studies* 3, Toronto, 1975, pp. 24-37.

5. For references to this text see the main discussion below.

6. Edition of B and LBAT 1543 in R.D. Biggs, "More Babylonian Prophecies," *Iraq* 29 (1967), pp. 117-32, to which add the new fragment published by the same author in "Babylonian Prophecies, Astrology and a New Source for <<Prophecy Text B>>," in *Language, Literature, and History: Philological and Historical Studies Presented to Erica Reiner*, *AOS* 67; New Haven, 1987, pp. 1-14.

lished with omens,⁷ *narā*-literature or "pseudo-autobiographies,"⁸ chronicles, or with such individual compositions as the *Fürstenspiegel*, but these connections remain generally superficial or of a purely stylistic nature. The only convincing argument linking the prophecies with another literary genre in Akkadian was brought forth by R.D. Biggs who pointed to many correspondences with astrological texts, particularly with the astrological omen series.⁹ Not only do they involve more than a superficial stylistic resemblance, but the case for an influence of the astrological tradition upon the prophecies is further enhanced by the fact that two of the compositions which bear the strongest resemblance to the prophecies, namely Text B (formerly considered a prophecy) and LBAT 1543 contain a large amount of astrological material. In these texts the predictions, which are cast, as in the prophecies, in the form of lengthy apodoses, are in addition accompanied by elaborate astrological protases. Future research may determine how dependent the prophecies are on the astrological and astronomical tradition.

It is outside the Mesopotamian cultural area, however, that the most meaningful connections with another literary genre have been suggested. Grayson and Lambert originally noted that sections of the Book of Daniel bore a certain similarity to Akkadian prophecies. In particular they were similar to Daniel 8:23-25 and 11:3-45, which contain predictions regarding the reigns of unnamed kings using cryptic language that could be understood only by well-informed readers. In his 1966 article provocatively entitled "Akkadian Apocalypses," the dedicatee of the present volume took the comparison many steps further, proposing to see in the Old Testament apocalypses as well as in their intertestamental and New Testament correspondents the real parallels to the Akkadian prophecies, which latter designation he rejected as a misnomer because of the absence of any clear relationship between Akkadian and Old Testament literary prophecies.¹⁰ He noted that most elements which characterize Jewish apocalyptic literature are also present in Akkadian prophecies, notably the pseudonymity (the authorship of the text is ascribed to a prophet or a god set in the distant past), the anonymity and use of cryptic language (historical events and figures are never explicitly named, but cast in allusive terms), the *vaticinium ex eventu*, the deterministic view of history and the vast temporal and spatial scope contemplated by the author.

7. Particularly valuable for comparison are the omens predicting the fall of Akkad published in CT 29, plates 48ff.

8. On this particular connection see T. Longman, *Fictional Akkadian Autobiographies: A Generic and Comparative Study*, Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, Indiana, 1990.

9. See the works referred to in note 6 above, and add, by the same author, "The Babylonian Prophecies and the Astrological Tradition in Mesopotamia," JCS 37 (1985), pp. 86-90.

10. W.W. Hallo, "Akkadian Apocalypses," IEJ 16 (1966), pp. 231-42.

He also insisted, however, on the provisional character of his conclusions, because of the fragmentary state of most Akkadian prophecies and the many unanswered riddles they presented to the modern interpreter. Subsequent critics of his hypothesis, most notably W.G. Lambert and S.A. Kaufman, raised the objection that Akkadian prophecies lack two fundamental traits of apocalypses,¹¹ namely the universal scope (Akkadian prophecies are culturally and geographically bound), and the eschatology which I would define as a dramatic and cataclysmic intervention of God in human history on behalf of the just, the ensuing end of historical time and the establishment of a new, everlasting order of things ruled by God. While he recognized that the climactic times hoped for by Akkadian prophecies were those of a permanent *Heilszeit* under the auspices of a benevolent earthly ruler, William Hallo nevertheless seriously envisaged the possibility that the Mesopotamians might have developed a doctrine of *Endzeit* close to a true eschatology, hence his proposal to rename the texts under consideration "Akkadian Apocalypses."

In spite of the criticisms voiced against this categorization, it should be emphasized that the debate over the significance of Akkadian prophecies for our understanding of such a significant phenomenon as Jewish apocalyptic is far from being closed. The title itself of H. Ringgren's contribution to the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism held at Uppsala in 1979, "Akkadian Apocalypses," was a timely reminder of that. Ringgren concluded that the relationship between the two genres was probably best summarized as "parallel phenomena (rather than Akkadian prophecies being an earlier stage of Judaeo-Christian apocalypses), examples of similar reactions to similar conditions couched in the language and style of their respective milieu."¹² It thus remains the task of future researchers to more precisely evaluate how significant Akkadian prophecies are for our understanding of apocalypticism. It is therefore with great pleasure that I offer to William Hallo, who took such an important initial step toward their elucidation, a

11. W.G. Lambert, "History and the Gods: A Review Article," OrNS 39 (1970), pp. 170-77; by the same author, *The Background of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Athlone, London, 1978); and S.A. Kaufman, "Prediction, Prophecy and Apocalypses in the Light of New Akkadian Texts," in *Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies* vol. 1 (Jerusalem Academic Press, Jerusalem, 1977), pp. 221-28.

12. H. Ringgren, "Akkadian Apocalypses," in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East*, ed. by D. Hellholm (Mohr, Tübingen, 1983), pp. 379-386. Other studies on the question of Akkadian prophecies and apocalypticism are J.G. Heintz, "Note sur les origines de l'apocalyptique judaïque à la lumière des prophéties akkadiennes," in *L'Apocalyptique*, ed. by M. Philonenko and M. Simon (Geuthner, Paris, 1977), pp. 71-87; P. Höffken, "Heilszeitherrscherschererwartung im Babylonische Raum," WO 9 (1977), pp. 57-71; and H.S. Kvangig, *Roots of Apocalyptic: the Mesopotamian Background of the Enoch Figure and the Son of Man* (*Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament* 61; Neukirchener-Verlag, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1988).

few thoughts about one of those enigmatic compositions: the Uruk Prophecy.

The tablet upon which the Uruk Prophecy is inscribed was found at Uruk in 1969 during the 27th season of excavations carried out by the German archaeological expedition. The tablet was excavated in quadrant Ue XVIII-1 in the southeast residential quarters together with a group of literary tablets, many of which bear colophons of the scribe and scholar Anu-ikšur. The houses in that area are of late Achaemenid or Seleucid date, and the tablets belong to the same period. It is impossible, on the basis of the archaeological data alone, to offer a more precise chronology for our exemplar of the Uruk Prophecy. The tablet may have been drafted at any time between the fifth and third centuries. The script is standard Neo-Babylonian, with no slant. Measurements are 135 x 98 x 30 mm. and the excavation number is W.22307/7. A photograph of the reverse as well as a preliminary transliteration and translation were published by H. Hunger in the 1972 archaeological report of the 26th season.¹³ The same author published a copy and a definitive edition in 1976,¹⁴ and, together with S. Kaufman, an edition and a commentary in 1975.¹⁵

Only the ends of lines are preserved on the obverse, but the reverse is almost complete. Since the composition presents no textual problem, only a translation, which does not depart from previous ones except in matters of details, is offered here. In the translation the rubrics on the reverse have been divided according to kings. This is only for the convenience of the present discussion and doesn't reflect the arrangement of the tablet, which presents itself as a continuous narrative with no internal divisions.

Obverse

1. [...] my 'signs'
2. [...] 'x'
3. [...] 'x'
4. [...] they will be made
5. [...] it was made
6. [...] 'x'
7. [...] it] passed
8. [...] this is his/its writing
9. [...] there will be distress in the land
10. [...] his name
11. [...] they stood
12. [...] he will not seize 'the throne(?) of his father(?)'

13. [... in/of] Uruk will seize the throne
14. [...] the 'x' he will restore
15. [...] he will establish destruction
16. [...] he will establish
17. [...] he laid in 'Dēr'
18. [...] he will be shut up
19. [...] he will settle in 'Dēr'
20. [...] he will go to 'Dēr'
21. [...] you (plural) possess
22. [...] 'x'
23. [...] the king will be shut up
24. in his palace for a number of months

Reverse

- King 1* [... a king w]ill arise and rule the scattered country. [... a king] from the Sealand who had exercised rulership in Babylon.
- King 2* [Aft]er him a king will arise. He will not provide justice for the land. He will not make the right decisions for the land. The old protective goddess of Uruk he will take away from Uruk and make her dwell in Babylon. He will make dwell in her sanctuary a protective goddess not belonging to Uruk and dedicate to her people not belonging to her. He will impose a heavy tribute on the people of Uruk. He will lay Uruk waste, fill the canals with silt, and abandon the cultivated fields.
- King 3* After him a king will arise. He will not provide justice for the land. He will not make the right decisions for the land.
- Ks 4-8* Ditto, ditto, ditto, ditto, ditto, he will take the property of the land of Akkad to the land of Subartu (*i.e.* Assyria).
- King 9* After him a king will arise. He will not provide justice for the land. He will not make the right decisions for the land. He will rule the four quarters of the world. At the mention of his name the world will tremble.
- King 10* After him a king will arise in Uruk. He will provide justice for the land. He will make the right decisions for the land. He will establish the rites of the cult of Anu in Uruk. The old protective goddess of Uruk he will take away from Babylon and make her dwell in Uruk, in her sanctuary. He will dedicate to her people belonging to her. He will rebuild the temples of Uruk. He will restore the sanctuaries. He will renew Uruk. He will rebuild the gates of Uruk with lapis-lazuli. He will fill the canals and the cultivated fields with plenty and abundance.

13. See UVB 26/27 (1972), p. 87 for the preliminary edition and plate 25g for the photograph. The archaeological context is discussed on pp. 79ff.

14. H. Hunger, *Spätbabylonische Texte aus Uruk I* (ADFU 9, Berlin, 1976) no. 3 (edition on pp. 21-23 and copy on p. 124).

15. H. Hunger and S. A. Kaufman, "A New Akkadian Prophecy Text." *JAOS* 95 (1975), pp. 371-375.

King 11 [Af]ter him a king, his son, will arise in Uruk and rule the four quarters. He will exercise [ruler]ship? and kingship in Uruk. His dynasty will endure forever. [The king]s of Uruk will exercise rulership like the gods.

The fragmentary character of the obverse precludes any final statement as to the literary affinities of the composition. Fortunately, enough is preserved on the obverse to show that the introductory section consisted of a statement in the first person. The first line ends with 'IZKIM.MEŠ'-ú-a (*ittātū'a* "my signs"), and the first person discourse may have been carried on as far as line 21, which ends possibly with a verbal address in the second person plural: *ra-ša-tu-nu* "you possess." The Uruk Prophecy shares this important distinction with the Marduk and Šulgi prophetic speeches, which both open with first person statements by Marduk and Šulgi respectively while the predictions in the balance of the two texts are cast in the third person with occasional first person interventions by Marduk in the predictive section of his prophecy.

The structure of the composition is noteworthy in two other respects. One is the obvious preponderance of the predictions associated with the reigns of kings 2 and 10. In both cases the predictions are elaborate and specific, while other reigns are described in vague, paradigmatic terms of "good" and "bad." Also, the reigns of kings 2 and 10 mirror each other in a relationship of opposites. The traumatic event during the reign of king 2, namely the removal of the *lamassu* goddess of Uruk to Babylon and the alteration of her cult, was later reversed during the reign of king 10 who returned her to Uruk and reestablished her proper rites. While king 2 acted with hostility towards Uruk in other respects as well, imposing a heavy tax load upon the city, king 10 behaved in the exact opposite manner, providing (presumably with funds from the royal treasury) for the architectural renewal of the city. And, while the nefarious acts of king 2 led to the destruction of the agricultural domains of Uruk, the reign of king 10 brought abundant yields to the cultivated areas of the city and its countryside. The two reigns are thus presented as emblematic of two archetypes of Babylonian rulers, the one who behaves hostilely towards Uruk, and the one who fosters care on the city. Another noteworthy aspect of the composition is the asymmetrical alternation of propitious and nefarious reigns, which suggests that these characterizations might be more than purely symbolic and reflect the author's point of view on the reigns of actual kings, regardless of the fact that the description of many reigns is reduced to mere stereotyped formulas. Most reigns on the reverse are described as inauspicious. While judgment concerning the reign of king 1 seems neutral, kings 2 to 9 are uniformly castigated as "bad" rulers, and only kings 10 and 11 meet with the approval of the author. One may

start with the working hypothesis that, insofar as these unnamed kings may be identified with historical rulers, this may provide us with a specific Urukæan point of view on successive rulers who assumed power in Babylon.

In their commentary on the Prophecy Hunger and Kaufman proposed to identify king 2 with Eriša-Marduk, who reigned in troubled times during the first half of the eighth century and king 10 with Nebuchadnezzar II, who reigned two centuries later (605-562 B.C.). The sources for these identifications are the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar himself, who claims to have returned to Uruk her *lamassu* goddess and to have restored the Eanna temple, and inscription 1 of Nabonidus (according to my own numbering) in which that king refers to the restoration of the *lamassu* to her abode by one of his predecessors and also points out in language strongly reminiscent of the Prophecy that the *lamassu* had previously been removed from Uruk during the reign of Eriša-Marduk and replaced with the image of an inappropriate *lamassu*. In support of their identification of king 2 with Eriša-Marduk Hunger and Kaufman also pointed out that the repeated references to Dēr at the end of the obverse of the Prophecy, as well as the mention of a king being held prisoner in his palace, are compatible with what we know of the reigns of Marduk-balassu-iqbi and Baba-aḥ-iddin, the two kings who reigned before the intervening period of trouble which preceded the rise of Eriša-Marduk. These two kings fought battles against the Assyrian invaders in the vicinity of Dēr, were besieged, and then taken captive to Assyria. Hunger and Kaufman concluded that the Prophecy was a political tract in support of the son and successor of Nebuchadnezzar, Awēl-Marduk, who should be identified as king 11, the last one in the Prophecy. The Prophecy specifically identifies king 11 as the son and successor of king 10. Otherwise the text is not too insistent on succession from father to son, and this seems one more argument for identifying king 11 as Awēl-Marduk who must have been badly in need of such support since he was deposed and assassinated by his own brother-in-law Neriglissar after reigning only two years.

In spite of the fact that the evidence brought by Hunger and Kaufman in support of their identifications is quite convincing, some doubts have been raised as to their validity. W.G. Lambert questioned the view that kings 10 and 11 were Nebuchadnezzar and Awēl-Marduk, pointing out that the proposed correspondences between the Prophecy, the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar, and inscription 1 of Nabonidus, were far from sound.¹⁶ There seem indeed to be inconsistencies between the report of Nebuchadnezzar, who claims in his inscription to have returned to Uruk both a male (*šēdu*) and a female (*lamassu*) deity and the reports of the Prophecy and inscription 1 of Nabonidus, which speak only of

16. W.G. Lambert, *The Background of Jewish Apocalyptic*, pp. 10-12.

a *lamassu* removed from Uruk by Eriša-Marduk and later returned to her abode. In addition it is not certain whether the king who, according to inscription 1 of Nabonidus, returned to Uruk the *lamassu* carried off by Eriša-Marduk, is indeed Nebuchadnezzar II, for the name of the king in question is lost in the inscription. Lambert also expressed some doubts that a strong current in favor of Awēl-Marduk might have existed in Babylonia considering that ancient sources consistently paint a negative picture of his short reign. Lambert proposed instead to identify king 10 as Nabopolassar and king 11 as his son Nebuchadnezzar II, in support of whose claim to the throne the text would have been composed. In a more recent reassessment of the Prophecy J. Goldstein has proposed to put the historical setting of the composition further back in time.¹⁷ He accepts the current identification of king 2 as Eriša-Marduk, and proposes simply to identify the successors of king 2 in the Prophecy as the real successors of Eriša-Marduk on the Babylonian throne. Thus kings 3 to 9 would be Nabû-šum-iškun, Nabonassar, Nabû-nādin-zēri, Nabû-šum-ukīn II, Nabû-mukīn-zēri, Tiglathpileser III/Pulu, and Shalmaneser V/Ulūlayu. King 10 would then be Merodach-Baladan II and king 11 his prospective son and successor. Goldstein posits that at the time the author wrote the return of the *lamassu* to Uruk still lay in the future. He dates the Prophecy between 721-710 and sees it as a propagandistic tract in favor of Merodach-Baladan II, whom the Urukaeans hoped would be a benefactor to their city.

Admittedly neither Lambert's nor Goldstein's hypotheses are *a priori* impossible. Their main weakness is the lack of corroborative evidence in their support, while Hunger and Kaufman can claim in favor of their identifications the agreement of two outside sources with the material found in the Prophecy. In fact, the correspondences proposed by these two authors between the Prophecy, the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar, and inscription 1 of Nabonidus, are much sounder than is generally acknowledged. The relevant portion of Nabonidus' inscription 1 reads as follows (Col. III 11-43):¹⁸

17. J. Goldstein, "The Historical Setting of the Uruk Prophecy," JNES 47 (1988), pp. 43-46

18. The inscription was published by V. Scheil, "Inscription de Nabonide," RT 18 (1896), pp. 15-29, with a photograph, a transliteration, and a translation. A somewhat unreliable copy was published by L. Messerschmidt "Die Inschrift der Stele Nabuna'id, des Königs von Babylon," MVAG 1 (1896), pp. 73-83. The inscription was also edited by S. Langdon, *Die Neubabylonische Königsinschriften* (VAB IV; Leipzig, 1912), Nabonidus no. 8. A translation by A.L. Oppenheim can be found in Pritchard, ANET, pp. 308-311.

Ištar of Uruk (^dINNIN UNUG^{ki}), the lofty princess who dwells in a golden shrine, to whom are harnessed seven lions (and) whose cult the Urukaeans changed during the reign of Eriša-Marduk, removing her shrine and unharnessing her team, left Eanna in anger to dwell in a place not her dwelling. They made dwell in her cella a protective goddess not belonging to Eanna (^dLAMA *la si-mat É.AN.NA*). He (presumably Nebuchadnezzar II) appeased Ištar (^dIŠ), reestablished her shrine for her (and) harnessed for her the seven lions befitting her godhead. The inappropriate Ištar (^dIŠ *la si-ma-a-tū*) he removed from the Eanna and returned Innin (^din-nin-na) to the Eanna, her sanctuary. Ištar (^diš-tar), the Lady of Elam, the princess who dwells in Susa [...].

Lambert warned that the identification of the *lamassu* of Uruk with Ištar was by no means certain. However, the above inscription refers to the improper image installed in the Eanna under Eriša-Marduk both as a *lamassu* (^dLAMA *la si-mat É.AN.NA*) and as an improper likeness of Ištar (^dIŠ *la si-ma-a-tū*), suggesting that the same double designation applied to the proper image removed by the Urukaeans, which image the inscription does not however specifically call a *lamassu*. But the Prophecy insists that the proper image removed from Uruk by king 2 (*i.e.* Eriša-Marduk) and returned by king 10 (presumably Nebuchadnezzar II) was the old *lamassu* of Uruk (^dLAMA UNUG^{ki} *da-ri-ti/tu*₄), while the Nabonidus inscription designates her as Ištar of Uruk (^dINNIN UNUG^{ki}), Ištar (^dIŠ) and Innin (^din-nin-na).¹⁹ Thus there is reason to believe that the authors of these texts assumed that Ištar of Uruk and the *lamassu* of Uruk were one and the same deity.

The fact that the name of the king who returned the *lamassu* to Uruk is lost in the Nabonidus inscription appears to be a more serious objection to the identification of king 10 in the Prophecy as Nebuchadnezzar II. Nevertheless, Lambert's suggestion that the king in question might be Nabopolassar is not substantiated by the inscriptions of that king, which mentions neither building activity at Uruk during his reign nor the return of any cult statue to the city. Several inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II, on the other hand, refer to the restoration of the Eanna and the return of the *lamassu* goddess

19. These spelling variants should not be understood to reflect the king's confusion as to the identity of the goddess. Neo-Babylonian sources from Uruk make it abundantly clear that Ištar of Uruk was known under three different names: Bēlit-ša-Uruk (the Lady of Uruk), Ištar, and Innin. The name Ištar is spelled indifferently ^dIŠ, ^diš-tar and ^dINNIN, while the name Innin is spelled either ^dINNIN, with a phonetic complement indicating a phonetic reading of the logogram (^dinnin-na), or syllabically ^din-nin-na/ ^din-nin-ni (all with overhanging final vowel dropped in the spoken language).

to Uruk.²⁰ The most elaborate account is I R 65-66, Col. II 50-59:²¹

I reinstated the original cultic features (*sì-ma-a-ti re-ēš-ta-a-ti*) and the former rites of Ištar of Uruk, the holy Lady of Uruk. I returned to Uruk her protective genius (*še-e-du-ú-šū*) and to Eanna its beneficent protective goddess (*la-ma-sa ša da-mi-iq-ti*). I excavated and inspected the old perimeter of the Eanna and established the (new) foundations above the old perimeter.

Lambert pointed to the discrepancies between this account and the ones found in the Prophecy and Nabonidus' inscription 1. Yet, even a cursory glance taken at these sources indicates that the similarities outweigh the differences by a wide margin. Nebuchadnezzar's report is in almost perfect agreement with the inscription of Nabonidus, save for its mention of the *šedu* of Uruk. Otherwise both sources insist that the rites of Ištar and her cultic features were reestablished (by Nebuchadnezzar) in their original form. The cultic features are referred to as *simat ilūtīšu* in Nabonidus' inscription 1 (l. 32), specifically in reference to her team of seven lions, and as *simāti rēštāti* in Nebuchadnezzar's account. In both the Prophecy and Nebuchadnezzar's inscription the goddess returned to the Eanna is called the *lamassu* of Uruk, a designation which, as argued above, is implicitly used also in Nabonidus' inscription 1 for the deity returned to Uruk. The Prophecy also agrees with Nebuchadnezzar's account of his reestablishment of former rites (called *paraš anūtu* in the Prophecy for motives that will be expounded below) and on his architectural renewal of Uruk, his restoration of temples in particular. That these sources do not always agree *verbatim* on specific points and that elements which are included in one source are omitted in another (e.g. the mention of gates of lapis-lazuli for Uruk in the Prophecy) is only natural for accounts of a complex event written from different perspectives, locales, and time periods.

This survey covers the sources which have been discussed in previous studies. These sources convincingly point to the identification of kings 2, 10 and 11 in the Prophecy as Eriba-Marduk, Nebuchadnezzar II, and Awēl-Marduk, as was suggested by Hunger and Kaufman. As I will presently show, there is still more evidence, some relatively new, some which has long been available, that can be invoked in support of their hypothesis.

20. Aside from the inscription quoted below, these deeds are also mentioned in VAB IV, Nbk. 1, Col. II 33 (= Berger, AOAT 4/1, p. 285, *Zylinder III*, 3); Nbk. 13, Col. II 63 (= Berger, p. 292, *Zylinder III*, 7); Nbk. 19, B Col. VIII 1-4 (= Berger, pp. 314-318, *Nahr el-Kelb/Wadi-Brissa Inschrift*); and Nbk. 20, Col. III 13 (= Berger, p. 293, *Zylinder III*, 8). Note also that two short building inscriptions consisting of stamped bricks with the king's titulary were also found at Uruk (see Berger, p. 202, *Backsteine A*, U and pp. 221-222, *Backsteine B I*, 15).

21. Edited in Langdon, VAB IV, Nbk. 9.

As mentioned earlier, the narrative of the Prophecy, which was obviously written from a parochial Urukian perspective, hinges on the opposition between the reigns of kings 2 and 10, who are presented as emblematic rulers in their attitude towards the city — the former being nefarious, the latter beneficent. Granted that king 10 is indeed Nebuchadnezzar II, one must then conclude that this ruler must have enjoyed wide popularity among the ruling elite of Uruk, and one might hope this popularity would be reflected in the abundant Neo-Babylonian source material from that city. Such information can be gleaned from two texts originating in the archive of the Eanna temple, YOS 6 10 and PTS 2097, dated respectively to the 28th day of the first month of the first year of Nabonidus, and to the 2nd day of the third month of the same year.²² They belong to a larger group of archival texts documenting king Nabonidus' visit to Uruk and Larsa in the beginning of his first regnal year, during which visit he ordered a partial reorganization of the cultic and economic affairs of the Eanna temple. YOS 6 10 and PTS 2097 record mostly royal directives regarding the reorganization of the offering system of the temple with the aim to reinstate cultic practices as they had been "in the time of Nebuchadnezzar." This enjoinder to take as a model the practices current in the reign of Nabonidus' illustrious predecessor should be understood in the light of other records from the Eanna archive which suggest that the temple suffered administrative and cultic disruptions during the intervening years between the death of Nebuchadnezzar and the accession of Nabonidus, most likely during the reign of Neriglissar. By these actions Nabonidus was ending a period of relative chaos and, more importantly for his political future, was ingratiating himself with the ruling elite of Uruk, who apparently remembered Nebuchadnezzar as an ideal ruler, one who had restored their city's temples and reinstated the local cults as they had been before times of disruption (as Nebuchadnezzar claims in his own inscriptions). As I argued elsewhere, Nabonidus commissioned his earliest known monumental inscription (no. 1) very shortly after his trip to Uruk.²³ The trip is in fact mentioned in the inscription among other noteworthy deeds of the king after his assumption of power, and, since the inscription is also the one which contains the historical narrative on the removal of the *lamassu* from Uruk under Eriba-Marduk and its return under an unknown king whom we have identified as Nebuchadnezzar II, one is tempted to speculate that the recent royal visit to the city provided the antecedents for the inclusion of the *lamassu* narrative

22. These texts are discussed in P.A. Beaulieu, *The Reign of Nabonidus, King of Babylon, 556-539 B.C.* (YNER 10; New Haven/London, 1989), pp. 117-27. Due to an oversight I omitted to mention the date of PTS 2097 on p. 120. It is dated at Uruk on the second day of Simanu of the first year of Nabonidus. The text is now published by G. Frame, ZA 81 (1991), pp. 38-44.

23. See *ibid.*, pp. 20-22 and 104-115.

in the inscription. The story of the *lamassu* is only one element in a larger historical prologue whose purpose was to provide an exemplary selection of the numerous restorations of temples and cults undertaken by previous rulers of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty in order to prepare the reader (or listener) for Nabonidus' vindication of his main restoration project, the rebuilding of the Eḫulḫul in Harran. The episode of the *lamassu* may have been included in the prologue just to stress the king's intention to maintain and further the religious program of his predecessors, which he had just done at Uruk by re-establishing the recently disrupted cult originally restored in its previous form by Nebuchadnezzar II.

Thus we have a strong piece of corroborative evidence that there prevailed at Uruk an opinion extremely favorable to Nebuchadnezzar (since Nabonidus evidently intended to cater to the Urukæans by so emphatically espousing their point of view) and possibly also to his son Awēl-Marduk, while Neriglissar might have been viewed with an unfavorable eye (but there is no direct evidence).²⁴ This is in agreement with the point of view expressed in the Uruk Prophecy.

Taking the argument one step further, one moves on to the question of the identity of king 9. Hunger and Kaufman suggested identifying him as Nabopolassar, who brought Assyrian domination to an end and founded the Neo-Babylonian empire. This possibility seems indeed the most likely if one takes kings 4-8 as symbolizing a long period of Assyrian hegemony down to Nabopolassar's uprising in 626 B.C. The only puzzling question is the negative portrayal of king 9 in the Prophecy which would seem inappropriate for a ruler who restored Babylonian independence. A search among native Urukæan sources, however, indicates that such a negative view of Nabopolassar is not limited to the Prophecy. The colophon of TCL 6 38, a Seleucid period prescriptive ritual for the daily offerings in the temple of Anu (the Bīt Rēš), contains a surprising statement as to the opinion held about Nabopolassar at Uruk in the early Seleucid period:²⁵

By the hand of Šamaš-ētir, son of Ina-qībit-Anu, grandson of Šibqāt-Anu. Writing board of the rites of the cult of Anu (GARZA ^d60-ū-tu), of the holy rituals (and) the ritual regulations of kingship, together with the divine rituals of the Bīt Rēš, the Irigal, the Eanna and the temples of Uruk, the ritual activities of the exorcists, the *kalīl* priests, the singers, and all the ex-

24. Note however that Nabonidus' inscription 1 expresses a negative view of Awēl-Marduk while it is generally favorable to Neriglissar. This reflects a specifically Babylonian, as opposed to an Urukæan, point of view (inscription 1 was probably intended for display in the capital, where it was found), which also finds expression in the *Babyloniaca* of Berossus (equally unfavorable to Awēl-Marduk and also stemming from Babylon).

25. Edited in F. Thureau-Dangin, *Rituels Accadiens* (Leroux, Paris, 1921), pp. 79-80 and 85-86; and H. Hunger, *Babylonische und Assyrische Kolophone* (AOAT 2, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1968) no. 107.

perts who follow the ...,²⁶ apart from everything that pertains to the apprentice diviners, according to the tablets which Nabopolassar, the king of the Sealand, took away from Uruk (TA *qé-reb* UNUG^{ki} *iš-lu-lu-ma*), and then Kidin-Anu, the Urukæan, the exorcist of Anu and Antu, the descendent of Ekur-zākir, the high-priest of the Bīt Rēš, saw those tablets in the land of Elam, and copied them and brought them back to Uruk during the reign of kings Seleucus (I) and Antiochus (I).

The tone of the colophon, especially the use of the verb *šalālu*, "to plunder," is blatantly hostile to Nabopolassar. The misdeeds ascribed to him can be correlated with an entry in the Babylonian Chronicle Series stating that in Addaru of his accession year "Nabopolassar returned to Susa the gods of Susa whom the Assyrians had carried off and settled in Uruk."²⁷ Since the colophon of TCL 6 38 insists that the tablets plundered by Nabopolassar were found in Elam, it seems reasonable to assume that they were transferred there, perhaps by mistake, when the gods of Susa and their appurtenances were returned to their city. This raises some questions. How could texts with presumably no relevance to the Elamite cults survive at Susa for more than three centuries and then be retrieved by the high-priest of the Bīt Rēš temple? Why did the priesthood of Uruk tolerate the loss of such important rituals for so long? Whether or not the claim of the colophon is, as I will argue below, a *fraus pia* concocted by the priesthood of the Bīt Rēš in order to vindicate its own view on the reorganization of the cult of Anu in the third century is beside the point. The crucial fact is that, for reasons which escape us, the return of the Elamite deities to Susa by Nabopolassar had been so resented by the Urukæans that three centuries later the religious establishment of the city could still claim that the departure of the gods was accompanied by acts of plunder and impiety by the founder of the new dynasty. This suggests that an attitude of hostility to Nabopolassar had been imbedded for centuries in the literary and historical tradition of Uruk,²⁸ and also supports the identification of king 9 in the Prophecy with Nabopolassar.

Thus the identity of the eleven kings mentioned on the reverse of the Prophecy is as follows. Kings 4 to 8 are

26. The word left untranslated is ^{lu}PAP, which, given the context, can hardly be read ^{lu}KÜR (= *nakru* "foe"). Thureau-Dangin translates "intendant."

27. A.K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (TCS 5; Locust Valley, New York, 1970), p. 88, l. 16-17 (Chronicle 2). See also E. Carter and M.W. Stolper, *Elam: Surveys of Political History and Archaeology* (University of California Publications, Near Eastern Studies 25; Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1984), p. 53, who speculate that Nabopolassar's "gesture seems to have been an attempt to find Elamite support for his insurrection, on the pattern of Chaldean insurgents in the previous century."

28. Note that the section of Nabonidus' inscription 1 devoted to the misfortunes of the *lamassu* of Uruk is followed by a statement concerning Ištar of Susa, the Lady of Elam. The passage is broken *in media res*, however, and at the point where the inscription resumes the narrative has moved already to another subject.

symbolic of the century long period of Assyrian domination of Babylonia, from Tiglath-pileser III to the uprising of Nabopolassar. All these rulers are viewed negatively (the KLIMIN refers each time to the inauspicious reign of king 3) and summarized as "he will take the property of the land of Akkad to the land of Subartu" (although this statement might refer to the reign of king 8 only). After the Assyrian episode Neo-Babylonian rulers are listed in chronological order: Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar and Awēl-Marduk (kings 9 to 11). Kings 1 to 3 are Babylonian kings who ruled before the period of Assyrian hegemony. Within this group only the identity of king 2 (*i.e.* Eriba-Marduk) can be established.

Previous discussions of the Prophecy have implicitly assumed that assessment of its historical background would automatically give the clue as to its purpose. In accordance with the evidence just outlined one would thus assume that the purpose of the Prophecy was to bolster Awēl-Marduk's claim to the throne. Yet one may also entertain the possibility that the historical material contained in the Prophecy was recast many generations after the actual events in order to provide an unnamed Persian or Seleucid ruler with a prestigious model set in the historical past, of exemplary behavior towards the city of Uruk. There is cogent evidence that this is indeed the case.

In the Prophecy we read that king 10/Nebuchadnezzar II not only returned to her abode the *lamassu* goddess carried off to Babylon by Eriba-Marduk but also established "the rites of the cult of Anu (GARZA ^d*a-nu-ú-tu*) in Uruk." This statement is not corroborated by the inscriptions of that king, who never mentions Anu and his cult, but only claims to have reinstated the former rites of Ištar (I R 65-66 II, 51. *pe-lu-de-e qú-ud-mu-ú-ti* 52. *ša dINNIN UNUG^{ki} bé-e-li-it UNUG^{ki} e-el-li-ti* 53. *ú-te-er aš-ru-uš-šú-un*), to have returned the goddess to Uruk, and to have rebuilt the Eanna. Anu was a rather unimportant deity at Uruk in the Neo-Babylonian period and the emphasis put on the reinstatement of his cult in the Prophecy seems more in agreement with the outlook of the Urukæan priesthood of the Hellenistic period than with that of their sixth century counterpart.²⁹ The fact is that at some point during the Achaemenid period there occurred a complete reorganization of the pantheon of the city leading to the replacement of Ištar by Anu as head of the local divine hierarchy. The crucial phase of this process had already taken place by the end of the fifth century, since by that time name formations with

Anu are overwhelmingly predominant in the local onomastics. It is only in the Seleucid period, however, that the rise of Anu was consummated with the final construction of the Bīt Rēš temple complex.³⁰ The author of the Prophecy is clearly more interested in Anu than in Ištar (note that Ištar is never mentioned by name in the Prophecy), and this might point to, first, a later date of composition for the Prophecy than previously assumed, and second, the possibility suggested by Heinrich,³¹ that the text was composed to commemorate the dedication of the temple of Anu in the third century. This hypothesis is also supported by the colophon of TCL 6 38, which summarizes the contents of the tablet as GARZA ^d*60-ú-tu* "the rites of the cult of Anu." The implication of the colophon is that because of Nabopolassar's acts of plunder at Uruk, the rites in question were forgotten and the cult of Anu was suspended until the high-priest of the Bīt Rēš rediscovered the tablets in Elam during the co-regency of Seleucus (I) and Antiochus (I), which covered the years 294/93-281 B.C. It is significant that the alleged rediscovery of these rituals took place at a time when the building program involving the extension of the Bīt Rēš, the Irigal, and the ziggurat of Anu into one of the largest cultic architectural complexes ever built in Mesopotamia, was certainly already contemplated by the establishment of Uruk, with the tacit approval, if not the active support, of the Seleucid rulers. The dates of the phases of the rebuilding are known from the two dedicatory inscriptions of Anu-uballit/Kephalon and Anu-uballit/Nikarchos, respectively dated to the years 68 and 110 of the Seleucid era (= 244 and 201 B.C.).³² These buildings almost completely obliterated the earlier Seleucid structures which were probably erected, on a much more modest scale, during the first quarter of the third century. The cult of Anu, Antu, and their circle of deities was doubtless reorganized on grander proportions to meet this considerable architectural expansion. There is little doubt as to the antiquarian, and even somewhat artificial, character of the cultic revival which then took place. One may safely assume that such rituals as TCL 6 38, miraculously rediscovered before the onset of the vast building program of the third century, were in fact complete fabrications, *fraus pia* that only remotely reflected the state of earlier cultic practices.

30. Some aspects of the rise of Anu in late Babylonian Uruk, including the chronology of the change and the antiquarian character of the new cult, are discussed in my article "Antiquarian Theology in Seleucid Uruk," *Acta Sumerologica* 14 (1992).

31. E. Heinrich, *Die Tempel und Heiligtümer im alten Mesopotamien* (DAA 14, Berlin, 1982), p. 301.

32. On these two personages and their inscriptions see L.T. Doty "Nikarchos and Kephalon," in *A Scientific Humanist, Studies in Memory of Abraham Sachs*, ed. by E. Leichty, M. deJ. Ellis, and P. Gerardi (Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund 9, Philadelphia, 1988), pp. 95-118. The architectural remains from Seleucid Uruk have recently been studied by S.B. Downey, *Mesopotamian Religious Architecture, Alexander through the Parthians* (Princeton U. Press, Princeton, 1988), pp. 15-46.

29. Admittedly the word *anūtu* may also apply to other gods in reference to their leading status. The word may also apply to the cults of Uruk in general (including that of Ištar) with no specific reference to Anu (but still including him). In this context, however, and because Ištar is never explicitly mentioned in the Prophecy, although the narrative is historically based on her tribulations, it seems appropriate to assume that, in his use of *paraš anūtu*, the author specifically had in mind the cult of Anu and his retinue.

Let us now consider the colophon of TCL 6 38 in conjunction with the Prophecy. The colophon indirectly imputes to Nabopolassar the responsibility for the loss of the *paraš anūtu* "the rites of the cult of Anu," while the Prophecy insists, employing vague and stereotyped formulas, that his reign (= king 9) was inauspicious. The Prophecy also credits his son and successor Nebuchadnezzar II with the reestablishment of these same *paraš anūtu*. Thus we are able to detect two layers in the Prophecy. One layer is the emblematic opposition between two Babylonian rulers in their attitude to Uruk: Eriša-Marduk and Nebuchadnezzar II. This opposition is based historically on the cultic disruptions imposed by the former and the reinstatement of the cult by the latter. But, while these historical events really concerned the cult of Ištar, the author of the Prophecy is specifically interested in the cult of Anu. His view of Nebuchadnezzar II is that of an exemplary ruler of the past, who restored the cults of Uruk and rebuilt her temples, a model for any contemporary or future ruler to follow should the same type of situation arise. The second layer is the recasting of Nebuchadnezzar II as the restorer of the cult of Anu as well as the implicit portrayal of his father Nabopolassar as the ruler, or one of the rulers, responsible for the interruption, or at least neglect, of that cult. The Uruk Prophecy is therefore a rewriting of historical material with the purpose of vindicating the establishment (presented as reestablishment) of a new cult (*i.e.* the cult of Anu as reorganized in the third century by the priesthood of the Bīt Rēš), to present the ruler who will foster this cultic revival (*i.e.* one of the contemporary Seleucid rulers) as a new Nebuchadnezzar, to obliquely suggest that his father was a neglectful, and therefore malevolent, ruler (as Nabopolassar had been), and to predict an everlasting rule for his dynasty, even a rule of divine character.

The historical background of the Prophecy now emerges clearly. Nebuchadnezzar II and his son Awēl-Marduk were viewed favorably at Uruk, and already in the Neo-Babylonian period there may have circulated among the city's literati compositions written in support of their rule and in condemnation of their successors, especially the usurper Neriglissar, and predecessors, Eriša-Marduk, Nabopolassar, and other kings who did not fulfill the expectations of the Uruk establishment. This material was later recast in the Uruk Prophecy, whose purpose was to show to a Seleucid ruler of the first half of the third century the proper royal conduct toward the city. Specifically the Uruk priesthood was soliciting the active support of the Seleucid monarchy for its ambitious religious and architectural program of renewal. One may raise the obvious question: was the Uruk Prophecy really ever brought to the attention of the Seleucid monarch for whom it was intended? It is quite conceivable that it indeed was, albeit not necessarily in the form it has been preserved at Uruk. A Greek or an Aramaic version may

have been in circulation, or perhaps only the existence itself of the predictions was reported to the king or to court officials. One may easily imagine a scenario in which the priesthood of the Bīt Rēš orchestrated a purported "discovery" of the tablet among ancient documents, thus lending an aura of great antiquity to their fabrication. One may further speculate, on the basis of some broken parts being preserved as first person speech, that the entire text may have been cast as an oracle delivered by the god Anu, the obvious beneficiary of the predictions. As seen earlier, two other Akkadian prophecies, the Marduk and Šulgi prophetic speeches, are likewise cast as oracles delivered in the first person by a god or a (deified) king with the purpose of justifying the reestablishment of the cult (*i.e.* the cult of Marduk as supreme god at the end of the second millennium B.C.). Further research may be needed in order to determine which of the Seleucid rulers was meant in the Prophecy as a new Nebuchadnezzar II, but Antiochus I appears to be the most probable candidate. Like Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus was the son of the founder of a new dynasty. In 294/93 B.C. his father, Seleucus, instituted a co-regency by which Antiochus was to rule the portion of the empire located east of the Euphrates, with Seleucia-on-the-Tigris and Babylon as his capitals. After the death of Seleucus I in 281 Antiochus became sole ruler of the empire. But it was not long before he reinstated with his own son Seleucus the same type of co-regency (this time not on strict territorial basis) he had shared with his father. This co-regency lasted from 279 until 267 and was brought to an abrupt end by the execution of Seleucus on charges of treason. In 266, however, Antiochus set up a new co-regency with his other son, Antiochus, who became sole ruler as Antiochus II after the death of Antiochus I in 261.

During his co-regency with Seleucus I, Antiochus I was bound as ruler of the eastern domains to pay special attention to Babylonia and therefore to develop with the local elites a closer relationship than might otherwise have been expected of the remote ruler of a multinational empire. It may not be a coincidence that it is precisely in this context that the Babylonian scholar Berossus composed his *Babyloniaca*. According to ancient historiographers, Berossus dedicated his work to Antiochus I,³³ and it has been convincingly argued that the work was offered to Antiochus for his own instruction and edification on the occasion of his accession to the throne as sole ruler in 281 B.C.³⁴ It is likely that Antiochus was the focus of hopeful expectations that he would reverse the somewhat hostile policies of Seleucus I, who had already deprived Babylon of its central position with the foundation of his new capital Seleucia-on-the-Tigris. These

33. See S.M. Burstein, *The Babyloniaca of Berossus*, SANE 1/5 (1978), p. 5; and P. Lehmann-Haupt, "Berossus," in RLA II (1938), pp. 2-3.

34. See Burstein, *Babyloniaca*, p. 34.

hopes were partly fulfilled, albeit on a very limited basis, by Antiochus' own patronage of Babylonian temples. A building inscription in the Babylonian style found at Borsippa (V R 66) commemorates his restoration of the Ezida, the temple of Nabû, begun in the 43rd year of the Seleucid era.³⁵ However, this pro-Babylonian policy was not emulated by Antiochus' successors. As seen earlier, the dedicatory inscriptions from Uruk commemorating the extension of the Bît Rēš are in the name of Babylonian city officials, and no building inscriptions of Seleucid rulers have been found in other Babylonian cities in spite of evidence of continuing rebuilding until the Parthian period. Antiochus I may thus have been the only Seleucid ruler who strove to win over the Babylonian city elites by promoting native culture and religion, presenting himself in the garb of a traditional Babylonian king, and fostering care over the old sanctuaries of the country. There are good reasons to believe that the Uruk Prophecy was intended for him and was, very much like the *Babyloniaca*, a work of edification designed to convey a sense of respect for the great antiquity of Babylonian culture, as well as to underscore the ruler's duty to protect and further that culture by his active support of pious works.³⁶ As seen earlier, the colophon of TCL 6 38 indicates that the priesthood of the Bît Rēš was already collecting and forging documents supporting the revival of the cult of Anu during the co-regency of Seleucus I and Antiochus I. And the archaeological evidence indicates that the early phases of the Seleucid expansion of the Bît Rēš must date to the first quarter of the third century, only slightly more than a generation before the first rebuilding on a massive scale, the one commemorated by the inscription of Anu-uballit/Nikarchos in 244 B.C. Evidently Antiochus I did not live to witness the completion of the new structure, but the circumstantial evidence (especially the chronology of the material) suggests that he was indeed the new Nebuchadnezzar described in the Prophecy as the expected restorer of the cult of Anu and builder of his temple. The author of the Prophecy also equated Seleucus I with Nabopolassar, two rulers he viewed negatively. Both founded new dynasties but neglected the cults of Uruk. King 11 in the Prophecy (*i.e.* the historical Awēl-Marduk) was equated, depending on the date of composition of the text, with either one of the two sons of Antiochus I, who successively shared the throne with him as co-regent.

35. On the building works of Antiochus I at Babylon and Borsippa see the recent assessment by W. Horowitz, "Antiochus I, Esagil and a Celebration of the Ritual for Renovation of Temples," *RA* 85 (1991), pp. 75-77.

36. This view agrees with the opinion recently expressed by M. deJ. Ellis on the function of the prophecies and other "literary predictive texts," which was to indicate "correct and legitimate action." See M. deJ. Ellis, "Observations on Mesopotamian Oracles and Prophetic Texts: Literary and Historiographic Considerations," *JCS* 41 (1989), p. 178.

To conclude, I must address the difficult question of the relationship of the Uruk Prophecy to other genres of Akkadian literature, and to non-Mesopotamian genres as well. On the Mesopotamian side, little can be added to what has been said in previous studies. I would only like to point to the resemblance between the Uruk Prophecy (and other prophecies as well) and certain chronographic and chronicle-like texts in which the reigns of past (named) kings are evaluated in the light of their behavior toward one or several cult centers.³⁷ One such text with a colophon of Anu-aḥ-ušabši, the high-priest of the Bît Rēš, and bearing the date year 61 of the Seleucid era (= 251/50 B.C.), is a fragment of an originally longer composition dealing with the kings of the third dynasty of Ur and their attitude to several major Babylonian cult centers.³⁸ The preserved excerpt of the composition concerns the reign of Šulgi, who is charged anachronistically with plundering the property of the Esagil and also as having "disturbed the rites of the cult of Anu ([GAR]ZA ḏ60-ú-tu), the plan of Uruk (GIŠ.HUR.MEŠ ša UNUG^[ki]) and the secret knowledge of the learned ([ni]-šir-ti lúum-ma-nu)." While the exact purpose of the composition still remains unclear, its general setting presents no interpretive problem. The date, only five years before completion of the full-scale rebuilding of the Bît Rēš, as well as the specific mention of the rites of the cult of Anu, the *paraš anūtu*, indicate that STU I 2 is also a pseudo-historical literary fabrication concocted in the wake of the reorganization of the cult of Anu by the priesthood of the Bît Rēš in the third century.³⁹ To be sure, from a strictly formal point of view, this genre bears only a superficial resemblance to the prophecies. From the more general standpoint of their purpose and ideological framework, however, they are characterized by a single preoccupation which they share with most of the prophecies: the respective merit of successive rulers as protectors of cult centers, or of one particular cult, both in the past and in the future.

Outside the Mesopotamian area, a few remarks should be made on the question of the relationship of the Uruk Prophecy to Jewish apocalyptic literature. Both the Uruk Prophecy and the Dynastic Prophecy are par-

37. The best known of these texts is the so-called "Weidner Chronicle," which evaluates third millennium rulers according to their attitude towards the cult of Marduk and the Esagil. The text, now nearly complete since the publication of a late Babylonian exemplar from Sippar, is cast in the form of a letter purportedly sent by king Dāmiq-ilišu of Isin to king Apil-Sin of Babylon. For the new edition see F.N.H. al-Rawi, "Tablets from the Sippar Library I. The <<Weidner Chronicle>>: A Supposititious Royal Letter Concerning a Vision," *Iraq* 52 (1990), pp. 1-13.

38. Published in Hunger, STU I 2. The text has attracted little attention so far save for the elucidation of the historical allusions concerning the reign of Šulgi by William Hallo, "Simurrum and the Hurrian Frontier," in *RHA* 36 (1978) 76 (= XXIV^c RAI, Paris, 1977).

39. Notwithstanding the fact that this fabrication may have been based on historical and chronographic material transmitted with the canonical corpus.

ticularly relevant to the study of apocalypticism because of their extremely late date of composition (third century), which brings them quite close to the date of composition of the Book of Daniel (early second century). The formal similarities between the prophesies and the historical predictions in the Book of Daniel have been repeatedly stressed. Both genres relish anonymity, allusive and cryptic language, and prophesize *ex eventu* toward an apocalyptic climax. The Uruk Prophecy however, distinguishes itself by one singularity. In the Book of Daniel, as seems to also be the case in the better preserved Akkadian prophesies, the historical narrative recast in the form of pseudo-predictions leads chronologically from the fictitious narrator (or prophet), set in the distant past, to the author, who writes just before the historical *terminus* (or the apocalyptic climax) which ends the composition. The prophet Daniel, for instance, is set historically at the court of Nebuchadnezzar II. The four successive kingdoms symbolized by the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream are the Median, the Neo-Babylonian (both contemporary with Daniel), the Persian, and finally the Graeco-Macedonian (*i.e.* Seleucid), whose impending destruction is prophesied by the author. On the agreement of most modern critics, the author lived at the time of Antiochus IV, whose pursuance of policies hostile to the Jews led to the Maccabean uprising and the rise of messianic hopes connected with the expected overthrow of the Seleucid dynasty. As we have seen, the underlying structure of the Uruk Prophecy is somewhat more complex. The historical figures who inspired the closing predictions lived three centuries before the actual author of the Prophecy. The narrative on their reigns was only slightly recast in order to provide a superficial parallel with Seleucid rulers of the early third century. The view of history which is inherent to apocalyptic literature is that history has a purpose (God's purpose) and develops in time as a linear process leading to a cosmic climax (apocalyptic time). The Uruk Prophecy, on the other hand, still adheres to the traditional Mesopotamian view of history, according to which events occur cyclically with the purpose each time of reestablishing an ideal model which was set once and forever in primeval times and is periodically disrupted by the acts of malevolent rulers. This still seems to be the outlook of the Uruk-kaean priesthood of the third century. Their "revival" of the cult of Anu, the result of complex theological and antiquarian speculations going back at least as early as the fifth century, was in many respects a self-conscious fabrication supported with spurious claims of its great antiquity. The inscription of Anu-uballit/Kephalon even sets the origins of the Bit Rēš temple in antediluvian times, before the coming of the culture hero Oannes-Adapa. The reestablishment of this cult with the support of Antiochus I would just repeat the reestablishment of the (allegedly) same cult at Uruk by Nebuchadnezzar II, thus completing another cycle.

These remarks do not however undermine the value of the Uruk Prophecy for comparison with the Book of Daniel and other works of Jewish apocalyptic literature. It has been repeatedly pointed out that Akkadian prophesies, in spite of the close formal resemblance they bear to some Jewish apocalypses, lack the universal scope as well as the eschatological implications of the latter. The author of the Uruk Prophecy yearned only for a new *Heilszeit*, which was to be brought about, not by the dramatic intervention of God in history but rather, in accordance with the traditional Mesopotamian view, by a mundane ruler who would reestablish the cult in its perennial form. He was looking "backward" at primeval times as an age of bliss to be eternally emulated, rather than looking "forward" to an eschatological end of history on behalf of the just, the salvation of man, and the establishment of everlasting good and peace in the kingdom of God. Nevertheless, I would not rule out the possibility that some conceptual change was beginning to occur among the Babylonian intelligentsia of that period. In the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the Seleucid empire the increased exposure of Babylonian scholars to other cultures, religions, and philosophical systems may have induced them to alter their traditional intellectual outlook, very much in the same manner as Judaism was progressively becoming tainted with Hellenistic thought, this in spite of the fact that the Seleucid cuneiform record shows altogether little trace of a Greek cultural influence. The author of the Uruk Prophecy expresses his yearning for a new *Heilszeit* in rather forceful terms: "His dynasty will endure forever. [The king]s of Uruk will exercise rulership like the gods." To hope for the establishment of an everlasting rule or dynasty is a *topos* of Mesopotamian literature and royal inscriptions. Divine kingship, on the other hand — assuming the final sentence of the Prophecy points in that direction — seems in disagreement with the Late-Babylonian concept of kingship, although ideas of divine rule were current in the third and early second millennia. That kings possessed a divine aura, however, was a prevalent assumption in Hellenistic political thought. Among the many divine qualities attributed to Hellenistic rulers was that of saviour-king, Greek *soter*, an epithet borne incidentally by Antiochus I himself. While this fact alone may not provide sufficient grounds to assume that the author of the Uruk Prophecy really viewed Antiochus I as a saviour, much less as a god, one may still contemplate the possibility that the Hellenistic concept of royal soteriology had become familiar enough to the Babylonians for it to surface in a text intended to cater to a Seleucid monarch. But there is still, of course, a long way to go between third century Greek soteriology and the eschatology of Jewish apocalypses — or is there? As is amply evidenced by the course of Jewish history during the Second Temple period, and even slightly later down to the revolt of Bar Kochba, expectations of the rise of a

messianic mundane ruler cannot be fully dissociated from the spiritual quest of salvation and the establishment of a celestial kingdom. Though falling short of being true apocalypses, the late Akkadian prophecies belong nevertheless to that formative period when the meeting of Hellenism with Judaism, Near Eastern, and

Egyptian cultures provided the background for the religious and intellectual revolution that was to culminate in the rise of Hellenized Judaism and Christianity. In that sense Akkadian prophecies and Judaeo-Christian apocalypses are arguably distinct, yet inseparable, phenomena.